

The Kurdish Movement

Ethnic Mobilization and Europeanization

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1. Introduction

The Kurdish question, one of the intricate issues of politics in Turkey and the Middle East, does not fit well into a system of sovereign nation-states. As there are Kurdish minorities in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, the conflict cuts across existing borders within this region. Due to migration, a transnational Kurdish movement has evolved in Member States of the European Union. And as there have recently been demonstrations directed at European institutions, there may even have been another leap beyond the confines of the nation-state – a Europeanization of the Kurdish movement.

If a Europeanization of the Kurdish Movement has indeed occurred, it would be a noteworthy case with respect to the currently predominant view that migrant groups do not yet use the political opportunities created by European integration (Marks / McAdam 1996). Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham, examining the political claims of migrants have realized an “almost complete absence of claims making related to the EU” (Koopmans / Statham 1999: 689). Hans-Jörg Trenz (2001) pointed out that migrants’ representatives involved in lobbying at Brussels are usually without touch to their social basis, and Adrian Favell and Andrew Geddes (2000) recognized an absence of ethnic mobilization directed at EU institutions as well.

The idea of a Europeanization of the Kurdish movement was first mentioned by Vera Eccarius-Kelly (2002: 95) in an article in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. It shall be elaborated here; I will maintain that a Europeanization of the Kurdish movement has occurred in the period after the arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. Turkey’s application for membership in the European Union, vigorously pursued since 1999, has offered considerable

European-level political opportunities for the Kurdish movement. There have been several demonstrations at Strasbourg. However, there are difficulties to decide whether they were purposeful with respect to EU political opportunities or rather symbolically related to the arrest of the Kurds' leader Abdullah Öcalan. So the case needs to be made with several caveats.

The perspective of the subsequent analysis is to explain the rise and the repertoires of the Kurdish movement by looking at the political opportunities it has encountered, i.e. by political factors *external* to the movement (Rucht 1998). A widely accepted definition of 'political opportunity' is to see it as "consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (Tarrow 1998: 20). One could also look, for instance, at discursive factors such as the 'framing' of issues for mobilization (Snow / Benford 1992), or at the characteristics of social movement organizations (McCarthy / Zald 1977). Accepting that these perspectives would contribute to a fuller understanding of the Kurdish movement, the presumption is here that the political opportunity-perspective provides us with the best tool for explaining Kurdish mass mobilization, and the alleged Europeanisation.

It may be noted that it is not an aim here to refine the conceptual tools, which have been developed to analyze transnational movements (della Porta 1999) and that have indeed been applied to the Kurdish movement (Lyon / Uçarer 2001). Conceptual sophistication has not always served the clarity of the presentation; in addition, the case at hand would require including a supranational dimension into the theory, which would be possible, but without assurance that added complexity would serve the purpose of a better understanding of empirical phenomena.

The first part of the paper will give an account of the rise of the Kurdish movement in Europe, as it is necessary to understand the situation within which Europeanization is taking place. There are large Kurdish populations in Germany, France, Britain, Sweden, and in the Netherlands, but the analysis will be limited to Germany, as Germany has the largest Kurdish population in Europe and has witnessed the strongest Kurdish movement activity. The second part, devoted to Europeanization, will first take a closer look at European-level political opportunities. Then, Kurdish protest aiming at European institutions shall be reported and discussed.

2. Ethnic Mobilization of Kurds in Germany

When looking at the Kurdish movement in Germany, the sheer number of people mobilized is a puzzle. From 1993 onwards, up to 80 000 Kurds attended demonstrations. Accepting the number of 600 000 as an estimate¹ for the total Kurdish population in Germany (Ammann 2001: 138), one author was right to point out that if mobilization rates were as high among Germans, an attendance of 15 million people at mass demonstrations would be witnessed (Mönch 1994: 168). It is the mass mobilization rather than the acts of political violence, a minority of Kurdish radicals has engaged in, that shall be explained here.

A Protest Event Data Analysis of Kurdish Protest

In order to trace the rise of the Kurdish movement, it is helpful to obtain an overview on Kurdish protest events. Figure 1 visualizes how attendance at Kurdish mass protest in Germany has developed in the 1980s and 1990s. The method used to produce this chart, called 'protest event data analysis', was developed by Dieter Rucht and Friedhelm Neidhardt in the so-called Prodat-

Project (Rucht / Ohlemacher 1992; Rucht / Koopmans / Neidhardt 1998). Basically, information about protest events is gathered by way of a content analysis of two leading German newspapers, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. The data basis for the figure presented here is an extract from the data of the Prodat-Project (1950 to 1993), and a newspaper analysis of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* for the time from 1993 onwards, carried out by myself.

A caveat needs to be made with respect to the representativeness of the data. The data do not include *all* Kurdish protest events, as the Prodat-project only looked at the newspapers' Monday issues. Second, concerning validity, there is insecurity whether the numbers reported in the newspapers are correct. Giving estimates for attendance at demonstrations is generally difficult, and numbers usually vary considerably between protest organizers and police estimates. This general problem applies to Kurdish protest as well; in addition, as a respondent in an interview pointed out, there are Kurdish protest events that have not been covered at all by newspapers. The numbers reported here may not be absolutely correct, and some protest events may even be missing, but that does not diminish the ability of protest event data analysis to show the general development of ethnic mobilization.

Kurds and German Politics

The chart presented shows that the huge Kurdish protest potential emerged from 1992 onwards. The first wave of Kurdish mass protest in Germany in 1993 and 1994 is clearly related to the ban of the PKK by Germany authorities in November 1993. The second wave reflected the kidnapping and arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in January 1999.

These two mobilizing events need to be seen within the context of a generally exclusive political opportunity structure. Migrants in Germany have usually faced political exclusion, at least until the major reform of citizenship law in 1999. But due to Germany's acceptance of the official Turkish doctrine of not considering Kurds as a distinct ethnic minority, Kurds from Turkey were in a particularly deprived situation.

Three long-term points of contention were the result. First of all, Kurds with Turkish nationality could not give their children Kurdish names; German authorities accepted only names found on lists that were provided by Turkish consulates.² Second, there were programs of mother-tongue education for Turkish labor migrants' children; Kurdish children with Turkish nationality had to attend classes given in Turkish, even if their mother tongue was Kurdish. In addition, German arms-sales to Nato-ally Turkey were suspected to be used for fighting Kurdish uprisings. All in all, Kurds from Turkey felt that Turkish-German relations flourished on their backs.³

Given that these circumstances persisted from the 1970s onwards, it may be asked why mobilizing events triggered mass protest in the 1990s, but not earlier: One might think of the breakdown of Kurdish resistance in Iraq in 1975, the disastrous aftermath of the 1980 military coup in Turkey for Kurds, and the chemical weapons attack on Kurds in Halabja in Iraq in 1988. To understand what was different in the 1990s requires to trace the development of the Kurdish movement.

Labor Migrants and early Ethnicization (1961-1980)

The first large group of Kurds who came to Germany was among the labor migrants recruited from Turkey from 1961 until 1974. An estimated 20 to 25 percent (Ammann 2001: 121) of the Turkish guest worker population of 900 000 were of Kurdish origin. But as most of them came from urban areas,

where Kurdish traditions and ethnicity were eroded, Kurdish labor migrants were rather apolitical and had a weak ethnic consciousness at first.

In Germany, Kurds started to rediscover ethnicity (Bruinessen 2000: 10). Though Germany did not support any cultural activities, liberal constitutional guarantees protected the expression and development of a Kurdish ethnic self-understanding. Kurdish associations carried out cultural activities, such as learning the Kurdish language – most Kurdish guest workers from Turkey learnt the Kurdish language in the diaspora (Ammann 2001: 290). In 1974, the Kurdish new-year, Newroz, was celebrated for the first time in Germany. Over the years, it became the outstanding cultural manifestation of Kurdish identity.

The most important organizational development was the founding of Komkar, the 'Federation of Kurdish Workers' Associations' in 1979. It had two distinctive aims. First, it supported the struggle of the Kurdish people in Kurdistan and organized activities to generate a respective public awareness in Germany; second, it furthered the integration of Kurds in Germany and represented its members' social, cultural and political interests to German authorities and German political parties (Şenol 1992: 213).

Refugees and Mobilization (1980-1993)

In the 1980s, events in the country of origin reverberated in the Kurdish group in Europe. Following the military coup in Turkey on 12 September 1980, there was an unprecedented degree of repression of Kurds in Turkey. To combat Kurdish separatism, Kurdish organizations and parties – moderate ones included – were banned. Around 81 000 Kurds were detained between September 1980 and September 1982. Two thirds of the Turkish army were deployed in Kurdish areas to maintain tranquility (McDowall 2000: 414).

Reports about military repression and human rights violations led to an increase of ethnic consciousness of Kurdish migrant laborers already present in Germany (Bruinessen 2000: 6). What is more, large numbers of Kurdish asylum seekers arrived in Germany.⁴ Most Refugees originated from Kurdish settlement areas in the south-east of Turkey and had a stronger ethnic self-understanding from the very beginning. In addition, a remark made by Östen Wahlbeck in her study on Kurdish refugees in Sweden applied to Kurdish refugees in Germany as well: „refugee communities ... often contain large resources for ethnic or political mobilization because of all refugees' similar backgrounds and life histories“ (Wahlbeck 2000: 11). Refugees had a catalytic function for the consciousness formation of the Kurdish community in Germany (Ammann 2001: 136).

Along with changes in group composition, there were changes in the organizational field. In the 1980s, the PKK (the Kurdistan Worker's Party) emerged as an organization. It was founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan and took up armed struggle in Turkey in 1984. In Germany, the PKK, unlike other Kurdish organizations rejected furthering the integration of Kurdish migrants into German society. It was exclusively homeland-oriented, fought for independence of Kurdistan, and accepted the use of violence as a political means. Initially, the PKK had its social basis among refugees and second-generation labor migrants (Bruinessen 2000: 24).

As a reaction to politics in Turkey, Kurdish organizations like Komkar changed their focus towards country of origin-oriented activities as well, but their moderate stance increasingly failed to attract Kurds who thought that their chances to influence politics by conventional ways of political participation were marginal. The view that PKK's radical way was the only viable one to go found more and more adherents and a reorientation away

from Komkar towards the PKK began. However, the growth of Kurdish protest potential did not amount to mass mobilisation until 1992.

PKK prohibited and Öcalan arrested (1993-1999)

Changes of attitudes among Kurds in Germany were accelerated by the civil war between the Turkish central government and the PKK from 1992 onwards. Clashes between PKK and the Turkish military all in all left 30 000 persons dead and were accompanied by the evacuation of around 3 500 villages.

For the PKK, the diaspora was primarily a source of financial resources and young men willing to fight in Kurdistan. But small groups within the PKK sought to bring the struggle to German soil as well. From 1991 onwards, there were several series of occupations of German broadcasting agencies and German party offices, of Turkish consulates and Turkish-run banks and travel agencies. Most importantly, Turkish institutions suffered various series of violent attacks.

German authorities deliberated to ban PKK as a terrorist organization. But as the PKK had increasingly served as a focal point for Kurdish identity, the threat to ban PKK, and the final ban in November 1993 was perceived as an hostile affront by many Kurds, most of all by refugees. Birgit Ammann, who has conducted two series of qualitative interviews between 1986 and 1990 and between 1997 and 1999, recorded a considerable and representative growth of the approval rates for PKK. At this point, this increasingly applied to first-generation labor-migrants not initially inclined to the PKK as well. As one respondent of Ammann put it: "Former guest workers, they were somehow truly educated by PKK. Before they said: 'We don't quarrel, as long as we are left in peace.' Then, PKK came and said: 'You have slept long enough, wake up!'" (Ammann 2001: 338). In a survey, Thomas Brieden recorded that the

number of those of Kurdish origin claiming that their exclusive identity was 'Kurdish' (and not Turkish-Kurdish, for instance) rose from 20 percent in 1984-86 to 76 percent in 1994 (Brieden 1996: 111).

As an immediate response to the ban on PKK in November 1993, there were many large-scale demonstrations, hunger strikes in various German cities, and – gaining most attention by German public opinion – there were blockades on German highways, accompanied by violent riots. Obviously, the PKK-ban mobilized Kurdish masses. German security agencies reported that PKK membership in Germany rose from 5000 in 1993 to around 9000 in 1999; despite the ban and criminal proceedings, there continued to be coordinated violent attacks on Turkish consulates, banks and shops and occupations of German institutions until 1996.

In January 1999, the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, the founder and leader of the PKK seemed to reproduce the events of 1993 and 1994 on a larger scale. Many Kurds felt directly affected by the kidnapping and the arrest of Öcalan (Ammann 2001: 392). In the aftermath of Öcalan's arrest, 1999 was a year of intense protests attended by up to 80 000 persons. Again, there were occupations and attacks against Turkish and other institutions.

In the aftermath of the Öcalan arrest, the PKK ceased its military struggle in Turkey. In 2002, it formally dissolved itself and was founded anew as 'Kadek', claiming to be committed to be peace and democracy. One immediate effect of the Öcalan arrest in Turkey was the military defeat of the PKK. At the same time, the result was a comprehensive identification of Kurds with the PKK's struggle in Germany. In 1993 and 1994, it was primarily refugees that attended protests, in 1999, it was first-generation Kurds who had managed to enter the middle-classes as well.

Closing Political Opportunities and Ethnic Mobilization

In *Power in Movement*, Sidney Tarrow remarks: “If we were to elevate political opportunity structure into a general covering law, we would always find movements it cannot ‘explain’ and those that arise as opportunities are closing” (Tarrow 1998: 200). The latter is true for the Kurdish movement. The mass mobilization of the 1990s was a reaction to changes in the political environment that were related to the Kurds, but essentially external to the group. The term ‘political *opportunities*’, if taken literally, seems absurd, as the Kurds’ remaining opportunities for struggle, were clamped down in the 1990s. This closing of apparent political opportunities gave rise to the Kurdish mass movement.

3. The Europeanization of the Kurdish Movement

In 1999, the Öcalan arrest eased the situation in the south-east of Turkey; in the same year, Turkey’s application for European Union membership gained new momentum. Membership in the European Union had been a strategic aim of Turkey since the late 1950s, but it persistently met an unwilling or ambiguous Europe. Yet in 1999, the European Council of Helsinki affirmed Turkey’s status as an accession candidate, stating: “Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States.”

The so-called Copenhagen-criteria referred to here demand *inter alia* respect for human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities. Turkey’s active longing to obtain membership in the European Union accordingly transformed the issuing of concerns about the Kurdish question by bodies of the European Union from an interference in Turkey’s internal affairs to a self-

imposed involvement. In fact, responding to the requirements for entering the European Union, several constitutional reform packages improving the human and minority rights situation have been decided by Turkey between 2000 and 2002. However, at the Copenhagen Summit in December 2002, the European Council decided that it would eventually make a final decision on Turkey's application – upon a recommendation of the Commission – at its meeting in December 2004.

Have there been possibilities of Kurds to raise the European Union's attention for the Kurdish question, thus putting pressure on Turkey? The analysis of the political opportunities of the Kurdish movement in Europe requires looking at the competences and positions of European actors relevant for Turkish accession and to consider ways to influence them: In the accession procedure of Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union it is the Commission, the Council and the Parliament that need to assent to an accession. But before this final decision on accession is made, accession negotiations are conducted between the applicant country and the Commission. The decision to take them up is made by the European Council. Thus, the relevant actors are the European Council, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament.

European Council

The European Council has been crucial for maintaining the perspective of a Turkish accession to the European Union. At the same time, it pointed emphatically to the Copenhagen criteria, relevant for the situation of Kurds in Turkey, on several occasions. However, it has never referred to the Kurdish question explicitly in any of its conclusions. That leaves some uncertainty, which weight the Council will assign to a viable solution of the Kurdish

question among other politically relevant factors when making a decision to take up accession negotiations with Turkey.

It is usually not undertaken to influence the heads of government assembled at European Council meetings directly. However, there is one interesting exception. On the occasion of the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002, the *Kurdistan Human Rights Project* (KHRP), a London-based organization fighting for Kurds' human rights, sent a 13-page briefing paper on the situation in Turkey to the Danish EU presidency, to the Permanent Representatives of all the member states, and to the European Commission. The paper contained a detailed evaluation of Kurds' situation in Turkey and highlighted that Turkey's constitutional reform packages had not yet been sufficiently implemented into ordinary law.⁵

The more "conventional" way of addressing the European Council are demonstrations. They constitute an indirect strategy, as demonstrations have the purpose to generate a public opinion state leaders might be responsive to. Respective efforts may aim at European Council meetings or at politicians' national constituencies.

European Commission

The Commission's importance as an actor is based on its power to define the situation in Turkey by issuing annual reports on Turkey's progress towards accession. These reports include evaluations whether the Copenhagen criteria have been fulfilled and have an important preparatory function for the European Council's decision on beginning accession negotiations. Generally, the Commission was fairly critical about the human rights and minority rights situation in Kurdish settlement areas. As the 1998 report, setting the stage for the following reports, put it:

The constitution does not recognize Kurds as a national, racial or ethnic minority. There are no legal barriers to ethnic Kurds' participation in political and economic affairs but Kurds who publicly or politically assert their Kurdish ethnic identity risk harassment or prosecution. Most of the Kurdish population lives in the South-East of the country. In this region, the Turkish authorities have engaged for over a decade in armed conflict with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), whose goal is to create an independent state of Kurdistan in south-eastern Turkey, and which employs terrorist methods. As a direct consequence of this situation, there is evidence of large-scale forced evacuation and destruction of villages accompanied by abuses of human rights perpetrated by the Turkish security forces. (Commission 1998: 19)

Points critically dealt with in the Commission's reports were the death sentence passed on Abdullah Öcalan (Commission 1999: 16), bans on Kurdish newspapers and magazines (Commission 2000: 19) and against radio or TV broadcasting in Kurdish (Commission 1999: 14; Commission 2000: 18; Commission 2002: 42), limitations to the possibility to give children Kurdish names (Commission 2000: 18) and denied possibilities for education in Kurdish language (Commission 2000: 18), and infringements on the work of human rights associations (Commission 2000: 17). These concerns were a part of the Commission's conclusion from 1998 to 2002 that Turkey did not yet meet the Copenhagen criteria. In 2002 there was a positive acknowledgement of the constitutional reforms of August 2002 as it expanded Kurds' cultural rights. Despite that, the Commission indicated that it would continue to monitor the situation in southeast Turkey (Commission 2002: 42).

From the perspective of an Kurdish movement activist, the Commission's proposal that "a civil solution could include recognition of certain forms of Kurdish cultural identity and greater tolerance of the ways of expressing that identity, provided it does not advocate separatism or terrorism" (Commission 1999: 14) is certainly unsatisfactory due to a lack of determination and a "misapprehension" of Kurdish self-defense as terrorism. More importantly,

because of its bureaucratic policy style, the Commission is not an accessible institution for movements in general, the Kurdish movement included.

Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union is a central decision-making body in the accession procedure of Article 49 TEU and oversees the EU's pre-accession strategy towards Turkey. According to the EU-Turkey Partnership Agreement agreement, decided by the Council in 8 March 2001, the allocation of pre-accession financial assistance (EUR 176 m in 2000 and EUR 152 in 2001) is conditional on progress towards fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria and on specific points referred to in the Partnership Agreement; financial aid may be suspended by the Council. Two points in the Partnership Agreement address the Kurd's situation: "Remove any legal provisions forbidding the use by Turkish citizens of their mother tongue in TV/radio broadcasting."; "Develop a comprehensive approach to reduce regional disparities, and in particular to improve the situation in the south-east, with a view to enhancing economic, social and cultural opportunities for all citizens."

However, there are certain strains on the relationship between Kurds and the Council. The Council decided on 2 May 2002 to put the PKK on the European Union's list of terrorist organizations. This caused harsh Kurdish criticism (see www.kurdishobserver.org), and gave rise to a noteworthy affair: In a letter addressed to the Council, the *Kurdish National Congress* (KNC), a Brussels-based congregation of Kurdish intellectuals and politicians in exile, demanded the revision of this decision, and otherwise, the publication of the evidence that had guided the Council. That demand was renewed by the KNC in a letter dating 28 October 2002, but rejected by the Council. As a reaction, the KNC filed a case at the Court of First Instance (C-206/02).⁶ It should be noted, that the whole matter is rather symbolic, as the PKK has transformed

itself into Kadek, and Kadek has not yet been put on the European Union's list of terrorist organizations.

The Council is an important actor in the accession process, but on a very basic level, defining one unified approach of the Council vis-à-vis Turkey and the Kurdish questions is difficult. The Council operates in various different compositions with corresponding different perspectives; priorities and agendas of the Council shift along with the presidency, making the Council a moving target. Ultimately, it is states that are represented in the Council and to influence their representatives' positions, taking the national route would certainly be the most effective strategy.

European Parliament

The European Parliament has devoted considerable attention to the Kurdish question. In a debate on "Democratic rights in Turkey, in particular the situation of HADEP" on 27 February 2002, Johannes Swoboda (PSE) exclaimed: "What Parliament stands by is this: We campaign for the cultural rights of the Kurds – rights that are inalienable, that do not amount to separatism or terrorism, that do not create difficulties for Turkey, but which could be the salvation of Turkey as a European country." The statement of the speaker of the PPE-DE, Lennart Sacrédeus was not much less emphatic. Commenting on the trial against the ethnic Kurdish party HADEP, he promised "that we in the European Parliament will show no lack of vigour, energy and persistence in monitoring this judicial process in Turkey. Within the framework of an ad hoc delegation, we intend to act in such a way as to protect democratic rights, the multiparty system and, of course, the rights of the Kurdish minority too in Turkey."

The parliament's stance towards the Kurdish question results from individual parliamentarians' initiatives, on the one hand. Feleknas Uca (GUE/NGL), a

Kurdish-origin parliamentarian, is an important contact for the Kurdish movement. She is a member of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee and has started various initiatives; for instance, she collected 93 signatures of members of the European Parliament in spring 2000, protesting against the Turkish government's action against the Diyarbakir Branch of the Human Rights Association, which was closed and opened several times by administrative decision of the Governor without explanation. Other parliamentarians were quite active as well, for instance in using oral and written questions and 'Question Time' to inquire about the Commission's and the Council's stance on issues such as the "Imprisonment of Leyla Zana and Turkey's accession to the EU", the "Ban on political parties in Turkey" or the EU ban of the PKK.

Beyond these individual initiatives, various resolutions adopted by the European Parliament demonstrate the willingness of the European Parliament as a whole to take strong positions on the Kurdish question. In its annual follow-up resolutions to the Commission's reports on Turkey's progress towards accession, it regularly called for improvements of the Kurds' situation. In 1999, three resolutions were passed on the arrest, trial and death sentence of Abdullah Öcalan and in February 2002, it adopted a resolution asking the trial in Turkey against the ethnic Kurdish party HADEP to be dropped. Earlier actions were the awarding of the 1995 Sakharov Freedom Award of the European Parliament to the Kurdish politician Leyla Zana. Due to human rights violations, a EP resolution called on the Commission in September 1996 to block financial aid for Turkey.

The European Parliament has thus been more supportive for the Kurdish movement's concerns than any other European institution. Many members of the EP are proactive on the Kurdish question by themselves. A strategy

addressing the EP would not need not to change the outlook of the EP, but should seek to strengthen its position vis-à-vis other EU institutions.

Summary

Generally, among the four institutions looked at, the European Council and the Commission are in a dominant position with respect to the question of Turkish accession. The Parliament and the Council are formally responsible for the accession procedure of Art. 49 EUT, but their decision is predetermined by the decision to take up accession negotiations at all, made by the European Council upon a recommendation of the Commission.

Concerning the distribution of roles between the European Council and the Commission, a quotation ascribed to the Turkish President Sezer caught constellations very well. Commenting on the Commission's position – its progress reports in particular – he uttered some days before the Copenhagen Summit in December 2002: “the Progress Report and the Strategy Paper is the product of technical work carried out by the Commission. However, the decision that is going to be taken by the 15 member states at the Copenhagen European Council will be beyond the technical and will carry a political connotation.” The underlying analysis is generally valid for constellations between 1999 and 2003. On the one hand, the Commission assembles data and information relevant with respect to the Copenhagen criteria and gives – depending whether the balance sheet is positive or negative – an evaluation of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. Statesmen convened at a European Council meeting will be more inclined to consider the historical dimension of their decision. That may mean putting present shortcomings into a long-term perspective.

Both alternative perspectives are valid by themselves. Nevertheless, they create political opportunities for the Kurdish movement. Movement activity

such as protest might have the aim to ensure that the European Council assigns political importance to information contained in the Commission's reports dealing with the situation in Kurdish settlement areas. That might be achieved by way of demonstrations directed at European Council meetings, on the one hand. It should however be noted, that protest at the national level may serve this purpose as well. Generally, Kurdish protest may make neglecting the Kurdish issue increasingly difficult.

European-level Activities of the Kurdish Movement

European-level activities of the Kurdish National Congress and the KHRP have already been referred to in order to support the analysis of the new political opportunities of the Kurdish movement in the European Union. The task is now to examine more systematically, whether European political opportunities have in fact led to a Europeanization of the Kurdish movement.

Europeanization might be considered a matter of organizational developments. In fact, the Kurdish National Congress and the European Federation of National Kurdish Federations (Kon-kurd) have their offices in Brussels. A campaign in summer 2001 illustrates that the Kurdish movement is very well linked in Europe: Kon-kurd organised, as a part of its 'identity campaign', a collection of signatures with the self-denunciations "I am the PKK" and "I Support the New Line of PKK". The signatures were finally handed over to official authorities. As almost 100 000 signatures were gathered until 19 July 2001, a remarkable organizational ability to organize a cross-European campaign was demonstrated. But beyond observations of this kind, obtaining information on the internals of Kurds' organizations is difficult. Thus, the approach will again be to report visible protest events and other activities related to the Kurdish movement.

Using ‘protest event data analysis’ as before would be desirable indeed. But there are impediments for the application of the method to Kurdish European level-protest that are related to the circumstance that a European public sphere is only emergent to date (Neidhardt / Koopmans / Pfetsch 2000). The newspapers scanned for protest in Germany (*Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau*) do not report consistently on protest outside Germany. Drawing on French newspapers (e.g. *Le Monde, Le Figaro*) for protest in Strasbourg and Belgium newspapers (*Le Soir, Le Belgie libre*) for protest at Brussels would deliver a mixed set of sources with different reporting standards; but what is more, there was very limited coverage on Kurdish protest in these newspapers at all. As a second-best solution – though not a wholly satisfactory one – different sources have been used to gather information about Kurdish European-level protest. The results are reported in table 2.

From early 1999 until March 2003, there have been nine Kurdish protest events that aimed at a European institution – if the term ‘European institution’ is not limited to institutions of the European Union, but understood to include the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. There has thus been a development that deserves to be called ‘Europeanization’. Five of the nine protest events were demonstrations related to the appeals procedure of Abdullah Öcalan before the European Court of Human Rights. In a similar vein, one of two protest marches headed for the European Court of Human Rights and intended to raise public attention for the Öcalan-case.

Looking at the other protest events, there was one protest march from Mannheim to Strasbourg (it did not reach its aim, as it was stopped before by German police) which demanded an end of bans against the PKK. Its aim was the Council of Europe. Finally, there were two protests that aimed at

European Union institutions per se, the European Parliament and the European Council of Nice, respectively. All in all, there has been a Europeanization of the Kurdish movement in a sense. But at first sight, there is a slight mismatch between the political opportunities as they were analyzed before and the protest events that actually occurred.⁷

Looking at the Kurdish protest reported, it certainly needs to be acknowledged that from the perspective of “rank-and-file” Kurdish protesters, Strasbourg, being the seat of the ECHR, is first and foremost the place where their devoted leader’s fate is on trial.⁸ By way of interpretation, it may be pointed out that one effect of the protest directed at the ECHR is to raise attention for the fact that Turkey is at trial because of an alleged human rights violation. That can be seen in relation to the general load of cases filed by Kurds at the ECHR.

That makes it more difficult for the European Council to neglect the Kurdish issue, but it may be questioned whether that is really the purpose protest organizers have in mind. They may have been exploiting European opportunities without being aware of it. However, there have also been two protest events that purposively addressed European Union institutions – the protest directed at the European Parliament in February 1999 and the demonstration at the European Council of Nice in December 2000.

4. Discussion

It has been argued here that a perspective capable to explain the ethnic mobilization of Kurds in Germany is the political opportunity-approach. Though it was the *closing* of political opportunities – the ban of the PKK, the arrest of Öcalan – that spurred Kurdish mobilization in the 1990s,

macropolitical factors explained the rise of the Kurdish movement in Germany. For the period from 1999 to early 2003, new and genuine political opportunities have arisen for the Kurdish movement, as Turkey strived to become a member of the European Union. The political opportunity-approach would predict a change of the movement's repertoire in response to changed political opportunities.

The Kurdish protest that has taken place warrants saying that there has been a Europeanization of the Kurdish movement. But as most of it was directed at the ECHR and related to the Öcalan case, the claim that a Europeanization purposefully exploiting new political opportunities in the European Union had taken place has to be made on a tentative basis. The protests at the European Parliament and at the Nice European Council are respective evidence, but it is not yet a sufficient basis for an emphatic judgment.

In fact, the hesitant Europeanization is in so far surprising, as the perception that "Turkey's way to the European Union leads over Diyarbakir" is obviously widespread among Kurds.⁹ One reason that a decisive turn to a Europeanized strategy has not yet occurred may be the absence of a European public sphere. Doing the research for this paper, finding newspaper reports about protest addressed at European institutions – some of which I had learned about in interviews – proved to be extremely difficult. No newspaper offers a continuous coverage on Kurdish European-level protest, some protest events were reported in Kurdish news sources, but not in German, French or Belgium newspapers. As the efficacy of protest depends essentially on the public attention paid to it, protest organizers may consider protest aiming at European institutions an ineffective tool.

The case of the Europeanization of the Kurdish movement deserves more inquiry and further attention. "Water makes noise, when the river gets

narrow” – keeping in mind this Kurdish saying and that a solution to the Kurdish question has not yet been found, it is not to be expected that the Kurdish movement will disappear. Thus, it will be possible to monitor whether a strategy of Europeanization will be pursued indeed.

Notes

¹ As there is no state called “Kurdistan”, ethnic Kurds have Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian or Syrian nationality. This generates considerable insecurity about the numbers of Kurds present in Germany. As official procedures in Germany only ask for nationality, but not for ethnicity, official statistics do not give information on ethnicity, and there are no numbers of Kurds in Germany apart from estimates.

² This policy has recently changed. In the German *Länder* of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hessen, Niedersachsen and Rheinland are admitted nowadays.

³ E.g. in 1996, the German Foreign ministry rejected a parliamentary request, pointing to Turkey’s position that this would be an interference with Turkey’s internal affairs.

⁴ Between 1979 and 1999 around 330 000 asylum seekers came to Germany from Turkey, the percentage of Kurds among these refugees being between 60 and 80 percent (Ammann 2001: 135).

⁵ “[...] If the EU does not ensure that changes in theory are matched by equivalent changes in practice, it risks irreparable damage to its credibility and integrity. It also risks compounding rather than alleviating the systematic violations to which the Kurdish citizens of Turkey have been subjected for decades, and thereby reigniting the bloody conflict which wracked the southeast for nearly two decades.

The Kurdish Human Rights Project therefore urges the representatives of the European Union meeting in Copenhagen this week not to submit to irrelevant and unfair external political pressure, and to consider in detail whether Turkey’s reforms are sufficiently proven and established to grant a definite date for the start of accession talks. To offer rewards for work not yet done is to set a precedent which imperils rather than expedites the utterly desperate need for genuine human rights reform in Turkey. We trust that such rewards will only be made on merit.”

⁶ Indeed, there is evidence that the Council’s decision was a political concession to Turkey: On the one hand, in a report on the terrorism situation in Europe prepared by Europol for the Council in November 2002, it was stated: “During a congress in April 2002 the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) decided they would call themselves Kurdish Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) and would finally stop their armed struggle. It appears that PKK/KADEK is strictly following this policy for the moment“ (Council 2002: 28). On the other hand, the minutes of the 110th EC-Turkey Association Committee include the note: “On terrorism, the Turkish side complained about the list of organizations, to which the EU replied that it would be regularly reviewed, i.e. at least every six months. The Spanish Presidency will take the initiative.” (Commission 2003: 4).

⁷ Another new element in the repertoire of the Kurdish movement in Europe is the use of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to raise complaints because of human rights violations against Kurds in Turkey. The ECHR enforces the European Convention of Human Rights of 1950 and its Protocols. The Convention is signed by 44 European states, among them Turkey. Because of the right of individuals to lodge complaints at the ECHR, the Convention is considered as one of the most effective human rights instruments. The Treaty on European Union refers to the Convention, but it is not part of the body of law of the European Union and the ECHR is not to be confused with the European Court of Justice. The London-based *Kurdistan Human Rights Project* is an organization dedicated to supporting the filing of cases before the ECHR. In January 2001, the KHRP celebrated its 26th successful judgment before the ECHR (Eccarius-Kelly 2002: 111). As the European Commission, for instance, noted 1874 applications at the ECHR regarding Turkey from October 2001 to 30 June 2002 (Commission 2002: 26), this may appear a relatively small number. But the cases supported by the KHRP were usually politically salient ones. They were inter alia related to Turkish policy to destroy Kurdish villages, the imprisonment of Leyla Zana and to disappearances. The activity of the KHRP can be related to the political opportunities analyzed before, though indirectly. Cases decided by the ECHR, due to the courts' high standing, generate "objective facts" that are considered by the European Commission in its reports on Turkey. They are therefore a factor that increases pressure on Turkey. Certainly it should be noted that most of the cases that have recently been decided were filed at a time when Turkey's accession perspective to the EU was not yet ranking high on the agenda; the original intention behind the proceedings has not been to pressure Turkey, using its aspirations to enter the EU. Nevertheless, this is a function the cases before the ECHR have assumed.

⁸ An additional clue to understanding ECHR-oriented protest may be found in the eight-volume defense Öcalan has written for the trial at Strasbourg, which includes a part on the Kurdish question and European Law (Öcalan 2002). The text perceives quite clearly of the importance of a solution of the Kurdish question for the ability of Turkey to comply with the Copenhagen criteria. But there is also a strange twist in the argument. Considering the European Convention of Human Rights as the solution for the Kurdish question, and the Council of Europe as its enforcement agency, Öcalan ultimately assigns supreme importance to these European institutions. The organizers of protest at Strasbourg may simply be following the way indicated by Öcalan.

⁹ Interview with Nikolaus Brauns. See for instance, the section on the European Parliament and the European Union of the *Kurdish Observer* which is full with articles pointing the Turkey and the EU. See www.kurdishobserver.org.

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Table 1: Attendance at Kurdish Protests in Germany 1980-2002

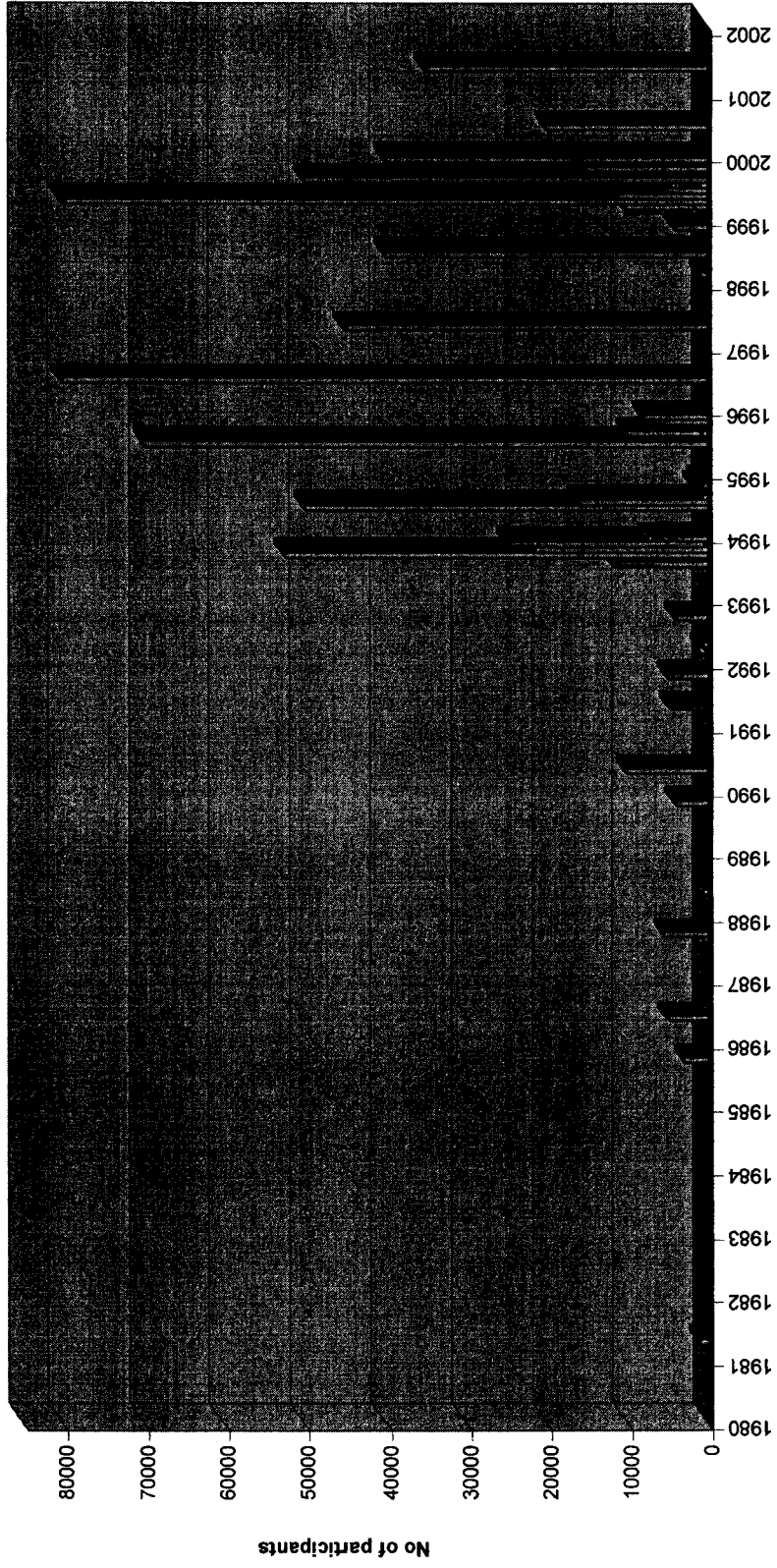


Table 2: Kurdish European-level Protest

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description of Event</i>	<i>Claim(s)</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Area of Mobilization</i>	<i>Source</i>
20 Feb. 1999	Demonstration at Strasbourg	"Freedom for Öcalan"	2000	(no information)	SZ 1999
25 Feb. 1999	Demonstration at the European Parliament	(no information)	(no information)	(no information)	www.ressourcesvoltaire.net
12 Feb. 2000	Demonstration at Strasbourg	"Freedom for Öcalan"	15 000	Germany, Belgium, Italy, UK, Switzerland	SZ 2000
14 Nov. 2000 – 21. Nov. 2000	Protest march from Luxembourg to Strasbourg	"Let us meet with our sun"	150	(no information)	KO 2000a
21. Nov. 2000	Demonstration at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg	(no information)	"several thousand"	(no information)	FTD 2000
9. Dec. 2000	Demonstration at European Council meeting in Nice	"We want our language, our culture, our identity"; "Peace in Kurdistan, freedom to Öcalan", "We want general amnesty"	(no information)	(no information)	KO 2000b
29. Jun. 2001 – 11 Jul. 2001	Protest march from Mannheim (Germany) to Kehl/Strasbourg – Council of Europe (early termination due to intervention of German police)	"End to bans, Let's our national identity be recognized"	150	(no information)	KO 2001
16 Feb. 2002	Demonstration at Strasbourg	"Freedom for Öcalan"	6000	France, Germany, Switzerland	NZZ 2002
15. Feb. 2003	Demonstration at Strasbourg	"Freedom for Öcalan"	20 000	(no information)	www.alsace.france3.fr