

THE KURDISH QUESTION AND TURKEY'S JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY

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After the defeat and consequent breakup of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, the European powers divided Turkey into several pieces. They also agreed, at the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, to establish an independent Kurdistan — a sort of homeland for the ethnic Kurds of the Middle East — in what now is south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq. Although this treaty was never put into force, it shaped the perceptions of the founding fathers of the Turkish Republic regarding the largest non-Turkic ethnic population in its territory. Given that the Kurds, despite their aspirations, have never been granted a homeland and that this issue has caused a great deal of violence in the ensuing years, the “Kurdish question” has occupied both the domestic and foreign policy of Turkey to varying degrees for over eight decades. Turkey has the largest Kurdish population in the world. The Kurds of Turkey have demands ranging from full

secession to federalism, and the recognition of individual rights as Turkish citizens within the framework of the process of Turkey’s entry into the European Union (EU).² Undoubtedly, the worst symptom of the Kurdish ethno-nationalism in contemporary history has been the terrorist activities led by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) against the Turkish state and moderate Kurds, and the Turkish armed forces’ equally violent backlash against Kurdish terrorists and innocent Kurdish civilians. Turkish soldiers have battled the PKK in the southeast since 1984, a conflict that has resulted in an estimated 37,000 fatalities.

In addition to this human suffering, the PKK-led rebellion has defined the meaning of politics, redefined the boundaries between state and society, and empowered certain state institutions at the expense of others. It has also retarded the democratization process of Turkey. Furthermore, the conflict has increased Turkey’s defense spending at the expense of education and

healthcare. In a way, both the domestic and foreign policies of Turkey have been hostages to the Kurdish problem for the past 25 years. Among other things, the conflict has transformed the demographic structure of the country with large-scale population movements: Millions of Kurds willingly, as well as by force, moved away from their homes in southern Turkey to major cities in western Anatolia. The state used almost all means to prevent “the communalization of the conflict” between Turks and Kurds and separated the PKK from the larger Kurdish issues.³ However, since the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, in 1999, the organization has shifted its strategies and, much to the chagrin of the Turkish military and the Kemalists, communalized the Kurdish problem by using new-found opportunity spaces brought about by the EU’s Copenhagen criteria. These criteria require full implementation of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities. On the basis of the Copenhagen criteria, the EU asked Ankara to reform its legal system and provide minority rights for the Kurds.

Today, Turkey is more polarized along ethnic lines than a decade ago, and the Kurdish problem has shifted from the military sphere to the social and political spheres. It is not the Turkish state that is confronting the Kurds any longer but Turks and Kurds confronting each other. There had been high expectation that the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government would address the Kurdish question and stop further social polarization between Turkey’s two main ethnic groups.⁴ However, after three years in power, on the eve of further negotiations for Turkey’s eventual entry into the EU, the JDP government

has failed to develop any coherent policy on this most critical issue. The JDP has used the Kurdish issue as a weapon against secularism in Turkey, identifying secularism as a cause of division between Turks and Kurds. The JDP has offered its own solution — “Islam as cement” — to end the societal polarization of Turkey. This paper will examine the reasons for its failure.

JDP INCAPACITY ON THE KURDISH QUESTION

The pro-Islamic JDP came to power with a commitment to address the Kurdish issue. The party’s main argument could be summarized in the following way: The Kurdish problem is not about nationalism but rather forced secularism and Turkish nationalism of the type enforced by Kemalist ideology. If we stress common Islamic ties and brotherhood, we can enhance the country (*memleket*) and also end the conflict. The thesis of this paper is that the JDP can neither develop nor implement a coherent policy to address the Kurdish problem for four reasons: (1) Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s definition of the Kurdish question is very different from that of the Kurdish actors, especially the PKK-led political parties;⁵ (2) there is a major conflict between the state institutions and the JDP over the conceptualization of the Kurdish issue and the foundations of the Turkish Republic; (3) one of the primary fears of the JDP is that the Kurdish issue could split the party and undermine its support in Turkish-Muslim provinces in central and eastern Anatolia; and (4) the Kurdish issue has the potential to lead to a major confrontation with the military. Yet the increasing PKK attacks on the military and other state institutions

force the JDP leadership to confront the problem. The party has not been able to prepare the legal changes needed to fight against the PKK, such as the Counterterrorism Law. The military has asked the government to establish a center and make the necessary legal changes to empower law enforcement to fight against all forms of terror. The JDP, in turn, has ignored these calls because its core Islamic constituency fears that the proposed Counterterrorism Law could be used against Islamic activism as well, especially when there are calls for an early election. The JDP leadership does not want to alienate its core Islamic supporters.⁶

Despite its own high expectations, the JDP has not only failed to develop a coherent policy towards the Kurdish question but has actually sharpened the conflict. Turkish society is more divided today along ethnic lines than it was five years ago despite liberalization within the framework of the Copenhagen criteria. In this paper, we will question the role of the Copenhagen criteria in addressing the Kurdish question without proper societal consensus. We will also question the role of religion in addressing ethnic tensions. We will first provide the historical context of the conflict and then the views of the JDP in the government. In the final section, we will examine the constraints, both internal (Kemalist ideology, Islamism, the intra-JDP power struggle) and external (United States and the EU) in the development of a coherent policy toward the Kurdish issue.

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ethno-nationalist mobilization, in general, is thought to be emboldened by the

expansion of “state capacity,” “the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.”⁷ In Turkey, the expansion of the state’s capacity has taken place as a result of, or concurrently with, modernization (nation-building and the secularization project). The expansion of state power has been accompanied by a series of reforms to modernize (read Westernize) Turkish society. The state in Turkey has sought to create a new identity and sense of loyalty in its subjects. Reform policies have thus aimed to favor Turkish nationalism since the reformist state elite have identified themselves with ethnic Turkish identity and allied themselves with Turkish nationalist groups.⁸ Turkey’s reformist project has included mandatory military service for young men, a uniform legal system that has undermined the country’s traditional power structure, primary education with state-sanctioned versions of history, the building of new communication infrastructure, and efforts to homogenize the national culture and identity.

Under the Ottoman system, some Kurdish tribes paid their taxes. They also sent troops to the army, while maintaining a degree of autonomy to govern their own domestic affairs.⁹ The centralized state sought to demolish these arrangements and build a new system to exert the power of the state and free ordinary Kurds from the pressure of the tribal chiefs. In multiethnic states, state- and nation-building have normally gone hand in hand, and these policies have tended to exclude those groups that resist the pressures of assimilation. This, in turn, deepens the grievances of ethnic groups, and the group eventually evolves to become ethno-political in nature.

When ethnic groups are organized to challenge the reform policies of the state, the central government uses a number of strategies: mass arrests, forced mass relocation, widespread torture and executions, even massacres. Anti-centralization and anti-modernization dissent by ethnic groups can gradually be transformed into ethno-nationalism.

Overall, Turkey's policy towards its Kurds has been informed by its perception of security needs.¹⁰ But one cannot understand the policy without understanding the place of the Kurds in the state ideology, known as

Kemalism.¹¹ The goal of Kemalism has been the creation of a homogeneous (Turkish), centralized nation-state and a secular society. These two goals were regularly chal-

lenged by Kurdish tribal networks and Islamic communities on the periphery. For instance, the Sunni (Shafii) Kurdish groups organized the first rebellion against the reforms of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in 1925.¹² This rebellion was crucial for the collective memory of the Turkish state and the "securitization" of Kurdish identity claims. The British played a direct role in the rebellion because of Turkish resistance to accepting the border between British-mandate Iraq and Turkey. As a result of post-World War I deliberate or accidentally inept British cartography, the historically Kurdish region had now been divided along the borders of four states: Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. As a result, the Kurds and

the Kurdish regions acquired the status of a "national security" problem for these states. The entire region became vulnerable to interference by regional and international powers and susceptible to Kurdish ethnic uprisings within individual states.

Although divisions among the Kurds and repressive Turkish state policies have helped to dampen the Kurdish resistance and have led to the arrest and at times elimination of its leadership, the Kurdish-dominated provinces have become hotbeds of spontaneous anti-reformist and anti-state

rebellions. These rebellions have shaped the collective memory of the Turkish state bureaucracy toward the Kurds in general and the Kurdish question in particular. Thus, these rebellions have aided in the

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formation of two fundamental precepts: political unity and secularism. Any attempt to challenge these two principles has led either to criminalization or forced exclusion from the body politic. This collective memory of the state elite is crucial in understanding current policies towards the Kurds.¹³

Turkey has always remained aloof from Iraqi domestic affairs, and the Kurdish issue has remained a source of fear in both its domestic and foreign policies. In the 1980s and '90s, Turkey's policy toward Iraq was guided by two principles: (1) border security against the PKK and the prevention of transregional Kurdish politicization, and (2) the protection

of the ethnic Turkoman minority of Iraq, currently estimated at between one and two million people. Although Turkey actively engaged in the proposal and implementation of the safe-haven policy for the Iraqi Kurds after the 1991 Gulf War, it remained adamant against Kurdish autonomy and statehood. By 2001, Turkey's policy towards Iraq consisted of four principles: (1) maintain Turkish military forces along Turkey's border with Northern Iraq, with occasional incursions into Iraqi territory against PKK activities, (2) prevent the emergence of a federated Kurdish region, (3) protect the rights of ethnic Turkomans, and (4) maintain close economic ties with the Iraqi Kurds. This policy has failed for a number of reasons, chief among them the U.S.-Turkey row over the occupation of Iraq.¹⁴

ISLAMIC AND SECULAR TRENDS

The Kurdish landscape in Turkey is divided along a number of economic, cultural and political faultlines.¹⁵ There are three competing, sometimes overlapping, secular and Islamic trends in the makeup of Kurdish ethno-nationalism. The first and most effective is the secessionist PKK and its political outlets (the Democracy Party, DEP; the People's Democracy Party, HADEP; the Democratic People's Party, DEHAP; and the Democratic Society Party, DTP).¹⁶ The Kurdish ethnic representation has always been under the control of the PKK leadership. The defining characteristics of the PKK-led movement is that it is secular, anti-traditional and usually supported by newly urbanized and university-educated Kurds who do not have deep tribal ties. When the Turkish state armed some loyalist tribes against the PKK, it backfired; due to tribal

competition, some tribes reluctantly became supporters of the PKK. This secular trend is blurred by regional, sectarian and class identities, engaging a dual rebellion — against both the traditional structure of Kurdish society and the Kemalist state system. The PKK started with the goal of full independence in a democratic republic and, at the very least, major constitutional changes. Short of outright secession, the goal of the PKK has been to create a binational (Turkish-Kurdish) state. Strategies have shifted from military confrontation — which met with only limited success — to demanding constitutional changes to the foundations of the Turkish Republic. This strategy is an attempt to use new political-opportunity spaces opened as a result of democratization to “separate” Kurdish civil society and enhance Kurdish identity at the societal level.

The second group of Kurds — known as “occasional Kurds” — are very much assimilated within Turkey and prefer to be active among center-right and center-left parties. These ethnic Kurds function within legitimate opportunity spaces and use tribal ties and state resources to get elected to the parliament and to maintain their support base. They have no major problems with the state; their main goal is to define and refine their status in the national society. Active in business and the bureaucracy, these Kurds usually live in major cities in western Turkey and maintain ties with their Kurdish villages in the east.

The third group of ethnic Kurds can be described as Muslim-Kurds, those who stress Islamic values and normally identify with religion rather than ethnicity but also feel Kurdish when confronted with the choice of Turkish identity. An Islamic trend in Kurdish nationalism refuses the founding

principles of secularism and nationalism of the Turkish republic.¹⁷ They always prefer to work within Islamic networks. Islamic Kurdish nationalism has evolved out of two branches of Turkish/Kurdish Islamic Sufism: Naqshbandi and Nurcu (follower of Said Nursi) networks. The supporters of this trend of Kurdish ethno-nationalism work with Turkish Islamic groups against secularism and (hyper-Turkish) nationalism.¹⁸ Within this sector there are two major subgroups: those who belong to traditional Naqshbandi and Nurcu movements and supporters of the Democrat Party (DP), the Justice Party (AP), the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the JDP versus those who are influenced by the radical Islamism of Iran and demand an Islamic-Kurdish state. The most prominent Kurdish Islamic formation has been the Kurdish Hizbullah (KH), a radical Kurdish Islamist organization that took responsibility for the killing in 2000 of many prominent moderate Kurds such as Izzettin Yildirim, the leader of the Kurdish Nurcu movement, along with a group of Kurdish businessmen.¹⁹ The KH was formed by Hüseyin Velioğlu, an admirer of the 1979 revolution of Iran. Many KH members are known to have received military training in Iran. The group is thought to have been given regular funding from the government of Iran to support, among other things, its Islamist ideology through its network of bookstores in southern Turkey. While the PKK has deliberately targeted tribal and religious structures due to its Marxist-Leninist ideology, the KH has worked closely with religious networks and tribal structures. The KH has thus identified the PKK as its rival and entered into a bloody conflict with it to control the Kurdish population and dominate the political

agenda. The KH's careful avoidance of confrontation with the Turkish state and its focus on its rival PKK were at first welcomed by the Turkish police as a way of containing PKK activities. The KH is thought to have been used by the Turkish police against the PKK militants.²⁰ Later, there were complaints by some prominent Kurdish families regarding the whereabouts of their family members, whom they suspected of having been kidnapped by KH militias. In January 2000, the Turkish police confronted the KH and managed to capture or kill its core leaders, including Cemal Aydın and Edip Gümuş, in a shootout in Istanbul. The police subsequently found a large number of files and documents owned by the KH, including photographs of the corpses of 65 mutilated bodies. Among the thousands of KH supporters and sympathizers, some are thought to have joined al-Qaeda and other anti-American insurgents in Iraq to fight against the U.S.-led occupation forces. However, some moderate KH members have also regrouped under the leadership of İsa Atasoy and focused on ideological warfare: publishing propaganda and various educational activities. One KH-linked publishing house in Turkey is known to have printed several important Islamist books in recent years.²¹ Some ex-KH members and traditional Islamic Kurdish groups are also known to have joined the JDP with the hope of undermining the founding principles of the Turkish republic. For these Islamic Kurdish groups, the JDP is the only available tactical solution to end the oppression of the Kurds.

CONFLICTING JDP POLICIES

Without a clearly articulated policy, the JDP has two strategies towards the

Kurdish problem: one, to postpone the issue until future elections to avoid criticism from the Turkish nationalist grass-roots groups and thus avoid a conflict with the military (and the threat of a coup); and, two, to transfer the problem to the EU. So far the JDP has been successful in both strategies, with increasing social cost. More than the parliamentarians of the JDP, it is the United States and the EU that shape the JDP's policy towards the Kurds. The EU has been calling for Turkey to restructure the republic in order to open political space for

the Kurds and other minorities' voices, to reduce the 10 percent threshold that would open ethnic Kurdish representation in parliament, and declare general amnesty for PKK guerrillas and members.²²

The issue has been the redefinition of sovereignty and its division among the municipalities. Although the JDP agreed to restructure the republic and empower the local municipalities, since it hopes to benefit from these constitutional changes more than the Kurds, it is adamant against changing the 10 percent threshold. The issue of a general amnesty for PKK members is also very unpopular among the JDP's grass-roots supporters. After the 2002 election, the JDP came to power with a landslide victory. Although the party received over 34 percent of the vote, it wound up with nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of the parliamentary seats — a result of the 10 percent threshold required

for national representation in the parliament. Small parties' seats went to the winner.

Despite its parliamentary dominance, the JDP has never developed a coherent domestic or foreign policy. It remains a party of social services rather than addressing some of the key national issues or seeking to create a new framework of social consensus. Dealing with contentious issues reveals the divided nature of the party. There are a number of issues that the party faces in 2006: the erosion of the

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JDP's governance and the organizational problems of the local branches of the party; the sluggishness of the economic recovery and the plight of ordinary people, including the growing gap between rich and poor; the failure of the party to meet

the Islamic demands of its core constituency (such as the headscarf issue, "preacher" schools and Quranic courses); the increasing corruption charges against ministers and JDP mayors; the increasing polarization of the Turkish society along ethnic lines; and the increase in the PKK terrorist attacks on state and civilian targets.

The JDP's policies have been formed in response to both external pressures (from the United States and the EU) and domestic pressures, especially from the PKK. The JDP has developed a number of positions on the Kurdish question. Before it came to power, it stressed its "opposition"

to state ideology and the military in the Kurdish-populated regions and during the elections. The common JDP theme was, we also suffered from this Kemalist ideological state and its military as much as you Kurds did; when we come to power, our first priority is to redefine the state and deconstruct its Kemalist ideology. As a result of its skill in positioning itself in the ideological marketplace, portraying itself as the party of opposition to the “system” and being “sensitive to the Kurdish problem,” the JDP received a sizable vote in the ethnic Kurdish regions. Most of the JDP’s votes came from Islamically influenced Kurdish villages, towns and cities. Those Kurds whose views were shaped by the Naqshbandi and Nurcu religious networks supported the JDP because it was against the “system.”

The major divide in the 2002 election was between Kurdish and Islamic identities. Ethnicity and religion have not been mutually inclusive. Some Kurds, for example, prefer to stress only their ethnic Kurdish identity through DEHAP, whereas others maintain their Kurdishness within the pro-Islamic JDP. Since DEHAP failed to send any representative to the parliament due to the 10 percent hurdle, Kurdish representation today takes place within the JDP. This makes the policies of the party very important. When the JDP came to power, its main strategy was to demilitarize the state and society. It measured its democratization success in terms of rolling back the military presence in politics. The PKK, along with other Kurdish organizations, used the liberalization process to expand its power and influence within Kurdish society. In other words, democratization within the framework of the Copenhagen criteria did not help to improve

the relations between the Turks and Kurds; it further polarized and radicalized their relations. This was an outcome of the PKK networks’ more assertive policy of criticizing the Turkish state. This, in turn, angered a large segment of Turkish society and has led to the rise of Turkish nationalism.

The Iraq War and the refusal of the Turkish government to join U.S. troops created a new opportunity space for the PKK and the Iraqi Kurds. The worsening of Turkish-American relations has helped the PKK enhance its bases in Iraq, attack targets inside Turkey, and network with radical Kurdish cohorts in Iraq and Iran. Turkey has not been able to attack PKK camps in Iraq due to objections by the United States and the new Iraqi government. Furthermore, the Pentagon, along with some other entities, has begun to use the Kurdish card against Turkey to force Ankara to follow U.S. policy towards Iran, Syria and the Iraqi Kurds. The rejection of the March 2002 motion empowered the PKK, and the United States became dependent on the Iraqi Kurds at the expense of Turkey. The United States has not hesitated to let Iraqi Kurds have access to the armaments of Iraq and has even provided some new arms to the Iraqi Kurdish tribal militia network — the *peshmerga*. Some of these weapons are known to have ended up in PKK hands. While the PKK was consolidating its position within Turkey and Iraq, Ankara passed an amnesty law to integrate some PKK militants into Turkish society. This law, according to some security experts, freed an unknown number of suspected PKK militants from Turkish jails, some of whom are thought to have subsequently joined the PKK’s roving bases in northern Iraq.²³

Until 2005, the JDP government's policy was to "forget" the Kurdish problem or assume that there was no such problem to begin with. For the JDP leadership, the PKK was an issue exaggerated by the military. Some privately claimed that the military wanted the conflict to continue in order to "maintain their spending and role in Turkish politics." Since the JDP leadership's conceptualization of nationhood was shaped by the Islamic national-outlook philosophy of Erbakan, they argued that the Kurdish problem is created by Kemalist principles of nationalism and secularism. The anti-military attitude of the JDP leadership was due to the February 28 process, which resulted in the criminalization of all Islamic movements. This helped the PKK to distance the government from the suggestions of the military.²⁴ In short, for some pro-JDP journalists, the Kurdish issue was partially created by the military; the best policy was to ignore it and stress Muslim brotherhood instead. This policy of "ignorance" came to an end as a result of resurgent PKK attacks in May 2005. The leadership of the PKK is thought to have met in northern Iraq and decided to spread the attacks to soft targets in different sectors of the population so as to create a wedge between ethnic Turks and Kurds.²⁵ It appears that, through "demonstration effects," the PKK militants have learned new tactics from the Iraqi resistance: attacking military targets, mining the roads and even suicide bombing. Moreover, the PKK is known to have had access to Iraqi military armaments. Also, in May 2005, the Turkish security forces suffered major losses in different parts of southern Anatolia at the hands of the PKK, which had attacked some tourist resorts and

businesses in major urban centers.²⁶

The new, integrated policy of Kurdish assertiveness has created a major backlash within Turkish society and among state institutions. Hilmi Özkök, the chief of the general staff, for example, has openly called on the state to make necessary legal changes to break down the infrastructure of PKK activism inside Turkey.²⁷ Although Erdoğan had initially favored the calls of Özkök, he later changed his views due to the "explanations" of his advisers and the grass-roots Islamic core of the party that the anti-terror law could be used against all Islamic groups. Thus, Islamic and Kurdish groups pursued a major campaign against the passing of an anti-terror law.

When he realized that he could not respond to Özkök's calls for new legal changes, Erdoğan pursued a two-tier policy, asking the United States to stop PKK activities in northern Iraq and using pro-Kurdish language to disarm Öcalan's influence on Kurdish parties within Kurdish society. U.S. support for Kurdish self-determination and the presence of the PKK camps in Iraq have undermined the U.S. image in Turkey. Aside from the general anti-war attitude of the Turkish public and images of Iraqi civilian deaths — many caused by the U.S. military — and the large-scale mayhem in Iraq caused by the U.S.-led invasion, another major source of anti-Americanism is the U.S. support for Kurdish self-determination, which many Turks fear may encourage spillover effects into Turkey. Many Turks even believe that the United States is using the PKK against Turkey to keep the country out of the restructuring of Iraq, a way of punishing Turkey for its refusal to cooperate in the Iraqi invasion. Indeed, the United States has ignored Ankara's call to

end PKK activities in northern Iraq and ignored Turkoman rights in oil-rich Kirkuk. Some observers argue that the United States needs to keep Turkey busy with the PKK until December 2007, when the final status of Kirkuk is determined. In fact, it appears that part of U.S. policy is based on a strategy of keeping Turkish troops out of Iraq. This policy is even enshrined by the U.S. Senate in the type of conditional aid given to Turkey. Furthermore, rather than support Turkey's fight against PKK terror, Washington has been asking Ankara to find nonmilitary means to address the Kurdish issue. Knowing its domestic legitimacy problems and the tensions within the Kemalist republican institutions, especially the military, the JDP has not confronted the United States. However, the discourse in local branches of the JDP is dominated by anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli rhetoric.

“TURKISHNESS” AS AN IDENTITY

Due to renewed PKK terrorism in 2005, Prime Minister Erdoğan decided to offer new ideas on the Kurdish question. However, while attempting to express his thoughts on the subject, he has further distanced himself and his party from both the state institutions and the PKK-led Kurdish actors. Erdoğan's understanding of “Turkishness” at one point is different from the constitutional definition of nationhood. He has treated Turkish ethnic identity just as the PKK has: Turkishness is

an ethnic identity and not a political construct used to bring diverse Muslim ethnic groups of the republic together under a Turkish nation-state identity. Previously, Turkishness had been more of a state identity than an ethnic one. But Erdoğan has also declared that there is room for ethnic (Kurdish and Turkish) identities within the concept of citizenship. He has hesitated to name this citizenship Turkish. This is a bold declaration, since historically Turkishness has been the only acceptable identity. (Indeed, as late as the 1980s, the very existence of Kurds was denied by some elements within the Turkish state,

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with Kurds being referred to as “mountain Turks.”) In a speech in Ankara in August 2005, Erdoğan stressed the existence of the Kurdish question and offered citizenship rather than “Turkish

identity” as a supra-identity for both the Kurds and Turks.²⁸ When he was in Diyarbakir, the largest Kurdish city in Turkey, a few days later, he stressed the unitary nature of the Turkish state and single nationhood.²⁹

This gap between the two speeches indicates his lack of understanding of the problem. It also reflects his Islamic roots in the National Outlook Movement of Erbakan. Erdoğan's differentiation of primary and sub-national identities has further aggravated the suspicion toward him. His conceptualization of the Kurdish problem in terms of “Muslim solidarity and brotherhood” has also not appeased

nationalist and secularist Kurds — led by the PKK, such as the DTP — both of which have rejected the Islamization of the identity debate. Moreover, within the JDP parliamentary group, there are also conflicting views. Erdoğan has started to favor primary vs. sub-identities, and the decentralization of the bureaucracy. Noble as they might be, Erdoğan's raw ideas appear to have created more problems than solutions. He has been sharply criticized by state institutions, including almost all opposition parties.

The National Security Council (NSC) is disturbed by the recent debate over “primary” vs. “sub-identities.”³⁰ Erdoğan has been reluctant to use Turkish nationhood and identifies “citizenship” as the primary identity rather than as an ethnic or cultural identifier; he also stresses Islam as a unifying identity of the people of Turkey. The National Security Policy Document (MGSB) of Turkey defines Kurdish, Bosniak, Albanian and Chechen identities as sub-ethnic identities under the state-centric Turkish identity. The military believes that the debate over primary versus sub-identity will erode national (Turkish) identity. This stress on sub-identity would, in turn, “endanger the unitary structure of Turkey and harm its unity and integrity.” First Army Commander Gen. Ilker Basbuğ, while he was deputy chief of the general staff, is known to have said on the topic that “those who live on Turkish territory and are bound to each other through ties of common aims are defined as the Turkish nation in a unitary state structure.”³¹ At the War Academy Command School in Istanbul in May 2003, Land Forces Commander Gen. Yasar Büyükanit argued, “Both advocating a single culture in the name of world

citizenship and universal culture, and trying to erode national identity through micro-nationalist movements which are supported by the separation of primary and sub-identities, are feeding the crisis of confidence in the international arena. We can foresee today that the political side of globalization can bring more harm than good through eroding the concepts of nation-state and sovereignty.”³² Although the military wants to stress territory, nationhood and the state as an organic and integrated unit, the JDP disagrees with this and seeks to provide a more multicultural understanding of nationhood. It is clear that there is no shared language between the military and the government to discuss the Kurdish question.

The last NSC meeting of 2005 focused on the new debate that Erdoğan has initiated over primary and sub-identities. Erdoğan has been trying to stress the Islamic and citizenship aspects in order to redefine nationhood and undermine its Turkish aspect. He has constantly shifted his position on the issue, however, apparently influenced by his close advisers. The NSC made the following statement: “The Turkish people are defined as a nation in a unitary state structure. Opening up the unitary state structure to debate is unacceptable.” According to Turkish daily newspapers, the report that was submitted to the NSC concluded that “[t]he debates on primary and sub-identities would erode the national identity, and micro-nationalism would endanger Turkey's unitary structure, harming its integrity and unity.” The report, like the NSPD, defined the Turkish nation as “Turkish people who live on Turkish territory and [are] bound to each other through ties of common aims in the unitary state structure.” At the same time, a

unitary state was defined as

a state which has a single centralized authority, with a single state, country, nation and sovereignty and is centralized through legislative, executive and judicial powers.

Therefore our Constitution cannot be changed on this, and bringing the unitary structure of the state up for debate, which is stipulated in unalterable Article 3 of the Constitution, is unacceptable.³³

The recent New Year statement of the president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, focused on the debate initiated by Erdoğan over primary versus sub-identities.³⁴ What is clear is that Erdoğan is not clear about what he wants. He claims to be capable of solving the Kurdish problem, but he also rejects any legal changes that would work in the direction of a solution, such as allowing ethnic Kurdish representation in the parliament by reducing the 10 percent threshold law—elaborated below.

THE 10 PERCENT THRESHOLD

One of the major debates of 2005 related to the Kurdish question has to do with the 10 percent threshold law for Parliament. This law requires parties to receive 10 percent of the vote before they can send representatives to Parliament. It has, in essence, deprived over 45 percent of the electorate of parliamentary representation³⁵ and is, thus, a barrier to further democratization in Turkey. The situation is especially significant for ethnic Kurds since the main Kurdish party legally functioning in Turkey (DEHAP, now DTP) has been unable to achieve representation in Parliament. Many observers, including the EU, are critical of this high threshold. They

consider it to be undermining the quality of an otherwise pluralistic political system and preventing broader political participation.

The JDP, along with the Republican People's Party, is against lowering the threshold, arguing that doing so would undermine the political stability of coalition governments. By opposing any changes in the threshold law, however, the JDP appears to be seeking to prevent the center right, and thus additional ethnic Kurds, from being represented in the parliament. If the threshold were 5 percent, the pro-Kurdish DEHAP party would likely win 54 seats, since DEHAP won the majority of the votes in Kurdish-populated provinces.³⁶ Due to the 10 percent threshold, DEHAP did not get a single seat in the Kurdish-populated provinces; the majority went to the JDP candidates. It is true that those who were elected from the JDP representing the Kurdish regions were all Kurds and, thus, there is ethnic Kurdish representation in Parliament, but such representation is now led by JDP politics. It has, in essence, muffled the major voice of the Kurdish electorate.

Due to the court cases, DEHAP was closed, and its members formed the new Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP).³⁷ Like the previous Kurdish parties, the DTP remains an ethnic party and has failed to become a political force. However, the DTP is very popular among politically conscious Kurds who stress separate identity and demand the redefinition of nationhood along with constitutional changes. Because of the popularity of the DTP, the JDP has refused to lower the election threshold law to 5 percent. The establishment in Turkey has thus denied parliamentary representation to ethnic Kurds in support of the DTP. In municipal

elections, almost all Kurdish-majority cities have Kurdish mayors from the ex-DEHAP party, most of whom have joined the DTP.

KURDISH BROADCASTING

Aside from the 10 percent barrier, the government has taken a number of positive steps to liberalize the Kurdish TV and radio stations. Due to the pressures of the EU membership process, Turkey had already changed its laws and allowed limited broadcasts in Kurdish and other minority languages, and state TV has been airing programs in two Kurdish dialects for half an hour each week. However, private TV and radio stations

were not allowed to broadcast in Kurdish as late as December 2005. The Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RTUK) decided to allow those “stations that have completed their

applications” to be able to begin broadcasting in Kurdish by the end of January 2006. Although this decision allows only 45 minutes a day of Kurdish broadcasting, it is still a major step for Turkey. Until 1991, speaking one’s non-Turkish mother tongue in public could have resulted in fines or prison sentences.

The pro-PKK Roj (“Sun”) satellite television station that broadcasts from Denmark has been a source of problems for the Turkish government. Ankara has been calling on the Danish authorities to close it down. In late 2005, Erdoğan even refused to attend a news conference in Copenhagen because a Roj TV reporter

was present. While the JDP government is trying unsuccessfully to force a closure of Roj, a total of 56 Kurdish mayors of the DTP from southern Anatolia appealed to the Danish government not to do so, stating, “For a truly democratic life to flourish in Turkey, Roj TV should not be silenced.” The Kurdish mayors argued in a petition to the Danish prime minister in December 2005 that, rather than “banning Roj TV, Turkey should embrace it and give it a legal identity.”

As part of EU-oriented reforms, Turkey began permitting Kurdish broadcasting and the teaching of Kurdish at

private language institutions in 2002.

After the decision was made, dozens of private language schools were opened, only to eventually close due to lack of interest and financial problems.

The current demand of the Kurdish parties is bilingual public education.

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THE U.S. AND THE IRAQI KURDS³⁸

The Kurdish question today is international. The United States and the EU are calling on Ankara to declare a general amnesty for PKK militants; to provide full recognition to Kurdish identity, along with public education; to reduce the 10 percent threshold; and to decentralize political power. In its war against the PKK, Turkey has worked closely with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani,

both based in Iraq. However, to obtain the support of the KDP, Turkey had to become involved in the intra-Kurdish politics of Iraq and sent over 2,000 soldiers as peacekeepers in 1993 to stop the conflict between the warring Kurdish sides. Turkey also paid regular salaries (\$65 per month) and supported 15,000 peshmerga fighters against the PKK. Thus, for security reasons, Turkey's internal Kurdish question forced it to become involved in the Iraqi Kurdish question.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the KDP developed close ties with the PKK. The JDP government, in turn, is courting the KDP leader, Iraq's current president, Jalal Talabani. The government has used both channels within the JDP and the Naqshbandi religious circles to get Barzani to control the PKK. Barzani has openly called on Turkey to declare a general amnesty for all PKK militants. Knowing the past betrayals of the KDP, however, the PKK has been seeking to move some of their bases inside Turkey and is also searching for new ties with Talabani and the PUK.

CONCLUSION

In spite of high expectations, the JDP government has failed to offer a framework for the solution for the Kurdish question. There are a number of reasons for this lack of political commitment to the problem. Neither the party nor the government has sought expert opinion, preferring to avoid open debate on the issue. Thus, the JDP has developed no integrated road map, causing insecurity among ethnic Turks and Kurds alike. By not addressing the problem, it has failed to win the confidence of both the Kurds and the state institutions. By attempting simultaneously

to appease the Kurdish voters and suppress Kurdish freedom, Erdoğan has not helped the JDP, but rather undermined his credibility among Kurds and Turks alike. Erdoğan also faces a dilemma: Even if the JDP, a party that can claim only 4-5 percent of the Kurdish vote, were to focus on the Kurdish problem, it would not be able to increase its support among the Kurds since they prefer the ethnic Kurdish parties. Nor would this attempt necessarily enhance the party's image among its ethnic Turkish base, who are generally against additional Kurdish rights. Moreover, the recent erosion in the credibility of the government has further complicated the debate. Erdoğan and his inexperienced advisers are less likely to devise a creative solution to the problem. The public has already been debating the lack of commitment by Erdoğan to Turkish identity. Some even think that he has become a hostage to pro-Barzani forces within the JDP. The government's lack of a policy, at a time when there are substantial numbers of PKK militants inside Turkey, will likely lead to increased attacks. This, in turn, will lead both the public and the military to force the JDP government to prepare the necessary legal framework to fight against PKK terrorism.

The JDP government is also unlikely to propose a comprehensive plan to address the Kurdish question in the future due to the conflict with state institutions and Kurdish political actors over the very definition of the problem. Moreover, the grass-roots base of the JDP is heavily dominated by Turkish Sunnis, Erdoğan's real power base, and there is no electoral incentive for the JDP to enter into this controversial domain. With elections on the horizon in 2007, there is less enthusiasm on

the part of Erdoğan to alienate his base. Finally, some argue that only external actors could have leverage in inducing the JDP to grant the Kurds more cultural and political rights. This external force could either be the EU or the United States. However, Turks today are less enthusiastic about EU membership due to the anti-Turkish sentiment in major European countries. The JDP government also feels betrayed by the EU over the Cyprus issue and is less likely to go along with EU pressure. As far as the United States is concerned, there is a high rate of anti-Americanism among the public. Many Turks believe that the United States is supporting the formation of an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq with future irredentist aspirations in Turkish territory, and thus are using the PKK against Ankara. No government in today's Turkey would risk its popularity by going along with pro-American policy suggestions.

One should expect further societal polarization in Turkey along ethnic lines, as

well as small-scale communal conflicts. This polarization will further radicalize Turkish nationalism against the Kurds — and against the United States and the EU, the perceived supporters of enhanced Kurdish rights. The EU process has so far failed to create a shared language for mutual dialogue on contentious issues. The JDP had hoped to solve the Kurdish issue within the framework of EU membership, but now realizes that it is headed down a long road with numerous special conditions delaying or even preventing its membership. Kurdish actors, in turn, have regarded the EU process as the beginning of a restructuring of the foundations of the Turkish Republic, demanding enhanced Kurdish cultural and political rights and federalism, if not outright secession. The U.S. occupation of Iraq has abetted such desires by opening the Pandora's box of trans-Kurdish secessionist nationalism in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. These ingredients could lead to a series of long-term conflicts throughout the region.

¹ The authors would like to thank Jason Alexander, Fahrettin Altun, Yasin Aktay, Edip A. Bekaroğlu, Payam Foroughi and Emrullah Uslu for their comments on different parts of this paper.

² The ethnic division of Turkey's population is Turks 86% (60.4 million), Kurds 8.5% (5.9 million), Zazas 0.5% (371,000), Cerkez 2.1% (1.5 million), Arabs 1.6% (1.1 million), others 1% (700,000). Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2002).

³ Seyit Hasim Hasimi, "Kürt Meselesinde Ak Parti Sinavi," *Yeni Safak*, August 1, 2005. This frank essay openly discusses the communalization of the conflict between Turks and Kurds and examines its potential consequences.

⁴ The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; AK Parti*) was formed in August 2001 after the closure of the Virtue Party by Turkey's Constitutional Court due to its religious activities. The younger generation of ex-Islamists with the desire to become more liberal formed the JDP under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. For the best official presentation of the JDP, see Yalçın Akdoğan, *AK Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi* (Istanbul: Alfa, 2004); Fahrettin Altun, "AK Parti'nin Topuğu," *Anlayış*, Ocak 2006, No: 32, pp. 27-28; Necdet Subasi, *Ara Dönem Din Politiklari* (Istanbul: Kure, 2005), pp. 155-172.

⁵ The PKK particularly does not want the JDP to develop a comprehensive policy since the PKK's main and only rival in the region appears to be the JDP. Especially after the local election in 2004, the pro-Kurdish DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) lost six of its stronghold cities to JDP. In recent months, Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, is more critical of the JDP government than the military. He fears the Islamization of the Kurdish identity at the expense of separatist secular Kurdism in Turkey.

⁶ Indeed, during the February 28, 1996, coup, the military and some secular fundamentalists have used the Counter-Terror Law against more pious Muslims and their normal religious activities.

⁷ Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in John A. Hall, ed., *States in History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 113.

⁸ For further reading, see Eric Zucher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997).

⁹ For further analyses, see M. Hakan Yavuz, "A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: The Politics of Kurdish Identity," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18:1 (1998), pp. 9-18; Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1977); and Kerem Öktem, "Incorporating the Time and Space of the Ethnic 'Other': Nationalism and Space in Southeast Turkey in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Nations and Nationalism* 10:4 (2004), pp. 559-78.

¹⁰ For more on Turkey's Kurds, see M. Hakan Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 1-24. Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004); Michael Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Robert Olson, ed., *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1996); and Nihat Ali Özcan, *PKK Kürtistan İsci Partisi, tarihi, ideolojisi ve yöntemi* (Ankara: Asam, 1999); Dennis Natalio, *The Kurds and the State* (Syracuse University Press, 2005).

¹¹ Doğan Akyaz, "Ordu ve Resmi Atatürkçülük", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Tarihi: Kemalizim*, Vol II (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), pp. 180-191.

¹² Robert Olson, *The Sheikh Said Rebellion and the Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism: 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). When there was a rebellion led by Alevi Kurds in 1938, Sunni Kurds refused to support it.

¹³ M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism," in *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (McGill: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), pp. 156-85.

¹⁴ The National Security Policy Document (NSPD) was changed in 2005. The last one was prepared in 2001 and this document articulated Turkey's policy towards Northern Iraq. The item says the following: "This is in line with the decision of the National Security Council of July 29, 2001 and endorsed by the Cabinet on July 10, 2001 (decision Number: 2717)." The NSPD is changed in 2005 with new modifications on the Kurdish issue.

¹⁵ M. Hakan Yavuz and Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Nation," *Current History*, (January 2001), pp. 33-39.

¹⁶ See interview with Resit Deli, deputy leader of Onlu-Kurdish HAK-PAR (the Rights and Freedoms Party) in *The New Anatolia*, January 1, 2006. Deli argues that: "Most Kurds are fed up with Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK, but they cannot say so openly because they are intimidated." In this interview, Deli calls for a federal solution and criticizes DTP as the front of the PKK.

¹⁷ Islamic-Kurdism, see n.author, ed. *Kürt Soruşturması* (Ankara: Sor, 1992); Mazlum-der, ed., *Kurd Sorunu Forumu* (Ankara: Sor, 1993). These books reveal the Islamic position on the Kurdish question and, the Kurdish Islamic attitude on the founding principles of the Turkish republic. One of Erdoğan's current associates, M. İhsan Arslan, has said: "It is not a miracle to argue that the final confrontation between Islam and democracy [he defines democracy as a form of *küfür* (idolatry)] will take place in the Middle East (*Kürt Soruşturması*, p. 261). Arslan also argues that "this regime in Turkey made its population ignorant (*cahilleştirme*), banned its religion, and even tried to reform and undermine Islam and forced all of these on the people of Kurdistan as well. ... The employees of [Turkey's] Directorate of the Religious Affairs are also involved in the project of undermining Islam." (p. 259). This statement by Arslan demonstrates his dislike of the Turkish republican principles and even his negative attitude toward democracy, secularism and Turkish nationalism, in general.

¹⁸ The Naqshbandi Sufi order is the largest and most influential one in Turkey. The Nurcu movement is a faith movement established by Said Nursi. For the Kurdish Nurcu movement, see M. Siddik Seyhanzade, *Nurculuğun Tarihçesi: medeniyet-i İslamiyye* (Istanbul: Tenvir, 2003); Fulya Atacan, "A Kurdish Islamist Group in Modern Turkey: Shifting Identities." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37:3 (July 2001), pp. 111-144.

¹⁹ So far the best document on the Kurdish Hizbullah is prepared by the Department of Anti-Terror Unit of the Turkish Police, *Hizbullah Terör Örgütü* (Ankara: Emniyet genel Müdürlüğü, 2001). The Kurdish Hizbullah evolved out of radical ideas that came from Egypt and later from Iran. The leaders of the organization, such as Hüseyin Velioglu and Fidan Güngör, preferred to create their networks around Diyarbakir and

Batman provinces. Their main target was the Kurdish youth. Although the organization first distanced itself from PKK-type violence, it eventually treated the violence as “redemption” and a “holy duty” against the leftist-oriented PKK. The KH prefers to organize itself through a network of bookstores throughout southeastern Turkey. Some of the prominent KH leaders, such as Fidan Güngör and Molla Mansur Güzelsoy, had stressed intellectual jihad as the first and violence as the second stage of their struggle. For them, it had been important to recruit sufficient ideologically-oriented people. This view had been sharply criticized by Hüseyin Velioglu, who wanted a revolutionary and activist movement rather than text-based intellectual movement. As a result, he refused to work with Güngör and Fidan. This led to a major split in the KH. Velioglu’s branch stressed the redemptive quality of violence against the “atheist system” in Turkey. The first group came to be known as Ilim Cevresi, whereas the second, which stressed intellectual activity, is known as the Menzil Community. This group also avoided any confrontation with the PKK, due to the fact that the PKK was undermining the authority of the Turkish state. On the other hand, the Ilim Cemiyeti of Veziroglu had stressed total confrontation against the PKK to open space for its own activities and identified the PKK as its first enemy. Eventually, the Ilim branch defeated the Menzil community and became the leading Islamic Kurdish movement with its terror activities. M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 176; Milliyet, pp. 20-23 January 2000; Emrullah Uslu, “Islamic and secular terror for Kurdish Independence: Case of PKK and Hizbullah,” Unpublished paper (2004).

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, “What Is Turkey’s Hizbullah?” February 16, 2000.

²¹ According to Emrullah Uslu, a Ph.D student at the University of Utah who has been writing a dissertation on the topic, the KH has two regular journals (*Gönülden Gönüle Damlalar*, and *Inzar*). The KH is also publishing *Mujde* in Basel, Switzerland. The KH linked publishing houses, Davet Kitapevi in Elazig and Risale Kitapevi in Batman are very active. The KH also benefited from the Copenhagen criteria and the lack of anti-terror law formed its nongovernmental organization, İnsan Haklari ve Mustazaflarla Dayanisma Derneği (Association for Human Rights and Solidarity with the Oppressed) in Diyarbakir.

²² The JDP opposition to the reduction of the 10 percent threshold has to do with its other rival Turkish parties. The JDP does not want small parties to be represented in the parliament.

²³ The Law of Integrating into Society (*Topluma Kazandırma Yasası*) came to force in August 2003. According to Minister Abdulkadir Aksu, 1,935 PKK militants, 1,975 Islamist terrorists, and 430 leftist terrorists have benefited from this law. This indicates that Islamist terrorists benefited more than any other group and most of them are Kurdish Hizbullah members. *Anadolu Haber Ajansı*, April 30, 2005.

²⁴ The 1997 military coup is commonly known as the “February 28 process.” The military mobilized the major business associations, media cartels, university rectors, and judiciary to its commands to engineer an anti-Welfare party drive to force the Necmettin Erbakan government to resign. The coup eventually introduced a system of controlling, monitoring, and criminalizing all Islamic activism as a security threat.

²⁵ Mahsum Şafak, *PKK, Yeniden İnşa Kongre Belgeleri* (Istanbul: Çetin Yayinlari, 2005).

²⁶ The PKK has targeted tourism centers in the following cities: Çesme on July 10, 2005; Pendik/Istanbul on August 3, 2005; and Antalya on August 12, 2005.

²⁷ There is a major debate going on within Turkey: Some Islamist journalists have accused the Turkish military placing these mines to force the government to pass the necessary legal framework. In other words, both the JDP government and its supporters do not give any autonomy to the Kurdish nationalism. They treat the issue as an external tool in the hands of Turkish secularists, the United States and even Israel. See “PKK’ nin derdi Kürtler değil,” *Aksiyon*, No. 556 (August 1, 2005).

²⁸ Mehmet Metiner, ex-Islamist Kurd, who also differentiates “primary” versus “sub-identities” and suggests “constitutional citizenship” as a solution, see Mehmet Metiner, *İdeolojik Devletten Demokratik Devlete* (Istanbul: Beyan, 1999), p. 110; for Erdoğan’s statement, see *Zaman*, August 11, 2005.

²⁹ *Zaman*, August 12, 2005; *Milliyet*, August 13, 2005.

³⁰ Debate on diverse identities in Turkey; see Suat Kolukirik, *Aramızdaki Yabancı: Çingeneler*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, (Ege University, Social Sciences Institute, Izmir, 2004).

³¹ Hilmi Özkök, “Yıllık Değerlendirme Konuşması on April 20, 2005,” in *Genel Kurmay Basını Bilgilendirme Toplantıları ve Basına Açık Ana Faaliyetleri* (Ankara: Genel Kurmay Genel Sekreterliği: Ankara, 2005), p. 215.

³² Yasar Büyükanıt, “Küreselleşme ve Uluslararası Güvenlik,” *Birinci Uluslararası Sempozyum Bildirileri* (Ankara: Genel Kurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayinlari, 2003), p. 17.

³³ Sezer's statement, see http://www.cankaya.gov.tr/tr_flash/ACIKLAMALAR/31.12.2005-3337.html.

³⁴ "Sezer'den yeni yıl mesajı," *Radikal*, 1 January 2006. Sezer argues that "according to our Constitution, the Republic of Turkey is an indispensable unity with its country and nation. Turkey has a unitary state structure. The unity is provided in a multi-cultural society with the principle of national state. It is the most influential method of co-existence by preserving diversities. Acknowledgement of every citizen as Turk does not mean rejection of different ethnic identities. On the contrary, it provides equality among citizens."

³⁵ Sezer also critiqued the 10 percent threshold and ask the parliament to rethink the Election Law. He argues that "national will is the real source of national sovereignty. Political parties should be represented in the parliament in comparison with votes they win in elections. Nearly half of Turkish voters are not represented in the parliament because of the electoral threshold. Today's election system contradicts with the principle of justice in representation." *Radikal*, January 1, 2006.

³⁶ There are a number of problems in the Election Law. The law determines the representation on the basis of demographic and also geographic representation. These two principles are in conflict and create injustice in terms of representation of population. For instance, in some provinces 8 or 10 thousand votes elects one seat, whereas this reaches to 90 thousands in Western provinces of the country. Although the law seeks to balance demographic and geographic representation, this balance has radically shifted toward geographic representation at the expense of democratic principle.

³⁷ Before the Constitutional Court's decision whether to close the party or not, with the order of Öcalan, a group of DEHAP politicians formed Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP) on November 9, 2005. The DEHAP closed itself and all DEHAP's 56 mayors and 852 municipal assembly members joined the new party in December 2005. *Vatan Gazetesi*, December 18, 2005.

³⁸ Mohammed M. A. Ahmed and Michael M. Gunter, eds., *The Kurdish Question and the 2003 Iraqi War* (Costa Mesa, CA.: Mazda, 2005); and Brendan O'Leary, John McGarry, and Khaled Salih, eds., *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005).