Language Policy and National Unity: The Dilemma of the Kurdish Language in Turkey

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LANGUAGE POLICY AND NATIONAL UNITY:

THE DILEMMA OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE IN TURKEY

A Case Study on Language Policy between 1924-2009

BY

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Introduction

"TRT e li ser xêrê be." This sentence means, "Best wishes to TRT Six" in Kurdish. On January 1, 2009, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan appeared on television and addressed the nation with these words. The occasion marked the initiation of the first uninterrupted broadcasting in Kurdish language via a state owned channel, TRT6. Considering the long repression Kurdish language had suffered under the Turkish state, it was quite puzzling to see a Turkish Prime Minister speaking Kurdish on a first of its kind state-owned channel that targets a Kurdish audience.

This gesture has enormous implications for the evolution of the Turkish state's approach to the "Kurdish Problem." The event marks a remarkable shift from the Turkish state's earlier policies regarding the linguistic rights of the Kurdish citizens in Turkey. The purpose of my thesis is to investigate the reasons behind this change.

Language planning is official planning carried out by those in authority, and it represents the exercise of political power. Language policy makers often face the question of accommodating the needs of linguistically diverse communities. Linguistic diversity has emerged as a major source of conflict affecting the stability of numerous political entities around the world. Language planning possesses the double function of both unifying and dividing people. The theme of using language as a means of excluding people socially, economically and politically has been explored by many social scientists. However language

policy remains an understudied subject in Turkey. I believe that studying the motivations, aims, and consequences of language planning holds a central importance in the quest of understanding why the status of Kurdish language changed from an officially "prohibited language" to "a free language" in Turkey.

My thesis is organized as follows. Chapter One reviews the literature on the relationship between language and nation as explored in the works of eighteenth century German Romantics. Then it discusses the two distinct models of national language planning: the nation-building and the diversity-preserving models. I find that the early Turkish policy-makers strictly opted for a nation-building model. I evaluate the ideologies and beliefs that guided the Turkish national language planning in the next chapter.

Chapter Two provides an historical account of the antecedent conditions that shaped the Turkish language policy. Most of this chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the early years of the Republic, as the language policies of this period heavily influenced the state's approach to linguistic diversity until 1990s. In this chapter, I also explore the implications of the Turkish language planning for the Kurds between the years 1923 and 1991. This chapter aims to explore the ideologies that drove the early policy-makers state to adopt official monolingualism, and aims to answer why this language policy did not change for over seventy years.

In Chapter Three, I address the shift in the Turkish state's language policies. The causal factors are grouped under two headings: the Kurdish actors and the Turkish state actors. In the first section I address the Kurdish actors that played an important role in transforming the Turkish state's denial policy, namely the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the pro-Kurdish political parties. The second part of this chapter examines the role of the two

Turkish politicians in bringing about change. These state actors are Turgut Ozal and the current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. I observe that it was external forces that pushed these two politicians in their attempts to reform the language policies. This section also discusses the impact of the European Union membership negotiations on the Turkish state's language policies. I argue that the European Union was the main catalyst that brought about change.

In sum the aims of my thesis are two-fold. First, I seek to study a policy change in Turkey. Why did the state begin to change its policy of oppression starting in the 1990s? My answers to this question lead me to argue that, the Turkish state's oppression of the Kurdish language for over seventy years was an example of linguistic engineering that aimed to suppress Kurdish identity. Yet ultimately, the sustained violence organized by PKK and the emergence of the pro-Kurdish political parties suggested that this policy failed in its efforts of coercive assimilation. Still, the legacy of this history of oppression continues to constrain the state's ability to tackle the question of language rights. However two state actors took important steps towards changing the Turkish state's language policies. I also seek to investigate how effective the changes made by these two Turkish politicians have been.

Second, my thesis is a case study on the relationship between language and politics. Brian Weinstein writes that political theorists have had a lot to say about "the language of politics" but not so much about "the politics of language" – the former being about the symbols and rhetorical devices used in political discourse and the latter about the decisions concerning which languages to use in political, legal and educational practices.[1] This study attempts to analyze both "the language of politics" and "the politics of language" in the

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[1] Kymlicka, Will. <u>Multicultural Citizenship A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights</u> (New York: Oxford UP, USA, 1996), 111.

framework of the Turkish-Kurdish relations. By establishing a comprehensive analysis of the issues related to linguistic pluralism and nationalism, I hope to make a contribution to the debate about the role of linguistic rights for establishing a viable pluralistic democracy and to find a path to peaceful ethnic co-existence.

Before I begin my analysis, I would like to make a side note about the Kurdish language. There are two major languages spoken by Kurds in Turkey. Most speak Kurmanji and a significant number speak Zaza. The former belongs to the southwestern group of Iranian languages while the latter belongs to the northwestern group. In turn, the Iranian languages belong to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. Kurdish scholar Izady writes that Kurmanji and Zaza, "like French and Italian," are utterly distinct languages, "not dialects of the same language." [2] However because both are spoken by Kurds, the Turkish government treats these two languages as the same. For convenience, this study also groups Kurmanji and Zaza under the name "Kurdish language." What is relevant here is that Kurdish and Turkish (which belongs to the Altaic non Indo-European language group) are not related languages and are not mutually intelligible. As Chapter Two will later illustrate, the Turkish state often referred to the Kurdish language as a "corrupt" form of Turkish that had "forgotten" its Turkic origins. This idea that Kurds were Turks who had forgotten their "authentic-selves" is one of the main components that shaped the aggressive nation-building process and would resonate in the state discourse for over seventy years.

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[2]Izady, Mehrdad. The Kurds A Concise History And Fact Book (Dallas: Taylor & Francis, 1992), 17.

Chapter 1

1.1. Language and Nation

The strong link between language and nationality was first explored in the works of the eighteenth century German Romantics such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Johann Gottfried von Herder. These philosophers defined the linguistic and cultural identity of the German nation, and their ideas were immensely influential in shaping nationalist movements throughout Europe. The German Romantics believed that national communities are natural and unique. They argued that even if these communities should forget their true identities they could reclaim their authentic selves through an "awakening of consciousness."[3] Language plays an essential role in the process of reclaiming one's true nature. Herder believed that language was synonymous with thought, and was to be learned in a community. Since every language is unique, he reasoned that each community had its own mode of thought and the community is the sum of these modes of expression.[4] In his essay *Treatise on the Origins of Language*, Herder wrote:

> Every nation has its own storehouse of thought rendered into signs; this is its
> national language: a store to which the centuries have added, that has waxed and

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[3] Smith, Anthony D. <u>Theories of Nationalism</u> (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 17.
[4] Ozkirimli, Umut. <u>Theories Of Nationalism A Critical Introduction</u> (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 18.

waned like the moon, that has experienced revolutions and transformations, [language is] the treasury and the thought of an entire people.[5]

Similar ideas echoed in the works of Fichte who claimed that language mirrored the national soul.[6]

Anthony D. Smith calls the German Romantic vision of nationalism "an organic version" as it characterizes the nation as being unique, neutral and objective, which stands over and above the individuals who compose it.[7] Another important component of the Romantic ideal of "awakening" in order to reclaim the "old holy rights" was characterized by the continual struggle for achieving the sovereignty of the state.[8] The idea of self-determination became the supreme political good through which citizens could return back to their roots. The notion of national self-realization through political struggle defined the characteristics of many nationalist movements in the nineteenth century, resulting in the creation of modern nation-states.

Some of the nineteenth century nation-states were constructed from parts of former multicultural empires and dynasties; others drew their boundaries by unifying various pre-existing states. The ideal of mutual dependence of languages and nations was an essential component in the creation of these nation-states. The demand for a

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[5] Morton, Michael. Herder and the Poetics of Thought (Pennsylvania State UP, 1989), 135.
[6] Ozkirimli, Umut. Theories Of Nationalism A Critical Introduction (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 19.
[7] Smith, Anthony D. Theories of Nationalism (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 17.
[8] Ibid. 17.

linguistically homogeneous nation has become a standard part of the nationalist ideology.[9]

1.2.   Political and Cultural Nations

German historian Friedrich Meinecke divided the concept of nation into two different typologies: "political nation" (*Staatsnation*) and "cultural nation" (*Kulturnation*).[10] A political nation is based on the desire of a people to live together. These people also share political values, citizenship, and loyalty to the nation.[11] The political nation is the product of a shared political will and a voluntary political association. According to British historian Hugh Seton-Watson's definition, a nation "exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one." [12] Following from the same tradition, Ernest Renan, in his famous lecture "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*" claimed that the existence of a nation was based on "a daily plebiscite." [13] This "civic, contractual, elective nation" [14] which represents a constructivist approach to the emergence of nations, has been endorsed by the Enlightenment philosophers and the thinkers of the French Revolution. The nation-building process in France has transformed the nation into "a community of

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[9] Barbour, Stephen, and Cathie Carmichael, eds. Language and nationalism in Europe (Oxford University Press, 2000) 14.

[10]Iggers, George The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of historical Thought fromr Herder to the Present (Middletwon, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983)

[11] Alter, Peter. Nationalism (London: E. Arnold, 1989) 14.

[12] Hugh, Seton-Watson. Nations and states an enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism (London: Methuen, 1977) 5.

[13] Ozkirimli, Umut. Theories Of Nationalism A Critical Introduction (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 35.

[14] Dieckhoff, Alain. "Nation and Nationalism in France: Between Idealism and Reality." (Proc. of National Identity and Euroscepticism: A Comparison Between France and the United Kingdom, University of Oxford, 2005), 1.

politically aware citizens equal before the law irrespective of their social and economic status, ethnic origin and religious beliefs." [15]

A cultural nation, on the other hand, emphasizes "the spirit of community based on objective characteristics" such as "common heritage and language, a distinct territory, shared religion, customs, and history." [16] A cultural nation is presented as a natural phenomenon, in which membership is determined by natural and historical circumstances. This "cultural, organic and ascriptive" idea of a nation means that the nation-formation can occur independent of state structures.[17] The German idea of the nation that was brought up by the German Romantics also rests on this concept.

In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal aimed to establish a political nation based on the French civic republican model. With the abolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, all Turkish citizens were declared equal before the law. However, because there was no "daily plebiscite" on behalf of the Kurds to join the political nation, the early policy-makers "constructed" a cultural nation based on "common characteristics." These "common characteristics" did not exist in reality, but were engineered by Kemal and other early policy-makers.

Various practical challenges of the late twentieth century gave rise to a range of debates regarding language policies in multilingual entities. On one hand, the ethnolinguistic conflicts in Eastern Europe refueled the debates about the relationship between state nationalism and language planning. On the other hand, the question of immigrant integration prompted many theorists to discuss ways to accommodate minorities and minority languages in the

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[15] Alter, Peter. Nationalism (London: E. Arnold, 1989), 15.
[16] Taras, Ray. Liberal and Illiberal Nationalisms (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 40.
[17] Dieckhoff, Alain. "Nation and Nationalism in France: Between Idealism and Reality." (Proc. of National Identity and Euroscepticism: A Comparison Between France and the United Kingdom, University of Oxford, 2005), 1.

West.[18] These political scientists addressed how "rights claims relating to linguistic diversity connect with liberal-democratic principles of justice, freedom and democracy." [19]

1.3. The Two Models of National Language Planning

In this section, I discuss the two prominent normative models of language policy-making that address the questions above: the nation-building and the language-preservation models. I borrow this dichotomy from Will Kymlicka and Allen Patten's book *Language Rights and Political Theory*. It must be noted that these two models are not the only approaches to language policy-making, however they are the most prevailing ones.

1.3.1. The nation-building model

The nation-building model regards the essential role of language planning as that of promoting statewide linguistic convergence.[20] Some academics point out that linguistic convergence can be an unintended consequence of state policies. Eugen Weber, for instance, argues that the promotion of economic development through the construction of roads and railways put those living in the periphery in contact with the central regions, resulting in an

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[18] Kymlicka 1995; Barry 2000; Parekh 2000
[19] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. Language rights and political theory (Oxford UP, 2003), 1.
[20] Ibid. 37.

unintended process of linguistic convergence.[21] On the other hand, some states use deliberate strategies to create linguistic convergence and cultural homogenization. These attempts often start with adopting the language of the majority as the official language of the nation-state.

Fernand De Varennes notes that states have no choice but to single out a language as the lingua franca for its institutions to function properly.[22] Many regard a shared first language as a means for greater economic and political cooperation between citizens. The creation and adoption of such a language is a means by which "a nation imagines itself" but its implications on other languages spoken within the boundaries of the same polity can be disastrous.[23] Serious problems arise when the state attempts to eradicate all linguistic differences for the purpose of imposing the language of the majority on the minority. Language then becomes a factor of division rather than unification.[24] James Tollefson writes:

> The effort by one language group to seek hegemony may contain within it the seeds
> of a cycle of resistance and repression. Hegemonic policies make compromises
> increasingly difficult and polarization increasingly extreme. The resulting struggle is
> not "ethnic conflict" grounded in linguistic or cultural differences, but rather a
> conflict over power and policy resulting from the effort of one group to establish
> hegemony over others.[25]

In states that promote linguistic homogenization, speakers of minority languages often find themselves excluded from many economic activities, as these are made available only in the language of the majority. Gellner argues for a similar point, stating that wealth

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[21] Joseph, Weber, Eugen. Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914 (Stanford UP), 1976.

[22] Varennes, Fernand De. Language, minorities and human rights (Kluwer Law International, 1996), 32.

[23] Millar, Robert McColl. Language, nation, and power an introduction (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 200.

[24] Varennes, Fernand De. Language, minorities and human rights (Kluwer Law International, 1996), 91.

[25] Tollefson, James W., and Amy B.M. Tsui. Medium of Instruction Policies Which Agenda? Whose Agenda? (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003), 197-198.

and economic opportunities are more available if one speaks the language of the majority.[26]

Proponents of the nation-building approach engage in mass literacy campaigns, promotion of education in the official language, and other means to accelerate linguistic convergence. Levy mentions that in such states, mandatory military service often acts as an important promoter of linguistic uniformity.[27] In his study of nation-formation in France at the end of nineteenth century, Eugen Weber presents in detail how the French state aimed to replace the regional dialects and languages with standardized French while imposing the French identity through mass compulsory education and military conscription.[28] We will later encounter some of these strategies in the Turkish nation-building process. Other examples of the states that actively promoted linguistic homogenization would be Franco's Spain, which took authoritarian measures to eradicate minority languages, and the newly formed ex-USSR states that followed a similar path in the 1990s.

Many states continue to endorse the eighteenth century Romantic view of language as absolutely fundamental to the unity of the nation. For example, in Eastern Europe minority languages are still seen in a framework of security and national identity.[29] With the disintegration of USSR, the newly formed countries that had long accommodated a range of minority linguistic rights under communism often reversed this policy by adopting official monolingualism. One of the first adopted laws of the many newly independent countries declared the majority language as the sole official language.[30] Although all the liberal democratic regimes in Europe today experienced some kind of a nation-building process in

[26] Ozkirimli, Umut. Theories Of Nationalism A Critical Introduction (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 139.
[27] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. Language rights and political theory (Oxford UP, 2003), 38.
[28] Joseph, Weber, Eugen. Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France. Stanford UP, 1976.
[29] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. Language rights and political theory (Oxford UP, 2003), 6.
[30] Ibid. 3.

the past, only few of these states still characterize their language policies as homogenizing in our modern world. Today, Western states regard the minority language issue in terms of democracy and equality, and promote the importance of preserving diversity. The next model illustrates the latter method, which presents a more sensitive approach to the needs and demands of the linguistic minorities.

1.3.2.   The diversity-preserving model

In the first half of the twentieth century, language planning was utilized as a tool for the social engineering projects of exclusivist ideologists in various countries. Tensions were inevitable because monolingualism is an unusual attribute of societies. Western states began to distance themselves from homogenizing projects as the nation-building model came to be seen as hostile to the preservation of minority languages.[31] There were many underlying factors that prompted the endorsement of the diversity-preserving model.

The first factor was a heightened sensitivity to language and a growing consensus on the desirability of linguistic diversity. The belief that languages should be preserved as "vehicles of cultures" resonate in the works of many academics. Leslie Green writes, "Ensuring preservation of vulnerable languages is implicit in the value assumption of nearly every linguistic demographer and sociolinguist." [32] On a similar note, in his famous essay *Politics of Recognition* (1992), Charles Taylor champions the importance of language to

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[31] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. Language rights and political theory (Oxford UP, 2003), 42.
[32] Ibid. 44.

individual identity and argued that its significance necessitates language maintenance policies.[33]

The rapid disappearance and death of many languages around the world also underscored the need for further action regarding the preservation of marginalized languages. Throughout the 1990s, international organizations gave voice to the increasing concerns about "the mass extinction" of "the cultural heritage of many people." [34] Language death can occur through the imposition or prohibition of a language by state authorities. Linguists coined the term "linguicide" to describe this type of intentional "killing" of a language.[35] For nation-builders, the linguistic convergence on a common language at the expense of minority ones justified, even if it means the complete disappearance of the latter. As aforementioned, the nation-building model defends linguistic convergence on the grounds that it generates social cohesion essential to a liberal democratic state. However, as linguists have shown, the threat of language death has significant consequences and must be acted upon through effective public policy.[36]

Practical conflicts and challenges also contributed to the widening support of the diversity-preserving model. The atrocities committed during World War II spurred movements declaring the need for universal protection of basic human rights. On December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although the Declaration did not specifically address the issue of minority language rights, Article 2(1) nevertheless stated, "Everyone is entitled to all rights and

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[33] Charles, Taylor. Multiculturalism examining the politics of recognition (N.J: Princeton UP, 1994), 1-25.
[34] Crystal, David. Language Death (Cambridge UP, 2002), 7-10.
[35] Phillipson, Robert, ed. Rights to Language Equity, Power, and Education (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000), 36.
[36] Ibid. 37.

freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as…language."[37]
The Declaration was followed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human
Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950), the International Covenant on Economic, Social,
and Cultural Rights (1966), and other such charters that emphasized the universal protection
of everyone's fundamental freedoms and human rights.

It is important to note that none of the post-1945 documents specifically addressed
the issue of minority language protection, as they limited their scope to the principles of
non-discrimination and equality of citizens before the law. Therefore, it was not surprising
that in the 1990s new declarations emerged in Europe as a response to the surge of ethno-
linguistic conflicts in countries like Yugoslavia. Among these were the Council of Europe's
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and its Framework
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), as well as the Organization for
Security and Cooperation in Europe's Oslo Recommendations of Linguistic Rights of
National Minorities (1998). These declarations were intended to guide the Eastern European
countries in "rejoining Europe" and to help their transition to liberal democracy by
developing standards for how "good liberal democracies would resolve the problems." [38]
Grin and Daftary argue that in the 1990s, there was an increasing consensus on the vital role
of language planning in the process of democratization.[39]

The third and the last factor I will address is the language-related conflicts European
countries face within their borders. Historically, these have involved clashes between the
dominant language groups and the minority language communities with regionally

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[37] "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights." <www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.
[38] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. Language rights and political theory (Oxford UP, 2003), 3.
[39] Ibid. 3.

concentrated populations. For example, the minority language speakers populate Basque country in Spain and Flanders in Belgium. As in the East, the most intense conflicts in Western Europe occurred when the dominant language group attempted to impose its language on the regionally concentrated minorities. Such attempts often resulted in strong resistance, for "a linguistic community with any numerical strength is unlikely to accept lightly any curtailment of previously enjoyed rights or privileges in relation to its language." [40] The rise of the Basque separatist organization ETA is typically related to the oppression of the Basque peoples and language under the Franco regime. Franco declared Castilian as Spain's only official language and proceeded to implement an aggressive nation-building project. Currently, the Basque language holds a co-official language status in the Basque regions of Spain.

The shift in the Spanish government's approach to the Basque language is illustrative of the Western trend towards the granting increased language rights to minorities. The potentially destabilizing consequences of adopting a strictly monolingual language policy redefined the states' approach to diversity. Most liberal democracies of the modern world seem to agree that "if a relatively large number of individuals use a particular language in a given state, it appears unreasonable not to provide some level of state services and activities in their language." [41] Thus, the territorial concentration of individuals speaking a different language became a valid factor to take into account in language policy making.[42]

Most Western European states have now adopted more flexible policies towards minority languages, proving that a national language and minor languages are not mutually

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[40] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. <u>Language rights and political theory</u> (Oxford UP, 2003), 98.
[41] Ibid. 9.
[42] Ibid. 95.

exclusive. So far, we have stated three factors that contributed to the adoption of the diversity-preserving model in Europe: the heightened sensitivity to language and increasing concern about language death; the ethno-linguist conflicts in Eastern Europe; and the regional ethno-linguist conflicts within the European countries. Although other factors such as immigration have undeniably helped to reshape the states' approaches to language policy making in Europe, these three factors can be regarded as the most important catalysts.

As I will show in this case study, the Turkish state chose to implement the nation-building model in the formative years of the Republic. The state's language policies in regards to the Kurdish language remained essentially the same until early 1990s. There are many factors as to why the language policy did *not* change for over seventy years, and why a seventy-year-old nation-building model began to change in early 1990s. I hope to address both of these questions in this study.

Chapter 2

This study investigates a policy change; therefore, it is crucial to provide an historical account of the antecedent conditions that shaped the policy in the first place. This chapter provides the historical overview of the Turkish state's language policies in relation to Kurdish language between the years 1923 and 1991. The year 1923 marks the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey and 1991 marks the abolition of the Kurdish language ban. Most of this chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the formative years of the Republic, as the early language policies heavily influenced the Turkish state's approach to linguistic diversity until 1990s.

The first aim in providing an historical overview is to explore the political and ideological beliefs that guided the Turkish policy-makers in opting for a nation-building model of language planning during the formative years of the Republic. The second aim of this chapter is to illustrate how the early language policies shaped the outlook of the Turkish military elite, who in turn reinforced the nation-building model in the aftermath of three different military coup d'états.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section (2.1.) investigates why the early Turkish policy-makers adopted a strictly monolingual nation-building model during the single-party period (1924-1946). There are two beliefs that guided official actors to pursue this model: first, the early policy-makers regarded language as a central tool in the creation of a new national identity. Thus, the Turkish language became an essential component in

forging a nation-state and an instrument in enforcing the bonds between the citizens and the new state. Second, the early policy-makers perceived minority languages in a framework of security. The Turkish state emerged out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, which had long accommodated a range of minority languages. However the nineteenth century minority uprisings contributed to the disintegration of the Empire. The early Turkish policy-makers, heavily influenced by the memory of these nationalist conflicts, reversed the Ottomans' diversity-preserving model by adopting official monolingualism in the name of "national unity and indivisibility." The Kurdish uprisings in the formative years of the Republic were also perceived in the framework of security. These revolts further reinforced the Turkish state's vision to create a linguistically homogeneous nation through the use of coercive assimilation.

The second section of this chapter (2.2.) gives an historical account of three military coup d'états that occurred in Turkish history (1960, 1971, 1980). I chose to examine these coups because each of them represents a crucial period in the history of the "Kurdish Question." As the self-proclaimed guardians of the early republican ideals, the Turkish military elites continued to perceive the Kurdish language in a framework of security. Therefore, in the aftermath of each coup, the military junta recycled the policies of the early policy-makers in their quest to safeguard the "national unity and indivisibility of the Turkish nation." These elites reinforced the early language policies by redrafting the Constitution and revising the Penal Code. Furthermore, as a response to the growing pro-Kurdish mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s, the military junta of 1980-1983 officially banned the use of spoken and written Kurdish language by revising the Constitution. The 1982 proscription on speaking and publishing in "non-official languages" was only repealed in 1991. By providing an historical account of the critical events until 1991, this chapter aims to

layout the groundwork for an examination of the Turkish language policy shift beginning with the 1990s.

2.1. The Single Party Period (1924-1950)

2.1.1. Building the Turkish nation: "Citizen, Speak Turkish!"

Following their defeat in the First World War, the Ottomans signed the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 which confirmed the partition of the Ottoman lands among the Allies. However, soon after, the political and military resistance that had mobilized under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal forced the Allies to abandon the Treaty of Sèvres. This treaty was replaced with the Treaty of Lausanne, which officially proclaimed the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Language played an essential role in the ambitious nation-building project devised by Mustafa Kemal who also became the first president of the Republic. Assessing the motivations, aims and the consequences of the Turkish state's language policy as regards to the Kurdish language calls for an examination of the driving ideologies that lie behind the nation-building project.

The term "Kemalism" refers to the ideas and principles adopted by Mustafa Kemal. The basic premises of Kemalism were nationalism, westernization and secularism. The Kemalist reforms sought to create a democratic, secular western nation-state. The earlier

attempts of the Tanzimat leaders to revive the Ottoman Empire through a series of reforms echoed in Mustafa Kemal's modernization and centralization efforts. These reforms aimed at a rapid transformation of the traditional societal structure. The Kemalist project of "westernizing" the newly created nation aspired to transform the religious and heterogeneous empire into a secular homogeneous nation-state. The goal was to replace people's loyalty to the Sultan-Caliph with a secular central national authority. Kemal abolished the Caliphate and declared the new identity of the state on a strictly secular ideology. The rejection of the religious link between the state and its subjects, and the establishment of the nation-state resulted in the creation of a new political citizenship. Turkish historian Hakan Ozoglu writes, "The project of the Kemalist nation-state reconciled territoriality with national identity. In doing so the project promoted the idea of modern political citizenship." [43]

The influence of the French Revolution and the French democratic ideals on Mustafa Kemal cannot be ignored. As in the aftermath of the French Revolution, all citizens were solemnly proclaimed equal before the law through the removal of all class privileges. Kemal also borrowed the French civic-republican model, which emphasizes the idea of citizens sacrificing for and participating in the creation of a common good. Many argue that the early years of the Kemalist project of nation building did not emphasize ethnic, but rather a liberal model of nationalism, but lost its civic character over time.[44]

Such a view however, is hard to sustain if one adopts Ernest Renan's definition of a liberal nation as "a daily plebiscite" characterized by "consent, the clearly expressed desire to

[43] Ozoglu, Hakan. "Nationalism and Kurdish Notables in the Late Ottoman-Early Republican Era." 2002. <http://www.jstor.com>. 173.
[44] Ozoglu, Hakan.Nationalism and Kurdish Notables in the Late Ottoman-Early Republican Era. www,jstor.com. 176.

continue a common life." [45] There was no such thing as a voluntary membership on part of the Kurdish citizens of the Republic. In fact those who rejected it were ruthlessly silenced. The cultural model of a nation (*Kulturnation*) rather than the political (*Staatsnation*) one certainly fits in better with the early Republican ideologies. The Turkish nation-builders devised a plan built on a political nation however their policies deviated from this model significantly.

Similar to Meinecke and his *Kulturnation*, Smith defined an ethnic nation as placing significance on birth, common descent, popular mobilization, vernacular languages, customs and traditions.[46] A common language was a uniquely appropriate basis for "constructing" a common identity. Drawing heavily from the nation-building model of language planning, the Kemalist reforms put emphasis on the importance of language in identity formation. Mustafa Kemal made the following comment during a Grand Assembly meeting:

> The Turkish language is a sacred treasure for the Turkish nation because the
> Turkish nation knows that its moral values, customs and memories, interests, in
> short in everything that makes it a nation was preserved through its language despite
> the endless catastrophes it has experienced.[47]

The idea that language is "a sacred treasure" which encapsulates "the values, customs and memories" of the "Turkish nation" is highly reminiscent of Herder's earlier quote in Chapter One ("Every nation has its own storehouse of thought rendered into signs; this is its national language: …[language is] the treasury and the thought of an entire people" [48]). This

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[45] Ozkirimli, Umut. <u>Theories Of Nationalism A Critical Introduction</u>. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. 35.
[46] Smith, Anthony D. National Identity (London: Penguin 1991), 9-12.
[47] Virtanen, O. E. "Recent Changes in Turkey's Language Legislation." 2003. Barcelona Mercator Working papers. <http://www.ciemen.org>. 13.
[48] Morton, Michael. <u>Herder and the poetics of thought</u> (Pennsylvania State UP, 1989), 135.

Romantic notion of the Turkish language "as the sacred treasure" of the nation came to be a central community symbol in the process of constructing the new Turkish identity, providing a sense of mutual sharing and obligation to the citizens.

The language planning process in the early Republic was driven from above by the elite such as Kemal, who claimed that Turkish was "of the people and their dialects" as opposed to the Ottoman language which belonged to the corrupt Ottoman ruling class.[49] In fact, the latter, which was a mixture of Turkish, Arabic and Persian, was the administrative and literary tongue quite unfamiliar to the subjects. Turkish, on the other hand, was the language of the ordinary people…. Therefore, the first phase of the Kemalist language reforms aimed to standardize and "modernize" the language in order to make it more accessible to the people.

There were already widespread discussions in the late Ottoman period about language reforms. Early twentieth century saw the establishment of several organizations that promoted nationalism through linguistic reform. In 1911, Omer Seyfettin, a member of the Young Pens, published a manifesto criticizing the Ottoman language as being inaccessible to the public. Another intellectual Ziya Gokalp (ironically of Kurdish origins) promoted the Turkification of the Ottoman Empire through the official adoption and promotion of the Turkish language. Gokalp's principles, what Historian Edward J. Erickson calls "the cult of nationalism and modernization" heavily influenced Kemalist language reforms. [50]

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[49] Millar, Robert McColl. Language, nation, and power an introduction (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 108.
[50] Erickson, Edward J. Ordered to die a history of the Ottoman army in the First World War (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 2001), 97.

The first Kemalist language reform was the adoption of the Latin script in 1928. Extensive literacy programs, a popular practice with the proponents of the nation-building model of language planning, accompanied the transition. The language modernization was an attempt to increase the literacy of the citizens, who were largely illiterate during the Ottoman period due to the difficulty in learning the Arabic script. Anderson establishes an interesting correlation between the rise of literacy and the popularity of the state: "Everywhere, as literacy increased, it became easier to arouse popular support, with the masses discovering a new glory in the print elevation of languages they had humbly spoken all along." [51] This was certainly the case in Turkey, as will be later demonstrated with the mobilization of the non-state actors who launched campaigns to encourage the use of Turkish.

The second phase of the language reforms was purification, which aimed to substitute words of foreign origin with "pure Turkish" forms. By the 1930s, the state had institutionalized ethnic and linguistic studies that conducted the purification and modernization projects. These institutions also became the bedrock of a series of theories attempting to trace back the roots of the Turkish language to ancient civilizations. The most famous one, the "Sun-Language Theory" claimed that Central Asia, the ancient homeland of the Turks, was the cradle of all human civilization and Turkish was the root of all languages. Although many early policy makers questioned this theory (Ali Fuat Basgil called it a "disease of fakery" [52]) it was nevertheless highly popular with the pro-Turkification politicians of the

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[51] Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London/New York: Verso, 1991), 81.
[52] Basgil, Ali Fuat. The Memoirs of Ali Fuat Basgil (Istanbul: Bogazici Yayinlari, 1991), 32.

era and was even taught at the Faculty of Languages at the University of Ankara for two years.[53]

Geoffrey Lewis coined the term "catastrophic success" for the Kemalist language reforms. According to Lewis, they were catastrophic because they brought about the emergence of extreme views on purification, as exemplified by the Sun-Language theory. On the other hand, they were successful because "they helped to minimize if not eliminate the gap between the language of the intellectuals and the language of the people." [54] Lewis argues that the alphabet reform was the main element that closed the gap.

One of the challenges that the Turkish nation-building project faced was the diverse number of languages spoken throughout the nation. There was a widespread fear that the linguistic diversity would constitute a threat to the formation of the national identity. Amid the heated debates in the National Assembly about what to do with languages other than Turkish, several campaigns were launched by the Turkish citizens themselves. For example in 1928 the Law Faculty Students' Association of Istanbul University initiated a nation-wide campaign with the slogan "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" Banners encouraging citizens to communicate only in Turkish were soon hung in public and private institutions throughout the country. One banner read, "Citizen, do not make friends with or shop from those so-called Turkish citizens who do not speak Turkish." [55] In her analysis of this particular campaign, Senem Aslan concludes that it was not only the state that led the nation-building project, but also a social network of zealous "Kemalist missionaries" took on the role of

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[53] Ayturk, Ilker. "Language and Nationalism", Brandeis University, PhD Dissertation, February 2005.
[54] Lewis, Geoffrey. The Turkish Language Reform A Catastrophic Success (Oxford Linguistics). New York: Oxford UP, USA, 2002.
[55] ""Citizen Speak Turkish!": A Nation in the Making." Nationalism and Ethnic Politics (2007): 245-72. <www.jstor.com>.

assisting the state in promoting a monolingual polity.

During this period, the Turkish language became an essential component in the creation of a new Turkish identity. In promoting the use of Turkish, the early policy-makers also encouraged linguistic homogenization and took extensive measures to discredit languages other than Turkish. The next section addresses the fate of the Kurdish language during the early years of the Republic.

2.1.2. Kurdish Language During The Single Party Period (1924-1946): A Question of Security

The Treaty of Sèvres had confirmed the partition of the Ottoman lands amongst the Allies. This treaty had also envisioned the creation of a Kurdish state by promising, "a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates."[56] However soon after, the Turks emerged victorious from the War of Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, with "considerable help" from the Kurds. When Kurds fought in the Turkish War of Independence, many Kurdish chiefs willingly backed Mustafa Kemal "in the belief they were fighting for the Muslim patrimony."[57] David McDowell writes that at the time Kurds had no interest in a Kurdish

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[56] "The Treaty of Peace Between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey signed at Sèvres August 10, 1920." <http://www.hri.org/docs/sevres/>. Section III Articles 62–64.
[57] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 18.

identity.[58] When the war ended, the Treaty of Sèvres was replaced with the Treaty of Lausanne, which legitimized the victory won by the Turks.

The Treaty of Lausanne is highly significant because of two reasons: first, by replacing the Treat of Sèvres, it eliminated the Articles 62-64 that had secured local autonomy for the Kurds. Second, despite recognizing the non-Muslim minorities and their rights, it did not contain any reference to the Kurds. The non-recognition of the Kurds as a distinct minority group was inspired by the Ottoman *millet* system, which had grouped the subjects according to their religions rather than their ethnicities. Kurds, as Sunni Muslims, belonged to the highest confessional community, *millet-i hakimiye*. To this day, the Turkish politicians use this effective exclusion to justify the lack of any special status for the Kurds, on the basis that they do not constitute a minority. Thereafter, the Turkish nation-builders took the Treaty of Lausanne as a point of reference as Kurdish nationalists did with the Treaty of Sèvres.

The years following the foundation of the Turkish Republic were characterized by policies emphasizing ethnic commonality. The term citizenship became equated with Turkishness.[59] Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution stated: "Everyone in Turkey is called a Turk without discrimination on the basis of religion or race." [60] As the nation-building project took off, the state policies gradually endorsed an exclusionary attitude towards the Kurdish identity. The early republican statesmen strongly believed that as long as sub-identities persisted, the national goal of forging a common identity could not be established. In this sense, multilingualism came be to seen as a problem. The Kurds had the largest minority population within the borders of the country, which necessarily placed them at the

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[58] McDowall, David. <u>A Modern History of The Kurds</u> (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996),17.
[59] Barkey, Henri J. <u>Turkey's Kurdish question</u>. (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 11.
[60] The 1924 Turkish Constitution. Bilkent University.
<http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~genckaya/1924constitution.pdf>.

center of the Turkification project. However there were other reasons that further prompted the state's efforts in assimilating the Kurdish citizens into the new Turkish nation.

In the years following the establishment of the Republic, protecting the territorial integrity of the country became the top priority. This worldview was shaped by the memories of competing ethnic nationalist movements that contributed to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. In this context, Kurdish presence increasingly came to be seen as a territorial threat. Kurds are an autochthonous community living in the mountainous eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. Although these provinces did not lie in the periphery of the Ottoman Empire, the harsh and rugged nature of their historical lands ensured the marginalization of the Kurdish community. Moreover, under the *millet* system the Kurdish tribal and religious chiefs had enjoyed a long period of self-rule. Therefore when the Republic was founded, the Kurdish community resisted the transfer of power to the central authority. The Kurdish leaders became anxious about losing their regional influence, hence resisted the modernist and secularist Kemalist ideologies.[61] An interesting side note would be McDowall's remark that, "Kurds had freely represented themselves in the 1920-1922 Turkish Grand National Assemblies as Kurdish tribal leaders." [62] In fact, one in every congressman in the Grand Assembly of April 23 in 1920 claimed that his mother tongue was Kurdish.[63]

However, Sheikh Said's rebellion against the Turkish state in 1925 fueled the memories of the nineteenth century nationalist revolts. Kurdish historian Bozarslan cites the court statements from the trials of the Kurdish resisters, illustrating that the judges were

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[61] Petersson, Bo. Majority cultures and the everyday practices of ethnic difference whose house is this? (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 173.
[62] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 184-195.
[63] Diken, Seyhmus. Isyan Surgunleri (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 2005), 25.

heavily influenced by their memories of the Balkan nationalist movements.[64] While Sheikh Said's rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed, many Kurds were forced to exile. Following the revolt of 1925, the state enacted the Law of Maintenance of Order which stated,

> The Government is directly authorized, with the approval of the President, to stifle
> all reaction and rebellion…or the publication of anything susceptible of troubling
> the order, tranquility or social harmony of the country.[65]

It was Prime Minister Ismet Inonu, a hardliner who suggested a repressive and violent solution to the "Kurdish Problem," who passed this law. He stated: "We are frankly nationalists…and nationalism is our only factor of cohesion…we must Turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose Turks." [66] Between the years 1925-1927, hundreds of Kurds were executed under the Maintenance and Order Act.[67]

The Turkification project led to other Kurdish revolts until the late 1930s, encouraging "the institutionalization of authoritarian nationalism" in the newly founded Republic.[68] Following the uprisings, the Turkish state took further repressive measures towards the Kurdish language and culture. In March 1924, the National Assembly passed a government decree that prohibited the use of the Kurdish language in both public and private spheres. The words Kurdish and Kurdistan were banned and replaced by "mountain Turks" and "the East." Numerous articles and books were published stating that Kurds were

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[64] Ibrahim, Ferhad, and Gulistan Gurbey, eds. Kurdish conflict in Turkey obstacles and chances for peace and democracy (New York: LIT, St. Martin's P, 2000),

[65] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 184-195.

[66] Cook, Terrence E. Separation, assimilation, or accomodation contrasting ethnic minority policies (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003), 61.

[67] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 200.

[68] Watts, Nicole F. "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-1994." International Journal of Middle East Studies 31 (1999): 631-56. Cambridge University Press. <www.jstor.com>. 634.

considered a tribe of Turanian origin that had forgotten its real language due to isolation in accessible mountains and by falling under the influence of its Persian neighbors. In 1934 the National Assembly adopted the Ordinance on Surnames which obliged all citizens to adopt a surname that was Turkish. Many Kurds were given names that emphasized Turkishness. An interesting example would be Ahmet *Turk*, a Kurdish politician who is currently the chairman of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP).

By the late 1930s, the Kurdish provinces came under military control through the establishment of police posts in the villages.[69] Similar to the government officials in the urban areas who were appointed to enforce the use of Turkish in public places, these police forces were charged with the duty of enforcing the language ban on the villagers. Peasants who brought their supplies to the urban market were liable to a fine of five piasters for every Kurdish words they used (a sheep was worth fifthy piasters at the time).[70] Literacy campaigns that included intensive Turkish courses for the villagers accompanied the military presence in the rural regions.

In 1934, the state enacted a new law that allowed the relocation of non-Turkish speakers into Turkish-speaking regions. In this attempt to force the non-Turkish nationals to assimilate into the Turkish nation, the state began to carry out massive population transfers, deporting Kurds from the densely populated southeastern region into other areas of the country, and in return resettling Turkish immigrants from Europe in the Kurdish regions.[71] Most villages where Turkish was not the mother tongue were disbanded, and their

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[69] Bruinessen, Martin Van. "The Kurds in Turkey." MERIP Reports 121 (1984). 8.
[70] Kendal, Nezan. Kurdistan in Turkey. (Chaliand,1980), 83.
[71] Ibid. 58-68.

population resettled in Turkish-speaking regions.[72] The state only abandoned the forcible population exchanges in 1947 as a precondition to receiving financial assistance from the Marshall Plan.

During this period, the state aimed at the complete assimilation of the Kurds by severely repressing the Kurdish language. The 1924 Constitution aimed at the Turkification of all citizens living in Turkey regardless of their religion or race. Kurds, not an officially recognized minority in the Treaty of Lausanne, came to be categorized as "mountain Turks." Thus Kurds could only claim Turkish citizenship at the expense of denying their own identity. Article 66 of the Turkish Constitution confirmed this by stating, "Everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk." [73] In time, assimilated Kurds enjoyed the rights of their citizenship, attaining high positions within the government and the military.[74]

The foundation of the Republic was a critical juncture in the Turkish-Kurdish relations. The Turkish state strictly opted for a nation-building language planning model. Turkish language came to be an essential component in the creation of the new Turkish identity. Furthermore, the early policy-makers were heavily influenced by the memory of the nationalist uprisings that led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, thus they came to perceive the Kurdish language in a framework of security. Safeguarding the "unity and indivisibility" of the Turkish nation became the state's main concern, while the Kurdish identity was repressed through assimilationist language policies. As the next section illustrates, these two beliefs, language as a central component of Turkish identity and

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[72] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 207.
[73] The 1924 Turkish Constitution. Bilkent University.
<http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~genckaya/1924constitution.pdf>.
[74] Barkey, Henri J. Turkey's Kurdish question (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 12.

Kurdish language as a threat to national security, would guide the state's language policies until 1990s.

2.2.   Kurdish language and the military coup d'états of 1960, 1971, 1980

This section focuses on the three military coup d'états in Turkish history. The Turkish military elites claim themselves to be the guardians of the Kemalist ideologies. Therefore, in the aftermath of each coup, these elites further reinforced the early language policies by redrafting the Constitution and enacting new laws.

In 1946, the country transitioned into a multiparty system. By enabling everyone to vote, the institution of the multiparty democracy made it possible for the Kurdish nationals to use their electoral power. The elections resulted in the victory of the Democrat Party, which ended the long domination of the Kemalist CHP rule. The first half of the Democrat Decade (1950-1960) was notable for a relative freedom of expression.[75] It was also a quite peaceful period for the Turkish-Kurdish relations. Turkish historian Murat Bardakci gives two reasons for this: in the aftermath of the violent suppressions of the last Kurdish rebellions between 1937 and 1938 in Dersim, Kurds failed to organize themselves into a coherent movement. Ali Kemal Ozcan coined the term the "Silent Decades" for the years between 1940 and the early 1960s, as there was no significant Kurdish mobilization during this period. Secondly, the Democrat Party's chairman Adnan Menderes allowed a number of notable Kurdish leaders to take seats in the parliament. This period represented a window of

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[75] Barkey, Henri J. Turkey's Kurdish question (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 14.

opportunity for restructuring Turkish-Kurdish relations. However the DP members failed to take advantage of this relatively peaceful period and eventually succumbed to the demands of the Kemalist military elites. Days before the military junta ousted Menderes in 1960, the DP government put forty-nine prominent Kurdish intellectuals on trial for sedition.

The Democrat Decade came to a halt with a military coup in 1960. One of the reasons underlying the coup was Menderes' relevant "softened" stance in regards to the "Kurdish Question," which the Kemalist military elite saw as encouraging "separatist activities." Following the coup, the military quickly arrested 485 Kurds and exiled the most prominent members of the group.[76]

2.2.1. 1960: The first military coup and the "Liberal Constitution"

In the aftermath of the 1960 coup, the military drafted a new Constitution structured along the lines of the European Convention on Human Rights. The new Constitution of 1961 granted relatively more civil liberties and political rights as it introduced proportional representation and a bill of civil rights. Article 11 "secured the individual's freedom at all times." Also, the words "social state" were included in Article 1, which prepared the groundwork for the emergence of liberal and pluralist politics as well as trade unions and student organizations.

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[76] Gunter, Michael M. Kurds in Turkey a political dilemma (Boulder, Colo: Westview P, 1990), 15.

However the assimilationist language policies persisted. The same year as the drafting of the "Liberal Constitution," a new law passed stating that the "foreign" village, city, and region names were to be replaced with Turkish ones. Numerous radio stations were set up in Kurdish towns, which together with the powerful central transmitters provided round-the-clock programs in Turkish. In 1964, the state established boarding schools that aimed to physically separate Kurdish children from their homes and provide them with a Turkish education from early ages.[77] The "Sun-Language" theory and the "Citizen, Speak Turkish" campaign were reintroduced. A 1949 book named "Eastern Provinces and Their History" was republished with an introductory section written by the leader of the military junta, Cemal Gursel who praised the author for proving that the Kurds were actually of Turkish origin. Despite the "Liberal Constitution" it was clear that the government did not abandon, but rather intensified its assimilation project in the aftermath of the 1960 coup.

The 1960s witnessed the emergence of the early left wing parties. Turkish Workers Party (TIP) won 15 seats in the 1965 elections. The party soon took an interest in the "Kurdish Question" or the "Eastern Question" as known at the time. The first party resolution affirmed the existence of Kurdish people who were being subjected to a policy of assimilation by the "fascist authorities": this was a landmark in Turkish politics, as never before had a party recognized the existence of Kurds in Turkey.[78]

The 1960s are relevant to our study because the new Articles in the Constitution led to the mobilization of Kurdish groups in Turkey. This period was also reflective of the emerging leftist movements around the world. Ozcan writes that the 1960 coup marked the

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[77] Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. Bilingualism or Not The Education of Minorities (London: Multilingual Matters Limited, 1987), 308-12.

[78] Gunter, Michael M. Kurds in Turkey a political dilemma (Boulder, Colo: Westview P, 1990), 16.

end of the "Kurdish tribal resistance" and the "beginning of the knock-on effect of Europe's '68 Generation." [79] In this period, many politically active Kurds joined the Turkish Left in search of liberating themselves from "the capitalist and imperialist yoke." [80] However the Turkish Left's failure to address the "Eastern Question" at greater lengths eventually led to the creation of independent left-wing Kurdish youth associations. The most important one among these was the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths (DDKO). Out of this group would rise *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan-* Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the 1970s.

Despite the language restrictions, this period also witnessed the rise of Kurdish opposition movements that formed around Kurdish various periodicals and other publications. Among notable ones were *Silvan'ın Sesi* (Voice of Silvan), *Dicle-Fırat*, (Tigris-Euphrates), *Roja Newe* (New Day), *Reya Rast* (Right Path), *Yeni Akı* (The New Wave), *Ezilenler* (The Oppressed).[81] These publications gave voice to Kurdish thinkers and intellectuals from different strata across the country. The state reacted to these publications by charging the publishers and the writers with "separatist propaganda." It was clear that the Turkish state still continued to perceive the use of Kurdish in a framework of security.

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[79] Ozcan, Ali Kemal. <u>Turkey's Kurds in perspective a theoretical analysis of Abdullah Ocalan and the PKK</u> (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 60.
[80] Barkey, Henri J., and Graham E. Fuller. <u>Turkey's Kurdish Question</u> (New York: R&L Inc., 1998), 15.
[81] Hassanpour, Amir. <u>Nationalism and language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985</u> (San Francisco: Mellen Research UP, 1992), 256.

2.2.2. 1971: the year of "the coup by memorandum"

By the end of 1960s, a wave of social unrest marked by street demonstrations, labor strikes and political assassinations plagued the country. Amid the economic recession, instability, and the growing violence between the left and the right wing student groups, the Turkish military delivered "a coup by memorandum" to restore law and order. The relative democratization and liberalization process of the Turkish politics in the 1960s came to a sudden halt.

Following the coup of 1971, freedom of speech was once again restricted while the military arrested thousands of "suspected terrorists" between 1971 and 1973. The military also dissolved the Turkish Workers Party (TIP) and sentenced some of its members to prison for "encouraging Kurdish separatist activities." [82] Meanwhile, the government introduced new laws concerning the use of Kurdish language. For example, the 1972 legislation on "National Registration and the Ordinance on Family Names" declared, "Nobody can bear a name that is not in accordance with our national culture, and Turkish traditions." [83] Parents who attempted to give Kurdish names to their children were put on trial and sentenced for "contradicting good morals…damaging the national culture and tradition." [84] During this period, the Turkish state continued to pursue its attempts to assimilate the Kurds into the Turkish nation.

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[82]Watts, Nicole F. "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-1994." International Journal of Middle East Studies 31 (1999): 631-56. Cambridge University Press. <www.jstor.com>. 651.
[83] Yildiz, Kerim. Kurtlerin Kulturel ve Dilsel Haklari (Istanbul: Belge Yayinlari, 2004), 50.
[84] Ibrahim, Ferhad, and Gulistan Gurbey, eds. Kurdish conflict in Turkey obstacles and chances for peace and democracy (New York: LIT, St. Martin's P, 2000), 23.

The 1971 coup marks the date after which the Kurdish mobilization radicalized. Kurdish historian Bozarslan argues that until the 1970s, Kurdish movements were concerned with integration and civic and social rights rather than separation and the recognition of a specified national identity. [85] The military junta of 1971 attempted to crush the emerging Kurdish movements that had benefited from the relative liberal period of the 1960s. However the state's intolerance of the Kurdish groups encouraged further mobilization. Among the notable Kurdish movements of the 1970s were the Vanguard Workers Party of Kurdistan (PPKK), the Kurdistan Liberation Party (PRK) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). In the early 1980s, the PKK would emerge as the most significant opposition movement, attracting thousands of partisans.

The elections were back in 1973. There were ten different governments between 1973 elections and the next military coup in 1980. Astonishingly, not one of them represented a majority party in the parliament. This is related to the 1961 Constitution which altered the electoral system to "one of excessive proportional representation" that eventually resulted in a multiparty system which "hindered and prevented the emergence of any majority government at all." [86] The result was a disastrous constant political deadlock. Social unrest ensued as political parties, student groups, and labor unions once again were all politicized and ideologically factionalized. The economic conditions also worsened as the ruling party failed to carry out IMF's austerity measures. As a result, the Turkish military once again took control of the government in 1980.

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[85] Kreyenbroek, P. The Kurds A Contemporary Overview (New York: Routledge, 1991), 100.
[86] Ibid. 24.

2.2.3. 1980 coup: state sponsored violence and further language restrictions

The aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état marked the most repressive period in Turkish history. For the next three years, the Turkish Armed Forces ruled the country through the National Security Council. This time the army directly intervened in the political process, forcing sweeping changes that profoundly altered the Turkish-Kurdish relations. General Kenan Evren who headed the military junta declared that the military's goal was "to exterminate communism and separatism." [87] In 1982 the Constitution was replaced with an authoritarian document which envisioned a highly centralized state with a depoliticized society.[88] The new Constitution gave extensive powers to the state in order to restore social and political order while it placed severe restrictions on political and civil rights.

All parties, leftist and rightist, were dissolved within a year. Around half a million people were detained, 230,000 of them tried, 14,000 stripped off their citizenship and 50 executed.[89] Referring to the aftermath of the 1980 coup, McDowall writes, "The Kurds featured prominently amongst those receiving the harshest treatment from the government."[90] Between the years 1980-1982 General Evren's plan to "exterminate the separatists" was brought to life in the infamous Diyarbakir Military Prison where hundreds of "suspected separatist" Kurds were imprisoned, tortured and killed.[91]

In relation to Kurdish language, the 1980 military government recycled the early Turkish state's language policies. However, because the Kurdish opposition movements

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[87] "Interview with General Kenan Evren." Der Spiegel 19 Oct. 1981.

[88] Yesilada, Birol A. "Problems of Political Development in the Third Turkish Republic." (Palgrave Macmillan Journals, 1988), 345-72.

[89] "Turkey still awaits to confront with generals of the coup in Sep 12, 1980." Hurriyet Daily News.

[90] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 413.

[91] Amnesty internaitional gunter pg. 46

continued to grow, the military junta took further repressive measures than the early republican statesmen. In the name of safeguarding the "national unity and indivisibility," the military generals of this period attempted to crush the Kurdish nationalist mobilization through more violent means and repressive regulations. The most significant law of this period was the Language Ban Act of 1983, which proscribed the use of languages other than the "mother tongue of Turkish citizens" in public places.[92] Under this regulation, the use of Kurdish came to be considered a constitutional treason. Furthermore, Turkish was declared the "mother tongue" of all Turkish citizens, replacing the words "official language" in the Constitution.

The homogenizing language policies of the earlier military governments were now implemented with full force. Almost every city hall and government building in the southeast region carried a sign which read: "It is strictly prohibited to speak any other language than Turkish." A new penal clause read, "A banned language cannot be used in publishing or expressing opinions." Another law that the junta passed allowed "a person's first name and family name [to] be changed with a court order without the will of the person in question." During this period, 2,842 more Kurdish village names were officially changed to Turkish, which meant that 12,422 out of a total 44,609 village names had now been "Turkified." [93] The measures taken by the 1980 junta were similar to those of the Republic's formative years as the Turkish penal code and the Constitution were once again manipulated to stifle the Kurdish nationals.

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[92] Watts, Nicole F. "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-1994." <u>International Journal of Middle East Studies</u> 31 (Cambridge University Press 1999), 634.
[93] Hassanpour, Amir. Nationalism and language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985. (San Francisco: Mellen Research UP, 1992), 136.

In 1983 the military junta decided to transfer power to the civilians and asked new politicians to form parties, as the old party chairs had all been banned out of politics. Turkey's association with the European Community prevented the military from opposing to pluralism. However in order to contain political opposition, the military presented people with "a false reality of plurality" as it demanded the new parties to be evaluated by the National Security Council which could veto individuals found unfit.[94] The elections resulted in the victory of the Motherland Party under the leadership of Turgut Ozal who combined a neoliberal economic program with conservative social values. Four years later, Ozal became the president, a position that he held until 1993. His role was crucial in recognizing the "Kurdish reality" as the Language Ban Act would be abolished under his leadership in 1991.

This chapter aimed to present the government's language-related policies vis-à-vis the political and social developments that occurred between the years 1923 and 1991. The successive military juntas that shaped the state's language policies consisted of Kemalist elites determined to safeguard the early republican nation-building model. As the Kurdish mobilization grew in scope, the state's approach to linguistic diversity took on an increasingly repressive character. However, in 1991, the ban on speaking and publishing in "non-official" languages was repealed. This presented a complete reversal in the state's approach to the Kurdish language. Why did the seventy-year-old state policies concerning the Kurdish language take a different turn in the 1990s? The next chapter investigates this policy change.

Chapter 3

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[94] Yesilada, Birol A. "Problems of Political Development in the Third Turkish Republic." (Palgrave Macmillan Journals, 1988), 355.

In this chapter, I present the various catalysts which prompted a change in the Turkish state's language policies. These causal factors are grouped under two headings: the Kurdish actors and the Turkish actors. In the first section (3.1.) I address the Kurdish actors that played an important role in transforming the Turkish state's denial policy. The Kurdish actors that are discussed are the aforementioned PKK, and the pro-Kurdish political parties. I argue that the PKK reinforced the notion of the Kurdish language posing a threat to the "national unity and indivisibility." However, the scope of the Turkish-Kurdish armed conflict forced the state to reverse its denial policy and recognize the "Kurdish reality." On the other hand, the pro-Kurdish parties and Kurdish politicians voiced the Kurdish cultural and linguistic demands in the political arena, contributing to the increasing debates about the recognition of the "Kurdish reality." The dissolution of the Kurdish parties by the Constitutional Court, and the banishment of Kurdish deputies from the parliament found worldwide coverage, resulting in international pressure on the Turkish state further democratization reforms. Overall I argue that the emergence of the PKK, and the persistence of the pro-Kurdish parties despite the party dissolutions forced the Turkish state to recognize failure of the assimilationist policies.

In the second section of this chapter (3.2.), I examine the changing Turkish state identities. My investigation focuses on the role of the two Turkish state actors, namely Turgut Ozal and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Both of these politicians attempted to restructure the early republican language policies. My findings lead me to believe that both Ozal and Erdogan aimed to reform the nation-building model as a result of pressure from the non-

Turkish actors. I argue that Ozal played an important role in recognizing the "Kurdish reality" as he was the first Turkish politician to publicly admit that the state's assimilationist language policies had failed. However he felt obliged to do so because of the increasingly violent clashes between the Turkish military forces and the PKK. Ozal's recognition of the "Kurdish reality" aimed to put an end to the conflict which had undermined the authority of the state. Under Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), the state took extensive steps to reform the language policies. Erdogan's efforts cannot be examined independent of Turkey's membership negotiations with the European Union. I find that this external factor was the main catalyst that brought about a policy change.

At the end of this chapter, I examine how effective the recent reforms have been. I find that the AKP government's reforms remain inconsistent as they were shaped within the framework of national security. Although the Kemalist military elites lost a certain degree of influence in the past decade, they continue to exert pressure on the ruling governments regarding the protection of "national unity and indivisibility." I argue that the AKP policy-makers were unable to escape the pressure from the Kemalist military elite and structured the language reforms according to the military elites' vision. Furthermore, AKP failed to implement the new legislative reforms. Overall I find that the policy changes remain superficial, yet they nevertheless represent a symbolic step forward.

3.1. The Kurdish Actors

According to Turkish political scientist Murat Somer, the Turkish nation-building project created three main groups among the Kurdish citizens: those who chose to assimilate into the Turkish national identity; those who privately maintain their ethnic identity but suppress it in public; and those who reject the Turkish state policy and try to change it by using violent or nonviolent means.[95] This section analyzes the impact of the third group on the state's policy change.

Although not recognized by the Turkish state as an official minority, Kurds constitute the second largest ethnic group in Turkey. Authorities estimate the number of the Kurdish population in Turkey to be somewhere in between eleven and fifteen million, a number that constitutes approximately twenty percent of the country's entire population.[96] The Kurds have historically occupied the eastern and southeastern regions of the country. Despite the early republican efforts of restructuring the ethnic composition of the region, most Kurds continue to reside in this area. Kymlicka and Patten write that the nation-building model has typically been resisted by groups which see themselves as forming "nations within." [97] The dense concentration of the Kurdish population in this region led to the mobilization of various Kurdish opposition movements. Some of these groups chose to resist assimilation through violent means. Other Kurds who opposed the Turkish state's repressive language policies aimed to transform the state's official monolingualism through political means. In

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[95] Murat Somer, "Diversity vs. Unity: Causes and Dynamics of Ethnic Polarization." December 1999
[96] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 3.
[97] Kymlicka, Will, and Alan Patten, eds. Language rights and political theory. (Oxford UP, 2003), 41.

this section I examine the role of these two Kurdish groups in bringing about the policy change.

3.1.1. The role of the PKK in the recognition of the "Kurdish reality"

In the aftermath of the Lausanne Treaty that proclaimed the Republic of Turkey, there were numerous Kurdish uprisings led by religious figures and tribal chieftains. As aforementioned, during this period the state began to perceive the Kurds as the primary challenge to the territorial integrity and security of the newly formed country. Thus, the Kurdish uprisings were ruthlessly suppressed and the state adopted coercive assimilation as its main strategy. The Turkish state's reaction to the early Kurdish rebellions underlined "the centrality of the use of coercion" in the Turkish policies.[98] David McDowall writes that the Sheikh Said revolt of 1925 signaled the beginning of "implacable Kemalism" that became "the symbol of state inflexibility." [99]

The last known rebellions of this period happened in the province of Dersim in 1938. Often referred to as "the Dersim Massacres" these uprisings were violently crushed by the Turkish authorities. Thereafter, the Kurdish leaders failed to organize themselves into a

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[98] Somer, Murat. Defensive and Liberal Nationalisms: The Kurdish Question and Modernization/Democratization (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2007), 14.
[99] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 198.

coherent movement until late 1960s, as the cleavages among the Kurds along geographic, linguistic and religious lines worked against the formation of a coherent Kurdish identity.[100]

The language homogenization efforts undertaken by the early policy makers were in some aspects successful in assimilating many non-Turkish citizens. Yet, they have also sowed the seeds of hostility and resentment that underlies the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. The most significant development in the history of Kurdish nationalist mobilization occurred when a group of university students gathered under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan in 1968. According to journalist Ismet Imset, Ocalan had gradually attracted the Kurdish Left through his speeches about Kurdish rights, which was then a major taboo.[101]

Although Ocalan's group originally emerged from within the Turkish Marxist Left, it later took on a Kurdish "revolutionary-socialist national liberation" character. In 1978, the group, then known as *Apocular,* declared that it had become a party under the name of *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan,* Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The organization's first manifesto stated:

> Kurdistan is an inter-state colony. A national liberation struggle is unavoidable duty
> in order to gain the freedom and independence of the Kurdish people. [102]

An examination of PKK's ideologies lies beyond the scope of this paper. What is important for this study is the effect the PKK had on the state authorities' actions in shaping their stance towards the "Kurdish Question" and Kurdish language. When PKK initiated its

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[100] Kirisci, Kemal, and Gareth M. Winrow. Kurdish question and Turkey an example of a trans-state ethnic conflict (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 105.
[101] Ozcan, Ali Kemal. Turkey's Kurds in perspective a theoretical analysis of Abdullah Ocalan and the PKK (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 93.
[102] Ibid. 86.

first armed attack on the Turkish military in 1984, it declared that the use of violence was legitimate due to lack of democracy in Turkey.[103] The Turkish state initially perceived the group as "a remnant of the pre-1980 terrorism" and "a doomed organization." [104] The military junta of 1980-1983 had been successful in restoring law and order by stabilizing the economy and bringing social unrest to an end. Nobody expected political violence to break out again. In Aliza Marcus' words, "Turkey was caught by surprise." [105]

The Turkish military responded back with further violence and repression to "root out…a handful of bandits." [106] Although the martial law was lifted in 1982, the Turkish military forces declared a "State of Emergency" in the southeastern provinces. The "State of Emergency Law" exempted judicial review of acts carried out by the Turkish administrative authorities and the security forces. This was a response to the growing unrest of the Kurdish groups. During this period, authorities crushed all kinds of Kurdish expression as anything Kurdish related came to be regarded as a support for the PKK. Ironically, the state's intolerance of Kurds facilitated the rapid growth of the PKK in size while it boosted the organization's popularity. During its highest point in the early 1990s the militant membership was around seventeen thousand.[107] The vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence had revitalized the growth of Kurdish consciousness and heightened the sense of Kurdish political identity.

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[103] Petersson, Bo. Majority cultures and the everyday practices of ethnic difference whose house is this? (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 176.
[104] Ibid. 85.
[105] Marcus, Aliza. Blood and Belief The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence. (New York: NYU P, 2007), 83.
[106] Ozcan, Ali Kemal. Turkey's Kurds in Perspective: a Theoretical Analysis of Abdullah Ocalan and the PKK (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 85.
[107] "PKK." Intelligence Resource Program. Ed. John Pike. <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/pkk.htm>.

The PKK initially promised to "liquidate" political parties, the "imperialist" cultural and educational institutions, legislative and representative bodies, and "all local collaborators and agents working for the Republic of Turkey in Kurdistan." [108] It had also aimed to establish a Kurdish nation in the Kurdistan regions of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. However its demands gradually transformed from forming an independent state to attaining regional autonomy. This transformation was made clear after Ocalan's capture in 1999 as the organization announced a peace initiative, declaring that it would now seek cultural and linguistic rights through non-violent means.

The PKK had two major effects on the "Kurdish Question." First, it reinforced the Turkish state's "Sèvres syndrome." After the Treaty of Sèvres, the Ottoman lands were partitioned amongst the Allies. This time the threat to the "unity and indivisibility" of the nation came from within. The stringent nation-state concept of the Kemalist ideology was reinterpreted within the context of the violent Turkish-Kurdish clashes. The emergence of the PKK became an excuse for the severe suppression of Kurdish related activities. Even after the capture of Ocalan, the state continued to perceive Kurdish language as a threat to the national security.

However, the PKK served another important purpose. In the span of fifteen years, the Turkish-Kurdish conflict had resulted in forty thousand deaths and colossal material costs.[109] Therefore, the state could no longer deny the existence of a "Kurdish Problem." Although the Turkish authorities' approach to the Kurdish question became increasingly

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[108] "Letter to Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema." 1998. Human Rights Watch.
[109] Marcus, Aliza. "Turkey's PKK: Rise, Fall and Rise Again?" (World Policy Journal 24, 2007), 75.

authoritarian, the inefficacy of the assimilation project had now become "an open secret." [110]

It was clear that by the end of 1980s, the systematic denial of the Kurdish existence and the state's assimilationist policies had failed.

When the Language Ban Act was repealed in 1991, the shift was a partial response to the violent conflict that had undermined the authority of the Turkish state. The abolition pursued several objectives: the state had failed to put an end to the popular dissent, the Kurdish nationalist sentiments and the PKK violence. The annulment of the Language Ban Act was also in part an appeasement gesture through which the state hoped to deprive PKK of its popular support.

Following Ocalan's capture in 1999, the PKK declared a peace initiative. Although the Turkish state perceived this as a victory against those "threatening the indivisibility of the nation," the PKK had nevertheless served an important purpose. The scope of the conflict forced the state to recognize the existence of a "Kurdish reality." The "Mountain Turks" finally became the "Kurds" in the state discourse. [111]

3.1.2. The pro-Kurdish political parties and Kurdish politicians

While some Kurds who resisted the Turkish state's assimilationist policies resorted to violent means, others chose to voice their dissent in the political sphere by forming pro-Kurdish parties. The role of these political parties in influencing the state's policy change is

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[110] Ibrahim, Ferhad, and Gulistan Gurbey, eds. Kurdish conflict in Turkey obstacles and chances for peace and democracy (New York: LIT, St. Martin's P, 2000), 155.
[111] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 446.

two-fold. First, the emergence of openly pro-Kurdish parties expanded the debates about language policies in the political sphere. Second, the party dissolutions and the arrests of Kurdish politicians who attempted to voice their dissatisfaction with the state ideology placed the language debates on the international agenda. In turn, international organizations put pressure on the Turkish government to alter its policies.

The first pro-Kurdish party was born out of an internal dispute within the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP). Founded in 1985, SHP had sheltered center-left Turkish intellectuals, moderate Marxists, workers and Kurds. This party had remained the party of choice for most Kurdish activists. However SHP became divided over the issue of its Kurdish party members' attendance in a conference sponsored by the Freedom Foundation and the Kurdish Institute in Paris. By attending this conference, Kurdish deputies were openly acknowledging their recognition of the Kurdish national identity. The question came down to whether this act was "treachery or freedom of expression." [112] After a series of heated debates, the SHP disciplinary committee decided to expel the Kurdish deputies. Other upset Kurdish members left the party. For the first time since the 1980 coup, the issue of Kurdish rights and democracy became widely discussed. The event was a turning point for the Kurdish political movement, as the Kurdish deputies who left SHP went on to found People's Labor Party (HEP) in 1990.

HEP became Turkey's first exclusively pro-Kurdish party. Thereafter, HEP members faced constant pressure from other parliament members, police, public prosecutors and the media. According to Watts, "No political party in Turkish history had ever sustained parliamentary representation while promoting formal recognition of a Kurdish people as its

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[112] Watts, Nicole F. "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-1994." International Journal of Middle East Studies (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 642.

central political platform." [113] Initially, the members of HEP refrained from using words such as Kurdistan and defined HEP as "a party for all Turkey." In HEP's first party program, there was only one page devoted to the Kurdish problem which included the following statement:

> Today, to propose the existence of the Kurdish people is reason for a party to be closed. In order to solve the problem, it is first of all necessary for all of the legal administrative and social obstacles that prevent free debate on this problem to be removed. [114]

The HEP chairman also defined it as "a party of the masses…[its] right line extends to 'democrat' but [its] left line stops before armed action." [115] He went on to claim that HEP aimed to "solve the Kurdish problem through peaceful and democratic methods in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." [116] Therefore, the group had distanced itself from the PKK, a crucial element to its survival within the Turkish political system.

The party's rising popularity among the Kurdish population was evident. As HEP meetings began to attract up to 10,000 people in the southeast region of Turkey, the state officials became increasingly wary of the situation. The attacks on HEP members, as well as the rising conflicts between the police and Kurdish civilians contributed to HEP's shift from "a party for the masses" to an openly Kurdish party. As PKK flags and PKK leader Ocalan's pictures began appearing at HEP meetings, the Turkish state actors began perceiving the party as a threat to stability.

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[113] Watts, Nicole F. "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-1994." International Journal of Middle East Studies (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 636.
[114] Ibid. 636.
[115] Ibid. 637.
[116] Ibid. 636.

Many representatives of the state thought that HEP and pro-Kurdish politicians were violating "the spirit if not the law of the ideological and legal codes they were expected to uphold." [117] For some, support for HEP was equal to support for PKK. In 1993, the public prosecutor filed a case for the dissolution of HEP in the grounds that HEP cultivated social differences and aimed to destroy the inseparable unity between the Turkish state and Turkish people. The prosecution also claimed that HEP had become a center of illegal PKK activities. The party defended itself with the following statement:

> HEP is attempting to voice the reality of Kurds. Being a nation or a minority are sociological facts. It is impossible to create or destroy these facts by laws. [118]

As a response, the prosecution stated that Kurds were not a minority but "part of the Turkish nation and blood." [119] The Constitutional Court decided in favor of HEP's dissolution. In its final statement, the Court greatly emphasized on the unity of the homeland and the Turkish nation, and drawing from the Treaty of Lausanne, it concluded that Kurds did not constitute a minority group, for the treaty only recognized non-Muslims as such.

In the post-1980 era Kurdish nationalism became Turkey's foremost national challenge to its notion of "indivisibility." The Court's enhanced powers after 1980 resulted in the institution's routine involvement in politics, which in turn, brought about eighteen party dissolutions. Dissolutions are generally thought to be exceptional in consolidated democracies especially in Western Europe, with the exception of Batasuna in Spain.[120] In Turkey, since its foundation in 1961, the Constitutional Court's authority gradually extended.

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[117] Kogacioglu, Dicle. "Unity and Democracy: Dissolving Political Parties." <u>Law & Society Review</u> (Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the Law and Society Association, 2004), 638.
[118] Ibid. 445.
[119] Ibid. 445.
[120] Ibid. 446.

Until today, it has shut down all Kurdish-affiliated parties, with the exception of the latest one, Democratic Society Party (DTP).

The prospects of dissolution have been so normal that few days before HEP was shut down, its members joined DEP, a newly founded pro-Kurdish party. The term "spare party" strategy was coined to describe this tactic as Kurdish politicians employed it each time their party was threatened with dissolution. After DEP came HADEP, followed by DEHAP which in turn was succeeded by DTP in 2005. Having been engineered by the same politicians, these parties all came to be seen as the extensions of each other.

These successive pro-Kurdish parties are relevant to this study because they expanded the debates concerning the state's language policies. In 1988 a number of HEP deputies have called for "the recognition of Kurdish aspirations for cultural and linguistic rights." [121] However the state continued to perceive these demands in a framework of security. The Court frequently relied on Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorist Act to charge the Kurdish deputies on the basis of engaging in "verbal and written propaganda [that] aims to destroy the national unity and the indivisibility of the Turkish Republic." [122] The case of Leyla Zana, the first elected Kurdish woman in the parliament, found widespread coverage in national and international media. In 1991, during her inauguration Zana addressed the parliament with the following words:

> I swear by my honor and my dignity before the great Turkish people to protect the
> integrity and independence of the State, the indivisible unity of people and

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[121] Avebury, Eric. Turkey's Kurdish Policy in the Nineties. Middle East Studies Association in Washington, DC. 1995.
[122] EUR 44/45/94, Amnesty International Report, June 1994.

> homeland…I take this oath for the brotherhood between the Turkish people and
> the Kurdish people. [123]

The final sentence was in Kurdish. She was immediately stripped off her immunity and banned from the parliament. In 1994 she was arrested and charged with treason in relation to her Kurdish speech in the parliament. The Court claimed she was "engaging in PKK propaganda" [124] and sentenced her to fourteen years of prison.

Zana's case illustrates the way in which the plight of the Kurdish politicians placed the issue of Kurdish rights on the international agenda. Following Zana's arrest, organizations such as Amnesty International initiated campaigns to free Zana. In 1995 she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and received the European Parliament's Sakharov Freedom of Thought Prize. Following the arrest of various Kurdish deputies along with Zana, the European Union decided to postpone its Customs Union Treaty with Turkey. Ten years later, the High Court of Appeals ordered the Kurdish deputies' release amid mounting pressures from the European Union.

The pro-Kurdish parties contributed to the political opening in regards to Kurdish language in two ways: first, they voiced the Kurdish cultural and linguistic demands in the political arena, contributing to the increasing debates about the recognition of the "Kurdish reality." Second, the dissolution of the Kurdish parties by the Constitutional Court, and the banishment of Kurdish deputies from the parliament found worldwide coverage and international support. Overall, like the PKK, the emergence of the pro-Kurdish parties despite the party dissolutions proved that the Turkish state had failed in assimilating the Kurdish minority into the Turkish nation.

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[123] "A Kurdish MP Leyla Zana in Prison." 2003. Bianet News. <www.bianet.org>.
[124] Ibid.

3.2. The Turkish State Actors

Beginning with the Treaty of Lausanne until late 1980s, the state pursued the early Kemalist goals of assimilating the Kurds into the Turkish nation. After each coup, the military elite intensified its policies of denying the Kurdish existence while repressing the Kurdish language. However, with the emergence of the PKK, it became clear that the reality contradicted the Kemalist vision of "one flag, one nation, one language." Apart from the Kurdish politicians, there have been two key Turkish politicians who publicly addressed the "Kurdish reality," and attempted to restructure the early republican language policies. I argue that these two state actors, namely Turgut Ozal and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, acted in response to external events and pressures.

3.2.1. Turgut Ozal and the "Kurdish Reality": a Silent Revolution?

When the military junta left the office in 1983, the elections resulted in the victory of Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party. Ozal served as the Prime Minister for two terms and became the president of Turkey in 1989. He was a liberal politician who reshaped the economy through the privatization of various state enterprises. His presidential tenure was defined by his dream to transform Turkey in a "little America." [125]

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[125] Anderson, Perry. "After Kemal." Review. London Review of Books 2008.

The country's economic revival under his leadership boosted Ozal's popularity, which led him to tackle more sensitive issues such as the "Kurdish Question." In 1989 Ozal stated, "In the first years of the Republic the state committed mistakes on this matter and it is necessary to recognize these." [126] This represented an obvious shift from the 1980 junta's repressive approach to the Kurdish dilemma.

In 1991, Ozal submitted a bill to the parliament that would allow "the Kurds, concentrated in thirteen provinces, to speak but not write their language." [127] The bill would repeal the 1983 Language Ban Act that proscribed the use of written and spoken Kurdish. However, the bill faced intense opposition: many denounced Ozal for "departing from the Kemalist tradition." [128] Despite the protests, Ozal's bill was passed in late 1991. The next day, the newspaper headlines read "Kurdish, a free language."

This shift from earlier policies can be seen as a response to the growing conflict between the PKK and the Turkish military forces which had undermined the authority of the Turkish state. By late 1980s, it was clear that the state had failed to put an end to the popular dissent and the growing Kurdish nationalist sentiments. Therefore, Ozal's bill was in part an appeasement gesture through which the state hoped to deprive PKK of its popular support.

Yet there was a catch. In order to convince the Kemalist military elites, Ozal had also proposed a new legislation, the Anti-Terrorist Act No. 3713, which passed the same day the language ban was repealed. This law defined terrorism as "any kind of action…with the aim

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[126] Gunter, Michael M. The Kurds in Turkey : A Political Dilemma (NY: Perseus Books Group, 1990), 126.
[127] "Reuters report from Ankara in The Globe." 8 Feb. 1991.
[128] McDowall, David. A Modern History of The Kurds (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 429.

of changing the characteristics of the Republic." [129] Under this law, the National Security Courts set up in the aftermath of the 1980 coup could easily try individuals involved in any type of activities related to Kurdish language. The Court frequently relied on Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorist Act to charge people on the basis of engaging in "verbal and written propaganda [that] aims to destroy the national unity and the indivisibility of the Turkish Republic." [130] The definition of "verbal or written propaganda" was left up to the judgment of the Court. This vaguely defined Anti-Terrorist Act led to the arrests of many Kurdish political figures such as Leyla Zana.

Ozal claimed that his solution to the "Kurdish Problem" rested on employing political means rather than violence. During an interview he said, "We can not accomplish a solution with sticks, but only with dialogue, persuasion and civil rights." [131] Still, I believe that the lifting of the language ban only had a symbolic significance. Ozal's bill did not signify a real change in the Turkish state's language policies but it was rather a superficial attempt to satisfy the external European pressures and the growing Kurdish demands. In fact the language-ban still remained in effect in matters concerning publishing, education, music, and broadcasting. Furthermore, similar to Adnan Menderes in the late 1950s, Ozal gave in to the pressures of the Kemalist military elites by adopting measures to protect the "unity and indivisibility" of the nation.

Nevertheless, Ozal's role in transforming the official state ideology of denial cannot be overlooked. He was the first Turkish politician to openly admit that the early Kemalist policies had committed injustice to the Kurds. In fact, his efforts to find a peaceful solution

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[129] McDowall, David. <u>A Modern History of The Kurds</u> (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 429.
[130] Ibid. 429.
[131] Dundar, Can. "Ozal's Solution to the Kurdish Problem." Milliyet Newspaper [Istanbul] 2005.

to the "Kurdish Problem" did not go unnoticed. In 1993, Abdullah Ocalan declared a unilateral ceasefire by stating, "There is no reason why we should not extend our ceasefire…if the Turkish government is responsive." [132] Ironically, the next day Ozal died due to a heart attack. McDowall writes that with the death of Ozal, Turkey and Ocalan had "lost the only statesman who had proved capable of imaginative if modest gestures towards the Kurds."[133]

The succeeding governments proved incapable of carrying on Ozal's moderate reforms. The ceasefire ended in 1993 and the Turkish-Kurdish conflict persisted until Ocalan's capture in 1999. It became clear that the sole recognition of the "Kurdish reality" by the state was not a sufficient step to satisfy the Kurdish nationalists.

3.2.2. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the "Kurdish Question" and the European Union: "a mental revolution?"

Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the current Prime Minister of Turkey. His Islamist-leaning Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been running the country since 2002. Under the leadership of Erdogan, the AKP government has taken more positive steps regarding the status of the Kurdish language than any other government in Turkish history.

Erdogan's Justice and Development Party was formed by a breakaway group of the Virtue Party that was dissolved by the Constitutional Court in 2001 because of its "anti-

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[132]McDowall, David. <u>A Modern History of The Kurds</u> (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 436.
[133] Ibid. 437.

secular" activities. Erdogan, associated with hardliner Islamists in the past, currently claims to hold a moderate stance. As the self-proclaimed guardians of the secular Kemalist tradition, the Turkish military is often suspicious of Erdogan, accusing him of harboring a secret Islamist agenda.

Despite his condemnation by the secular elite, Erdogan's popularity in Turkey is irrefutable: under his leadership, AKP won two landslide victories in 2002 and 2007. The incumbent party collected almost fifty percent of the total votes in the general elections of 2007.[134] The party also outpolled the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) in most of the southeastern provinces. AKP's success in the Kurdish populated regions has been attributed to Erdogan's ambitious claims to solve the "Kurdish Problem" through democratic means, as well as the party's conservative agenda that appeals to the Muslim identity of the Kurdish voters.

When AKP came to power in 2002, Erdogan claimed that the twenty-first century had opened "a new democratic era" for the Kurds.[135] The reforms initiated by AKP cannot be seen independent from two external events: first is the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's arrest in 1999. In the wake of his incarceration, Ocalan urged the PKK rebels to "lay down [their] guns" and seek justice through political means.[136] He also claimed that the organization would now abandon its claim to separatism in favor of coexistence within a "more democratic Republic." [137] The PKK then renamed itself Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan (KADEK), and claimed it would now continue its fight for linguistic and cultural rights through political means. The armed forces perceived Ocalan's

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[134] "2007 Elections in Turkey." 5 Apr. 2007. <http://www.euroactive.com>.
[135] "Political Landslide In Turkey?" Bianet News 13 Nov. 2002. <www.bianet.org>.
[136] "Ocalan and the PKK Anounce Ceasefire." Aksam Newspaper 3 Apr. 2000. <http://arsiv.aksam.com.tr>.
[137] Ibid.

arrest as a victory and lifted the 15-year "State of Emergency" in the southeastern provinces. While the PKK attacks gradually faded between the years 1999 and 2003, fears of militant Kurdish separatism diminished, and the Kurdish language came to be seen less threatening to the "national unity and the indivisibility."

I argue that the second factor was the most important catalyst that brought about the shift in the Turkish state's approach to linguistic diversity. This external factor was Turkey's recognition as a candidate for full membership in the European Union (EU). The Turkish state had first shown an interest in joining the EU in 1963 when it signed an association agreement that promised eventual membership. Negotiations moved very slowly until 1999 when Turkey was officially recognized as an EU candidate.

Until the 1990s the EU was primarily depicted as an economic unity. However in the post-Cold War period, the Union became increasingly concerned with democracy and respect for human rights. The reasons for this shift have already been outlined in Chapter One. Consequently, the "Kurdish Question" caused disagreements between the European Union and the Turkish state. The 2000 Regular Report of the Commission on Turkey analyzed the situation for the European Union:

> Regardless of whether or not Turkey is willing to consider any ethnical groups with a cultural identity and common traditions as national minorities, members of such groups are clearly still largely denied certain basic rights…such as the right to broadcast in their mother tongue, to learn their mother tongue, or to receive instruction in their mother tongue. [138]

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[138] Petersson, Bo. Majority cultures and the everyday practices of ethnic difference whose house is this? (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 177.

In 2002 the European Council stated that the EU was ready to open negotiations with Turkey without delay "if Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria (the political, legal, and the economic criteria that define a country's eligibility to join the European Union)." [139] Legal reforms were crucial to Turkey's bid. Therefore, when AKP came to power in 2002, the pro-European party embarked upon a number of reforms in order to comply with the EU accession conditions of "democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities." [140]

With its electoral victory in 2002, AKP received sixty-five percent of the seats in the parliament, hence AKP became the first party in almost two decades to govern Turkey without coalition partners. Holding most of the seats in the parliament, the party was able to quickly pass the legislative measures necessary for the EU accession. The AKP government enacted three "Harmonization Law Packages" in 2002 with the goal of reforming the legislative system in compliance with the EU norms. The introduction of these led to various amendments in the Turkish Penal Code and the 1982 Constitution.

The first important reform came when the government removed the following sentence from Article 26 of the Constitution: "No language prohibited by law shall be used in the expression and dissemination of thought." [141] This provision had banned the use of Kurdish, as Kurdish was a "prohibited language." The removal of this sentence paved the way for other changes in the legislation regarding broadcasting in Kurdish. The next year the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RTUK) drafted the regulation on "Radio and TV

[139] "Q&A: Turkey's European Union Entry Talks." BBC News 11 Dec. 2006. <www.bbc.co.uk.>.
[140] "Enlargement and Accession Criteria: the Copenhagen Council." The European Commission. <http://ec.europa.eu>.
[141] Oran, Baskin. "Minority Legislation and Its Implementation in Turkey." 25 July 2007. <http://www.turquieeuropeene.eu>.

Broadcasts in Languages and Dialects Traditionally Used by Turkish Citizens in Their Daily Lives." [142] However the broadcasting had time limits (45 minutes per day 4 hours a week for radio, and 30 minutes per day and 2 hours a week on television). Private broadcasting was not allowed until 2006 and significant restrictions would remain until 2008.

Another important reform was the new regulation on "the learning different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives." [143] This regulation aimed to establish and supervise private language courses. However, in 2005 all of the eight Kurdish private language courses were closed down due to a lack of demand. While the Turkish elites perceived this as evidence of apathy on the part of the Kurds, the Kurds themselves put the blame on the state for complicating the implementation of the regulation by restricting the attendance to those over eighteen, those who have already had eight years primary school and to those who speak Turkish.[144] They also argued that the high costs were unaffordable to the Kurds.[145] As a response to the changes made in regards to the Kurdish language, a political scientist noted that these were created for "the education of Kurdish but not the education in Kurdish," [146] voicing the opinions of many other supporters of teaching Kurdish as a first language in national schools.

Although the new changes failed to satisfy many Kurds, they nevertheless marked the beginning of a new era. Ertugrul Ozkok, the chief editor of one of the national dailies, wrote in his column that the Turkish parliament had "a mental revolution… as it has come from

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[142] Oran, Baskin. "Minority Legislation and Its Implementation in Turkey." 25 July 2007.
<http://www.turquieeuropeene.eu>.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Petersson, Bo. Majority cultures and the everyday practices of ethnic difference whose house is this? (NY: Palgrave Macmillan), 2008.
[145] Bozarslan, Mahmut. "Kurdish Courses Closed Down." BBC News 1 Aug. 2005. <www.bbc.co.uk>.
[146] Demir, E. Education in Mother Tongue, Nation and Equality. Istanbul: Sorun, 2005.

the fear of pronouncing the word 'Kurd' to end up with granting freedom for education and broadcast in Kurdish language." [147] In fact, these reforms can be defined groundbreaking in a country where the recognition of the existence of Kurds and the Kurdish language had been denied as the cornerstone of state policy. Despite the shortcomings, the 2002 Report of the European Commission welcomed the progress made by Turkey.[148]

Other reforms followed. In 2003 the law on name-ban was repealed. In 2004 the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) started its limited broadcasts in languages other than Turkish, including Kurmanji and Zaza. Another major development in this period was the abolition of State Security Courts that were set up by the 1980 military junta. These courts were responsible for trying cases involving terrorism and state security. Their abolition was significant because the European Court of Human Rights had found the presence of military judges in these courts to be a violation of fair trial.[149] Following these reforms, the European Union announced that it was ready to start official accession negotiations in 2004. Interestingly the same year the PKK renounced the unilateral cease-fire as its hardliner militant wing took control of the organization. The militants claimed that they decided to take up arms again because the AKP reforms were "superficial and insincere." [150]

Indeed the reforms remained superficial as the government failed to implement the new regulations. For example, a campaign conducted by university students to allow the

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[147] http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?viewid=158436

[148] Petersson, Bo. Majority cultures and the everyday practices of ethnic difference whose house is this? (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 181.

[149] "European Court of Human Rights Hands Down Judgement on State Security Courts." July 1998. Kurdish Human Rights Project.

[150] "KONGRA-GEL Press Conference." Bianet News 1 July 2004. <www.bianet.org>.

teaching of Kurdish as a second language in schools, landed seventy-eight students in jail.[151] The Court described the campaign as "subversive activity" organized by the PKK. The pro-Kurdish party MPs protested the arrests, by claiming that the government was blocking democratic demands "just because PKK raises similar demands too." [152] Furthermore, Amnesty International reported that twelve journalists were incarcerated and various pro-Kurdish weeklies were banned in 2002, for making "separatist propaganda." [153] In 2003, the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RTUK) ordered a Kurdish radio off the air on the grounds that a program called the "History of Kurdish Language and Literature" endangered the "Turkish Republic's existence and independence, the indivisible integrity of the state, and against Ataturk's principles and revolutions." [154] These cases are not isolated events, but are illustrative of a larger pattern. To this day, various human rights organizations such as Amnesty International continue to report cases where AKP's harmonization reforms were not put into practice.

The most striking incident occurred a month after Prime Minister Erdogan's appearance on the new state-owned Kurdish channel TRT6. During a live broadcasting of the pro-Kurdish party DTP's meeting in the parliament, Ahmet Turk, the chairman of the party, announced that he would deliver the rest of his speech in Kurdish. The state-owned TRT channel immediately cut the broadcast. The announcer stated, "Since no language other than Turkish can be used in the parliament meetings according to the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Political Parties Law, we had to stop our broadcast." During his speech Ahmet Turk pointed out to the irony of the situation:

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[151] "Appeal for Kurdish Language Courses Refuted." Bianet News 15 Feb. 2002. <www.bianet.org>.

[152] Ibid.
[153] 153 Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) Annual Report on Media. Rep. Paris, 2002.
[154] BIA2 2004 Three-Month Report. Rep. Istanbul: Bianet, 2004.

Despite the Kurdish broadcast on TRT 6, there is no legal protection for Kurdish…Politicians get punished for speaking Kurdish while the Prime Minister Erdogan speaks Kurdish during rallies. Therefore, Kurdish is forbidden to Kurds yet free for the ruling party and the state. [155]

Erdogan's position on the "Kurdish Question" is inconsistent and ambiguous. Many blame him for trying to be all things to all people. Last year at a meeting held in Ankara, referring to Kurds he said, "One nation, one flag, one motherland and one state…they are opposed to this. Those who oppose this should leave." On the other hand he also made the following statement at a meeting in the Kurdish populated city of Diyarbakir:

What will we do with the Kurdish issue?' This is, before anyone else, my problem as the Prime Minister of this country. We are a big state and we will resolve every single issue with more democracy, more law and more prosperity. We don't deny any of the problems. We accept them all and are ready to face up to them. [156]

Erdogan gave this speech right before the elections of 2007, which resulted in AKP's victory in the Kurdish provinces. Akin to this political maneuver, Erdogan appeared on the Kurdish broadcasting channel TRT6 prior to the local elections of 2009. This tactical move certainly aims to undermine the popularity of the pro-Kurdish party DTP in the southeastern provinces. While DTP politicians such as Ahmet Turk reacted with skepticism to TRT6, the PKK leader Ocalan stated that Turkey wanted to "create its own Kurds with the Kurdish 'assimilation' channel." The Turkish state actors' reactions to TRT6 were also predominantly negative. The Kemalist party's leader Deniz Baykal said that Erdogan betrayed "the fundamental principles of the Turkish state." The chairman of the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party Devlet Bahceli accused Erdogan of striking "a mortal blow" to

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[155] "Kurdish Politician Speaks Mother Tongue in Parliament, Live Broadcast Cut." Bianet News 25 Feb. 2009. <www.bianet.org>.
[156] Candar, Cengiz. "Turkey : Mr Prime Minister and DiyarbakÄ±r." Turquie Europeene 28 Oct. 2008. <www.turquieeuropeene.eu>.

the national unity.[157] On the other hand the TRT6 president insists that the channel aims to be "apolitical, entertainment for the family." [158]

There is another crucial factor that haunts the AKP's language reforms, namely the Kemalist military elite. Following the abolition of the State Security Courts and the amendments to the Anti-Terror Law which had considerably limited the authority of the military, these elites became increasingly anxious about the EU-related democratization reforms of the AKP government. Hilmi Ozkok, the former Chief of the General Staff stated, "Despite reduced authority the Turkish armed forces…will continue to fight, with self-sacrifice, the terrorist organization which aims to take our nation back to painful days in the past."[159] In fact, Erdogan's inconsistent stance towards the Kurdish issue can be partly related to the pressures he has been facing from the Kemalist generals. Following Ozkok's comments Erdogan assured the generals that,

> Our struggle against terrorism will be pursued under all conditions and above all other concerns through effective cooperation between state bodies and every measure will be implemented with determination. [160]

Erdogan also claimed that the "Kurdish Problem" and the PKK terrorism were different things, and added, "We won't confuse the two, we should separate them." [161] Like his predecessors Erdogan seems to have fallen under the impression that PKK's rise is not related to the Kurdish demands for cultural and linguistic rights. He insists on perceiving

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[157] Seibert, Thomas. "Kurdish TV brings hope but picture remains unclear." The National 7 Jan. 2009. <www.thenational.ae>.

[158]Holland, Ben. "Kurds Get Brad Pitt as Erdogan Breaks Turkish Taboo on Language." Bloomberg News 13 Jan. 2009. <www.bloomberg.com>.

[159] H Balta-Peker, Evren. "The Ceasefire This Time." The Middle East Report Online.

[160] "Turkish PM wishes PKK to lay down arms." Hurriyet News 21 Mar. 2009. <www.hurriyet.com.tr>

[161] Ibid.

PKK as a purely terrorist phenomena allegedly aiming only "to destroy Turkish sovereignty and divide the country with foreign supervision and support." [162]

All the new reforms initiated by the AKP emphasize that the new freedoms cannot be enjoyed against "the fundamental principles of the Turkish Republic enshrined in the Constitution and the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation." Similar to Ozal, Erdogan had taken steps to alter the state's policies, but nevertheless couldn't escape the pressure from the Kemalist military elites. Therefore like Ozal, Erdogan fails to break away the framework of security, which continues to perceive Kurdish as a threat to the "indivisibility of the nation."

After a period of intense bargaining, the European Union membership negotiations were officially launched in 2005. Amidst the mounting pressure to solve the Kurdish problem by non-military means, AKP approved further amendments to a penal code that expanded rights on publishing and broadcasting. Since its reelection in 2007, the AKP government opted for a strategy of moderate liberalization. In its 2007 Progress Report on Turkey, the European Commission stated that the minority-related reforms were progressing slowly and remained insufficient.[163]

Despite his political maneuvers, Erdogan holds a central importance in transforming the state's assimilationist policies. Even if TRT6 and other reforms are tactical moves for attracting the Kurdish votes at the next upcoming elections, they nevertheless represent an important symbolic step forward. Since Ozal's death, the Turkish state actors had shied away from tackling the "Kurdish Question." The reforms made under Erdogan and his AKP

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[162] "Turkish PM wishes PKK to lay down arms." Hurriyet News 21 Mar. 2009. <www.hurriyet.com.tr>
[163] Turkey Progress Report 2007. Working paper. Commission of the European Communities.
<http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/turkey_progress_reports>.

signify a dramatic departure from the previous states' policies. Erdogan may seem a reluctant champion of Kurdish rights but he has done more for the Kurds and Kurdish language than at least fifteen years of armed struggle.

Conclusion

Language planning can serve the purpose of both unifying and dividing people. The adoption of an official language in which the economy and the state function can lead to the social and political exclusion of those who speak other languages. Hence, the official language of a state carries a powerful message about citizenship; it is a symbol of who is included within the national policy. Language policy-makers are often motivated by ideological objectives. Some policy-makers support the diverse languages spoken within the boundaries of a polity whereas others perceive language diversity as a threat to social cohesion and national unity. In this case study, I investigated the motivations of the Turkish policy-makers who have until recently promoted official monolingualism through coercive assimilationist measures.

I constructed my thesis around one simple question: what caused the Turkish state to change its language policy? In answering this question, I investigated the factual and theoretical beliefs that guided the early policy-makers of the Republic. In identifying the antecedent conditions, I found that the Turkish language became an essential component in the creation of the new Turkish identity during the formative years of the Republic of Turkey. Therefore linguistic homogenization became a goal through the Turkish state could create a common civic identity within a multilingual society.

During the early years of the Republic, there were several Kurdish revolts against the Turkish state's homogenization project. The Turkish authorities, having violently crushed these uprisings, used further repressive methods to assimilate the Kurds into the new

Turkish nation. The early Republican statesmen attempted to eradicate the Kurdish language through various practices, such as forceful population transfers and the proscription of Kurdish in public places.

The language policies adopted by the early statesmen remained in place until the early 1990s. The successive military juntas of 1960, 1971 and 1980 consisted of Kemalist elites determined to uphold the early republican ideologies. Therefore, these military elites recycled the Kemalist language policies by enacting similar laws and regulations emphasizing ethnic commonality. As a response to the growing Kurdish opposition movements, the military juntas opted for increasingly repressive policies, which in turn bred further violence, resulting in the emergence of various Kurdish resistance groups.

The third coup d'état in 1980 oversaw the most repressive and violent period in Turkish history. The military junta suspended elections, banned all political parties and arrested the party leaders. In the name of restoring law and order, the new regime adopted policies and methods akin to those implemented by Latin American bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of the same period. Mass arrests and tortures became commonplace in the junta's war of "exterminating the communists and separatists." The Constitution was revised, and the liberal reforms of 1961 were completely reversed. The Language Ban Act enacted during the rule of this military regime was to remain in place until 1991.

The official state ideology took a different turn beginning with the early 1990s. This can be seen as a response to the growing violent clashes between the Turkish military forces and the Kurdish armed resistance movement, the PKK. President Turgut Ozal enacted a bill which abolished the Language Ban Act in 1991. This was an appeasement gesture through

which Ozal had hoped to derive PKK of its popular support. However armed conflict persisted until the incarceration of the PKK's leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999.

The same year as Ocalan's arrest, the European Union announced Turkey's official recognition as a candidate for membership. I argued that the European Union became the main catalyst in the fundamental restructuring of the Turkish state's language policies. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister Erdogan, the pro-European AKP reshaped the language policies in an attempt to fulfill the European Union accession criteria.

Despite the Turkish state's recent shift in its language policies, various obstacles remain in the way towards the adoption of a diversity-preserving language model. The Kemalist military elites pose the first and the foremost challenge to democratic reforms. These powerful actors continue to perceive the Kurdish language in a framework of security. The three military coups indicate that the Turkish military has a strong tendency to intervene in the governmental affairs in the name of safeguarding the nation's "unity and indivisibility." The military has effectively utilized the memory of these coups to block reforms, and intimidate the parties in power. However there have been two recent improvements which diminished the influence of the military: one is the abolition of the State Security Courts and the other is the changing nature of the armed Turkish-Kurdish conflict.

Another obstacle which overshadows the reform process is the non-recognition of the Kurds as a distinct minority group. Drawing from the Treaty of Lausanne, the Turkish state still refuses to acknowledge the Kurds' minority status, which in turn prevents the Kurds from claiming special rights that the non-Muslim minorities are entitled to. The Turkish state

remains reluctant to assign such a status to Kurds as the authorities assume this act would threaten the "unity and indivisibility" of the country.

The principle of "unity and indivisibility" has also been used in excluding the Kurdish state actors from the political arena. The Constitutional Court's party dissolutions rest on the Turkish Penal Code's prohibition against "creating minority groups." The crime of "forming minority groups" is intrinsically linked the use of Kurdish language, as the Kurdish politicians accused of violating this law have been charged under Article 81 of the Law on Political Parties which prohibits politicians using a language other than Turkish.

Yet, despite the obstacles and the shortcomings of the recent reforms, it is clear that the Turkish state had a "mental revolution. " When Leyla Zana spoke Kurdish during a National Assembly speech in 1992, she was quickly arrested and charged for "separatist crimes." Twenty years later, when Ahmet Turk made a similar move, he did not face such charges. This incident illustrates that the state has "softened" its stance towards the Kurds and the Kurdish language. I argued that this democratic opening was a direct consequence of the EU accession talks and that it was this external catalyst which prompted the policy change.

Would the policy shift have happened if the prospects of joining the European Union did not exist? Although it is not possible to make a definite judgment, the political climate before the European Union accession talks points to a bleak scenario. Before the European Union came into the picture, the Turkish state was taking minor steps towards the recognition of the Kurdish language. The European Union's recognition of Turkey as an official candidate has most definitely accelerated the pace of the reforms.

This thesis is a narrative case study of policy change. The causal phenomena that

brought about the change remain unique to the Turkish case. However, it is possible to draw some conclusions regarding the causes and effects of adopting a strictly monolingual language policy. In the Turkish case, language policy was instrumental to elite preferences for the implementation of assimilationist strategies. However the systematic denial of the Kurdish identity and the coercive methods employed by the Turkish government had a "backlash effect," resulting in the emergence of Kurdish opposition movements. I conclude that a state's vision of an ideal homogenous entity is the recipe for ethnic conflict in multicultural societies.

In spite of the successive Turkish governments' efforts, it has now become clear that the assimilation project was unsuccessful in creating a monolingual entity. According to a recent poll carried out in the six biggest cities of the southeast region, sixty-five percent of the residents speak Kurdish at home and outside, fifty-two speak a mixture of Turkish and Kurdish and twenty-one percent only speak Kurdish.[164] In a country where for seventy years, just about everything have been tried except the recognition of the Kurdish identity, these numbers clearly indicate that coercive assimilation failed to eradicate the Kurdish language. As a Kurdish politician put it:

> Being a nation or a minority are sociological facts. It is impossible to create or destroy these facts by laws. [165]

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[164] Union of Industry and Trade Chambers, Report of Cultural and Language Rights of the Kurds, KHRP, February 1997, quoted fromP. 20 1995 poll.
[165] Ibid. 445.

The full recognition of the Kurds and the Kurdish language requires a reformulation of the definition of the Turkish nation-state and what it means to be a Turkish citizen. The Constitution must be revised along the lines of a multicultural, diversity-preserving model. The European Union already advised the AKP government to draft a new Constitution. However this advice faced intense opposition from the Kemalist military elite who blocked a possible revision of the Constitution.

The EU accession talks represent the beginning of a new era for the Kurdish language in Turkey. The vision of a monolingual nation is unfamiliar to the Western liberal democracies that promote diversity-preserving language policies. Therefore, the European Union membership talks hold a central importance in Turkish state's policy shift. The "Kurdish Question" remains part of problem concerning the Turkish state's further democratization. Its resolution requires the lifting of all prohibitions related to language. The prospects of a European Union membership remains the most important catalyst of change for Turkey's further democratization. However it remains unclear whether the Turkish state will be able to achieve real reforms and genuine policy changes while the Turkish military elite continues to "safeguard" the "unity and indivisibility" of the nation.

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