The Turkish state's discourse towards the Kurds' language rights (2003-2015): recognition or containment?

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Abstract

This research explores the extent of the shift in the Turkish state's discourse towards the Kurds' language rights and the sources of resistance to their recognition under the successive AKP governments between 2003 and 2015. Examining this issue, I explore 1) the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights in lights of the relevant key points in the political theories of language rights; 2) the extent of the shift in the AKP's Kurdish policy towards the Kurds' language rights; 3) the sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights in the state discourse in view of the competing rationales behind language rights from both the state's and minority groups' perspectives; 4) whether the AKP's Kurdish policy aims to contain the Kurds' language rights or accord it greater recognition. The thesis concludes that the Turkish state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights under the successive AKP governments between 2003-2015 primarily aimed to contain potentially far-reaching consequences of the Kurds' language rights.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

The main objective of this thesis is to understand the extent of the shift in the Turkish state discourse towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights and the sources of resistance to their recognition. This research aims to examine a twelve-year period of the state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights, from 2003 to 2015. The period of analysis starts with the emergence of the Justice and Development Party (Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) as a new political actor in Turkish politics in 2003.

Turkey was founded in 1923 from the remnants of the multi-religious and multinational Ottoman Empire, in which there were not a particular ethnic or a language group on which the Empire was founded. The Kurds with their deeply rooted and regionally concentrated population were the largest non-Turkish ethnic group. Their incorporation into the newly founded Republic was one of the most crucial questions that the Founding Father had to answer. The radical homogenisation and coercive assimilation policies whose main components were the promotion of Turkishness and the Turkish language were carried out; yet, often referred to as the 'Kurdish question', 'Kurdish issue' or 'Kurdish problem', this question has incessantly occupied a central position in Turkish policies since the founding of the Republic, especially in the last thirty years during which an armed conflict has taken place between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê — PKK) and the state. The Kurdish question, therefore, with its practical and theoretical dimensions flies in the face of almost a hundred years of Turkish state policy since the founding of the Turkish Republic.

There are many aspects to the Kurdish question and as a multifaceted issue it has direct bearings on Turkey's modernisation. The Kurds' discontent and identity-based rights

claims were seen as the rejection of the project of modernisation/westernisation, which led the state to associate the Kurdish question with regional backwardness, reactionary politics, banditry and national security depending on different phases of Turkey's modernisation project (Yeğen 1996; 1999). Its ethnic dimension is a constitutive element of the Kurdish question for it shows continuity since the inception of the question. Yet the denial of the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish question characterised the Turkish state discourse to the extent that the Kurds' existence as a distinct ethnic group and their language were denied. The state assumed all ethnic elements in Turkey as Turks and the Turkish language as their mother tongue.

Almost all states that had gone through a nation building process and attempted to transform the state and society utilised language to create a commonality or a sense of togetherness among their citizens. Yet, it is equally important to emphasise that the choice of a common language to be used in the public domain, education, governance or legislation is not simply a neutral process. Granted that it is impossible for a state to stay neutral in this process as it has to function in one language or another, hence, one or more languages will be in a favoured position. However, the imposition of a common language resolves the questions of "who should exercise sovereignty or who has rights of self-government […] by creating a 'we' that is united as a single political community with a common sense of nationhood" (Kymlicka and Grin 2003:12). Such attempts, regardless of the rationale behind them, be it assimilation, modernisation, social mobilisation, the protection of state integrity or indoctrination of the state ideology have resulted in regional minority nationalism that has sometimes amounted to violent conflicts. In these contexts, the meaning attached to language goes beyond the idea of language as a utility in a way that language groups consider "themselves not just having a distinct language, but also as forming a distinct 'nation' within the larger state" for which they seek recognition by mobilising "behind nationalist political parties with nationalist goals of self-government" (Kymlicka and Patten

2003: 5). A language group's demand for recognition of its language, for example, "by having it taught in the public schools comes from the group's broader demand for recognition as a distinct political community and building block of a larger federated polity" (Bauböck 2001: 332). In these contexts, language becomes a source of political mobilisation and linguistic conflict, which is part of the wider national conflict between the state — usually a dominant language group — and a minority language group.

The Turkish language was utilised to serve a similar purpose of creating a commonality or a sense of togetherness among ethnic elements of Turkey during Turkey's nation building process. The founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey, known as Kemalism which is mainly based on Turkish nationalism and Turkishness adopted top-down revolutionary reforms to create political and sociological rupture from the Ottoman Empire in its attempt to embrace Westernisation. Given the Kurds' historically rooted and regionally concentrated population in Turkey, the Kemalist nation building project attempted to eliminate the Kurdish language through coercive assimilation policies in order to "remove the emergence of a competing alternative Kurdish nation and nationalism" on the road to the making of the modern Turkey (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013). The reason is that the Kurdish language constitutes "the clearest and most radical difference between Turks and Kurds, who otherwise share religious traditions, with no direct possibility of observing physical differences" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 165-6). No other ethnic or linguistic group in Turkey other than the Kurds has the power to challenge the founding ideology of the state and question the legitimacy of the dominant position of the Turkish language; therefore, the recognition of the Kurdish language has normative implications for the centralist Kemalist nation-state origins of Turkey.

The multifaceted and enduring character of the Kurdish question has forced the state to adopt various policies and rhetoric in its attempts to cope with the Kurdish question with

different perceptions for the Kurdish question over the years. The politics of recognition, oppression, assimilation and discrimination have been utilised by the state to contain the Kurdish question (Yeğen 2010). There are three major periods in the state discourse on the Kurdish question: pre-denial, denial and post-denial (Yeğen 2010). The period of pre-denial corresponds with the promise of the Turkish National Movement during the Turkish War of Independence (Turkish: İstiklâl Harbi) between 1919 and 1923 to recognise the Kurds in the prospective state. The Kurdish discontent that Ottoman modernisation/westernisation had created since the early nineteenth century due to policies of centralisation and secularisation, which put pressure on the social space wherein Kurdishness traditionally appeared was acknowledged by the leader cadres of the Turkish National Movement, Mustafa Kemal in particular. Yet, after the founding of the Republic, a period of denial began in the mid-1920s during which the Kurds' both cultural and political rights as well as existence as a distinct ethnic group were denied. Since the early '90s, the Kurdish question's ethnic dimension have begun to see acknowledgment of the state where the state's strategies of assimilation and oppression in its attempts to cope with the Kurdish question "have morphed into an amalgam of old and new, blending assimilation and oppression with discrimination and recognition" (Yeğen 2010: 67). In the '90s, discourse of recognition co-existed with discourses of the period of denial. The Kurds' existence as an ethnic group was not "overtly" denied and there was no longer an official ban on the Kurdish language; yet, "old and new policies" run "contrapuntally" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 169). The main reason behind the shift in the state discourse towards recognition was the growing discontent of the Kurdish masses and the increasing intensity of the armed conflict between the PKK and the state, as it was no longer possible to maintain the denialist attitudes of previous decades (Yeğen 2010; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013). From the state's perspective the Kurdish question has appeared an issue that has to be contained and confined as much as it has to be recognised. There has been, therefore, a tension between recognition, denial

and containment of the Kurdish question in the post-denial period of the state discourse. The AKP emerged as a new political actor in Turkish politics in this context where a shift had already occurred in the state discourse on the Kurdish question towards the politics of recognition since the early '90s. The AKP period maps onto the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question.

The AKP emerged as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics in 2002 and continues, at the time of writing, to dominate the political landscape in its third term in the office. The party has achieved unprecedented success in the ballot box by becoming the largest party in every local and national election since 2002 and almost consolidating the centre-right voters. Right-wing political parties of the '90s disappeared from the political arena with the exception of the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP). Therefore, the AKP's emergence on November 3, 2002 constitutes a sensational break from Turkey's "political old guard" (Aras and Gökay 2003: 148), marking the beginning of a new era in Turkish politics.

The AKP's emergence as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics signifies more than a mere electoral success. The AKP's adoption of discourses of democracy and human rights as well as its strong emphasis on Turkey's EU membership, particularly in its initial years have led to transformative reforms and a certain degree of normalisation in civil-military relations, protection of fundamental freedoms, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, the protection of minorities and the exercise of cultural rights, which, by implication, have had positive effects on the Kurds' rights. In many ways, the AKP has appeared as a discourse of opposition to the Kemalist regime's secularist and nationalist nation building project. The party's leader cadres' past affiliations with Islamist political parties and the party's 'conservative' political line have always been a central issue among its critics, making the long standing tension between Turkey's secular segments and public manifestation

of Islam, in politics in particular, all the more visible. Nonetheless, the party's strong popularity among the electorate and carefully executed strategy to avoid confrontation with the military-led secular establishment while maintaining a pro-EU discourse had allowed the party to question and challenge the hegemonic position of the Kemalist establishment and to gradually consolidate power in its favour. In its term in the office, which spans between 2011 to 2015, the party has begun to show authoritarian tendencies that appear to aim both further consolidation of power and construction of a new 'Turkish society' according to the values upheld by the party's leader cadres under the 'new Turkey' slogan. Therefore, the AKP's rise to power in Turkish politics signifies a change in power dynamics in state apparatus.

The Kurdish question has consistently occupied a central position in Turkish politics and the AKP era is no exception. In fact, despite the stagnation and decline in the party's reformist and transformative discourse since its second term in the office, which spans between 2007 to 2011, and amid the question over the party's increasing authoritarian tendencies in its third term, the Kurdish question has continued to occupy a central position in the AKP's agenda, particularly since 2009, which has included a number of limited yet important steps towards the Kurds' rights and a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including its armed wing — the PKK. There have been a number of steps under the AKP rule towards the use of language(s) other than Turkish, which have led to a certain degree of normalisation in the Kurdish language's use and dissemination. For instance, these steps allowed setting up private Kurdish courses, choosing Kurdish as an elective course in public schools, the right to defence in Kurdish and the right to education in mother tongue in private schools. Also, a state-run Kurdish TV channel — TRT Kurdî [formerly known as TRT ŞEŞ until 2015] — as part of part of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) was set up in 2009. The AKP's Kurdish policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means and its steps to-

wards the Kurds' rights suggest a possible direction of change in the state discourse towards a greater recognition. However, the extent of this recognition is questionable, as the AKP appears to manifest strong resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

The Kurdish question is an embodiment of the case in which a minority language group seeks constitutional recognition for its language rights that extends beyond the accommodation of the Kurdish language in private domain. Grounded on the idea that language has an intrinsic value to its speakers (Green 1987; Réaume 1991; 2000; Rubio-Marín 2003), language rights are concerned with the Kurdish language's use in public services, governance and education facilities regardless of its speakers' proficiency in the Turkish language. Language rights take the constitutive character of language in the construction of one's both individual and collective identity as primary point of interest. In this sense, while most policies of the AKP towards the Kurdish language are implicitly or explicitly concerned with the instrumental nature of the Kurdish language as a tool of communication, the Kurds' language rights are about the non-instrumental nature of language, which implies a different category of rights that have potentially far-reaching consequences.

For example, for a minority language group on a national scale, recognition of its language is seen "as a symbol of recognition of its nationhood", which signifies the acceptance that the state is "a multination state, a partnership of two or more nations within a single state" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 5). Such recognition typically involves "a claim to territory (the nation's 'homeland') and a claim to self-determination over that territory, perhaps even its secession" (2003: 5). Moreover, it could be tantamount to re-imagination of the state as a multicultural and multi-ethnic state (May 1997; 2001). Language rights, in this sense, are part of the wider national conflict between a dominant language group and a minority language group, and "central to the larger political project of containing nationalism" (Hechter 2001 cited in Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 6). For this reason, it is possible to

observe a tendency in many states to avoid explicitly recognising regional minority languages yet accommodating them without according official recognition.

The Kurds' language rights claims are particularly problematic yet crucially important because in many ways it is the last and most important front-line of political debate in the Kurdish question. Most issues in the Kurdish question are related to language rights either by definition or implication in terms of self-government, national identity, citizenship and sovereignty; therefore, language rights signify more than a language policy choice. The AKP's political engagement with the Kurdish political movement in what is usually referred to as the Solution Process and its policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means particularly put the Kurds' language rights claims to the centre of the political debate. The reason is that language rights are rights of political compromise in the sense of being as "a result of a constitutional bargain" between the state and a language group through which language rights are usually negotiated and recognised (Green 1987; Réaume and Green 1989; Réaume 2002; Green and Réaume 1990). The Solution Process, therefore, appears to constitute the process of political compromise in the Kurds' language rights. In this context, the extent of the shift that has occurred towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights in state discourse and major sources of resistance to its recognition between 2003 and 2015 are of paramount importance.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

This research problematises the Turkish state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights and aims to unfold the policy shift and then understand the sources of resistance to its recognition. To achieve this overall aim, the research has four specific objectives:

1. To locate the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights.

2. To illuminate the extent of the shift in the AKP's Kurdish policy towards the Kurds' language rights.

3. To explore the sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

4. To understand whether the AKP's Kurdish policy aims to contain the Kurds' language rights or accord it greater recognition.

1.2 Literature Review

The Kurdish question has attracted the interest of academics from diverse disciplines with various different bodies of literature concerned with different aspects of the Kurdish question.

There are monographs and edited books exploring history of the Kurds (McDowall 1991; 1996; 2000; Gunter 1988; 2009; 2010; Özoğlu 2004; Kreyenbroek and Sperl 2005; Bois 1996), emergence of Kurdishness (Bruinessen 1992; Olson 2013) and emergence of modern Turkey (Lewis 1968; Zürcher 2004; Shaw 1976; 1977). A rich body of literature exists on the Kurdish question in general and the state's approach to it (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997; Barkey and Fuller 1998; McDowall 2005; Güneş and Zeydanlıoğlu 2013; Bilgin and Sarihan 2013; Natali 2005; Ergil 2000). Mesut Yeğen is an often-quoted academic for his works on the Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question in general (1996; 1999; 2007; 2009; 2010). These works are primarily concerned with the historical account of and the state's perception of the Kurdish question in general.

This research focuses on the period 2003-2015, when the AKP emerged as a new political actor in Turkish politics. Thus, the literature review section of this study particularly engages with academic works analysing the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question in general and the Kurds' language rights in particular.

The AKP's emergence as a strong political actor in November 2002 marked the beginning of a new era in Turkish politics, not least because it consolidated the centre-right voters that resulted in the disappearance of the right-wing political parties from the political arena (Aras and Gökay 2003; Cagaptay 2002; Çarkoğlu 2002). The AKP's conservative political line and its leader cadres' past affiliation with political Islamist parties made Turkey's long standing social and political cleavages all the more apparent, causing a tension between the military-led secular establishment and the party's conservative political identity. During its initial years, the AKP attempted to avoid direct confrontation with the military-led secular establishment, adopting discourses of democracy, human rights and EU membership without developing an explicit Kurdish policy. Thus, the period between 2003-2009 was mainly informed by Turkey's EU membership process and accordingly, the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question during this period was generally studied within the context of Turkey's EU membership, general normalisation in Turkey's democracy and the party's Islamic political identity.

The studies exploring the impact of the EU process on the protection of human rights in Turkey touch on the Kurdish question as an important issue of Turkey and how reforms and policies adopted as part of the process affected the Kurds' rights in general (Müftüler Baç 2005; Moustakis and Chaudhuri 2005; Hale 2003). Despite deficiencies in practice, the immediate impact of the EU process was apparent in civil-military relations, protection of fundamental freedoms, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, the protection of minorities and the exercise of cultural rights, which, by implication, had positive effects on the Kurds' rights and led to a certain degree of normalisation in the perception of the Kurdish question (Yildiz and Müller 2008). The AKP's discourses of human rights and democracy and its discourse of opposition to the Kemalist regime led many authors to discuss whether Turkey was going through a transformation under the AKP's conservative political identity (Çınar 2006; Insel 2003; Dağı 2004; 2005; 2006). The Kurdish question

and the Kurds' language rights were not primary concern of these studies; yet, they are important in understanding the AKP's discourses of human rights and democracy and the initial normalisation in the Kurds' rights. The practical outcome of the AKP's EU-motivated policy stance on the Kurdish is that it has suffered from the inherent limitations of the EU process in protection of minority rights, which is also apparent in relevant studies. Thus, there are studies that point out limits of Turkey's EU reforms and EU's limited in protection of minority rights (Kirişçi 2011; Kizilkan-Kisacik 2010; Cengiz and Hoffmann 2013).

Moustakis and Chaudhuri, for example, point out the limitation of the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership in imposing fundamental changes in Turkey to the extent of creating "a truly democratic environment that would allow the Kurds of Turkey the right to exist without Kemalist restrictions" (2005: 87). The inherent limitation of the EU process is apparent here, as the Copenhagen criteria require that a candidate country has stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, which do not impose recognition of diversity of any kind and sort in candidate country beyond the protection of fundamental rights. Similarly, Polat observes a process of de-securitisation in the Kurdish question thanks to the AKP's reforms towards normalisation that has led to changes in the mainstream discourse on the Kurdish question, as it now involves "discussion of cultural-linguistic rights and political solutions without mentioning words such as 'threat', 'survival' or 'danger'" (2008: 84-5). She, however, highlights that this process suffers from the problem of internalisation of legal changes by the political and bureaucratic elite while particularly noting, despite being a major catalyst for the desecuritisation of the Kurdish question, limitations arising from the EU process. As a result, she argues, "Turkey swings between forces, agendas, and actors of securitisation and desecuritisation when it comes to the Kurdish issue" (2008: 5). The absence of an explicit Kurdish policy in this period forces these studies to analyse the state discourse on the Kurdish question through the lens of EU process and within the general

politics of the AKP. This manifests itself a limitation of these studies. However, there are also a few studies that specifically discuss the AKP's understanding of the Kurdish question in this period.

Yavuz and Özcan's (2006) article examines the AKP's main argument for the Kurdish question. They explain that the party's understanding of the Kurdish question rests on the conviction that the Kemalist regime's conceptions of secularism and Turkish nationalism are the main reason behind the Kurdish question. Thus, if common Islamic ties and fraternity of the Kurds and Turks are to be stressed, the conflict will end. Yavuz and Özcan argue that there are four reasons that the AKP cannot manage to develop or implement a coherent Kurdish policy, which are as follows: Erdoğan's definition of the Kurdish question is different from that of the Kurdish political movement, there is a major conflict between the state institutions and AKP over the perception of the Kurdish question, the Kurdish question can cause internal tension within the party and effects its support base, particularly in the Kurdish regions, the Kurdish question may cause a major confrontation with the military (2006: 103). As it will be discussed in the relevant chapter, the AKP has consolidated state power and changed power dynamics in its favour by forcing the military-led establishment to retreat; therefore, some of these factors are not sufficient to explain the AKP's Kurdish policy between the period 2003-2015 given the recent developments and new dynamics. Öktem's article (2008) is another important study on the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question in this period. He describes the AKP's attitude towards the Kurds as a 'patronising embrace' in the sense that, he argues, the Kurds are caught between a better material life and the prospect of discrimination and exclusion, as they are expected to renounce the Kurdish political movement and its identity-based politics for "the emerging space of AKP-supported material wealth" (2008: 2).

The AKP's absence of an explicit Kurdish policy started to change in 2009 with the announcement of what is usually referred to as 'Kurdish Initiative', 'Kurdish opening', 'Democratic Initiative' or 'National Unity and Fraternity Project'. The initiative was presented as a new era in Turkey's Kurdish question that aimed to resolve the Kurdish question through non-military means, including political engagement with the Kurdish political movement and its armed wing — the PKK. Thus, a new body of literature emerged, examining reasons and factors behind this 'new' policy on the Kurdish question (Çınar 2011; Çandar 2009; Cizre 2009; Somer and Liaras 2010; Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011; 2014; Yeğen 2010).

Although it does not specifically study the AKP's Kurdish opening *per se*, Yeğen's article is an important study. It attempts to contextualise the recent developments on the Kurdish question within the historical account of the Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question since the founding of the Republic. He points out that, as noted above, there are three periods in the state discourse on the Kurdish question, pre-denial, denial and post-denial. In the post-denial period since the early '90s, the Kurdish question's ethnic dimension has begun to see acknowledgment of the state where the state's strategies of assimilation and oppression in its attempts to cope with the Kurdish question have been adopted concurrently (Yeğen 2010: 67). While considering steps towards the Kurds' rights in 2009 as major steps towards the politics of recognition, he states that "the Turkish state is, at best, **begrudgingly** on this road" (Yeğen 2010: 80) (emphasis added). The AKP's policy stance, therefore, maps on the post-denial period of the state discourse and is informed by the same dynamics and factors that forced the state to revise its conceptualisation of the Kurdish question towards the politics of recognition. The important point in Yeğen's argument is that the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence and increasing intensity of the armed conflict with the PKK forced the shift that has occurred in

the state discourse in the post-denial period. Casier, Jongerden and Walker (2011; 2014), Çınar (2011), Çandar (2009) and Somer and Liaras (2010) all point out the then pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's (Turkish: Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP, Kurdish: Partiya Civaka Demokratîk, PCD) local election victory in 2009 as an important domestic factor that forced to the AKP to develop a new Kurdish policy. Casier, Jongerden and Walker (2011; 2014) particularly note how the state wanted to contain the Kurdish question amid the Kurdish political movement's increasing support base by both adopting judiciary and security-oriented measures and a rights-oriented discourse to challenge the Kurdish political movement both politically and ideologically. This particular identification is important because it manifests itself as a tension between recognition, denial and containment of the Kurdish question in the state discourse.

Çandar (2009) also notes that there are regional factors in the AKP's Kurdish opening. Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq in general and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in particular has witnessed the adoption of a new foreign policy line after the American withdrawal from Iraq and oil discoveries in the KRG. On the road to Turkey's desire to become an energy hub, Çandar argues, resolution of the Kurdish question and the disarmament of the PKK occupy an important role, which in returned forced the state to take steps towards it. Cizre (2009), on the other hand, sees the AKP's policy of resolving the Kurdish question though non-military means as part of the party's efforts to civilianise politics by reducing the military's influence both ideologically and institutionally.

Although beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that the AKP's policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means has led to the emergence of studies exploring the possible normative theoretical frameworks that would apply to the Kurdish question (Kuzu 2010, Köker 2010; Ozkirimli 2013a; 2013b; Keyman 2012). For example, Ozkirimli, promotes "a form of recognition-based multiculturalism" that aims to

respect all citizens' basic rights regardless of their membership to minority or majority group yet "leaves room for alternative values or conceptions of the good life" (2013a: 1). Similarly, there are also studies exploring the state's negotiation with the PKK from peace and conflict resolution perspective (Yildiz 2012; Çağlayan 2013; Nykanen 2013; Ercan 2013; Aydinli and Ozcan 2011; Taşpınar and Tol 2014).

It should be noted that the AKP's Kurdish opening was not a package in the sense of being a definitive list of steps to be taken on the road to resolve the Kurdish question; rather, it appeared, in Çandar's words, as an "enigma and for every party concerned or involved, there is a different definition or explanation of what it really is" (2009: 16). Thus, there are studies exploring the substance and logic of the AKP's Kurdish opening and how the process should proceed (Aytaç 2010; Ensaroğlu 2013; Larrabee 2013; Gunter 2013; Efegil 2011; Karaveli 2010). The lack of transparency in the state's political engagement with the Kurdish political movement and of actual policy-making steps in the process limit these studies' capacity in terms of demonstrating the possible direction of change in the state discourse towards the Kurdish question. The following years have witnessed the emergence of another body of literature examining and questioning the limits and nature of the AKP's Kurdish opening (Çiçek 2011; Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2014; Derince 2013; Polat 2008; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013; Kayhan Pusane 2014).

Zeydanlıoğlu's book chapter looks at the AKP's steps towards the Kurdish language and argues that despite its policies towards the Kurds' rights, not least by ending the denialist policy of the state, the AKP's discourse and policies on the Kurdish question are "strongly informed by the same nationalist, statist, and militarist tradition" and in many aspects share the same sources of resistance to the Kurds' rights as with the traditional state discourse (2013: 180). In a similar vein, Çiçek (2011) argues that the AKP's Kurdish opening has not aimed to incorporate the pro-Kurdish politics into Turkey's politics; rather, it has

attempted to eliminate the pro-Kurdish politics. He states that the AKP's Kurdish initiative has not been open to "the collective cultural rights and waited for the Kurds to be content with the individual cultural rights which are nothing but delaying the assimilation process" (2011: 24). The AKP's "ideological and political characteristics and weak administrative capacity", which is informed by Turkish nationalism and Islamism, have, according to Çiçek, prevented the party from "favourable conditions for a settlement of the Kurdish issue and the disarmament of the PKK" (2011: 24). Casier, Jongerden and Walker (2011; 2014) also argue that the AKP's Kurdish initiative have aimed to contain the Kurdish political movement through both judiciary measures and adoption of a new discourse in order to restructure the state's relationship to the Kurds by challenging the Kurdish political movement both ideologically and politically. Studies generally imply an inherent incapability of the AKP for resolving the Kurdish question due to the party's conservative political identity, which is informed by populism, pragmatism, Islamism and Turkish nationalism.

While the AKP's political identity and its practical implications for the Kurdish question, to a certain degree, affect the party's policy stance on the Kurdish question, these studies appear to ignore the prospect of the Kurdish political movement's empowerment in its negotiation with the state and the implication of the Kurds' collective rights in terms of devolution of power that further empower the Kurdish political movement. In other words, while the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence forces the state to adopt a new policy towards the Kurdish question, the Kurdish political movement's very existence and potentially far-reaching consequences of the Kurds' rights appears to impose a restraint conceptual and institutional capacity on the AKP. Therefore, the limits of the AKP's Kurdish initiative and its sources of resistance to the Kurds' rights should also be sought outside the party's limited conceptual capacity for the Kurdish question without reducing its 'failure' of developing a comprehensive solution for the Kurdish question to being informed by the nationalist character of the traditional state discourse.

This study aims to achieve this gap by exploring the Kurds' language-related rights in the context of language rights in order to reveal the competing rationales behind language rights from both the state's and minority groups' perspectives. Human rights that are either by implication or by definition collective in nature usually witness strong resistance of the state. In this sense, a state's resistance to collective rights is almost a given; therefore, the discussion should move beyond this mere identification and focus on the nature of the Kurds' language-related rights claims in the Kurdish question in order to understand what makes the Kurdish language so challenging for the Turkish state yet so powerful for the Kurds. Understanding the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights beyond identifying such rights claims as collective rights, hence the state's resistance is also crucially important in order to pave the way for future studies on the possible normative theoretical framework for the resolution of the Kurdish question.

Moreover, the existing literature on the limits of the AKP's Kurdish policy usually emerged in 2013 when a new initiative of political engagement between the state and the Kurdish political movement has begun. Since then, however, there have been important developments that have resulted in the emergence of 'new' discourses in the AKP politics. These developments imply the possible direction of change in the Kurdish question yet show continuity and consistency in the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question since its rise to power in 2002. Thus, it is important to explore the period 2003-2015 in its entirety without treating each contingent development as an end itself.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This thesis will benefit from the explanatory power of language rights by utilising relevant points in the political theories of language rights for both locating the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights and exploring the sources of resistance to the Kurds' lan-

guage rights in an attempt to illuminate the extent of the shift in the state discourse towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights.

The study does not attempt to justify or denounce the Kurds' language rights through a normative theoretical framework. it is, therefore, necessary to clarify some issues and remind that this research is not a theory building or testing study; rather, it is a case study aiming to understand first the extent of the shift in the Turkish state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights, and then look for the sources of resistance to its recognition. Thus, the theoretical framework aims to reveal key points in the political theories of language rights, which are relevant to the Kurdish question.

There are two particular approaches to language policy. The nation-building approach aims a language convergence without any attempt for the preservation of linguistic diversity or accommodations for minority languages. This approach utilises language as an ideological instrument, particularly during a nation-building process to create common identities for a single political unity. The use of language in this particular way to achieve ideologically motivated national goals does not take the value that one might attach to language or the social character of language in producing cultural heritage into account as the priority is to create a language convergence as part of the larger political and economic modernisation project of the nation state (Green 1987: 652). The nation-building approach to language policy is not, therefore, concerned with the possible or eventual outcome of such assimilationist language policy such as the disappearance of minority languages or the detrimental effects of this policy on minority groups. The viability of this nationalist and assimilationist language policy is particularly problematic and counter-productive in those political contexts where there is a strong and competing minority nationalism through which minority groups mobilise to have their language rights claims recognised in the forms of official language status or various types of power delegation. In this context, the

unity that nation-building approach claims to create becomes questionable. The Kurdish question is an embodiment of such a case.

The second approach to language policy prioritises the maintenance and preservation of minority languages and attempts to address and remedy the detrimental effects of the nation-building approach to language policy. Political theories of language rights emerge from this approach and ground themselves according to the meaning they attribute to language and to the centrality of a particular dimension of people's interests in language in a particular context or the rational and purpose of recognition of language rights within the limits of one's ideological and philosophical conviction. Theorists of language rights, therefore, primarily grapple the questions of the rationale behind language rights' recognition and what purpose the recognition should pursue or outcome it should produce or secure, if any. In this sense, why the preservation of vulnerable languages should be a priority from language rights point of view, why one should be concerned with the disappearance or marginalisation of some languages or language communities to the extent that policy makers are expected to take steps to prevent such outcome (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 44) are important questions for understanding the various justifications for the maintenance and preservation of minority languages and to escape from an 'implicit value assumption' in ensuring the survival of language groups (Green 1987: 653; Grin 2003). These are, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, fundamentally relevant to the Kurdish question in terms of both demonstrating how the Turkish state has perceived the Kurdish language since the founding of the Republic, the Kurdish language's value to the Kurds and its policy implications as well as understanding the sources of resistance to its formal recognition during the period 2003 and 2015.

Boran (2003) and Van Parijs (2000) point out the interconnectedness between linguistic diversity and biodiversity, which are, they argue, both value to people, in their justification

for the preservation of minority languages. In this sense, they see the disappearance of a language as a decline in linguistic diversity in the sense of being "akin to a decline in bio-diversity" (Boran 2003: 190).

Another and more popular account for the preservation of minority languages grounds itself on the contention that there is something intrinsically valuable about language that compels us to take each particular language as a human accomplishment and "a manifestation of human creativity which has value independent of its uses" (Réaume 2000: 250), which constitutes the main rationale behind the language preservation.

The intrinsic value argument's rationale goes beyond the instrumental function of language in communication by pointing out that language has a defining role in shaping people's interests in language. For example, the nation-building approach's utilitarian considerations in its implementation of language policy, as briefly noted above and discussed in Chapter 3, that foresees language as part of economic and political modernisation aims to increase the social mobility of people by ensuring that language does not ground a liability for people's participation to the democratic institutions by attempting to create equal opportunities. This social mobility argument, however, loses its ground and appeal because, in certain cases as is in the Kurdish question, the language group in question does not suffer from lack of proficiency in the dominant language and what is more, it considers itself as a nation within. Moreover, Green notes that "when a minority is culturally and linguistically distinctive, demands for fair treatment will encompass much more than the centrally important economic issues" (1987: 642; 1982: 236). In other words, the minority group's priority is to raise to the same footing with the majority's language in respect to language choices in various domains. In this sense, language is of value to people and language group; that is, there is a legitimate concern that a language group demands that its language survives and flourishes. Language, therefore, cannot be reduced to being an essential

tool of communication as it has an 'intrinsic value' (Réaume 2000) or 'expressive value' beyond its instrumental nature, not least by being 'a maker of identity' and representing "a cultural inheritance and a concrete expression of community" (Green 1987; 659).

The study primarily focuses on the language preservation and maintenance approach and the intrinsic value argument in its engagement with the political theories of language rights. The reason is that, as briefly mentioned above, the questions that the language preservation and maintenance approach as well as the intrinsic value argument raise in terms of the rationale behind language rights' recognition and what purpose the recognition should pursue or outcome it should produce or secure, if any correctly touches on the many key theoretical and normative questions and issues in the Kurdish question in exploring the competing rationales behind language rights both from the state's and the Kurds' perspectives. This in return allows a better evaluation of the questions of recognition or containment in the state's discourse towards the Kurds' language rights between the period 2003 and 2015.

A prominent example of the intrinsic value argument in the political theories of language rights is Denise Réaume's (1988;1991; 1994; 2000; 2002;) and Leslie Green's (1982; 1987; 1994) concept of linguistic security, on which the study puts a particular emphasis in its engagement with the political theories of language rights in order to critically locate people's interest in language and address crucial and challenging moral, legal and political questions arising out of attempting to form a regime of language rights. Linguistic security is an important concept in itself; however, what is more is its critical engagement with competing rationales arising out of forming a regime of language rights, which is a much needed approach to avoid the simplification of the Kurds' language rights or reducing the Kurdish question to one particular argument in language rights.

Linguistic security sees the distinction between the instrumental nature of language as a tool for communication and the non-instrumental nature of language as what Green describes as an expressive interest in language as "a maker of cultural identity, a cultural and a concrete expression of community" (1987: 658). It aims to create a fair and secure environment for a language in order to ensure that speakers make choices about language use freely (Réaume and Green 1989: 781). Linguistic security, in its fullest sense, encourages the flourishing of a minority language group by creating a free and fair environment in which the minority language group can "participate in public life in its language, and it have its disposal the means of cultural reproduction" (Réaume and Green 1989: 783; Réaume 1991: 52; Green 1987: 663) and "the opportunity, without serious impediments, to live a full life in a community of people who share one's language exists" (Réaume and Green 1989: 781). In this sense, the right to services, to participation in government, and to education facilities in one's mother tongue are seen as the minimum requirements of linguistic security.

Linguistic security is not a future-oriented concept of potentially indefinite extent in the sense that it does not attempt to guarantee the survival of the language neither does it ignore that one's membership in a minority group and the role of language in the formation of this membership may not be permanent.

It is more tangible and concerned with the immediate interest of the creation of a free and fair context in which a language group holds the ultimate fate of its future without its speakers facing any unfair or coercive pressure to abandon their language (Réaume 1991: 45-7) The language group's survival is up to the language group itself and the regime of language rights based on the concept of linguistic security aims to make sure that the language group does not face unfair or coercive pressures from outside, particularly the hegemonic position of a dominant language. The current speakers of the language as well as

the future generations may or may not identify themselves with the language in question despite the existence of a free and fair environment; yet, the free and fair context that linguistic security seeks to create aims to ensure that this choice happens without any coercion including the internal linguistic choices within the language group itself.

The study similarly benefits from Stephen May's (1997; 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2005) account of language rights. May is often described as a linguistic nationalist by his critics, particularly by Laitin and Reich (2003), who are critical of the regime of language rights, which is, they argue, being used as "a mechanism to restore the health and viability of historically marginalized peoples and their languages" by treating each language group as a nation (Laitin and Reich 2003: 85). Both Laitin and Reich's attempt to build a theory for language rights within liberal political theory by attempting to develop countermeasures to prevent what they describe as human rights violations or illiberal tendencies in other accounts of language rights as well as May's answers to his critics and his own justification of language rights and its social and political consequences are quite valuable for the aims and objectives of the study.

May points out that the common tendency in both the academia and politics of dismissing the validity of language rights can be categorised under three themes: Linguistic modernisation is inevitable; therefore, these efforts are futile, an unquestioned link between language and ethnicity is established to justify language rights claims, and finally the insistence of speaking a language of limited use delimited the social mobility of minority speakers (2005: 320). There are, however, May argues, many key theoretical misconceptions in these arguments and he identifies three main problems in these critiques: the problem of history, the problem of essentialism, and the problem of (im)mobility (2005: 320; 2003a: 125) and goes in great length in explaining his justification for language rights and identify what he describes as theoretical misconceptions in language rights' critiques.

These arguments and other accounts discussed in the relevant chapter will allow the study to better understand and identify the state's resistance to the Kurds' language rights in its policies and discourse.

1.4 Overview of the Chapters

The study begins in Chapter 2 by discussing the historical and thematic account of the Kurdish question in lights of the certain key events and developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and competing dynamics and discourses that led to the formation of the contemporary Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question. A particular attention is paid to understand how and to what extent Kurdishness was related to the project of modernisation/westernisation of the Ottoman Empire in order to understand the social space wherein Kurdishness was historically constituted.

In Chapter 3, the study engages with the political theories of language rights in an attempt to locate the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights claims and to explore the competing rationales behind language rights both from the state's and minority groups' perspectives. These engagement aims to reveal key points which are relevant to the Kurdish question in the political theories of language rights in order to locate the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights claims and explore the sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

Chapter 4 highlights the emergence of the AKP as a new actor in Turkish politics in 2002 by discussing its political journey between 2003 and 2015. The reason is that the state discourse of the period between 2003 and 2015 on the Kurds' language rights is synonymous with the AKP ruling, as it has been the only government in power since 2003. Therefore, Chapter 4 looks at the AKP's rise to power in Turkish politics while touching on how certain events and developments have affected its Kurdish policy stance. The chapter begins

with a brief history of Turkey's quest for the EU membership and discusses the rise and transformation of political Islam in Turkey as part of the reasons and dynamics behind the emergence of the AKP as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics. These are also important in understanding the AKP's adoption of discourses of human rights and democracy with a strong emphasis on Turkey's EU membership in its attempts to secure its survival as a new political party with Islamic references. It then discusses how the AKP has consolidated its power to the extent of having its own 'social engineering' project, the 'new Turkey'. Finally, the main factors beyond the impetus of the EU and despite the question over the party's recent drift towards authoritarianism that have forced or motivated the AKP to adopt its Kurdish policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means are discussed.

Chapter 5 deals with the Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question in general and Kurds' language rights in particular in lights of the relevant key points of the political theories of language rights, which is discussed in Chapter 3, in order to understand the extent of the shift in the Turkish state discourse towards Kurds' language rights and the sources of resistance to its recognition in the period between 2003 and 2015. The AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question and its attempts to define the Kurdish question in its own term is the first theme of the chapter. This is followed by the party's conceptions of national identity and citizenship in order to understand whether and to what extent these conceptions are different from the traditional state discourse. Third theme discusses the perception of the Kurdish political movement and the Solution process in the AKP's Kurdish policy. Final theme explores how the party's 'new' Turkey discourse relates to the Kurdish question and the Kurds' language rights.

1.5 Methodology

I began studying law at Istanbul University in 2003, when the AKP emerged as a powerful political actor in Turkey's politics with a strong pledge for a more advanced democracy for all. As a Turk, I met the first Kurdish person in my life during this time and later had many close Kurdish friends. The Kurdish question, therefore, has not been a question that I have personally experienced in terms of its effects on daily lives of Kurdish people. But the engagement and dialogue that I have had with close Kurdish friends provided me with a unique perspective on the nature of the Kurdish question and placed a particular moral pressure on my shoulder in terms of fairness, justice and equality. The reason is that as a Turkish-speaking Turk, I belong to a majority group that inevitably enjoys the benefit of having an unquestioned legitimacy in identity perception and language choices in various domain.

One's personal journey to question the policies and practices that favours his or her personal or cultural traits is difficult as it profoundly changes the perception of how one defines himself or herself or the group he or she feels attachment for. This has been an important source of motivation for the interest that I have shown to the Kurds' language rights. The period between 2003 and 2015 reflects, in many ways, both my own personal experience and observation of and the AKP's understanding of the Kurdish question. It is not, therefore, coincidence that the study aims to unfold the policy shift in the Turkish state's discourse towards the Kurds' language rights and then understand the sources of resistance to its recognition in this period.

It is clear that I am committed to the recognition of the Kurds' language rights in Turkey and to the accommodation of linguistic plurality within modern nation-states, which might raise questions about my position on the ground of neutrality. In response to similar critiques, Stephen May states at the outset of his PhD thesis that some critics might find one's

commitment to such argument as "a 'moralistic' one rather than a form of 'disinterested' academic enquiry" (1997: 2). Yet, he stresses that he does not accept this critique nor the distinction on which it is based. He continues:

"All positions that are taken on ethnicity and nationalism -- academic or otherwise -- involve a moral dimension, reflecting the particular values and ideologies of their exponents. Ideology is not the sole preserve of nationalists or minority 'ethnic spokespersons', although it is often painted as such. Seen in this light, the equation of academic disinterestedness with scepticism towards, and/or criticism of ethnicity and nationalism may be seen for what it is -- an ideological move in the politics of ethnicity, nothing more. Indeed, [...] such a move often acts to reinforce the hegemony of dominant ethnic groups within nation-states" (1997: 2-3).

That said, I recognise the potential nationalist sentiments in the argument for a greater recognition of language rights. There exists the possibility of nationalistic tendencies in a regime of language rights or any type of governmental or administrative solution for the Kurdish question. Most rights and freedoms demanded by the Kurdish political movement and Kurdish people have the potential to create further nationalisation regardless of their legitimacy in the first place if there are no safeguards put in place. The main reason is the tendency in politics to create outcome-oriented policies, which eventually create their own ideology, methodology and morality.

For example, the right to education in one's mother tongue is a legitimate and fundamental human right. It is, therefore, quite legitimate to demand its recognition from the state. However, most of the time, the purpose of education in one's mother tongue is expressed along the lines of securing the flourishing of one's language or preserving one's cultural heritage. As much as they are, again, legitimate and genuine concerns, these types of motivations are outcome-oriented with a specific objective, that is, the flourishing of the lan-

guage and the preservation of culture, which, without safeguards in place, can create its own ideology and turn into an authoritarian pressure toward those who disagree on the application or methodology of these objectives.

Any approach to language rights, therefore, should take these dynamics into accounts in its engagement with the competing rationales for language rights. In the current study, this is particularly apparent in the criteria for the selection of material for analysis and their categorisation and in the engagement with political theories of language rights in the literature in light of the aims and objectives of the thesis.

1.5.1 Design and Data Collection

The planned period of this study is from 2003 to 2015. The year 2003, when the AKP emerged as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics, was selected as a starting point because of the party's discourses of human rights and democracy and different conceptions of national identity, citizenship and secularism, which had direct bearings on the Kemalist centralist nation-state origins of Turkey. The state discourse of this period is synonymous with the AKP ruling, as it has been the only government in power since 2003.

Most issues in the Kurdish question are related to language rights either by definition or implication in terms of self-government, national identity, citizenship and sovereignty, which widens the scope of an already complicated issue. Moreover, the Kurdish question has consistently occupied a central issue in Turkey's politics, which means that it is possible to find political statements, remarks and discussions on its various aspects almost every day. The accumulation of such data within the context of such a complex issue gets further complicated by the AKP's and Erdoğan's populist and pragmatic practices. It is often possible, for example, to observe what may appear 'contradiction' in Erdoğan's position on the

Kurdish question over the years or to find remarks, statements and policies that may appear at the outset as 'ground breaking', 'transformative' or 'radical'.

In order to overcome these challenges and achieve the aims and objectives of the study, the research mainly adopts a thematic design in order to highlight the possible continuity and consistency in the state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights amid the remarks, statements or policies that may appear 'ground breaking', 'transformative' or 'radical' at the outside. This allows the evaluation of the period in its entirety without treating each particular remark as an end itself with a clear purpose.

As will be argued extensively, the main reason behind why the state has not managed to resolve the Kurdish question is not due to an act of 'failure' on the state side in terms of producing policies that can address the Kurdish question rightly and timely; rather, it is primarily conceptual in the sense that the very articulation and definition of the Kurdish question have determined the corresponding policies. As part of its aims and objectives, the study focuses on the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question during this period in light of the political theories of language rights under four particular themes in order to demonstrate both the possible direction of change in the state discourse and the extent of recognition that the party's policy-making steps towards the Kurds' language rights suggest.

These themes are the result of the critical evaluation of the key points in the political theories of language rights, which are relevant to the Kurdish question, and what the AKP's policies and practices as well as Erdoğan's remarks and statements reveal within the broad scheme of understanding the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question.

The first theme focuses on the nomenclature of the Kurdish question by looking at Erdoğan's various attempts over the years to make a distinction between 'Kurdish problem'

or 'Kurds' Problems' in describing the Kurdish question. The second theme deals with the conceptions of national identity and citizenship to see how these concepts have evolved, if any during this period within the context of the Kurdish question. Third theme attempts to understand the Solution Process and the state's political engagement with the Kurdish political movement and its implications for the Kurds' language rights and the state's resistance to their recognition. Final theme engages with the emergence of the 'new Turkey' discourse during the AKP's third term in office and attempts to demonstrate how the Kurdish question is perceived in this discourse. These themes demonstrate the emergence, evolvement and decline of the AKP's discourse the Kurdish question during the period 2003 and 2015, which coincidently correspond to the AKP's rise as a new political party in Turkey, its consolidation of state power and finally its drift towards authoritarianism.

A chronological design will also be adopted in discussing the AKP's rise as a powerful political actor in Turkey politics, including its recent drift towards authoritarianism, which spans between 2011 and 2015.

The study mainly focuses on political statements, interviews, relevant laws and regulations and official party documents. Therefore, it looks at recent documents, issued in the last twelve years, laws enacted by the National Assembly, and speech acts/discourses produced by the state elite. It places a particular emphasis on speeches, statements and remarks of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is the current President of Turkey and as the leader of the AKP, served as the Prime Minister of Turkey from 2003 to 2014. In the AKP's position statement on, understanding of and policy stance on the Kurdish question, Erdoğan has played a central and crucial role, as it is hardly possible to find any policy-making step that suggests otherwise.

The research is concerned with a very recent and unfinished period and the political engagement with the Kurdish political movement and the state is still an on-going process.

The lack of transparency in the Solution Process makes it difficult to conclusively assess the contents of the negotiation between the parties. The study recognises these difficulties and in order to extract relevant data, it uses already done and published interviews, speeches and statements of the party's leader cadres in ceremonies and rallies over the years, relevant laws and regulations and their preambles.

Briefly, as primary sources: documental analysis, official party documents, press conferences, news reports, debates in the Parliament, speeches, already conducted interviews, newspapers and video recordings, and as secondary sources, academic books and articles, and policy papers will be analysed.

1.6 Limits of the Study

One of the main limits of the research is its attempt to analyse a very recent and relatively short period. The process of political engagement between the state and the Kurdish political movement is still on-going behind 'closed doors'. The negotiation process between the two and the question of the PKK's disarmament is beyond the realm of this study. The research deals with certain aspects of these issues so long as they are relevant to the aims and objectives of the study.

It limits itself to the period between 2003 and 2015. Thus, the developments taking place outside this period will not be researched. As it was previously mentioned, the period of analysis starts in 2003, the year that the AKP emerged as a new political actor in Turkish politics.

The state's attempts to contain the Kurdish question occur in two particular ways (Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011): First, the state challenges the Kurdish political movement, including its civilian — the Pro-Kurdish parties in particular — and non-civilian wings both politically and ideologically by attempting to restructure its relationship to the Kurds'

(Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011: 103-4). In this sense, the government and state institutions adopt a rights-oriented discourse to contain and roll back the Kurdish political movement's political and societal influence, and manage the implications of the Kurds' rights claims. Second, the state uses judicial investigations into those accused of being PKK members to crack down on its [PKK] urban wings and adopts security-oriented measures to tackle the growing influence of the Kurdish political movement (Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011: 107). On the issue of the containment of the Kurdish question in general or the Kurds' language rights in particular, the study limits itself to the state's adoption of a rights-oriented discourse; therefore, the state's other security-oriented measures to contain the Kurdish question is beyond the limits of the study.

Chapter 2: Turkey's Kurdish Question and Formation of the Turkish State Discourse

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the historical and thematic account of the Kurdish question in light of the certain key events and developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and competing dynamics and discourses that led to the formation of the contemporary Turkish state discourse. A particular attention is paid to understand how and to what extent Kurdishness was related to the project of modernisation/westernisation of the Ottoman Empire in order to understand the social space wherein Kurdishness was historically constituted.

There are many aspects to the Kurdish question and as a multifaceted issue it has direct bearings on some of the questions that Turkish and Ottoman modernisation raised. Its ethno-political aspect is perhaps the constitutive element of the Kurdish question for it shows continuity since the inception of the question; yet, it is also the most neglected one in the state's perception and identification of the Kurdish question.

The 'negligence' is intentional and in fact it is not limited to the Kurdish question or its ethno-political dimension; on the contrary, it is a carefully executed policy aimed to assimilate any religious or ethnic identity and to ignore and deny any demands that the state considers are in conflict with or as threatening its ideals for a modern, central, secular nation state. The extent and intensity of this assimilative policy depends on the challenge that the state considers a particular identity pose to its modernisation efforts. The Kurdish question has perhaps posed the greatest challenge, which, therefore, with its practical and theoretical dimensions, flies in the face of almost a hundred years of Turkish state policy

since the founding of the Turkish Republic. Moreover, the fact that the formation of the contemporary Turkish state discourse takes its roots from the early modernisation policies of the Ottoman Empire, the issue gets even more complicated.

It is a common practice of the Turkish state discourse to consider the Kurdish question, despite all its complexity, along the lines of reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness with no recognition of or attribution to its ethno-political character. Before discussing the actual policy implications and examples of the Turkish state discourse, particularly the ones related to Kurdish language, borrowing from Yeğen's (1996; 1999) arguments on the formation of the Turkish state discourse and exclusion of Kurdish identity in the Turkish state discourse, it is important to understand the political context in which the contemporary Turkish state discourse occurred historically. This helps locate the root causes of the Kurdish question while at the same time dealing with the questions of whether, in its identification of the Kurdish question with reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, the Turkish state misrepresented the Kurdish question as something which has no ethno-political aspect and consequently its 'legitimate' struggle with reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness concealed the exclusion of Kurdish identity. In other words, "the state was actually engaged in repressing political reactionaries, smuggling or tribal resistance - neither of which seemed to be connected with the exclusion" of Kurdish identity (Yeğen 1996: 216-7).

In addressing these questions, Yeğen argues that what is referred to as political reactionaries, smuggling or tribal resistance are in fact part of the social space in which Kurdishness was constituted, adding that any pressure on these areas through the policies of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and secularisation was an attempt to exclude Kurdish identity by implication if not by intent. Therefore, the Turkish state discourse is not the

concealment of the exclusion of Kurdish identity; rather, it is the enunciation and the very practice and language of this exclusion, in which the Kurdish question was reconstituted.

In this sense, Yeğen does not see the state discourse an ideological construction that misrepresented the Kurdish question by 'failing' to identify its ethnic or national character; rather, he argues that the state discourse is an occurrence that emerged through discursive formation whereby "every particular discourse appears in a context where numerous discourses are in a relationship of continuous interaction" where "these discursive practices struggle, supplement, deny and/or provoke each other" (1999: 555-7). As a result, a discursive practice is both being constituted and threatened by this complex interaction. In this sense, an analysis of the formation of the state discourse that takes the discursive formation into account then reveals the complex and continuous interaction between various discourses that eventually formed the contemporary Turkish state discourse (1999: 555-7).

The particular importance of this discussion for the purpose of the study is that in addition to understanding the various discourses behind the formation of the Turkish state discourse and root causes of the Kurdish question in its historical development, it gives us a glimpse into the discussion on Kurdishness and its constitutive elements during the inception of the Kurdish question, which is a much needed discussion for locating the ethnopolitical character of the Kurdish question, hence Kurdishness of the Kurdish question, as well as understanding how Kurdish language, if any, played a constitutive role in Kurdishness in the following chapter.

As noted above, there is a common tendency in various political and societal discourses on the Kurdish question that attempts to simplify or downgrade it to something that is seemingly more manageable or fits one's ideological narrative. This is all understandable and expected; however, when one confronts an issue that is as complex and historically rooted as the Kurdish question, which has serious implications for cohesion in society as well as

the political future of the country, the question of identification and definition of the Kurdish question becomes of paramount importance. The effectiveness and relevancy of a proposed solution to and argument for a particular aspect of the Kurdish question depend on the correct identification of the Kurdish question. This is true both for the overall success of the Solution process as well as the purpose of this study.

2.2 Turkey's Kurdish Question

There is a common tendency in various political and societal discourses on the Kurdish question to attempt to simplify or downgrade the Kurdish question to something that is seemingly more manageable or fits one's ideological narrative. This is all understandable and expected; however, when one confronts an issue that is as complex and historically rooted as the Kurdish question, which has serious implications for cohesion in society as well as the political future of the country, the question of identification and definition of the Kurdish question becomes paramount importance. The effectiveness and relevancy of a proposed solution to and argument for a particular aspect of the Kurdish question depend on the correct identification of the Kurdish question. This is true both for the overall success of the Solution process as well as the purpose of this study. In this sense, within the limits of the study, an overview of how the Kurdish question is given below.

As a nation state, Turkey was founded on the remnants of the multi-religious and multi-national Ottoman Empire, in which there was not a particular ethnic or a language group on which the Empire was founded. The Kurds with their deeply rooted and regionally concentrated population were the largest non-Turkish ethnic group and their 'integration' to the newly founded Republic was one of the most crucial questions that the Republic had to answer, which is now mostly referred to as 'the Kurdish question', 'the Kurdish problem' or 'the Kurdish issue'. Often quoted as a by-product of the nation building process through

which Turkey imagined itself as a nation without providing meaningful recognition for the Kurds, it has occupied an important place in Turkish politics since the establishment of the Republic, especially in the last thirty years during which an armed conflict has taken place between the PKK and the Republic of Turkey.

The articulation of the Kurdish question with the founding of the Turkish state does not imply that the Kurdish question is an archaic problem from Turkey's past. Surely, the Kurdish question is rooted in the early modernisation policies of the Ottoman Empire and later of the Turkish Republic. The Ottoman Empire and Turkish state's modernisation policies created various discontent among the Kurds and marked the beginning of the exclusion of Kurdishness by implication. The project of modernisation envisaged or perhaps 'necessitated' centralisation, secularisation and creation of a new national identity, which in returned put pressure on a social space that was historically de-centralised and a-national thanks to the millet system and the institution of the Caliphate. Modernisation efforts attempted to transform this space into a central and national one. The de-centralised and a-national social space was where Kurdishness was historically and traditionally constituted and any pressure on this space challenged the Kurds' life style and their political, economic and administrative autonomy in the Ottoman Empire.

In return, the discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and secularisation have been the constitutive components of the discursive formation in which the Turkish state discourse appeared. In other words, the complex and continuous interaction between the discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and secularisation eventually formed the contemporary Turkish state discourse. In this sense, Yeğen duly notes that various stages of the Kurdish question are also the various stages of Turkish modernisation (2009: 31). Emphasis may have shifted over time according to circumstances but in essence the state saw the Kurdish question as a rejection of its projection of a modern, cen-

tralised, secular nation state and reconstituted the Kurdish question as a question of reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness.

This does not, on the other hand, imply that the Kurdish question has no contingent character. On the contrary, it was shaped and is being shaped by both domestic and global developments in addition to the progress and process of Turkey's modernisation. Yeğen quotes the global political context toward the end of 1980s, particularly the 1989, as the beginning of another important period for the Kurdish question in contrast to the common perception in public that consider the emergence of the PKK as a fundamental milestone of the historical account of the Kurdish question (2009: 29-47).

This period witnessed the collapse of the state socialism and end of the Cold War, which resulted in the emergence of new national and regional dynamics, and the notions of democracy and human rights with their transformative pressure on national politics becoming the discourse of much political discontent around the world. In regard to the Kurdish question, the Kurds' discontent had become more apparent on national scale with strong political and social mobilisation. Similarly, the discourse of democracy and human rights created a rights-based approach to the Kurdish question, which set the achievements of certain political and cultural rights as the objective of these mobilisations (2009: 29-47). In its current form, the seemingly autonomist discourse of the Kurdish political movement is an important reflection of this approach with strong emphasis on language rights and demands for greater political representation in Turkey through de-centralisation of the state power while at the same time *de facto* construction of an autonomy as 'a civil society initiative' in Kurdish populated principalities.

An eventual solution to the Kurdish question undoubtedly raises serious questions regarding the very well established identity and nationhood perceptions of the state and poses great challenges to the corresponding policies and practices that historically created injus-

tices and institutionalised the practice of exclusion of Kurdish identity. The corresponding policies have manifested themselves in the identity construction of the state which systematically ignore and deny the Kurds' demands for fundamental human rights and greater political representation. Perhaps more importantly, in addition to the lack of representation or misrepresentation of the Kurds in the state, the fact that Kurdishness and Kurdish identity did not have a place in this assumed nationhood or unity and were being securitised by the state and, to some extent, by the public have made any demands or practices which are even remotely Kurdish to be seen as a fundamental threat to the existence or integrity of the state and its founding ideologies. Therefore, the issue at stake is not only a theoretical identification of the lack of recognition of the Kurds but an institutional and very well established discriminatory practices and racism, which uses coercive assimilation policies to turkify any Kurdish element in society and creates severe injustices by hindering the enjoyment of the fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Although radical homogenisation and coercive assimilation policies were carried out whose main components were the promotion of Turkishness and Turkish language, the Kurdish question is pretty much the same question in the sense of how and how much Kurdish identity and Kurdishness will be 'integrated' into Turkey's identity and nationhood perception, which is in a way what it also had to answer in its founding years. From the state's perspective, one can argue, the Kurdish question and its implications are still seen a 'threat' to the future of the Republic with the difference being that the state now attempts to contain and manage the nationalistic sentiment with a discourse, which seemingly is more rights and freedoms oriented. The Kurdish question, on the other hand, undoubtedly has the potential to question and challenge its very foundation not least because its transformative pressure on the state's very well established perception of identity and nationhood but also its implications for other ethnic minorities and their political and legal status in Turkey. Many human rights-related problems in Turkey are inextricably linked to the Kurdish

question either as a result of sharing the same or similar root causes - factual or conceptual - or the inevitable effects of eventual peace to the Kurdish question on these problems.

The national identity perception in Turkey's case has not recognised Kurdishness or Kurdish identity in its effort to construct a new identity for itself and embraced the Kurds in any meaningful way to the extent that the end result has been the misrecognition and/or non-recognition of the Kurds. Moreover, the issue not only a discussion about the recognition of fundamental human rights of the Kurds but also on an explicit power struggle between the Turkish state and the Kurdish political movement.

In addition, given that the Kurdish question has turned into an armed conflict since the 1980s, a comprehensive solution to the Kurdish question, therefore, does not only have to deal with the institutional shortcomings of the state including legal, political and social reforms that can address the problems of the Kurds but also find ways for the better inclusion of the Kurdish political movement to the political system and the disarmament of the PKK. The issue is historically and inevitably political and requires political compromise as it cannot be contained within the limits of what an objective identification of the rights and freedoms of the Kurds should be. In other words, as a political actor, the Kurdish political movement has a desire for power and greater political representation for its own future. Thus, it is not quite possible to downgrade the Kurdish question solely to an institutional failure in preventing injustices or racist tendencies towards the Kurds.

To address all the aspects of the Kurdish question and remedy the past injustices, Turkey needs transformative institutional and conceptual changes through which ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity are constitutionally recognised without any discrimination, while at the same time issues such as decentralisation and citizenship are answered. Its nationhood perception requires fundamental re-conceptualisation that will not assume greater legiti-

macy in legitimising its Turkishness-oriented identity construction and corresponding policies and will not have a self-perception of ownership of the country.

These institutional and conceptual capacities to address the different aspects of the Kurdish question have a direct impact on many other rights and identity-related issues in Turkey. A possible solution to the Kurdish question, therefore, is not only valuable and desired for its own sake but also for both regional and domestic stability and democratic progress on the rights and freedoms of all in the country. Conversely, the lack of or failure to develop an institutional and conceptual capacity to address and recognise the categorically ignored and denied rights and freedoms of the Kurds will only worsen cohesion in the country.

2.3 Formation of the Turkish State Discourse

It is quite possible that one might find the expression of 'Kurdishness' of the Kurdish question self-contradictory and would be forgiven to assume that the Kurdish question, as its naming implies, must surely be something related to the issue of Kurdishness. The truth is that this particular aspect is in fact the crux of the problem. The identification of the Kurdish question with Kurdishness or as an ethno-political issue is a relatively new phenomenon as far as the Turkish state discourse is concerned though there are still strong reservation and resistance to recognise this particular and crucial aspect. Given that the Kurdish question is a centuries-old issue, it is imperative that one questions the reasons behind this 'failure' of identification and attempts to understand why the state is still reluctant to recognise this particular aspect.

The fact that the state did not identify the Kurdish question with Kurdishness or recognise its ethno-political nature does not necessarily imply that it did not have a particular way of understanding or interpreting the Kurdish question. On the contrary, for so long, it was a persistence discursive practice for the state to categorically deny the existence of any Kurd-

ish element in Turkey. It associated any demand, regardless of its medium, for a separate Kurdish identity or anything, which are even remotely Kurdish, with posing a fundamental threat to the foundation of the state and took measures accordingly. However, as Yeğen rightly notes, the denial of the existence of the Kurds or the 'failure' of identification of the ethno-political nature of the Kurdish question did not prevent the state from thinking, speaking and speculating on the Kurdish question, adding that the association of the Kurdish question with reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness with no recognition of its ethno-political nature was the common practice of the Turkish state discourse (1996: 216).

This association was the prime notion in the state's vocabulary to define and take measures against what it considered Kurdish or Kurdishness. In other words, this association does not only demonstrate the wording that the state used to define the Kurdish question or rather its different forms and shapes but also implies the sources of its struggle with the Kurds. This raises an important question, on which Yeğen (1996: 1999) writes critically, as to whether the Turkish state discourse misrepresented the Kurdish question by identifying the Kurdish question with reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness but not with Kurdishness, and in doing so, whether the Turkish state concealed the practice of exclusion of Kurdish identity.

Yeğen does not assign the capability of representing or misrepresenting the Kurdish question to the Turkish state by refusing to consider the Turkish state as a rational subject or an author; rather, he argues, a particular 'discursive formation', that is, the relationship of complex and continuous interaction of numerous discourses whose constitutive components were the discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation, nationalism and secularism with a constant struggle with the political order of the 'past', consolidation of a centralised state power and building of a national market economy turned the Kurdish

question into a question of reactionary politics, of tribal resistance, or of regional backwardness for the Turkish state (1996: 227). In other words, the discursive formation in which the Turkish state discourse appeared led to the "reading of the Kurdish question in terms of the tensions between the past and the present; tradition and modernity; and the periphery and the centre; Islam and reason" (1996: 227) and was a reconstitution of the Kurdish question as a struggle with reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness.

The standard view that the Turkish state discourse misrepresented the Kurdish question takes "instances of the Turkish state discourse as the context-free speech of a biased author (i.e. the Turkish state)", Yeğen argues, by considering the Turkish state as a rational subject who "has the freedom to define its 'practice' according to its own wishes" (1999: 556). Borrowing from M. Foucault's concept of 'discursive formation' from the *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002)*,* Yeğen considers the Turkish state discourse not a free speech of a rational subject, that is, the Turkish state, but rather an *occurrence* that emerged through discursive formation whereby "every particular discourse appears in a context where numerous discourses are in a relationship of continuous interaction" where "these discursive practices struggle, supplement, deny and/or provoke each other" as a result of which a discursive practice is both being constituted and threatened by this complex interaction (1999: 557). In this sense, an analysis of the formation of the Turkish state discourse that takes the discursive formation into account then reveals the complex and continuous interaction between various discourses that eventually formed contemporary the Turkish state discourse.

The underlying premise behind the discourse analysis in this manner is to determine the conditions in which a particular statement prevailed over another. In other words, it deals with the question of why a particular statement out of an 'infinity of statements' appeared

in a particular context rather than another (Yeğen 1999: 557). Yeğen is concerned with "how, and the expense of which others, some particular statements appeared in republican Turkish state discourse" on the Kurdish question, adding that "it is *discursive formation* and its *rules of formation* that determine the conditions" that pave the way for the appearance of a particular statement (1999: 557). Thus, he examines the discursive formation wherein the Turkish state discourse appeared through which he argues that the discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation, nationalism and secularism formed the discursive formation in which the Turkish state discourse appeared and in its struggle with the realisation of the project of creating a western/modern and a secular nation state, many policies, practices and statements of the state put pressure on the social space in which the Kurdishness was constituted, which is wider than many assumed and cannot be confined to ethnicity or language in their relation to identity in its modern sense.

The argument that the Turkish state discourse is the enunciation of Kurdish identity argues for an intrinsic connection between the formation of the Turkish state discourse and the social space in which Kurdish identity is constituted (Yeğen 1996: 217). Therefore, the Turkish state discourse is in fact the language and practice of the exclusion of the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question (Yeğen 1999: 568).

The alienation of the Kurds and Kurdish identity in Turkey is often traced back to the formative years of the Turkish Republic particularly after 1922, due to the coercive nation building policies that envisaged creating a new national identity along linguistic, ethnic and religious lines in order to realise the projection of a modern, secular nation state. Although one understands the obvious correlation between the argued alienation of the Kurds and the transformative, revolutionary and obvious top-down policies of the Republican Turkey and; therefore, the reason behind this argument, it is important to note that the

alienation of the Kurdish identity started much earlier and dates back to the early westernisation efforts in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century.

These efforts in Ottoman Empire are seen as the early root causes of the Kurdish question. As it was briefly noted at the outset, Kurdishness and Kurdish identity were constituted in a much wider social space than is often acknowledged and in this sense, corresponding developments of westernisation and following discourses put pressure on the social space in which the Kurdishness was constituted. The alienation or exclusion of Kurdish identity, therefore, started before the official formative years of the Republic and its assimilationist policies and it is possible to argue that the newly founded Republic did not only inherit a particular political context in terms of administration and identity perception but also a particular discourse.

This, on the other hand, does imply that early westernisation efforts and consequent developments and discourses did specifically intend to exclude Kurdish identity. As Yeğen notes, "the reverse was more less the case", adding that the exclusion of Kurdish identity was an inevitable outcome of the projection of building a modern, central and secular-nation sate, for the realisation of which a pressure put on the social space wherein Kurdish identity was constituted. In other words, Kurdish identity was excluded by implication (1996: 226).

2.3.1 The Articulation with the Centre

Modernisation with its bearings on centralisation, secularism and nationalism had profound effects on the Ottoman Empire and its administrative and societal structure in the nineteenth century.

There was a division on religious grounds where Muslims were considered above non-Muslims (*dhimmis* - Protected Communities) and yet, the fact remains that the components

of the Empire regardless of their religion, cultural or ethnic traits were allowed to have a certain degree of autonomy without being subjected to exclusive practices of a dominant ethnic group with exception being the overlap of an ethnic identity with a religious one (Yeğen 1999: 557). In other words, for example, a Muslim Kurd would not be repressed because s/he was 'ethnically' Kurdish for the Muslimness preceded one's being Kurdish.

A person's identification with a religious group, Kirişçi and Winrow (1997) state, was the basis of nationality in Ottoman society, which was similar to Western Europe in the sixteenth century where religion was considered constitutive in determining one's individual identity. They add that the religious affiliations were stronger than ethnic and national identity to the extent that when the Ottoman Empire was referred to as 'Turkey' and its peoples as 'Turks' by Europeans, self-identification with Muslimness and their loyalty to the 'community of Islam' and to the Ottoman Sultan — The Caliph — were prevalent among the Muslim components of the Empire (1997: 22). Known as the *millet* (nation) system, the conceptualisation of the 'nations' of the Empire through a non-ethnic approach aimed to guarantee the co-existence of different communities without being subjected to ethnic exclusion. In other words, as Lewis notes, "in the Empire there was a Muslim millet, but no Turkish or Arab or Kurdish millets; there were Greek and Armenian and Jewish millets, but as religious communities, not as ethnic nations" (1969: 335).

This division and understanding of the components of the Empire based on the religious grounds were accompanied by a particular logic of administration that recognised a certain degree of autonomy for different communities ('periphery') to build their own 'sub-systems' within the larger and general system of the Empire ('centre'). This was, according to Yeğen, "the constitutive logic of the Ottoman Empire" to develop a dialectic relation between the sub-systems and the general system based on "a relationship of articulation more than a relationship of exclusion", that is, the "articulation involved neither the maintenance

of the autonomous existence of the ethnic, religious and cultural 'differences' of the periphery, nor the assimilation of the periphery into the centre by the tyranny of the centre over the 'differences' of the periphery" (1996: 218; 1999: 557). The Kurds with their deeply rooted and regionally concentrated population enjoyed a remarkable degree of autonomy thanks to the strategic position they occupied against the Iranian Empires and this particular logic of administration of the Empire.

The sixteenth century witnessed the Kurdish tribes organised under emirates (principalities), which was a political organisation that provided a confederative unity for Kurdish tribes, to act on behalf of the Ottoman Empire against the Iranian Empires, which ended their *de facto* independence; yet, due to the administrative and political logic of the Ottoman mentioned above as well as the strategic position that the Kurds played, Kurdish provinces had autonomous status governed by the leading Kurdish families (*emirs*) (Yeğen 1996: 218). The Kurdish emirates built their own sub-system within the general system of the Ottoman Empire, which resulted in de-centralism in politics, economy and administration (1996: 218), which in return created a "considerable difference between the governmental structures of Kurdish provinces and those of non-Kurdish ones" (Bruinessen 1992: 127 cited in Yeğen 1996: 218). The recognition of the autonomous status of the emirates continued until the mid-1800s.

By the nineteenth century, amid the rise of nationalism in Europe and its domino effect on particularly the Christians communities of the Empire, some of which would gained their independence, the Ottoman Empire began to question its political and administrative logic that had no trouble with granting a certain degree of autonomous status to the periphery. In addition to that, the gradual decline and, to a certain degree, decay of the Empire for the last few centuries combined with the changing power relations between the Empire and the West triggered the realisation that the classical Ottoman state system was ineffective in

dealing with the emerging phenomenon as the Empire did not have the means and logic to address newly occurring problems.

At this point, perhaps it should be again reiterated that the absence of an ethnic hierarchy in the Empire and the recognition of autonomous status to Kurdish provinces, allowing them to create sub-systems within the general system implies the existence of an a-national and de-central space within which Kurdishness appeared. In other words, although the initial transformative efforts for the westernisation/modernisation of the Empire were mostly administrative, they put great pressure on the social space in which Kurdishness appeared not least because, by definition, they intended to transform the a-national and de-central space, according to the logic of modernisation, into a national and central one (Yeğen 1996: 226). Because of that, the discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and secularisation have an ethno-political aspect attached to them. Put differently, there is an intrinsic connection between the project of westernisation/modernisation and Kurdishness as a result of the implications of the former for the latter (Yeğen 1996: 226). The early westernisation/modernisation efforts in the Ottoman Empire occurred in this context and aimed to bring reformation and reorganisation to the Empire to address its administrative shortcomings and demands of various ethnic groups amidst the rise of nationalism in Europe.

2.3.2 Tânzimat Era and Centralisation Policies

The *Tânzimat*, literally meaning reorganisation, was a period that began in 1839 with the aim of modernising the Ottoman Empire and securing its territorial integrity against separatist tendencies through various reforms for the reorganisation of the Empire in terms of administration and nationality perception. It was announced by Sultan Abdülmecid with a hatt-i sharif (hatt-ı şerîf) - imperial edict - called the Edict of Gülhane or *Tânzimat Fermânı*,

followed by several statutes enacting its policies, the era lasted until the First Constitutional Era in 1876. Prior to the Tânzimat Era, there had been other westernisation/modernisation efforts in the Empire; however, they were mostly symbolic in nature and did not foresee any structural or organisational changes.

The prominent examples of the reforms include the attempts of promising full legal equality for citizens of all religions with the Hatt-ı Hümayun - also known as hatt-i sharif (hatt-ı şerîf), the diplomatic term for a document or handwritten note of an official nature composed by an Ottoman sultan - in 1856 called *Islahat* (improvement), creating a common Ottoman citizenship irrespective of religious or ethnic divisions by a Nationality Law (1869), guaranteeing to ensure the Ottoman components security for their lives, honour, and property, reorganisation of the finance system (1840), reorganisation of the Civil and Criminal Code (1840), reorganisation of the army and imposing compulsory conscription (1843–44), adopting of an Ottoman national anthem and Ottoman national flag (1844), issuing of national identity cards (1844), abolition of slavery and slave trade (1847) and abolishing *mütesellims* (tax collectors) and creating a bureaucratic system for taxation (1839).

Weiker argues that the reformers - the bureaucracy - were "so strongly committed to Ottoman values, that they could not become committed to the radical social and political changes required for modernisation" (1968); yet, the Tânzimat reforms in general had strong effects on administration, public life and nationality perception in the Ottoman Empire.

The Edict of Gülhane of 1839, the first major reform of the Tânzimat, envisaged the abolition of tax collectors and removing any privileges that had been enjoyed by autonomous communities thanks to the millet system. It was enforced that all communities irrespective of their religious convictions be subjected to the same law, aiming to establish legal and

social equality for all Ottoman citizens. These reforms ended the millet system and attempted to reinforce a different perception of communities by means of centralisation and other forms of construction of public life. Clearly, the project of centralisation is quite evident in these reforms, which aimed to give more control to the Empire over its components through the creation of a more centralised government, to increase its revenue by collecting taxes directly and furthermore, to develop countermeasures against the increasing effects of nationalism on the Empire by conceptualising a different category of citizenship for the components of the Empire and their relations to the centre.

The first notable outcome of westernisation/modernisation efforts in the Tânzimat Era was the politics of centralisation, the immediate impact of which was the abolition of the emirates and removal of *mütesellims* (tax collectors) in order to accomplish a centralised administration that no longer recognised the economic, political and cultural autonomy of the periphery, which in return put an end to the *de facto* 'conventional consensus' between the Kurdish emirates and the Ottoman Palace (Yeğen 1996: 218-9).

The centralisation efforts, however, did not see much acceptance from the components of the Empire as the attempts of providing social and legal equality for all components of the Empire regardless of their religious convictions by removing the autonomous status of the periphery also meant the loss of certain privileges of the communities. The most obvious discontent was among the Kurdish emirs, who challenged the transfer of power to the centre. The subsequent years and decades witnessed a number of Kurdish revolts in varying degree, the most notable and effective one being the Bedirhan revolt of 1847, which had to be crushed with a heavily armed Ottoman army and is often noted as being "exclusively a response to the Ottoman recentralisation policies" (Özoğlu 2004: 60).

The emphasis here on the 'exclusivity' of the motivation behind the revolt is important as there are similar and varying arguments about the subsequent revolts and rebellions in-

cluding those during the Republican Turkey, and about their motivations and particularly the role of 'Kurdishness' or 'Kurdish cause', that is, whether these discontent had a nationalistic sentiment or the reason behind them were personal and an example of an individual resistance of the Kurdish notables to their loss of status and privileges.

These questions get even more complicated giving the unexpected outcome of the removal of the emirates, which was, as noted above, acted as a confederative unity for the Kurdish tribes that provided 'a critical communal and organisational bond' among the Kurdish tribes, and their removal resulted in "the individualisation of Kurdish tribes and tribal confrontations", which in return created a new political actor in Kurdish politics: the sheikhs, who had the power and legitimacy above and beyond the palace-appointed governors, who were ineffective in restoring 'order' among Kurdish tribes (Yeğen 1996: 219). Most Kurdish rebellions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had Kurdish sheikhs or their distant family members behind them, the first one being the revolt of Sheikh Ubeydullah in the 1870s, which is often cited as the first nationalist uprising.

The Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt of 1880-1881 is usually seen as the first stage of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism (Olson 2013: 1-7). However, McDowall (2000: 53) notes that there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the revolt was "anything other than the kind of tribal disturbance", emphasising that behind his use of "the vocabulary of contemporary European nationalism", Sheikh Ubeydullah was still loyal to the Ottoman Sultan (the Caliphate), who was in fact trying to establish an autonomous principality, similar to the one that the Tânzimat era abolished rather than to establish 'Kurdistan' as a separate state for the Kurds. Kirişçi and Winrow notes that his opposition was mainly to the imposition of more centralisation policies by the Ottoman administration (1997: 42).

The presentation of Sheikh Ubeydullah's expressing loyalty to the Caliph-Sultan and accordingly aiming to revive an autonomous principality that the politics of centralisation

ended as an indication if not a proof for his 'a-national' motives is contested and discussed later; however, it is, at this point, important to note that religion, nationalism and identity were all intertwined, particularly after the resuscitation of the Caliphate by Abdülhamid II. Additionally, it should be remembered that there was the rise of religious figures as political actors in Kurdish politics after the abolition of the emirates, which consequently made the sheikhs' 'personal' or 'religious' interpretations of the Caliphate as an integral part of the discussion on religion and nationalism in Kurdish politics. The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 is an embodiment of this sentiment, which was a 'wake up call' for the young Republic, which is discussed in the following part.

As noted above, one of the objectives of the Tânzimat Era was to maintain the territorial integrity of the Empire amidst the various ethnic disturbances on its territory while empowering the central administration. To this end, prior to the First Constitutional Era, an attempt had been made to create a different nationality perception called Ottomanism that was not based on religion as it was in the millet system that the Edict of Gülhane dismantled; rather, was based on the idea of accepting all separates ethnicities in the Empire equal before the law by secularising organisations and policies such as the application of the policies of primary education, compulsory conscription and head tax both to non-Muslim and Muslim subjects. In other words, it promoted equality among the millets (nations) of the Empire.

The rejection of Ottomanism by both Muslim and non-Muslim components of the Empire proves in a way that the acceptance of a policy that effects the social space and public life of a community, particularly if the policy in question implies the loss of traditional privileges of that community, is much more difficult than one might imagine in the first place not least because the transformative polices of this kind are not merely administrative even

if they may appear so at the outset; on the contrary, they aim to transform the society either by definition or implication.

The 'egalitarian' approach of Ottomanism were rejected by Muslim communities as it was considered as the elimination of their centuries-old superiority over non-Muslims while non-Muslims considered it as the loss of their traditional privileges. It was clear that the object of maintaining the territorial integrity of the Empire with a different concept of nationality that assumed to include its both Muslim and non-Muslim components was proving difficult as not only the policies failed to achieve a considerable acceptance in this sense but also the traditional and long-lasting religious unity of all Muslims under the Ottoman Empire did not resist the separatist tendencies on Ottoman territories. In this context, the politicisation of Islam and resuscitation of the concept of the Caliphate became the main focus for the Empire.

2.3.3 The Resuscitation of the Caliphate and 'Broken Promise'

Aside from the discussion on whether it was in fact the genesis of Kurdish nationalism, the Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt manifested the dilemma that Abdülhamid II was facing, that is, the territorial integrity and financial well-being of the Empire required centralisation and; yet, the policies issued accordingly were facing powerful resistance from local notables, which started to threaten the unity of the Empire by causing disturbances and alienation of the Kurds (Akyol 2006: 13). In addition, the Empire had lost its many non-Muslim territories. The gradual effect of nationalism was, therefore, getting more apparent to Muslim components of the Empire to the extent that, in addition to the above-noted discontent among the Kurds, many disturbances and nationalist movements started to appear in Arab regions.

Moreover, the Empire did not have the financial and military strength to prevent both domestic disturbances as well as to develop armed countermeasures against Russia and the British Empire. In this climate, the religion of Islam with its elements and figures with an emphasis on the institution of the Caliphate was used as a weapon (Georgeon 2006: 221). Abdülhamid's politics to overcome and address these issues and complications can be summarised as maintaining a balanced position against Russia and the British Empire, the demonstration of the institution of the Caliphate against them as a threat by developing close relations with Muslims under their territories, which was hoped to increase the reach and effectiveness of the Caliphate, the constitution of a new bond among Muslim components of the Empire in order to contain the emerging nationalist tendencies among Muslims elements (Eraslan 2011: 423), continuation of reformation policies while addressing the discontent caused by the previous reforms of the Tânzimat Era.

In this sense, Abdülhamid utilised Islam as an ideology (Islamism) that would connect Muslim components of the Empire together, especially the Arab and Kurdish regions while at the same time softening the centralisation reforms, an example of which was the formation of a tribal militia, known as the Hamidian regiments, from the Kurdish tribes to police the eastern provinces of the Empire. In contrary to reforms that begun during the Tânzimat Era, which aimed to realise the settlement of nomads and detribalisation (Bruinessen 1992: 185), Abdülhamid's Hamidian regiments intended to better the inclusion of the Kurds to the centre by giving them a certain degree of autonomy and praise while at the same strengthening the Ottoman army with the Kurdish tribes as Abdülhamid did not want to recruit non-Muslims for the army (Kodaman 2011a: 331; 2011b). Abdülhamid also established a five-year boarding school named the *Mekteb-i Aşiret-i Humayun* (Imperial School for Tribes) that admitted the sons of the "descendants of the most respected and treasured families" (Rogan 1996: 84), which initially only accepted the sons

of the Arab sheikhs and notables and later the sons of the Kurdish notables were also per-mitted to enrol. Religious education and instruction in Turkey language were two im-portant characteristics of the school.

As an elite school, it was intended to integrate the tribal communities into the Empire through education and sought to create an allegiance to the Caliphate and Sultanate in the future as the graduates were expected to have further education and serve the Ottoman Palace in their native regions. Rogan (1996) considers the tribal education system as an ambitious and integrationist initiative that aimed to integrate the tribal communities of the Empire into the political life of the state. This was in a way an attempt to remedy the reac-tions of the Ottoman notables to the centralisation policies that would otherwise started to threaten the unity of Muslim elements of the Empire as it was assumed that the school was giving education to the future notables of the Empire, which in return would guarantee their allegiance to the Caliphate and Sultanate (Kodaman 2011a: 324).

The politicisation of the religion of Islam was part of the larger strategy of Abdülhamid, that is, the preservation of the Ottoman territory, especially Muslim populated areas, by attempting to create a commonality or bond between Muslim components of the Empire through Islam and its figures and elements while acting as a leader for all Muslims includ-ing those who were not on the Ottoman territory. Accordingly, the main focus of the Ot-toman diplomacy was the preservation of the existing territorial integrity of the Empire and the development of projects, some of which were to revise certain political and economic policies of the Tânzimat Era that created discontent among small Muslim bourgeoisie (Tu-ran 2011: 60, 65). In this sense, it should be noted Abdülhamid's policy of Islamism and his utilisation in non-Ottoman territories were not in fact expansionist; on the contrary, with the non-existence of military and financial strength, it was a defence strategy (Turan 2011: 86) that aimed to intimidate Russia and the British Empire into refraining from in-

tervening the domestic politics of the Empire by giving the impression that the Caliph-Sultan had the capacity and means to mobilise Muslims in their territories, which he, in fact, did not.

Aside from its implications for Muslims in non-Ottoman territories, in Abdülhamid's policy of Islamism, a much stronger importance was placed on the concept of the Caliphate with the aim of creating a new Muslim millet (nation), which did not, contrary to Ottomanism, aim to become a source of political unity for non-Muslims as its main focus and object were to keep Muslim components under the Ottoman banner and to address the discontent in Kurdish (Kurdistan) and Arab regions. Additionally, Islamism aimed to keep the 'Ottoman' spirit alive and motivating factor for all Muslims in order to prevent a collapse in morale in society. In fact, this was also part of the logic behind the Imperial School for Tribes, that is, to create future notables from the tribal communities, who believed the 'Ottoman' spirit and unity of all Muslims and could serve in their local regions accordingly (Kodaman 2011a: 324).

Moreover, the resuscitation of the institution of the Caliphate, which existed only symbolically until the Abdülhamid's reign, came partly as a reaction to the idea that certain secularisation policies of the Tânzimat Era had diminished the authority and legitimacy of the Sultan so the politicisation of Islam and the resuscitation of the Caliphate were attempts to sacralise the Sultanate (Georgeon 2006: 226). Given that, historically, the Caliphate was assumed to give further 'legitimacy' and power to the Sultanate to maintain the unity of all Muslim elements on the Ottoman territory, it is imperative to underline that neither the symbolic existence nor the resuscitation of the Caliphate prevented Arabs gaining their independence. Yet, it is quite possible to argue that the concept of the Caliphate and the emphasis on Islam with its elements and figures were still important for the unity of the remaining Muslims elements on Ottoman territory (Yeğen 1996: 221) and had a particular

and sentimental resonance for the Kurds. The importance of the concept of the Caliphate and its utilisation as a source of collective consciousness among Muslim components of the Empire, particularly among the Kurds, was such that its abolition later during the Republican Turkey in 1924 is seen as the second major breaking point for the Kurds after the abolition of the emirates (Yeğen 1996: 221).

In addition to its political implications for the self-identification of the Kurds with the centre and how the concept of the Caliphate and Islam with its elements and figures mapped onto this self-identification, it should also be pointed out that there was a particular sociological reason as to why the concept of the Caliphate played such a major role in the Kurds' articulation with the centre.

As noted above, after the abolition of the Kurdish emirates, the confederative unity of the Kurdish tribes was dismantled and the leading Kurdish religious figures - the sheikhs - became important political actors in Kurdish politics in providing the political unity of the Kurds to the extent that Yeğen argues "they have never been simple religious figures in Kurdish politics. Rather, they fulfilled the role of a mediator between the religion of Islam and Kurdish nationalism" (1996: 220). As political actors in Kurdish politics, therefore, the sheikhs placed a crucial importance on not only the function but also the mere existence of the institution of the Caliphate. The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 is an embodiment of this sentiment given that the Sultanate had already been abolished in 1922 and there were growing number of Kurdish nationalist organisations and discontent among the Kurds and; yet, it was only the abolition of the Caliphate (3 March 1924) that triggered a large scale rebellion.

At this point, it is also important to note that the Kurds continued to articulate themselves with the Empire during its troubled times and aligned themselves with the Turks in their 'holy' struggle against the invasion of the Allies — 'the Christian Invader'. The emphasis on

Islam and the Caliphate and their binding functions for the Kurds was quite apparent in their support for the Turks. The Kurds supported the Turks in the First World War (1914-1918) and the Turkish National Movement during the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922). The Kurds did not incline towards separatist tendencies such as the initiative of an ex-general and a Kurdish nationalist, Şerif Pasha, the Kurdish national representative in the Paris Peace Conference who made an agreement with the Armenians for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan and ensured the Allies' support. Additionally, under the section of Kurdistan, the articles 62, 63 and 64 of the Treaty of Sèvres, an agreement that the Central Powers had to sign subsequent to their defeat, which marked the beginning of the partition of the Ottoman Empire, envisaged the establishment of a local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas - South-eastern and some parts of Eastern Turkey - with a clause on the possibility of future independence from Turkey on the condition that:

> "[…] If… the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas" (Article 63-64, Treaty of Sèvres).

Despite the apparent weakness of the Empire and perhaps the inability to prevent any attempts of the Kurds to gain their independence, these efforts did not get a strong reception from the Kurds, particularly among the conservative ones. On the contrary, Kirişçi and Winrow (1997) note that the agreement of Şerif Pasha with the Armenians on independent Kurdistan strengthened Kurdish participation in the resistance movement with a number

of telegrams being sent to Paris, stressing that the Kurds did not wish to separate from Turks and declaring that Turks and Kurds were "brothers in terms of race (*soy*) and **religion**", which led to "a declaration of **Islamic solidarity**" in which certain Kurdish tribal leaders expressed their oppositions to initiatives that would separate Kurds and Turks (1997: 79) (emphasis added). Bruinessen notes "in the years 1919-21 Mustafa Kemal's contacts with Kurdish chieftains appeared to be better than those of the Kurdish nationalist organisation", which according to the Kurd Taali Jamiyati of Diyarbakır, deterred them from "proclaiming an independent Kurdistan, owing to the Turks having won over two of the principal local notables who are influential among surrounding tribes" (1992: 279).

It should be emphasised that the fact that the Kurdish masses didn't incline toward separatist tendencies and share the enthusiasm of certain Kurdish nationalist organisations at this point should not be mistaken as a suggestion that the Kurds did not have any demands or expectations from the Turkish National Movement or its leader, Mustafa Kemal; rather, the relationship between the Kurds and Turks during the War of Independence should be characterised as a unity against an external common enemy and postponing certain issues until the *vatan* (homeland) was rescued.

Moreover, the language that Mustafa Kemal used in addressing the certain expectations and demands of the Kurds while also touching upon the questions of identity, ethnicity and nation was inclusive in its emphasis on the unity of Muslim elements and historical fraternity of the Kurds and Turks and the Caliphate as its sources of legitimacy. In this sense, McDowall stresses that until the foundation of the republic and the crystallisation of what is usually referred to as the Kemalist ideology, that is, the project of modernisation of the newly founded Republic, "the Kemalists envisaged, or pretended to, a Muslim state, composed of the Turkish and Kurdish remnants of the Empire. This was implicit in the National Pact, and explicit in Kemalist action and utterance", adding that Mustafa Kemal

was aware of Kurdish separatist tendencies and; yet, he was more concerned with the immediate threat of invasion and the Kurdish question being used by the British to wrest eastern Anatolia from the Empire (2000: 187). McDowall continues:

> "Whether in sincerity or in deceit, Mustafa Kemal pragmatically stressed the unity of Turks and Kurds, condemning foreign (essentially British) plots to wean the Kurds away. This was consonant with the resistance movement already operating when Mustafa Kemal arrived in Anatolia. For the Society for the Defence of Rights of Eastern Anatolia was already issuing rallying calls that appealed to Kurdo-Turkish unity. **Such calls appealed to ethnic identity, but unity centred on the controlling religious idea of empire**. In the words of Mustafa Kemal in September 1919:

> As long as there are fine people with honour and respect, Turks and Kurds will continue to live together as brothers around **the institution of the khilafa**, and an unshakeable iron tower will be raised against internal and external enemies" (2000: 187) (emphasis added).

Mustafa Kemal was in a way attempting to manage and contain sentiments of Kurdish nationalism in a difficult time by both recognising the Kurds as a separate ethnicity and appealing to religious elements of Islam, particularly the institution of the Caliphate through which the Kurds and Muslim elements of the Empire historically associated themselves with the Empire. Therefore, his inclusive language is not surprising; however, the real question was whether his seemingly inclusive language and arguments on the unity of Muslim elements and Islam and the Caliphate as the basis of this unity would be, if so to what extent, the foundation of the prospect political system once the *vatan* had been saved.

McDowall notes that as much as Mustafa Kemal was "explicit on the existence of different ethnic groups within the Muslim *vatan* (homeland)", he was "more vague on the future relationship" between the Kurds and Turks (2000: 187-8). On the existence of different ethnicities, Mustafa Kemal acknowledged that the nation was not comprised one single element; rather:

> "…There are Turks and Kurds. We do not separate them. But while we are busy to defend and protect, of course, the nation is not one element. **There are various bonded Muslim elements**. Every Muslim element which makes this entity are citizens. They respect each other, **they have every kind of right, racial, social and geographical. We repeated this over and over again. We admit this honestly**. However, our interests are together. **The unity we are trying to create is not only Turkish or Circassian**. It is a mixture of **one Muslim element**" (McDowall 2000: 188).

It is clear that, in his 'recognition' of the existence of different ethnic categories, he was also aware that the existence of different ethnic groups did not suggest a simple mere act of being existed without any complications or implications. In his own words, he 'admits honestly' that they [Muslim elements] have racial, social and geographical rights. However, the nature and extent of these rights or how or if these rights would be recognised and incorporated into the new political system once the immediate threat had been repelled were not made clear. It is clear, on the other hand, that religion and ethno-political demands were intertwined in the sense that Mustafa Kemal was careful with not giving too much political power to the idea of ethnic diversity while attempting to contain its implications through Islam and the institute of Caliphate in order to prevent its 'destructive' nature.

Given that modernisation policies had already created doubts among the Kurds and fault lines in their identification themselves with the Empire since the Tânzimat Era, Mustafa

Kemal's assurance of inclusiveness and recognition of racial, traditional and environmental realities of Muslim elements within the national borders once the homeland had been saved was of paramount importance. Moreover, in his appeal to the Kurds, his use of religious rhetoric with the institution of the Caliphate and Muslimness presented as continuing to constitute a common bond among Muslim elements amplified the already sentimental value of these notions for the Kurds to the extent that a divergence from these concepts without addressing their fundamental meanings for the Kurds would inevitably create more fault lines and become more 'destructive'.

One particular line of argument in the abolition of the Caliphate was based on the idea that the Caliphate was not a religious institution; rather, it was a political institution with no theological power in determining rights and wrongs, which was resuscitated out of need for political mobilisation and maintaining the unity of the Empire. However, this is precisely the crux of the problem as objectively, it is true that the Caliphate was not necessarily a religious institution but a political one; however, this theological identification did not change or diminish the meaning and function of the Caliphate for the Kurds' self-identification with the Empire and later with the Republic during its formative years.

Moreover, it should be noted that the Sultanate had already been abolished two years prior to the abolition of the Caliphate, which in a way was a 'relief' for the Kurds as the Caliphate was to be preserved. In fact, Hasan Arfa, who was the Iranian ambassador to Turkey, in Anatolia in 1922, the year the Sultanate was abolished by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, in which he stated that the Kurds were more "concerned with the religious significance of the Ottoman rulers than with the political, and as the Khalifate was to be preserved by the regime [...] the Kurds were satisfied that the religious aspect of Turkey was being preserved" (Arfa 1966 cited in Akyol 2006: 47). The Sheikh Said rebellion occurred in such a political context though it is true that the abolition of the Caliphate in itself was

the major trigger in the rebellion, it is also widely noted that there was too a nationalist sentiment involved. To this end, the 'shift' in Mustafa Kemal's 'inclusive' language toward the Kurds should be highlighted in order to contextualise how religion and nationalism became intertwined in the rebellion.

Following the abstract language of Mustafa Kemal that gave assurance of inclusiveness to the Kurds in the new political system, the establishment of "an autonomous administration for the Kurdish nation in harmony with their national customs" was proposed in the Grand National Assembly on 10 February 1922 (McDowall 2000: 188). However, the proposed autonomy did not foresee any fundamental forms of power delegation to the Kurds from the central government, particularly those that would literally de-centralise the governmental power. In other words, the consideration in the proposal of an autonomous administration to be established in harmony with the Kurds' national customs did not imply a fundamental power delegation or resuscitation of traditional privileges for the Kurds. It should be born in mind that the Kurds' continuing alignments with the Turks during the War of Independence was conditional on the existence of the Caliphate, which was the reassurance of the a-national and de-central social space of the Empire in which the Kurds' self-identification with the Empire occurred and Kurdishness appeared. The political opportunist and pragmatist language during the War of Independence toward the Kurds was intended to give the impression if not the promise that this traditional logic would be continued or incorporated into the new political system and; yet, there was an apparent possible change of direction and of heart. This was perhaps the broken promise.

In the proposed autonomy, there was a consideration for a Kurdish National Assembly, which was to be elected by universal suffrage and yet, the chosen governor-general by the people in Kurdish regions would be subjected to the approval of the Grand National Assembly. According to the article 16 of the proposal, on the other hand, "the primary duty

of the Kurdish National Assembly shall be to found a university with a law and medical faculty" (McDowall 2000: 188). Aside from the more obvious intention of not delegating any political power to the Kurds, there were also hints of the emergence of ethnic exclusion. Seen as "a harbinger of repressive measures', there was an insistence The Grand National Assembly on 'Turkish being the language of the Kurdish National Assembly", though the governor-general was allowed to encourage the use of Kurdish, it was conditioned that it did not constitute "the basis for the future recognition of Kurdish as the official language of government" (McDowall 2000: 188, 189).

The draft proposal for the autonomy was never realised; however, the language and scope of the proposed autonomy was more than enough to create discomfort among the Kurds. The abolition of the Sultanate had already created doubts among the Kurds as to the future of the country and themselves in it. In this context, the hesitancy in addressing the Kurds' demands and more apparent exclusive language of the Kemalists increased the inclination toward Kurdish nationalist organisations among the Kurds. The abolition of the Caliphate was in fact an icing on the cake for Kurdish nationalists, the abolition of the Caliphate, as noted before, is considered as the second major breaking point for the Kurds after the abolition of the Kurdish emirates (Yeğen 1996: 221).

In this sense, Kurdish nationalist organisations during this time and the Sheikh Said rebellion are discussed in the following part alongside the question how religion and nationalism became intertwined in the Kurdish resistance with a brief account of Kurdish nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

2.3.4 The 'Failure' of Kurdish Nationalism

The Kurdish revolts of the nineteenth centuries were presented on the basis that westernisation/centralisation policies of the Tânzimat Era did not please the Kurdish notables and leading religious figures and meant loss of centuries-enjoyed autonomies and privileges.

At the end of the century, Akyol notes, nationalism as a new phenomenon among the Kurds emerged with difference being that it was not a reaction to modernisation as it was in the Bedirhan and Sheikh Ubeydullah revolts during the Tânzimat Era and later in the Hamidian regime; on the contrary, it emerged as "the very product of modernisation itself" among "the Kurdish intelligentsia based in Istanbul or foreign capital" (McDowall 2006: 20), who set up, among other activities, various literary organisations, published a Kurdish newspaper named *Kurdistan* and founded a Kurdish school in Istanbul to create awareness for Kurdish culture and Kurdishness.

McDowall notes that the activities of this Kurdish intelligentsia started as an opposition to the authoritarian regime of Abdülhamid and did not have an ethnic emphasis until Turkish awareness became apparent among the Young Turks, who, in addition to their frustration with the religious orientation of the Empire, were doubtful of the effectiveness of the traditional identity perception of the millet system after non-Muslim elements of the Empire had already claimed an ethnic national identity (2000: 88-92).

The nationalist activities and rhetoric of the Kurdish intelligentsia did not find a strong reception among the Kurds and particularly from the prominent Kurdish religious leaders as some of them went on so far as to describe them as "carriers of **ungodly** and revolutionary ideas" (Kinnane 1964 cited in Akyol 2006: 21) (emphasis added). Intense rivalry among prominent Kurdish families was an another factor for the unfavourable view of nationalist efforts in addition to 'the urban-rural dichotomy', that is, the Kurdish intelligentsia ap-

peared elitist in the modern sense of the word and secular compared to religious and traditional Kurdish leaders, which was another important factor in their 'failure' to gain support from the wider Kurdish population (Kinnane 1964 cited in Akyol 2006: 21). How traditionally and historically the Kurds identified themselves with the Empire and defined their 'Kurdishness' continued to become the main factor in their choice of direction for their future during the early twentieth century. In this sense, McDowall argues:

> "Those in Kurdistan who felt threatened by the political changes now affecting the whole empire, clung to the old verities of caliph and sultan which offered certainty and security in a now rapidly changing world. **The 'Kurdishness' of their existence was defined essentially by the pursuit of traditional, usually tribal, identity which the ancien regime seemed willing to foster**" (2000: 88) (emphasis added).

Similar tendencies among conservative Kurds toward separatist and nationalist activities of certain Kurdish notables during the War of Independence was discussed in previous parts, stressing that the institution of the Caliphate and seemingly inclusive language of Mustafa Kemal towards the Kurds managed to a certain degree to contain Kurdish nationalism. In this sense, perhaps, one might consider Kurdish nationalism as a failed attempt, considering that Kurdish nationalist organisations did not get a strong reception from the wider Kurdish populations both during the Hamidian regime and the War of Independence, as the apparent discontent did not lead to a larger secessionist movement. As controversial as the question whether one can argue for 'the failure of Kurdish nationalism' conclusively, there is another important question posed by the above-noted intertwined character of religion, nationalism and identity that became apparent in the Kurds' discontent with modernisation policies of the Empire and Republic.

The Kurds did not incline toward Kurdish nationalist movements of the early twentieth century and, even before that, they placed a crucial importance on the concept of the Caliphate with their loyalty still being with the Sultanate. This raises the question whether the prominent Kurdish notables' resistance to centralisation policies of the Tânzimat Era and westernisation/modernisation policies of the Turkish Republic, first the Bedirhan revolt of 1847 and later the Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt of 1880-1881 and more importantly the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1924 during the Republican Turkey, for which the abolition of the Caliphate was quoted as the main trigger, can be classified as nationalist uprisings or whether there was a 'Kurdishness' sentiment attached to these resistance.

In this sense, referring to the Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt, Tucker argues that Sheikh Ubeydullah did not only exemplify how the sheikhs emerged as political actors after the abolition of the Kurdish emirates but also "marked the emergence of a political force directed toward unification of the Kurds", adding that "the sheikhs played a role of considerable magnitude in Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish autonomist political and military movements" as for the Kurds, "nationalism and religion became intertwined, in effect, from the beginning" (2003). Similarly, in discussing the various relationship between religion and nationalism, Brubaker notes that sometimes religion can become "so deeply imbricated or intertwined with nationalism as to be part of the phenomenon rather than an external explanation of it"; in other words, it is not "something outside nationalism that helps to explain it", adding that in one kind of intertwining, "religion does not necessarily define the boundaries of the nation, but it supplies myths, metaphors and symbols that are central to the discursive or iconic representation of the nation" (2012: 8-9). Brubaker continues,

> "The question that religious resources help to answer in this case is not necessarily 'who belongs?' but rather 'who are we?' and '**what is distinctive about us as a people, in terms of our history, character, identity, mission, or destiny?**' This

second kind of intertwining involves the religious inflection of nationalist discourse. If one interprets nationalist discourse broadly as embracing not only the discourse that accompanies and informs nationalist movements or specific forms of nationalist politics, but any form of public or private talk about particular 'nations' or countries, then this offers a broad and fertile terrain for studying the connection between religion and nationalism" (2012: 9) (emphasis added).

The institution of the Caliphate for the Kurds mapped onto this particular aspect as it guaranteed an a-national social space, which the Kurds historically enjoyed. On the Sheikh Said rebellion, Tucker suggests:

"The Sheikh Said rebellion showed many years ago something that some observers have associated only with Iran in recent times - the possibility of a symbiotic relationship between nationalism and religion. […] Nationalism in its seemingly modern western sense (shared language, cultural forms, history, contiguous territory etc.) and religion, in this case Sunni Islam, were by no means incompatible, at least at the level of political policy and struggle" (2003: ?).

The years leading to the Sheikh Said rebellion had already witnessed the emergence of various Kurdish nationalist organisations despite the unfavourable view of those during the War of Independence among the Kurds. In 1923, another Kurdish nationalist organisation, *Azadi* (Freedom), was founded though with a different composition from the preceding organisations as their founders were not urban notables as it was in the early nineteenth century Kurdish nationalist organisations but mainly experienced military men (Bruinessen 1992: 280). In this sense, McDowall suggests that the establishment of Azadi, "marked the real arrival of Kurdish nationalism in Turkish Kurdistan" as "the new movement […] spread like wildfire through the oratories, or takfyas, of the Sufi orders, from the encamp-

ment of one ex-Hamidiya agha to another, and finally through the commissioned and other ranks of Kurdish battalions in the army" (McDowall 2000: 192).

In 1924, in their first congress, Bruinessen notes, Sheikh Said was among those who attended thanks to his "influence among the Zaza-speaking tribes of the districts northeast of Diyarbakir" and "convinced them of the need to fight for Kurdish independence, since the Ankara government's policies had become increasingly threatening to the Kurds" (1992: 280). A general and organised uprising with the ultimate goal of declaring independence was one of the most important decisions of the congress followed by whether foreign assistance was necessary and if so, how it could be attained (1992: 280).

In addition to the organisational and compositional differences of Azadi compared to the previous nationalist organisations, it should be highlighted that their much wider support base was also due to the grievances that the policies of the Republic caused. As briefly noted in the previous part, the seemingly inclusive language of Mustafa Kemal during the war time did not demonstrate itself in the subsequent actual policy implementations; on the contrary, there were many cases where an apparent ethnic exclusion based on a kind of Turkishness and early signs of assimilative policies began to make the headlines though McDowall notes that "it is unclear whether Mustafa Kemal premeditated his ruthless suppression of Kurdish identity, or whether his thinking underwent a radical change in 1923" (2000: 184). Nonetheless, Bruinessen states:

> "The fear of Kurdish nationalism led the Ankara [the Capital of Turkey] government to take measures that could only make Kurdish nationalist sentiments more general. In the name of populism, the Kurdish language was forbidden in public places (1924); in the name of the abolition of feudalism, Kurdish aghas, but also intellectuals, were sent into exile to western Turkey. A new law (Nr. l505) made it possible to expropriate the land of Kurdish big landlords and give it to Turkish-

speakers who were to be settled in Kurdistan. Azadi's propagandists took up the grievances resulting from this, and found many willing ears" (1992: 281).

Perhaps a more 'objective' indicator of the involvement of nationalist sentiment in the Sheikh Said rebellion could be the list of complaints given to the British intelligence inter-rogators by a number of Azadi members about the treatment to which the Kurds, they claimed, were subjected by the government. Accordingly, Bruinessen emphasises that "most sources on the events of this period are rather biased. They are partisan and, in the case of written memoirs and oral informants, coloured by hindsight, later interpretations and wishful thinking" (1992: 282) and; therefore, he takes the list of complaints men-tioned below as a more objective indicator of the nationalist character of the rebellion. The following complaints are worth mentioning in order to demonstrate both the nationalist sentiment of the rebellion as well as their resemblances to certain discussions on the treat-ment of the Kurds in today's Turkey.

1) "A new law on minorities aroused suspicion. Fears were that the Turks planned to disperse the Kurds over western Turkey, and settle Turks in their stead in the east.

2) **The caliphate, one of the last ties binding Kurds and Turks together, had been abolished**.

3) **Use of the Kurdish language in schools and law courts was restricted. Kurdish education was forbidden; with the result that education among the Kurds was virtually non-existent**.

4) **The word 'Kurdistan' (used previously as a geographical term) was deleted from all geography books.**

5) All senior government officials in Kurdistan were Turks. Only at lower levels, were carefully selected Kurds appointed.

6) Relative to the taxes paid, there were no comparable benefits received from the government.

7) The government interfered in the eastern provinces in the 1923 elections for the Grand National Assembly.

8) The government pursued the policy of continuously setting one tribe against another.

9) Turkish soldiers frequently raided Kurdish villages, taking away animals; requisitioned food supplies were often not or insufficiently paid for.

10) **In the army the Kurdish rank-and-file were discriminated against, and generally selected for rough and unpleasant duties**.

11) The Turkish government attempted to exploit Kurdish mineral wealth with the aid of German capital" (Bruinessen 1992: 282-3) (emphasis added).

The discontent caused by the exclusionary policies of the government is quite apparent in the complaints. Perhaps the most thought-provoking one is the presentation of the abolition of the Caliphate, which was described as 'one of the last ties binding Kurds and Turks together', as an example of the ill-treatment of the Kurds alongside those which have more explicit nationalist sentiments such the restriction placed on the use of Kurdish language and other discriminatory practices toward the Kurds. The emphasis on the Caliphate and the use of religious rhetoric during the rebellion led, perhaps understandably, many to argue that the rebellion is not a nationalist uprising but a religious one that aimed to re-

establish the Caliphate. This is not, on the other hand, limited to the Sheikh Said rebellion; rather, the discussion on whether a particular Kurdish revolt or rebellion was national or not had been the centre of the Kurdish question's historical account.

Yeğen highlights that 'the sociology of Kurdish resistance' is often neglected in the arguments leading to the question whether a particular Kurdish resistance was national or not, adding that having ignored the sociology of Kurdish resistance, most analyses have been exclusively through the lens of political terms (1996: 224). Moreover, the effects of certain reforms and discourses of the Ottoman and later the Turkish state on the Kurds and their social space in which Kurdishness appeared was ignored due to "the apparent lack of Kurdish consciousness" in a particular resistance, he adds (1996: 224). The implications of the Islamic figures and the Caliphate for and the effect of the tribal politics on Kurdish nationalism are the two prime examples of this misconception.

In regard to the involvement of the tribal politics in Kurdish resistance, particularly against early centralisation policies, Yeğen draws a similar conclusion to Tucker's arguments on the intertwined character of religion and nationalism in Kurdish resistance, saying "Kurdish tribes (though not exclusively) became the new spaces of resistance to the centralisation of administration and politics. Tribal politics consistently played a critical role in Kurdish rebellions" (1996: 221).

It is also true that, to some extent, the tribal politics prevented the unification of the Kurds, as the factionalism had always been a common sentiment in Kurdish politics. However, this should not prevent one from recognising that in certain ways there was an articulation of tribal politics and ethnic-based politics in Kurdish resistance to the project of modernisation of the Empire and Republic. The realisation of the intertwined character of the tribal politics and ethnic-politics by the state consequently caused more pressure being put on the Kurdish tribes. In other words, while centralisation and modernisation policies were

creating discontent among the Kurds, who resisted these policies with the heavy participation or involvement of the Kurdish tribes, the resistance in itself led further efforts of centralisation and modernisation of the tribal communities (Yeğen 1996: 222). In short, as Bruinessen notes, "Kurdish nationalism and the tribal and religious loyalties stand in an ambivalent relation to each other" (1992: 7).

It would be a misconception to judge the importance and nature of this ambivalent relation only in terms of how religious figures, the sheikhs, and tribal politics characterised and in a way intensified the resistance by using their popularity among the Kurdish people. In fact, Bruinessen notes that Azadi deliberately wanted the Sheikh Said rebellion to also have a religious dimension so that the uprising would benefit from the popularity and power of mobilisation of the Sheikh (1992: 282). However, sociologically and politically, the existence of the Caliphate for the Kurds represented a different political context that had the conceptual and political capacity to fulfil their expectations from the Republic and this was also the very reason for how the resuscitation of the Caliphate during the Hamidian regime ensured the bonding tie between the Kurds and Empire and prevented an inclination toward nationalist movements among the Kurds. Similar sentiments were also apparent in resistance against centralisation policies of the early nineteenth century.

In this sense, Yeğen states that the institution of the Caliphate and the autonomous status of the Kurds thanks to the emirs ensured an a-national and de-central social space in which Kurdishness appeared. Accordingly, policies of centralisation and modernisation, which envisaged the consolidation of economical, administrative and political power into the centre and abolition of the Caliphate by attempting to create a national and central space in a space that was historically a-national and de-central thanks to the logic of the millet system, put great pressure on this space, which were, by implication, attempts to exclude Kurdish identity. In almost all Kurdish resistance of the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, therefore, there had always been a 'Kurdishness' element in the sense that "the politics of Islam (the Caliphate and the institutional practices of the religion of Islam), tradition (tribal politics), and the periphery (smuggling and resistance to taxation and military requirement)" constituted what Kurdishness was and how it was constituted (1996: 225-6). The question whether a particular Kurdish resistance was national or not, therefore, could be misleading in understanding the complex relationship between religion, nationalism and Kurdishness if the wider social space in which Kurdishness appeared during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how modernisation policies affected/challenged Kurdishness are ignored.

So far, discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and briefly secularisation are given in the context of a brief historical account of the Kurdish question and how they affected the social space in which Kurdishness appeared. Before concluding, it is important that the Young Turks regime in the early twentieth century is discussed, as there is a particular ideological heritage that the Young Turks regime left to the Turkish republic and have important bearings on the formation of the state discourse on the Kurdish question.

2.3.5 The Young Turks and Ideological Continuity

In previous part, it was noted that Kurdish nationalist movements in the early twentieth century did not have a favourable view of the Kurdish masses; however, it should be also noted that this sentiment, on the other hand, was not necessarily because of the life-style or traits of the Kurdish intelligentsia as similar resentment was also prevailing among religious Kurds against the *Jön Türkler* (Young Turks) and their discourse. Young Turks was a political movement in the early twentieth century that aimed to replace the absolute monarchy of the Hamidian regime with a constitutional monarchy and succeeded in doing so by a political revolution against Abdülhamid II. However, their 'success' is controversial.

First established among medical and military students in 1889, who were discontent with the abolition of the Constitution of 1876 by Abdülhamid II that ended the First Constitutional Era in 1878, the Young Turks turned into a political party with the establishment of the Committee of Progress and Union (CPU) and its successor, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) that demanded the re-establishment of a constitutional monarchy in the Ottoman Empire. In 1908, often referred to as the Young Turk Revolution, they forced Abdülhamid II to restore the constitution, which started the Second Constitutional Era of the Empire. However, Hanioğlu argues that "they [the Young Turks] were not constitutionalists or advocates of the reinstatement of the constitutional regime for the sake of establishing a constitutional political system" (2001: 313) as many failed to acknowledge due to the lack of attention being paid to their background where debates and political discussions among the Young Turks and the Young Turk's *Weltanschauung* reveal that "all of the principal issues of the second constitutional period had been debated and discussed among the Young Turk expatriates" (2001: 313).

Therefore, Hanioğlu continues, the authoritarian character of the regime was not coincidental or merely an outcome of the corruption of power and a response to external developments, adding that "they viewed themselves above all else as the saviors of an empire" (2001: 313) for which the existence of a constitution was a great help in overcoming many problems of the Empire. "As empire-savers the Young Turks always viewed the problems confronting the Ottoman Empire from the standpoint of the state, placing little if any emphasis on the people's will" (2001: 313), which was not surprising giving their inclination toward authoritarian theories, whose common character was an enlightenment above and the opposition to the idea of egalitarianism, which they considered as 'unscientific' (2001: 313). Biological materialism, positivism, Social Darwinism, and Gustave Le Bon's elitism are some of the theories that shaped many Young Turks' mind and way of governance and perception of the people and society (2001: 313). It is also worthy of noting that their at-

tractions to the authoritarian theories and strong rejection of ideologies that are critical of the state came partly from the fact they had aspirations to save the state and "they did not form an intelligentsia independent of the state" (2001: 314). In other words, their desire for a strong government and enlightenment from above necessitated theories and ideas accordingly in such a way that despite the emphasis on 'equality' in their political propaganda, what the idea of equality really meant was "the peculiar political meaning of equality among Ottomans from different ethnic and religious groups, rather than referring to equality among men in a general sense" (2001: 314). Despite its officially short-life span, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 had and still has strong implications for the founding ideologies and ideas of the Republic as well as on the society.

Firstly, the ultra-nationalistic discourse of the Young Turks was the first seeds of the Turkish nationalism, which was to a certain degree based on the above-noted ideas of inequality of men and aimed to glorify Turkishness not necessarily in the sense of cultural nationalism but of Turkish race, Turkism, though the Young Turks modified their discourse of nationalism according to the realities of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire and adopted a more political opportunist approach that exploited Panturkist, Panislamist and Ottomanist policies simultaneously (2001: 298). However, similar Turkist policies and ideas re-appeared during the Republican period.

Secondly and more importantly, the ideology of the Young Turks had profound effects on the Turkish state's perception of society, enlightenment, difference and culture and methods to address potential issues that would appear in a society that was being subjected to a heavy modernisation project. In this sense, the Turkish Republic did not only inherit a society that was multi-ethnic and multi-religious and a discourse from the Ottoman Empire that it attempted to transform according to its projection of a modern, centralised and secular nation state; it also inherited a particular ideology from the Young Turks.

They were hostile to the opposition or what they would consider 'a reactionary act' as, combined with a narcissistic monopoly over the interpretation of modernity, the politics were reduced to engineering which saw no limits in constructing the society of the future, using "a derogatory language when referring to politics outside these boundaries" (Hanioğlu 2005). The self-perception of being the mastermind behind the transformation of the society and state, hence the idea of being the saver of the nation, on the other, resulted in assuming a self-claimed legitimacy that would see any opposition to "the state-building engineers a betrayal of the nation", which was also a common rhetoric in the founders of the Republican People's Party in the Republican Turkey (Hanioğlu 2005). Therefore, Hanioğlu rightly argues that there is still an ideological continuity of the Young Turks ideology to the present day:

> "A widely accepted view in our society is that the years 1922-3 mark the beginning of our modern history, and that events occurring before and after these dates are as sharply separated from each other as heaven and hell. This thesis of rupture makes a fair amount of sense in many areas. Above all, the transformation from a multi-national empire to a nation-state, together with the policies termed reforms by the Republican regime, brought about drastic change. At first sight the new institutions, educational policies, and historical theses produced by the new nation-state, and the strong will it manifested in severing its ties with the past, make us believe that the transformation was an all-encompassing one. Yet when we turn to the deeper strata beneath these apparently radical changes, and focus on the underlying ideas rather than the superficial rhetoric, we uncover an astounding ideological continuity.

> In other words, 1922 does not mark an ideological break in the history of Otto-man/Turkish society. Contrary to accepted views this date, despite marking the ini-

tiation of a significant process of change, cannot be taken as the year in which a major ideological transformation began. In fact, the changes that took place after 1922 are the product of ideological continuity, and the present-day Turkish state and elites still embrace this ideology" (2005).

In addition to its immediate effect on the Republican period's modernisation policies and the formation of the Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question, regardless of the political spectrum in today's Turkey, there are many areas and occasions where the signs of this ideological continuity or perhaps the world view that it implies are quite apparent, particularly in the state's attitude toward demands of different groups that represent different categories of identity, which in certain ways are challenging the established state practices. Glorification of Turkishness or what is being considered as 'Turkish' without any recognition of cultural, ethnic or linguistic diversity or a political tradition of being able to accommodate different ideas or world views without creating, causing or exploiting the fault lines in society are some of the shadows of this century-old ideology on today's Turkey.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in addition to the resentment among religious Kurds against the Kurdish intelligentsia of the time whose nationalist activities and rhetoric were perceived as being 'ungodly', the Young Turk regime, obviously, did not have a favourable opinion of the Kurds, who continued to identify themselves with the Empire along the traditional lines during this time.

2.3.6 The Emergence of Kemalism in the Republic of Turkey

As noted above, the Young Turk regime's ideology has had a profound effect on the formation of the Republic of Turkey's official ideology, which is usually referred to as Kemalism — named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938). In this context, Kemalism

emerged as a political project of westernisation/modernisation that aimed at nation-building by reimagining the multi-national, multi-religious and de-centralised Ottoman Empire as a modern, central and secular nation state. McDowall argues, for example, that the Kemalists completed what the Young Turks regime started by their imposition of a kind of 'Turkishness' on all citizens of the republic and coercive secularisation policies of the Kemalists and interest in strong central government. (2000: 189).

Kemalism had important bearings on Kurds and other minorities in Turkey and continues to have important implications for Turkey's minorities and their rights claims, including language rights. In other words, it still dominates the official ideology of the state in terms of resistance to recognition of diversity of any kind. This aspect needs further elaboration in order to understand Kemalism in the context of the Kurds' language rights claims and the state's position on their recognition.

The exact definition and the scope of Kemalism is a contested subject even among Kemalist themselves; yet, there is a relative consensus on its modernisation and westernisation aspect, which is to say that it aimed to create a secular nation state, in which it succeeded (Taspinar 2005: ix). The implication of this particular aspect of Kemalism for the Kurdish question is discussed above and later in detail under the theme of language rights and the Kurdish question in Chapter 3. It is, however, at this point imperative to stress a particular aspect of Kemalism, which has direct bearings on rights claims of minorities in Turkey, Kurds in particular and the state's reaction to them.

Taspinar argues that Kemalism's success of achieving its goals of creating a modern nation-state is responsible for its new dimension as "a conservative ideology" in the modern Turkish political context, which demonstrates "an understandable urge to protect what has been achieved" in terms of secularism and unity (2005: ix). This 'urge' has been, he continues, particularly apparent in Turkey's military-led secular establishment as "a defensive

political reaction against the "perceived enemies" of the secular Turkish republic: Kurdish nationalism and political Islam" (2005: ix-x). Kemalism in this sense has been primarily concerned about the ascendance of Kurdish nationalism and political Islam to the extent that it has become "**a secularist and nationalist reflex**, rather than a coherent ideology", which, "in the context of the country's official ideology and identity, […] "refers to **the sacrosanct character of the Turkish republic as a unitary and secular nation-state** (2005:x) (emphasis added). "Therefore, any deviation from **the Turkish character of the nation-state**, and the secular framework of the republic presents a challenge to Kemalist identity", Taspinar concludes (2005:x) (emphasis added).

It is in this context that the public manifestation of Islam and assertion of ethnic identity of any sort other than Turkishness, including the dissemination of minority languages is perceived and categorised as security threats to the Republic. The unity that the newly founded Republic set out to achieve is not confined to territorial integrity or consolidation of administrative power. As indicated above, it signifies a monolithic perception of identity, which is based on Turkishness and a secularist world view that allocates no space for the public manifestation of diversity.

The inclusive discourse of Mustafa Kemal during the War of Independence and its abstract recognition of ethnic diversity in the country on the road to the founding of a new state in 1923 was replaced with a monolithic policy of identity in the aftermath of the first Republican constitution in 1924. This policy ignored the enjoyment of cultural rights by ethnic groups with the exception of religious minorities such as Christians, Jews and Armenians as they are officially recognised as minorities and are allowed to open their own schools and teach their own languages. No other ethnic, religious or linguistic group other than those mentioned above, including Kurds, Caucasians and the Laz etc. have an official minority status in Turkey. In other words, "all non-Turkish citizens of the Republic other

than Greeks, Armenians and Jews now had to become Turkish" (Yeğen 2014: 69), which put an end to the seemingly recognition oriented discourse of Mustafa Kemal until the emergence of Kemalist ideology as the official ideology of the Republic.

The Kurdish question's perception by the state was inevitably aligned with the Kemalist regime's political agenda and priorities. While its focus, for example, was on the consolidation of the state power militarily and administratively during the initial years of the Republic amid the riots and disturbances in Kurdish regions, its efforts of economic consolidation during 1950s led to the conceptualisation of the Kurdish question as a reginal backwardness (Yeğen 2014: 71). In general, the Kurds' discontent and identity-based rights claims were seen as the rejection of the project of modernisation/westernisation, which led the state to associate the Kurdish question with regional backwardness, reactionary politics, banditry and national security depending on different phases of the Kemalist regime's modernisation project (Yeğen 1996; 1999).

Turkey's resistance towards a more inclusive language policy that would accommodate the Kurdish language and its implications as well as the rights demands of other minorities in Turkey should be placed within this context. The research's interest in understanding the extent of the shift in the state's discourse towards the Kurds' language rights and its resistance to their recognition should then be understood in light of this long-standing nationalist reflex of the state. In other words, while the study primarily focuses on the period between 2003 and 2015, it at the same time offers a re-evaluation of the state discourse amid the emergence of a new political power in Turkey in terms of divergence from or continuation of this century-old nationalist reflex.

2.4 Conclusion

The contemporary Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question occurred in a discursive formation whereby the discourses of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and secularisation of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constituted the constitutive elements of the Turkish state discourse. Thus, the state considered the Kurdish question as a reaction to its project of a modern, central and secular nation state. Accordingly, the Kurdish question was reconstituted in alignment with a particular priority of the modernisation project in a given time. For instance, during the formative years of the Republican period, the consolidation of the state power was the ultimate priority; hence, the Kurdish question was reconstituted along the lines of reactionary politics and tribal resistance. In 1950s, the economic consolidation as part of the modernisation project was among the top priorities of the state and accordingly the Kurdish question was also associated with regional backwardness. Both policies of modernisation during the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic put great pressure on the social space in which Kurdishness appeared was amounted to the exclusion of Kurdish identity by implication.

These policies did not specifically aim to exclude Kurdish identity; however, the transformative pressure they put on the social life and traditional privileges of the Kurds were where Kurdishness appeared and was constituted historically. In this sense, Kurdishness appeared in a much wider social space than language and ethnicity. The economic, cultural and administrative autonomy of the Kurds in the Empire implied an a-national and decentral space in which Kurdishness appeared and the institution of the Caliphate signified their articulation with the Empire; therefore, policies of westernisation/modernisation, centralisation and secularisation of the Empire and later of the Turkish state attempted to create a new national and central space, which was obviously a direct challenge to the life style of the Kurds.

The Kurdish resistance to the project of modernisation both during the Tânzimat Era and the Republican Turkey was a resistance to preserve a particular form of life. The resistance had, by implication, sentiments of Kurdishness. Particular instances of Kurdish resistance may appear as an exclusive reaction to a particular policy of centralisation or secularisation, which then can be categorised as an individual tribal resistance, an effort of preserving the old privileges out of self-interest or protecting the concept of the Caliphate out of religious piety. However, their implications for the social space in which Kurdishness appeared added ethno-political dimension to these policies and to the resistance unfolded subsequently, even though the intention behind these modernisation policies didn't specifically target the exclusion of Kurdish identity. In this sense, the Turkish state discourse has been the language of the exclusion of the Kurdish identity rather than being a concealment of it.

The resistance to preserve their political, economic and administrative autonomy was, again by implication, a resistance to the project of modernisation, which led the Turkish state to read the Kurdish question in terms of discourses emerged consequently. Additionally, the Young Turks' self-perception of legitimacy, monopoly over the interpretation of modernity and emphasis on a strong central government became an ideological inheritance to the founders of the Republic. Considering themselves as the saver of the nation, any form of opposition to the modernisation project was considered reactionary and a threat to the national integrity. The Kurds with their deeply rooted and regionally concentrated population posed the greatest challenge.

The association of the Kurdish question and the Kurdish resistance of the past and present with reactionary politics, tribal politics and regional backwardness and later as a security problem with the emergence of the PKK resulted in the disassociation of Kurdishness from the Kurdish question. In other words, the ethno-political nature and Kurdishness of the

Kurdish question were hardly recognised. This aspect is still the crux of the problem and the overall success of the Solution process and whether Turkey can develop a comprehensive solution to address the different aspects of the Kurdish question depend on how and how much Kurdishness of the Kurdish question can/should be incorporated into the state's perception of identity and nationhood.

The Kurdish question's inherent connection to Turkey's modernisation and its various albeit problematic process and progress had certainly profound effects on the formation of the state discourse and the Kurdish question itself; however, the Kurdish question has also contingent character and is not an archaic problem from Turkey's past. It was shaped and is being shaped by both domestic and global developments.

The global political context towards the end of 1980s which witnessed the notions of democracy and human rights with their transformative pressure on national politics becoming the discourse of many political discontent around the world marked another important period for the Kurdish question in contrast to the common perception in the public that consider the emergence of the PKK as a fundamental milestone of the historical account of the Kurdish question. In this period, the Kurds' discontent had become apparent on a national scale with strong political and social mobilisation. Similarly, the discourse of democracy and human rights created a rights-based approach to the Kurdish question, which set the achievements of certain political and cultural rights as the objective of these mobilisations. Language rights, in this sense, are embodiment of this objective and the fundamental challenge that the state faces in developing a comprehensive solution for the Kurdish question.

The Kurds' language-related rights claims and the state's hesitancy or reluctance to officially recognise them map onto language rights' nature and questions they raise. Language rights have valuable explanatory power in evaluating the state discourse on the Kurdish

question under the successive AKP governments, which is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Language Rights and Key Points

3.1 Introduction

This chapter engages with the political theories of language rights in an attempt to locate the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights claims and to explore the competing rationales behind language rights both from the state's and minority groups' perspectives. The study does not attempt to justify or denounce the Kurds' language rights through a normative theoretical framework; rather, it benefits from the explanatory power of language rights by utilising relevant points in political theories of language rights for both locating the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights claims and exploring the sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights in an attempt to illuminate the extent of the shift in the AKP's Kurdish policy towards their recognition. Thus, this chapter aims to reveal key points, which are relevant to the Kurdish question in political theories of language rights.

Language rights claims are a contentious issue which raises many questions as to the justification for granting a legally protected language right to speakers of a particular language and usually part of a national conflict between a dominant language group and a minority language group which considers itself a distinct 'nation' within. Language rights claims have implications for the claim for nationhood and self-government, which in many ways challenges the established nationhood perception of many nation-states. The reason is that language rights are different from linguistic human rights that aim to protect a language's instrumental nature in exercising a particular right or accessing to public services. Regardless of a speaker's proficiency in the majority's language, language rights are concerned with speakers of a minority language to have their mother tongue at their disposal in vari-

ous domains, including public services, courts and education facilities. Language rights, therefore, are related to the non-instrumental character of language.

Thus, linguistic conflicts have been particularly problematic in those countries that have regionally concentrated and historically rooted language groups, as dominant national groups usually tend to apply language policies that aim to dominate majority language(s) as the official language(s) of the state throughout the country including those areas in which minority groups are regionally concentrated and historically rooted. The imposition of a common language gives an unquestioned legitimacy and power to the dominant language group in terms of sovereignty and self-government and this perception of ownership of the country gets challenged when there is competing minority nationalism against the majority's nationalist policies.

The Kurdish question is an embodiment of many questions that language rights claims raise and a normative theory of language rights attempts to address. Language rights claims of the Kurds are particularly problematic yet crucially important because in many ways it is the last and most important front-line of political debate in Turkey's Kurdish question. The Solution process and the negotiation between the state and the Kurdish political movement particularly put language rights claims to the centre of the political debate. Inevitably, any such initiative has to take a position one way or another on language rights claims of the Kurds. Language rights of the Kurds are one of the most sensitive issues in Turkey, which prevent greater and wider protection and enjoyment of human rights within its borders. In this sense, the political theories of language rights provide a good point of reference to explore the state's position on this issue during the successive AKP governments.

3.2 Language Rights and the Kurdish Question

The Kemalist nation building project attempted to eliminate the Kurdish language through coercive assimilation policies in order to "remove the emergence of a competing alternative Kurdish nation and nationalism" on the road to the making of the modern Turkey, as it constitutes "the clearest and most radical difference between Turks and Kurds, who otherwise share religious traditions, with no direct possibility of observing physical differences" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 165-6). The Kurdish language plays a crucial role in the Kurds' struggle for recognition as a distinct ethnic group; therefore, it is seen as "both proof and symbol of the separate identity of the Kurds" (Kreyenbroek 2005: 53). In this sense, it is important to locate the true nature of Kurds' language-related rights in order to understand why the Turkish state adopted coercive assimilation policies to eliminate the Kurdish language and the Kurdish language continues to play a powerful role in the Kurdish question. Thus, this section discusses language rights in general and how certain discussions and rationales map onto the Kurdish question.

3.2.1 Linguistic Diversity and Nation States

Linguistic diversity is so multi-faceted a notion as to have inherent and contingent value that can have profound social and political repercussions for several political contexts, which, in many cases, has manifested itself as "a major source of political controversy, affecting the stability and sustainability of a wide range of political communities" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 3). In addition to language being a complicated issue in itself, it has wider implications and in certain cases is part of the wider national conflict between a dominant language group and a minority language group while theoretically having bearings on questions of democratisation and ethno-nationalism.

Kymlicka and Patten note that, among other factors, there are two particular political contexts in which linguistic diversity has challenged the stability and sustainability of many political communities around the world, especially of those that are on the verge of democratic transition and those that have experienced regional minority nationalism (2003: 3). These two practical challenges deserve particular attention for both their relevance to the Kurdish case but also being embodiments of the bitterest conflicts along linguistic lines.

The first practical challenge is democratic transition in Eastern Europe. After the fall of state socialism in 1989, the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia adopted language policies (Grenoble 2003; Wright and Kelly: 1994; Kamusella 2009) that envisaged official monolingualism, which was a shift from the language policies of the Communist regime that provided accommodations, however their effectiveness is questionable, for minority language rights. Such mono-linguistic language policies resulted in strong minority resistance and mobilisations ranging from peaceful protest to violent secession (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 3). The role of language in the identity perception of the Slavic Peoples is such that even where the same religion or cultural heritage is shared, language has still been a differentiating factor among neighbouring Slavic peoples to the extent that it was one part of the multidimensional aspects of inter-ethnic tensions in the former Yugoslavia (Greenberg 2001: 17; 2004; O'Reilly 2001). There were attempts to develop literacy languages along ethnic lines distinct from the Serbo-Croatian language in an effort to create new identities for which recognition could be demanded. One such effort was the creation of Macedonian literary language, which was distinct from Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian (Weinstein 1990: 13).

The linguistic aspect of ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe is not unique and in fact the democratisation attempts of many African and Asian countries (Lundberg 2009) faced similar resistance and challenges. In these political contexts, the attempts of creating a com-

mon identity among their citizens have been challenged by recognition demands of numerous language groups (Weinstein 1990 cited in Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 3), which in return made the construction of a national identity while maintaining the political integrity quite difficult. This is the crux of the problem faced by those countries that are considered to be 'in transition period', that is, they were ruled by the Communist regime for a long time from which they inherited a political history with a "specific discourse regarding ethnic and linguistic plurality" of their own (Grin and Daftary 2003: XVII). This is, however, not peculiar to countries ruled by the Communist regime as the underlying difficulty in this transition period comes from the plural composition of the country in question, which was historically recognised and accommodated by the old regime. The question of how and how much of this plural composition would be incorporated into the new political system is in fact a common question that many nation states, many of which were part of multi-national empires, faced during their founding years.

As noted previously, a similar question was also apparent in the Kurdish question as it emerged as a question of incorporation during the early modernisation policies of the Ottoman Empire and reached its climax with the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The underlying problem was, however, the same, that is, the Kurds' cultural, economic and to a certain extent administrative autonomy was historically recognised by the Empire thanks to the millet system which created an a-national and de-central social space in which Kurdishness could be constituted. The foundation of the Republic based on the project of creating a modern, central, secular nation state challenged and coercively attempted to assimilate any ethnic, linguistic or religious identity that the state considered as reactionary to its project of modernisation into a kind of Turkishness that was embodiment of the Kemalist ideology. The transformation of an a-national and de-central social space into a national and central one was in contradiction with the historical privileges of the Kurds as the last nation state founded from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey inherited a

specific discourse regarding ethnic and linguistic plurality; yet, it did want to build a nation state without providing any accommodations for any kind of diversity. The resistance generated as a result of such monolithic policies manifested itself in various form, ranging from peaceful protests to violent secessionist movements.

This takes us to the second political context in which linguistic diversity has challenged the stability and sustainability of the state, that is, regional minority nationalism. Linguistic conflicts have been particularly problematic in those countries that have regionally concentrated and historically rooted language groups. Dominant national groups usually tend to apply language policies that aim to dominate majority language(s) as the official language(s) of the state throughout the country including those areas in which minority groups are regionally concentrated and historically rooted (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 4). The rationale behind such policies and the resistance generated as a result of such policies is discussed below, which is important for the adequacy of a normative theory of language rights.

3.2.2 Language Policy and People's Interests in Language

Language-related claims and rights are multifaceted in nature and contextual to the extent that it is not always possible for a normative theory of language rights to be applicable to every linguistic conflict. The characteristics of the case and the function that language plays in that particular conflict are of paramount importance for the applicability and relevancy of a proposed theory or an adapted approach. Moreover, what is common in perhaps all linguistic conflicts is that the argument for a normative theory of language rights gets its first form according to the meaning attributed to language or the centrality of a particular dimension of language in a particular context. In other words, the questions of why language rights should be a theoretical and normative concern for political theorists and on

what rationale such recognition should be based demonstrate the centrality of a particular dimension of language as most political theories of language rights build on these questions and other normative issues arising out of language policy. Additionally, when we consider the tendency in many states' politics of language to avoid the identity dimension and far-reaching implications of language rights claims for nationhood and self-government, it becomes obvious that the problem of centrality or meaning is not just an intellectual process of choice among many other aspects of language; rather, it is a crucial and necessary step in understanding the linguistic conflict at hand.

"Public access, social mobility, democratic participation, and identity" (Patten 2003: 305) are among the important aspects of language that are being articulated in connection with people's interests in language; hence, a language policy is expected to address. These aspects are not necessarily mutually exclusive and in fact, in many cases, it is often possible to find them inextricably linked to one another. Language's role in social mobility or its use as a tool for individual survival is already apparent in the sense that people use language to conduct their daily lives and to communicate with each other. It is important to emphasise that in the case of social mobility, the aim of a language policy is to increase the accessibility of public services to the wider public and prevent language becoming an obstacle for people's access to public services or enjoyment of their rights. In other words, the priority is to make sure that language is not a barrier for the enjoyment of certain rights and services, which is based on the assumption that the bearer of the right and the recipient of the public services are unable to express himself/herself as his/her language repertoire limits him/her. In this case, language is seen as a utility and its role is to provide its speakers with an instrumental tool to better communicate in their daily lives and enjoy their rights without their language repertoire becoming obstacle for them.

3.2.2.1 Instrumental and Non-Instrumental Character of Language

In this sense, the role of language as an instrumental tool for communication is perhaps the most evident aspect of people's interests in language. Yet, one should not oversimplify the instrumental value of language by downgrading its instrumental role to being a tool for communication, which ignores other instrumental roles that language plays. The viewing language only as a basic communication tool should not conceal the various instrumental functions that language plays "beyond simply communicative reach", such as "being an instrument for reinforcing group loyalties and solidarities, affirming identities and histories, reproducing culture and advancing political and institutional claims" (Kymlicka and Grin (2003: 11). These examples in fact hint a particular intrinsic value that people attach to the use of a particular language, which manifests itself in one's perception of both individual and group identity as well as a language group's mobilisation for greater political representation and self-government. In this context, language has a 'non-instrumental' or 'intrinsic value', which plays a pivotal role in shaping one's identity (Green 1987; Réaume 1991; 2000; Rubio-Marín 2003; Fishman 1999; Edwards 2009) and is being used as a basis for political mobilisation.

The intrinsic value of a particular language choice, which assigns a non-instrumental character to language, has different implications from a language policy point of view compared to the above-mentioned instrumental character of language. Their priorities and purposes differ significantly. While the aim of a language policy that puts the instrumental nature of language to the centre is to increase the accessibility of public services to the wider public and prevent language becoming an obstacle for people's access to public services or enjoyment of their rights and freedoms, the non-instrumental character of language does not build on the premise of whether a person's language repertoire is a limiting factor in his/her access to the public services or enjoyment of certain human rights and

freedoms. On the contrary, the idea that language has an intrinsic value to a person's identity or language is something to be preserved, constitutes the basis for the non-instrumental character of language. It then primarily aims to recognise this intrinsic value to suggest that language for certain groups has roles, meanings or functions beyond being an instrumental tool for communication. The non-instrumental character of language is not, therefore, concerned with a person having language repertoire that will not limit his/her access to public services as in most cases, the person in question is already able to speak the dominant language and has no problem in terms of social mobility. The point here is that conditions in which language manifests itself as an instrumental tool for communication or a medium in exercising a right, "language use is governed by the usual democratic rights such as freedom of expression and the requirements of natural justice and rule of law", meaning that "there would be no need for distinctive rights protecting interests using a particular language" (Green 1987: 641). Thus, language rights claims are, in this sense, different from linguistic human rights (MacMillan 1998: 10) for which language is seen as an instrument for the enjoyment of other fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech or freedom of press.

As a normative approach to language policy, linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, Kontra, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1999, de Varennes 2001, Wright 2001) attempt to create widely accepted human rights standards that are applicable to all individuals regardless of their numbers, history, or nationhood (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 33). As attractive as this approach may seem, this approach suffers from the weakness of the international human rights law regulating linguistic human rights. As with other international human rights provisions, there are differences of interpretation and application of language rights enshrined in human rights declarations. This is largely due to the general limitations of international law, which has limited power of implementation. In addition, there are also issues surrounding the drafting and signing of human rights treaties which

by and large are based on compromise rather than consensus and provide legal flexibility in terms of interpretation and application through various mechanisms such as limitation clauses, derogation powers, reservations and margins of appreciation. de Varennes notes that "there is not in the present state of international law or under European treaties an unqualified right to use a minority language" or "right to language" (2001: 16; for similar, see Dunbar 2001; Schilling 2008). Therefore, as noted above, language rights claims are different from linguistic human rights in the sense that the non-instrumental nature of language and its implications are the main focus of language rights.

3.2.2.2 Turkey's Position on the Kurdish Language and Kurdish Identity

This distinction between the instrumental and non-instrumental character of language manifests itself in discussions on the rights and freedoms surrounding Kurdish language. Historically, the use of the Kurdish language even in private sphere has been problematic in Turkey to the extent that people were punished for speaking Kurdish even in their private lives until the law was changed in 1991. The use of Kurdish in political propaganda or in a context where a case for a different distinct Kurdish identity was made, the punishment has been more severe. Sometimes even a reasonable demand for the rights of the Kurds can easily be associated with being pro-Kurdish, worsening the situation by dimming the possibility of a democratic discussion and solution. This situation is the main obstacle in providing the Kurds in Turkey with human rights protection and is often manipulated by political actors on both sides of the politico-ethnic spectrum to the great overall disadvantage to the human rights project in Turkey. The successive AKP governments have taken various steps to normalise the use of Kurdish in the country including, to some extent, in receiving public services though structural and institutional changes that would challenge the established state discourse were not made.

The common character of the policies that the successive AKP governments have issued is that they are more concerned with the instrumental aspect of Kurdish language. Given the human rights violations that occurred historically in the Kurdish question, this is surely a progress on so many levels; however, this is also where the debate on the future of the Kurdish question and the content of the Solution process gets complicated. The language rights claims of the Kurdish political movement or the bearings of their political demands on language rights put the non-instrumental nature of language to the centre of the Kurdish question to which the state has been so far reluctant. As briefly implied above, Turkey's mono-linguistic language policy is quite established in the sense that it has been an integral part of the Kemalist ideology since the foundation of the Republic and included not only the suppression of regional languages but also engineering of a new Turkish language from the administrative, commercial and 'peasant' dialects spoken in the region during the Ottoman Empire through 'the Turkish Language Reform', which Lewis (2000) describes as a catastrophic success.

Language was utilised by almost all states, including liberal democracies that had gone through nation building process to transform the state and society by attempting to create a commonality or a sense of togetherness among their citizens. The imposition of a common language, in this sense, plays a crucial role in consolidating the state power as well as building civic identities that people could identify themselves with. Nation-building approach to language policy envisions convergence on a common national language in order to create a common identity and sense of membership and it is, therefore, a nationalist project. When this project witnesses a strong minority resistance from groups that are "sufficiently large and institutionally complete" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003:5), then the viability and legitimacy of this approach will be called into question not least because if there is a competing nationalist movement within the state then the insistence on language convergence is likely to be counter-productive and "policies that recognise and institutionalise a

degree of national and linguistic difference" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 41) should be adopted.

Moreover, it is equally important to note that the choice of a common language to be used in the public domain, education, governance or legislation is not simply a neutral process. Surely, it is not quite possible for a state to stay neutral in this process as it has to function in one language or another; hence, one or more languages will be in a favoured position. However, the imposition of a common language resolves the questions of "who should exercise sovereignty or who has rights of self-government […] by creating a 'we' that is united as a single political community with a common sense of nationhood" (Kymlicka and Grin 2003: 12). This imposition becomes particularly problematic in those political contexts where there is competing minority nationalism against the majority's nationalist policies.

The 'we' created in Turkey's case has not recognised Kurdishness or Kurdish identity in its effort to construct a new national identity for itself and embraced the Kurds in any meaningful way to the extent that the end result has been the misrecognition and/or non-recognition of the Kurds. The imposition of Turkish as the only official language throughout the country has been an established language policy practice, which is usually seen as an integral part of 'national unity and integrity' of the state. The argument for the national unity and integrity is a common phrase in Turkey's political and legal discourses uttered against any distinct identity claim other than how the state defines nationhood and national identity.

The national unity argument implies that there is only one 'nation' in the country and accordingly any other claim suggesting otherwise threatens the 'national integrity' of the state. This argument represents the century-old fear of dismemberment of the Turkish state since the Treaty of Sèvres, which, as noted before, was an agreement that the Central Pow-

ers had to sign subsequent to their defeat in World War I, which marked the beginning of the partition of the Ottoman Empire and envisaged the establishment of a local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas – South-eastern and some parts of Eastern Turkey – with a clause on the possibility of future independence from Turkey though it was rejected by the Turkish National Movement and never realised. This primal fear of Turkey, often phrased as the 'Sèvres syndrome' (Jung 2003; Hovsepyan 2012), expresses wider meaning, "including the fear of territorial dismemberment, mistrust toward the outside world, worldview based on conspiracy theories and other phobias" and it manifests itself in various discussions such as democratisation or recognition of rights of minorities or similar reforms (Hovsepyan 2012: 4).

In fact, Turkey insistently put the special-case argument of 'national unity and integrity' to avoid any international document or treaty dealing with the rights and problems of ethnic or linguistic minority groups. It put forward the argument of 'national unity and integrity' during the drafting process of the rights of minorities of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the right to education of the UN Covenant on Economic; Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding to the rights of minorities and during the drafting of provisions of other international legal instruments setting out the rights of minorities and the right to education. However, Turkey's suggestions for alternative wordings were repeatedly defeated during the voting stages. The point here is that Turkey's special-case argument of national unity and integrity to avoid providing its ethnic minorities, particularly the Kurds, with the right to mother-tongue education and so forth have been consistently rejected by international bodies and at international level. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that any reservation has to be compatible with the object and purpose of the treaty in question. Similarly, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action emphasises that it is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms despite their national

or regional idiosyncrasies and historical, cultural or religious background. Yet, failing to change the wording of these provisions, Turkey has consistently entered reservations to various human rights treaties on these points.

Turkey's minority policies (Oran 2008; 2011; Çavuşoğlu 1999; Kaya, 2009) are based on the Treaty of Lausanne, an agreement between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies after the failed attempt of the Treaty of Sèvres, according to which only Christians, Jews and Armenians are recognised as minorities and are allowed to open their own schools and teach their own languages. No other ethnic, religious or linguistic group other than those mentioned above, including Kurds, Caucasians and the Laz etc. have an official minority status in Turkey.

Additionally, according to the article 42 of the Turkish Constitution, no language other than Turkish can be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education as it states:

> "**No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens** at any institution of education. **Foreign languages to be taught in institutions of education and the rules to be followed by schools conducting education in a foreign language shall be determined by law**. The provisions of international treaties are reserved (emphasis added)" (Article 42, Turkish Constitution).

Because the Constitution does not allow any language other than Turkish to be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens with the exception of minorities mentioned above, the Kurds could not establish their own schools teaching in and their own language until the law was changed in 2014 to allow private schools to instruct education in 'different languages and dialects'. However, it is important at this point to emphasise that the law spe-

cifically refers to minority languages as 'different languages and dialects' without mentioning the right to education (Beiter 2006) in mother tongue and it limits the education in 'different languages and dialects' to the private education initiatives. One particular reason is that the Constitution clearly forbids the teaching of another language other than Turkish as a mother tongue; therefore, the letter of the law could be seen as a political compromise until a constitutional amendment is made. This assimilationist and coercive imposition of Turkish language is, on the other hand, the result of the fact that the use of minority languages in education and public service has been perceived as a threat to the integrity of the state.

The fact that no religious, linguistic or ethnic minority other than those mentioned in the Treaty of Lausanne don't have the right to establish their own schools teaching in and their own language is not coincidental. It was noted in the discussion on the formation of the state discourse that, the common practice of association of the Kurdish question with reactionary politics, tribal resistance and regional backwardness has been the distinctive character of the state discourse. Accordingly, the state for so long has avoided implicit or explicit recognition of Kurdishness of the Kurdish question, that is, the Kurdish question as an ethno-political matter. Clearly, the Kurds with their deeply rooted and regionally concentrated population posed the greatest challenge to Turkey in terms of their claims for self-government and constituting a distinct 'nation' within. Therefore, language rights claims of the Kurds have more powerful and concrete implications than those holding an official minority status according to the Treaty of Lausanne.

There are many reasons that could be articulated to explain the hesitancy of the state to recognise Kurdish language with its intrinsic value to the Kurds, ranging from political populism to maintaining the status quo. However, the real answer lies in the characteristics of the Kurds' language rights claims as the main issue is not about the removal of ban on

Kurdish to increase the social mobility or the availability of Kurdish language for the Kurds in their private lives. After all, language rights require an environment in which a language could live, which in return raises many questions as to language choices in various domains including the public institutions. More importantly, with language rights, minority groups hope to create members of their communities for the future.

3.2.2.3 Language and Nationhood

In these contexts, the intrinsic value that people attach to language become a source of political mobilisation and linguistic conflict, which is part of the wider national conflict between the state — usually the dominant language group — and a minority language group. The meaning attached to language goes beyond the idea of language as a utility or a communication tool in a way that language groups consider "themselves not just as having a distinct language, but also as forming a distinct 'nation' within the larger state" for which they seek recognition by mobilising "behind nationalist political parties with nationalist goals of self-government. Language rights are part of a larger programme of sub-state nationalism" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 5). A language group's demand for recognition of its language, for example, "by having it taught in the public schools comes from the group's broader demand for recognition as a distinct political community and building block of a larger federated polity" (Bauböck 2001: 332; 2000). Similarly, the imposition of a common language resolves the questions of "who should exercise sovereignty or who has rights of self-government" by constructing a national identity with a sense of 'we' to create a single political community that shares a commonality and togetherness. (Kymlicka and Grin 2003: 12). In other words, the issue is not about a simple choice of language but an explicit power struggle between the state and a language group that considers itself a nation within.

It should also be noted that the imposition of a common language during the nation-building process in an attempt to create a commonality and to build civic identities for the assumed political unity, also carries an ideologically biased package of modernisation and corresponding policies. It is part of the state's broader efforts for creating a single political community on the basis of a newly conceptualised national identity. The construction of a new national identity usually takes the dominant language group's identity and language as the norm and expects, sometimes coercively, others' assimilation into it. The compulsory primary education becomes a process of assimilation for minority groups. This obviously challenges and ignores the identity perception of different groups that historically resided in the country. Aside from the direct implications of the new national identity for minority groups' historically rooted identity perceptions, dominant national groups usually tend to apply language policies that aim to dominate majority language(s) as the official language(s) of the state throughout the country including those areas in which minority groups are regionally concentrated and historically rooted (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 4). Because of that, linguistic conflicts have been particularly problematic in those countries that have regionally concentrated and historically rooted language groups.

There is no denying that a sense of togetherness and cohesion is a needed element for a functioning democracy and one might accordingly argue that the imposition of a common language, in this sense, helps achieve this collective consciousness. Aside from the philosophical and theoretical arguments against this articulation on the basis of justice and the fact that it possesses the danger of justifying and presenting 'liberal' assimilationist policies as the only way of achieving cohesion, from the state's perspective, the imposition of a common language is not just about providing its citizens with a tool of communication. It has other controversial implications beyond creating social mobilisation.

As noted above, a particular language policy is part of the state's larger project of modernisation, which, in many cases, expects assimilation of 'distinct' identities into the identity perception of the nation state and involves indoctrination of the state ideology. Similarly, a state might consider a monolithic language policy essential for the protection of its political integrity. Regardless of the rationale behind them, attempts of creating an assumed unity or togetherness for a cohesive and integrated nation state and using language as a utility for that purpose, be it assimilation, modernisation, social mobilisation, the protection of the state integrity or indoctrination of the state ideology, have resulted in regional minority nationalism that has sometimes amounted to violent conflicts, especially in those cases in which a strong majority nationalism is confronted by a similarly powerful minority nationalism with a strong sense of 'we'. It is hardly possible to argue that the discontent in these contexts is based on the instrumental nature of language. The intrinsic value and non-instrumental nature of language play the main motivating factors behind this power minority nationalism.

One should, on the other hand, notice that there is always an assumption of value or legitimacy for language from both the language group's and the state's perspectives in their efforts to defend a particular language policy or language rights claims. This is problematic not least because of generalisation of one's personal attachment to his/her culture as the ultimate manifestation of the language group's right to have its language recognised by the state with the outcome of self-government, particularly on the territory that it historically existed. Assuming a universal value to language can be difficult to objectively defend despite how the common sense compels us to consider it that way.

Conversely, there is also always a covert assumption of legitimacy for the official or monolinguistic language policies of the state that tends to degrade language groups' claims as illegitimate or inferior and offers remedies, if any, accordingly, which in the end favour the

dominant group. The categorisation of language rights claims as 'nationalist' in a derogatory sense and dismissal of certain legitimate questions that these claims raise result in maintaining the status-quo of the dominant language group without asking any fundamental questions for its assumed greater legitimacy in pursuing monolithic language policies. Similarly, Kymlicka and Patten note that in the four Western countries that set the post-war intellectual agenda, US, UK, France, and Germany, despite public institutions' monolithic language policies, there were not any significant movements challenging the hegemonic position of the majority language in these countries. This in return, Kymlicka and Patten continue, resulted in scholars from these countries writing "as if one could simply take for granted that people in a political community share a common language. They have often written as if this were the 'normal' or 'natural' condition for a 'mature' democratic political community" (2003: 7, 51).

This tendency is quite apparent in language policy making and discussions on language rights in Turkey. It is often possible to find derogatory comments by politicians about Kurdish language that questions the linguistic capacity of Kurdish language. One might for a moment assume that the question whether Kurdish language has the linguistic capacity to be a language of instruction in education is an innocent question; however, this question is not a question posed out of linguistic curiosity neither is it ready to take 'yes' as an answer. This and similar issues are discussed in the following chapter; yet, at this point, it is suffice to say that language rights as briefly noted above are part of the wider national conflict and in this sense, what appears to be an intellectual discussion on the linguistic capacity of Kurdish language is also part of the state discourse on the Kurdish question, which tends to degrade the Kurds' cultural traits. Besides, the question whether the Kurdish language is linguistically capable could give further legitimacy to the Kurds' language rights claims as it might be argued that the Kurds need their language rights to be recognised so that the Kurdish language could develop linguistically and get sufficient for the

future generations. This, again, points to the non-instrumental nature of language and its relation to claim for nationhood.

The connection between nationhood and language (Taras 1998; Barbour and Carmichael 2000) is complicated and it is not always clear how they are related as having a distinct language with an intrinsic value attached to it does not always result in a group to view itself as a distinct nation (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 6). There is a, therefore, particular difficulty in revealing the non-instrumental nature of language through a discussion on the intrinsic value of a particular language choice. In this sense, a more practical approach is more helpful in revealing the non-instrumental nature of language or in other words, its function beyond a communication tool: What does a language group want to preserve when resisting to a mono-linguistic language policy? This reveals the crux of the problem.

This question helps locate the issue adequately without oversimplifying and overgeneralising the value of language to a language group or assuming a categorical legitimacy of the official language policies of the state. This is a crucial and much needed balance in order to take a critical approach to the established majority-oriented policies of the state while at the same time developing countermeasures to prevent any possible human rights violations that may occur if the minority language group attempts to create its own nation-building process with similar methods and practices that of the state. Language rights claims should not be considered as a method of going back in history. The critical account of nation building process and questions on the dominant position of a particular language in a state should be considered as a way of asking the right questions in order to escape from maintaining the status-quo of the dominant language group by treating its dominant position as 'natural' or taking an existing policy as the 'norm'.

These considerations are of paramount importance since language rights are about being able to use one's mother tongue or native language in various domains including education

facilities and public services and they are collective rights by nature. Language rights carry themselves a risk of becoming the source of further nationalisation of a language group. The main reason is the tendency in politics to create outcome-oriented policies, which eventually create its own ideology, methodology and morality. For example, the right to education in mother tongue is legitimate and a fundamental human right. It is, therefore, quite legitimate to demand the recognition of this right from the state. However, most of the time, the purpose of education in mother tongue is expressed along the lines of securing the flourishing of language or preservation of cultural. As much as they are, again, legitimate and genuine concerns, these types of motivations are outcome-oriented with a specific objective, that is, the flourishing of language and preservation of culture, which, without safeguards in place, can create its own ideology and turn into an authoritarian pressure toward those who disagree on the application or methodology of these objectives. It should not be forgotten that these motivations, regardless of how genuine and legitimate they are, are not neutral desire in terms of politics and have a nationalist sentiment attached to them. In other words, they have, naturally, their own agenda, ideological construction and a specific understanding.

As noted above, language rights are, the manifestation of claims about the rights of self-government and related to nationalism and ethnicity, which, in some cases, renders the question of recognition of these rights as a question of recognition of nationhood. These characteristics of language rights also show not only the great challenge they pose to monolithic language and identity policies but also the conflictual character that language can have, that is, it can shatter the very unity that a particular language policy is intended to create.

Moreover, language groups' demands for self-government or recognition for their language rights are most of the time intertwined. It is possible either to argue that they demand a

political status in order to create an environment in which their language can flourish or language and its intrinsic value to language group and to its members are only utilised and instrumentalised to create legitimacy for political mobilisation and status. Similarly, on the question of minority groups' desire to preserve their distinctive differences and its relation to the claim for self-government, Bauböck argues that "rather than self-government being a means to preserve cultural difference, this difference is more often preserved as a means to justify the claim to self-government" (2000: 384). In either case, the question of what a language group really wants to preserve when resisting the imposition of a language or a monolithic language policy occupies a central point in locating the nature of language rights a specific context, particularly its non-instrumental nature.

That said, this does not imply that preserving the language is not valuable or does not have a purpose in itself; on the contrary, the issue is to underline the cultural, political and symbolic motivations behind political mobilisations to preserve a minority language. Accordingly, Kymlicka and Grin state that:

> "When a language group fights to preserve its language, it is never just preserving a tool for communication: **It is also preserving certain political claims, autonomous institutions, cultural products and practices, and national identities**. Conversely, of course, when the state attempts to impose a dominant language on minorities, it is never just imposing a language: **It is also imposing a set of political and cultural claims about the primacy of the state, the need for common rules and centralized institutions, the need to learn a new history and literature and the construction of new nation-state loyalties and identities.** Language disputes are never just disputes over language" (2003: 11) (emphasis added).

The question of what purpose the imposition of a language on minority groups and the resistance of minority groups to such mono-linguistic language policies to preserve their

languages serve gives us a glimpse into the rationale behind the reluctance and hesitancy to grant language rights claims.

It is clear that language is being assigned a symbolic power in terms of ownership of nationhood and political legitimacy by both the state and language group, which makes the symbolic power of language (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991) in terms of sovereignty and rights of self-government quite apparent and central to the issue of language rights. There is a competing ascendancy over nationhood between the state and language group as "'national and ethnic identities are in most cases connected to membership in a language group" (Bauböck 2001: 333) and in this sense, "language conflicts are inextricably related to nationalist conflicts" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 6). Kymlicka and Patten continue:

> "For the minority language group, recognition of its language is seen as **a symbol of recognition of its nationhood**. For the minority group, official multilingualism is desired in part because it is a symbol of, and a step towards, acceptance that **it is a multination state, a partnership of two or more nations within a single state**.
>
> […] Conversely, attempts to impose a single state language throughout the territory of the state are often attempts to impose **a hegemonic national identity on all citizens**, and to entrench the idea that the state is **a nation-state belonging to the dominant group and embodying its right to self-determination**. Majority support for official monolingualism, as much as minority demands for bilingualism, are typically manifestations of nationalist projects" (2003: 5) (emphasis added).

The presentation of recognition of language as a symbol of nationhood and more importantly its implication for the political structure as well as the founding logic of the state clearly challenges the common inclinations of many states toward building a nation-state on the basis of a dominant language group's identity and nationhood perception rather

than recognising various ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities and issuing policies accordingly. This challenge in return sheds light on the hesitancy or reluctance of the state to recognise a regional language group.

The recognition of a regional language group's language and consequently of the language group itself as a nation within has clearly far-reaching consequences. Being recognised as a 'nation' in this sense is not only a mere act of admittance of various diversities on a particular territory. It involves a claim to territory (the nation's 'homeland') and "a claim to self-determination over that territory, perhaps even its secession", and this is why according official language status to a regional language which is not preferable for the state as it could be "tantamount to, or a step towards, accepting the claim to nationhood by the regional group, and hence opening up claims to territorial self-government" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 5). Therefore, for a state founded exclusively on the basis of a dominant group's right to self-determination and construction of a national identity based on its self-perception, language rights challenge the very foundation and centralist state power that the nation-building process intended to create. Accommodations of language rights in these contexts could be tantamount to the reimagination of the nation state (May 1997; 2001) with a different conceptualisation of nationhood and institutionalisation of a more inclusive language policy.

It should be noticed that there is a strong symbolism that represents the power, nationhood and self-government or, put differently, presents an argument for the (co)-ownership of the state in discussions on language policy and language rights. One might, therefore, suggest that similar to the idea of religious disestablishment in order to address religious conflict, the state should not recognise, endorse or support any particular language in order not to "encourage or discourage particular linguistic choices by its citizens" (Kymlicka

and Patten 2003: 32), which would in return prevent the attachment of a symbolic meaning to language from both the state's and minority language group's perspectives.

One problem with this approach is that language policy is not only and always about language repertoires of individuals, meaning that a state can refrain from unduly intervening in language choices of its citizens in their daily lives or attaching any symbolic yet powerful meaning to language; however, it cannot do so when it comes to language choices in public institutions. The reason is that it has to function in one language or another, as a result of which one or more languages will be in a favoured position. Because there is simply no way that everyone will be able to speak the favoured language, the state will have to promote or support if not recognise other languages in public institutions, most apparent example of which is public translation services in courts to ensure fair trial (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 32).

Additionally, this approach is not viable in a linguistic conflict where the conflictual character of the case makes the state's neutral position practically impossible. For instance, the Kurdish question reached a level where the state's existence is required so that it can act in a transformative manner to eliminate those policies that had created the issue in the first place. Moreover, the legal, social and political problems in Turkey arising out of the Kurdish question are the outcome of an actively pursued nationalist project by the state. The favoured position of Turkish language is not an outcome of a natural process, let alone the fact that in its current form neither identity construction nor language policy of the state recognise the Kurds. In short, in national conflicts with a strong linguistic aspect, instead of the absence of the state, its very existence is required; hence, 'linguistic establishment' (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 32; Bauböck 2001) is the norm.

Going back to the argument that accommodation of language rights in political contexts where language signifies an intrinsic value to claims of self-government and nationhood

could be tantamount to the reimagination of the nation state, the rationale, extent and source of such 're-imagination' and other relevant questions arising out of policy implementations are in fact what a normative theory of language rights is attempting to address.

The issue of a more inclusive language policy is not only a theoretical discussion. On the contrary there are certain concrete questions that such a language policy is expected to address. The questions of which language(s) will be used in education, governance and legislation or what kinds of accommodations will be provided for those speaking a language other than the official language(s) and more importantly whether such a language policy requires a reimagination of the state in terms of power delegation, self-government or identity politics are among the normative questions of language rights.

The requisite re-conceptualisation of nationhood for the accommodations of language rights and their implications necessities the realisation that the numerical majority of a dominant language group does not automatically assign greater legitimacy to the pursuit of a mono linguistic language or similar policies that foresee assimilation into the majority's perception of nationhood. Moreover, the practical outcome that the state perhaps intended to have as a result of its nationalist project of imposing a common language on its territory including those areas in which a regional language group is regionally concentrated and historically rooted, may not be attainable given the resistance generated as a result of such policies. In fact, in such cases it is quite likely that language could become more divisive and an invitation to fragment along ethnic or linguistic lines or amplify the wider national conflict. Re-imagination of the state, in this sense, requires a different mentality that is not majority driven and does not assume greater legitimacy because of its size or have self-perception of ownership of the country.

As noted above, linguistic conflicts have been particularly problematic in those countries that have regionally concentrated and historically rooted language groups. "Belgium (Flan-

ders), Spain (Catalonia and the Basque Country), Canada (Quebec and parts of several other provinces), Italy (the German-speaking South Tyrol), United States (Puerto Rico), and Switzerland (the French- and Italian-speaking cantons)" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 4) are among the examples of linguistic conflicts that have generated strong minority nationalism. Kymlicka and Patten note that in these political contexts, language rights have seen varying degree of recognition and the common tendency is to accord an official language status to the regional language at least where it is concentrated, which aimed to create an environment in which speakers of the regional language can access a wide range of public institutions and conduct their lives in their own tongue. (2003: 4).

The importance of this point in relation to the discussion on normative theories of language rights is that in these political contexts, there is already an official recognition of language rights of the regional language. Consequently, political theories written or discussed in these contexts are more concerned with the purpose and extent of this recognition alongside other normative issues arising out of language policy. Additionally, as Kymlicka and Patten themselves note in their edited volume in which various normative theories of language rights are put together, "the field of language rights is a relatively new one for normative political theorists […] A fully adequate theory of language rights will undoubtedly have to consider other contexts, distinctions, and approaches" (2003: 51).

Therefore, a discussion on the Kurds' language rights claims in Turkey differs slightly in the sense that there is no official recognition of language rights of the Kurds unlike the countries mentioned above. While political theories written and discussed in these countries tend to deal more with the practical problems of language rights that emerge in their actual implementations, in the Kurdish case, the issue is still in its initial stages. Thus, the following part gives an overview of normative political theories of language rights with a

particular focus on certain points which are helpful in explaining the state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights in the following chapter.

3.3 Political Theories of Language Rights

Language rights claims are clearly contentious enough to raise many questions as to the justification for granting a legally protected language right to the speaker of a particular language, their distinctions from similar language-related concepts and discussions, their holders or which language group should have these rights and the extent and limits of their constitutional recognition. A normative political theory of language rights is initially expected to grapple with these issues and develop arguments that deal with these fundamental questions. It is clear that the interpretation and limit of language rights in their implementations as part of a more inclusive language policy would differ significantly depending on how these aspects are approached and addressed. Additionally, it is possible that a state's language policy might have a multi-faceted nature as to have different justifications for various regulations.

3.3.1 The Questions of Rationale and Purpose Behind Recognition

Political theories of language rights ground themselves according to the meaning they attribute to language and to the centrality of a particular dimension of people's interests in language in a particular context or the rational and purpose of recognition of language rights within the limits of one's ideological or philosophical conviction. These also give glimpse into the rationale behind their recognition and what purpose the recognition should intend to produce or secure, if any.

The utilisation of language as an ideological instrument in nation-building process to create common identities for a single political unity is already noted. The use of language in

this particular way to achieve ideologically motivated national goals clearly does not take the value that one might attach to language or the social character of language in producing cultural heritage into account as the priority is to create a language convergence as part of the larger political and economic modernisation project of the nation state (Green 1987: 652). In other words, the preservation of language(s) other than the dominant language - usually the majority's language - that shapes the identity perception of the nation state and maintenance of linguistic diversity are ignored. The nation-building approach to language policy, therefore, is not concerned with the possible and eventual outcome of such assimilationist language policy, that is, the disappearance of minority languages, sometimes referred to as 'linguistic genocide' (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000), or the detrimental effects of this policy on the flourishing of minority languages such as marginalisation of minority languages whereby a minority language speaker uses his/her mother tongue only in certain contexts and shifts to the dominant language in other contexts (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 43). The fundamental questions that these assimilationist language policies raises in terms of justice and fairness are obvious. The viability of this nationalist and assimilationist language policy is, on the other hand, discussed in the previous part by arguing that it is particularly problematic and counter-productive in those political contexts where there is a strong and competing minority nationalism through which minority groups mobilise behind political parties to have their language rights claims recognised, which sometimes include an official language status or various types of power delegation.

In contrast to the nation-building approach to language policy that aims a language convergence without any attempt for the preservation of linguistic diversity or accommodations for minority languages, there is another approach, which prioritises the maintenance and preservation of minority languages as the foundation for language rights. Why the preservation of vulnerable languages should be a priority from language rights point of view, why one should be concerned with the disappearance or marginalisation of some

languages or language communities to the extent that policy makers are expected to take steps to prevent such outcome (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 44) are important questions for understanding the various justifications for the maintenance and preservation of minority languages and to escape from an 'implicit value assumption' in ensuring the survival of language groups (Green 1987: 653; Grin 2003).

One particular approach attempts to justify the preservation of minority languages by pointing out that linguistic diversity and biodiversity is connected and both are of value to people; therefore, the disappearance of a language constitutes a decline in linguistic diversity, which in returns is "akin to a decline in biodiversity" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 44; Boran 2003: 190). This justification, Boran notes, is similar to the protection of threatened species (Boran 2003: 190). Similarly, according to Van Parijs, linguistic diversity has a strong role in protecting cultural diversity, which "permits a diversity of experimentation in private and collective life, from which the general interest may well, in the long run, benefit" (2000: 7).

In addition to their "contribution […] to global linguistic diversity", another account for the preservation of languages argues, is something intrinsically valuable about particular languages (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 5). Emphasising the importance and the intrinsic value of each particular language, Réaume states that, as a human accomplishment, "each language is itself a manifestation of human creativity which has value independent of its uses" (2000: 250). "There is no such thing as a primitive language" and "every language is capable of great beauty and power of expression" (Crystal 2000: 29). Certain derogatory comments on particular languages in terms of their linguistic capacities are, therefore, politically motivated expressions rather than being scientific observations. Thus, in this approach, the rationale behind the language preservation is that as a human accomplishment and manifestation of human creativity, languages should be preserved. Perhaps the most

apparent critique of the value of linguistic diversity argument is the tendency that it inadvertently simplifies the value of language by downgrading it to diversity itself.

It was noted previously that the nation-building approach to language policy foresee language as part of economic and political modernisation; therefore, it aims to increase the social mobility of people by ensuring that language does not ground a liability for people's participation to the democratic institutions by attempting to create equal opportunities. However, it is important to underline that the viability of this approach is limited as when a minority language group that raise language rights claims has "a fairly full range of options (a societal culture) in its own language" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 46; 2005), the social mobility argument loses its ground and appeal because the language group in question does not suffer from lack of proficiency in the dominant language and what is more, it considers itself as a nation within. Moreover, Green notes that "when a minority is culturally and linguistically distinctive, demands for fair treatment will encompass much more than the centrally important economic issues" (1987: 642; 1982: 236). In other words, the minority group's priority will become its language to be in the same footing with the majority's language in respect to language choices in various domains. This leads us to a point discussed in the previous section: Language is not just an instrumental tool for communication; rather, the non-instrumental nature of language plays a defining role in people's interests in language; hence, a language policy is expected to address.

From this perspective, the questions of why the preservation of vulnerable languages should be a priority from language rights point of view, why one should be concerned with the disappearance or marginalisation of some languages or language communities to the extent that policy makers are expected to take steps to prevent such outcome are given answers on the ground that language is of value to people and language group; thus, there is a legitimate concern that a language group demands that its language survives and flour-

ishes. Language, therefore, cannot be reduced to being an essential tool of communication as it has an 'intrinsic value' (Réaume 2000) or 'expressive values' beyond its instrumental nature, that is, it is 'a marker of identity' and represents "a cultural inheritance and a concrete expression of community" (Green: 1987: 659). In Réaume's words:

> "Most people value their language not only instrumentally, as a tool, but also intrinsically, as a cultural inheritance and as a marker of identity as a participant in the way of life it represents. Their language is a repository of the traditions and cultural accomplishments of their community as well as being a kind of cultural accomplishment itself. It is the vehicle through which a community creates a way of life for itself and is intrinsically bound up with that way of life" (2000: 251).

This is not, however, to suggest that language defines people's identity conclusively and exclusively. It is clear that the reinforcement of the argument that language conclusively defines us is considered as essentialist; therefore, May accordingly stresses that "language, or any specific cultural aspect of ethnic and/or national identity for that matter, must be recognised as a contingent factor" in identity, adding that language does not conclusively define us and may not be a requisite or important feature in the construction of our both individual or collective identities; yet, it is a significant and constitutive factor of identity (2003: 141; 2005: 327; 2001; for similar, see Edwards 1985; 2002; Eastman 1984; Coulmas 1992; Bentahila and Davies 1993) as "languages provide their speakers with significant individual and collective forms of linguistic identity" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 46). The recognition of the intrinsic value of language in itself, however, raises further questions.

Once the constitutive character of language in shaping one's and language group's identity has been acknowledged, the question then becomes how much protection the recognition of the intrinsic value of language entails from a language policy point of view or what out-

come should such a policy intend to produce, if any. The latter also implies a further categorisation in normative political theories of language rights, that is, should the regime of language rights be out-come oriented in the sense that a language policy for language rights should aim a desired outcome and measure its success according to whether the outcome has been satisfied?

As discussed before, the nation-building approach to language policy desires convergence on a common language and the success of language policy is measured accordingly. The nationalist nature of such approach clearly has the potential to resort to coercive assimilationist methods to achieve the desired outcome as language turns into an ideological instrument for the national goals. In the language maintenance approach to language policy, the outcome is the preservation of languages and protection of language groups with varying degree of emphasis and priority on these objectives. Procedural approaches, on the other hand, attempt to articulate a procedural or non-outcome oriented language policy which is indifferent to the question whether the intended outcomes will be generated; rather, it focuses on whether "certain procedural standards have been satisfied in the generation of whatever outcomes happen to come about" (Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 49). Most procedural approaches are also a critique of the outcome-oriented argument that the purpose of the language rights regime is to secure the survival of those language groups; therefore, the success and effectiveness of a language policy is determined by whether the policies and rights regulating language rights can secure the survival of those languages.

Réaume (1991; 1994) and Green (1987) are critical of the survivalist approach that grounds the foundation of language rights on the survival of language groups over time. Green notes the Charter of French Language in Québec, which, in its preamble, states that Quebecers' wish to "see the quality and influence of the French language assured" is recognised by the National Assembly of Québec, and argues that the charter attempts to achieve

this outcome by placing restrictions on the use of other languages and requiring the use of French. This is similar to the above-noted nation-building approach to language policy, which sees language as an instrumental tool for nation-building and ethnic survival. The value of language is constituted in terms of ethnic survival and comprehensive steps are expected from policy makers to ensure the survival of regional majority languages (French in Quebec and English elsewhere) and equality of status between the two languages as there is "an inherent territorial imperative in linguistic demography" despite "the social reality that French is in a minority position in North America and needs vigorous support in order to survive" (Green 1987: 654). Gruben also notes that the principal objective of Canada's language policy is to ensure linguistic survival (2008: 92; for Canada's language policy, see Brand 1997; MacMillan 1998; Marx 1967; Scott 1970; Conklin 1978). Green continues:

> "Our sadness at the extinction of a language does not itself seem to warrant the imposition of duties on others to keep that language alive, particularly if they are deliberately abandoning it in order to gain social prestige and economic power. The abstract interest in linguistic survival seems almost aesthetic; **it evinces a concern for languages as things in themselves, rather than for their speakers**. But like the extinction of other endangered species, the death of a language is either mediated by human interests or irrelevant to questions of human rights" (1987: 656) (emphasis added).

On this aspect, Réaume states that the objective of ensuring the survival of a language, in this case French in North America, is problematic as a normative basis for language rights, noting that "any theory of rights based on human interests must focus on the speakers of a language rather than on the language itself"; otherwise, the argument for the survival of a language "tends either to be ultimately aesthetic in nature or to anthropomorphize lan-

guage. It is not languages that have rights, but people" (1991: 39). Moreover, the crucial point in the survivalist argument is the geographical area on which the language in question is being spoken. In other words, the concern is the survival of the language in a particular geographical area rather than its mere existence in the world; therefore, Réaume notes that the demand for "special protections for French is conditional on the idea that French must survive in North America; thus, its preservation is not of importance to French language itself" but to its speakers on the North America (1991: 40).

Accordingly, Green highlights that another approach grounded on the idea of survival could be a desire for cultural continuity as language is, in the ethnic context, both the vehicle and the expression of cultural inheritance and people's aspirations (1987: 656). People's substantial interest in cultural survival and continuity is clear; however, the question is the plausibility of this desire from policy-making point of view. Green argues that as "a future-oriented interest, of potentially indefinite extent", which may include "the desire to see the use of one's language continue in perpetuity"; linguistic survival also raises two important moral concerns. Firstly, the identity of languages is not permanent as it changes over very long periods of time so does culture. Secondly, it is not possible to determine the potential effects of language policy as "our concern for future generations tends to diminish with their distance from us" (1987: 656-7). Similarly, Laitin and Reich state that it is fundamentally illiberal to assume that a group has "inevitably an abiding interest in sustaining ancestral cultural forms", adding that we cannot assume that "all members of cultural minorities value membership in their own culture above all others"; moreover, the assumption of minorities as homogeneous ignores intra-group tension, which is unrealistic (2003: 87, 89).

3.3.2 The Concept of Linguistic Security

Thus, Réaume and Green (1989) understand the interest in language that compels us to form a regime of language rights as a concern for linguistic security and argue that a concern for survival cannot justify the regime of language rights (Green 1987: 658) not least because of its implausibility in terms of policy making but also theoretically locating the interest in language incorrectly by focusing on the language itself rather than its speakers as the bearers of language rights. The concept of linguistic security, Green states, is "the knowledge that one's language group may flourish and that one may use the language with dignity. Unlike the future-oriented value of survival, security is present-oriented and it encompasses both the individual and social aspects of language" (1987: 658). Linguistic security takes the distinction between the instrumental nature of language as a tool for communication and what Green (1987: 659) describes as an expressive interest in language as "a marker of cultural identity, a cultural inheritance and a concrete expression of community" into account and aims to "give speakers a secure environment in which to make choices about language use, and in which normal processes of language transmission between generations can take pace in way that confers positive value on the resulting ethnic and cultural identification" (Réaume 1991: 46). The creation of a fair and secure environment for a language is the main priority from linguistic security point of view in order to ensure that speakers make choices about language use freely (Réaume and Green 1989: 781).

As the ground of language rights, the value of linguistic security is different from the survivalist argument discussed above in the sense that it is more tangible and concerned with the immediate interest, that is, the creation of a free and fair context in which a language group holds the ultimate fate of its future without its speakers facing any unfair or coercive pressures to abandon their language (Réaume 1991: 45-7). The important point is that the

survival of a language group is up to the language group itself and what the regime of language rights aims to do is to make sure that the language group does not face unfair or coercive pressures from outside, particularly the unfair and unnatural hegemonic position of a dominant language. As a by-product of linguistic security, the survival of the language is still possible; however, that is not the immediate concern or the purpose of linguistic security. Once linguistic security has been established and the language group is protected from unfair and coercive pressures, Réaume notes, this can ensure "the normal practices of language use and transmission" take place, which usually results in the continued health of a language community (Réaume 1991: 47).

Linguistic security does not assume that the membership to a language community is permanent; on the contrary, the current speakers of the language as well as the future generations may or may not identify themselves with the language in question; yet, the free and fair context ensure that this choice happens without any coercion including the internal linguistic choices within the language group itself. It is still possible that despite the existence of a free and fair environment, some members of minority language groups would decide to integrate with a majority community, and linguistic security ensures that the decision is made freely and without coercive pressures (Réaume and Green 1989: 781). In some cases, one's participation in a language community or rather his/her 'insistence' on keeping the minority language may have certain costs to bear such as potential economic opportunities in the dominant language; yet, Réaume rightly highlights that "to coerce some to remain in a language community is no better than coercing one to leave. In both cases his interest in expressing affiliation with a language group is violated", and the function and purpose of linguistic security in this sense requires that language choices occur without any imposition (1991: 46-7).

One particular dimension of linguistic security is concerned with the instrumental dimension of language and in this sense it requires that language does not hinder the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms and one's language choice is not a ground for discrimination (Green 1987: 660-1; Réaume 1991). This particular dimension, however, as noted previously, does not require any special regulation as the use of a particular language is already protected by the same protection for fundamental human rights and freedoms and; therefore, the state's action to protect or promote a minority language is not expected (Gruben 2008: 96). In other words, for example, the law that protects the freedom of speech also protects the language that a person has used in exercising this right. Therefore, languages other than the official or dominant language(s) should always be tolerated even if there is not a regime of language rights that grants other constitutional protections for minority languages. In addition to tolerance-oriented language rights (Kloss 1977) or what Réaume describes as a regime of linguistic tolerance (1991: 50-1), there is also the regime of official languages, whereby certain languages enjoy a favoured position and have extensive constitutional language rights to the extent that in Canada, language rights simply mean minority official language rights (Green 1987: 662). This particular aspect is the most contested aspect of language rights.

Each language has value independent of its use and there is nothing inherently inferior about a particular language; yet, the second dimension or perhaps the main dimension of linguistic security is about the favoured positions of certain minority languages as official languages in a particular territory beyond them being tolerated in a democracy. The interest in language as a concern for security clearly applies to speakers of all languages; therefore, it is a legitimate claim for them to demand the creation of a free and fair environment in which their language may flourish. Thus, there are two fundamental questions that a justification for official language rights needs to answer: Which interest in linguistic security makes us go beyond the regime of tolerance so far as to accord official status to certain

languages and secondly, how do we determine which languages should enjoy these further protections? (Green 1987: 663).

It is clear in the concept of linguistic security that the justification for language rights lies in the security of speakers. The survival of language of languages is considered as a by-product of the regime of language rights as it is up to the language group itself to see its language flourishing. This is, however, conditioned on the existence of a free and fair environment in which a minority language has resources to ensure its flourishing. Thus, the question of how linguistic security can ensure a free and fair environment becomes paramount.

In this sense, it is argued that linguistic security that encourages the flourishing of a minority language group is only possible if the minority language group can "participate in public life in its language, and it have at its disposal the basic means of cultural reproduction" (Réaume and Green 1989: 783; Réaume 1991: 52; Green 1987: 663), which constitutes in return linguistic security in the fullest sense, that is, a free and fair environment in which "the opportunity, without serious impediments, to live a full life in a community of people who share one's language" exists (Réaume and Green 1989: 782). Accordingly, the right to services, to participation in government, and to education facilities are articulated as the minimum requirements that constitute linguistic security through which a language can be effective in public as well as private realm (Green 1987: 663). This in return can enable "the community to define itself as a collectivity and fairly to participate" in society (Réaume 1991: 52).

Given that the main interest in linguistic security is to prevent unfair and coercive pressures to abandon one's mother tongue, the regime of official languages aims to ensure that a language community can participate in political life in its own language including communication with officials or any activities under government control. A language group's

participation in the political life of its own country in its own language is a direct challenge to the majority-oriented political life and to the incentive to assimilate. Compared to toleration-oriented language rights, it is clear that these arrangements are beyond the instrumental nature of language in access to public services. While in a regime of linguistic tolerance, the main purpose is to make sure that language is not a ground of liability in people's access to various governmental services as well as in the enjoyment of their rights, the regime of official languages goes beyond that and takes the language choices of a minority group as the ground for facilitating governmental services in minority languages regardless of speakers of those languages' proficiency in the dominant language.

Therefore, the situation such as "the denial of government services, whether the court system or the kind of everyday help and advice that many government departments provide" which "turns the use of one's mother tongue into a handicap and sometimes even a source of shame" (Réaume and Green 1989: 783) cannot be remedied, according to the interest in linguistic security, by appealing to the argument of tolerance-oriented rights or integrationist approaches. It should be perhaps reiterated that Réaume's argument that language has an intrinsic value places this value to one's mother tongue and its relation to culture. In other words, a person's fluency in another language other than his/her mother tongue does not substitute the intrinsic value argument. Comparing Réaume's approach to that of Kymlicka's distinction between national minorities and immigrant minorities as the basis of which minorities should have which type of rights, Pinto argues that Kymlicka "actually ascribes an instrumental value to one's mother tongue language and not an intrinsic value" as once the difficulty in learning a foreign language and integration into a new culture have been overcome, a person still can make meaningful choice in a language other than his/her mother tongue (2007: 161-2; for similar critiques of Kymlicka, see Young 1997; Carens 1997; Benhabib 1999).

Thus, the interest in linguistic security that makes us go beyond the regime of tolerance so far as to accord official status to certain minority languages is argued on the ground that the fulfilment of linguistic security in its fullest sense requires an environment in which a language group can live a full life in its own language including accessing to governmental services, having education facilities and participating in government. This leads us to the second question of how we determine which language group should enjoy such rights as it is clear that the interest in linguistic security discussed above is easily applicable to all languages. Patten notes that one can observe a sharp dichotomy between national minorities and immigrant or 'ethnic' groups among political theorists as to which cultures should have such rights, adding that while for immigrant groups only integration-oriented cultural rights are proposed, national minorities are considered to "have a legitimate aspiration to full public equality with the majority cultural group: the same rights to use and maintain their languages, to have institutions of self-government, and so on" (2003: 103).

On this point, Green quotes Pierre Trudeau, the 15th Prime Minister of Canada:

> "If there were six million people living in Canada whose mother tongue was Ukrainian, it is likely that this language would establish itself as forcefully as French. **In terms of realpolitik, French and English are equal in Canada because each of these linguistic groups has the power to break the country**. And this power cannot yet be claimed by the Iroquois, the Eskimos, or the Ukrainians" (1968: 31 cited in 1987: 664) (emphasis added).

As noted previously, linguistic conflicts are usually part of the wider national conflict between a dominant language group and a minority language group. Given that language rights claims of minority groups are, by implication, usually claims for nationhood and self-governments, it is no surprise that Trudeau rightly points out that in terms of realpolitik, language groups which have the power to threaten the integrity of the country claim

these rights. This particular aspect raises important question as to the justification and nature of language rights, and whether the regime of language rights that treats each language group as a nation is being used as "a mechanism to restore the health and viability of historically marginalised peoples and their languages" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 85). Similarly, there are also accounts critical of such policies on the ground that there is a nationalist sentiment to such claims, which is incompatible with liberal political philosophy.

3.3.2.1 Political Compromise vs Fundamental Human Rights

Green argues that 'the threat advantage' of having the power to destroy the political unity may provide the motivation for the state to address language rights claims and determine corresponding policies and rights; yet, it is the character of the linguistic interests and the agreement between the state and a language group that the recognised language rights flow from. In other words, one may interpret language rights as rights of political compromise in the sense that "they are special rights created as a result of a constitutional bargain over interests which the parties rightly regard as legitimate" (1987: 665). Arzoz also notes that "recognition of language rights […] is based on contingent historical reasons" (2007: 1). This leads to the question whether language rights are rights of political compromise.

Firstly, if language rights are to be accepted as rights of political compromise, this means that they are in a different category of rights compared to the fundamental human rights, which in return affects their implementations and enforcements in courts. Secondly, if they are based on political compromise because a language group has the power to break the country, the interest in linguistic security expressed through the intrinsic value of language weakens, as it gets difficult to present a moral significance to recognise the language rights claims of the language group. The justification of language rights then can be reduced to a mere power struggle between the dominant language group and a minority language group that has nationalist aspirations.

Green argues against viewing language rights as rights of political compromise, saying that the whole aspect of political compromise signifies the political process through which language rights have been recognised but does not determine the nature of the constitutionally recognised rights. Therefore, an argument for language rights based on the idea that they are fundamental rights rooted in principle can be made. Moreover, the size of a language group on a national scale and its power of being able to break the country is not the only reason that the language group is accorded an official language status, adding that a moral argument from linguistic security point of view for is still possible, that is, these languages are "a viable social group which has the capacity to sustain a rich cultural life for its members", which maps on the objective of the creating a free and fair environment in which a language group has the tools and resources for its cultural reproduction and linguistic flourishing (1987: 664-5).

Similarly, Réaume points out the social dimension of language rights by noting that linguistic security ensures that one is able to live his/her life in "a particular milieu, within a language community", which relies on the existence of a social group to produce what she describes as a participatory good (Réaume 1988), adding that "the point of the freedom to use one's mother tongue lies in sharing it and the culture it embodies with others". Thus, quoting the English and French communities in Canada as examples, Réaume states that these "communities are sufficiently robust and capable of providing a reasonably full range of experience for their members", which justifies, she continues, their protection in such extent. However, she also emphasises that this does not suggest that the claimants of language rights are the whole communities not least because it would render enforcement of rights impossible due to the lack of clearly identifiable representative bodies in language communities. Rather, "the participatory nature of a language community has more to do with establishing preconditions of the existence of the rights, and, […] with the substance

of those protections, than with the question of who has standing to put such claims" (1991: 48-9).

The question whether language rights constitute fundamental human rights; hence, they should be treated as such in courts comes from a number of decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada. In *Attorney General of Quebec v. Quebec Association of Protestant School Boards*, the Court describes minority-language education rights, compared to other constitutional provisions, as not being "a codification of essential, pre-existing and more or less universal rights that are being confirmed and perhaps clarified, extended or amended", which have strong applicability as they are being "given a new primacy and inviolability by their entrenchment in the supreme law of the land" ([1984] S.C.R. 25: 79 cited in Green and Réaume 1990: 564-5). In *MacDonald v. The City of Montreal*, reiterating that these rights are rights of political compromise, the Court regards them as "a constitutional minimum which resulted from a historical compromise arrived at by the founding people who agreed upon the terms of the federal union", adding that "it is not open to the courts, under the guise of interpretation to improve upon, supplement, or amend this constitutional compromise" ([1986] 1 S.C.R. 460: 496 cited in Green and Réaume 1990: 565).

Similarly, in *La Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick Inc. et al. v. Association of Parents for Fairness in Education,* Green notes, the Supreme Court had to decide whether the section 19/2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that either English or French may be used by any person in, or in any pleading in or process issuing from, any court of New Brunswick, "entitles a party in a court of New Brunswick to be heard by a judge who is capable of understanding the proceedings, evidence, and arguments, regardless of the official language used by the parties" (1987: 644). The Court decided that due to the nature of language rights, it has a restraint capacity in interpreting language rights, and writing for the majority, Beetz J. states:

"**Unlike language rights which are based on political compromise, legal rights tend to be seminal in nature because they are rooted in principle**. This essential difference between the two types of rights dictates a distinct judicial approach with respect to each. More particularly, **the courts should pause before they decide to act as instruments of change with respect to language rights**. This is not to say that language rights provisions are cast in stone and should remain immune altogether from judicial interpretation. But, in my opinion, the court should approach them with more restraint than they would in construing legal rights" ([1986] 1 SCR 549: 578 cited in Green 1987: 645; Green and Réaume 1990: 565-6) (emphasis added).

The Court clearly sees a distinction between legal rights and language rights, stating that the foundation of language rights is political compromise. As stated, the process of recognition of language rights is based on political compromise; yet, the Court's view is in contrast to the above-noted point that political compromise signifies only the political process through which language rights have been recognised but does not determine the nature of the constitutionally recognised rights. In this particular ruling, the Court appears to view the notion of political compromise not only as a process for the emergence of language rights but also a foundation in which language rights are rooted. This distinction also implies that the Court considers that it has a restraint capacity in interpreting language rights in order not to act 'as instruments of change with respect to language rights' for the content and extent of language rights should be primarily decided by policy makers.

It is possible to discuss theoretically how and to what extent a constitutional provision should be interpreted by a constitutional court; however, what is really crucial here is not the fact that the Court considers itself in a position of judicial restraint in interpreting language rights; but it classifies language rights as rights of political compromise rooted, un-

like legal rights, not in principle but in compromise, which in return questions the moral foundation of language rights. Thus, according to the Court, "there are two classes of constitutional rights - first-class or principle-based rights and second-class or compromise-based rights. The nature of compromise rights is such as to mandate judicial restraint in their interpretation. Language rights are compromise rights" (Green and Réaume 1990: 566), and; therefore, the Court adopts a more restrictive approach for interpreting what it considers rights of political compromise though in *R v. Beaulac* ([1999] 1 S.C.R. 768), its approach has changed, declaring that the fact that the genesis of language rights are based on political compromise is not a ground to distinguish them from many other Charter rights and does not imply any normative repercussions in understanding them (Réaume 2002: 596).

Green also draws a similar conclusion in answering the question whether language rights are fundamental by arguing that "a legal right is a fundamental right if and only if it is at least partly justified by the fact that it protects a moral right", which, he continues, cannot be determined by looking to the law alone as the answer to the question lies in an argument of political morality. In an argument for a moral foundation of language rights, he states, the point is not whether the law in question was adopted out of moral reason or to suggest that recognising language rights as fundamental imply that they have equal weight with what is usually considered as fundamental rights. It simply means that "language rights have moral rights among their justifications" and not "merely considerations of general public policy or administrative convenience". Therefore, he concludes, the question whether language rights are fundamental is not a historical, sociological or even a legal question; it is a moral question, which poses the question whether if some person's interest, a person's common good or participatory good (Green 1987; Réaume 1988), in language rights is sufficient reason for holding others to be under a duty to provide or secure

them (1987: 646-9; also see, Raz 1984). In short, the process of political compromise through which language rights are recognised are irrelevant to the nature of them.

3.3.3 Other Accounts of Political Theories of Language Rights

In an another account of a normative political theory of language rights, borrowing from Réaume (1991) and Green (1987), Ruth Rubio-Marin (2003) grounds her theory on the distinction between the instrumental and non-instrumental language rights. She argues that a theory of language rights should bear in mind the different interests that language serves, meaning that there needs to be a distinction between language as a means of communication and language as a marker of identity. The instrumental language rights do not necessarily require the recognition of a particular language in a political sense in order to be accommodated in ensuring human rights that have a linguistic dimension. The non-instrumental language rights, on the other hand, is 'the commitment, on the part of the state, to help a certain collectivity achieve the goal of protecting its language' and the recognition of this kind is seen "as necessary for the fulfilment of individual autonomy and as a basis of self-respect" (Rubio-Marin 2003: 57) so that individuals do not have a distorted identity (Taylor 1994).

In another theory, Weinstock (2003) starts by noting, like many other theorists, that language has different functions in one's life and that political philosophers have accordingly attempted to develop normative arguments for how best to address language rights. The problem is, Weinstock argues, theories based on the idea that language has an intrinsic value for one's identity or it allows people to access their own cultures have created "paternalistic language policies geared towards the protection of particular languages", which, however, were "at times, against the choices of the members of the linguistic communities involved" (Weinstock 2003: 269). Perhaps the solution, he claims, is to remember "the

most obvious and fundamental aspect of language, namely, its instrumental value", which requires a minimalism on the state side by making the "effective communication" only legitimate linguistic goal that the state can pursue (Weinstock 2003:269). In addition to minimalism, since the goal of language is to provide effective communication, "no symbolic significance" is to be attached to the state's linguistic choice; hence anti-symbolism is needed (Weinstock 2003:268). The final principle is revisability, that is, the state remains open to "the possibility that its use of language may have to change so as to reflect the changing linguistic make-up of society" (Weinstock 2003: 268). Weinstock himself notes that such a policy will in most cases favour the language of the majority; however, "it will do so for pragmatic reasons to do with the organisation of a functioning democracy" and since the state is still a linguistic actor, this theory will escape from the idea of benign neglect, that is, the state should be in a neutral position in regard to language, which is noted that it is not possible due to the fact that the state has to function in one language or another, particularly in public institutions; therefore, its existence is the norm. (Weinstock 2003: 269-70).

There are also those who question the tendency to grant extensive recognition to minority language groups such as Laitin and Reich, who are critical of the regime of language rights that treats each language group as a nation and argue that it is being used as "a mechanism to restore the health and viability of historically marginalised peoples and their languages" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 85). Accordingly, they are critical of such policies on the ground that there are illiberal tendencies in their justifications and/or implementations for which they attempt to develop countermeasures to prevent human rights violations or 'illiberal' tendencies.

3.3.3.1 Liberal Democratic Approach to Language Rights

Laitin and Reich develop a liberal democratic approach to language rights based on the idea that an assumption that suggests that individuals prefer their own societal culture cannot be made. Instead, they argue, in a liberal democracy, institutions are required through which people can express their preferences. Since an assumption has not been made as to the language interests of the citizenry, which might change over time, a democratic disagreement both between and within cultural groups concerning the best language policies is welcomed (2003: 93-4). Through democratic process such as voting or democratic discussion any language policy decision is open to further changes. Although, this theory supports any democratic initiative that attempts to "rebuild language communities lost due to historical injustices" or "create a new language regime", it, on the other hands, wants to "restrict what a local community can do in creating a language community" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 96).

In their attempt to build a theory within liberal political theory, Laitin and Reich (2003) also criticise certain justifications for language rights claims. In this sense, they quote three approaches to language rights, which they describe as compensatory, nationalist and liberal culturalist, by arguing that the way that these approaches deal with competing language claims does not fully grasp the fundamental indeterminacy of liberal principles of justice.

Compensatory approach to linguistic justice (Van Parijs 2002; 2003), which sees linguistic justice as a matter of redistribution, argues that justice requires that compensations should be offered to "individuals for any unfairness suffered by virtue of not knowing how to speak the dominant or politically preferred language" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 81) Laitin and Reich argue that this approach does not correctly address the nature of the justice issue by giving various examples of state policies which, according to them, offered enough compensations in various forms, ranging from literacy campaigns to subsidised public ed-

ucation in the dominant language. The problem is, Laitin and Reich stress, the justice that is being demanded by minorities is not compensation; rather, in regard to education, to be able to use their languages in education (2003: 84).

The liberal culturalist approach (Kymlicka 1995) to language policy sees culture and language valuable "in so far as they are valuable to individuals", which is not something to provide "linguistic minorities with unbounded rights to recreate and revitalise their native tongues" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 89). Based on the premise that "individuals exercise freedom only through their moorings to a societal culture" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 89), liberal culturalists argue that recognition and accommodation policies are needed for "the distinctive identities and needs of ethnocultural groups" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 89) in liberal democracies. Strong emphasis on basic individuals' rights and personal autonomy does not allow these rights to "be overridden by the interest of subgroups in coercively maintaining the loyalty of their members" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 89). However, Laitin and Reich argue that we cannot assume that "all members of cultural minorities value membership in their own culture above all others" (Laitin and Reich 2003: 89). Moreover, they opine that the monolithic perception of these minorities, which ignores intra-group tension, is 'unrealistic'. In addition to this, they are worried that the recognition of "the freedom to move within one's own societal culture" may not be enough to ensure "the possibility of children learning how to participate in the dominant societal culture or an alternative culture" (2003: 90).

On what they describe as 'the nationalist approach,' they are critical of the notion that perceives each language group as a nation, which, they argue, was used as "a mechanism to restore the health and viability of historically marginalised peoples and their languages" (2003: 85). Moreover, they find it fundamentally illiberal to assume that a marginalised group has "inevitably an abiding interest in sustaining ancestral cultural forms" (2003: 87).

They are concerned with network externalities, that is, the reinvigoration of marginalised languages, they argue, coercively limits "the choices of those living in polities in which a marginalised language is being revived", which "poses a threat to liberalism" (2003: 88). Accordingly, they consider the 'insistence' on the bilingual education as a restriction on children that limits "their opportunities to learn the language of some broader societal culture" (2003: 92). Children do not have control over their parents' language; yet, their parents' language "if it is a minority one […] constrains social mobility". Consequently, "those who speak a minority (or dominated) language are more likely to stand permanently on the lower-rungs of the socio-economic ladder" (2003: 92). In a similar position, Pogge questions how compatible for parents to confine their children education choices by 'insistence' on minority language education with liberal principles, adding that the choice of minority language education does not consider whether it benefits the children concerned (2003: 118).

They state that nationalists' concern for justice is grounded on the idea that marginalisation of languages are caused by the dominant groups; thus, a remedy should be facilitated by the dominant groups in which the marginalised languages are revivified. The concern for justice, therefore, focuses on "reclaiming ancestral identities and seeking state support for the effort' (Laitin and Reich 2003: 85). On this aspect, Laitin and Reich cite Barry's (2001; 2002) views on policies to keep a language in existence. Regardless of how a language becomes marginalised, Barry argues:

> "A liberal society cannot adopt policies designed to keep a language in existence if those who speak it prefer to let is go. Thus, (Charles) Taylor is quite correct in saying that liberalism 'can't capture the full thrust of policies designed for cultural survival'. But why should it expected to?" (2001: 65 cited in Laitin and Reich 2003: 86)

The author that Laitin and Reich explicitly term as a linguistic nationalist is May (1997; 2001; 2003a; 2005), who in return points out that the justification of language rights and its social and political consequences along with its practical application are being questioned around three themes: Linguistic modernisation is inevitable; therefore, these efforts are futile, an unquestioned link between language and ethnic identity is established to justify language rights claims, and finally the insistence on speaking a language of limited use delimits the social mobility of minority language speakers (2005: 320). There are, however, May notes, many key theoretical misconceptions in these arguments about minority language rights many of which are being used in dismissing the validity of language rights. He identifies three main problems in these critiques: The problem of history, the problem of essentialism, and the problem of (im)mobility (2005: 320; 2003a: 125).

3.3.3.2 Theoretical Misconceptions about Minority Language Rights

May states that the argument that linguistic modernisation - a process of modernisation - is inevitable in the sense that maintaining minority languages by attempting to reverse language shift pattern is "almost certainly futile" have proponents including those who reject recognition of language rights (Schlesinger 1998; Barry 2002; Laitin and Reich 2003; Pogge 2003) as well as those who are doubtful about the achievability of the aims of language rights (Edwards 1984; 1985; 2001; 2002; Coulmas 1992), a position which May describes as 'resigned language realism' (2005: 321; 2003b; 2004). In both positions, May argues, linguistic modernisation, which is usually linked to the majority languages, is seen inevitable and beneficial, adding that this in return raises three key problematic features as part of the problem of history: historical disavowal, or the problem of 'presentism'; historical simplification and/or misrepresentation, or the problem of sanitisation; and historical inevitability, or the problem of the linguistic *fait accompli* (2005: 231; 2003a: 125).

The problem of presentism refers to the tendency to study language without taking the social and political conditions in which it is used into account, which is most apparent in arguments that assign an unquestioned legitimacy to majority languages and accept their favoured and dominant social and political position within modern nations states (see Schlesinger 1998; Barry 2002). May cites Pierre Bourdieu as a critique of the tendency towards a synchronic or 'presentist' approach to the study of language in the discipline of linguistics who states that:

> "Bracketing out the social […] allows language or any other symbolic object to be treated like an end in itself, [this] contributed considerably to the success of structural linguistics, for it endowed the 'pure' exercises that characterise a purely internal and formal analysis with the charm of a game devoid of consequences" (1991: 34 cited in May 2005: 321)

The outcome of a synchronic approach to language in return does not question the historical and political processes through which majority languages come to have a socially and politically dominant position within the nation state; therefore, their legitimacy is never questioned. Thus, May suggests that a critical approach that adopts a diachronic analysis of language rights is needed in order to understand how particular languages are politically legitimated by the state to the extent of being accorded "the status and prestige of 'national' languages, while other languages have been 'minoritised' and, most often, stigmatised" (2005: 323). It is important to underline that the favoured position of national languages usually takes the form of imposing of a single language in various domains, and; therefore, as noted before, the state's language choice cannot be considered as neutral. The advantage of this to the majority language group is that, May states, "a dominant language group usually controls the crucial authority in the areas of administration, politics, education and the economy, and gives preference to those with a command of that language" (2005: 322).

The unquestioned legitimacy of majority languages is usually accompanied by the view that considers the dominant position of these languages as inevitably, which takes us to the problem of sanitisation, that is, in May's words, "the current hegemony of particular majority languages in any given national context comes to be viewed retrospectively, as inevitable, unproblematic and, crucially, uncontested - as, in effect, a natural, evolutionary and seamless march to linguistic victory" (2005: 323-4). As noted above, language policy is usually the part of a larger project of modernisation and in certain political contexts coercive assimilation policies have been adopted in order to create the desired language convergence. Some of the methods and policies have been clearly beyond the realm of human rights and democratic values such as those that ban the use of a particular language even in private life. In other contexts, less 'brutal' methods have been issues. Yet, May states, even one might recognise and accept how these policies have been in violation of human rights and values, in addition to the problem of presentism and of sanitisation, there is the problem of the historical *fait accompli*, that is, "we may well regret the past, but there is nothing we can now do about it, so it should not, nor can it, usefully inform our present. What is done is done" (2003: 325). The main problem with this position, May continues, is that it takes the current situation of the dominant language granted and does not offer any opportunity by foreclosing "the possibility of considering alternative conceptions - of rethinking the nation-state in more culturally and linguistically plural ways, not least via the application of language rights for minority language speakers" (May 2003: 141; 2005: 327).

On the critique that those who advocate for the recognition of language rights treat language as an inevitable feature of identity in order to justify language rights claims, which implies essentialism as the centre of such claims, May reiterates that "language, or any specific cultural aspect of ethnic and/or national identity for that matter, must be recognised as a contingent factor" in identity, adding that language does not conclusively define us and may not be a requisite or important feature in the construction of our both individual

or collective identities; yet, it is a significant and constitutive factor of identity, adding that "to say that language is not an inevitable feature of identity is thus not the same as saying it is unimportant" (2003: 141; 2005: 327; 2001). The significance of language as a constitutive element of identity is particularly apparent in language issues in many political contexts in which particular languages play an important role in many people's individual and collective identities despite the possibility that speakers of those language may have less opportunity due to their language choices or, at times, face discriminatory behaviours or oppression (May 2005: 330).

On the question whether minority languages delimit the social mobility of their speakers, May notes that an argument on the disadvantaged position of speakers of minority languages in terms of social mobility should not ignore that there are many underlying and deep reasons behind social mobility issues such as racism, discrimination and wider structural problems. The above-mentioned argument presented by Laitin and Reich that speakers of minority languages are more likely to "stand permanently on the lower-rungs of the socio-economic ladder" and, as such, can be regarded as nothing more than 'happy slaves' is embodiment of the case (2005: 335). He argues that if steps are taken to better the less favoured position of minority languages by changing historical, political and social relationships that produced the less favoured position in the first place, the limited instrumentality of particular minority languages should change and increase mobility for its speakers (2005: 335).

Finally, regarding 'the availability of exit' from one's societal culture', he points out that the maintenance of a minority language does not exclude acquiring a majority language and this process is not very much different from many aspects of compulsory education policies of the state (May 2003: 150; for discussion on one's exit from his/her community, see Reitman 2005). Moreover, minority language rights don't necessarily foresee a mono-

linguistic language for the minority language group in question and in this sense, "the majority language is not generally being precluded from the public realm, nor proscribed at the individual level, nor are majority language speakers actually penalised for speaking their language" (2005: 36). In contexts where monolingual majority language speakers reside where a minority language constitutes the majority language, "monolingual majority language speakers are being asked to accommodate to the on-going presence of a minority language and to recognise its status as an additional language of the state" in the same way minority language speakers accommodate the majority language, a process which May describes as 'mutual accommodation' (2005; 335; for internal minority rights, see Green 1994; Patten 2005; Weinstock 2005; Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev 2005; Reich 2005; Eisenberg 2005).

May's identification of what he describes as misconceptions about language rights are apparent not only in critiques of certain political theorists but also in various discourses of the state. The presentation of the dominant language as a language of modernisation with minority languages being stigmatised and questioned over their linguistic capacity to provide their speakers social and economic opportunities is a common tendency in this respect. From minority language groups' perspectives, language rights claims are their manifestations for being a 'distinct' political community; therefore, a state's resistance or reluctance to recognise language rights does not only demonstrate a resistance to a particular language policy. Rather, through the state's approach to language rights claims, it is possible to understand its perception of national identity, nationhood and self-government. The Kurdish question and the state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights under the successive AKP governments is, in this sense, an embodiment of the case that shows the competing rationales in language rights.

3.4 Conclusion

Language rights have strong explanatory power for the role of language in a power struggle between the state and a minority group. In this sense, in relation to the Kurdish question, language rights help locate the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights claims, which is crucial in order to understand the extent of the shift in the state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights under the successive AKP governments. Certain aspects in the political theories of language rights discussed so far maps onto the Kurdish question. In many ways, the Kurdish question is an embodiment of the case in which a minority language group seeks constitutional recognition for its language rights that extends beyond the accommodation of the Kurdish language as a tool of communication. On the other hand, the Kurds' language rights challenge the dominance and legitimacy of the Turkish language and monolithic policies of the state, which are based on Turkishness and Turkish nationalism, by demanding greater constitutional recognition for the use of the Kurdish language in public services, education services and government. The Kurds' language rights claims have, therefore, normative implications for the Kemalist centralist nation state origins of Turkey. In this sense, the Kurds' language rights claim is perhaps the most constitutive element of the ethno-political nature of the Kurdish question.

Language rights claims are a contentious issue which raise many questions as to the justification for granting a legally protected language right to speakers of a particular language and usually part of a national conflict between a dominant language group and a minority language group which considers itself a distinct 'nation' within. Thus, linguistic conflicts have been particularly problematic in those countries that have regionally concentrated and historically rooted language groups. The reason is that dominant national groups usually tend to apply language policies that aim to dominate majority language(s) as the official language(s) of the state throughout the country including those areas in which minori-

ty groups are regionally concentrated and historically rooted. The imposition of a common language gives an unquestioned legitimacy and power to the dominant language group in terms of sovereignty and self-government and this perception of ownership of the country gets challenged when there is competing minority nationalism against the majority's nationalist policies. Therefore, for minority language groups, language rights are their manifestations for being a 'distinct' political community; therefore, the state's resistance or reluctance to language rights claims signifies more than a mere resistance to a particular language policy. Such resistance helps reveals the state's perception of national identity, nationhood and sovereignty. In this sense, there are nine particular points that will help exploring the state discourse on the Kurds' language rights in the following chapter, which are as follows.

First, language rights are about the intrinsic character of language in the sense that a minority language group seeks constitutional protection for its language beyond its accommodation in the private domain. Grounded on the idea that language has an intrinsic value to its speakers, this category of rights are concerned with the use of minority's language in public services, government and education facilities, regardless of its speakers' proficiency in the dominant language. Language rights take the constitutive character of language in the construction of one's both individual or collective identity as primary point of interest; therefore, their justification mainly rest on the conviction that language is a marker of identity and an important tool for the continuity of culture.

Second, this conviction suggests that language rights are not conditional upon one's inability to express himself/herself in the dominant language. In this sense, language rights are different from linguistic human rights or the regime of linguistic tolerance that aim to accommodate a particular language so that language does not hinder the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms and one's language choice is not a ground for discrimination or

liability. The intrinsic value argument carries one's interest in language beyond a tool of communication; therefore, the protection of the private use of a minority language or its accommodation in circumstances where speakers are unable to express themselves are different from language rights as discussed and defined in the political theories of language rights.

Third, language has a symbolic power in terms of sovereignty and self-government. The imposition of a common language by the state signifies the logic on which the state is founded, which is usually based on the dominant language group's identity and language. This monolithic conceptions of national identity and citizenship attempts to resolve the question of sovereignty and self-government by imposing the dominant language group's language and identity as the only legitimate conceptualisation of the state without recognising diversity of any kind and sort in the country.

Fourth, minority language groups too assign a symbolic power to their language. Similar to the state's attempt to resolve the question of sovereignty and self-government by imposing a common language, the minority language group's demand for recognition of its language aims to challenge the dominant language group's perception of sovereignty and self-government, not least by stressing its distinct ethnic and linguistic traits. In other words, language marks 'otherness'. For the minority language group, language becomes a symbol of its struggle against the 'tranny' of the dominant language group and a powerful source of political mobilisation.

Fifth, language rights are part of the wider national struggle between the dominant language group and the minority language group. Given the symbolic power of language from both the state's and minority language group's perspective, it suggests that recognition of the minority language group's language rights have potentially far-reaching consequences. For the minority language group, recognition of its language is seen as a step towards

recognition of its 'nationhood', which in return implies that the state is in fact a multicul-tural and multi-ethnic entity. For this reason, the state tends to avoid explicitly recognising the minority language in order to prevent potentially far-reaching consequences of official recognition, such as self-government or remedial secession of the minority group. Thus, the state's attempts to recognise language rights in its own terms is part of its attempts to contain the minority group's nationalism.

Sixth, language rights are rights of political compromise in the sense that their recognition is usually based on contingent historical developments. There is a constitutional bargain between the dominant language group and the minority language group over language rights. Minority groups that have the 'threat advantage' in the sense of having the power to disintegrate the state usually get extensive protection for their language.

Seventh, the minority language group's power to force the state to re-conceptualise itself as a multi-ethnic and multi linguistic state raises the question of further nationalisation of the minority group in the sense that language rights as collective rights by implication are usu-ally accompanied by the devolution of power and a kind of self-government. Therefore, the normative political theories of language rights show a tendency to develop countermeas-ures in order to prevent language rights being used as an ideological tool for the minority group's own nation building process. In other words, there are attempts to strike a balance between the minority group's interest in language as a collective entity and rights of indi-vidual member of the group in order to empower the group's members against the possible wrongs of the group's elites on the road to their conception of 'good life'.

Eighth, the risk of further nationalisation of the minority group should not be used as a mechanism to dismiss the validity of language rights, not least by implicitly accepting the hegemonic position of the dominant language group as the only legitimate form of concep-tion of national identity. A balanced approach that both questions the monolithic percep-

tion of the state and the minority group's language rights claims is needed in order to escape from the trap of adopting an implicit ideological position that legitimises the dominant language group in the end without recognising any possibility for the reconceptualisation of the state in a more plural way.

Ninth, the regime of language rights cannot secure the survival of a language; therefore, the purpose of the regime of language rights is not to ensure the survival of a language or grant unlimited power to the minority language group that can lead to the group's own nation-building process. Rather, language rights are the constitutional commitment on the state side to ensure linguistic security for the minority language group whereby it has a fair and free environment in which its speakers has the opportunity without serious impediments to live a full life in a community of people who share its language and to be able to define itself as a collectivity and fairly to participate in society. Above and beyond its implausibility, such an outcome-oriented policy has the potential to turn language rights into an ideological asset for the group's self-perception of nationhood.

Chapter 4: A New Era in Turkish Politics: The AKP

4.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the emergence of the AKP as a new actor in Turkish politics in 2002 and its political journey between 2003 and 2015 are discussed. The reason is that the state discourse of the period between 2003 and 2015 on the Kurds' language rights is synonymous with the AKP ruling, as it has been the only government in power since 2003. This chapter begins with a brief history of Turkey's quest for the EU membership and discusses the rise and transformation of political Islam in Turkey as part of the reasons and dynamics behind the emergence of the AKP as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics as well as its adoption of discourses of human rights and democracy with a strong emphasis on Turkey's EU membership in its attempts to secure its survival as a new political party with Islamic references. It then deals with the question of how the AKP has consolidated its power to the extent of having its own 'social engineering' project, the 'new Turkey'. Finally, the main factors beyond the impetus of the EU and despite the question over the party's increasing authoritarianism that have forced or motivated the AKP to employ its current Kurdish question policy that foresees a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement as well as other steps towards the Kurds' rights are discussed.

The AKP emerged as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics in 2002 and continues to dominate the political landscape in its third term in the office. The party has achieved unprecedented success in the ballot box by becoming the largest party in every local and national election since 2002 and almost consolidating the centre-right voters. Right-wing political parties of the '90s disappeared from the political arena with the exception of the Na-

tionalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP). Therefore, the AKP's emergence on November 3, 2002 constitutes a sensational break from Turkey's "political old guard" (Aras and Gökay 2003: 148; Cagaptay 2002; Çarkoğlu 2002) and marked the beginning of a new era in Turkish politics.

The AKP's emergence as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics signifies more than a mere electoral success. The AKP's adoption of discourses of democracy and human rights as well as its strong emphasis on Turkey's EU membership, particularly in its initial years have led to transformative reforms and a certain degree of normalisation in civil-military relations, protection of fundamental freedoms, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, the protection of minorities and the exercise of cultural rights, which, by implication, has had important positive effects on the Kurds' rights. In many ways, the AKP has challenged and, to a certain extent, changed the state's traditional secularist and nationalist principles and perceptions. On the other hand, The AKP's leader cadres' past affiliations with Islamist political parties and the party's 'conservative' political line have always been a central issue among its critics, making the long standing tension between Turkey's secular segments and public manifestation of Islam, in politics in particular, all the more visible. Nonetheless, the party's strong popularity among the electorate and its carefully executed strategy to avoid confrontation with the military-led secular establishment while maintaining a pro-EU discourse had allowed the party to question and challenge the hegemonic position of the Kemalist establishment and to gradually consolidate its power. In its term in the office, which spans between 2011 to 2015, the party has begun to show authoritarian tendencies that appear to aim both further consolidation of power and construction of a new 'Turkish society' according to the values upheld by the party's leader cadres under the 'new Turkey' slogan. Therefore, the AKP's rise to power in Turkish politics signifies a change in power dynamics in state apparatus.

The Kurdish question has incessantly occupied a central position in Turkish policies and the AKP era is no exception. In fact, despite the stagnation and decline in the party's reformist and transformative discourse since its second term in the office and amid the question over the party's increasing authoritarian tendencies in its third term, the Kurdish question has continued to occupy a central role in the AKP's agenda, particularly since 2009, which has included a number of limited yet important steps towards the Kurds' rights and a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including its armed wing — the PKK. This in return raises the question of what factors have motivated or forced the AKP to take steps towards the Kurdish question beyond the impetus of the EU membership process, which led to the adoption of many reforms and policies in the AKP's initial years that had also bearings on the Kurdish question.

What makes all these developments all the more relevant to the Kurdish question is that the self-interest of the AKP in pursuing the EU membership as well as other reforms and policies, particularly in its initial years makes a revealing argument for how the AKP has instrumentalised discourses of human rights and democracy with a strong emphasis on the EU process for consolidation of power. This raises the question of how the Kurdish question and the on-going Solution Process maps onto the AKP's recent drift towards authoritarianism and its overall policy-making practices in terms of motivation and method in order to better explore its discourse on the Kurdish question, the Kurds' language rights in particular. This in return will help clarify the question whether the Solution process is also being instrumentalised for the AKP's self-interest, which plays a crucial point in the Solution process's future with any further steps towards recognition of the Kurds' language rights being conditioned on the party's self-interest on the road to its construction of a 'new Turkey'.

4.2 Turkey's Quest for EU Membership

One particular outcome of the Kemalist ideology that projected Turkey as a modern secular nation state during its founding years is that a particular effort was apparent in order to create an ideological and sociological rupture from the Ottoman's legacy. The religion of Islam and sociological and political legacy of the Empire were considered as the ultimate reason of the decline and collapse of the Empire while 'revolutionary' yet authoritarian steps by the founding elites towards modernisation/westernisation have been associated with progress and prosperity. This particular formulation has dominated the self-perception of the state with a strong desire to position itself as a 'European' nation, and its foreign policy line. Turkey's EU quest maps onto its self-identification with the West.

In December 1999, citing the reforms by Turkey towards complying with the Copenhagen criteria, the European Council granted Turkey candidacy status for the EU membership (Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki European Council 1999) with accession negotiations being conditioned on the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.

In December 2002, in its Copenhagen summit, the European Council welcomed the steps taken by Turkey to meet the Copenhagen criteria through the legislative packages and the subsequent implementation measures to address the key issues specified in the Accession Partnership. Yet, the Council stated that further steps were needed on the path of reform "to address swiftly all remaining shortcomings in the field of the political criteria, not only with regard to legislation but also in particular with regard to implementation," reiterating the existence and stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities for the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria (Presidency Conclusions, Copenhagen European Council 2002: 4). Thus, the Council declined to open accession negotiations with Turkey and decided that it would re-examine Turkey's fulfilment of the Copenhagen political criteria at its meeting in Decem-

ber 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, and open accession negotiations with Turkey "without delay". (Presidency Conclusions, Copenhagen European Council 2002: 5). The Commission's 2004 Regular Report noted the political reforms, in line with the priorities in the Accession Partnership, introduced through a series of constitutional and legislative changes adopted over a period of three years (2001-2004), stating that Turkey had achieved significant legislative progress in many areas and made important progress in the implementation of political reforms though the issue of implementation needed to be "further consolidated and broadened" (European Commission 2004: 167). It recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. At its Brussels meeting, the Council decided, in the light of the Commission's report and recommendation, to open accession negotiations, stating that "Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria" (Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 2004: 6).

The political reforms and the legislative progress of Turkey that the Council considered 'sufficient' for the fulfilment of the Copenhagen political criteria were mostly made possible after the AKP had assumed the office on November 3, 2002. It is clear, however, that Turkey's EU membership process precedes the AKP's ruling with certain steps having taken prior to its ruling by previous governments. There already existed a momentum for EU membership (Müftüler Baç 2005: 24). The fact that the AKP was able to form a majority government allowed Turkey to adopt reforms in a fashion that would otherwise have been much more difficult in a coalition government due to the ideological differences among Turkey's political parties.

The political reforms that the government adopted, which were transformative in nature and aimed to address civil-military relations, protection of fundamental freedoms, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, the protection of minorities and the exercise of

cultural rights, and the state of emergency in some provinces of the Southeast, to secure opening accession negotiations had profound effects on the respect of fundamental freedoms and protection of human rights as well as other deficiencies in Turkey's democracy despite the shortcomings in the strengthening and full implementation of the reforms (Cengiz and Hoffman 2013; Kizilkan-Kisacik 2010; Müftüler Baç 2005; Hale 2003; Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel 2003). The practical outcome of Turkey's reforms to comply with the Copenhagen political criteria have perhaps manifested itself more visibly in the protection of the Kurds' rights. Other language(s) other than Turkish, the Kurdish language in particular has witnessed a certain degree of normalisation thanks to the reforms.

The AKP's 'enthusiasm' towards the process and its willingness to adopt the reforms energetically, particularly in its initial year in the office should be noted. The reason is that the AKP takes its roots from a political tradition with strong Islamic references that have historically been critical of EU affairs. Two political Islamists parties in particular, Welfare (Refah - RP) and Virtue (Fazilet - FP), both banned from politics by the Constitutional Court for violating the separation of religion and state in 1998 and 2001 respectively, were the recent representatives of political Islam in Turkey. After the FP, its certain members founded Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi - SP), which continued to adopt a relatively similar political position as the outlawed pro-Islamic parties mentioned-above while others who formed the AKP, Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül in particular, explicitly stated that their party wasn't a political Islamist party; rather, they argued that the AKP takes "Conservative Democracy" as its political motto, which, in Erdoğan's words, provides an opportunity for the "conservative idea, which emphasises tradition, history and social culture, gives religion a place of importance and (re)constructs itself in a democratic form" (Doğan 2005: 432).

The AKP's 'departure' from political Islam and factors and forces that led the AKP leader cadres to adopt a pro-European stand despite coming from a Euro-sceptic political tradition is important in order to understand the pragmatic considerations in the AKP's adoption of discourses of human rights and democracy with a strong emphasis on the EU membership, which has resulted in its absolute consolidation of power. To this end, political Islam's rise and transformation in Turkey should be discussed, as its rise and eventual transformation, particularly towards EU affairs resulted in the emergence of the AKP as a powerful political actor in Turkey and determined its initial pro-EU discourse.

4.3 Political Islam's Rise and Transformation in Turkey

The rise of political Islam in Turkey in the '90s was a culmination of political, economic and social transformation that Turkey had gone through since the transition to a multi-party system in 1950. This transformation later resulted in the emergence of the AKP as a powerful political actor in Turkey. Political Islamist parties' political experiences in their brief tenure in power both transformed their attitude towards EU affairs as well as had a strong impact on the AKP's emergence as a new political actor in Turkey with a strong emphasis on EU affairs, human rights and democracy.

Political Islamist parties in Turkey generally saw an inherent incompatibility between what they considered Turkish society's religious and social identity and Turkey's membership to a Western organisation. The factors that led to the rise of political Islam and eventually to the RP's success in the '90s also transformed the Eurosceptic attitude of political Islamist parties to the extent that economic integration with the EU was welcomed provided that it was in Turkey's best interest. Moreover, political Islamist parties' struggle with the military-led secular establishment, the 28th February process in particular, during which the Turkish military forced the government, in which the RP was a coalition partner, to adopt cer-

tain secularists measures in accordance with the declaration of the National Security Council on February 28, 1997, and consecutive closures of their parties shaped their Euro-sceptic view led to the realisation that Turkey's fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria with its implications for civil-military relations and human right and democracy would act as a protection against the military-led secular establishment. The AKP's pro-EU stance takes its historical and discursive roots from this particular transformation of political Islam's attitude towards the idea of Europe since the 1970s (Doğan 2005).

As discussed, Turkish modernisation date back to the Tânzimat Era, in which there were transformative efforts towards modernisation/westernisation and secularisation. Discussing the Kurds' reactions to modernisation steps of the time, it has been noted that the tradition and Islam constituted two major sources of resistance to the modernisation project. Thus, Doğan notes that Turkey's modernity project witnessed an Islamist-traditionalist opposition since the reforms of Sultan Selim III in the late eighteenth century with opposition having manifested itself as reactions and uprisings yet having been suppressed harshly. He further highlights that the Islamic reference of the opposition led it to position itself as "a bulwark against the modernising elites"; hence the adoption of an anti-western attitude. However, Doğan points out that, throughout the modernisation history of Turkey, the opposition has been in a search for compromise with modernity to be able to contend with modernising elites, which, citing Tunaya (2003: 67-9), has created "a westernised Islamist political line" (2005: 422-3) in Turkey. Therefore, both the transformation of political Islam's attitude towards the idea of Europe and the AKP's pro-western stance in its initial years in power is a by-product of this compromise.

The founding of the Republic with its flattening assimilation policies envisaged the rejection of tradition and religion and adopted top-down policies to achieve a modern secular nation state while repressing any opposition to the founding elites' conception of moderni-

ty. The denialist politics of the Republic created a problem for those alienated by revolutionary policies in terms of self-identification with the new regime. Aras and Gökay note the major problem that the denial of the Ottoman–Islamic heritage created in the self-identification of the majority Muslim people of Turkey with the new regime, stating that "the power and legitimacy of the new republic were from the start based on a conflictual relationship between the secular centre and deeply religious and traditional periphery" (2002: 155). Public manifestation of Islam, particularly as part of a political ideology was considered as threatening to the newly founded Republic's projection of Turkey; hence, Islamic groups were suppressed and were not publicly visible during the one-party regime between 1923 and 1946.

Yeğen states that "the 'periphery' has always been considered in Turkish politics as the space of resistance to the secular and national characteristics of the modern Turkish state"; thus, he adds, the early years of Republican politics suppressed almost all entities of political opposition including those considered moderate (Yeğen 223-4; see Mardin 1973; Göle 1997 for the centre-periphery relationship as a key social cleavage in Turkey). Similarly, Yavuz argues that "as the secular Kemalist ideology began to be imposed by the centre over much of traditional Anatolian social life, religion gradually was politicised and became the dominant counter hegemonic identity of the broad periphery" (2003: 208).

The transition to a multi-party system in 1946 witnessed political movements with Islamic references to emerge though Islamic groups generally supported the Democratic Party (Demokrat Parti - DP) until its banning following the 1961 military coup d'état. The Justice Party (Adalet Partisi - AP), successor of the DP, got the support of Islamic circles until the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi - MNP) was founded in 1970 by Necmettin Erbakan, which is the first autonomous party organisation that campaigned explicitly for an Islamist agenda (Aras and Gökay 2002: 155), often formulated under the political motto of

the 'National Outlook Movement'. It was closed down in 1971 on the grounds that it violated the Constitution. In 1972, the National Salvation Party (Millî Selâmet Partisi, MSP) was founded as its successor.

Gülalp argues that the MSP was an outcome of the economic boom in 1960s and 1970s that was based on import-substituting industrialisation (ISI), which attempted to "utilise a nationalist ideology by combining the basic principles of the welfare state with an emphasis on rapid industrialisation". In practice, he notes, ISI was a process of importing technology, capital goods, and inputs, and manufacturing the final product locally for the state-protected domestic market. The ISI boom, he further states, threatened small independent businesses with extinction, which in return resulted in provincial small-business people to seek political representation in their struggle against the ISI-based industrial and other business interests in urban areas (2001: 434). The MSP's anti-western rhetoric and its criticism towards modernisation was considered an answer to their search for representation as westernisation and the capitalist system were blamed for their deteriorating and economically disadvantaged situation (Doğan 2005: 423).

The MSP's attitude towards the EEC was based on the idea of an inherent incompatibility between Turkey's social structure and its pursuit of a membership of a western political entity. Yet, after becoming the third largest party in the 1973 elections, it entered into a coalition government with the CHP and had to reach a compromise on the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement by agreeing on a policy of "revising the additional protocols which regulated the conditions of the transition stage" instead of freezing relations with the EEC altogether. Thus, Doğan notes that the MSP's desire to share the governmental power in coalition governments with the CHP and later the AP forced it to compromise on the idea of a carefully designed economic cooperation or even a customs union for Turkey's interests (2005: 425). The important point is that the MSP's compromise is an early

example of what Doğan describes as a structural transformation in the attitude of political Islam in Turkey regarding EU affairs that has occurred since the 1970s that constitutes the historical and discursive roots of the AKP's EU stance (2005).

In addition to the transition to a multi-party system and subsequent political transformation in Turkey's politics in which political parties with Islamic references were, to a certain extent, allowed to operate, the Özal government's flexible response to Islamic activism and political liberalisation, Aras and Gökay state, opened up new opportunities for Islamist groups and their activities resulted in the RP's election victory in 1997 (2002: 155). Yavuz notes that the traditional groups of the periphery were treated as partners in opening the Turkish economy by Özal. This particular development, he argues, led to the instrumentalisation of Islam as an ideology for "legitimising business connections and profit-making," as these groups "reinterpreted Islam and Islamic society in a manner compatible with their own ideological needs as members of the provincial bourgeoisie and upwardly mobile technocrats" (2003: 216).

On this point, Gülalp sees the RP's brief tenure in power as the culmination of a decade of steady growth aided by Islamist organisations and institutions, which included newspapers, publishing houses, Islamic foundations, Islamist labour-union confederation, a businessmen's association - MÜSİAD (the Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen). Despite having their own agenda, he notes, these institutions worked in tandem with the RP, the representative of political Islam in Turkey. The Islamist political movement in Turkey, he argues, rose on this wide social base (2001: 433).

Aras and Gökay state that the particular political transformation of the politics that eventually prepared the ground for the AKP's decisive victory in 2002 was also accompanied by a social and economic transformation. They point out that the growing and persistent movement from the periphery towards the centre that caused the break-up of the centre in

the 1970s, as social groups in the periphery started to gain more socio-economic mobility and moved to big cities, becoming effective socially and economically while at the same time placing a strong importance on religion and Islamic practice and public manifestation of their religious identity.

As noted, the public manifestation of Islamic religious identity was perceived as detrimental and threatening by the secular elites. Accordingly, Aras and Gökay see the tension between the new urban middle class's demand to publicly manifest their religious identity and the old established secular urban elite's opposing attitude as one of key factors behind the increasing support for the Islamist political parties. The large university student population frustrated by Turkey's long-standing social and economic problems, unskilled young urban sub-proletariat and the state-employed workers affected by the economic crisis, particularly since the early 1990s joined this new middle class that became the basis for the AKP's victory, they add (2002: 156).

In a similar vein, Yavuz notes that the MSP's political discourse based on its social contract, known as "the National Outlook (Milli Görüş), which was defined according to four pillars: culture, industrialisation, social justice, and education" "expanded the boundaries of political debate in society and integrated Islamic discourses into the political sphere" through which it "fuelled the democratisation of society by integrating the previously marginalised voices of the periphery" (2005: 212).

What makes the political, economic and social transformation of Turkey that resulted in the rise of the political Islam and eventually the AKP's success perhaps all the more important is the transformation of the Islamic groups' attitude towards the idea of Europe, which, as noted, historically saw an inherent incompatibility between what they perceived as Turkish society's religious and social identity and membership to a western organisation. Aras and Gökay see this transformation as an important example of the dynamic

changes that Turkish society experienced. They cite the case of Turkish migrant workers'
as a breakthrough development in this sense, that is, they adapted themselves to the local
conditions of European countries while keeping their identity and in certain cases they
were able to practice their religious beliefs more freely and organise collectively than were
allowed in Turkey (2002: 156). Their adaptation to the local conditions and Islamic
groups' collective mobilisation through charities and associations in European countries
weakened the inherent incompatibility argument.

Aras and Gökay argue that the process of the enlargement of economic space was another
development in the transformation of the Islamic groups' attitude towards the idea of Eu-
rope. The traditionally conservative Anatolian cities witnessed the emergence of new in-
dustrialists thanks to the policies that envisaged liberalisation and a shift to export-oriented
industrialisation, leading to the creation of an alternative economy by "widening the well-
established boundaries and challenging the rationale of the Turkish economy". These new
industrialists were, they note, in a position to better benefit from this export expansion to-
wards European countries and it was in their best interests to demand further economic
integration with Europe (2002: 157).

Gülalp argues that globalisation and post-modernisation is connected to the rise of political
Islam, which is in contrast with the argument that religion would decline as a result of
economic development (2001: 435). Quoting Bulaç, who highlights the "serious doubt as
to the validity and accuracy of the widespread conviction that all problems can be solved
within the Western paradigm," which is, Gülalp says, what Jean-Franqois Lyotard has
called the "postmodern condition," Gülalp links the rise of Islamism to this particular con-
dition while stating that this is not to claim that Islamism is necessarily a post-modernist
ideology; rather, to highlight that the postmodern condition helped Islamism gain popular-

ity in Turkey "by questioning the unquestionable truths of the Westernisation project of Turkey" (1999: 23-24).

Noting that "political Islam is not necessarily opposed to globalisation"; on the contrary, "political Islam in Turkey has actually flourished under conditions of globalisation," he points out that the portrayal of political Islam as a reactionary conservative political ideology of small traders and small businessmen who often feel threatened by the industrial economy may have been accurately identify the social base of political Islam during '70s; yet, "it is now anachronistic". The reason is, he continues, that this particular sector of the economy, unlike the ISI sector that was developed in the statist period, is ascendant in the age of globalisation, as "within the current context of the world economy, this sector is flourishing in the Third World" (2001: 435-6).

Aside from the above-noted social and economic developments that resulted in the rise of political Islam in Turkey and transformation of its attitude towards the idea of EU, political Islamist parties' own struggle with the secular establishment had a transformative effect on their perception of the idea of EU. The establishment's discontent with political Islam and the increasing popularity of the RP in the '90s became more apparent after the RP's decisive successes in the municipal elections on March 27, 1994, and national elections of December 24, 1995.

Yavuz considers the RP's decisive successes "as a psychological break in Turkish history that was an outcome of the search for new state-society relations and the re-articulation of national identity," further noting that the results "revealed a society sharply divided along secular versus Islamist sociocultural lines". In this context, he continues, the RP represented "a platform for those who seek to change the secular system as well as for those who demand reforms in the system, that is, within the bureaucratic state structure". The organisation of the political centre and transformation of the bureaucratic system led large seg-

ments of the population, including the Kurds and newly emerging Anatolian bourgeoisie to mobilise behind the RP, "all in the name of identity and justice" (2003: 214-5). Gülalp describes this mobilisation as "a resurgence of Islamist political organisation and a renewed attempt to devise an Islamic ideology as the alternative to Kemalist nationalism". He argues that Islamism in Turkey has emerged as "a cultural politics of identity" in a fashion similar to the "the proliferation of several post-modernist politics of identity" following "the crisis of ideologies based on modernism" in the West (1999: 23). Kamrava argues that the party's "unique brand of populism" that attracted and mobilised supporters at the grass-roots level was another important factor in its rise to power (1998: 297).

Despite becoming the largest party in the national elections of December 24, 1995 by receiving 21.4 per cent of the total valid votes, which was not enough to form a majority government, the RP had to seek a coalition with the True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi - DYP), one of the political parties that signed the Customs Union with the EU earlier that year. The clauses in the coalition government's party programme that aimed to empower relations between the EU and Turkey "by considering cost–benefit balances within the framework of relations among equal states, without sacrificing the principles of national sovereignty, state integrity and Turkey's national interests" were examples of political compromise of the RP in order to share the governmental power with the DYP (Doğan 2005: 426).

The tendency in the RP's leader cadres to revise their Euro-sceptic view became more apparent during what is usually referred to as 'the 28th February process' or 'Post-modern coup d'état', during which the Turkish military forced the coalition government to adopt certain secularists measures in accordance with the declaration of the National Security Council on February 28, 1997 (Cizre and Çınar 2002). This initiated the process that precipitated the overthrow of the RP-DYP coalition with the resignation of Necmettin Erbakan

of the RP. The RP was banned by the Constitutional Court from politics on the grounds of violating the democratic and secular principles of the Constitution and challenging the independence of the state. Its successor, the FP was considered sharing the same organisational and political identity as the RP and also banned by the Court.

Usul notes that the leader cadres of the National Outlook Movement welcomed the EU's pressures on Turkey in regard to civil-military relations and overall non-democratic practices in the country. There was, he continues, an overlap between Turkey's fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria that had implications for the demilitarisation and establishment of democratic and civilian control of the military and, given the closures of their parties, the Movement's struggle to contend with the military-led-establishment (2008: 177). Similarly, Doğan states that the February 28 process and consecutive closures of their parties were "all learning and maturing experiences" for the movement, shaping greatly their attitudes towards the EU, the Copenhagen criteria in particular, as its many members and followers realised that democracy and human rights would act as a protection against the secular establishment (2005: 427). Prior to the closure of the RP and upon the EU's exclusion Turkey from the next round of enlargement in December 1997, Erbakan stated that Turkey's anti-democratic political regime was the main reason behind the EU's rejection of the candidacy status. Emphasising that "the very ethos of the CE [Council of Europe] rested on the central ideals of democracy, freedoms and human rights," he further said Turkey's membership would be suspended if the Constitutional Court banned the RP (Usul 2008: 177).

Usul (2008) and Doğan (2005) present Oğuzhan Asiltürk, who was a prominent actor in the National Outlook Movement with strong anti-European perspective, and Recai Kutan, the leader of the VP, as examples of how the movement's perception of the EU had changed upon the February 28 process and subsequent anti-democratic developments. In

a parliamentary discussion the EU Council's decision at its Helsinki summit to declare Turkey's candidacy status, Asiltürk welcomed the decision and asked the government to "submit to European pressures for democratisation and the implementation of key freedoms" (Usul 2008: 178), drawing attention to "Turkey's shortcomings in democracy, human rights, rule of law, and development," further stated that "in the process of the achievement of these targets, 'national and strategic' targets should not be neglected, nor should the government be in a state of total surrender". In a similar vein, Kutan said "they were hoping for democracy, human rights, and freedom at the end of this process and that they were ready to make any necessary contribution to this" (Doğan 2005: 428). Usul points out that Kutan saw the EU process and the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria as a "benchmark" for Turkish 'Westernisers' 'in terms of their understanding of modernity and Europeanisation', through which the degree of their Europeanness would be evaluated" (2008: 178).

It should also be noted that the change in the National Outlook Movement's attitude towards the EU affairs maps on the distinction that it sought to establish between Westernisation and modernity. For instance, the RP described Westernisation as "a process of alienation from one's own cultural values and history and its replacement by an empty shell that only could be a pale shadow of the Other that it aspires to be," which created a weakness causing "underdevelopment, the lack of political independence, the erosion of moral values, and the subjugation of the Turks in their own historical regions" (Yavuz 2003: 224). Modernity, on the other hand, was associated with progress and seen compatible with Islam on the grounds that it included the essential elements that would ensure one's survival and progress through technology, science and democracy; therefore, "democracy, liberalism, and industrialisation, could be accomplished without compromising essential Islamic customs and values". Thus, Yavuz states that the RP's adoption of a liberal political and economic agenda was a viable strategy for the RP to the extent of being used "cleverly"

to "assail the authoritarian aspects of the Kemalist tradition while increasing their popularity and credibility with those who were dissatisfied with the present system" (2003: 224). For instance, Erbakan's de-emphasis of his party's religious identity by portraying the RP as "a guarantor of democracy and secularism in Turkey" in party's convention in October 1996 while omitting all references to what it called as 'The Just Order' (Adil Düzen), which vaguely articulated certain principles and theories for socio-cultural and theoretical issues with a focus on economic matters (Kamrava 1996: 301) is an example of the party's populism and pragmatism; yet, it also shows both its compromise and as well as efforts to work with and within the 'system'.

Similarly, Öniş states that the RP's successor, the FP adopted a significantly different position from "the reformist fundamentalist model" of the RP by attempting to project a relatively moderate stand in parliament based on "Islamic liberalism" through which it placed a strong emphasis on democratic rights and closer relations with the EU. There were also clearly pragmatic considerations that led to the FP's transformation, that is, "the leadership of the party became well aware of the domestic and external context that defines and sets clear boundaries for the type of political Islam that is permissible in the Turkish context" (2001: 291-2). The pressures imposed on them and their political compromise to secure their existence as a political actor in a militarised political arena transformed them into a much more liberal position.

Öniş argues that Islamist politics' possible change of direction towards a more "moderate direction" was also due to the pressure of "the instrumental role of the external context," stating that:

> "In the current global environment, the behaviour of the individual nation-states and the parameters of the domestic political game are increasingly conditioned and constrained by global norms. In the Turkish context, the EU norms have become

progressively more significant for both the state actors and 'anti-systemic' actors as a point of reference, given Turkey's close relations with the EU and its hopes of becoming a full EU member at some future date. […] **Islamists in Turkey in the post-Refah era have looked upon the EU as a natural source of protection**. They have also realised, however, that **a fundamentalist stance will not generate support for their cause**, given the deep suspicions which exist in the west concerning political Islam in the Middle East and some of the tough actions taken by the EU itself against fundamentalist movements within its own orbit" (2001: 292-3; similar Dağı 2004; 2005; Kösebalaban 2005) (emphasis added).

The political, economic and social transformation of Turkey led to the rise of political Islamist parties in Turkey and their brief tenure in power and struggles with the establishment changed their perception of the EU. More importantly, after years of political struggle, the Islamist movement, particularly the leader cadres that founded the AKP came to a point where they learned an important lesson, that is, moderation was more effective than the confrontational style of governing in a democracy (Aras and Gökay 2001: 158) and "the only peaceful method of limiting the role of the military in Turkish democracy lay in being in accord with EU norms and thus attaining full membership" (Doğan 2005: 428).

The AKP's pro-EU stance, particularly in its initial years and efforts to avoid confrontation with the military-led secular establishment as much as possible was motivated by this particular conviction, as Aras and Gökay nicely put, the AKP is "the product of this important lesson" (2001: 158) and the embodiment of the case where Islamist-traditionalist opposition has adopted a compromise position against the military-led secular establishment. The pragmatic considerations in the AKP's pro-EU stance in its struggle to secure its survival against the military-led secular establishment have proved to be a viable strategy, as the AKP has eventually managed to consolidate its power.

4.4 AKP's Pragmatism and 'Enthusiasm' For EU Membership

The AKP's pro-EU stance and adoption of discourses of human rights and democracy are good examples of how the party attempted to avoid confrontation with the Kemalist establishment in its initial years while securing its place in Turkish politics as a new political party with Islamist roots. This particular tendency is the embodiment of the case where Islamist-traditionalist opposition to the Kemalist regime has adopted a compromise position in order to contend with the military-led secular establishment. The AKP's 'compromise' position have been characterised by pragmatism and 'enthusiasm' for Turkey's EU membership.

Despite adopting a liberal political stance with a strong emphasis on human rights, democracy and well-fare while emphasising that the AKP was not an Islamist party, the AKP's leader cadres' political affiliation with political Islam in the past, nonetheless, led to the rise of questions as to their 'sincerity' and position on secularism and public manifestation of Islamic beliefs and symbols. While "a discursive shift" was clearly apparent in the AKP's discourse on democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the EU which were in line with the above-mentioned pragmatic considerations, whether this discursive shift would be followed by an identity change (Dağı 2005: 16) has remained an important question. Thus, issues and questions such as Islamism, democracy and secularism (Hale and Özbudun: 2009; Yavuz 2006; 2009; Cizre 2008a), conservative democratic political identity of the AKP (Akdoğan 2006; Çağliyan-İçener 2009; Duran 2008), the AKP as a 'post-Islamist' government (Dağı 2004; 2005; Robins 2007), globalisation, Islamic political identity and conservative politics (Kösebalaban 2005; Keyman 2010; Öniş 2009), civil-military relations (Kuru 2012; Narli 2009; Cizre 2008b) have occupied an important place in Turkish politics as well as in the literature.

The AKP leader cadres, Abdullah Gül and Tayyip Erdoğan in particular, come from a political Islamist tradition with a long history in the National Outlook Movement and the RP. This made the emergence of the AKP as a powerful political actor in Turkish politics all the more relevant to the question of civil-military relations in Turkey. The reason is that the Turkish military's presence in Turkish politics and its identification of political Islam and the Kurdish question as a national security issue have had a profound effect on the state's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question as well as perception of the religion of Islam, not least because it perceived itself as the 'guardian' of the secularist and nationalist character of the Republic (Cizre 2008b). Thus, as Cizre rightly argues:

> "The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) redefined and intensified its 'guardian' mission in the last decade in stronger terms to lock out Islamic and Kurdish 'threats' from public life, causing a shift in civil-military balance further in its favour. In other words, during the 1990s, changes in civil-military relations in Turkey were intimately connected with the armed forces' identification of **political Islam and the Kurdish question as the foremost internal threats to the secular character of the Turkish state**" (Cizre 2008b: 132; 1997; similar Burak 2011; for discussion on national security concept in Turkey and its utilisation as a tool to legitimise the military's role in civilian affairs, see Cizre 2003).

One crucial point to bear in mind is that, as discussed above, the AKP's emergence as a new political party with a liberal and pro-western oriented political agenda lie in the transformation of the Islamist movement since the '70s thanks to the political, economic and social factors that led to the rise of political Islam in the '90s and its transformation into a more moderate and rights-oriented liberal political line. The pragmatic considerations in this transformation, such as implications of Turkey's fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria and Turkey's eventual EU membership for Islamist parties' own survival against the mili-

tary-led secular establishment should also be noted. The pragmatic considerations that led to the transformation of political Islam in Turkey and later to the emergence of the AKP has determined the AKP's policy stance on important issues in terms of both rationale as well as methods. Its policy stance and enthusiasm on the EU affairs in its initial years and discourse of human rights and democracy were embodiment of this pragmatism.

Cizre points out this particular aspect by noting that the AKP government's reform agenda on the steps and measures that were necessary for the EU accession included "the resetting of the civil-military balance in favour of constitutionally elected organs" (2008b: 132). Dağı puts the AKP's discourse on human rights and EU membership in a wider context, arguing that the AKP has "instrumentalised both human rights and EU membership in its search for systemic legitimacy and security". Its discourse that perceived "human rights as fundamental to its very survival" was "indicative both of its insecurity and the social and political strength of a human rights discourse". The AKP, therefore, he continues, "has sought to secure a 'legitimate' place for itself in Turkish political arena by the discourse and mechanisms of human rights in addition to the popular legitimacy it has enjoyed through elections" (2006: 14). Turkey's EU quest and the AKP's enthusiasm to pursue reforms to comply with the EU's requirements has normalised the politics and economy of the country while at the same time diminished the role and influence of the military and more importantly, "legitimised" the AKP "which was in name a new party but whose core cadre was from the NOM" (Usul 2008: 190). For the AKP, the process of the EU membership has been more important than the EU membership itself (2008: 190). Similarly, Doğan stresses that the AKP did not have any other choice but to stand by the EU cause in order to stay in power and undertake reforms that provided pragmatic solutions for the chronic problems of Turkish society, noting that the AKP managed to alter or control "the traditional opposition of the army and elites to Islamist parties," for which end "the EU accession process has been successfully utilised" (2005: 432, 435). While noting the Islamic and

outwardly religious roots of the AKP, Yavuz states that the AKP's leader cadres "compromised on its religion-political convictions and objectives by transforming itself into "a typical political party, accepting the secular framework of the state while it functions within the confines of the Turkish polity" (2009: 9).

The above-mentioned pragmatic considerations led the AKP to adopt transformative political reforms to fulfil the EU's accession criteria and secure the opening of accession negotiations. They intended to address crucial issues in Turkey's democracy, including but not limited to civil-military relations, protection of fundamental freedoms, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, the protection of minorities and the exercise of cultural rights, and the state of emergency in some provinces of the Southeast and the use and dissemination of languages other than Turkish (Müftüler Baç 2005). Consequently, at its Brussels meeting, the Council decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey, stating that "Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria" (Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 2004: 6) thanks to the government's political reforms. Turkey has officially begun membership talks with the EU on October 3, 2005. Soon, however, there emerged signs of weakness and loss of enthusiasm in the government's attitude towards the EU accession process (Doğan 2005: 434). Noting the transformation of political Islam from a Euro-sceptic political line to Euro-enthusiast one, Usul describes this loss of momentum as "Euro-fatigue" (2008).

One particular reason behind the loss of momentum was the introduction of an additional protocol by the EU that asked Turkey to extend the 1963 Association Agreement by opening of Turkey's harbours, airports and air spaces to the Republic of (Greek) Cyprus. Turkey signed the protocol; yet, unilaterally declared that it does not recognise "the current Cyprus Republic as the one that Turkish and Greek Cypriots established together in 1960" (Usul 2008: 183-4). Upon its failure to comply with the additional protocol, the Commis-

sion recommended the suspension of accession talks on eight negotiating chapters to "pun-ish Turkey". Disappointed by the decision and describing it "unacceptable," Erdoğan stated that they would nonetheless pursue the EU bid by turning the Copenhagen criteria into "Ankara criteria" and the Maastricht criteria, the criteria that the EU member states have to meet for the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and adoption of the euro as their currency, into "Istanbul criteria" (2008: 184). Turkey has not given up on the EU; yet, the progress has dramatically declined, particularly in the AKP's second term since 2007.

The AKP's political identity, Islamist roots and its influence on the orientation of the Turk-ish foreign policy have also been discussed as part of the AKP's loss of enthusiasm towards the EU membership process (Jacoby 2010; Koprulu 2009; Casanova 2006; Öniş 2009; Kirişçi 2008; Jung and Raudvere 2008; Hale 2009; Yavuz 2009).

On this aspect, the dilemma that the AKP's liberal and pro-Western discourse has created for the whole Islamist project and its religiously motivated political identity is also worth noting in order to highlight the AKP's possible intellectual and ideological limit in pursu-ing the EU membership. Dağı argues that the Islamist movement's realisation that the only way to stay in power and contend with the Kemalist establishment would be through a discourse of rights and democracy rather than a direct confrontation with the Kemalist es-tablishment has put "the whole Islamist project in question". The reason is that, he contin-ues, the modern Islamist identity rested on the conviction that rejected "the West and Westernisation in both political and intellectual domains". Thus, the transformation that led what he describes as the "post-Islamists" to view the "the rapprochement with the west/modernity" and integration into the EU and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) as "a leverage" against the ideological conviction of the Kemalist regime, reduces, Dağı states, the possibility of "setting up another ideological state" as part of the whole Is-

lamist project. This then raises a fundamental question, that is, "what is to be left of Islamism?" (2004: 16-7). Similarly, in his analysis based on a survey of the Islamist attitudes towards Turkey's EU membership, while highlighting the process of transformation in the Islamist's attitude towards the EU and their perception of Europe, Duran notes that "the transformation is not yet complete," as "identity-related aspects of Islamism are still being voiced as a dividing line between Turkey and Europe". This, he continues, "signifies the difficulty of carving out a space for a Turkish Islamic identity within the European identity, and the limits of the transition from an anti- to a pro- European stance" (2004: 140).

Given the above-mentioned pragmatic considerations in the AKP's adoption of a pro-EU policy stance in the first place, the AKP's loss of enthusiasm for the EU process should also be discussed within its own pragmatism and how the EU has mapped onto the party's self-interest. The reason is that the pragmatism and instrumentalisation of the EU's role in inducing internal change for the party's self-interest implies a possible limitation in one's conceptual understanding of and commitment to the EU. Rahigh-Aghsan argues that Erdoğan understands 'Europeanisation' only in the sense of an "intergovernmental coordination in specific issue areas," as there is no clear indication that a commitment towards "Europeanisation in the sense of European collective identity, norms and rules, or policy coordination" exists in his understanding of the EU. Therefore, "a functionalist approach" to the EU is apparent in the AKP's EU policy stance (2011: 44) to increase its self-interest.

The pragmatic considerations in the AKP's discourse of EU, human rights and democracy and its pragmatism in general is not confined to its EU policy; rather, pragmatism and instrumentalisation of various discourse for the party's self-interest has always played an important role in the AKP politics regardless of the issue or policy in question.

This particular pragmatism that has put the AKP's self-interest to the centre and its protection against the military-led secular establishment is accompanied by a strong populism.

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Noting how populism has been part of Turkey's democracy since the founding of the Republic, Eder notes that, populism is "the 'birth defect'" of Turkey's democracy that "has survived three military interventions, numerous boom-and-bust cycles in the economy, and a large number of ideologically different governments and parties". She points out the effective instrumental character of populism utilised to integrate "lower classes into the political process and addressing their social discontent," noting that "all populisms, despite their wide range of eclectic ideological instruments, utilise an anti-elitist and anti-establishment discourse" (2004: 51-2).

Moreover, political Islam has always had a populist discourse in Turkey in the sense that it had promised "different things to different classes of people," which became all the more apparent in the RP's discourse (Gülalp 2001: 435; Kamrava 1996; for populism, see Tella: 1997). The important point is that the populist tendency in the AKP's politics is similar to the RP's utilisation of "identifiable albeit mutually contradictory interests" of "different social classes and class segments" that "expressed their interests in a common idiom of opposition to the Kemalist state" (Gülalp 2001: 435). "Their differing interests were successfully assimilated by the Islamist movement in a discourse of **opposition to Kemalism** and **the demand for an Islamic lifestyle**" (2001: 435) (emphasis added). Thus, the AKP has adopted a similar populist rhetoric in order to garner more votes by associating all the long-standing issues of people from different segments of Turkish society with the Kemalist regime, its nation-building project or previous governments prior to the AKP while presenting the AKP as a political actor with a capacity and desire to address these issues. This populist discourse of opposition to Kemalism accompanied by an appeal to political values such as democracy and human rights and a strong emphasis on economic developments led the AKP to get support from all segments of society (for discussion for the AKP's social bases, see Aydın and Dalmıs 2008).

This increasing support for the AKP has translated itself into consecutive electoral success-es. In the last general election in June 2011, the AKP got the 49.8% of the votes and was able to form a majority government for the third time. One immediate outcome of the re-sult is that the AKP appears to consolidate its electoral power base, as aside from the MHP, all other right-wing parties disappeared from the electoral scene (Çarkoğlu 2011: 58). The AKP's consolidation of its electoral base to such extent has raised the question whether there emerges a dominant party system in Turkey (Çarkoğlu 2011; Müftüler-Baç and Keyman 2012; Gümüşçü 2013; Özbudun 2013; Ayan Musil 2014).

What makes this particular development all the more important is that the AKP's third term since 2011 has been a period in which the AKP has appeared to collapse into a sort of authoritarianism, not least by 'presenting' its projection of Turkey more assertively. The reformist attitude of the AKP lost its momentum in its second term (2007-2011) and its third term since 2011 has been a period in which the prospects for Turkey's democracy have been called into question.

4.5 AKP's Drift Towards Authoritarianism

The AKP's term third term in power, from 2011 to 2015, has been a more controversial period than its previous terms. Steps towards democratisation that were already in a period of relative stagnation in this second term and its third term, an increasing authoritarianism has manifested itself in both the AKP's efforts to further consolidate its power and its own construction of Turkish society according to the values upheld by the party's leader cadres. The AKP's 'transition' from a reformist and transformative political actor to the one that has drifted towards authoritarianism shows the pragmatic considerations in the AKP's policy-making steps and how it has instrumentalised steps and reforms that have appeared at the

outside 'reformist' and 'revolutionary' for its own self-interest of securing its survival and consolidating its power.

The AKP's own projection of Turkey, which is often described as the "new Turkey," have strong Islamic references that maps onto the party's Islamist roots and perception of Turkish society (Dağı 2012; Özbudun 2014). Before discussing how and how much its Islamist roots have had influence in its ever increasing authoritarian tendencies and becoming more assertive in its perception of Turkish society, it is important to highlight how the AKP have changed power dynamics in state apparatus that has led it to consolidate power in its own favour.

As discussed, the pragmatic considerations were the main reason behind the AKP's adoption of discourses of human rights and democracy in order to legitimise its existence as a new political party with Islamist roots in a militarised political system and secure its survival against the military-led establishment (Doğan 2005; Dağı 2006; Usul 2008; Öniş 2014). This particular pragmatism was utilised successfully by the AKP and one practical outcome of this "survival/power strategy" has been the strong emphasis on "the supremacy of the national will, i.e., the constitutionally elected governments, over the non-elected and non-accountable Kemalist state apparatus," which, together with the AKP policies that have improved people's daily lives, constituted "the material and normative basis of the AKP's popularity" (Çınar 2011: 111). Thus, both the AKP's pro-EU stance in its first term and policies issued accordingly as well as its increasing electoral popularity reduced the Kemalist establishment's influence in politics and state institutions.

The AKP faced the danger of being closed down by the Constitutional Court in 2008 on the ground of becoming "a centre for anti-secular activities," which was "a judicial intervention against a governing party" (Kösebalaban 2008: 1). This particular initiative was an extension of the military's e-memorandum, an online statement of the Turkish military's

chief of staff released on April 27, 2007, and the Constitutional Court's decision that changed the rules of how the Grand National Assembly could vote and elect Turkish president. Both attempts had political motives that aimed to prevent Abdullah Gül's, one of the founders of the AKP, presidency. Çınar notes that once the AKP had endured the closure case and elected Abdullah Gül as president, it gradually took over the key positions that once were "exclusively reserved for the Kemalists" (2011: 111).

At this point, the 2010 constitutional referendum that envisaged important constitutional amendments should be noted. The referendum initially was considered as a demonstration of the "Turkish people's determination" to do away with the constitutional order of the 1980 coup d'état (Ergil 2010: 15). On the other hand, Arato criticises the initiative by arguing that these provisions were not part of "a whole liberal democratic constitution"; rather, they were set forth in a context of crisis where the Constitutional Court and the government were in a struggle in the sense that the Court stood in the way of the AKP. He highlights the risk of authoritarianism in primarily aiming to overcome a practical obstacle for the party's self-interest rather than adopting a comprehensive change (2010: 347).

Thus, the referendum is seen as an important step in the AKP's consolidation of power (Özbudun 2014: 156; 2011; 2012). The constitutional amendments were adopted by fifty-eight per cent of the popular vote on September 12, 2010. The referendum in itself took place in a highly polarised environment, which resurfaced the main cleavages in Turkish society (Kalaycıoğlu 2012). On the other hand, the amendments allowed the AKP to change the composition of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors (HSYK), breaking "the monopoly of the secularist judges" in these two key institutions by creating "a more representative and pluralistic structure," which has weakened their "tutelary control over the elected government," the AKP government and its conservative policies in particular (Özbudun 2014: 156). The constitutional amend-

ments "significantly weakened the possibility of challenges to the AKP government from the military and/or the judiciary" (2014: 156).

There were also steps and reforms to restrict the military's influence. For instance, certain reforms which were part of the EU membership process have restricted "the legal-institutional sphere of the military's influence," such as changes in the composition of the National Security Council and the annulment of the EMASYA protocol, which allowed the military to act in its own discretion when responding to social incidents (Çınar 2011: 112). In addition to the direct impact of EU-driven reforms on the military's influence (Gürsoy 2011) Moreover, there have been criminal cases before courts that have tried the military personnel's alleged plots and attempts to "destabilise and eventually overthrow the government" (Çınar 2011: 112). Referring to the trials and as well as the public scrutiny of the military, Çınar states that "unlike the centrist governments of the past, the AKP did not perpetuate the military's institutional autonomy by referring these cases to high military authorities only," forcing the military to retreat and prevailing victory over the Kemalist establishment (2011: 112-3).

The civilianisation of civil-military relations and the decline of the Kemalist bureaucracy have led to the emergence of discourse often referred to as the "new Turkey". The "new Turkey" was initially viewed more democratic than the "old Turkey," the Kemalist establishment in a number of respects, civilianisation of civil-military relations and the decline of the Kemalist bureaucracy in particular (Öniş 2013: 105). In addition to these two particular developments, the AKP governments did not adopt the flattening assimilation policy of the Kemalist regime and have been more open to accommodate religious and ethnic diversity and, to a certain degree, recognition of religious and ethnic groups' rights claims (2013: 105). Similarly, the exclusionary character of the "old regime" that has tended to ignore identity claims of religious segments of society have been replaced by a more inclu-

sive attitude that has given greater recognition to religious or conservative group of people (2013: 106).

The important point in the above-mentioned developments is that steps towards the civil-ianisation of civil-military relations and diminution of the Kemalist establishment as well as accommodation of religious and ethnic diversity could have been objectively considered positive developments for Turkey's democracy. However, as Çınar rightly notes, steps that led to the civilianisation of civil-military relations and diminution of the Kemalist establishment carried elements that would hinder "the possibility of a paradigm shift" to more constitutive politics, particularly after the AKP's decisive victory in 2011 (2011: 113). On this point, Öniş observes that the AKP have "steadily and rather paradoxically" reversed its democratisation impulse and taken an "authoritarian turn". Noting the AKP's efforts to move from the periphery to the centre of the Turkish political system, he argues that the AKP "appears to have progressively monopolised power, leaving little opportunity for forces of opposition to contest its power and hegemony in a genuinely open political order" (2014: 4).

Moreover, the "new Turkey" discourse steadily started to imply more than the retreat of the Kemalist establishment in the sense that it has appeared to suggest the AKP's vision of Turkish society. Thus, Özbudun points out the majoritarian but more importantly a markedly Islamic political line that the AKP leadership has pursued in the aftermath of the retreat of the Kemalist establishment and the AKP's consolidation of power (2014: 157). It has been possible to observe references to Islamic themes in Erdoğan's remarks, such as "his promise to raise 'pious generations', the introduction of more Islamic themes — on an optional basis — into the school curricula, his statements against abortion, his insulting words about alcohol drinkers and unmarried boy and girl students sharing the same

house" (2014: 158). Özbudun stresses that Erdoğan's condescending and authoritarian tone have really caused "concern within the secular sectors" (2014: 158).

Erdoğan's conception of democracy should also be noted in order to highlight the authoritarian tendencies in the AKP's politics. Noting that Erdoğan's understanding of democracy has been limited by "a narrow vision of democracy based on an extreme understanding of majoritarianism," Öniş states:

> "This effectively means that if you have the mandate of the electorate that grants you a comfortable majority in the Parliament, and then you effectively have the right to govern without any notion of checks and balances. Clearly, this kind of rule creates the period of excessive polarisation and deepening mistrust among key groups as those who form the majority benefit excessively from the policies of the ruling party, whilst others feel increasingly disgruntled, unfairly treated and marginalised. Certainly, this is the feeling of wide segments of society who are more secular and Western-oriented and who feel increasingly marginalised in the midst of the AKP style social and political engineering, which has a deep effect in terms of placing restrictions on their everyday existence and life-styles" (2014: 7).

This particular conception of democracy has particularly manifested itself in the self-justification of the government's policies in the sense that the AKP's electoral success has been portrayed as "the only legitimate instrument of accountability," which has led to the description of protests and demonstrations against the government as "an attempt by the minority to impose its will on the majority by unlawful means" (Özbudun 2014: 157). This reflects "an excessively majoritarian or even plebiscitarian conception of democracy" (2014: 157). This particular tendency leads critiques of the AKP to argue that a kind of "civilian tutelage" has replaced the Turkey's long-standing military tutelage (Özkan 2014: 35; Öniş 2013: 107). The end result is similar to the "old Turkey" of the Kemalist regime

in the sense that despite "its more flexible understanding of secularism," the "new Turkey" displays similar democratic deficits, particularly in terms of limiting the space for "the more Western-oriented, secular segments of Turkish society" (Öniş 2013: 107), which in return has resulted concern among secular people.

Started as an environmental protest against the demolishing of a city park, Gezi, in Taksim, Istanbul, the Gezi park protests, named after the park, quickly escalated and turned into large scale civilian revolts in a number of cities in May and June 2013 with the participation of well-educated middle-class young people (Bilgiç and Kafkaslı 2013, Yörük 2014, Göle 2013, Özkırımlı 2014; Çelik 2015). As noted above, the AKP's tendency to view its electoral success as the only legitimate instrument of accountability has led it to view any protests or demonstrations against the AKP's policies unlawful and illegitimate. Thus, the government considered the protests as part of an international conspiracy aimed to oust Erdoğan and his government by non-electoral means with "unnamed foreign enemies, the interest-rates lobby, and their violence-prone allies" being among the culprits (Özbudun 2014: 158). There was excessive police violence against the protesters that claimed eight lives and resulted in thousands of injuries (Özkan 2014: 35-6).

According to a survey conducted among the protesters, 92.4% of those joined the protests expressed Erdoğan's authoritarian attitude as the reason behind their personal involvement in the protests (Bilgiç and Kafkaslı 2013: 8). Similarly, in addition to authoritarianism of any sort, in his findings, Çelik shares the main points of criticism among the protesters as follows:

> "The main points of criticism were interference in people's chosen lifestyle; women's rights; authoritarian attitudes and policies; anxiety regarding the possibility of the transformation of the country into an Islamic state; freedom of expression, especially the freedom of journalists and the media; oppressive alcohol regulation;

abortion law; the Atatürk personality cult; the capitalist economy; and the lack of a satisfactory opposition in parliament" (2015: 291- 294)".

Given the multifaceted nature of the protests, Özbudun states that the protests did not erupt solely out of environmentalist concerns, adding that "they were the spontaneous explosion of accumulated anxieties resulting from what was perceived as the government's increasing interference with the secular way of life and the arena of personal choice" (2014: 157). The roots of this secularist anxiety can be traced back to the presidential elections of 2007, during which certain secular groups also protested the prospect of Abdullah Gül's presidency. Referring to the secularist anxiety during the election, Shankland notes that "there are pent-up feelings, movements under the surface, in Turkey that give rise for grave concern and are hardly likely to be resolvable in the short term" (2007: 358). On this point, Çelik views the Gezi Park protests, to a substantial degree, as the manifestation of these anxieties accumulated out of concern over what many perceived as an Islamic authoritarianism or the government's interference with secularist people's lifestyles. (2015: 18).

The AKP İstanbul provincial organisation's chairman, Aziz Babuşçu, made a controversial statement in April 2013, which is seen as explicit admission of the party's parting its ways with "the intellectually important, but numerically insignificant, liberals," who mostly supported the AKP (Özbudun 2014: 158). More importantly, his statement described the AKP's next ten years as "a period of construction". Babuşçu states:

> "Those who were partners with us in one way or another during our ten-year period of government will not be partners with us during the next ten years. **The future is a period of construction. The construction period will not be to their liking**. Therefore, those partners will not be with us. Those who walked together with us yesterday in one way or the other, tomorrow will be partners with the forc-

es that are against us. **Because the future that will be constructed and the Turkey that will be built will not be a future and a period which they will accept**" (Cited in Özbudun 2014: 158).

The AKP's increasing emphasis on a particular way of life and its policies and certain remarks of the party's leadership, such the one mentioned above, raise questions as to whether the AKP is undertaking large-scale social engineering, "moving Turkish society in a more conservative direction, with religion having an increasingly important role in public space" (Öniş 2013: 108). Amid the questions over the AKP's authoritarian tendencies and the party's increasing Islamist attitude towards the making of a "new Turkey," the AKP government faced a series of charges of corruption involving four cabinet ministers, the general director of a major state bank and certain businessmen and bureaucrats towards the end of 2013.

The allegations suggest that "Turkey's new elites are increasingly benefiting from asymmetric access to state resources, which seem to confer tremendous advantages to individuals and groups within the business community and the bureaucracy that are connected to higher ranks of the party apparatus" (Öniş 2014: 5). Similar to its tendency to perceive any opposition or challenge to its ruling as a conspiracy against its very existence, the AKP government described the corruption allegations as "as a sinister plot by international actors and their Turkish collaborators, with the intention of discrediting and ousting the AKP government" (Özbudun 2014: 158). The United States (US) and Israel were explicitly or implicitly accused of being international instigators behind the 'plot' while the Gülen movement, "one of the most important and influential religious communities in Turkey," was considered as 'their Turkish collaborators' and accused of using its sympathisers within the police force and judiciary to oust the government (2014: 158). The government made radical changes in the structure of the HSYK by transferring many critical powers to

the Minister of Justice and purged thousands of police officers (2014: 163-5). The corruption allegations and the government's subsequent reactions and adoption of policies to control the judiciary and the polices have made the AKP's increasing tendency towards authoritarianism and its making of a "new society" all the more important for the prospects for Turkey's democracy. Thus, there are various discussions in the literature to describe this particular phase of the AKP's ruling and Turkey's democracy.

Öniş observes the AKP's move from the periphery to the centre of the Turkish political system and how it has progressively monopolised power while leaving little to no room for opposition to challenge its power and hegemony, saying that, it is not, therefore, surprising that concepts such as "illiberal democracy," "hybrid democracy" or "competitive authoritarianism" are utilised to characterise the third term of the AKP in power (2014: 4; also see, Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002). It is possible to argue, he continues, that the "new post-Kemalist Turkey" has moved to "a new mode of illiberal democracy," where "formal institutions of democracy exist, but a civilian majority, with the religious conservatives as its dominant constituent element, increasingly monopolising power and restricting the space for the rest of the society in an unequal political contest" (Öniş 2014: 5). On this point, Dağı makes a distinction between "illiberal democracy" and what he terms as "postmodern authoritarianism" in describing the AKP's efforts to create a "new society," saying that he does not describe "the marriage of Islamism and democracy" as "illiberal democracy"; rather, as "postmodern authoritarianism". The reason is that, he states, while "in the former a majority simply imposes its will on the rest, […] in the latter the majority legislates a particular way of life and uses the state apparatus to impose its choice of morality, lifestyle and values system". He continues:

> "Once a majoritarian notion of democracy is instrumentalised to create a "new society," based on a set of values that define what the "good society" is, postmodern au-

thoritarianism then emerges. It is a form of leadership which does not amount to the totalitarianism of an ideological state, yet uses state apparatuses to build a new society inspired by the values upheld by the party" (2012).

Dağı regards the AKP as a "hybrid political entity with Islamist, nationalist and democratic credentials"; yet, he points out the increasing tendency of the "centrality of values instead of ideas, likely a result of the party leaders' Islamist roots" within the AKP. On Erdoğan's reliance on "values" in public debates and in justification of the AKP's social and cultural policies, he notes how Erdoğan refers these "values" as "our national values," "historical values," "our civilisation" and "values that our nation represents," saying that "these are all fine, but vague. What do they mean? Their lines need to be filled in by someone, an authority". Dağı concludes:

> "The inheritance of Islamism in the AK Party is the still prevailing belief that a "new society" is possible, a new society constructed by the state apparatus according to a set of "imagined values." This is not any different from the social engineering Kemalism has implemented in Turkey. "So if the Kemalist conducted and achieved a social engineering project in Turkey why not the AK Party," the ones who "represent the true values of the nation" within a democracy?" (2012).

On the question of how the Turkish case can be best described in terms of the type of democracy it has, Özbudun argues that O'Donell's notion of 'delegative democracy' fits the Turkish case best. (Özbudun 2014: 162; 2000; O'Donell 1994). Özbudun quotes O'Donell, in which he describes delegative democracies as follows:

> "Delegative democracies (DD) are not consolidated (i.e. institutionalised) democracies, but they may be *enduring*. In many cases, there is no sign either of any imminent threat of an authoritarian regression, or of advances toward representative

democracy.' In contrast to representative (or institutionalised) democracies, they are marked by a highly personalistic style of leadership (*personalismo*): 'DD is strongly majoritarian. It consists in constituting, through clear elections, a majority that empowers someone to become the embodiment and interpreter of the high interests of the nation … Elections in DDs are a very emotional and high-stakes event: candidates compete for a chance to rule virtually free of all constraints … After the election, voters/delegators are expected to become a passive but cheering audience of what the president does" (O'Donnell 1994: 60 cited in Özbudun 2014: 162-3).

On the question of accountability in DD, Özbudun notes that there is a weakness in "'horizontal accountability', i.e. accountability to other autonomous institutions of the state such as the legislature or the courts," which the President sees "as a 'nuisance' and an impediment to fulfilling his/her mission". In institutionalised democracies, there exists not only a vertical accountability whereby elected officials are answerable to the ballot box but also horizontal accountability in the sense that there are relatively autonomous state institutions, to which elected officials are also answerable. Vertical accountability alongside the existence of various political parties to influence public opinion exists not only in representative but also delegative democracies; yet, the weakness or non-existence of horizontal accountability, which is a characteristic of representative democracy, characterises delegative democracies. What makes the this aspect all the more challenging is that the development of institutions that would render horizontal accountability effective are seen "as unnecessary encumbrances to their [delegative presidents] "mission," hence, "strenuous efforts" are made to "hamper the development of such institutions" (O'Donnell 1994: 61–62 cited in Özbudun 2014: 162-3).

One particular reason why Özbudun considers Turkey as a delegative democracy is the Erdoğan's style of leadership, which has "a strong sense of mission and an excessive con-

centration of authority in his hands" that views the ballot box (i.e. vertical accountability) as "the only instrument of accountability and the only source of democratic legitimacy". Accordingly, the AKP's electoral performances and "National will" of the people expressed through the elections are elevated to "a nearly sacred status," which, given the weakness of "instruments of horizontal accountability" in Turkish politics and the AKP's "strong, loyal, and disciplined" majority in parliament, renders accountability to the legislature ineffective (2014: 163). Similarly, Öniş points out the absence of appropriate mechanisms of checks and balances in the Turkish context, which, he argues, is the central problem in "the presence of an increasingly dominant party system". "Both the institutional context and the overriding political culture," he states, "seems to have contributed to a process whereby political power is increasingly concentrated at the centre, leaving those located in the periphery increasingly marginalised in terms of their voice and effective participation in the political system" (2014: 6). One the question of the AKP's on-going popularity and Erdoğan's aggressive and divisive language in his political campaigns that have proved to be effective in consolidating his support base, Öniş sees the concept of "bounded communities" as a useful concept to understand the mobilisation behind Erdoğan's leadership and to explain why serious corruption allegations did make any impact on Erdoğan's and the AKP's popularity (2014: 17-8; also see Toktamış and Çelik 2014; for bounded communities, see Linklater 1998; Smith, Booth and Marysia 1996). In these communities, "attachment to a specific political identity" has an important role for individuals to the extent that "they develop particularistic orientations towards members of a society," which is accompanied by a "strong moral sentiments to their group members" that they refrain from "punishing 'insiders' to preserve unity of their communities". Thus, Öniş argues that "even if there were evidence of corruption or malpractice, group members would refrain from taking such allegations seriously," these allegations would not affect their choice in elections, "since they would be afraid of losing their hard earned economic and cultural rights as a

group during the course of the AKP era" (2014: 18). Moreover, given the excessive leader domination in Turkish politics, which applies to all political parties in Turkey, the central role that Erdoğan occupies "in terms of influencing the fortunes of Turkish politics and democracy over the course of the past decade" should not be surprising (Öniş 2014: 7). Consequently, the AKP's popularity is still strong, as it became the largest party in the local elections in March 30, 2014 (Çarkoğlu 2014) and Erdoğan got the 51.79% of the votes and became the first elected president in August 8, 2014. Giving its on-going popularity among the electorate, the AKP's declaring the year 2023, the centennial of the Republic, as its target under the political motto of "Turkey is Ready, Target is 2023" does not appear to be "a pretentious assertion" (Çınar 2011: 108).

Despite the stagnation and decline in the AKP's reformist and transformative discourse since its second term in the office and amid the question over the party's increasing authoritarian tendencies in its third term, the Kurdish question has continued to occupy a central role in the AKP's agenda, particularly since 2009, which has included a number of limited yet important steps by the AKP towards the Kurds' rights and a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including its armed wing - the PKK (Öniş 2013; Özbudun 2014). This in return raises the question of what has motivated or forced the AKP to employ its current policy on the Kurdish question that appears to aim to address the Kurdish question through peaceful methods.

4.6 Impetus Behind the AKP's Kurdish Initiative

There has been a certain degree of normalisation in the Kurds' rights, particularly in the private use of the Kurdish language and the exercise of cultural rights under the AKP rule. Steps towards the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria have provided limited yet transformative reforms for the civilianisation of civil-military relations, protection of fundamen-

tal freedoms, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, protection of minorities and exercise of cultural rights, and lifting of the state of emergency in some provinces of the Southeast. These steps did not specifically aim to better the protection of the Kurds' rights or recognise their identity-rights claims, as the main motivation behind them was to secure the opening of the EU accession process, for which Turkey needed to comply with the Copenhagen criteria. Yet, although their effectiveness is questionable, these and other steps that the AKP took in the subsequent years mostly as part of the EU membership process have, by implication, created a certain degree of normalisation in the Kurds' rights (Cengiz and Hoffman 2013; Kizilkan-Kisacik 2010). However, the impetus behind AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question has not been confined to the EU process and in fact, despite the party's declining record in reforms and policies towards democratisation since its second term in the office and amid the question over the party's increasing authoritarian tendencies in its third term, the Kurdish question has continued to occupy an important role in the party's agenda, particularly since 2009. This in return raises the question of what has motivated or forced the AKP to employ its current policy on the Kurdish question that appears to aim to address the Kurdish question through non-military means, including political engagement with the Kurdish political movement.

One noticeable aspect that the AKP has differed from the Kemalist regime has been the perception of the Kurdish question. While, as noted, the traditional state discourse tended to deny and ignore the very existence of the Kurds or perceive the Kurdish question as a security threat to the integrity of the state, the AKP's policy stand on the Kurdish question has been more inclined towards addressing the Kurdish question through peaceful and democratic means without relying wholly on security-oriented measures (Cizre 2009; Öniş 2013; Özbudun 2014). Another noticeable difference has been a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including both its civilian - the pro-Kurdish political parties - and non-civilian outlawed - the PKK - actors. Thus, since 2009,

beginning with what is usually referred to as the 'Democratic Initiative', 'Kurdish Opening' or 'National Unity and Fraternity Project'; there have been various attempts and processes with different naming to open a channel of 'negotiation' between the state and the Kurdish political movement (Hurriyet Daily News 29.07.2009). In March 2013, Abdullah Öcalan, jailed leader of the PKK, called for ceasefire and urged the PKK to withdraw from Turkey, saying, "we have reached the point where weapons should be silent and ideas and politics should speak" (BBC 21.03.2013). Since then, a process of talk, which is referred to as the Peace, Solution or Negotiation process depending on the context and actor in question, is in place between the state and the Kurdish political movement, Öcalan in particular, though the two are talking via intermediaries - the National Intelligence Organisation (Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı - MİT) and the pro-Kurdish party's delegation to the process. The details of these developments and their implications for the Kurdish question and recognition of the Kurds' rights, language rights in particular will be discussed in the following part. At this point, it is suffice to say that the AKP has moved beyond the impetus that the EU membership process created for the Kurdish question. There are various discussions in the literature as to the timing of and reasons for the AKP's Kurdish opening.

One particular point that should be noted is the multifaceted and enduring character of the Kurdish question, which has led the state to adopt varying policies and rhetoric in its attempts to cope with the Kurdish question. Noting the multifaceted and enduring character of the Kurdish question that has assumed different forms since its inception, Yeğen points out that the state has had different perceptions for the Kurdish question over time, such as associating it with resistance of the past to the Republic's modernisation project, banditry, regional backwardness and disloyalty. As a result, the politics of recognition, oppression, assimilation and discrimination have been utilised by the state to contain the Kurdish question. Thus, he considers three major periods in the state's varying perceptions of the Kurdish and corresponding citizenship policies, which he terms as pre-denial, denial and

post-denial. The period of pre-denial corresponds with the promise of the Turkish National Movement to recognise the Kurds as an ethnic group during the War of Independence. The period of denial is the period between the mid-1920s and the 1990s, which witnessed the denial of the Kurds' both cultural and political rights as well as existence as a distinct ethnic group. Yeğen argues that the validity of the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish question have begun to see acknowledgment of the state since the '90s. Concomitantly, he continues, the state's strategies of assimilation and oppression in its attempts to deal with the Kurdish question "have morphed into an amalgam of old and new, blending assimilation and oppression with discrimination and recognition" (2010: 67). Noting how major political events have affected the state's methods to cope with the Kurdish question, he describes the developments in the past ten years, which corresponds to the AKP's coming to power, as "a shy politics of recognition" that has been "overruled by, or at best mingled with, a reinforcement of the politics of assimilation and discrimination" (2010: 79). Therefore, the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question is a continuation of the tendency in the state's perception of the Kurdish question towards the politics of recognition since the '90s, which maps onto the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question.

The main impetus for the state's changing perception of the Kurdish question towards recognition by the early '90s should also be discussed in order to locate dynamics and forces that pushed for change in the state discourse and to understand how relevant they were and still are to the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question. On this point, Yeğen explains that the denialist attitudes of previous decades were no longer attainable amid the growing discontent of the Kurdish masses and the increasing intensity of the armed conflict between the PKK and the state by the early '90s (2010: 74). Moreover, as stated before, Yeğen argues that the global political context towards the end of '80s, particularly the 1989 is the beginning of an important period in the history of the Kurdish question. This

period witnessed the collapse of the state socialism and end of the Cold War, which result-ed in the emergence of new national and regional dynamics, and the notions of democracy and human rights with their transformative pressure on national politics becoming the dis-course of much political discontent around the world. In regard to the Kurdish question, the Kurds' discontent had become more apparent on national scale with strong political and social mobilisation. The Kurdish political movement adopted a rights-based approach to the Kurdish question, which set the achievements of certain political and cultural rights as the objective of their mobilisation (2009: 29-47). Yeğen considers the 1991 elections as an indicator of how the Kurds' discontent had reached a critical mass. In the election, the pro-Kurdish People's Labour Party (HEP), founded just one year earlier before the election, aligned with the leftist Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) won 22 seats in Parliament, which, according to Yeğen, clearly showed that "the Kurdish and Turkish masses were no longer persuaded by the old arguments that had been used to justify *inkılap* (reform), op-pression and assimilation". It is within this particular context, he continues, it was revealed by state officials that the state was prepared to "'correct' the dictums that there were no Kurds in the Turkish territory and that the Kurdish question was without an ethnic dimen-sion" (2010: 74). The elimination of the ban on speaking Kurdish in public by the Nation-al Assembly in 1991, the then prime minister Süleyman Demirel's remark, declaring that "Turkey recognised 'the Kurdish reality'" and his suggestion of "a constitutional citizen-ship" as well as the then president Turgut Özal's similar efforts are some of the examples of the state's inclination towards the politics of recognition in the Kurdish question, through which "the attitude of denial was left behind" (2010: 74; for discussion that the AKP con-tinues Özal's Kurdish question policy, see Efegil 2011: 28).

Similarly, Zeydanlıoğlu states that during the '90s, the Kurds' existence was not "overtly" denied and there was no longer an official ban on the Kurdish language; yet, the recogni-tion of the Kurdish language's existence was not based on "a genuine reform and reconcili-

ation process" neither did it envisage "the granting of official status to the Kurds and their language in Turkey". The "recognition" occurred, he argues, because of the impossibility to "maintain the official paradigm of denial by the early 1990s". He too, just like Yeğen, points out that the increasing popularity and power of the Kurdish mobilisation and the on-going armed conflict between the state and the PKK were the main reasons why the state's denialist policy has "eased" since the early '90s, further adding that the discourse of 'recognition' "co-exists with old discourses of denial and denigration" in the sense that "old and new policies" run "contrapuntally" (2013: 169). In addition to the transformation of the state discourse towards recognition since the early '90s, which also has affected the AKP's perception of the Kurdish question, there are also certain domestic factors that led the AKP to adopt more 'radical' and perhaps 'surprising' steps towards the Kurdish question in 2009.

The problematic character of civil-military relations in Turkey here manifests itself as an important factor in the sense that the identification of the Kurdish question and Islamic challenges as internal security threats by the security-minded secular establishment and adoption of a 'military solution' to the Kurdish question has blocked "civilian imaginations", causing "the decline of democratic discourse and its replacement by repackaged conservative nationalist reactionism" (Cizre 2009: 3). Thus, Cizre states, "purely political problems have been brought within a national security framework; in other words, military functions became politicised and civilian politics became securitised" (2009: 3). The civilianisation of civil-military relations, as noted above, has helped the AKP consolidate its power and become more assertive in its policies on the road to its vision of the "new Turkey". In this sense, Cizre points out the importance of adopting civilian discourse for the Kurdish question rather than relying wholly on security-oriented measures of the security-minded secular establishment in terms of correcting "the power imbalance between civilians and the military by limiting the latter's political role and influence". The AKP's "civil-

ian" perspective to address the Kurdish question through peaceful methods represents "a change in the perennial trade-off between civilians and the military in Turkish politics" by strengthening the AKP's own 'legitimacy' through formulating "its 'own' clear choices free from non-civilian, undemocratic constraints". Therefore, similar to the AKP's discourse of human rights and democracy, the AKP's decision to develop a "civilian" perspective for the Kurdish question was also informed by the party's efforts to redefine "the locus and space in which the phenomenon of political power takes place in Turkey" by "taking advantage of its pro-European Union facet in order to shape new opportunities for restructuring the power balances and addressing the Kurdish question" (Cizre 2009: 4-5).

As discussed above, the Kurds' growing discontent and the increasing popularity of the Kurdish political movement as well as the armed conflict between the PKK and the state rendered the state's denialist policy of the Kurdish question impossible to maintain and; therefore, a shift has been occurred in the state discourse since the '90s towards the politics of recognition. Similarly, the timing of the AKP's Kurdish initiative for the Kurdish question was not coincidental, as it was, Casier, Jongerden and Walker (2011; also Çandar 2009; Çiçek 2011; Cengiz and Hoffman 2013) argue, part of the state's wider legal and political measures to 'contain' the Kurdish political movement amid the victorious performance of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi - DTP) in the local elections of March 2009.

Casier, Jongerden and Walker point out the relative normalisation in the Kurdish question in the early 2000s thanks to the EU process, the ceasefire of the PKK and eventually the emergence of the AKP, during which various political reforms were introduced that created "a more peaceful atmosphere to prevail in the Kurdish-inhabited provinces of Turkey's southeast". They argue that this relative normalisation and the pro-Kurdish party's electoral success in the municipal elections in predominantly Kurdish-inhabited provinces allowed

for "a re-orientation in the political organisation of the Kurdish movement over the past decade" in the sense that the Kurdish political movement, with the PKK being the major actor has strengthened its presence in the south-eastern without relying on means of arms. The government and state institutions, they continue, made various attempts to "contain and roll back this **political and societal influence** of the PKK" in the Kurdish region (emphasis added). They further claim that while the AKP's Kurdish initiative aimed to challenge the Kurdish political movement, including the PKK, its affiliated organisations and the then pro-Kurdish party DTP "**both politically and ideologically**" by "attempting to restructure the relationship of the Turkish state to the Southeast and its Kurdish issue" (emphasis added), judicial investigations into those who accused of being PKK members aimed to crack down on its [PKK] urban wings (2011: 103-4, 107), not least because of its growing support base and the Kurdish political movement's *de facto* development of structures "for self-government at local and regional levels" that turned the issue into "a struggle over sovereignty" (2011: 105, 113), which is often referred to as the 'democratic autonomy' (Sönmez 2012; Kurdistan 2013; Ozkirimli 2013). Therefore, the timing of the AKP's launch of the Kurdish initiative was imposed by the Kurdish political movement's growing popularity and increasing support base in the Kurdish region. On this point, one particular development should be mentioned, that is, the AKP's Kurdish opening came right after Öcalan had announced in May 2009 that the release of a roadmap for the Kurdish question's resolution (Somer and Liaras 2010: 155). The then Interior Minister Beşir Atalay announced two months later that the government had its own "plan"; hence, the AKP's Kurdish opening (2010: 155).

The relationship between the AKP and the Kurdish political movement should also be noted as part of reasons behind the government's Kurdish initiative. The reason is that the AKP and the Kurdish political movement are also "direct competitors" in the sense that

they appeal, to a certain extent, to the same Kurdish electorate both in the Southeast and western metropolises (Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011: 120; also see 2014). One particular example that demonstrates how the Kurdish political movement's growing support base is 'personal' to the AKP is the DTP's success in the local elections of 2009, in which the AKP lost many mayorships to the DTP that it had won in the local elections of 2004, as the DTP increased its number of mayorships by 60 per cent compared to the local elections of 2004 (Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011: 108; Çarkoğlu 2009). In addition to the fact that they appeal to the same Kurdish electorate, it should be bear in mind that both the Kurdish political movement and the AKP have their own versions of "political change" in Turkey, as both "seek to transform socio-political life by engaging in the transformation of the individual and society"; therefore, there is "struggle for authority" between them as the political actors that want to achieve political change (2011: 120-1). Thus, Çınar points out the AKP's self-interest in its approach towards the Kurdish question, saying that the main rationale was to sideline the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi - BDP), which succeeded the DTP after its closure by the Constitutional Court, further noting the AKP's desire to emerge "as the true representative of the Kurdish people in Turkey, and thereby substantiate its claim to be the one and only democratic and democratising force." (2011: 120).

In addition to the above-discussed points for understanding the timing of and reasons for the AKP's Kurdish initiative, Somer and Liaras also point out the possible change in the public perception of the Kurdish question as a factor in the AKP's Kurdish initiative (2010: 158; similar Haşimi 2009). They observe how the expression of Kurdish identity and argument for ethnic-cultural difference had been "more or less taboo for mainstream society" until the '90s, arguing ethnic-cultural difference has become "acceptable and widespread" since then. The immediate outcome of this change in public's attitude towards ethnic-national diversity is more apparent in the monolithic perception of Turkish society in the

sense that "Turks' predominant image of their society no longer resembles a homogeneous melting pot. The society's ethnic, cultural and regional heterogeneity is more or less recognised as *de facto* plurality"; yet, they note, the extent that this recognition of diversity translates into *de jure* pluralism is yet to be seen. The important point is that given that the AKP's rise has led to the emergence of new socioeconomic and political elites, "in so far as the core AKP socio-political elites hold different and more liberal beliefs and values vis-à-vis ethnic pluralism and the Kurdish question", Somer and Liaras argue, the AKP may take steps towards resolving the Kurdish question (2010: 157-8). It should be borne in mind that the AKP's emergence in the Turkish politics was by and large due to the party's ability to "grasp the changing realities of Turkish society" (Aras and Gökay 2002: 157); therefore, it should not be surprising that the AKP would want to utilise public's perceptions and expectations regarding the Kurdish question, as there are strong acceptance in the public that the Kurdish question is one of the biggest issues of Turkey and the government's steps towards resolving the Kurdish question through peaceful methods, Solution Process in particular, is "positive" (Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA) [The Society for Political, Economic and Social Research], Public Perception of the Kurdish Question in Turkey 2009; Kadir Has Üniversitesi, Türkiye Sosyal-Siyasal Eğilimler Araştırması [Kadir Has University, Social and Political Trends in Turkey] 2015).

In addition to the above-discussed domestic factors in the AKP's Kurdish opening's both timing and substance, Çandar (2009; similar Çiçek 2011) views circumstances that have led Turkey to reconsider its Iraq policy, including its attitude towards the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) as an external factor in the Kurdish opening. Historically, it is possible to find various derogatory remarks in the state discourse towards the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in, not least because of the state's primal fear that an independent or autonomist Kurdish region in Iraq would trigger secessionist feelings among Turkey's Kurds.

For instance, in July 2007, Erdoğan stated that the central government in Iraq was their counterparts; therefore, he, as a prime minister, could not meet a 'tribal leader', referring to Masoud Barzani, president of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, but low-level relations might be possible (Habertürk 05.07.2007). Erdoğan's description of Barzani as a tribal leader despite the fact that he was already the president of the KRC at the time was not surprising. Since then, however, Turkey's foreign policy towards the KRC has also witnessed normalisation.

Çandar points out that the state has come to the realisation that cross-border military operations against the PKK's strongholds in the Iraqi Kurdistan territory has not been sufficient for eradicating the PKK, which, together with American withdrawal from Iraq, has triggered Turkey to develop "a new and relatively more realistic Iraq policy" (2009: 14-5). Therefore, concerns over the future of Iraq "have unequivocally played a role" in the launch of the Kurdish initiative; however, Çandar states that in addition to "the concerns over 'Iraq's situation' in the near future", there are other factors that should also be considered in order to understand Turkey's new policies towards Iraq and the KRC. He considers what he describes as 'Turkey's ambitions' for becoming "an energy hub and crossroads for pipelines that are already in operation or projected to come from the Transcaspian basin, the Gulf, and elsewhere, such as from Russia and Iran" as an important factor to the extent that, he continues, "the adjacent Iraqi territory and the unexplored hydrocarbon wealth underneath Iraqi Kurdistan are essential components of Turkey's strategic outlook". The resolution of the Kurdish question, therefore, is an important step towards securing Turkey's environs for "new energy transportation projects including Nabucco". Moreover, given the KRC's potential to become a major player in energy policies thanks to its hydrocarbon resources, he continues, Turkey's resolving its Kurdish question will pave the way for a full-fledged cooperation with the KRC, which have otherwise been hindered by the state's security-oriented perception of the Kurdish question. Therefore, it is not surprising

that the AKP's government decision to address the Kurdish question through peaceful methods other than military means have resulted in "a new policy of rapprochement and cooperation" with the KRC (2009: 15).

Çiçek also points out similar geopolitical dynamics that condition the resolution of the Kurdish question within Turkey and rebuilding of better relations with the Iraqi Kurds while emphasising that the Kurds currently live under four different countries in the region, namely Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, which, he argues, "one of the main dynamics which determines the relations between these countries" (2011: 17). In fact, the regional developments, particularly in Iraq and Syria put the state of the Kurdish question to the centre of Turkey's future. One particular reason is that the Kurdish question has transnational and diasporic characteristics in the sense that, to a certain extent, it is both emotionally and politically related to the Kurds in Syria and Iraq, their political future and political status, which in return affect the self-perception and self-identification of the Kurds in Turkey. The recent years has witnessed the emergence of the KRC in Iraq and the *de facto* autonomous region of Rojava in northern and north-eastern Syria, 'West Kurdistan', which make the transnational character of the Kurdish question (Bruinessen 2007) all the more challenging for Turkey.

In short, the increasing popularity and power of the Kurdish political movement and the Kurdish question's overall impact on daily life in Turkey are among the main reasons behind the AKP's current attitude towards the Kurdish question that appears to aim to address the Kurdish question through non-military means, including political engagement with the Kurdish political movement. The important point is that from the state perspective, the Kurdish question is an issue that has to be contained and confined as much as it has to be recognised. One aspect of the politics of containment relies on military solutions or judiciary measures to tackle the Kurdish political movement with its both civilian as

well as non-civilian activities. The other aspect, which is more relevant to the current study, is to contain the Kurdish question through the adoption of rights-oriented policies that aim to challenge the Kurdish political movement both ideologically and politically and to include the Kurds' into the state's identity perception, which has historically been ignorant of the Kurds.

4.7 Conclusion

The AKP has become a powerful political actor in Turkish politics thanks to its unprecedented success in the ballot box since 2002 by becoming the largest party in every local and national election. Beyond its electoral success, the AKP has challenged the hegemonic position of the Kemalist regime through various political and legislative reforms as well as adopting discourses of human rights and democracy not only to legitimise its survival as a new political actor with Islamic references but also to gradually consolidate its power and change power dynamics in its favour. The AKP rule, therefore, marked the beginning of a new era in Turkey's political history and continues to dominate the political landscape.

The AKP's increasingly authoritarian attitude does not simply imply a strong AKP dominance in state institutions and its absolute consolidation of power; rather, it also signifies the making of a 'new Turkey' according to the party's conception of Turkish society along values upheld by the party's leader cadres. Thus, there is a strong sense of mission in Erdoğan's statements that appears to aim further consolidation of power with a presidential system that would change the current parliamentary system being portrayed as essential for the 'new Turkey'. These developments have clearly many implications for the prospect of Turkey's democracy and its social and political cleavages. They have, on the other hand, strong bearings on the Kurdish question, which, as a long-standing issue of Turkey, has

incessantly occupied a central position in Turkish politics regardless of the political spectrum.

The reason is that with its third term in the office, the AKP has consolidated its power to the extent of securing its own existence against the military-led establishment and making the case for a 'new Turkey'. Therefore, the AKP's own understanding of the Kurdish question and its policy stance on the Kurdish question determines the state discourse on the Kurdish question. This in return makes the AKP's very existence and policy-making practices relevant to the future of the Kurdish question. Moreover, the AKP's description of its period in power as the beginning of a 'new Turkey' suggests a divergence from the Kemalist regime and its nation-building project, including conception of secularism and national identity. In other words, from the AKP's perspective, one might argue that Turkey has re-imagined itself as a new nation under the AKP rule, which then leads to the question of how 'Kurdish' this newly 're-imagined' Turkey is in terms of recognition of the Kurds in general and their language rights in particular.

The Kurdish question has been on the AKP's agenda since its emergence in Turkish politics in 2002. The requirements of the Copenhagen criteria created the major impetus behind the AKP's initial political reforms that have, by implication, normalised certain aspects of the Kurds' rights. However, the Kurdish question has continued to be in the party's agenda, particularly since 2009 despite the stagnation and decline in its reformist and transformative attitude and amid the question over its recent drift towards authoritarianism. The AKP's corresponding policy stance on the Kurdish question has included a number of limited yet important steps towards the recognition of Kurds' rights and a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including its armed wing - the PKK in order to resolve the Kurdish question. Therefore, there are, beyond the impetus of Turkey's EU membership, factors that have motivated and forced the AKP to adopt its cur-

rent policy on the Kurdish question, which appears to aim to address the Kurdish question through non-military means, including political engagement with the Kurdish political movement.

The Kurdish question in itself with its implications for Turkey's political integrity creates the main force for change in the state discourse, not least because it has the potential to destabilise and disintegrate the country. The state's denialist perception of the Kurdish question has already been eased towards recognition since the '90s, as the denial of ethnic-dimension of the Kurdish question was no longer attainable amid the growing political and societal influence of the Kurdish political movement and the impact of the conflictual nature of the Kurdish question on daily lives in Turkey. The AKP's Kurdish question policy, therefore, maps onto the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question. Similarly, the timing of the AKP's Kurdish initiative in 2009 had also similar motivation, as it was announced in the aftermath of the pro-Kurdish DTP's victory in local elections and the Kurdish political movement's *de facto* efforts to develop structures of self-government.

The important point is that from the state perspective, the Kurdish question is an issue that has to be contained and confined as much as it has to be recognised. While one of aspects of the Kurdish question's containment rests on military solutions or judiciary measures to tackle the Kurdish political movement with its both civilian as well as non-civilian activities, the other aspect, which is more relevant to the current study, is concerned with the containment of the Kurdish question through the adoption of rights-oriented policies that aim to challenge the Kurdish political movement both ideologically and politically and to include the Kurds' into the state's identity perception, which has historically been ignorant of the Kurds. It is, therefore, possible to observe a tension between recognition and containment in the AKP's approach to the Kurdish question, as it aims to roll back the societal and political influence of the Kurdish political movement. However, this particular tension

also stems from the fact that the AKP and the Kurdish political movement are in a political competition, as they appeal, to a certain extent, the same Kurdish electorate. More importantly, as two powerful political actors, both have their own versions of democratisation of and political change in Turkey through the transformation of socio-political life. This puts the AKP's self-interest to the centre of the Kurdish question and its future.

The AKP has been a pragmatist and populist party that has instrumentalised the EU process and discourses of human rights and democracy for its self-interest on the road to consolidate power and change power dynamics in its favour. The end result is that any step towards long-standing issues of Turkey has become subjected to the AKP's own desire and agenda, meaning that it takes steps, if any, so long as the timing and the nature of the steps are in accordance with its agenda. The corruption allegations and the 'new Turkey' discourse, makes the AKP's pragmatic and rational characteristics more apparent and prevailing. The reason is that the AKP wants to remain in power more enthusiastically in order to realise its 'new Turkey' vision as well as to tackle corruption allegations, which render the attainment of power as a matter of survival for the party. On the other hand, despite being the president, who is expected to be non-partisan, Erdoğan still takes a partisan position and his leadership continues to occupy a central role in the AKP's politics, not least by pushing for a presidential system mainly for his own interest. Thus, in this context, the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question and the Solution process's future become all the more challenging, as the question arises as to whether and if so, to what extent, the Process is instrumental for the AKP's self-interest with the Process's future and any further steps towards the Kurds' recognition, their language rights in particular being conditioned on the party's self-interest on the road to the making of a 'new Turkey' and further consolidation of power.

Chapter 5: The Turkish State Discourse under the Successive AKP Governments

5.1 Introduction

The AKP has incessantly been in power since its emergence as a powerful political actor in 2002, which is an unprecedented achievement in Turkish politics. One practical implication of the AKP's incessant electoral success for the current study is that the exploration of the extent of the shift in the state discourse on the Kurds' language rights between 2003 and 2015 deals, by definition, with the AKP era. In other words, the state discourse of this period on the Kurds' language rights is synonymous with the AKP's, its leader cadres' in particular own understanding of the Kurdish question and the party's corresponding policies and practices towards the Kurds' language rights. Thus, this chapter deals with the state discourse on the Kurdish question in lights of the certain points in the political theories of language rights discussed in Chapter 3 in order to understand the extent of the shift in the Turkish state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights and the sources of resistance to its recognition in the AKP period between 2003 and 2015. Language rights provide explanatory power for the AKP's policies on the Kurdish language, the party's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question and more importantly its resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

As discussed above, the AKP era corresponds to the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question whereby the denial of ethnic dimension of the Kurdish question that had been the dominant perception in the state discourse since the foundation of the Republic has begun to shift towards recognition in the early '90s, as the denialist attitudes of previous decades was no longer possible to maintain due to the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence, and the increasing intensity of the

armed conflict between the state and the PKK (Yeğen 2010; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013). This particular tendency has also been apparent in the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question, as the party's Kurdish opening was launched in the aftermath of the pro-Kurdish DTP's local election victory in 2009 and amid the Kurdish political movement's efforts to develop structures for self-government in the Kurdish regions (Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011; 2014). The important point is that the Kurdish question has always been on the AKP's agenda since it came to power in 2002. Yet, while the initial political reforms that have created a certain degree of normalisation in the Kurds' rights were motivated by the Turkey's EU affairs (Cengiz and Hoffman 2013; Kizilkan-Kisacik 2010), the subsequent policies of the AKP have been more informed by the similar forces that had resulted in the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question, that is, the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence and the state's desire to contain the Kurdish question in order to roll back the Kurdish political movement's influence as well as prevent the Kurdish question becoming a destructive force for the country (Casier, Jongerden and Walker 2011; 2014; Çandar 2009; Çiçek 2011; Cengiz and Hoffman 2013; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013). Despite the stagnation and decline in the party's reformist and transformative attitude and amid the question over its recent drift towards authoritarianism, the Kurdish question has still continued to occupy an important place in the party's agenda (Öniş 2013; Özbudun 2014).

Although it is not possible to observe the development of a comprehensive or an explicit Kurdish policy in the AKP era (Öktem 2008: 2), the AKP's current policy stance on the Kurdish question appears to aim to resolve the Kurdish question through non-military means, including political engagement with the Kurdish political movement and its armed wing - the PKK and steps towards recognition of the Kurds' rights (Cizre 2009; Çandar 2009; Efegil 2011; Öniş 2013; 2014; Özbudun 2014). The party has taken a number of steps to advance the use and dissemination of the Kurdish language and it is possible to

observe a certain degree of normalisation in the Kurds' rights. In fact, the AKP's political reforms in its initial years challenged many aspects and assumptions of the nation-building project of the Kemalist regime, not least by better protecting the Kurds' rights. This led some authors to view the AKP's discourse of opposition to the nation-building project of Kemalism as a step towards "defending the radical restructuring of the country along multi-ethnic lines" by discontinuing the Kemalist regime's nation-building project and adopting a multicultural approach (Yavuz and Özcan 2007: 131-2). It was perhaps premature to view the AKP's divergence from the Kemalist regime's nation-building perception as such by arguing that the AKP and military have "diametrically opposing visions of Turkey" (2007: 131). The reason is that although the AKP has adopted many transformative policies towards the Kurds' rights by ending the denialist policy of the state, the party's discourse and policies on the Kurdish question are "strongly informed by the same nationalist, statist, and militarist tradition" and in many aspects share the same sources of resistance to the Kurds' rights as with the traditional state discourse (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 180). Yet, the AKP's steps towards recognition of the Kurds' rights as well as its policy of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement to resolve the Kurdish question imply a possible direction of change in the state discourse on the Kurdish question.

It should be noted that the main reason behind why the state have not managed to resolve the Kurdish question is not due to an act of 'failure' on the state side in terms of producing policies that can address the Kurdish question rightly and timely; rather, it is primarily conceptual in the sense that the very articulation and definition of the Kurdish question have determined the corresponding policies. The state's association of the Kurdish question with regional backwardness, reactionary politics or national security (Yeğen 1996; 1999) have all implied a limited conceptual capacity in resolving the Kurdish question. Therefore, an analysis of the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question demonstrates both the possible direction of change in the state discourse on the Kurdish

question and the extent of recognition that the party's policy-making steps towards the Kurds' language rights suggest.

As noted, one of the reasons that the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question implies a possible direction of change in the state discourse towards recognition of the Kurds is due to the party's seemingly rights-oriented approach to the Kurdish question in the sense of taking certain steps in order to advance the use and dissemination of the Kurdish language, which has not been the case prior to the AKP era. However, one needs to locate the true nature of the Kurds' language rights and the rights that the AKP has aimed to address in order to explore the possible conceptual change and its extent in the state's perception of the Kurdish question. In this sense, language rights help identify the true nature of the Kurds' language-related rights and have strong explanatory power to understand how a particular state perceives a minority language group's language rights claims; therefore, a state's resistance to language rights is not about a mere resistance to a particular language policy, as language rights have much wider implications for a state's self-perception of national identity, citizenship and sovereignty. This particular aspect is crucially helpful in analysing and understanding the Turkish state's discourse during the successive AKP governments on the Kurdish question as language rights provide a valuable point of reference to analyse the shift in the state's discourse towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights and to explore the sources of resistance to their recognition.

The Kurdish question is an embodiment of the case in which a minority language group seeks constitutional recognition for its language rights that extends beyond the accommodation of the Kurdish language in the private domain. Grounded on the idea that language has an intrinsic value to its speakers (Green 1987; Réaume 1991; 2000; Rubio-Marín 2003), this particular dimension of language rights are concerned with the Kurdish language's use in public services, participating in government and education facilities regard-

less of its speakers' proficiency in the Turkish language. The Kurds' language rights, therefore, are about the non-instrumental nature of language. Most policies of the AKP towards the Kurdish language are implicitly or explicitly concerned with the instrumental nature of the Kurdish language as a tool of communication and in this sense falls into the regime of linguistic tolerance (Réaume 1991; Kloss 1977) that, as discussed before, takes the instrumental nature of language as its primary point of interest rather than the constitutive character of language in the construction of one's both individual or collective identity (May 2001; 2003; 2005; Edwards 1985; 2002; Eastman 1984; Coulmas 1992; Bentahila and Davies 1993). Language rights claims of the Kurds point, however, to a different regime of language rights.

People's interest in language rights as a concern for linguistic security (Réaume 1991; Réaume and Green 1989) requires that the Kurds have the tools and resources to live a full life in the Kurdish language without facing unfair pressures from the often-unquestioned dominant position of the Turkish language. The viability and size of the Kurds increases the interest in linguistic security to the extent that linguistic security in its fullest sense (Réaume and Green 1989) requires the Kurdish language to be used in public services, governance and education facilities so that the Kurds have a free and fair environment in which the Kurdish language may flourish without its speakers facing any imposition or unfair pressure to abandon their mother tongue.

In this particular point, the regime of language rights often goes so far as to accord official language status to a minority language, particularly on the territory that the minority group has historically lived (Green 1987; Réaume 1991). The political implications of language rights for self-government and perception of nationhood are particularly apparent in this case, not least because the minority language group considers itself a 'nation' within and challenges the monolithic policies and perceptions of the nation state in terms of national

identity, de-centralisation of the state power and ownership of the country (Kymlicka and Patten 2003; Bauböck 2001: 2000; Kymlicka and Grin 2003). The state's resistance and hesitancy to recognise a minority language group's language rights come partly from the political implications of language rights, as their recognition could be tantamount to re-imagination of the state as a multicultural and multi-ethnic state (May 1997; 2001). Language rights, in this sense, are part of the ethno-political character of the wider national conflict between a dominant language group and a minority language group and the question of language rights recognition is "central to the larger political project of containing nationalism" (Hechter 2001 cited in Kymlicka and Patten 2003: 6). This particular dimension of language rights applies to the Kurdish question, as the Kurds' growing discontent forces the state to change its policy stance on the Kurdish question towards the politics of recognition. Thus, from the state's perspective, as noted above, the Kurdish question is an issue that has to be contained and confined as much as it has to be recognised.

The Kurds' language rights claims are particularly problematic yet crucially important because in many ways it is the last and most important front-line of political debate in the Kurdish question. Most issues in the Kurdish question are related to language rights either by definition or implication in terms of self-government, national identity, citizenship and sovereignty; therefore, language rights signify more than a language policy choice. The Solution process and the 'negotiation' between the state and the Kurdish political movement to resolve the Kurdish question particularly put the Kurds' language rights claims to the centre of the political debate. The state inevitably has to take a position one way or another on the Kurds' language rights claims. The reason is that, as discussed above, language rights are rights of political compromise in the sense of being as "a result of a constitutional bargain" between the state and a language group through which language rights are usually negotiated and recognised (Green 1987: 665; also see Réaume and Green 1989; Réaume 2002; Green and Réaume 1990). Therefore, in practice, language groups with extensive

constitutional protections for their language rights are usually those that are on a national scale with a strong political mobilisation that have 'the power to break the country' (Green 1987). The on-going political engagement between the state and the Kurdish political movement to resolve the Kurdish question, including the disarmament of the PKK appears to constitute the process of political compromise through which language rights are usually negotiated and recognised. The Kurds, as a distinct language group, have 'the power to break the country', not least because of their historically rooted and regionally concentrated population and the growing discontent of the Kurdish masses. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Kurds' language-related rights claims fall into the category of language rights both in terms of their rights claims and the state's 'motivation' to address the Kurdish question.

Although the whole aspect of the question of political compromise signifies only the political process through which language rights are recognised, there is a tendency to view language rights as rights of political compromise in terms of their nature and enforcement, which suggests that they do not qualify as fundamental human rights that are rooted in principle (Arzoz 2007; Green 1987; Green and Réaume 1990). This in return weakens language rights' enforcement in courts and implies a restraint judiciary capacity in their interpretation, as they are viewed as part of a historical compromise of the founding people ([1986] 1 SCR 549: 578 cited in Green 1987: 645; Green and Réaume 1990: 565-6). In this sense, given the AKP's steps towards the Kurdish language and its 'negotiation' with the Kurdish political movement, the question whether the AKP views the Kurds' language rights claims are fundamental human rights are of paramount importance. Similar to how the formulation of language rights as rights of political compromise implies a restraint judiciary capacity, the AKP's possible perception of the Kurds' language rights as rights of political compromise rather than fundamental human rights may imply a limited conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question with a limited recognition of language rights.

There are strong indications that the state sees minority rights claims in Turkey as rights of political compromise rather than fundamental ones. This appears to be evident not only in discussions over the Kurds' rights during the Solution process but also in the AKP's similar steps to address the many problems of Turkey, particularly those which have their root causes in the exclusionary identity practices of the state. The AKP has not been shy of publicly admitting that there had been great injustices and discriminatory practices towards ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in the country, and that the only way to remedy these injustices would be through greater democracy and human rights. One aspect of the government's initiative to address Turkey's long-standing issues was concerned with the Alevis, followers of a particular branch of Islam, under the process of Alevi opening. The process has promised much and; yet, what it has delivered in terms of actual transformative policies has been very limited, barely extending beyond symbolism, aligned with a strong political populism and pragmatism. It would be unfair to deny the importance of symbolic steps in the political context of Turkey, where the possibility of an open and democratic discussion on issues, which raise serious questions about well-established and internalised state discourse, has proven difficult. However, since it is possible to observe similar tendencies in the AKP's other policies, one cannot help but question whether and to what extent the AKP views minority groups' rights claims as fundamental human rights and aims to contain and manage these issues within its own agenda and timing. This might also explain the slow progress of the Solution process as well as how the recognition of the Kurds' rights appears to be conditioned on the AKP's self-interest and the on-going 'negotiation' with the Kurdish political movement.

This should not come as surprise or accidental; on the contrary, it can be seen as a carefully executed policy which, just like many other AKP practices discussed before, aims to secure the AKP's power base and maximise its self-interest, with little to no intention of taking transformative actions unless an eventual step on a certain issue will provide benefit to

the AKP and is in line with the party's agenda and timing. The embodiment of this prag-
matic and populist approach demonstrates itself in the authoritative measures of recent
years. They are concrete, precise and outcome-oriented, and have 'wonderful' titles. As
Shami Chakrabarti, the director of Liberty, the British civil liberties advocacy organisation,
nicely puts it, "the most authoritarian measures always have wonderful titles". Steps in the
Kurdish and Alevi questions, however, are vague, ambiguous and contradictory, and lack
effective implementation and identification of the real issues.

Nonetheless, the AKP period in Turkish politics is a valuable point of reference to explore
the shift in the state discourse towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights due to
steps towards the Kurds' rights and the on-going Solution process. The reason is that when
the Kurdish question was wholly seen as a security problem accompanied by a categorical
ignorance and denial of Kurdish identity, there was no room left for a democratic discus-
sion about if and to what extent Kurdish identity and the Kurdish language would be rec-
ognised by the state if the state's perception of the Kurdish question was to shift towards
recognition. That the state now appears to recognise the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish
question and talks about related issues without categorically denying or ignoring the Kurd-
ishness of the Kurdish question as it had done previously makes it more possible to ex-
plore the state's position on the Kurds' language rights and extent of its inclination towards
recognition.

In the AKP's party meeting in October, 2009, which was intended to get the support of the
AKP delegates for the Kurdish opening that was launched two months earlier, the then ad-
visor to the Prime Minister, Hüseyin Çelik expressed the need of conceptual change in the
Kurdish question by noting that given the number of seats of the AKP in the Parliament, it
was not possible to make any constitutional amendments; yet, a change in mentality and a
new approach to the Kurdish question would occupy a central point on that day forward

(CNN Türk 03.10.2009). In practice, however, Erdoğan's own understanding of the Kurdish question has determined the AKP's policies, as it is hardly possible to find any evidence that suggests otherwise. Therefore, in this chapter, a particular focus has been placed on Erdoğan's remarks and statements on the Kurdish question over the years.

As noted before, the AKP is a pragmatist and populist political party that has successfully instrumentalised various discourses for its self-interest. Similarly, political populism and pragmatism manifests itself in Erdoğan's remarks on the Kurdish question. It is possible to observe what may appear 'contradiction' in his position on the Kurdish question over the years, particularly when a negative public perception appears to emerge in the media about the AKP's Kurdish policy or when it affects its support base. Similarly, Erdoğan's certain remarks, including the most controversial ones about the existence and nature of the Kurdish question have aimed to utilise the nationalistic tendencies in the country yet winning the Kurds' hearts in his efforts to consolidate the party's power base. Therefore, it is more helpful and explanatory to view his contradictory or often ambiguous remarks on the Kurdish question as part of the party's populist and pragmatic nature rather than treating each remark as an end itself with a clear purpose. On the other hand, in analysing Erdoğan's remarks and statements on the Kurdish question, a particular attention has been placed to points that suggest continuity and consistency in Erdoğan's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question.

This chapter will explore the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question that has been predominantly shaped by Erdoğan's leadership under four themes: definition of the Kurdish question, conceptions of national identity and citizenship, the Kurdish political movement and the Solution process and the 'new Turkey' discourse.

5.2 Kurdish Problem or Kurds' Problems?

In analysing the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question in order to ex-
plore the possible direction of change in the state discourse on the Kurds' language rights
and the sources of resistance to their recognition, it is important to understand whether
there is any indication of a conceptual change in the state discourse in terms of Kurd-
ishness of the Kurdish question or how the Kurdish question is defined. Kurdishness of the
Kurdish question refers to the ethno-political character of the Kurdish question, which
rests on the Kurds' distinct traits that differentiate them from the Turks, the dominant lan-
guage group in Turkey, and have not been incorporated into the state's national identity
perception. The Kurdish language constitutes "the clearest and most radical difference be-
tween Turks and Kurds, who otherwise share religious traditions, with no direct possibility
of observing physical differences" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 165-6). For this reason, on the road
to the making of the modern Turkey, the Kemalist nation building project attempted to
eliminate the Kurdish language in order to "remove the emergence of a competing alterna-
tive Kurdish nation and nationalism" (2013: 166). To this end, coercive assimilation poli-
cies that denied the Kurds' distinct ethnic identity and the Kurdish language had been
adopted. Therefore, in exploration of the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish
question, the question of how the AKP has described the Kurdish question and to what
extent it has recognised the ethno-political character of the Kurdish question occupies a
central position, as any further discussion flows from this identification.

The important point in the ethno-political aspect of the Kurdish question is that the ques-
tion of incorporation of Kurdishness into the state's nationhood and identity perception
renders the Kurdish question political in nature, which cannot be reduced to a simple legal
matter, as it questions and challenges the state's monolithic founding principles. This is in

fact one of the reasons that the state has been hesitant to identify the Kurdish question as an ethno-political issue since its inception.

In Erdoğan's remarks on the Kurdish question over the years, in which he defined the Kurdish question, the question whether there is indeed a Kurdish problem in Turkey as an ethno-political matter or as Erdoğan puts it, there is no longer a Kurdish problem in Turkey; rather, there are the Kurds' certain problems, which are not unique to the Kurds and in fact are shared by other ethnic groups, occupies a central point in his understanding of the Kurdish question. The outlook of these remarks may appear identical with a twist in their wordings; however, this distinction constitutes the core of Erdoğan's understanding of the Kurdish question and manifests itself not only in his remarks but also in the AKP's policies on the Kurdish question. In other words, this particular formulation of the Kurdish question demonstrates both the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question and the limited nature of the party's policy stance on the Kurdish question, which in return help reveals the extent of the shift towards recognition in the state discourse on the Kurds' language rights.

The formulation of the Kurdish question as the Kurds' socio-economic problems is an embodiment of oversimplification attempts of the state to reduce the Kurdish question or similar matters in that sense to something that's more controllable, containable, definable and manageable according to the desire and ideological narrative of the state. The AKP's policies towards the Kurdish language that appear to stem from this particular formulation are mainly concerned with the instrumental or non-intrinsic character of language as a tool of communication. In other words, in regard to the Kurdish language, the AKP's conceptual articulation of the Kurdish question is limited to accommodate the private use of the Kurdish language and does not recognise the intrinsic value of language to the Kurds or their interest in language as a concern for linguistic security. It should be, therefore, noted that

regardless how radical or ground breaking the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question may appear at the outset, it does not appear to extend so far as to recognise Kurdish identity or the Kurdish language in the sense of transforming the state's established perceptions and founding principles such as monolithic language and identity policies and of re-imagining Turkey as a multi-ethnic and multicultural state.

Yeğen terms the AKP's policies on the Kurdish question as "a shy politics of recognition" that has been "overruled by, or at best mingled with, a reinforcement of the politics of assimilation and discrimination" (Yeğen 2010: 79). In this sense, Erdoğan's admittance in Diyarbakır in 2005 that there is indeed a Kurdish problem in the country signifies an important step in the party's 'shy politics of recognition' towards the Kurdish question. The extent of the politics of recognition, however, is questionable, as in many ways it has also included elements of assimilation and discrimination, which, despite the shift towards the politics of recognition, has been a characteristic of the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question since the '90s (Yeğen 2010; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013).

After the late president Turgut Özal, Erdoğan is usually given the credit for being the first state official to publicly accept and recognise the existence of a Kurdish question in Turkey as a non-security issue. The speech he delivered in a ceremony in Diyarbakır in 2005 is often quoted as a sign of real change in the state discourse on the Kurdish question under the successive AKP governments (Efegil 2010). On several occasions, Erdoğan himself referred to this particular speech in order to emphasise his position and 'sincerity' on the Kurdish question, often stressing his promise of resolving the Kurdish question (Milliyet 02.06.2012).

The AKP's 'politics of recognition' towards the Kurdish question manifests a tendency to simplify the Kurdish question in order to contain the Kurds' rights claims, which, by implication, require reimagination of Turkey as a multi-ethnic state to incorporate Kurd-

ishness into the state's founding principles. Simplification occurs in two ways: first, the Kurdish question is reduced to the existence of the Kurds' socio-economic problems with a tendency to disassociate Kurdishness from the Kurdish question. Secondly, the Kurdish question and what the state considers as the Kurds' problems are portrayed as common problems of all ethnic elements in Turkey so that the Kurdish question loses its significance as a particular and crucial problem of Turkey and becomes an ordinary problem of the country that the AKP government can or will address within the framework of democracy, human rights and economic developments.

In his speech on August 12, 2005, stating that there were mistakes and difficult experiences in each country's past, Erdoğan claimed that a great state and a strong nation was the one which had the confidence to face its past mistakes and sins, adding that this was what constituted their government's motivation. After sharing his personal experiences with the state in regard to his politically motivated imprisonment, he continued stating that there was no need to give a name to every problem in the country, as they were all our shared problems. Yet, if a name was to be given to the Kurdish problem, it should be noted that it was not a problem of a particular element of the nation, he added.

He particularly stressed that regardless of their origins, all problems of Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Laz or Abhaza were all shared problems of the citizens of Turkey. In addressing those asking "what will happen to the Kurdish problem?", he said "as the prime minister of the country, the Kurdish question is, above anyone else, my problem. If I was asked about any other problem in the country, it would be, above anyone else, my problem as well". Reiterating the often-used nationalist motto of 'one state, one nation, one flag' in order to emphasise the 'sense of togetherness' in Turkey (Habertürk 17.11.2013), he concluded as follows:

"We are a great state, and as a nation, we will solve all problems, in accordance with the fundamental and republican principles, and the constitutional boundaries inherited to us from the Founding Fathers, through more democracy and greater well-fare" (Hürriyet 12.08.2005).

His speech did not meet the expectations as many expected to see a more concrete roadmap for the Kurdish question; yet, the significance of the acknowledgement that there is indeed a Kurdish problem in Turkey lies in the fact that a prime minister for the first time publicly admitted the wrongdoings of the state and pledges to resolve the Kurdish question through non-military means. Given the serious human rights violations towards the Kurds throughout the '90s, his emphasis on democratic means to address the issue and admittance of the Kurdish question implied a divergence from the established state discourse that denied and ignored the very existence of the Kurdish question and avoided describing it along ethnic or linguistic lines; rather viewed it as a security issue.

A noticeable point in Erdoğan's speech is the emphasis that other ethnicities other than the Kurds in Turkey also have problems. In Erdoğan's various remarks in the following years on the Kurdish question, this point has been apparent in his remarks on the Kurdish question. Asked about Kurdish nationalism, for example, he responded:

"First of all, in Turkey, there is a divergence in our objectives. The Kurdish problem is always on the news as if there was no any other ethnic element [in the country]. **I watch the debates on a new constitution; the main question is what it will give to the Kurds. No one asks what it will give to Laz, Bosnian or Georgians. You have to protect their rights, too**" (Zaman 14.04.2013) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan has quite often made similar remarks, emphasising that other ethnic groups other than the Kurds in Turkey also have problems. In December 2012, in a ceremony in Şanlıurfa, he stated:

> "We have been telling for ten years that let the politics and democracy under the roof of Parliament become a means for the solution to the terror [referring to PKK] and my Kurdish brothers' and sisters' problems. My Kurdish brothers' and sisters' have problems but what about my Arab brothers and sisters? My Turkish brothers and sisters? My Bosnian brothers and sisters? My Roma brothers and sisters? **All ethnic groups have their own problems; yet, you see a group [the pro-Kurdish party] talking about as if only they had problems**" (Cumhuriyet 29.12.2012) (emphasis added).

In regard to the Kurds' language-related rights, which comprise the Kurds' most rights claims, it should be noted that language rights language rights fall into the category of non-comparative rights (Green and Réaume 1990: 583-4). It means that the Kurds' entitlement to language rights in the sense of deserving 'special protection' for their language is not grounded on the idea of whether other ethnic groups in Turkey have it; but, the entitlement stems from the intrinsic value of the Kurdish language to the Kurds. In other words, from a moral point of view, the Kurds' language rights claims do not affect or diminish other groups' rights to demand similar recognition from the state, as one group's entitlement cannot be conditional on another group's entitlement. On other hand, one may assume that Erdoğan's acceptance of other ethnic groups' issues in Turkey suggests a moral standing or implies a comprehensive policy to address ethnic groups' problems - rights claims; yet, what appears is that the generalisation of the Kurdish question as 'all Turkey's problem' by incorporating other ethnic groups' issues into the same discussion with the Kurdish question aims to simply the Kurdish question in order to contain the Kurds' rights

claims. The reason is that the AKP has yet to develop a comprehensive policy to accommodate ethnic groups' rights claims and in fact, in regard to the Kurdish question; "the absence of an explicit Kurdish policy" has been the AKP's greatest asset (Öktem 2008: 2) in the sense that the party has managed to keep the Kurdish question in the agenda without taking concrete steps yet successfully utilised its seemingly ground breaking rhetoric on the Kurdish question for the ballot box. Moreover, Erdoğan does not offer any clarification about which specific problem, he thinks, each particular ethnic group has or what the nature of their rights are. This is not surprising as his 'recognition' of ethnic diversity or 'implicit' acceptance of certain problems of ethnic groups in Turkey do not appear to imply any normative implication for the state's established monolithic identity and language policy.

In 2008, in his exchange in a meeting with the then Head of Diyarbakır Bar Association, Sezgin Tanrıkulu, who criticised the government over the Kurdish question, Erdoğan asked: "What would you do if you were me?". In response, Tanrıkulu gave the right to education in mother tongue and opening of Kurdology departments in universities as policy-making examples. Erdoğan responded:

> "The Kurds are not the only ethnic group. Tomorrow, Circassians, Laz will demand [these]. If all demand [these], **how can we maintain the unity?** We have a saying, if you are not in a position of responsibility, it is easier said than done" (Hürriyet 05.01.2008) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan's concern the national unity and integrity of the state in regard to Tanrıkulu's suggestions is reminiscent of the traditional state discourse. The Kemalist regime's nation building project considered the Kurdish language source of a competing nationhood claim, and it attempted to eliminate it (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 166). The association of the Kurds' distinctive traits, the Kurdish language in particular with the rejection of the making of the

modern Turkey led the state to view identity-related rights claims beyond and above Turk-
ishness and Turkish identity as threatening to the unity and integrity of the state. However,
while this particular argument explains certain policies and practices of the denialist period
of the state discourse on the Kurdish question, it does not completely explain the hesitancy
of the state's towards recognition of the Kurds' rights claims in the post-denial period, in
which a shift towards the politics of recognition has occurred. Surely, it is possible to argue
and observe that, to a certain extent, the nationalist discourse of the Kemalist regime con-
tinues to inform the post-denial state discourse (Yeğen 2010; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013); yet, it is
also explanatory to point out the true nature of Kurds' rights claims and their far-reaching
consequences for the state in order not to justify the state's attitude of non-recognition but
to help locate the possible sources of resistance to their recognition.

As discussed, language rights have potentially far-reaching consequences in the sense that
for a minority language group on a national scale, recognition of its language is seen "as a
symbol of recognition of its nationhood", which signifies the acceptance that the state is "a
multination state, a partnership of two or more nations within a single state" (Kymlicka
and Patten 2003: 5). Moreover, it typically involves "a claim to territory (the nation's
'homeland') and a claim to self-determination over that territory, perhaps even its seces-
sion" (2003: 5). For this reason, it is possible to observe a tendency in many states to avoid
explicitly recognising regional minority languages by accommodating them without ac-
cording official status, as such recognition is "tantamount to, or a step towards, accepting
the claim to nationhood by the regional group, and hence opening up claims to territorial
self-government" (2003: 5). Thus, it is possible to argue that one particular reason that the
state is unwilling to recognise the Kurds' language rights despite its inclination towards the
politics of recognition lies in potentially far-reaching consequences of language rights. It
has been discussed that the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political
influence has forced the state discourse towards recognition to contain the Kurdish ques-

tion. It should be, however, stressed that the policy of containment is not only aimed at the Kurdish political movement's growing power; rather, it also applies to the Kurds' language rights in order to prevent or diminish their above-discussed potentially far-reaching consequences. Therefore, Erdoğan's resistance to tangible demands of ethnic groups can also be understood within this context; hence the emphasis in his remarks on the fraternity and unity of all ethnic elements of Turkey under the same *vatan* (homeland) and same flag, on which a future will be built (CNN Türk 30.12.2009). Furthermore, Somer and Liaras (2010) analysed the contents a certain number of religious-conservative and secular newspapers between 1996 and 2004 in order to reveal the public's changing perception in regard to ethnic-cultural pluralism and nationalism. They state that despite the AKP's reformist image, their findings suggest "a limited amount of discussion and normative change in religious-conservative thinking on the Kurdish issue", as while the *de facto* plurality of Turkish society is widely accepted, the extent of this acknowledgement of diversity in terms of *de jure* pluralism is not clear (2010: 152, 157). In this sense, coming from a religious-conservative background, a similar tendency is also apparent in Erdoğan's perception regarding ethnic diversity, as while he is comfortable with the idea of diversity, normative change in his conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question is limited.

In his book, 'Mezopotamya Ekspresi', journalist Cengiz Çandar (2012) shares the conversation he had with Erdoğan after his speech in Diyarbakır. Referring to his own activism for the Kurdish question, Çandar says he 'welcomed' Erdoğan to the club, referring to those that defend the Kurds' rights and have a different position on the Kurdish question from the state discourse. Reiterating the importance of the speech and how it should be complemented by actual policy implementations, Çandar notes that Erdoğan listened to him carefully and, referring to the speech, he responded:

"I have made a mistake there. **Seeing the reactions generated afterwards, that I'd said 'the Kurdish problem' has created tension**. I should have found something else [another wording]. I don't know; something like '**the social and economic problems of my citizens of Kurdish-origin**" (emphasis added) (Çandar 2012: 29-30).

The Kurdish question has always been a sensitive issue in Turkish politics and as the leader of a centre-right political party, which had been in post for only two years; Erdoğan's concern for the reactions that his remarks generated was expected. In fact, many contradictory and often ambiguous remarks of the AKP about the Kurdish question have aimed to reduce the possible nationalist reaction against the party's Kurdish policy. Erdoğan's definition of the Kurdish question as the social and economic problems of citizens of Kurdish-origin is not coincidental, as his regret in using the 'Kurdish problem' constitutes the basis of his conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question and policies of the AKP issued accordingly over the years, which manifests itself, as noted above, as an attempt of implication of the Kurdish question as a way of containing it.

In answering to Erdoğan's response that he had made a mistake using 'the Kurdish problem,' Çandar says he couldn't resist but intervene:

"Prime Minister, this is exactly what the Kurdish problem is; there are many definitions of the Kurdish problem and the simplest yet accurate definition is the failure to name it, the inability to call it 'the Kurdish problem. **The moment you define it as 'the social and economic problems of citizens of Kurdish-origin', you are talking about the common problems of citizens in Tekirdağ, Denizli, Çankırı or Giresun** [referring to non-Kurdish cities in Turkey] such as health services, educational issues or infrastructure. These are the common problems of the people regardless of their ethnic origins. **The Kurdish problem is, however, the problem**

due to the Kurds' Kurdishness. The failure to name this as the Kurdish problem is the real issue. You had done the right thing defining it as the Kurdish problem in Diyarbakır" (2012: 30-1) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan was neither insistent in his definition of the Kurdish problem as 'the social and economic problems of citizens of Kurdish-origin nor completely convinced by Çandar's arguments, yet saying that still, a different wording needed to be found (2012: 31). Erdoğan's desire to use different wording to define the Kurdish question is not purely aesthetic.

In June, 2009, in an interview to Murat Akgün of NTV, asked about the possibility of a new initiative on the Kurdish question, Erdoğan referred to his speech in Diyarbakır, saying that he had stated in that speech that the problems of citizens of Kurdish-origin were his problem too and this issue had a special place in their party programme. Erdoğan continued:

> "**Either you name it Kurdish question, Kurdish problem or the Eastern problem**; this issue has a place in our party programme. We have aimed to address this issue **including socio-economic and socio-cultural problems** and started our work accordingly. In 2005, [in Diyarbakır], I explained the steps we had taken thus far and expressed that it will continue. Looking to the 79 years of our history [since the foundation of the Republic], **you would see that the Southeast and the Eastern Anatolia regions have received incomparable investments during our governments. You can see this in security, health, transportation, agriculture and education**" (Akgün 11.06.2009) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan refers to the Kurdish question more loosely this time by using different terminologies for the Kurdish question interchangeably and giving the impression that how it is

named is not important or irrelevant amid the existence of socio-economic and socio-cultural problems. Similar use of language was also evident in his announcement of the 'Kurdish opening' two months later, in which he said: "Call it the Kurdish problem, the Southeast problem, or call it the Kurdish opening. We have started an initiative on it [the Kurdish question]" (Hürriyet 23.07.2009). His wording choice should be considered within the context that there was the expectation of an initiative on the Kurdish question; yet, its substance was not clear. In the meantime, an AKP Member of Parliament (MP) for Diyarbakır, İhsan Arslan told the news channel CNN Türk that his party had taken all the political risk and had started a solution process for the Kurdish question, including allowing private Kurdish TV channels, before its official announcement to the public (CNN Türk 15.05.2009). This and similar remarks did not please Erdoğan to the extent that in the same press conference he announced the Kurdish opening, he stressed that the AKP MPs should follow the position statement of the Party on the issue and avoid remarks that would damage the 'unity', referring to the Party's position statement, which in practice means Erdoğan's own position. (Hürriyet 23.07.2009). In December 2012, he had a meeting with the AKP MPs to the Kurdish regions amid the rumours of a new process in the Kurdish question. It was revealed to the media that Erdoğan asked the MPs to follow the position statement and not to refer to the issue as 'the Kurdish problem' (CNN Türk 14.12.2012).

In addition to his wording choice in defining the Kurdish question, Erdoğan's emphasis on the Kurds' socio-economic problems and the state's investments to the Kurdish regions should be noted. The identification of the Kurdish question as a socio-economic issue is not necessarily new in the state discourse as one aspect of the common tendency in the state discourse has been the association of the Kurdish question with regional backwardness. What makes Erdoğan's presentation of the Kurdish question as the social and economic problems of citizens of Kurdish-origin is that the AKP has achieved a certain degree

of economic developments and investments in the Kurdish regions and an increase in the welfare in the country. Thus, a tendency has become apparent in the AKP's discourse that views the Kurdish question as an archaic problem of Turkey, meaning that it does not have bearing on the present Turkey thanks to the 'increase' in the Kurds' material lives and other steps of the government towards the Kurds' rights. This particular rhetoric is part of the AKP's "new Turkey" discourse, which will be discussed later.

Economic development is one of the strands of the AKP; therefore, it is not surprising that Erdoğan puts a special emphasis on economic achievements of his government, measuring his party's 'achievement' in the Kurdish question by economic investments to the Kurdish regions along the steps towards the Kurds' rights. Naturally, the electorate is expected to 'reward' to the AKP for its achievements; however, the party's self-perception of 'achievement' in the material life in the Kurdish regions, together with the certain degree of normalisation in the Kurds' rights indicate an assertive position in regard to the Kurdish question that the Kurdish question is no longer the same question before the AKP came to the power; hence the Kurds are frequently called on by Erdoğan to distance themselves from the Kurdish political movement (Today's Zaman 29.12.2012). On this particular aspect, Öktem describes the AKP's attitude towards the Kurds as 'patronising embrace' in the sense that the Kurds are caught between a better material life and the prospect of discrimination and exclusion, as they are expected to renounce the Kurdish political movement and its identity-based politics as presented by the then pro-Kurdish party DTP for "the emerging space of AKP-supported material wealth" (2008: 2) and to submit to "the new Turkish-Islamic national identity" (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 180).

Despite its recognition-oriented discourse, the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question is characterised by a strong tendency that attempts to simplify the Kurdish question by disassociating 'Kurdishness' from the question in order to reduce the issue

to the idea of Kurds' socio-economic problems. This allows the party to portray the Kurdish question as an ordinary problem of Turkey that all ethnic groups experience in one way or another. The admittance of ethnic diversity or their potential problems in Turkey aim to serve the purpose of simplification and generalisation of the Kurdish question so that it loses its significant as a particular and crucial problem of Turkey and becomes an ordinary problem of the country that the AKP government can or will address within the framework of democracy, human rights and economic developments. The acceptance of ethnic diversity does not appear to imply any normative change in terms of incorporating ethnic groups identity-related claims into the state's founding principles. Erdoğan adopts a carefully executed vagueness and unclarity about what ethnic groups' problems, including the Kurds in Turkey are or what their implications are, if any, for the state. His remarks and statements that imply a clear divergence from the established state discourse remain as functional and rhetorical. This minimisation of the Kurdish question is accompanied by a strong resistance to the Kurds' right claims, language rights in particular, which are collective by nature and have, by definition and implication, potentially far-reaching consequences that force the state to re-imagine itself as a multi-ethnic state. Therefore, the AKP's recognition-oriented discourse on the Kurdish question aims to contain the Kurds' rights claims, not least by defining the Kurdish question as the Kurds' individual problems or rights.

5.3 Conceptions of National Identity and Citizenship

In exploring the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question, the party's direct attempts to define the question in its own terms in a way constitutes the ground of the party's consequent arguments and policies for the Kurdish question. The party's conceptions of national identity and citizenship in this sense occupy an important place in its Kurdish policy in terms of exemplifying the above-discussed point that Erdoğan remarks

and statements that imply a clear divergence from the established state discourse remain as functional and rhetorical without any normative change in the state's founding perceptions.

One particular area that the AKP's discourse of opposition to the Kemalist nation-building project manifests itself is the conception of national identity and basis of the assumed commonality and togetherness in the nation state perception of Turkey. While the Kemalist regime enforced Turkish nationalism and secularism as the basis of national identity and treated all ethnic elements in the country as Turks, whose mother tongue is Turkish; the AKP's conception of national identity is more inclusive towards ethnic and linguistic diversity of Turkey. Its conception of citizenship appears be to ethnic-blind in the sense that the citizenship of Turkey - not Turkish citizenship - with a strong emphasis on common Islamic ties and shared history is seen as common bond among all ethnic elements in Turkey (Yavuz and Özcan 2006; Somer and Liaras 2010; Yavuz 2009; Zeydanlıoğlu 2013).

In the same interview he gave to Murat Akgün of NTV, Erdoğan argued that the Kurdish political movement, the PKK in particular applied "a physiological pressure" to the Kurds to channelise them into "different directions", such as, he exemplified, the conviction that the state's identity politics did not recognise the Kurds' identity. He continued:

> "This is not true. **As infra-identities, I have always respected all the ethnic elements in my country**. This is the party policy of the AKP. And, **as a supra-identity, we will together embrace the citizenship of Turkey; it is our common bond**. But all ethnicities living in my country, Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Laz, Bosnians, Abhazas… are respected and all these ethnicities should understand this" (Akgün 11.06.2009) (emphasis added).

The AKP's discourse of opposition to the Kemalist regime's national identity perception that took Turkishness as the only 'legitimate' concept of national identity is evident in Erdoğan's adoption of citizenship of Turkey as a supra-identity, similar to Britishness, the basis of common bond among ethnic elements of Turkey. In addition to this secular conception of common bond for citizenship, the AKP has often stressed the idea of sharing the same religion - Islam - and common history to emphasise 'brotherhood' of ethnic elements. Religion of Islam and common history are considered to function as a spiritual bond among ethnic elements of Turkey. In this sense, Islam is given "a greater role" as "a new glue" (Yavuz and Özcan 2007: 131). In Erdoğan's words, "the most beautiful connection that bond us together is our membership to Islam, our fraternity [in Islam]. Could there be more beautiful bond [than Islam]?" (Cumhuriyet 29.12.2012).

This is often complemented by how deep a connection the Kurds and Turks share historically. On this point, Erdoğan stated:

> "For nearly a thousand years, Turks have been the sole friends and brothers of Kurds; and Kurds have been the sole friends and brothers of Turks. Those who question the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds are doing injustice to the history and our ancestors. The connection and affection with Kurds can only be defined by us, the Turks and the Kurds" (Republic of Turkey Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information - BYEGM 23.03.2015).

Similarly, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who became prime minister after Erdoğan was elected as president in August, 2015, stated that common history and its historical legacy, religion in particular, was crucially important for the fraternity among the Kurds and Turks, further noting that it was one of the founding rationales of the Solution process, the other two being the equal citizenship and 'a new Middle East' grounded on the same logic of fraternity among the Turks and Kurds (Sabah 25.01.2015).

The important point in Erdoğan's conception of national identity is that according to article 66 of the Turkey's Constitution, "everyone bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk", which means, in other words, there are no other ethnic groups in Turkey other than Turks. Therefore, Erdoğan's acceptance that there are other ethnic groups in Turkey other than Turks and conception of the citizenship of Turkey as a supra-identity are in direct conflict with the Constitution (also see Yavuz 2009: 188-9).

The question of definition of citizenship has been one of the most controversial issues in the discussions of the Turkish Parliament's Constitution Reconciliation Commission (CRC) on a new constitution. It was expected that the definition of citizenship in the Constitution would be changed in favour of a more neutral or ethnic-blind definition. The AKP's position has been affirmative. On April 15, 2015, in announcing the AKP's manifesto for the upcoming general election in June 2015, Davutoğlu shared his party's vision for the year 2023, the centennial for the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, known as Yeni Türkiye Sözleşmesi 2023 (New Turkey Contract 2023), which contains articles on more inclusive citizenship though they are not definitive in description; rather, a statement of purpose in its current form (Gürcanlı 16.04.2015). Additionally, In the AKP's election manifesto, the first Grand National Assembly of 1920 during the War of Independence is quoted as an important reference point for Turkey's history of democracy (AK Parti, 7 Haziran 2015 Genel Seçimleri Seçim Beyannamesi: 34) due to its more inclusive language and politics towards ethnic elements in Turkey. How or if this reference will translate into an actual policy is not yet clear.

It should be borne in mind that none of ethnic elements in Turkey other than the Kurds have challenged or questioned the state's founding perceptions and principles as much as the Kurds have done, not least because of their size, culture or political mobilisation. Discussions that may appear at the outset as a general or ordinary discussion on issues such as

citizenship, ethnic diversity, ethnic identity or language are implicitly or explicitly connected to the Kurds and the Kurdish question. Therefore, Erdoğan's seemingly inclusive conceptions of national identity and citizenship while stressing that Turkey is not a homogeneous country in terms of ethnic groups primarily aim to address the Kurds or the Kurdish question. What should be noticed, however, in his remarks and statements is that other ethnic groups' existence or problems are usually positioned against the Kurds in order to stress that the Kurds are not 'unique' in their problems. As discussed above, these are part of the party's attempts of generalisation and simplification of the Kurdish question in order to minimise its impact and to contain the implications of the Kurds' rights, language rights in particular. Similar to the AKP's rhetorical acceptance of ethnic diversity in Turkey that has yet to manifest itself as a moral standing or a comprehensive policy, the party's conceptions of national identity and citizenship, which, as discussed above, appear to reject the Kemalist regime's 'Turkish identity' conception that is based on Turkish nationalism and Turkishness has the same vagueness and unclarity in terms of possible normative implications of such 'rejection' for the state's monolithic policies, the dominant position of the Turkish language in particular.

In Erdoğan's remarks and statements on the Kurdish question, such as the one mentioned above (BYEGM 23.03.2015), he often stresses that there are those who question the 'brotherhood' of Turks and Kurds, particularly when he talks about the historical and religious connection of these two ethnic groups. It is not always clear as to which action or position falls into what Erdoğan describes as an act of questioning the brotherhood of Turks and Kurds. However, it is possible to suggest that identity-based rights claims above and beyond the party's programme and the Kurdish political movement's efforts to keep the Kurdish question on the agenda are two particular examples. In this sense, Erdoğan has a tendency to view identity-based rights claims or any different position on the Kurds'

rights from the AKP's agenda as nationalist and detrimental to the bond, according to him, these two ethnic groups have shared historically.

One particular context in which Erdoğan stresses what he considers as national tendencies in Turkey is his critique of the Kurdish political movement or of those who, according to Erdoğan, deliberately keep the Kurdish question on the agenda by acting as if there was no other problem other than the Kurdish question. Reiterating that the Kurds were not the only ethnic group in Turkey, he stated:

> "There are thirty-six different ethnic elements in this country and all are held together under the citizenship of Turkey. […] We said 'one nation', 'one flag', 'one homeland', 'one state'. My brothers, do you know what nation is? Nation is a notion that holds together various ethnic elements under the same roof. In this notion of nation, there are Turks, Kurds, Laz, Circassians, Georgians, Abhazas, Roma, Albanians … this is how this nation is composed of. And they [Kurdish political movement] don't internalise this" (TCCB 23.03.2015).

The shift towards recognition in the state discourse on the Kurdish question has involved the acceptance that Turkey is not a homogeneous country; there are other ethnic groups other than Turks. Interestingly, as this acceptance has become the statement of obvious and is no longer a novelty in terms of ethnic composition of the country, in Erdoğan's remarks, the focus appears to shift towards the existence of other ethnic groups other than the Kurds; therefore, he considers the Kurdish political movement, including the pro-Kurdish parties as a nationalist movement, not least because of its emphasis on Kurdishness or the Kurds' distinct traits. This is one of the reasons that the state discourse tends to approach the Kurds' identity-based rights claims solely through the lens of politics and nationalism and to associate them with the Kurdish political movement and its self-interest.

In his critique of the Kurdish political movement on the basis that its political line and rights claims are detrimental to the bond that Turkey's ethnic elements share, Erdoğan appears critical of nationalism of any kind. Noting that there were three red lines in the AKP's politics, Erdoğan's stated:

> "First, we said, ethnic nationalism. We said 'there are various ethnic elements in our country and we can't discriminate among them. All of them are infra-identities. There is a bond that holds us together; that is, the bond of the citizenship of Turkey.

> Secondly, we said, **regional nationalism**. We see non-discrimination as a legacy of our civilisation. […] We continue our journey with the motto of 'Let the people live so the state will live'. West-east, North-south [referring to different regions in Turkey] … **We can't discriminate among them**. Until now, unfortunately, it [discrimination among regions] has been done and we are eliminating it now. Therefore, in our understanding, there is no place for regional nationalism, too.

> Thirdly, there is no place for religious nationalism, too. We are the followers of an understanding, which is in an equal position to all regardless of their religions or sects. We are determined to keep it like that" (Sabah 17.12.2009).

Erdoğan quite often has repeated these three red lines of the AKP over the years. The important point is that although he is also critical of Turkish nationalism, he particularly problematises and raises the issue of nationalism when the Kurdish question or the Kurds' rights claims are in question. His critique or 'rejection' of Turkish nationalism does not go so far as to question the legitimacy of the state's monolithic policies. As discussed previously, imposition of a common language and monolithic language and citizenship policies are part of a state's modernisation project, which is, by definition, a nationalist project. A dom-

inant group, the Turks in Turkey's case, often enjoys an often-unquestioned legitimacy in terms of its language's hegemonic and favoured position, as it is seen as a natural achievement (May 1997; 2003; 2005). Thus, any rights claims or ideological position that challenge, either by definition or implication, the hegemonic position of the dominant group or the state's founding principles rooted in the dominant group's 'primacy' become subjected to derogatory remarks to the extent of being viewed as 'inferior', 'detrimental', or 'not worthy'; hence, they are associated with ethnic nationalism.

Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, who was a founding member of the AKP and MP for Mersin between 2007 and 2011, shares the conversation he had with Erdoğan about the right to education in the Kurdish language, noting that in response to his arguments supportive of the right to education in mother tongue, Erdoğan replied by saying: "The Kurds do not have a state of their own so that a school instructing in their mother tongue can be opened" (T24 27.04.2015). In his argument, Erdoğan sees conditionality between an official language, which, in practice, is usually the majority's language, and the rights to education in mother tongue. This is an embodiment of the above-noted point that the hegemonic position of the dominant language has an unquestioned legitimacy that renders a minority language group's language rights claims 'inferior' or 'nationalist'. In relation to the 'inferiority' or 'unworthiness' of the Kurdish language, the then Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç's remark on the viability of the Kurdish language as a language of instruction is worth noting, in which he asked the following 'rhetorical' questions:

> "**Would education in Kurdish be as effective as education in Turkish?** Turkish is a language of civilisation, but is Kurdish a language of civilisation? Kurdish can become an elective course but we cannot have Kurdish as the language of education from primary school to universities" (Cited in Zeydanlıoğlu 2013: 163).

As noted before, "there is no such thing as a primitive language", as "every language is capable of great beauty and power of expression" (Crystal 2000: 29). Moreover, in relation to the importance and the intrinsic value of each particular language, as a human accomplishment, "each language is itself a manifestation of human creativity which has value independent of its uses" (Réaume 2000: 250). Thus, Arınç's derogatory comment on the Kurdish language in terms of its linguistic capacities as a language of instruction is a politically motivated expression rather than being a scientific observation, which 'inadvertently' aims to justify the hegemonic position of the Turkish language.

That said, the problematic dimension of the tendency of the state officials to associate a minority group's language rights claims with ethno-nationalism to dismiss their legitimacy does not ignore the prospect of nationalist tendencies among minority language groups in their mobilisation for political recognition. In fact, recognition of language rights and devolution of power to minority language groups should always be accompanied by counter-measures to ensure that the process of recognition does not result in the minority language group's own nation-building process that bears the same or similar human rights violations and imposition of a particular ideology of a typical nation building project. Therefore, recognition of language rights, which have potentially far-reaching consequences, carry the possibility of further nationalisation of minority language groups. In regard to the Kurdish question, the Kurdish political movement is no exception, which will be discussed in detail in the following part. However, the important point is that discourse of nationalism is used against ethnic groups' language rights claims regardless whether their rights claims constitute a legitimate concern or impose a moral obligation on the state. This results in further justification of the hegemonic position of the dominant language group, which in return forecloses "the possibility of considering alternative conceptions - of rethinking the nation-state in more culturally and linguistically plural ways, not least via the application of language rights for minority language speakers" (May 2003: 141; 2005: 327). It is possible to

observe a similar tendency in Erdoğan's reaction to even a symbolic yet tangible act of recognition of the Kurds that implies a step towards the Kurds' self-government or even secession. His use of the word 'Kurdistan' is an example of the case.

In a big ceremony in November 2013 in Diyarbakır, Erdoğan hosted president Masoud Barzani, and Şivan Perwer, a Kurdish poet and singer who lived in exile until his return to Diyarbakır for the ceremony, to demonstrate 'good will' and 'determination' for the Solution process. Erdoğan welcomed Barzani by saying "I wholeheartedly welcome my dear brothers and sisters in northern Iraq **Kurdistan** Region" (Çetin 16.11.2013) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan's wording choice to use Kurdistan sparked controversies. While nationalists and certain members of opposition were not pleased with his choice, Osman Baydemir, who was the then pro-Kurdish party mayor of Diyarbakır, welcomed the choice, adding, "another taboo has been broken. The word Kurdistan was uttered" (Habertürk 17.11.2013). In the following day, he thanked Erdoğan for using the word Kurdistan when referring to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, also noting that there was nothing wrong with referring to the southeast Turkey as 'Turkish Kurdistan' (CNN Türk 18.11.2013). Similarly, Galip Ensarioğlu, AKP MP to Diyarbakır, said: "I would not hesitate to use the word Kurdistan. [Saying] 'Turkish Kurdistan' may not sound right; but, the geography where the Kurds live in Turkey is called Kurdistan" (Hürriyet 06.12.2013).

Erdoğan responded to his critics, particularly to opposition parties by stating that there were references to the words Kurd, Georgian, Arab, Bosnian and Kurdistan in the parliamentary discussions and certain official documents during the founding years of the Republic, adding that Mustafa Kemal also used the word Kurdistan occasionally. More importantly, Erdoğan noted that the East and Southeast regions of Turkey were part of the federation named 'Kurdistan' during the Ottoman period. "This nation is not without any

historical roots nor can it deny the legacy of its ancestors. These are all our historical legacy, which we cannot afford to ignore", he concluded (Aytaş 19.11.2013).

Similar to his previous remarks, Erdoğan emphasised the historical relationships among ethnic groups in Turkey to stress that all ethnic elements in Turkey share a historical and religious bond on which Turkey was founded. His explanation that there was a federation of Kurdistan during the Ottoman Empire and these ethnic groups were explicitly acknowledged during the years leading to the modern Republic is particularly worth noting, as it raises the question whether this historical legacy, as Erdoğan describes it, is to be resuscitated to the extent of having implications for the present Turkey in resolving the Kurdish question.

The usual and careful vagueness of Erdoğan in his remarks, including ones considered to have broken taboos, about the Kurdish question is also apparent in this particular case. In response to Baydemir, he stated: "It is not possible for us to accept the word 'Turkish Kurdistan'. […] **His region** [Diyarbakır] is the South-eastern Anatolia Region. **The name of the Turkish Republic is obvious**" (T24 20.11.2013) without giving any detail about what his initial historical explanation and justification of the word 'Kurdistan' really meant or signified, if any, in terms of its implication for Turkey's Kurdish question.

In addition to the above-mentioned potentially far reaching consequences of the Kurds' language rights, Erdoğan's resistance to the possible implication of his own remark and hesitancy to move the debate forward come partly from his concern that such 'radical' steps would harm his party's electoral popularity. On a more theoretical level, it should be noted that "any attempt at the public recognition of Kurdish identity should adopt the language of human rights and promote universal values, such as democracy, justice and equality, not the inherent value of Kurdish culture or cultural diversity in general"

(Ozkirimli 2013b: 40), as any attempt of promoting Kurdish culture may spark nationalist tendencies among Turkish nationalists.

Thus, Erdoğan occasionally aims to reduce public reaction to the AKP's Kurdish policy by attempting to clarify, for example, its extent in terms of policy-making. Against the critics of the Solution process on the ground that the process attempts to create a 'new nation' in Turkey, he stated:

> "We see differences as a richness and respect one another's language, culture, way of life, belief and opinion without attempting to impose on one another. We walk to the future under the single flag as a single nation. That's why we say, 'one nation, one flag, one homeland, one state'. We are not in search of a new flag. We are not attempting to create a [new] nation other than the one nation. Those who do not know the concept of nation are in search of a different conception. The notion of nation encompasses Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Laz, Circassians, and Bosnians. Those who attempt to give different meaning to this [nation] are in an act of treason. They are separatists" (Zaman 29.10.2013).

It is certainly possible to see this line of arguments as part of the AKP's populist and pragmatist politics to garner more votes and consolidate its support base; however, taken with Erdoğan's other remarks and the party's consequent policies, it is clear that Erdoğan 'theoretically' recognises ethnic and linguistic diversity in the concept of nation; yet, his emphasis on the notion of 'one nation' suggest that he does not leave his 'recognition' open to any implication that would challenge the established 'one nation' perception, which is, in terms of actual state policies, synonymous to Turkishness and Turkish nationalism. In other words, Erdoğan's rhetorical 'rejection' of the Kemalist regime's conceptions of Turkishness and Turkish nationalism does not appear to translate into a normative change in monolithic state policies. Thus, the hegemonic position of the Turkish language remains unchal-

lenged and continues to enjoy an unquestioned legitimacy with its dominant position being considered as a 'natural' achievement. The immediate outcome of this tendency is that the Kurds' identity-based rights claim, language rights in particular are solely seen as the Kurdish political movement's nationalist claims. The fact that the Kurdish political movement has been vocal about such rights claims feeds into the narrative that Erdoğan pictures, which raises the question whether and to what extent Erdoğan considers the Kurds' language rights as fundamental human rights rooted in principle that impose a moral obligation on the state in terms of their recognition.

The AKP's conceptions of national identity and citizenship are not grounded on Turkishness or Turkish nationalism, which in return suggests an ethnic-blind definition of citizenship; yet, in terms of actual citizenship policies and changing the already established monolithic policies of the state, the implication of the party's conception is not clear, if it has any. Similar to Erdoğan's acceptance of Turkey's *de facto* pluralism, his presentation of the citizenship of Turkey as a supra-identity has yet to manifest itself as a multicultural and multi-ethnic concept for Turkey. His articulation appears to recognise only the mere existence of diversity in the ethnic composition of the country, as recognition of ethnic diversity is not accompanied by any transformative policy that would challenge or change the current hegemonic position of the Turkish language or Turkishness. Similar to the party's efforts of simplification and minimisation of the Kurdish question in order to contain its potentially far-reaching consequences, the party's seemingly more 'inclusive' conceptions of national identity and citizenship appears to aim at containing the Kurdish question, which also shows the tension between recognition and denial of the Kurds that has characterised the post-denial state discourse on the Kurdish question since the '90s. Yet, despite being only 'rhetorical' in its current form, the AKP's conceptions of citizenship and national identity are still an important step towards recognition.

5.4 The Solution Process and Kurdish Political Movement

The AKP's policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means foresees a certain degree of political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including its armed wing - the PKK. As noted, there have been various attempts and processes of the AKP under different names in order to resolve the Kurdish question. In its current form, the Solution process signifies the AKP's most concrete step towards political engagement with the Kurdish political movement. An analysis of the AKP's perceptions of the Kurdish political movement and the Solution process is an important step in exploring the party's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question.

The reason is that the Solution process constitutes the process of political compromise through which language rights are usually negotiated and recognised between a dominant language group and a minority language group. This process helps reveal how the state views the Kurds' language rights claims although the process is still on-going. On the other hand, the process, similar to the Kurdish opening in 2009, is not a package in the sense of being a definitive list of steps to be taken on the road to resolve the Kurdish question. Rather, it appears as "an enigma and for every party concerned or involved, there is a different definition or explanation of what it really is" (Çandar 2009: 16). Therefore, certain aspects of the AKP's self-perception of the Kurdish political movement and its definition or explanation of the Solution process show some of the major sources of the AKP's resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

The then deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay, explained the purpose of the new 'democratic initiative' for the Kurdish question, stating that "increased democracy, more human rights, increased civilianisation, more influential civilian politics, the further curbing custodial powers over politics and making civilian will the prime determinant -- these are our targets", further adding that: "the most important aspects of the [democratic initiative] are

furthering democratisation and better protecting civil rights as well as compensating for past wrongs regarding the violation of civil rights if there were any in the past" (Today's Zaman 24.12.2012) (emphasis added).

As pointed out in in the discussion on the impetus behind the AKP's Kurdish opening, the party's non-security oriented policy stance on the Kurdish question was part of its efforts to change "the power imbalance between civilians and the military by limiting the latter's political role and influence" (Cizre 2009: 4-5), which was particularly apparent in the state's understanding of the Kurdish question. Atalay's emphasis on civilianisation and civilian politics should be understood within this context. On the other hand, given the institutional shortcomings in the protection of protection of civil rights and in implementation of steps that aimed to normalise the Kurds' fundamental rights and freedoms, the priority that he placed on civil rights is expected and understandable. Moreover, as discussed above, the AKP's recognition-oriented Kurdish policy tends to define the Kurdish question as the question of Kurds' individual rights and problems. In this sense, the explanation of the new initiative as a process of furthering democratisation and better protecting civil rights maps onto the party's attempts to resolve the Kurdish question within the framework of human rights and democracy.

However, as the other party in the process, the Kurdish political movement has political demands above and beyond what an objective identification of the Kurds' rights and freedoms may suggest, not least because it has a desire for power and greater political representation for its own sake. On the question of why Kurdish demands have been intensifying in the last two decades to the extent that a peaceful resolution becomes so urgent, Ozkirimli, notes four particular points: the politicisation of Kurdish demands, resurgence of identity politics, symbiotic development of Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms and re-securitisation of the Kurdish problem (2013b: 30-32). While these points help explain in a

way the impetus behind the AKP's attempts of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means, they also show the Kurdish political movement's power and strength in mobilising Kurdish masses. The Kurds' language rights claims' legitimacy does not change the prospect of further nationalisation of the Kurdish political movement due to the nature of language rights, not least because their recognition generally foresees a kind of self-government. Moreover, the PKK's disarmament is a challenging issue in itself, which certainly requires decisive political steps and incentives. The Kurdish political movement's political demands and the issue of the PKK's disarmament make a 'negotiation' process inevitable in order to resolve the Kurdish question. This is all to stress the competing and often contrasting perception of the Solution process depending on party concerned.

For example, particularly during the last two years of talks between the state and the Kurdish political movement, the process has been given different names depending on the actor in question. Sometimes, 'peace', 'negotiation', 'solution' and 'settlement' have been used interchangeably. The government has in particular refrained from using the term 'negotiation' to refer to the process due to the negative public perception that it might create, not least because the Kurdish political movement has been seen as 'separatists' or 'terrorists' by the state. The Kurdish political movement, on the other hand, has been pushing for 'real talks' to take place between the parties so that the 'negotiation process' can begin for the incentives needed for the disarmament of the PKK and certain rights claims such as decentralisation of the state and recognition of language rights.

Selahattin Demirtaş, co-leader of the pro-Kurdish the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), while presenting a ten-item principles to the government on which to base the future negotiations, which is discussed later, expressed the existence of different phases of the process from their perspectives:

"We have always supported the transparency of the settlement process. The dialogue process was supposed to have been finished after the presidential elections [in August of 2014]. This dialogue phase, as we called it, was intended to help the parties get to know each other, build trust and try to determine the intentions of the others. With the finalisation of this phase, we were supposed to enter the mutual negotiation phase" (Today's Zaman 26.02.2015).

The process has not been transparent and most information available in public on the content of the talks is speculative and propagandist; therefore, it is not possible to draw a conclusive picture about the exact nature of the discussions on the disarmament of the PKK and whether certain rights and policies have been promised on the condition of the PKK's laying down arms.

It is obvious that an expectation for the full disclosure of all the details about the talks is unrealistic, as a certain degree of secrecy is needed if not helpful. However, when this lack of transparency is combined with the non-inclusive attitudes of the government — which has assumed full control of the Solution process by ignoring any criticism of its policies on the Kurdish question and keeping Parliament and the opposition parties away from the process — peace has become vulnerable to daily and sudden developments, endangering the public support necessary to translate the Solution process into a lived experience. Furthermore, a consequence of the government seeing itself not only as the only power that can solve the Kurdish question but also as the sole party in the process is that the process becomes subjected to the government's own desire and agenda, meaning that the government takes steps, if any, in the process so long as the timing and the nature of the steps are in accordance with its agenda. Here the 'agenda' can be read as resembling a century-old state discourse on the Kurdish question, as well as an extension of the AKP's vision of a socially and politically constructed society, the 'new Turkey'. From the state's perspective,

on the other hand, the priority appears to be on the disarmament of the PKK with any further steps, if any, towards the Kurds' language rights being conditional on the disarmament of the PKK and the AKP's self-interest. The Kurdish political movement's self-interest in the process and the prospect of its gaining further legitimacy and power affect the AKP's perception of the process and the Kurds' language rights. It should borne in mind that the AKP's attempt to define the Kurdish question in its own terms, which is clearly different from that of the Kurdish political movement, does not see the political representatives of the Kurdish political movement — the pro-Kurdish parties in particular— as an integral part of the Kurdish question; rather, it considers it "a part of the problem, but not the solution" (Çınar 2011: 120). Therefore, Erdoğan's remarks are generally concerned with not giving further legitimacy and power to the Kurdish political movement, not least by disassociating Kurdishness or Kurds' individual rights and problems from the Kurdish question so that the argument for a Kurdish issue in Turkey would appear as a nationalist cause of the Kurdish political movement. This particular line of formulation of the Kurdish question supports the argument that the AKP's Kurdish opening aims to contain the Kurdish political movement's societal and political influences through judiciary means and adoption of rights and freedoms oriented discourse to challenge the Kurdish political movement both politically and ideologically (Casier, Jongerden, Walker 2011).

Thus, Erdoğan is careful in order not to legitimise the PKK or position the Kurdish political movement as the sole representative of the Kurds. Accordingly, he tends to demonstrate the Solution process as a process for the whole Turkey, similar to his articulation of the Kurdish question as a problem of the whole country. He stressed this point, saying that:

> "**The Solution process is the common issue of the whole nation and the whole country; it does not pertain to one or two ethnic components or regions**. We

will march forward with whoever is with us. However, we cannot do that with hypocrites who have proven their untrustworthiness several times. **We do not aim to legitimise anyone; that is out of question**. The Republic of Turkey does not bow to terrorist organizations or looters, and does not let such an impression to emerge" (BYEGM 23.03.2015) (emphasis added).

There is no question that the Solution process is about the Kurdish question. However, the process occupies a central role in the news and political debates, which creates a perception of special treatment of the Kurds. Erdoğan attempts to reduce the impact of the process on its support base and not to legitimise the Kurdish political movement as the representative of the Kurds. It should also be noted that Erdoğan has expected that his admittance of the state's past wrongs as well as other economic, social and political steps towards the Kurds would weaken the Kurdish political movement, including public support for the PKK, and Kurdish nationalism. In January 2013, speaking at his party's parliamentary group, he admitted that certain mistakes in the past served as an opportunity for the PKK, citing the coup d'état on September 12, 1980 as the prime example which caused severe destruction to human rights and freedoms, including and particularly in the Kurdish regions. He then continued to mention that his party cancelled in 2001 the Law of Extraordinary Conditions (OHAL) that was previously in place in the Kurdish regions. He expressed his 'frustration' as follows:

"Our Kurdish brothers told us at the time: Just lift OHAL, and **we don't want anything more**. **We did remove it, but unfortunately nothing has changed**' […] With the AK Party, cultural pressure and intimidation has ended. The AK Party came to power with the motto 'Let the people live so the state will live' and that's how it has been for the past 10 years. We know the painful events prior to 2002, all that trauma, very well. **But we see 2002 as a watershed point in history and**

we clearly state this, both in words and deeds" (Today's Zaman 22.01.2013) (emphasis added).

The on-going strong position of the Kurdish political movement and the PKK seems to have frustrated Erdoğan as, in his own words, 'nothing has changed' in terms of political strength of the Kurdish political movement, which in return affects Erdoğan's discourse.

It has been noted that the AKP tends to perceive and portray the Kurds' identity-based rights claims as nationalist claims of the Kurdish political movement, particularly when rights claims are not in line with the AKP's agenda in terms of both timing and substance. The Kurdish political movement's self-interest in its negotiation with the state and legitimacy and empowerment that it might get out of the process further leads the party's understanding of the Kurdish question and perception of the Kurds' language rights to the point of denial of the existence of a Kurdish problem in Turkey; rather to conceptualise it as an issue of individual rights in Turkey's process of democratisation with little or no significant implication for Turkey's centralist Kemalist nation-state origins. All these developments and factors further lead to a restraint conceptual capacity in both Erdoğan's and the AKP's understanding of the Kurdish question; hence strong resistance to the Kurds' language rights. Thus, it is possible to observe a tension between recognition and denial of the Kurdish question in Erdoğan's remarks on the Kurdish political movement and the Solution process, which becomes particularly apparent in the question of the PKK's disarmament.

The PKK's disarmament creates a dilemma for the AKP in the sense that the state has to negotiate with the Kurdish political movement in order to achieve that goal and to resolve the Kurdish question in its entirety. Yet, this particular aspect creates occasional uneasiness among the AKP's support base, not least because of the perception that the state is negotiating with what it has for so long considered a 'terrorist' or 'separatist' movement. There-

fore, while it is not possible to know the exact nature of the negotiation due to lack of transparency in the process, Erdoğan's discourse in this period is generally concerned with 'clarifying' aims and limits of the Solution process without further strengthening the Kurdish political movement, and containing the Kurdish question by arguing that the Kurdish question is no longer the same question in the 'new Turkey' thanks to the steps his governments have taken over the years.

The main aim of the Solution process is to remove the violent aspect of the Kurdish question. From the state's perspective, the disarmament of the PKK appears to be a precondition for any further transformative reforms for the Kurds' rights. The practical outcome of this formulation is that the Kurdish question is reduced to the PKK question, similar to the 'old' state discourse that saw the Kurdish question as a security issue. In his party's Diyarbakır congress in June 2012, in Erdoğan he stated:

> "**There is not a Kurdish problem in my country. There is the problem of PKK and terror**. **My Kurdish brothers and sisters may have problems, which we will solve**. […] We love Turks, Kurds, Zazas, Romas, Albanians, Circassians, Abhaza because we love the creature because of the creator; we do not discriminate" (Milliyet 02.06.2012).

This is obviously not the first time that Erdoğan talked about the PKK or its place in Turkey's Kurdish question; yet, in this particular speech he mentioned the PKK as the problem while denouncing the existence of a Kurdish problem in Turkey. The minimisation of the Kurdish question as a PKK issue should be considered within the context of the AKP's consolidation of power in its third term and becoming more assertive. In this context, the tendency to view the Kurdish question as the Kurds' certain, mostly socio-economic problems have led the AKP to treat the Kurdish question as an expired concept or an archaic problem of the 'old' Turkey, as the AKP's steps towards the Kurds' rights are considered

'enough' for the Kurdish question. Therefore, while the AKP's 'new Turkey' discourse signifies the party's own vision of Turkish society along values upheld by its leader cadres, in relation to the Kurdish question, it signifies the argument that the Kurdish question has mostly been resolved thanks to the government's steps over the years. According to this conviction, the most important and remaining aspect of the problem is now the PKK; hence, the Solution process's primary aim is the disarmament of the PKK with any possible further transformative reform towards recognition of the Kurds' language rights are conditional on it.

On this particular point, the Deputy Prime Minister, Beşir Atalay, who acts as a co-ordinator in the Solution process, stated: "The essence of the Solution process is that once the terror has stopped and arms have been laid down, **the politics will do what has to be done**", noting that the government would take the necessary steps once the arms had been laid down, including steps towards the PKK militants' participation in politics and their return to home (Habertürk 16.11.2013) (emphasis added). He did not state which particular right, if any, would be recognised after the PKK's laying down its arms.

On July 10, 2014, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey adopted *Terörün Sona Erdirilmesi ve Toplumsal Bütünlesmenin Güçlendirilmesine dair Kanun* [the Law on Ending Terror and Strengthening Social Integration] with the purpose, according to article 1 of the law, of regulating the procedures and principles for the Solution process that aims to end terror and reinforce social integration (Law No. 6551 (10.07.2014), art. 1, Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], No. 29062 (16.07.2014)). Article 2 of the Law sets forth the general duties of the government in the Solution process, which include determining the steps in political, legal, socio-economic, psychological, cultural, human rights, security and disarmament fields and on related issues to end terror and reinforce social integration and other steps to ensure coordination among relevant state institutions engaged in the process and to take

measures for members of the PKK who give up their weapons and resume normal life (Law No. 6551). According to the Preamble to the draft version of the Law, it aims to consolidate the legal regulations of relevant state bodies engaged in the process and issue legal regulations which are exclusive to the Solution process to further its progress and to reinforce the process as a state policy (Draft of the Law on Ending Terror and Strengthening Social Integration and the Report of the Committee on Internal Affairs, No. 31853594-101-995-2780, (26.6.2014)). The Law also removes any civil, criminal, and public responsibility of those who engage in the process and conduct their activities within the scope of the law. The government has not announced any concrete steps in regard to the duties set forth in the Law yet.

The issue of disarmament has been particularly apparent in Erdoğan's recent remarks. The difference of Erdoğan's association of the Kurdish question with the PKK from the 'old' state discourse is that he argues that the AKP's steps, particularly those towards the elimination of policies of denial and assimilation have left "no excuse for arms" (TCCB 23.03.2015). Referring to the Kurdish political movement, "If they want to do politics in this country and if they want to contribute to peace; they should first free themselves from the shadow of arms", he said (BYEGM 23.03.2015). Similarly, on another occasion, he noted: "Peace is not possible under the shadow of arms. ... We cannot move forward in an environment in which promises are violated repeatedly unless we see concrete steps" (Hurriyet Daily News 23.03.2015). Erdoğan appears to see 'insincerity' in the Kurdish political movement's approach to the Solution process on the ground that the PKK has not laid down its weapons despite the government's 'steps' and the pro-Kurdish HDP's efforts to keep the Kurdish question on the agenda aim to increase its own political interest. On this point, he stated: 'There is no difference between those who banned the word 'Kurd' in the past and those who exploits [the Kurdish political movement] it today' (Yeni Şafak 02.05.2015). Similar expressions of mistrust and insincerity are also directed towards the

PKK. Referring to the PKK's announcement in the spring of 2013 that it would draw its armed militants from Turkey, which has not fully been achieved, he said:

"Will we take the same road with these names, whose words cannot be trusted? How can we proceed with those smiling at our face, but playing all kinds of games behind our back? **You will first lay down your arms; and if there is anything you will say, you will come and say it on the political platform within constitutional and democratic boundaries**. If you do not want a solution, and do not contribute to the efforts expended in this direction, it is your choice. We set out to resolve this issue, counting on our nation with its Turks and Kurds. We will continue together with our nation, and resolve this issue despite arms" (BYEGM 23.03.2015).

His usual vagueness and unclarity about the Kurds' rights is also apparent here in the sense that it is not immediately clear which further steps, if any, the government would take, despite arms, as far as resolving the Kurdish question is concerned. This makes it difficult to assess whether the disarmament of the PKK would make any difference in terms of recognition of the Kurds' language rights. The disarmament of the PKK is clearly beyond the scope of the study; however, the important point is that the possibility of any further steps in the Kurdish question appears to be conditioned on the progress in the disarmament of the PKK, as Erdoğan is quite confident that enough has been done to expect the PKK's laying down arms. Noting the steps by governments since the Kurdish opening in 2009, he stated:

"We began this process with the Democratic Initiative. That was phase one. The second phase was the National Unity and Brotherhood Project. The third phase is the Solution process. I stand by and support the Solution process. Above all, I am in the Process. It is not possible any other way. **Now, I say those with arms should**

bury their arms in cement just like IRA [The Irish Republican Army] did if they are truly sincere. You have arms and you say Solution Process. You cannot deceive anyone" (BYEGM 27.03.2015) (emphasis added).

Although Erdoğan assumes that enough has been done to expect the disarmament of the PKK, the Kurdish political movement expects more concrete steps, or 'real talks', so that a negotiation process can begin among the parties. On February 28, 2015, at a joint press conference last week with the government's delegation to the Solution process, Sırrı Süreyya Önder of the HDP quoted a message from Abdullah Öcalan, jailed leader of the PKK, calling on the PKK to convene a conference in the spring on "making the strategic and historic decision to lay down its arms" based on mutually agreed upon common grounds in the Solution process. According to Öcalan, this is a historic declaration of intention for democratic politics that will put an end to the armed struggle (Today's Zaman 28.02.2015). Öcalan renewed his message by a letter to Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır, stating that the PKK's armed campaign has reached an "unsustainable" and a PKK congress should determine its "political and social strategy in harmony with the spirit of the new period" (Today's Zaman 21.03.2015). The call for the possibility of an end to the armed struggle is undoubtedly an important element of Öcalan's message; however, what are equally important are the ten-item list of principles in his message on which future negotiations would be based. The call on the PKK to lay down its arms is conditioned on the government's acceptance of these principles. The ten principles are as follows:

1) The definition and content of democratic politics must be debated;

2) What needs to be done for the national and local dimensions of democratic settlement;

3) The legal and democratic assurances of free citizenship;

4) The relationship between democratic politics and the state and society and its institutionalisation;

5) The socioeconomic dimensions of the settlement process;

6) The new security structure that the settlement process will lead to;

7) The solving of problems and the legal assurances pertaining to women's [rights], culture and ecology;

8) The concept, definition and development of pluralist, democratic and equal mechanisms to acknowledge identity;

9) The definition of concepts of democratic state, common land and the nation by democratic means, their legal and constitutional rights enshrined in the pluralist democratic system; and

10) A new constitution aiming to internalise all of the above democratic moves and transformations (Today's Zaman 28.02.2015).

It is still not very clear how these ten items will be received by the public or whether the government will take any measures towards their clarification or implementation. However, it is important to keep in mind that the fact that these demands are presented as 'principles' on which substantial negotiations would be based should not be mistaken for vagueness or lack of clarity, especially from the Kurdish political movement's perspective. On the contrary, these principles — that is, 'democratic politics', 'democratic settlement' or 'free citizenship' — constitute the different aspects or elements of 'democratic autonomy', a model of self-government that Öcalan has proposed (Sönmez 2012; Kurdistan 2013; Ozkirimli 2013b). The Kurdish political movement has already been ideologically and practically working towards the realisation of these principles, hence the autonomy in its

constituencies. Moreover, 'democratic autonomy' has two stages, one being the de facto construction of autonomy and another being the attainment of formal recognition from the state. In fact, in an interview with the Radikal news portal (29.04.2014), Seydi Fırat — who is a member of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the umbrella organisation of several Kurdish civil society organisations that unilaterally declared 'democratic autonomy' in 2011 — argues that without the formal recognition of the state, the autonomy cannot be fully successful or functional. That is why, according to Fırat, the Kurdish political movement should find alternative ways to convince the state of granting formal recognition to the 'already-constructed' autonomy.

Therefore, how the state sees these principles and their potential political implications for Turkey — and whether or not or to what extent it agrees to them — is of paramount importance. While Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu considered the joint statement as the beginning of a new phase in the process, noting that "the discourse of arms and violence will end and the road will be opened for a discourse of democracy" (Today's Zaman 28.02.2015), Erdoğan was not pleased with the statement, stating that these demands were 'new' while adding that those items [the ten principles] had nothing to do with democracy (Bila 22.03.2015). The upcoming general election is an important factor for Erdoğan's hesitancy, despite being the president, which is expected to be non-partisan, as he appears to want the government to be subtler on the Kurdish question by not taking any 'radical' or 'reformist' steps until the AKP's ruling is secured in the election. Soon, the positive atmosphere that emerged after Öcalan's message has disappeared. Consequently, Bese Hozat, co-leader of the executive council of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella organisation that encompasses the PKK, said: "Convening this conference is not on our agenda at the moment because the process has not worked and no step has been taken" (Today's Zaman 05.05.2015).

There is clearly a power struggle between the state and the Kurdish political movement, as each party aims to maximise its own interest in the process. From the AKP's perspective, the upcoming general election in June 7, 2015 and prospect of the AKP's being unable to form a majority government is also an important reason behind the harsh and often nationalist rhetoric of Erdoğan. For instance, amid the predictions that the HDP is likely to surpass the ten per cent election threshold, which prevents the AKP from forming a majority government, for example, he accused the HDP of 'engaging in illegal methods', refusing to recognise the HDP as an 'interlocutor' in the Solution process, further claiming:

> "Who do you think you are, claiming to be an interlocutor? There is a state in this country. There is not a table that is being sat around. If there were, it would mean the collapse of the state. The state does not lay down its arms and if the terrorists take up arms, then the state will do whatever the situation requires" (Üstüntağ 29.04.2015).

HDP Deputy Co-chair Sırrı Süreyya Önder responded to Erdoğan, saying that there was an agreement between the HDP and the government as part of the settlement process, meaning that the HDP was indeed an 'official' interlocutor in the process (Today's Zaman 30.04.2015). Erdoğan's this particular remark was seen as a sign of collapse into the security-oriented policies of the '90s. HDP MP for Muş, Demir Çelik criticised Erdoğan, saying:

> "The whole world recognises the existence of the Kurdish problem. His comments imply that military options and security precautions will once again step in, as has been done for the last 40 years, and a total war will be waged against Kurds instead of seeking a solution to the subject based on peaceful talks […] If there is not an interlocutor on the Kurdish issue, then why do you continue to meet with Öcalan and send delegations to İmralı Island where Öcalan is being held? What do those

meetings between the government and delegations mean? Denying reality is an empty effort" (Üstüntağ 29.04.2015).

As discussed, the AKP has been a pragmatist and populist party that has utilised every opportunity and instrumentalised various discourses for its self-interest in order to consolidate its power and change power dynamics in its favour. Thus, any step towards long-standing issues of Turkey has become subjected to the AKP's self-interest and agenda. This means that it takes steps, if any, so long as the timing and the nature of a step is in accordance with its agenda. Moreover, it has been noted that the corruption allegations and the 'new Turkey' discourse make the AKP's pragmatic and rational characteristics more apparent and prevailing, as the AKP wants to remain in power more enthusiastically in order to realise its 'new Turkey' vision as well as to tackle corruption allegations, which render the attainment of power as a matter of survival for the party. This has raised the question whether and if so, to what extent, the Process is instrumental for the AKP's self-interest with the Process's future and any further steps towards recognition of the Kurds' language rights being conditional on the party's self-interest on the road to the making of a 'new Turkey' and further consolidation of power.

The upcoming general election is the first general election since the Solution process has begun in 2013. The prospect of the AKP's being unable to form a majority government and the HDP's surpassing the election threshold have provided revealing insights into how the process is conditional on the party's self-interest. In this context, Erdoğan's nationalist and condescending language towards the HDP and his remarks on the Kurdish question have gone to the point of denial of the existence of a Kurdish problem in Turkey and use of security-oriented measures.

As noted above, Erdoğan assumed that his 'recognition' of the Kurdish problem and steps towards the Kurds' rights would weaken the Kurdish political movement, its political rep-

resentatives in particular; yet, it did not happen. In this sense, whether the Solution process would translate into strong support for the AKP in the general election, particularly among the Kurdish electorate remains as a crucial question for the future of the Kurdish question, as a possible decline in the AKP's electoral success may change its attitude towards the Kurdish question in general and the Solution process in particular, not least because it is not in a position to 'afford' losing power.

Therefore, it is possible to speculate that if the HDP surpasses the election threshold, power dynamics may change in Turkish politics once again, as it implies a decline in the AKP's popularity in the ballot box for the first time since its emergence. It will also mean that, perhaps paradoxically, while the main impetus behind the state's discourse shift towards recognition has been the containment of the growing influence of the Kurdish political movement, the AKP's more recognition-oriented policies have not been successful in doing so. On the other hand, the resume of the talks between the parties after the election is still possible. Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan noted, for example, that: "the settlement process is not a [random] process that can be sacrificed for the [parliamentary] elections; this is a strategic issue for us. … We won't take a step back from this process", adding that the HDP was a political opponent of the AKP; therefore, they [the AKP] would campaign against the HDP and their politics; yet, it wouldn't affect their position on the process (Today's Zaman 27.03.2015).

Similar to the shift that has occurred in the state discourse on the Kurdish question since the '90s towards recognition, the AKP's Kurdish policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means are not motivated by genuine reforms; rather, it is an outcome of pragmatic considerations. The Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence force the state to change its attitude towards the Kurdish question in favour of a more recognition-oriented policy. Paradoxically, while the Kurdish political movement's

growing societal and political influence force a change in the state discourse; it also impos-es a restraint capacity on the state discourse in resolving the Kurdish question and mani-fests itself as a major source of resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

The Kurdish political movement's self-interest in its negotiation with the state and legiti-macy and empowerment that it might get out of the process further leads the AKP's under-standing of the Kurdish question to the point of denial of the existence of a Kurdish prob-lem in Turkey. Thus, the Kurds' language rights, which are collective by nature and usually require a kind of self-government, witness strong resistance, as the Kurds' rights claims are viewed within the confines of individual rights with little or no significant implication for Turkey's centralist Kemalist nation-state origins. The identification of the Kurds' rights claims as such further lead to the argument that the Kurdish question is an expired con-cept in the 'new Turkey', as the AKP's steps towards the Kurds' rights are seen 'enough' in terms of the Kurds' rights claims. Accordingly, the most important and remaining aspect of the problem is seen as the PKK with any possible further transformative reform towards recognition of the Kurds' language rights are conditional on the PKK's disarmament and the AKP's self-interest. The AKP's tendency to formulate the Kurds' rights within the con-fines of individual rights and to subject the Kurds' language rights to the disarmament of the PKK, the progress in the process and its self-interest suggest that the party sees lan-guage rights as rights of political compromise rather than fundamental human rights in the sense that in the AKP's case, the process of political compromise signifies not only the pro-cess through which language rights are usually negotiated and recognised but also the na-ture of language rights.

5.5 The Kurdish Question in the 'new Turkey'

The AKP's 'new Turkey' rhetoric has served different purposes over the years. It was generally used as a discourse of opposition to the military-led secular establishment in order to emphasise the party's 'different' conceptions of national identity, citizenship, secularism and religion from the Kemalist regime. Associated with progress and democratisation, it was sometimes used to justify certain AKP policies and practices, including the most authoritarian ones. In the AKP's third term, it started to signify both the idea of a 'new' state that re-imagined itself under the AKP ruling and the party's own vision of Turkish society along values upheld by its leader cadres. Building on the previously discussed points, this part analyses the AKP's discourse on the Kurdish question in the context of the party's 'new Turkey' rhetoric in order to clarify the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question, the Kurds' language rights in particular.

The AKP's 'new Turkey' discourse is related to the Kurdish question in three particular aspects. The first aspect is concerned with the association of the emergence of Turkey's long standing issues, the Kurdish question in particular, with the 'old' regime. In this sense, opposition parties, the CHP in particular are viewed as having caused injustices to the Kurds or having being the very reason behind the emergence of the Kurdish question. For instance, Erdoğan portrays the main opposition party, Republican People's Party (CHP), and Kemalists as the main responsible actors behind all the atrocities and injustices perpetrated on the Kurds. In June 2011, in a rally in Diyarbakır, he stated:

> "My dear brothers and sisters, CHP is the main cause of the Kurdish question. It is the main reason for all the pains and sufferings of my Kurdish brothers and sisters […] when we name the issue as the Kurdish question, they said there is no Kurdish question. […] They banned Kurdish music, ignored and denied the Kurdish language and my Kurdish brothers' and sisters' culture" (AK Parti 02.06.2011).

In the same rally, he also accused the then pro-Kurdish party, BDP for exploiting the Kurdish question for its own benefit, saying that CHP and BDP were the main reason that the Kurdish question could not be solved completely (Karakuş 02.06.2011). This particular line of argument has proved effective, as his criticisms of opposition parties and the 'old' regime allow him to garner more support from the public by adopting a 'different' and a 'new' rhetoric and also enables him to manoeuvre in politically difficult times by putting blames on others and presenting himself and his party as the source of solution. Erdoğan has utilised this particular rhetoric to change or control the negative public perception in regard to the AKP's Kurdish policy or to justify his party's position on the Kurdish question. For example, on Turkey's normalisation in the Kurdish question and amid criticisms of the AKP's Kurdish policies, Erdoğan stated that his governments' steps did not intend to create privileges for the Kurds; rather, they aimed to normalise Turkey by eliminating certain policies and practices of the past such as banning of the Kurdish language or punishment of those who spoke Kurdish or sang in Kurdish (Aytaş 19.11.2013). Referring to those who adopted a security-oriented approach to the Kurdish question in the past, he added:

> "They feared from the language [the Kurdish language], they banned the language. They feared from songs [in Kurdish], they banned them. They feared from artists and opinions, they sent them to exile. They feared from clothing [Kurds' traditional clothes], they oppressed. They feared from the identity, they attempted to assimilate. Great states cannot have such fears. Which prohibition developed Turkey? Which prohibition created the peace? Which denialist, assimilationist policy became for Turkey's benefit? None of them. On the contrary, all this weakened Turkey, held it back and exacerbated its issues. Whatever we do, we do to normalise Turkey" (Zaman 20.11.2013)

It should be noticed that Erdoğan is unsurprisingly clear and critical about the past injustices to the Kurds unlike his vagueness and unclarity about the specificity of ethnic groups' problems in Turkey, as discussed previously, which aims to simplify and contain the Kurdish question.

The second aspect of 'new Turkey' discourse in the context of the Kurdish question signifies the idea that the Kurdish question is an expired concept that does not have any bearing to the present Turkey thanks to the successive AKP governments' steps towards the Kurds' rights. The underlying premise is that most long-standing issues of 'old' Turkey no longer exist in 'new' Turkey thanks to the AKP's achievements and steps towards democratisation, which created, in Erdoğan's words, a process of 'true normalisation' in Turkey (Today's Zaman 02.11.2013). The discourse of 'normalisation' is usually used against the military-led secular establishment or what Erdoğan portrays as the vanguards of the 'old' regime in an attempt to justify certain steps towards 'thorny' issues, particularly those which changed the Kemalist regime's perceptions. For example, Erdoğan exemplified the process of normalisation as follows:

> "What is normal is allowing headscarf-wearing students to enter university campuses. […] **What is normal is allowing every language to be spoken freely**. **This is what is happening now**" (Today's Zaman 02.11.2013) (emphasis added).

Both wearing the headscarf and use of any other language other than Turkish in public domain have been problematic in Turkey. One could hardly deny that there has been a certain degree of normalisation in the enjoyment of fundamental rights though, as noted before, the AKP's recent drift towards authoritarianism suggests that the protection of human rights is in a decline. The AKP uses the notion of normalisation to justify its authoritarian policies and measures that aim to serve its self-interest on the road to the making of

the 'new Turkey'. The AKP's portrayal of Turkey as a country, which is going through a process of normalisation and re-imagination, has also bearing on the Kurdish question.

Erdoğan's speech in a rally in Diyarbakır four days before the general election of June 2011 provides a good overview of what his governments had done for the Kurdish question from Erdoğan's perspective.

> "**I'm behind my words and what I had said in 2005, here in Diyarbakır**. Call it the Southeast problem, or anything you want, there is the Kurdish problem in this country. But, for God's sake, are we going to live and breathe the Kurdish problem or the Southeast problem until our death? What is the solution for this? This is what we've done; taking the steps that could have never been taken before. We started the process of reconciliation in August 2005. In 2009, we launched a democratic opening and the National Unity and Fraternity Project. We built the foundation for the Solution process. You told me at the time: Just lift OHAL, and we don't want anything more. We did remove it. **We lifted the bans on the Kurdish language. We compensated and continue doing so those who have suffered from the terror. We published the Mem-û Zin [a Kurdish classic of Kurdish literature]. TRT Şeş broadcasts 24/7. We opened Kurdish language and literature departments in universities. We made private Kurdish courses and political propaganda in Kurdish possible**. We opened the door for a peaceful and permanent solution. We created the chance to discuss this issue [the Kurdish question] in the Parliament. We ensured that issues that couldn't have been talked about before were being discussed freely and openly" (AK Parti 02.06.2011) (emphasis added).

The reforms and steps in the speech are important steps towards recognition of the Kurdish language, which allow the use and dissemination of the Kurdish language in different

settings. These steps are the most concrete examples that show the divergence of the AKP's perception of the Kurdish question from the Kemalist regime's nation building project. They are 'reformist' and 'transformative' in the sense that recognition of the existence of the Kurdish language and normalisation of its use had been problematic. In regard to the Kurds' language rights as defined and discussed previously, these and other steps that the government has taken towards the Kurdish language are limited to address the instrumental character of the Kurdish language as a tool of communication, which implies a different regime of rights, that is, linguistic human rights or linguistic tolerance (Réaume 1991; Kloss 1977). The legal protection of language use in exercising human rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech and fair trial, political propaganda is already expected in a functioning democracy. In other words, regardless of a language group's size or whether the group in question is officially recognised by the state, the group's language should be accommodated in order to prevent language being a liability for its speakers in their enjoyment of human rights.

The Kurds' language rights, on the other hand, suggest a constitutional commitment on the state side to protect the Kurdish language in order to create a free and fair environment in which the Kurdish language may flourish. The Kurds' interest in language as a concern for linguistic security (Réaume 1991; Réaume and Green 1989) requires that the Kurds have the tools and resources to live a full life in the Kurdish language without facing unfair pressures from the often-unquestioned dominant position of the Turkish language. Grounded on the idea that language has an intrinsic value to its speakers (Green 1987; Réaume 1991; 2000; Rubio-Marín 2003), this particular dimension of language rights is concerned with the Kurdish language's use in public services, participating in government and education facilities regardless of its speakers' proficiency in the Turkish language. The reason is that the viability and size of the Kurds increases their interest in linguistic security to the extent that linguistic security in its fullest sense (Réaume and Green 1989) requires the Kurdish

language to be used in public services, governance and education facilities so that the Kurds have a free and fair environment in which the Kurdish language may flourish without its speakers facing any imposition or unfair pressure to abandon their mother tongue. The distinction between the instrumental and non-instrumental character of language and language rights as defined and discussed above clearly imply different category of rights. Erdoğan's understanding of the Kurds' language-related rights claims and the AKP's consequent policies appear to be limited to the instrumental character of language. For example, in the context of the Kurdish question, asked about his views on the right to education in mother tongue and self-government, Erdoğan pointed out that the Kurdish language could be taken as an elective course in schools and dismissed the possibility of the right to education in the Kurdish language while stating that "this country [Turkey] has an official language [Turkish]". This is similar to his previously noted remark that sees an inextricably link between an official language and the right to education in the mother tongue. In the same interview, he accused the Kurdish political movement of being 'insincere' and 'dishonest' on the ground that they had constant demands from the state, saying that there was no end to their demands (Bila 22.03.2015).

This is in line with the party's tendency to view the Kurds' rights within the confines of individual rights. Claiming that assimilationist and denialist policies have mostly been eliminated, Erdoğan stated:

> "My Kurdish brother and sister could not speak his/her own language. There was the OHAL and we were being asked [by the Kurds] to remove it, which we did. We did all these. The state is no longer concerned with its citizens' religious or social background; being a citizen is all that matters. In this country, one's identifying self as Kurds, Laz or Bosnian was prohibited. You couldn't speak Kurdish on the street

[…] We've taken steps adamantly and solved these problems" (Yeni Şafak 02.05.2015).

As discussed, the AKP's motivation in terms of steps towards the Kurdish question was concerned with civilianisation of policies on the Kurdish question, furthering democratisation, better protection of civil rights and compensation of past wrongs. Moreover, in Erdoğan's understanding, the Kurds' language rights are mainly about non-discrimination in use of the Kurdish language in the private domain with little or no accommodation in the public domain. Therefore, his government's steps to redress the injustices perpetrated on the Kurds by the state's security-oriented and denialist policies and to eliminate the restrictions on the Kurdish language have led Erdoğan to consider the Kurdish question a question of 'old' Turkey with no bearing on the present day. The better protection of the Kurds' civil rights or elimination institutional practice of denial and discrimination of the Kurdish language is surely an important step towards the politics of recognition. However, the point is that the argument that the Kurdish question is no longer a valid concept in the 'new Turkey' implies the extent of the AKP's recognition-oriented policy towards the Kurdish question, including the Kurds' language-related rights, which is in its current form limited to the instrumental character of the Kurdish language.

In March 2015, Erdoğan made a series of speeches in various cities of Turkey behind the pretence of normal presidential visits. Despite his presidential position that is expected to be impartial to the politics, Erdoğan made a number of controversial remarks on the Kurdish question and the Solution process in these speeches, which aimed to garner support for the AKP in the upcoming general election. They are worth discussing because in many ways they support the many points discussed so far.

On the question of why the Kurdish question is no longer a valid concept in 'new' Turkey, referring to his speech in Diyarbakır in 2005, Erdoğan stated:

"On that day, **we discarded the understanding that denied the problems**. **With the Solution process, the concept of a Kurdish problem has lost its validity**. When I say there is no Kurdish problem, they maliciously distort my remarks. However, what I mean is very clear; **there is no longer a Kurdish problem in Turkey; there are problems of my Kurdish brothers**" (BYEGM 23.03.2015) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan considers his Diyarbakır speech in 2005, in which he publicly 'recognised' the existence of the Kurdish question, a milestone in the Kurdish question that ended the denialist discourse of the state. However, as much as the rejection of the denialist attitude of the state is important, it should be noted that the Kurdish question requires affirmative action on the state side to address both the past injustices as well as to recognise the Kurds' rights claims. The fact that Erdoğan sees the Kurdish question as a concept that has lost its validity with the Solution process explains his formulation of the Kurdish question as the Kurds' certain problems, as his governments' steps towards the Kurds rights, which are briefly mentioned above, and non-denialist attitude of the state are seen enough to argue that the Kurdish question is now an archaic problem of Turkey.

His recent remarks on the Kurdish question, ten years after his Diyarbakır speech, taken together with his attempts of simplification and generalisation of the Kurdish question and unwillingness to give any transformative power to ethnic groups' identity-related rights claims or to his own 'radical' and 'reformist' conceptions of national identity and citizenship, show a continuity in terms of his conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question and the Kurds' language rights. For example, first speaking in Çanakkale and then in Balıkesir the next day, he said: "There is no problem in our country stemming from their [Kurds'] ethnicity", further stating:

"My brothers, **there has never been any problem called the Kurdish issue in this country**. Yet, there are intentional efforts to keep this on the agenda… **We ended it [the problem] in a speech I made in Diyarbakır in 2005** and that is it. **My Kurdish citizens could have problems. They could have problems just like the problems of Turkish citizens. Thirty-six ethnic groups in the country have their own problems**. There is constant talk about the Kurdish problem. Turkey has been kept busy with this for years - 40,000 people have been killed in this country for this reason.

Now, when you take a look at them, they keep talking about a Kurdish problem. What are you talking about, brother? What Kurdish problem…**what have you not got?** Did you have a president [of Kurdish background], did you have a prime minister [of Kurdish background], did you have ministers [of Kurdish background]? Yes, you did. Do you have [Kurds] in the bureaucracy, in the TSK [Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)]? Yes. **What else do you want? For God's sake, what don't you have that we do, you have everything.**

I also told this to my Roma sisters and brothers yesterday [Saturday, in Çanakkale]. Turks have problems, too; Roma people have problems, too. Bosnian people have problems, too; Laz people have problems, too; they all have problems" (Today's Zaman 15.03.2015) (emphasis added).

The upcoming election plays a crucial part in Erdoğan's harsh language, not least because of the possibility that the AKP may see a decrease in its votes and be unable to form a majority government. Yet, what appears is that the essence of his understanding of and where the resolution of the Kurdish question lies in has not changed since his speech of 2005 despite his many remarks and the AKP's policies on the Kurdish question that appeared 'radical' or 'ground breaking' in terms of their divergence from the denialist and assimilationist

state discourse. Erdoğan continues to consider the Kurdish question just another problem of Turkey that does not have any 'unique' implication for Turkey's centralist Kemalist nation-state origins. His tendency to define the Kurdish question as the Kurds' socio-economic problems is also apparent in the speech, as he attempts to formulate the Kurdish question as a problem of social mobility of the Kurds. The AKP's attempts to define the Kurdish question in its own terms mean that the Kurdish question is read through the lens of the party's socio-economic achievements. Perhaps the most explanatory of this particular point and the extent of his understanding of the Kurdish question is his rhetorical question — 'what more do you want?' — to the Kurds. Similarly, Erdoğan stated:

> "**What don't you have that we have? You have everything. For years you had no roads, we built them**. We are constructing an airport in Hakkari [an underdeveloped Kurdish city], but they try to stop it. We did all of these things. […] **Did this state make any sort of discrimination?** Whatever was done for the West was also done for the East and Southeast. But **their problem is something else**. We have eliminated all denialist and assimilationist policies" (Hurriyet Daily News 15.03.2015) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan's condescending language is an embodiment of what Öktem (2008) describes as 'patronising embrace' whereby the Kurds are caught between a better material life and the prospect of discrimination and exclusion or, as in this case, are expected to be contented with what the AKP has done for them. What is perhaps the most noticeable a sign of the party's assertiveness in Erdoğan's remark is that he uses the word 'state' to describe the AKP period, during which, he claims, the state has not discriminated the Kurds. Erdoğan continued to make similar comments on the Kurdish question in the following days, to a certain degree, to remedy the reaction among the Kurds. Arguing that the Kurds had equal

rights with the rest of the country while noting that deficiencies that still existed were diminishing every day (CNN Türk 17.03.2015), he stated:

> "I repeat here one more time: Turkey does not have a Kurdish problem. Like every other group of people in Turkey, our Kurdish brothers and sister too have problems. **There is a problem of non-recognition of their identities. There is a problem of their beliefs not being respected. There is a problem of being underdeveloped, despised and neglected**" (Hurriyet Daily News 17.03.2015) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan's vagueness and unclarity about normative implication of ethnic diversity in Turkey or of his conceptions of national identity and citizenship exists here, as it was not immediately clear as to which particular identity-related problem Erdoğan thinks the Kurds have. The 'contradiction' in his remarks comes partly from his perception of the Kurdish political movement and the prospect of its growing societal and political influence, which in returned leads him to attempt to disassociate Kurdishness from the Kurdish question. As his perception of the Kurds' identity-related rights rests on his association of such rights claims with the Kurdish political movement's 'nationalist' agenda, he, therefore, demonstrates a strong resistance to further rights claims and their repercussions for Turkey. On this aspect, he stated:

> "Those who still insist that the country has a Kurdish issue embark on this discourse to occupy the country's agenda and garner more votes in the election. **Calling the matter the 'Kurdish problem' is a step towards dividing the country, a type of discrimination**" (Üstüntağ 29.04.2015) (emphasis added).

In response to Erdoğan's remarks on a Kurdish problem no longer existing in the country and the Kurds having the same equal rights with the rest of the country, Hasip Kaplan,

HDP MP for Şırnak, stated that he founded Erdoğan's statements 'incomprehensible' and 'inconsistent', adding that:

> "Every citizen of this country has problems being an equal citizen. Kurdish citizens have a problem enjoying the same rights as Turkish citizens. **The [Kurdish] problem will continue to exist until these legal and constitutional rights are maintained**" (Today's Zaman 15.03.2015) (emphasis added).

Similarly, Gülten Kışanak, HDP mayor of Diyarbakır, mentioned, in particular, the right to education in mother tongue as an example of how the Kurds still lacked many rights in contrast to Erdoğan's claims that the Kurds had the same equal rights with the rest of the country (Today's Zaman 15.03.2015). Populism and pragmatism play a crucial role in Erdoğan's what may appear as inconsistent or contradictory remarks on the Kurdish question; however, there is a relative continuity and consistency in his conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question regardless of how ground breaking or radical his remarks may appear at the outside. The AKP's policies on the Kurdish question so far support this continuity and consistency.

The third and final aspect of 'new' Turkey discourse that relates to the Kurdish question is the presidential system, which is presented as the ultimate solution to all problems of Turkey, including the Kurdish question. On this point, Erdoğan said:

> "Above all, **we should elevate the transformation process, which we initiated and successfully sustained so far, to a whole new level. We call this New Turkey**. **I believe that we need a new constitution and presidential system for the New Turkey**. When we adopt the presidential system, the majority of the problems we experience at the Parliament will be over. There will no longer be multi-headedness. All obstructions will be lifted. Turkey will sprint, leap forward and

reach beyond the level of contemporary civilisations" (BYEGM 25.03.2015) (emphasis added).

Erdoğan has already been acting as a *de facto* president since he has assumed the office in August 2015. It appears, therefore, that this debate will become an important point of discussion after the upcoming general election. Announcing the AKP's manifesto for the election, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said: "We see the restructuring of the administrative system towards a presidential system as necessary to clear up the mess over lines of responsibility and to genuinely restore accountability" (Today's Zaman 15.04.2015). The adoption of a presidential system appears to be one of the most important steps on the road to the AKP's 'new' Turkey, which aims further consolidation of power. There are two particular points that a new presidential system debate relates to the Kurdish question.

First, taken together with the AKP's recent drift towards authoritarianism and its vision of 'new' Turkish society, the AKP in many ways aims not only to maintain its power but also control civil society. The AKP's self-interest in this period is likely to be a more determining factor than it has ever been in the AKP politics. The future of the Solution process and the AKP's attitude towards the Kurdish question is yet to be seen; however, the question whether the AKP will continue to proceed in the Solution process even if it sees a decrease in its votes in the upcoming general election remains crucial. In addition to that, the Kurdish political movement and particularly the HDP appear to act as a strong opposition against the AKP. The HDP has maintained a harsh rhetoric towards Erdoğan's desire for a presidential system and his concept of the 'new Turkey'. Although Selahattin Demirtaş, co-leader of the HDP, stated that the HDP's opposition to the AKP would not affect the Solution process as it could proceed regardless (Kanal D 05.03.2015), what further complicates the issue is that if the HDP surpasses the ten per cent election threshold, the AKP loses a number of seats in the Parliament that it will have to seek a coalition government. The

question whether the Solution process will continue regardless of the parliamentary composition of the AKP after the election or how the HDP will position itself as a political party against the AKP politics is of paramount importance. In this context, a system change in favour of a presidential system may become subjected to negotiation between the AKP and the HDP. Second, if a proposal for a presidential system is accompanied by a restructuring of the administrative system with a focus strong self-government in an effort to get the HDP's support, it would put one of the most controversial aspects of the Kurdish question to the centre of the debate. These two particular points will perhaps become the most concrete examples of how the AKP has instrumentalised the Solution process and the Kurdish question in general for its self-interest.

The AKP's 'functional' use of 'new' Turkey discourse in different ways over the years, to a certain extent, summarises its transition from a reformist and transformative political party to one that has become the 'state' in terms of consolidation of power. While initially its signified a discourse of opposition to the Kemalist regime with a particular criticism of the regime's nation building project, it then started to symbolise the AKP's assertiveness and secured position in Turkish politics and in a way its own 'nation building project'. The important point is that as the AKP has gained more power and become stronger, the centre focus of Erdoğan's speeches shifted to his party's achievements and to the argument that Turkey is now a 'new' country. There is much less emphasis on the Kurds' rights and what the state should do to address them, not least because the AKP's approach to the Kurds' rights does not extend to recognising the non-instrumental character of language or rather the regime of language rights, as its conceptual articulation of the Kurdish question is limited to accommodate the private use of the Kurdish language and does not recognise the intrinsic value of language to the Kurds or their interest in language as a concern for linguistic security. Turkey's long-standing issues, including the Kurdish question are seen as archaic problems of Turkey with the most important and remaining issue being the PKK.

Therefore, in terms of the Kurds' language rights, 'new' Turkey discourse signifies the limit of the AKP's policies towards the politics of recognition rather than a process or progress towards further recognition.

This is not to argue that Erdoğan's understanding of or the AKP's approach to the Kurdish question is cast in stone; rather, to emphasise that, in the AKP's policies, there is a consistency in terms of how much recognition to be given to the Kurds. Despite what appears at the outside as a fall back or contradiction in Erdoğan's remarks on the Kurdish question over the years, his understanding of the Kurdish question and its effect on the policy-making steps has a particular consistency. From the AKP's perspective, the Kurds' language rights are rights of political compromise; therefore, as part of its negotiation with the Kurdish political movement in the Solution process, the AKP, as a pragmatist and populist political party may take 'radical' steps towards the Kurds' language rights so long as such steps are in line with its self-interest on the road to the 'new' Turkey.

5.6 Conclusion

The Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question under the AKP rule carries the main characteristics of the post-denial period of the state discourse on the Kurdish question in the sense that the politics of recognition, discrimination and assimilation are all intertwined. Yet, despite shortcomings in their implementation, the AKP's steps towards the Kurdish language's use and dissemination, the better protection of the Kurds' civil rights and its direct political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, including its armed wing suggest a greater shift towards the politics of recognition, which is a divergent from the denialist state discourse of the Kemalist regime. However, the state discourse under the successive AKP governments and the traditional state discourse converge on their resistance to the Kurds' language rights and attempts to contain the Kurdish question.

Therefore, there is continuity in the state discourse in terms of resistance to the Kurds' language rights and their political recognition to the extent of reimagining Turkey as a multi-ethnic and multicultural state. In this sense, the state discourse bears the same characteristics and sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights with difference being that this 'newly' developed discourse are ostensibly more rights and freedoms oriented. From the AKP's perspective, the concept of 'new Turkey' rests on the conviction that Turkey has already re-imagined itself as a new nation under the AKP ruling. However, the resistance to the Kurds' language rights and the party's attempts to contain them suggest that 'new' Turkey is not more 'Kurdish' than 'old' one.

The emergence of the post-denial period in the state discourse in the early '90s was due to the unattainable nature of the denialist policies of previous decades amid the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence and the increasing intensity of the armed conflict between the PKK and the state. Similarly, the AKP's policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means was forced by the same factors. Therefore, it is possible to observe a tension between recognition, denial and containment of the Kurds' language rights in the AKP period, as from the state perspective, the Kurdish question is an issue that has to be contained and confined as much as it has to be recognised.

One aspect of the containment of the Kurdish question that is relevant to the current study is the adoption of rights-oriented policies that aim to challenge the Kurdish political movement both ideologically and politically and to include the Kurds' into the state's identity perception, which has historically been ignorant of the Kurds, within the confines of the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question. The AKP's policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means, including the political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, in many ways, fall into this category. The limited capacity of its policies in addressing the Kurds' language rights and the party's sources and reasons

of resistance to the Kurds' language rights support this conviction. In addition to the nationalist/traditional discourse of the Kemalist regime, which continues, to a certain extent, inform the state discourse, there are three particular reasons that the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question shows resistance to the Kurds' language rights despite the party's policy of resolving the Kurdish question through non-military means and its seemingly recognition-oriented position on the Kurds' language-related rights.

First, perhaps paradoxically, while the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence force a change in the state discourse towards recognition, it also imposes a restraint conceptual capacity on the state discourse in resolving the Kurdish question through greater recognition. The Kurdish political movement's self-interest in its negotiation with the state and legitimacy and more power that it might get out of the process leads the AKP's understanding of the Kurdish question to the point of denial of the existence of a Kurdish problem in Turkey. There is a power struggle between the state and the Kurdish political movement. The Kurdish political movement's own demands for its self-interest and the implications of the Kurds' rights claims in general for the Kurdish political movement's future affects the AKP's position on the Kurdish question.

Second, the Kurds' language rights are collective by nature and have, by definition and implication, potentially far-reaching consequences that force the state to re-imagine itself as a multi-ethnic state, not least by challenging and questioning the legitimacy of hegemonic position of the Turkish language. Recognition of the Kurdish language has the potential to be tantamount to recognition of the Kurds' nationhood, hence opening up claims to self-government or even secession. For this reason, it is possible to observe a tendency in the state discourse to avoid explicitly recognising the Kurdish language yet accommodating it without according official status. Thus, the nature and implications of the Kurds' language

rights for Turkey's centralist Kemalist nation-state origins is another sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights.

Third, the state discourse of the period between 2003 and 2015 is synonymous with the AKP era; therefore, the AKP's style of policy-making and its self-interest, Erdoğan's own understanding of the Kurdish question shape the state discourse and, in certain ways, manifest themselves as a major source of resistance to the Kurds' language rights. Amid the allegations of corruption and malpractice, the party's attempts of further consolidation of power and its vision of a 'new' Turkish society along the values upheld by its leader cadres render the question of power as a matter of survival for the AKP. In this context, the AKP's self-interest becomes a more determining factor in the Kurdish question, which in returns limits the state's institutional and conceptual capacity in resolving the Kurdish question, as any further transformative step towards the Kurds' language rights appears to be conditioned on the party's self-interest and agenda on the road to its 'new Turkey' vision. These sources of resistance to the Kurds' language rights are important factors in the formation of the party's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question and consequent policies and practices in its efforts to contain the Kurdish question. In this sense, the AKP's policy stance on the Kurdish question can be summarised as follows:

First, the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question is characterised by a strong tendency that attempts to simplify the Kurdish question by disassociating 'Kurdishness' from the question in order to reduce the issue to the idea of Kurds' certain problems. The Kurdish question's simplification in this way is usually accompanied by the emphasis that there are other ethnic groups in Turkey other than the Kurds, who have the similar problems as the Kurds, which is an attempt to generalise the Kurdish question so that it loses its significant as a particular and crucial problem of Turkey and becomes an ordinary problem of the country that can be addressed within the framework of democra-

cy, human rights and economic development. Hence, the Kurds' rights claims are viewed within the confines of individual rights. The formulation of the Kurdish question in this ways leads the AKP to associate the Kurds' identity-based rights claims, language rights in particular, which are usually collective by nature, with the Kurdish political movement's political discourse and Kurdish nationalism, which is then seen detrimental to the unity of the nation.

Second, the AKP's theoretically more inclusive conceptions of national identity and citizenship that are not grounded on Turkishness or Turkish nationalism conceptions of the Kemalist regime and its acceptance of diversity in Turkey's ethnic composition do not appear to aim incorporating ethnic groups identity-related claims into the state's founding principles. Erdoğan adopts a carefully executed vagueness and unclarity about the possible normative implication of such conceptions for citizenship policies and the already established monolithic policies of the state. His presentation of the citizenship of Turkey as a supra-identity has yet to manifest itself as a multicultural and multi-ethnic concept for Turkey's centralist Kemalist nation-state origins. His definition of citizenship and national identity appears to recognise only the mere existence of diversity in the ethnic composition of the country, as the recognition is not accompanied by any transformative policy that would challenge or change the current hegemonic position of the Turkish language, which is the immediate example of the Kemalist regime's conception of citizenship on the basis of Turkishness. Erdoğan's remarks and statements on these issues, which imply a clear divergence from the established state discourse, remain rhetorical. Therefore, similar to the party's efforts of simplification and minimisation of the Kurdish question in order to contain its potentially far-reaching consequences, the party's seemingly more 'inclusive' conceptions of national identity and citizenship appears to aim at containing the Kurdish question, not least by attempting to create a new bond on the basis of religion of Islam and common history without re-imagining Turkey in a more plural way.

Third, the general premise of the AKP's 'new' Turkey discourse rests on the conviction that Turkey is a 'new' country thanks to the party's achievements over the years, in which Turkey's long-standing issues, including the Kurdish question no longer exist or are mostly resolved. In this context, the AKP's identification of the Kurds' rights claims within the confines of individual rights further leads to the perception that the Kurdish question is an expired concept in the 'new Turkey', as the AKP's steps towards the Kurdish language rights are seen 'enough' in terms of the Kurds' language-related rights claims with the most important and remaining issue being the PKK. The AKP's approach to the Kurds' language-related rights does not extend to recognising the non-instrumental character of language or rather the regime of language rights, as its conceptual articulation of the Kurdish question is limited to accommodate the private use of the Kurdish language and does not recognise the intrinsic value of language to the Kurds or their interest in language as a concern for linguistic security. Therefore, in terms of the Kurds' language rights, 'new' Turkey discourse signifies the limit of the AKP's policies towards the politics of recognition rather than a process or progress towards further recognition. However, this is not to suggest that Erdoğan's understanding of or the AKP's approach to the Kurdish question is cast in stone; rather, to emphasise that, in the AKP's Kurdish policy, there is a consistency in terms of how much recognition to be given to the Kurds' language-related rights. This policy stance is characterised by the accommodation of the Kurdish language in the private domain with little or no accommodation in the public domain; therefore, points to the regime of linguistic tolerance rather than the regime of language rights. Any further step towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights appears to be conditional on the on-going negotiation with the Kurdish political movement and the party's self-interest and agenda.

The AKP's tendency to formulate the Kurds' rights within the confines of individual rights and to subject the Kurds' language rights to the disarmament of the PKK, the Solution process and its self-interest suggest that, in the AKP's case, the process of political compromise

signifies not only the process through which language rights are usually negotiated and recognised between a dominant language group and a minority language group but also the nature of language rights. As part of its negotiation with the Kurdish political movement in the Solution process, the AKP, as a pragmatist and populist political party may take 'radical' steps towards the Kurds' language rights so long as such steps are in line with its self-interest on the road to the 'new' Turkey. Therefore, from the AKP's perspective, the Kurds' language rights are seen as rights of political compromise rather than fundamental human rights. This helps explain the reluctance in recognising the Kurds' language rights, as the increasing popularity and power of the Kurdish political movement and the Kurdish question's overall impact on daily life in Turkey appear to constitute the main reason behind the AKP's Kurdish policy stance, which supports the conviction that its recognition-oriented policy stance is mainly motivated towards the containment of the Kurdish question.

It needs to be stressed, at the risk of reiteration, that the Kurdish question is an embodiment of the case in which a minority language group seeks constitutional recognition for its language beyond its accommodation in the private domain. Language is a constitutive element of identity and has an intrinsic value to its speakers; therefore, in regard to the Kurds, language rights are concerned with the use of the Kurdish language in public services, participating in government and education facilities regardless of its speaker's proficiency in the Turkish language. All this to ensure an environment as a requisite of linguistic security in which speakers can live a full life in their language without any impediments or face unfair pressures from the dominant position of the Turkish language to abandon their mother tongue. The Kurds' language rights, therefore, are about the non-instrumental nature of language, which implies a different regime of rights than linguistic tolerance that puts the instrumental character of language as a tool of communication to the centre and aims to ensure that language does not constitute a liability for its speakers. In this sense,

the distinction between the instrumental and non-instrumental nature of language demonstrates the extent of the shift in the state discourse on the Kurds' language rights. The AKP's policies towards the Kurdish language fall into the category of linguistic tolerance, which shows that, in its current form, the extent of the shift in the state discourse on the Kurds' language rights is limited to the regime of linguistic tolerance and does not go so far as to recognise the Kurds' language rights to the extent of reimagining Turkey as a multilingual state. Therefore, the party's policy stance on the Kurds' language rights, taken together with its other policies and practices in the Kurdish question, is primarily concerned with the containment of the Kurds' language rights.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study set out to uncover the extent of the shift in the Turkish state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights and the sources of resistance to their recognition during 2003-2015. The research has attempted to provide an alternative perspective to the existing literature on the Turkish state discourse on the Kurdish question under the successive AKP governments by focusing on the Kurds' language rights and adopting relevant points in the political theories of language rights in order to seek the state's resistance to the Kurds' language rights in a wider context.

The existing literature sheds light on the limits of the AKP's Kurdish policy in general terms. However, this research brought the Kurds' language rights to the discussion in detail and further suggested that the nature of the Kurds' language rights and the prospect of the empowerment of the Kurdish political movements play a significant role in shaping the Turkish state discourse towards the Kurds' language rights. To put it bluntly, it argues that the shift in the state discourse towards the recognition of Kurds' language rights has not gone so far as to recognise the Kurds' language rights to the extent of reconceptualisation of Turkey in a plural way and the state discourse has been primarily concerned with the containment of the Kurds' language rights due to by and large potentially far-reaching consequences of language rights. An overview of the findings of the study in its attempt to understand the extent of the shift in the Turkish state discourse under the successive AKP governments towards the recognition of the Kurds' language rights and the sources of resistance to its recognition is as follows:

First, the Kurdish question is an ethno-political issue, which cannot be reduced to a mere legal matter. Since its inception, the main and crucial question in the Kurdish question has been about Kurdishness and its inclusion into or exclusion from both the Ottoman and

Republic elites' project of modernisation. Even without the explicit nationalist sentiments in its modern sense, the Kurds manifested strong resistance to the Ottoman modernisation/westernisation project due to the pressure of the policies on the social space wherein Kurdishness appeared. In this context, Kurdishness implied a much wider social space than language or ethnicity suggest. Despite the Kurdish question's contingent character, this aspect of the question is its most enduring character. Regardless of one's ideological position on the definition of the Kurdish question, to this day, the question how and to what extent Kurdishness can or should be incorporated into the state's founding perceptions continues to occupy a central position in the Kurdish question.

Second, the Kurds' resistance to the Ottoman Empire's modernisation/westernisation policies led the makers of the modern Turkey to view the Kurds' discontent with the policies of centralisation, nationalism and secularism as a rejection of the project of modernisation. This resulted in the association of the Kurdish question with the 'past' and with the Kurds' desire to preserve an 'archaic' way of life. The monolithic perception of the modern Turkey on the basis of Turkishness and Turkish nationalism attempted to eliminate any possible competing national identity perception. In its attempt to assimilate the Kurds into its perception of citizenship and national identity, the state attempted to eliminate the Kurdish language due to its potential for becoming a source of a competing nationalism. The Kurdish language was the most obvious differentiating factor between Turks and Kurds, who otherwise share strong commonalities.

Third, the Kurdish language is a constitutive factor in Kurdishness. The politicisation of the Kurds' rights claims and the Kurdish political movement's rights-based approach to the Kurdish question in the sense of setting the achievements of certain political and cultural rights as the objective of its mobilisation has rendered the Kurdish language as a symbolic and important tool for political mobilisation and claim of 'otherness'. Most rights claims in

the Kurdish question are related to the Kurdish language either by definition or by implication.

Fourth, the imposition of a common language is not a politically neutral or innocent process. Beyond the often-desired yet pragmatic consideration of creating a commonality and togetherness among the citizens of a country, such imposition is the declaration of sovereignty of a dominant language group on a particular territory. It signifies the dominant language group's claim for nationhood and 'ownership' of the country. Consequently, the state's monolithic policies aim to reinforce a particular conception of identity based on the dominant language group's language and ethnicity. In Turkey's case, the imposition of the Turkish language as the official language of the country without recognising or accommodating other languages in the public domain serves the purpose of Turkish nationalism. The competing Kurdish nationalism and on-going popularity of the Kurdish language despite the almost hundred years of coercive assimilation policies make Turkey's exclusionary language choice all the more problematic.

Fifth, the official paradigm until the '90s was based on Turkishness in the sense that diversity of any kind and sort of the country was denied. In relation to the Kurdish question, the denial of the Kurds' existence as a distinct ethnic group was the main characteristic of the state discourse until the '90s. The Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence and the increasing armed struggle with the PKK forced the state to restructure its relationships to the Kurds. The state discourse has shifted towards the politics of recognition since the early '90s and marked the beginning of the post-denial period of the state discourse. While the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish question began to witness recognition in the early '90s, the state concomitantly adopted the politics of recognition, assimilation and discrimination in its attempt to tackle the Kurdish question. From the

state perspective, the Kurdish question is, therefore, an issue that has to be contained and confined as much as it has to be recognised.

Sixth, the AKP emerged in the post-denial period of the Kurdish question. Therefore, the party's implicit and explicit Kurdish policy in its three terms in the office has carried the main characteristics of the period in a number of ways. First, the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence was an important reason behind the party's Kurdish opening in 2009. Second, there has been a tension between recognition, containment and denial of the Kurdish question in the party's Kurdish policy. Third, the party's policy stance on the Kurdish question has been, to a certain extent, informed by the nationalist discourse of the Kemalist regime.

Seventh, in addition to bearing similar characteristics of the post-denial period of the state discourse, the AKP's Kurdish policy has shown 'uniqueness' in the sense that a greater shift has been occurred towards the politics of recognition in the state discourse. There has been a certain degree of normalisation in the Kurds' rights and the party has taken a number of steps for the use and dissemination of the Kurdish language. This shift's extent, however, is limited and questionable due to the nature of the Kurds' language-related rights and the party's resistance to its recognition despite its progressive policies on the Kurdish question.

Eighth, the Kurds' language-related rights are an embodiment of the case where a minority language group seeks constitutional protection for its language beyond its accommodation in the private domain. Grounded on the idea that language has an intrinsic value to its speakers, this category of rights are concerned with the use of minority's language in public services, governance and education facilities, regardless of its speakers' proficiency in the dominant language. The group's demand for recognition of its language comes from its claim for 'nationhood'; therefore, language rights are part of the wider national conflict between the dominant language group and the minority language group that considers itself

a 'nation' within. Language rights take the constitutive character of language in the construction of one's both individual and collective identities as primary points of interest. Their justification mainly rests on the conviction that language is a marker of identity and an important tool for the continuity of culture.

Ninth, the immediate implication of this conviction is that language rights are not conditional on one's inability to express himself/herself in the dominant language. In this sense, language rights are different from linguistic human rights or the regime of linguistic tolerance that aim to accommodate a particular language so that language does not hinder the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms and one's language choice is not a ground for discrimination or liability. The intrinsic value argument for language and symbolic power of a minority's language in its struggle against the 'tyranny' of a dominant language group extend the minority group's language-related rights claims beyond the protection of the private use of language or its accommodation in circumstances where speakers are unable to express themselves. For the minority language group, recognition of its language is seen as a step towards recognition of its 'nationhood', which in return implies that the state is in fact a multicultural and multi-ethnic entity. While, language rights claims force the state to re-conceptualise itself as a multi-ethnic and multi linguistic state, the state tends to avoid explicitly recognising the minority language in order to prevent potentially far-reaching consequences of official recognition, such as self-government or remedial secession of the minority group. Thus, the state's attempts to recognise language rights in its own terms is part of its attempts to contain the minority group's nationalism and implications of language rights for the state's founding ideology and principles. The AKP's Kurdish policy has been no exception.

Tenth, while adopting a recognition-oriented policy stance on the Kurdish question, the AKP has been primarily concerned with the containment of the Kurdish question in gen-

eral and potentially far reaching consequences of the Kurds' language rights in particular. The tension between recognition and containment of language rights has been an important characteristic of the AKP's policy stance on the Kurds' language rights.

Eleventh, the AKP's corresponding discourse on the Kurdish question can be summarised in three particular points. First, the AKP's conceptual understanding of the Kurdish question has been characterised by a strong tendency to simplify the Kurdish question by disassociating Kurdishness from the discussion in order to reduce the issue to the idea of Kurds' certain problems. This has aimed both to contain the Kurdish political movement's influence in the Kurdish question and to minimise and generalise the Kurdish question to the extent that it loses significance as a particular and crucial problem of Turkey and becomes an ordinary problem of the country that can be addressed within discourses of democracy, human rights and socio-economic development without any transformative reconceptualisation of the state along ethnic or linguistic lines. The perception of the Kurdish political movement as the 'problem' in the formation of the Kurdish question and the party's conceptual understanding of the Kurds' rights claims within the confines of individual rights has led to the party associating the Kurds' identity-based rights claims with the Kurdish political movement's political agenda and Kurdish nationalism. Second, the AKP's most apparent divergence from the Kemalist regime's discourse on the Kurdish question has been its conceptions of national identity and citizenship. Its conceptions are not grounded Turkishness or Turkish nationalism and recognise ethnic diversity in Turkey's ethnic composition. However, this conceptualisation has not translated into actual policy implementation. There has appeared a carefully executed vagueness and unclarity about the possible normative implication of such conceptions for citizenship policies and the already established monolithic policies of the state. Erdoğan's rejection of Turkishness and Turkish nationalism has yet to manifest itself as a reconceptualisation of Turkey, not least by challenging or changing the current hegemonic position of the Turkish language, which is the

immediate example of the Kemalist regime's conception of citizenship on the basis of Turkishness. The party's seemingly more 'inclusive' conceptions of national identity and citizenship have aimed to contain the Kurdish question, not least by attempting to create a new bond on the basis of religion of Islam and common history without re-imagining Turkey in a more plural way. Recognition of ethnic diversity has remained 'rhetorical'. Third, the Kurdish question has been instrumentalised for the party's self-interest and become subjected to the party's agenda on the road to consolidation of power and to the making of the 'new Turkey'. The AKP has become more assertive in the aftermath of its third general elections victory in 2011. The following years have witnessed the emergence of the party's 'new' Turkey discourse, which rests on the conviction that Turkey is a 'new' country thanks to the party's achievements over the years, in which Turkey's long-standing issues, including the Kurdish question no longer exist. In this context, the AKP's identification of the Kurds' rights claims within the confines of individual rights has led to the perception that the Kurdish question is an expired concept in the 'new Turkey', as the AKP's steps towards the Kurdish language rights are seen 'enough' in terms of the Kurds' language-related rights claims with the most important and remaining issue being the PKK. The AKP's approach to the Kurds' language-related rights has not extended to recognising the non-instrumental character of language or rather the regime of language rights, as its conceptual articulation of the Kurdish question has been limited to accommodate the private use of the Kurdish language and has not recognised the intrinsic value of language to the Kurds or their interest in language as a concern for linguistic security. Therefore, in terms of the Kurds' language rights, the 'new' Turkey discourse signifies the limit of the AKP's policies towards the politics of recognition rather than a process or progress towards a greater recognition. This is not to suggest that Erdoğan's understanding or the AKP's Kurdish policy are set in stone; rather, to emphasise that, in the AKP's Kurdish policy, there has been a consistency in terms of how much recognition to be given to the Kurds' language-

related rights. In its twelve years of history, this policy stance has been characterised by the accommodation of the Kurdish language in the private domain with little or no accommodation in the public domain, which points to the regime of linguistic tolerance rather than the regime of language rights.

Twelfth, in addition to the continuing shadow cast by the Kemalist regime's nationalist discourse, there are three main reasons behind the successive AKP governments' resistance to the Kurds' language rights despite the party's recognition-oriented policy. First, perhaps paradoxically, while the Kurdish political movement's growing societal and political influence force a change in the state discourse towards the politics of recognition, it also imposes a restraining conceptual capacity on the state discourse in resolving the Kurdish question through greater recognition. The Kurdish political movement's self-interest in its negotiation with the state and legitimacy and more power that it could gain from its political engagement with the state has led the AKP's understanding of the Kurdish question to the point of denial of the existence of a Kurdish problem in Turkey, forcing it to define the issue in its own terms. The struggle for authority in the Kurdish question between the state and the Kurdish political movement has affected and, to a certain degree, shaped the party's position on the Kurdish question. Second, the nature and implications of the Kurds' language rights for Turkey's centralist Kemalist nation-state origins has been another source of resistance to the Kurds' language rights. The Kurds' language rights are collective by nature and have, by definition and implication, potentially far-reaching consequences that force the state to re-imagine itself as a multi-ethnic state, not least by challenging and questioning the legitimacy of hegemonic position of the Turkish language. Recognition of the Kurdish language has the potential to be tantamount to recognition of the Kurds' nationhood, hence opening up claims to self-government or even secession. This particular aspect is also related to the above-mentioned question over the Kurdish political movement's further empowerment in the sense that language rights have normative implications

in terms of self-government and devolution of power that can further empower the Kurdish political movement in the end. The AKP Kurdish policy has been concerned with avoiding explicitly recognising the Kurdish language yet accommodating it without granting official recognition in order to prevent potentially far reaching consequences of the Kurds language rights. Third, the state discourse of the period between 2003 and 2015 is synonymous with the AKP era; therefore, the AKP's policy-making style, its pragmatist and populist political identity and Erdoğan's personality and his own understanding of the Kurdish question have shaped the party's Kurdish policy. To a certain degree, these three particular points have manifested themselves as a major source of resistance to the Kurds' language rights. Amid the allegations of corruption and malpractice, the party's attempts of further consolidation of power and its vision of a 'new' Turkish society along the values upheld by its leader cadres have rendered the attainment of power as a matter of survival for the AKP. In this context, the AKP's self-interest has become a more determining factor in the Kurdish question, which in returns has limited the state's institutional and conceptual capacity in resolving the Kurdish question in general and recognising the Kurds' language rights in particular. The AKP has taken a step, if any, in the Solution process so long as the step in question has been in line with the party's agenda and timing. Any further transformative step towards the Kurds' language rights appears to be conditioned on the party's self-interest on the road to its 'new Turkey' vision and the power struggle between the state and the Kurdish political movement.

It should be reiterated that language rights are rights of political compromise in the sense that their recognition is usually based on contingent reasons and a constitutional bargain between the dominant language group and the minority language group. Therefore, the power struggle between the state and the Kurdish political movement as well as the ongoing negotiation between them constitute this process of political compromise. This process has not produced any concrete step and more importantly, its future is not certain.

While the AKP has moved the state discourse closer to the politics of recognition thanks to the certain degree of normalisation of the Kurds' rights and the political engagement with the Kurdish political movement, the Kurdish question has been subjected to the party's self-interest and existence. It is yet to be seen how a possible change in power dynamics in Turkish politics would affect the Kurdish question. The prospect of the pro-Kurdish HDP surpassing the election threshold, which would force the AKP to seek a coalition government, is an important example how power dynamics in Turkish politics might change once again. One thing is clear that the Kurds' language rights will continue to occupy a central position in the Kurdish question.

For Further Research

The state's engagement with the Kurdish political movement in order to resolve the Kurdish question though non-military means has led to the emergence of studies exploring the possible normative theoretical frameworks that would apply to the Kurdish question (Kuzu 2010, Köker 2010; Ozkirimli 2013a; 2013b; Keyman 2012). There are two particular theoretical frameworks that benefit from further research due to their relation to the Kurds' language rights.

First, Leslie Green and Denise Réaume's concept of linguistic security that justifies language rights on the ground that a minority language group has a legitimate interest that imposes a moral obligation on the state to create a free and fair environment in which speakers of the minority language can have the opportunity without serious impediments to live a full life in a community of people who share its language and to be able to define itself as a collectivity and fairly to participate in society. It aims to prevent speakers of the minority language from facing any imposition or unfair pressure of the dominant language to abandon their mother tongue. The linguistic security concept is procedural and does not

aim to secure the survival of the minority language. The applicability of this concept to the Kurdish question and relevant normative issues it will raise needs further discussion.

Second, non-territorial autonomy is another framework that needs exploring. It has been discussed that the prospect of the Kurdish political movement's empowerment has manifested itself as a major source of resistance to the Kurds' language rights. The state has associated language rights with the Kurdish political movement due to, among other reasons, the prospect of further empowerment of the Kurdish political movement and potentially far reaching consequences of language rights, such as self-government or secession. This dilemma between recognition and its possible implication for the state's political integrity is not unique to Turkey, as similar resistance is apparent in many cases. Non-territorial autonomy aims to overcome the tension between autonomy of minority groups and the prospect of dismemberment of the state by challenging the notion of "exclusive territorial sovereignty" yet ensuring "the effective participation of minorities in public life" in order to "find ways to provide national minorities with equal rights, governance, and political participation – without dismembering existing states" (Nimni 2012: 45-6). One particular reason that an exclusive territorial sovereignty cannot be a viable solution to the Kurdish question is the fact that the Kurds do not exclusively reside in the Kurdish regions; on the contrary, although there is no official number, it is estimated that half of the Kurdish population lives in the western cities of Turkey. Therefore, any possible scenario for autonomy or self-determination has to take this into account in order to escape from putting the whole 'burden' of reproduction of culture to the Kurds in the Kurdish regions or denying legitimate rights claims of those Kurds in the western cities on the ground that they happen to reside on the 'wrong' side of the country.

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