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**Durham**  
University

School of Government  
and International Affairs

# **TRAJECTORIES OF KURDISH POLITICAL ECONOMY AND POLITICAL IDENTITY**

**EXPLORING GREAT (NON)TRANSFORMATION,  
COUNTER-HEGEMONY AND OPPORTUNITY SPACE**

**Ömer Tekdemir**

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the School of Government and  
International Affairs, Durham University**

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# Trajectories of Kurdish Political Economy and Political Identity: Exploring Great (non)Transformation, Counter-hegemony and Opportunity Spaces

by  
Omer Tekdemir

## Abstract:

The transformation and internationalisation of the Kurdish political identity plays a momentous role and also determines the antagonistic relations of agent, structure and superstructure, in a cycle of violence, which has simultaneously impacted peace building and both Turkey's EU accession and democratisation processes. Therefore, the 'complexity' of the Kurdish status in Turkey significantly makes the counter-hegemonic discourse, strategy, policy and ideology of the Kurdish 'intellectual and moral leaders' a valuable variable to consider in conceptualising the Kurdish political economy and its transformation. The Kurds' challenging of the 'unity' of regional nation states by deconstructing their imposed and 'imaginary' national(ist) identities, in a post-nationalist or globalist era, makes it necessary to socially construct identity in relation to politically-defined identities.

The aim of this research is, thus, to explore, examine and analyse the transformation and development of the Kurdish political economy and identity within a historical context through three main periods. In understanding the nature of each of these periods, the study is compelled by the respective periods' circumstances to apply a particular theoretical framework relevant to that particular period. Hence, three distinguished theoretical frameworks are utilised to understand the macro and micro dynamics of the Kurdish political economy and identity, which help to demonstrate and present a comprehensive analysis of transformation of the Kurdi(sh) political identity.

Initially, the research critically examined the social formation and political economy of Kurdish society in the late Ottoman period with the aim of demonstrating how the Kurds could not follow the 'Great Transformation' articulated by Karl Polanyi. After a discursive enquiry, the study concludes that the internal factors in relation to the social formation of Kurdish society as identified in its political economy did not allow the Kurds to converge towards the modern society. Therefore, the study focuses on the social structure and political economy of Kurdish society from the nineteenth century onwards by examining the linear-modernisation and institutionalisation vis-à-vis Kurdish society and the role of the internal dynamics in relation to traditional institutions. However, this era ended with modernity being imposed on the 'centre', with the new Turkish state under the Kemalist Republic in 1923 resulting in the disappearance of the Kurdish leadership, which led to the emergence of the hegemonic gap.

In the new advanced-modern era, the Kurds created their own identity protection strategies, a resistance-oriented response by the new counter-hegemonic Kurdish socio-political agents resulting in double movement, which is explained by Antonio Gramsci's 'Hegemony Theory', within 'war of manoeuvre' and 'war of position' strategies, which could be considered prevalent in Kurdish circles and dominating Kurdish activism until the 1984 period. After the observed and theorised hegemonic struggle by different actors in different sub-periods, a counter and modern *Kurdi* identity is socially constructed based on socialist, secular and nationalist values.

Nevertheless, this identity has been challenged by various sub-agents; 'many Kurds', following the EU's institutional impact in shaping the Turkish, and hence, the Kurdish political culture, emerged as various groups in the form of 'postmodern *Kurdi* historical bloc' and have competed for a share of the opportunity space with the help of the 'EU-isation' of the identity process since the 1990s. Therefore, the study argues, through a social constructivist approach, that the new 'EU-ising *Kurdiness*' has challenged the mainstream Kurdish political identity, while the latter have also become a member of pro-EU sides in Turkey to extend the democratic nature of the country, in terms of a 'non-otherising democracy,' which is non-exclusive and shaped in the context of 'radical democracy'.

This study hence argues that, since political economy and political culture are not fixed but represent a dynamic process permeating around various internal and external factors, it is not possible to explain them with only one variable or theoretical framework. Therefore, three different theoretical frameworks are utilised by this study to respond to the dynamics of each period. The Kurdish future may still seem still bleak in Turkey and beyond, and the search for the emergence of various counter-hegemonies in exploiting the available opportunity spaces created through social constructivism will remain the dynamics of the process.

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that no portion of the work that appears in this study has been used in support of an application of another degree in qualification to this or any other university or institutions of learning

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## NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

In this thesis, all non-English character words, the study's own terminology and some important words that need to be specified are italicised. They are designed in accordance with the transliteration system of the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES). However, some non-English terms are not italicised due to their common use, such as *sheikh*, *agha* etc. Diacritical marks are not employed by this study nor are macrons used for any places or personal names.

Kurdish, Turkish and Arabic orthographies have been transliterated in English (Bedir Khan instead of Bedirxan *etc.*). Therefore, the pronunciation of Kurdish, Turkish and Arabic letters utilised in the study can be illustrated as follows:

c -j as in January (cuma or cemiyet are used as jummah or jemiyet)

ç- ch as in cherry (çiftlik as chiftlik)

ı- i as in list (subaşı as subasi)

k- q as in quality (Kadiri as Qadiriyya)

ö- o as in no (köy as koy)

ş-sh as in shadow (padişah as padishah)

ü- u as in run (Türk as Turk)

y- ai as in brain (kaymakam as kaimakam)

x- kh used for the sound of "h" as in holy (Xoybun as Khoybun or xeri as kheri)

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AKP: *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* (the Justice and Development Party)
- AP: *Adalet Partisi* (the Justice Party)
- ARGK: *Arteshen Rizgariya Gelli Kurdistan* (in Kurdish), (the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan)
- BDP: *Barish ve Demokrasi Partisi* (the Peace and Democracy Party)
- CHP: *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (the Republican People's Party)
- CUP: Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihat ve Terakki Partisi*)
- DEP: *Demokrasi Partisi* (the Democracy Party)
- DDKO: *Devrimci Dogu Kultur Ocaklari* (the Revolutionary Cultural Clubs of the East)
- DP: *Demokrat Parti* (the Democrat Party)
- DTP: *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (the Democratic Society Party)
- ERNK: *Eniya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan* (in Kurdish), (National Liberation Front of Kurdistan)
- EU: European Union
- IHD: *Insan Haklari Dernegi* (Human Rights Association)
- HADEP: *Halkin Demokrasi Partisi* (the People's Democracy Party)
- HAKPAR: *Hak ve Ozgurlukler Partisi* (the Right and Freedoms Party)
- HEP: *Halkin Emek Partisi* (the People's Labour Party)
- KADEP: *Katilimci Demokrasi Partisi* (the Participatory Democracy Party)
- KCK: *Koma Civaken Kurdistan* (in Kurdish) (the Union of Communities of Kurdistan)
- KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government
- MIT: *Milli Istihbarat Teshkilati* (National Intelligence Agency)
- MP: Member of Parliament
- NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
- OZDEP: *Ozgurluk ve Eshitlik Partisi* (the Freedom and Equity Party)
- PJAK: *Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistane* (in Kurdish), (the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan)

PKK: *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* (in Kurdish), (the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

Post: Postposition

Pre: Preposition

PSK: *Partiya Socialist a Kurdistan* (in Kurdish), (the Socialist Party of Kurdistan)

SHP: *Sosyal Demokrat Halkchi Parti* (the Social Democratic Populist Party)

Sub: from a lower level or position

UK: United Kingdom

USA: United States of America

TBMM: *Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi* (Grand National Assembly of Turkey)

TIP: *Turkiye Ishchi Partisi* (the Labour Party of Turkey)

TUSIAD: *Turk Sanayicileri ve Ishadamlari Dernegi* (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)

YTP: *Yeni Turkiye Partisi* (the New Turkey Party)

## GLOSSARY

*Agha*: chieftains or tribal leaders.

*Alawite or Alevi*: ordinarily known as an Islamic religious sect. The *Alawite* population unofficially numbers nearly 20 million in Turkey but the Turkish and Kurdish (known as *Qizilbash*) are organised differently.

*Ashiret Mektepleri*: the imperial tribal schools; they were designed to educate the notable, namely Arab, Albanian and Kurdish *agha*'s children in the Ottoman state culture. These people were subsequently expected to serve the interests of the state and the police as civil servants or pashas in their respective regions.

*Ayan*: Ottoman notable, who became a very influential actor in the political economic life of the Empire in the nineteenth century.

*Beg/bey*: local notable or (feudal) lord.

*Caliphate*: the chief Muslim civil and religious ruler, regarded as the successor of prophet Muhammad. The caliph ruled in Baghdad until 1258 and then in Egypt until the Ottoman conquest of 1517; the title was then held by the Ottoman sultans until it was abolished in 1924 by Mustafa Kemal.

*Dede*: a very important religious person in the *Alawite* community, particularly among the *Alawite* of Turkey.

*Eshir*: Kurdish term for tribe (*ashiret* in Turkish).

*EU-isation*: the term is offered by the study, it means adapting the EU's institutional values, such as democracy, human rights, liberalism, secularism *etc.* instead of becoming European or culturally Europeanising. This transformation is a product of the EU enlargement/accession process and promotional identity constructed politically rather than the gradually and socially constructed as a social reality.

Great Transformation: It is a theoretical framework of the upheaval of nineteenth-century society from a traditional, classic and socio-economic structure to a modern, national(ist), market (capitalist) society by political economist Karl Polanyi.

*Hamidiye Alaylari*: a cavalry organised by Sultan Abdul Hamid II to control the Kurds and struggle against Armenian armed groups in the Kurdistan region.

Hegemony: leadership or dominance by hegemonic culture of a group (state) over all other sub-groups of society. It was developed as a theoretical framework by Italian post-Marxist (Euro-Marxist) Antonio Gramsci in the early twenty-century.

*Kurdi* and/or *Kurdiness*: a term used by the study to address the Kurdish identity. It is an ‘original’ or inner (socially) construction of Kurdish or Kurdishness by political agent(s) with their intellectuals, which relates to the Kurdish culture, history, values, tradition and customs etc. without external involvement or influences.

*Kurdiyati/Kurdistani*: a different version of addressing the Kurdishness in the Kurdish language.

*Madrasa*: religious school or Islamic school system.

*Mal*: house, moreover, a family, which was the social and economic unit in Kurdish society and was composed of wider family members, including married sons and their families; the unit assumed a crucial role in the economy and social life.

*Many Kurds*: created by the study to draw attention to the various Kurdish sub-agents; it also denotes the fragmental socio-political, multi-identity and pluralist ‘postmodern’ structure of Kurdish society.

*Melle/mullah*: a Muslim man educated or learned in Islamic theology and Quran/sacred law.

*Millet*: a term for the religious communities in the Ottoman Empire that was used as a political and judicial system mostly for non-Muslim subjects of the Empire after *Tanzimat* Reform, 1839.

*Mir*: emirate or *de facto* independent principality.

*Newroz*: (in Kurdish) celebration of traditional New Year of the Iranic people on the 21<sup>st</sup> March. However, recently it has played a crucial role in the Kurdish identity and political mobilisation that was rooted in the Blacksmith Kawa legend of the Kurds, which represents a starting point of the Kurdish national movement in history.

*Non-otherising Democracy*: a term created by the study, it is a democratic system that refers to a multi-identity and pluralist ‘superstructure’ and embraces all excluded citizens of the country who could not find any opportunity spaces in the public sphere, such as Kurds, ‘radical’ Islamists, *Alawites*, non-Muslims, ‘radical’ socialists or LGBTs.



*Seyyid/sayyid*: a person who is a descendant of the prophet Muhammad.

*Sheikh*: a religiously wise man or saintly person.

Socially Constructivism: a theory of knowledge that considers the creation of social reality and phenomena of society by certain groups. It utilises various disciplines, particularly politics, sociology and international relations.

Sultan or *padishah*: a title for ruler of the Ottoman Empire.

*Sunni/sunnite*: a sect of Islam commonly described as an orthodox version of Islam that is followed by a large percentage of Muslims.

*Tariqah*: Islamic religious order as a path and method for practising, or a school and doctrine of *Sufism*, for spiritual learning.

*Timar*: a land-granted system under control of the Ottoman Sultan for certain people (janissary etc.), who were expected to work the land and pay a certain amount of their income as a tax. It was constructed for economic, social and military reasons and functioned at the same time as a political economic system.

Turkishness: characteristic of Turkish people and their language, values, beliefs, customs and habits etc.

*Turanism*: the unity of the Turkic world or Pan-Turkism.

*Ummah*: the community of Muslims (nation) that is commonly used to mean bound together by the ties of Islam.

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Omer Tekdemir

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## 1. 1 INTRODUCTION

After socio-political ‘revolutionist’ movements and the remarkable developments generally in the Arab world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which has come to be known as the ‘Arab Spring’, Turkey has been suggested as a model for this Islam-dominated region, as a secular, democratic, ‘moderate Islamic’ and regional medium (soft)power and because of its ‘Islamist democrat’ ruling party (AKP<sup>1</sup>), big Muslim population, its relationship with the West and its aspirations as a candidate country for the EU. In other words, Turkey as a Western-looking and Islamic-based country has always been an important subject and strategic ally of the European world, in the Middle East. This is due to the fact that it is perceived as a bridge between the Eastern (Islamic) and Western (Christian) world, both culturally and geographically by eliminating the context of ‘clash of civilisations’<sup>2</sup>. However, since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey has faced three major issues: accommodating religion (Islam) and ethnic issues (mainly the Kurds), and the economy. While economically, Turkey has successfully managed to converge with capitalism, the accession of the AKP to power has moved religion into the public sphere, where it is now accepted. However, the Kurdish issue remains to be solved; the Kemalist nature of the state and the fact that the mainstream political movements and parties in Turkey are Turkish nationalist in essence have meant that the Kurdish issue remains unresolved despite the *EU-isation*<sup>3</sup> policies leading to democratic expansion in the state. Thus, every political movement and actor in Turkey has certain limitations and, for most of them, the Kurdish issues mark the start of such limitations.

Amid such developments in Turkey and the Middle East, the Kurds have recently also become important players in the region, particularly after the restructuring of Iraq, when they gained power. In addition, *de facto* autonomy as a Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and current political mobilisation in Syria led to the Kurds controlling the Kurdish-dominated region in Syria. As a result, Turkey was suddenly faced with having to share an exceptionally long border with the Kurds. Thus, the Kurds (re)turned, perhaps not as the main, but as one of the crucial actors and political

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<sup>1</sup> *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party).

<sup>2</sup> see Huntington, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> The term is offered by the study, see the glossary for detail definition.

economic realities of the Middle East region. On the other hand, the Kurds of Turkey have had a big impact in Kurdish history by attempting to lead or actually leading a large number of rebellions with the aim of gaining Kurdish rights (e.g. linguistic, cultural *etc.*). One of these struggles, the latest Kurdish rebellion, which is still ongoing after 30 years, involving Turkey and the Kurdistan Worker's Party-PKK, has caused the loss of more than 40,000 civilians and armed force, with Turkish security forces destroying more than 3,000 villages, resulting in an approximate figure of 3,000,000 internally displaced individuals<sup>4</sup>.

An important milestone for Kurds is Turkey's EU accession processes/projects, which provide an opportunity space for Kurds in Turkey to bring the Kurdish question forward in the country's politics and, furthermore, making it a European problem. In other words, the EU accession process has facilitated democratic reforms in Turkey, which as a result, expanded the opportunity spaces for everyone including the Kurds. In addition, the EU accession process requirements are mostly in line with Kurdish demands of democratisation. As a result, Turkey's long-term Kurdish issue again grew to become part of the country's crucial matrix, and, thus, the issue became part of the EU's security, energy, enlargement, immigration and economic concerns. Therefore, the recent progress and democratisation in Turkey has further contributed to the transformation of the Kurdish political identity and political economy as the ongoing process. In this study, the transformation of Kurdish political identity among Kurdish socio-political agencies will hence be considered principally for Kurds in Turkey.

As argued by this study, the Kurdish transformation has been progressing antithetically within the Turkish transformation of modernisation/Westernisation project, in Turkey's nation-building process. In other words, the Kurdish transformation is based on resistance against Turkish hegemonic culture. The method of this *double movement* created conflict and antagonistic political and social spheres, which can be called a 'clash of transformations'<sup>5</sup>. This is due to the fact that the Turkish modernisation aimed at a nation-building process in the sense of an

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.internaldisplacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpCountries\)/C1E13DEC3D6630EB802570A7004CB2F8?OpenDocument](http://www.internaldisplacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpCountries)/C1E13DEC3D6630EB802570A7004CB2F8?OpenDocument)

<sup>5</sup> The term was inspired by the Samuel P. Huntington's (1996) work "Clash of Civilisation and Remaking of World Order".

‘imaginary society’ that constructed a new artificial ‘citizen model’ who is a *Sunni* Muslim (but secular) with a Turkish ethnic background. It has thus been a Turkification project since the Young Turks came to power in 1908, which, as a policy and ideology, was taken up by the Kemalist regime of the new Republic. As it is a Turkification process, it excludes different ethnic and religious actors of ‘post-Ottoman society’ that generated divergent ‘identities’ or ‘otherising’ citizens of the country within the creation of a Turkish ‘quasi society’<sup>6</sup>. The Kemalist elite could not digest Kurdishness and Islamification of society in the Republic’s public spheres; therefore, the Kemalist cult attempted to assimilate or suppress the new ‘internal threat’ after the war against ‘external enemies’ even though the ‘independence war’ ended with the support of those two strong ‘non-republic’ actors, namely religiously-oriented individuals and Kurds. The ‘threatening tactics’, which were also used against post-Ottoman neighbouring states (Greece, Bulgaria, Iraq, Iran or Syria and Armenia), became the foundation of the regime’s - internal and external - legitimacy, and provided a ‘new hegemonic power’ among Turkish society. However, it also simultaneously induced the protectionist Kurdish movement.

In 1960s, the Kurdish agents, on the other hand, found more opportunity spaces in the public sphere with ‘other’ anti-regime elements, particularly after the new Constitutions. However, these were interfered with by militarist *coups* (1960, 1971, 1980, and a post-modern one in 1997) that continued until Turkey’s journey towards membership of the EU. This democratisation process reached a climax when Turkey was recognised officially as a candidate for full membership at the Helsinki summit of the European Council in December 1999, opening another stage in terms of both (Turkish-Kurdish) transformations’ progress.

The ‘EU-isation’ process has started to replace the modernisation/Westernisation argument of Kemalist elites in modern Turkey. Ironically, Kemalist representatives opposed the EU (within the *Ulusalci Cephe* - nationalist bloc) and became EU sceptics for many conservative and nationalist reasons due to concern about losing sovereignty in the state and society, even though Kemal Ataturk himself aspired to a

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<sup>6</sup> My emphasis.

Western civilisation for the young state<sup>7</sup>. The European imagination of Kemal Ataturk and Kemalists, hence, seems related to the forms rather than the substance. In this last stage of Turkish modernisation, Islamists moved into centre from their counter-hegemonic position. The new actors, who can be identified as moderate and conservative ‘urbanised Muslims’, using the state’s institutions and tools and, under the AKP, have been the governing party since 2002. Hence, the AKP has been addressing a liberal market economy by fully supporting the EU membership process.

In this changing environment, Kurdish political movements also began constructing an identity or creating a project of ‘*EU-ising Kurdiness*’, which is embedded with EU values and institutions. Kurdish political parties with NGOs or local mayors immediately afterwards disseminated the EU’s democratic value system, such as human rights, minority rights, cultural and linguistic rights or the rule of law in Kurdish society with the support of some European allies and Kurdish diaspora in Europe, despite the identity of the EU being conceptualised differently from that of the AKP or state expectations. They view the concept of democracy from a radical perspective<sup>8</sup> as compared to AKP’s conservative democracy (Akdogan, 2004). Therefore, these opportunity spaces such as freedom of speech and expression, freedom of belief in faith/ideology and pluralistic democracy - in terms of being recognised in the public sphere by the state’s strict, stable regime - and rule of law that stimulates the EU-isation of Kurdish political mobilisation extend their ‘historical bloc’ with the Pro-EU (or ‘EU-phile’) agents against the hegemonic culture of a homogenous system. As a result, the new solidarity began searching for new opportunity spaces, but an external and powerful hegemonic member (EU) of this new formation has been using a ‘soft power’ against the existing system to alter its ‘oppressive’ or non-democratic policies. Hence, the EU superstructure canalised both transformations in terms of building or creating a balance point between those two hegemonic actors of the country.

It should be noted that, when the AKP became the governing party after 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2002 elections, large numbers of Kurds saw the AKP’s policy as a ‘renewal of social

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, the Republic Party of People-CHP; particularly under Deniz Baykal’s leadership and the Ataturkist Thoughts Associations (who also see themselves the real owners of the republic).

<sup>8</sup> This implies that they employ a ‘non-otherising democracy’.



contract'<sup>9</sup> between Kurds and Turks, which has been established since Turks came to the Anatolia and Mesopotamia region based on Islamic brotherhood, and expired after Kemalist elites sought to 'politically' construct a '*fictitious nation*' that had to be designed by a homogenous formula within the denial of all differences of society embedding the multi-ethnic/religious agents. Simultaneously, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan visited Diyarbakir and made a speech about the peace process, which showed that he officially recognised the on-going war in the region (it also became a tradition for the Turkish prime ministers to make priority speeches in Diyarbakir<sup>10</sup>). This was followed by the famous 12 August 2005 speech, in which he abruptly stressed that the problem is a 'Kurdish problem' rather than an 'Eastern', 'South-eastern' 'bandits/anarchist', or a 'terror' problem, and accepted the state's mistakes against Kurds, which was a socially and politically enormous step taken by the state's representations, in terms of historical evolution of the 'Kurdish reality' background in Turkey<sup>11</sup>.

The AKP administration, therefore, started transubstantiating the problem, moving into a conversational stage in Turkish society that provided a datum print of re-Turkishness; in other words, the meaning of Turkishness began to undergo a change. The AKP attempted to be a central party and gained majority support of ethnic and religious societies in Turkey, under the ambition of reaching full membership of the EU which could easily determine and provide an understanding of the base of Kurdish society's support for a 'new style' of Islamic movement. On the other hand, the meeting point of transformations managed by the EU has been changed after dissidence between state institutions and the Kurdish agency that oriented the Kurdish perspective to another dimension. It also became easier whenever the cycle of violence stopped, as the PKK occasionally declared a unilateral ceasefire, which opens the way to dialogue and peace-building processes. The state and PKK meetings

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<sup>9</sup> The first contract was constituted in 1075, when the Turks first entered the Anatolian region, and became stronger during the Ottoman era especially after Ottoman Sultans held caliph institutions for whole Islamic societies.

<sup>10</sup> Started with Turgut Ozal and followed by Suleyman Demirel, Tansu Ciler and Mesut Yilmaz (all of them representatives of conservative/centre right parties) after being elected as presidents, they came to Diyarbakir (Amid) and recognised 'Kurdish reality' by giving state's promises and apologies to the Kurdish people; citizens of Turkey.

<sup>11</sup> AKP government also launched the first state-owned TV channel to broadcast in Kurdish, TRT 6 (*Shesh* in Kurdish), in January 2009. However, pro-Kurdish agents or nationalist Kurds considered it a 'project' of Turkifying Kurds through Kurdishness shaped in the Islamic/Sunni context.

(negotiations) in Oslo, in 2010 (which was revealed in 2011), also relaxed the country's political environment for a 'social peace'. The Kurdish civil society (political parties, NGOs, institutions/organisations *etc.*) continued using opportunity spaces in Turkey's public sphere for their own purposes/demands. This became very effective during the recent 2013 'peace building' process between the state and PKK.

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) and its 'bloc'<sup>12</sup> representing the Kurds gained 22 MPs in 2007 and 36 (6 of them jailed in connection with the KCK 'terror case') through its successor Peace and Democratic Party (BDP) in 2011, in the parliament, and nearly a hundred mayors in the Kurdish-dominated regions. They acted as one of the essential stakeholders of the emergent conflicting camps, which can function as restructuring the existing system and applying 'non-otherising democracy'<sup>13</sup>, in the context of *radical democracy*<sup>14</sup>.

In the period of developing relations between the EU and Turkey, relations between the Kurds and EU have also deepened. Some of the European officials visited Diyarbakir before Ankara, and Kurdish organisations and NGOs became very effective in their communications with the EU institutions, which mushroomed in Europe under lobbying or diplomacy. Furthermore, after the 9/11 attack<sup>15</sup> in New York City and other attacks in European cities such as London and Madrid by 'Islamist extremist groups', the EU became more sensitive to such violence, which simultaneously had implications for the Kurdish movement; hence, the PKK's and pro-Kurdish parties' policy to use the legal and diplomatic ground and employ 'passive struggle' tactics through civil and democratic devices also created a new redistribution of political power and provided the continuity of transformation of Kurdi(sh) political identity.

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<sup>12</sup> A "Thousand Hopes" bloc, which is between pro-Kurdish DTP and other minorities, especially with 'non-statist' Turkish leftist political parties such as EMEP, ODP etc. It was rearranged under the name of "Labour, Freedom and Democracy" bloc in 2011.

<sup>13</sup> It means that democracy is equal for everybody in the same distinction and embraces all different, expelled or 'others' of society. This is my terminology and I will explain it in the last chapters (Chapters Five and Six). For further definition, see the glossary.

<sup>14</sup> see Laclau and Mouffe (1984/2001).

<sup>15</sup> The cell-based organisation *Al-Qaida* took responsibility for these attacks under the name of *jihad* (war) against Western imperialist powers which they believe are the enemy of Islam.

Consequently, the AKP called this merging process ‘democratic expansion’ or ‘Kurdish opening’ in 2009. However, it was later renamed “the project of national unity and togetherness<sup>16</sup>”. Moreover, the EU accession process, democratisation of the country, and peace-building processes suddenly ceased after AKP gained sufficient power by positioning itself as part of the centre rather than part of the periphery, as its predecessor ‘right-wing’ political parties had done. In explaining this, some argue that the AKP has become a ‘statist party’ or has turned into a ‘*Kemalist Islamist* party’. Thus, the AKP’s rapid policy shift created disappointment and a suspicious atmosphere in Turkish society, particularly among Kurds, *Alawites*, liberals and other minorities, such as Christians or devout Muslims or some big capitalists, in regard to the government and its institutions. Kurdish political agents also felt disappointed because of operations such as the Northern Iraq-Qandil Mountains on 21 February 2008 and DTP closure on 11 December 2009. There were also operations against the pro-Kurdish institutions with allegations of hundreds of members building PKK’s urban structuring under the name of Kurdistan Peoples Community-KCK (in Kurdish initials); pictures of them in handcuffs were shown via the media in 2010, which shocked the Kurds and liberal Turks. There was also the very dramatic ‘Uludere (Roboski) Massacre’, where 34 Kurdish smugglers (most of them children or teenagers, the youngest was 12) were killed by Turkey’s warplanes in Hakkari province, on the border with Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government) on 28 December 2011. It should be noted that their ‘smuggling’ had never been considered a criminal offence by the security forces before, as Arif (1968) in his poem on a similar case stated: ‘they never understood the meaning of passports’. These are the most recent important reasons that can be mentioned now alongside the on-going ‘bloody battle’ or the ‘unnamed war’ waged since 1984. While the war has been going on, ending it and continuing through to the EU or democratisation process and the peace-building project are strongly required by civil society. However, during this study submission process (starting early in 2013), crucial negotiations began between the PKK (including BDP) and the Republic of Turkey, aiming at conflict resolution and building a peace project.

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<sup>16</sup> This is the slogan that has been used by ultranationalist agents for a long time, particularly for the Kurdish issue or ‘terror(ist) incidents’.

## 1.2 THE BACKGROUND: ANALYSING THE KURDISH POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH

In this section, an attempt is made to elaborate a brief history of Kurds and Kurdistan (particularly of Turkey) in a historical context through a political economy paradigm. The literature on Kurdish studies neither provides theoretical perspectives nor pays attention to the impact of political economic relations of the Kurdish political identity and the so-called Kurdish issue. Therefore, the account of political economy became the centre of the study to build the groundwork for understanding the transformation process of Kurdish political identity through questions such as: *What is the role of the Kurdish political economy approach in the transformation of Kurdish society, particularly in the late nineteenth century? Why don't self-regulated market economies penetrate into society? Why are modernist institutions absent from Kurdish society or why didn't society require them? How did internal agents respond to the transformation of the nineteenth century and what was the reaction of these agents against a 'new modern order'? What is the reason for non-linear or non-modernisation process, and who/what is responsible? Or why didn't the economy and its capitalist relations become embedded in social relations and why didn't 'fictitious commodities' emerge in the region for a long time? Or what are the political and economic consequences of this era for the Kurdish society?*

While searching for the answers to all these questions, the study instinctively discovered that the progression of the Kurdish political economic approach became a device of the social construction of reality, in particular time or period conditions<sup>17</sup>. As a result, the study mainly focuses on internal dynamics (agents/actors), domestic affairs (and their reverberation across the external relations) and societal, political and economic 'bases' of the society. The leadership of political agents (*mir/gha/sheik* later on organisations), function of traditional institutions (*madrassa, tariqah*, tribes, *kiriw*, or marriage) or the character of society (predominantly built on *eshir* and *Islamic* values) became significantly important for understanding the future progress (like modern agents' hegemony struggle or EU-isation progression) of the transformation process.

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<sup>17</sup> see Chapter Two for theory (Berger and Luckmann, 1971) and Chapter Five for implementation of the theory within the research case.

This research aims to analyse the political economy of the identity construction process of Kurdish political agents in three main periods (or cases), in historical and chronological context. The first case emerged in the late Ottoman era and early days of the Republic, predominantly the nineteenth-century (modern time). The second case appeared after the fall of the Kurdish hegemonic struggle between 1925 and 1984 ('advanced' modern time). The third case constituted with the EU-isation of political discourse, and emergence or rise of new (sub)agents in the new structure of Kurdish society (post-modern time). Therefore, establishing sub-periods of modern Kurdish history is considered an effective way of examining the transformation of Kurdish society.

The Kurds, who are believed to number around 35 or 40 million<sup>18</sup> people, are also known as the largest ethnic nationality in the world without any country under their own authority. Despite this, describing the matrix of Kurd and Kurdishness is still very complicated and difficult to achieve, in terms of a Western (or European) definition of nation and nationality. If one looks at the *pre-modern* era, one can see that the terms 'Kurd' and 'Kurdish origins' are based on very old history. Kurds and their territory have always been squeezed by the big powers and they have always attracted the big powers in history including Byzantium, Romans, Greeks, Persians, Arabs and Turks *etc.* The land of the Kurds was also one of the crucial passages of the 'Silk Road'. Therefore, the location was always a geographical 'bargaining pot'. The term 'Kurdistan' was called the land of *Kardu* or *Karduchoi* in ancient times (McDowall, 2000). Since then, Kurdistan has been utilised in two different patterns - geographical description and an ethno-geographical understanding - in terms of a historical and cultural meaning, which did not exist, in the long term, under the name of a state in the history of Mesopotamia and the Middle East. From the historical point of view, the term 'Kurdistan' culturally refers to the region that is dominated by a Kurdish population.

The term 'Kurdistan' was first used by the Turkish Seljuk Prince Saandjar in 12<sup>th</sup> century, who created a *sanjak* or province under the name of Kurdistan, the land of Kurds, with a capital city, Bahar, that came to refer to a system of fiefs in the 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> There is no definite data or information about the Kurds' population in the region for specifically political, social and geographical reasons.

century. The land had been drawn from Azerbaijan and Luristan, as well as certain adjoining areas, to the west of Zagros, stretching from Kermanshah in the east to Sinjar in the west (Ghassemlou, 1965; Vanly, 1971; Chaliand, 1980; van Bruinessen, 1992; Izady, 1992; McDowall, 1996/2000). Although Kurdistan was divided again afterwards, between the Ottoman and Persian Empires in the Kasr-i Shrin agreement in 1639 after the battle of Chaldiran, the Kurdish Prince Idris-i Bitlisi was given privilege by Sultan Selim, the Ottoman Sultan, after their 'agreement' to be allies and was associated with the battle against Safavid (*Shia*) Sah Ismail, on the side of the Ottoman *Padishah* (both sides being *Sunni*). He became a leader of Kurdistan with the province of Amid (Diyarbakir) and 16 other *sanjaks* (provinces).

The second important division of Kurdistan took place after the First World War following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Safrastian, 1948; Kinnane, 1964; McDowall, 1992, 1996; Bruinessen, 1992; and Izaddy, 1992), which ended with the splitting of Kurdistan into four parts (during the Treaty of Lausanne 1923) between new states of the post-war world (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria). The division was legalised by the League of Nations in 1926; therefore, Kurds became minorities with no legal economic, social and political rights as an 'independent nation.'

A number of ethnographic studies could be important sources for the background information of this study's subject, and some of these easily come to mind<sup>19</sup>. The modern and linear transformation of Kurdish political identity can be built on the historical and anthropological background, which can also provide an examination of the modern and socially constructed Kurdish society and identity. The geopolitical location of Kurdistan is also an important element in the international arena in terms of political, economic and military strategy. Besides, the geographical application of the term 'Kurdistan' evidently has nothing to do with political, legal and official description<sup>20</sup>. The word 'Kurdistan', in its general understanding, simply applies to

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<sup>19</sup> Such as, Prince Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi *Sharafna`ma or History of the Kurdish Nation*, (1597); Ahmed-i Khani's *Mem u Zin Epic*, (1694); *Diary of Major E.M. Noel on special duty in Kurdistan* E.M. Noel (1919); *Kurds and Kurdistan* Arshak Safrastian, (1948); *Kurds, Turks and Arabs* C.J. Edmonds (1957), *The Kurds and Kurdistan* Derk Kinnane, (1964); *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, (1965); Ismail Besikci's *Dogu Anadolunun Duzeni*, (1969); *Survey of the national question of Turkish Kurdistan with historical background*, Ismet Cheriff Vanly, (1971); *Kurdistan in Turkey etc.*

<sup>20</sup> Because our first concern here is not to open a political discussion that is still argued by different political agents but, rather, to define the subject background for an academic objectivity.

the regions inhabited by Kurds that have been denied by the regional powers. Therefore, since World War I, Kurdistan has been divided among multiple sovereign states, with the largest portion of Kurdish territory in Turkey followed by Iran, Iraq, Syria and the former Soviet Union.

In terms of an economic perspective, in the new mode of (information) technological production and the globalisation era, it is hard to characterise a country's (society) economic activity. Especially in Kurdistan, the case is more complicated as the region is divided among various states. In the pre-modern method of production, the region had a very important role. Particularly, the ancient 'Silk Road', which was the commercial route between eastern and western countries that projected through Kurdistan and the 'Fertile Crescent', made Kurdistan one of the richest areas in Asia Minor. However, in general, the region's main economic activities are agriculture and stockbreeding because of the Kurdish nomadic lifestyle and geographical conditions. Kurdistan is also suitable for a pastoralist economy. The livestock took a very important place in the economic life of the region. The region is very rich in natural resources, with one of the largest oil reserves in the Middle East. Recently, water has become one of the important political and economic elements in the Middle East. In spite of this, Kurdistan has very rich reserves. Apart from a few local industrial places, Kurdistan is the least developed industrial region in all the states where it is located due to a number of reasons, such as political, geographical, social *etc.* However, it has not benefited sufficiently from its resources due to the political situation, which led to an economic migration to the more economically attractive cities or countries. As a result, the political and economic issues are embedded within the Kurdish historical context.

In the case of Kurds in Turkey, the 'No *Shah*, no *Padishah*; we wanted our *Mir*' slogan dominated the early modern history of Kurds. Kurdish society was led by Kurdish *Mirs* (emirates) in modern times (nineteenth century). The *mirs* have always possessed a *de facto* independent relationship with the Ottoman Empire; they neither paid taxes nor affiliated with the *timar* system, which forced owners to prepare soldiers (*janissary*) for the Imperial army. Therefore, they could control their own capital, political and economic relations. However, the Kurdish lifestyle, character or social relations did not interfere with the capitalist mode of production. Until the

beginning of the twenty-first century, the Kurdish mode of production was conducted through a household economy based on self-sufficiency, and still did not complete the mechanisation process, with limited connections to the country's Western (Turkish) and international markets (van Bruinessen, 1992; Besikci, 1969; Yalcin-Heckmann, 1991). The '*eshir* mode of production' dominantly controlled the economy; the economic relations were embedded in social (feudal, religious) relations for a long time. Whenever the impact of *mir* politics diminished, the control of the region passed to the new actors, the *agha/sheikh* who simultaneously replaced the (internal) hegemonic gap and responded to the (external) new order (Republic of Turkey). However, after the failure of this violent reaction, the new type of *agha/sheikh* had affiliated with state institutions, and opened the economy up to different markets through transformation of the centre (state), and the 'commodification' of land and labour was critically stimulated in this process. Domination of *agha/sheikhs* diminished after the new social actors, such as working-class, syndicate, union, youth/student organisations, appeared in the Kurdish society between the 1960 and 70s. Consequently, the balance of leadership also changed, which was carried by PKK into different dimensions particularly after the start of the armed struggle against the Turkish state in 1984. Nevertheless, since the 1990s and EU accession process, civil society (political parties and NGOs such as institutions, groups, think tanks and capital organisations) has led demands for Kurdish society to enter the public sphere, and this is an on-going process.

### **1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Based on the preceding discussion, the aim of this project is to critically explore, examine and analyse the transformation process of Kurdish political identity (including political economy), in a chronological/historical context with multiple theoretical frameworks and an interdisciplinary approach.

In doing so, the study first examines the failure of political-economic development in Kurdish society by locating it within the theoretical framework of the *Great Transformation* (developed by Karl Polanyi) in relation to political and economic origins of the nineteenth century with the objective of understanding why linear development had not taken place in the Kurdish domain. Moreover, it considers the political, economic, cultural and social structure of the Kurdish society in order to



understand the missed opportunities. As a result, the study focuses mainly on internal factors, such as agents, actors or institutions, but also makes references to the external factors (such as the Ottoman Empire, Turkey or the EU) whenever necessary.

Secondly, in understanding the consequences of the previous era and the new Kurdish developments from the beginning of the new Republic in 1923 to 1984, the study aims to explore the responses of the Kurdish internal dynamics and the socio-political counter-hegemonic struggles of the agents (including new agencies) and their strategies with the help of a Gramscian theoretical account and literature.

Thirdly, in analysing the current developments and role of these new agents, organisations or institutions in the (social) construction of the (political) identity, the study finds itself in a new post-modern *Kurdi* society, which is more complex with (sub)identities, particularly in the EU accession process of Turkey. However, the EU will be referenced as an external dynamic that intervenes in domestic affairs along with various sub-groups of the Kurdish political society. Undeniably, the Kurdish political culture has gone through a transformation since Turkey's EU accession processes began; consequently, the 'new(est) Kurdish actors' have utilised democratic and liberal values emanating from Turkey's EU accession process in developing new strategies of the social construction of identity.

As a consequence, this study aims to explore and examine the problematic areas within the framework and reinforcement of three distinguishing theories, which have been used in analysing the transformations of the societies in a historical and contemporary context. This study thus attempts to ground the subject matter in these theories in an attempt to combine these theories to identify and contextualise the research question within their explanatory power, in the case of Kurdish political identity and political economy. Hence, the study falls naturally into three cases, which are devoted to more theoretical issues. In addition, it aims to go further by employing a *transdisciplinary* approach via a multi-theoretical context to investigate agents' discourses, identities within their *sui generis* characteristics, and their impacts on the transformation of political identity of the society during its linear-modernisation process.

The objective indicates the central concern of the research and also identifies the specific issues that the study purposes to examine into various intense, inquisitorial and analytical sections, as identified as follows;

(i) to explore the processes of transformation of Kurdish societies in the nineteenth century within an historical political economy context by making reference to the anthropology of the society with the support of the theoretical framework of the *Great Transformation*;

(ii) to analyse the impacts of the Ottoman Empire's political, economic and social structure as a macro or central power in the micro or peripheral Kurdistan region;

(iii) to examine the foundational *base* of development or underdevelopment of political economy in Kurdish society;

(iv) to examine the role of internal dynamics, such as agents, actors (leadership) and institutions, in the linear-modernisation process of the society and its consequences for the next era;

(v) to analyse the effect of external powers, such as a Turkish hegemonic power, on Kurdish society and subsequently the response of counter-hegemonic power of Kurdish movements in respect of the notion of hegemony and double movement for the period between 1923 and 1984;

(vi) to gauge the tactics/strategies –‘war of manoeuvre’ and ‘war of position’- of hegemony theory for internal agents in different periods, conditions or politics;

(vii) to examine the counter-hegemonic struggle of Kurdish internal political mobilisation, in itself or against external hegemonic power;

(viii) to utilise the social constructivist perspective to analyse the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Kurdish identity, in a ‘new form’ by different internal dynamics;

(ix) to denote the aspects, strategies and worldview of three main internal Kurdish socio-political agents through a drawn ‘map of identity’. They are oriented in different forms, in redefining and retransforming existing modern Kurdish identity through post-modern perspectives;

(x) to analyse the impact of EU institutional superstructure as an external hegemonic power within the EU's political imposition on the Turkish regime and to assess the *domestic* impact of these new external dynamics on the Kurdish transformation process;

(xi) to deliberate the process through which the new Kurdish actors have exploited the *opportunity spaces* in the public sphere, and to determine how/what the *public sphere* has been transformed into by the Kurdish society's transformation in terms of Turkey's on-going democratisation process.

The study thus concentrates on the following objectives. It investigates the effects of internal dynamics such as Kurdish political actors and external dynamics identified as EU and Turkey on Kurdish political identity and the country's political and legal structures. In addition, the role of internal and external dynamics in transforming and constructing a modern Kurdish political identity (*EU-ised Kurdishness*) is explored.

In locating the formation of modern Kurdish identity, this study also uses micro-level analysis to examine the Kurdish movement through its ideological stages of political developments and discourses. In other words, it considers the internal effects on (under)development and transformation of Kurdish society through movement and struggle, followed by an examination of the form of those internal dynamics with their respective aspects and philosophy in respect of the transformation of Kurdish political identity. In doing so, it also analyses the (de)construction of Kurdish identity in terms of the Turkification processes of the state policy through a number of periods that could be negatively characterised, until the EU's positive contribution.

#### **1.4. RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The Kurdish issue is one of the twenty-first century's crucial problems involving many ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, political and social perennial questions, in the context of post-national(ist) or global society. Therefore, one may ask: *What makes the Kurdish ethnic question different from other ethnic minorities' problems all around the world?* In fact, identity in Kurdish society has always been an issue for de-/re-construction, which is based on the 'society's reality' like other societies and is also historically shaped by various factors, such as religion, tribalism, ideology, language and geopolitics. Kurdistan and 'Kurdishness', in this context, are composed

of different elements in a complicated puzzle, which makes the Kurdish issue unique. As Kurds share a common language, albeit with four distinctive dialects, Kurdish society is divided with different geographical regions, and Kurdistan has been split between multiple countries and areas: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and partly Caucasia. With all these multiplies and pluralities, there were no exact common criteria to define Kurds as a nation in the modern or Western sense, which also became insufficient in the Kurdish case and provided a condition to ensure Kurdish identity as a really open argument to be constructed by internal and external powers.

In summary, it should be noted that the structure of the study is first considered in a theoretical framework, and the analysis of social constructivism subsequently provides a theoretical and methodological perspective to better understand Kurdish political economy and identity developments in Turkey through the context of Turkey's political culture and structure, with guidance from some distinguishing theories such as Gramsci's hegemony and Polanyi's double movement. Therefore, this may bring a more theoretical perspective to the field and open more theoretical discussions on relevant issues.

The complicated nature of the analysis of Kurdish studies begins with misreading, misunderstanding and appellation; therefore this study needed to focus on characterisation of the Kurdish issues under the basic questions, in terms of discourse analysis - *What is it?* and *what is it not?* - in order to be able to hold an appropriate discussion. On the other hand, the states with which Kurds are linked and international society (or power) do not have a clear definition or aspect; furthermore there is no tangible policy on or solution to the Kurdish question that is inspired to concentrate on the Kurdish political identity within the problem designated in the research question and title.

As a result, one may fairly say that Kurdish studies present many opportunities and are virgin, unexplored territory that as yet has not received enough attention from academia for number of reasons that have mainly arisen from political sensitivities and difficulties. Also, the limited sources and the gap in the theoretical framework of Kurdish studies have constituted another crucial reason why this study focuses on mainly theoretical frameworks without applying too much event analysis, which - this study argues - is where Kurdish studies are suffering most. Therefore, the research

presented in this study is one of the unexplored areas of Kurdish studies, and it has provided further inspiration and temptation to carry on studies in such frameworks and fields.

Kurdish political struggle had a very long history that was mainly conceptualised in terms of ‘independency’, ‘self-determination’, ‘autonomy’ or ‘democratic republic’ in Turkey. However, because of Kurdish society’s structure or external factors, the method or identity of these struggles has not been explored to reveal their true nature and aims, which also constructed or affected the Kurdish political identity by defining the Kurdish demands in the respective contexts. Thus, there have been different forms and stages of construction/reconstruction or transformation of Kurdish identity and struggle, and it is therefore important to consider the distinguishing nature of these forms in their respective periods in order to develop a better understanding of the Kurdish identity.

In brief, the exploration of Kurdish political economy and identity began and transformed from a traditional/conservative context under the traditional leadership of *mir/gha/sheiks* and continued with a modern/socialist movement created by youth and student organisations into the post-modern/new concept of *EU-ised Kurdi(sh) identity* under the leadership of new agents. It should be noted that the third section of this study is the most attractive and important part, alongside political economic discussions, as it has not been studied in previous works on the Kurdish case. Furthermore, it is crucial to focus on the relations between the EU and the Kurds and Turkey’s EU accession processes as these will help explore the impacts of the EU on the last stage of Kurdish transformation. In other words, in searching for the contents and the processes of modern Kurdish identity, the European political intervention in Turkey is explored to locate the transformation of Kurdish society and its impact on democratisation in Turkey. The impact of external dynamics such as the EU on Kurdishness in such a positive and domestic way has inspired this research to explore it. Indeed, the ‘new manner’ of politics could be called the ‘*EU-isation of Kurdianness*’ process, which covers the ‘new’ Kurdish political identity that has been influenced through EU institutional politics, in liberal and democratic values and through the consequences of long and violated experiences shaped in (radical) democracy as an ‘other’ of the system. Thus, this part of the research explores how the Kurds

understood the importance of adopting and responding to the new political opportunities together and how to deal with the internal and international environment. In addition, this research found it attractive to study how this ‘new aspect’ affected the policy of Kurdish movements and Turkish political life, namely the democratisation process.

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The long-term aim of the study is to contribute to the development of Kurdish studies by producing knowledge that will lead to an understanding of the political, economic and social issues concerning Kurdish studies, usually within a theoretical framework and conducted with interdisciplinary or *transdisciplinary* support. Therefore, the study is divided into three main parts or cases that are examined by three different theoretical frameworks. As a result, it is constructed as *transdisciplinary* research, as it attempts to understand various independent variables - the political (partly social and economic) activities, relations, agents, mobilisations or identity of the Kurdish society in a wider historical context, from the nineteenth century (late Ottoman era) to the present (Turkey’s EU accession process) - in order to contribute a highly concentrated reading and strong theoretical approach to the field of Kurdish studies.

As the existing body of knowledge or literature review indicates an absence not only of any previous works addressing these aims and objectives but also the framework proposed and actualised by this, such as Kurdish political economy, hegemonic strategies, various types of intellectuals, map of Kurdish identities/agents and the impacts of them on existing modern *Kurdi* identity alongside EU institutions. In doing so, the study constructed its metaphors or terminologies that could be very useful for future study in this field. For instance, ‘*eshir* mode of production’, ‘many Kurds’, ‘map of identity’, ‘EU-ising’ process, ‘non-otherising democracy’, ‘fictitious society’ and similar discourses or abstracts could contribute to future discussions in the field of Kurdish study. The study focuses on non-state agents, their political economy in the post-modern perspective and these non-state agents’ (direct) relations with the EU and the EU institutions. These are of particular significance for this research, thus enhancing the importance of the research presented in this study.

## 1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Similar to any political science research, this research should also be situated within a particular methodology, as a framework, and method, as the tools of analysis. Research, in this context, means gathering, processing and interpreting data, and critically evaluating the outcomes and findings of the research process. In this respect, the method is a more general context and analytical tool of the research; moreover, the method constitutes a component of the methodology that has many dimensions. However, the “research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem, it may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically” (Palekar, 2007: 14). Particularly, like other political research studies, this study also requires knowledge and analyses in a range of paradigms, theories and methods. As a case study in political science, this study analyses the development of society in many different dimensions, from macro and micro levels.

As a research philosophy, this research is shaped in the context of one of the underlying philosophical approaches of political science research, the post-positivist paradigm, which is associated with qualitative research and collection of data based on theory, as a *counter-foundationalist* approach. In supporting this, for instance, McNabb (2010:19) states, “today, postpositivist political scientists apply rationalist or qualitative methods to study [...] the distribution and exercise of power [hegemony] and domination, and the actions of individuals and groups who seek to gain power [hegemony] and hold onto it once they have it”. Consequently, in terms of social sciences this study is closely related mainly to the interpretivism (with post-modernist and social constructivist approaches) paradigm, which believes that research is a socially constructed activity like ‘reality’ itself, as it perceives ‘reality’ as socially constructed, and therefore the role for the research is to attempt to understand that ‘socially constructed reality’ through an interpretative method which is shaped by individual researcher’s ‘social reality’.

This study, hence, methodologically benefits from qualitative research as it mainly explores the subject and evaluates the suitability of the identified theoretical framework. As regards the research methods or analysis methods, this study follows a discursive (theoretical) and analytic research method, which is primarily concerned with the analysis of the historical process by exploring the development and

transformation of the political identity of Kurdish society in terms of political, societal and economic dimensions, in a historical context. Furthermore, due to the study's structure, design and objectives, it does not specify a certain type of research method or theory; rather, it divides the subject into three main historical periods: the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1923; 1923-1984; and 1984 to the present and applies correspondingly appropriate theoretical frameworks for the respective periods. Thus, this periodisation and historical moments as well as their contents and activism are considered as socially constructed realities as a human production. In other words, each of these periods has particular trends which governs it, and this 'particular trends' necessitates of using a particular theoretical framework. In this respect, using diverse qualitative methods and several theories allows the study to take a strong position on the way research should be understood.

It should, however, be noted that it is difficult to agree on any essential definition of qualitative research because of its separate and multiple uses. Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 2) define qualitative research as a "field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, field, and subject matters. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term *qualitative research*. These include the traditions associated with foundationalism, positivism, postfoundationalism, postpositivism, poststructuralism, and the many qualitative research perspectives, and or/methods connected to cultural and interpretive studies". Qualitative research, thus, essentialises the concept of social reality, origin of knowledge and acceptance of those values by society, which has already been constructed. Moreover, qualitative research evolved as a social construct and set of practices (Alasuutari, 2010). Hence, Denscombe (2003: 268) states that "qualitative research can be part of an information gathering exercise and useful in its own right. Or, qualitative research can be used as the basis for generating theories. In neither case, however, are its descriptions ever 'pure' –they are always the outcome of an interpretation by the researchers". Qualitative methods, therefore, constitute a broad range of different ways of collecting empirical materials/data and analysing these data. In addition, qualitative methods derive from the data, as they do not belong to a single discipline. This is compatible with this study's interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary or more counterdisciplinary nature.



As a result, the qualitative methodology is helpful for understanding, exploring and examining society/agents issues in respect of post-positivist, inductive, interpretive, and *post-modernist* ways. The philosophical view of this research, thus, is based on social constructivist approach as an ontological position; and therefore engages with the given knowledge of the subject's definitive version by accepting that its is socially constructed.

This study, therefore, uses more texts and words in terms of collecting and analysing data and materials, which are based on secondary sources by emphasising words, discourse or text rather than quantification in the gathering and analysing of data. The collected data in the form of secondary data is analysed by an interpretative method. Therefore, while the available discourses and positions are deconstructed through interpretivism, social constructivism is used as a methodological tool in this study to construct its own central argument, which offers a fruitful, epistemological basis for designing an effective research method.

Constructivists argue that theory and reality are fundamentally interlinked, as they believe that reality is not simply there to be discovered; rather, they argue that humans construct all social and political phenomena. In this tradition, for example, identity, which is a subject matter of this study, is socially generated and articulated through values, moral, tradition, culture and politics. Berger (2008: 20) states that “constructivism suggests that the categories that people employ in helping them to understand the natural and social world are in fact social products. The categories do not have built-in essence; instead, their meaning is constructed in and through interaction”. Moreover, Alasuutari (2010: 149-50) states, “[t]heory-wise, different strands of constructionist thought have gained popularity. This development has meant an increased interest in questions of identity [...]. Much of present-day qualitative research deals with identity politics, for instance trying to understand how and why identity positions and forms of subjectivity as potential collective political agents are formed, whether they are related to gender, race, age or and other categories”.

It should be noted that there are two main theoretical approaches in the constructivist philosophical field that explain the constructing process of knowledge: cognitive

reading and social constructivism. The latter is predominantly used in this research, which is popularised by the sociological treatises of Berger and Luckman (1966).

In summary, hence, social constructivism suggests that knowledge and, thus, identity is about human practices and historical experiences, which is a set of common understanding or creating, in three dimensions: reality, epistemology and methodology. This perspective enables the research to ask how the key stakeholders of Kurdish society developed the political identity in the context of the hermeneutic dialectic circle. Furthermore, it focuses on how the social (political) reality became institutionalised in Kurdish society and in the members of society due to different groups having different positioning on what can be considered as reality<sup>21</sup>. This methodology allows us to see how a particular perception of reality is instilled in Kurdish society. Thus, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) famous social science statement is helpful: "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (cited by Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006: 48). Therefore, this methodological approach of socially created reality presents a structure to analyse with a set of research questions of cognition, which is designed as the method of this research.

It is important also to mention that within the qualitative research methodology, social constructivism is extended to use other methods such as institutionalism, or behaviouralism, which is used to explain the transformation process of conventional Kurdish institutions by modernism, or is utilised to delve into 'social reality' political culture and discourse in the everyday lives of different agents of Kurdish society alongside Euro-Marxist and post-modern approaches in the context of political science.

Since qualitative research through social constructivism is associated with grounded theory, the results of the analysis presented in this study can provide the basis for a theoretical discussion in terms of a grounded theory and, furthermore, promote an alternative formulation of the research question. In other words, in social science disciplines, the lack of a theoretical approach is accepted as the weakness of a research that are based on qualitative methods; such studies are mostly narrative and

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<sup>21</sup> see Berger and Luckmann, (1966).

centred on social science, particularly political science. However, “Glaser and Strauss’ *grounded theory*’ was an attempt to break with this tradition and show that theories could be created by means of studies based on qualitative methods” (Rasmussen *et al.* 2006: 148), as this study also aims to do. Thus, the grounded theory model works as “an approach dedicated to generating theories. In this sense it contrasts with approaches concerned with testing theories, and is different from research whose main purpose is to provide descriptions of the subject matter [...]. The ‘grounded theory’ approach has become a popular choice of methodology among social researchers in recent times” (Denscombe, 2003: 109). It should be noted that the grounded theory method has been used effectively in many studies, disciplines and cultures within a reactive context against positivist research. It offers an opportunity to advance qualitative research by providing the flexibility to explore further. “For building on the pragmatist underpinnings in grounded theory and developing it as a social constructionist method” (Charmaz, 2005: 509), this study concentrates on discussing social and political realities through case examples through a systematic orientation to data collection and analysing.

Theories can be related to research questions in two main ways: They can be tested with the research questions’ relation to their ability to help us understand a particular aspect of the social world. Alternatively, “gaps in existing theories can be identified and research can aim to generate theories in order to make up for these absences. These two approaches are often described as ‘theory testing’ and ‘theory generation’” (White, 2009: 24-25). The main concern of this study is to explore the field and the subject through a particular theory instead of trying to prove whether a theoretical framework is valid or not; therefore, it focuses on the ability and suitability of a theoretical structure. However, this study might also be able to generate theories out of the theoretical frameworks examined and applied in this study. Therefore, “inevitably grounded theory will help to discover future projects’ theoretical framework that derives from data, methodical recovery and analysed research process. A particular phenomenon of concern is composed of the analytic codes and categories generated additively in the analysis and assessed in terms of their analytical/theoretical capability” (Clarke, 2007: 424, quoted in Outhwaite and Turner).

In summary, thus, with regard to the data and material, most of which are based on archival and library research, this study also employs a grounded theory model due to its multi-theoretical framework within its trans-disciplinary structure. The grounded theory method is a fruitful framework for this study to analysing qualitative data, as the study employed three distinct theories. However, theories are themselves ‘grounded in social reality’ in explaining the original cases to which they were applied. In this respect, the study, first of all, attempts to test those theories within the subject, and examine as to how exactly those theories are suitable for the research question by posing the question: do these theories provide satisfactory explanations of the subject matter or not, and could alternative theories also be adopted? And, finally, is it possible to generate or ground those theories to construct a ‘new theory’, which can be appropriate to the research questions and emerge through the subject’s character and condition?

Besides, in relation to the research strategy, this research involves a primarily inductive perspective (predominantly qualitative approach) rather than a deductive one. These are the two main approaches of research in which knowledge is constructed and applied. However, the inductive process infers the implications of the research findings and interprets these outcomes on the theory in relation to the theory and subject (narrative), and it creates new knowledge by archiving data and experience. It is simultaneously a very empirical method of studying society/nations in respect of a post-modern worldview, also accommodating the social constructivist philosophy.

In addition, as part of secondary data analysis within interpretivist approach under social constructivism, discourses have also become a fruitful device for construing textual data and covering all kinds of language in use or practice, which have already been collected by a qualitative approach. In other words, “discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations - it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individual’s interaction with society” (Candlin, 1997: 9). Thus, discourse is related to the social constructivist approach; in other words “social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning” (Bryman 2008: 50). In doing so, the textual analysis is used

to understand or exploit the text, which is largely interpreted and determined by the study's background and theoretical account. According to textual analysis, the meaning does not exist inside the text; therefore, we use discourses in interaction with the texts, rather than applying and utilising the discourse analysis.

As regards to research design, this study should be considered as an explorative case study, as it aims to explore the transformation of the Kurdish society along with the changing dynamics of Kurdish identity. Thus, explorative case study helps to explore and analyse the transformation and development of a social unit or political agent, as this study aims at. It is one of the most common methods of qualitative inquiry; however, it is not a methodological choice but, rather, a part of the scientific methodology. It brings out the matrix-relationship of the various complex groups operating directly or indirectly upon the subject of the study. As a result, as mentioned above, this study periodises the Kurdish historical line to gather data and analyse the research question within various theoretical frameworks as a single case, which provides an efficient understanding of contemporary Kurdish society.

In terms of research design, thus, this study is a qualitative piece of research; it is "not based on a single, unified theoretical concept, nor does it follow a single methodological approach" (McNabb, 2010: 45). Therefore, it also considers data collection and channelling research processes; this project concentrates particularly on one of the qualitative strategies: the case-study. "The case study is the social research equivalent of the spotlight or the microscope: its value depends crucially on how well the study is focused. Case studies take as their subject one or more *selected* examples of a social entity - such as communities, social groups, organisations, events, life histories, families, work teams, roles or relationships - which are studied using a variety of data collection techniques" (Hakim, 2000: 59). In addition, the case-study generally constitutes qualitative inquiry and an effective guide for concentrating on the particular subject to draw attention and learn the research context. Its popularity among other qualitative strategies lies in its great flexibility. In relation to this research, the Kurds, exclusively the Kurds in Turkey, constitute the substance of the case-study, which is one of the most flexible research designs in terms of micro-level analysis and the bottom-up perspective. It also puts Kurdish affairs at the centre of the research and makes external factors revolve around this centre.

Additionally, the study also makes ‘partial’ observations as one of the qualitative methods, which is a systematic way of watching and listening an interaction with the subject and collecting data from primary resources, hence gathering and systematising its observations. However, rather than using a systematic observation method to collect primary data, this research refers to individualised memory and life experience of the researcher’s own experience. In order to form a tentative hypothesis on the transformation process or identity itself, it furthermore presents new assertions.

In concluding, this research is constructed with the framework of qualitative research methodology, as epistemologically it is based on socially constructed perceptions of the participants in terms of their understanding of the social reality that this is the transformation of the Kurdish society and Kurdish identity. In doing so, this study deconstructs the existing discourses and material in an interpretative attempt to construct its own understanding of the subject matter by substantiating with the extensive analysis of the secondary data. In doing so, through chronological periodisation of the modern Kurdish history, different theoretical frameworks were applied to each period in an attempt to give more efficient meaning to the social reality of the period in question through meaning making. While this study has not considered formulating a new theoretical perspective, however, it paves the way to attempt to construct a ‘grounded theory’ with the rich material and analyses it provides.

An important part of the research methodology and method in this study has been the values and role of the researcher. Being a Kurdish and studying Kurdish society’s and its identity transformation has inevitable impact in terms of axiological assumption of the study. While the experience, observation and knowledge of the researcher throughout his life should be considered as an important source in giving meaning to social reality gained and discovered through data analysis, it might be considered an obstacle in ‘objectively looking at the reality’. However, considering that this study, from the beginning, identifies itself as a social constructivist piece, it rejects the notion of ‘single available objective reality’ and therefore aims to substantiate the central argument of the theory to overcome the inevitable, therefore, ‘subjective bias’. Hence, this research also represents a meaning making attempt of a Kurd in the ‘wilderness’ of Kurdish reality but also in the ‘wilderness’ of epistemological reality

of conducting a research in social sciences in a post-positivist frame of social constructivism.

## 1.7 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

This section provides an overview of all the chapters before starting the main discussion, simultaneously providing an understanding of the relationship between the theoretical framework and the subject's areas and elements. This also creates a chance to observe the process of integration in three different theoretical frameworks within the field's variety and gathered sources. The opening chapter, namely Chapter One, presents general and technical features, such as aims, objectives, methodology, motivation and contribution to the field. This is followed by sections concentrating on the notion of theories and narratives of the subject within theories, as follows:

Chapter Two, being the main foundational chapter, aims to provide readers with some theoretical background and present the theoretical framework proposed for use in this research: Polanyi's *Great Transformation* is one of the essential perspectives from which to examine the identified aims of this research with a guide of distinctive expressions such as "embedded/disembedded", "transformation", "double movement" and "fictitious commodities". It is followed by Gramsci's well-known *Hegemony (cultural) Theory*, in terms of utilising 'war of manoeuvre', 'war of position', "historical bloc", "traditional intellectuals", "organic intellectuals" and "modern prince". In the final stage, the social constructivist theoretical approach is used with the aim of exploring the shaping of identity through the social construction process with the application of "knowledge", "experience", "values/tradition", "opportunity space" and "language/discourse" apparatus or behaviours. These three frameworks are then linked to provide an integrated framework.

Chapter Three, the first analysis chapter, focuses on the reason behind the failure of the Kurdish transformation or underdevelopment of Kurdish society, mostly from a Polanyian standpoint. The Kurdish modern historical period, from the late nineteenth century until 1923, is explored and then located in the Polanyian framework. The chapter also attempts to explain the '*Lost Transformation*' of Kurdish society in a historical context by asking questions such as *why has Kurdish transformation/development failed? What caused this failure? How did Kurdish internal dynamics or institutions play a role in this process?* In fact, the internal

dynamics or institutions of Kurdish society play a role in that failure as a responsible actor. In other words, leadership could not respond to society's requirements and necessities, which eventuated in their own failure as well as that of traditional institutions. The chapter argues that, as there were no visionary leadership cadres beyond traditional forces, the Kurds could not integrate into the 'new world' and its new institutions; therefore, the linear-modernisation process ceased. As a result, the 'modernisation' could not be achieved in Kurdish society, and they lost or 'missed' opportunities in the nineteenth century that constituted a 'hegemonic gap' in the 'late developed' society, which was replaced by an external (new) power (Republic of Turkey) in the early 1920s.

Chapter Four argues that the '*Great Regression*' of Kurdish society caused a deficiency of authority and emergence of a hegemonic gap, which was subsequently filled by Turkish state power. Thus, the chapter analyses the response and strategies of the Kurdish socio-political agents and the relations between hegemonic power and counter-hegemonic movement from a Gramscian perspective. Hence, the fourth chapter focuses on the period between 1923 and 1984, which is called the *hegemonic era*, and asks questions such as *how did the Turkish state dominate Kurdish society? Who were the agents of interim hegemonic struggle? Or what kinds of strategies/tactics have been taken up by Kurdish counter-movements?* Moreover, the chapter focuses on how the Kurdish counter-hegemonic movement(s) reacted against the state's hegemonic powers (which were built on the failure of Kurdish - modern - transformation) in different periods. Besides, these strategies changed in different conditions at specific times. They emerged in two ways: On the one hand, the "war of manoeuvre", which is the method of uprising through the use violence against the state authority; and, on the other hand, the "war of position", which is a passive strategy (passive revolution), an inception of the second style of responses. This second type of reaction was consequently a challenge for the Kurdish movement. The chapter argues that the modern Kurdish identity has been constructed during this era, which may be called the '*re-enlightenment*' processes of Kurds. Therefore, the modern *Kurdi* identity is socially constructed in this period on the basis of a socialist, secular and nationalist context.



Chapter Five focuses on the social construction of Kurdi(sh)ness that had already emerged through several areas, such as the national, cultural, political, economic and social terrains, during the post-60s. It has been established that there were rebellions by Kurdish political agents (*mir/gha/sheik*) followed by the cultural and moral leadership of “organic intellectuals” (or “modern prince”), in the ‘*uneventful bidding’s*’ era. However, the new identity was developed by the PKK, namely the ‘*Newrozification* of Kurdishness’, particularly after the Diyarbakir Prison resistance in early 1980s, leading to the armed struggle against Turkish armed forces in 1984. This identity was significantly accepted and at the same time became a dominant, mainstream or common identity for the Kurdish society (at some levels, by the state too) of Turkey. Nevertheless, the internal and external factors have dramatically changed, particularly since the 1999, and Turkey’s active EU accession process has been an important contributor. This research suggests that the Kurdish social structure and formation has been reshaping itself in this period, and again during this period democratisation and EU-isation of leading political agencies (such as PKK or BDP line) increased. Therefore the ‘many Kurds’ emerged in the new post-modern *Kurdi* society. In the first part of the chapter, the study focuses on these sub-agents, such as *secular-Kurdi*, *Islami-Kurdi* and *State-linked or Opportunist Kurdish* sub-identities and their strategies that also challenge the existing modern *Kurdi* identity. In other words, various agents emerged in a new post-modern Kurdish society including the new post-modern/EU-ising era. The study distinguishes these agents into their main groups/identities, and they started challenging existing modern *Kurdi* identity. The argument by these groups is the existence of an identity that had been (socially) constructed and politicised in secular and socialist values. As a result, they endeavour to extend the realm of this *Kurdi* (political) identity, continuing the hegemonic struggle in the ‘post-modern historical bloc’ that simultaneously provided for the creation of a ‘non-otherising democracy’ in the context of a *radical democracy*. In addition, this chapter’s second part explores the effect of external dynamics, mainly the EU, as a *superstructure* on the Kurdish identity, in terms of its domestic involvement and impacts, and how those external factors impact the Kurdish identity in the public sphere through the Kurdish political, economic and social great transformations in terms of Turkey’s on-going democratisation processes. In this stage, the Kurdish political actors and people integrated into state institutions and attempted to benefit from mostly EU-originated opportunity spaces in the public

sphere within parliament, local governments, mayors, universities, schools, and media. Simultaneously, they attempted to become the biggest opposition camp in Turkish political life and a dynamic part of the democratisation progress of the country as one of the strongest members of the pro-EU front.

Chapter Six, the discussion chapter, provides an integrated attempt to contextualise the entire research through a further interpretative method, namely the *dénouement part* of the research. However, the chapter does not typically discuss the subject profoundly or merely summarise the previous chapters, which has already been done in each section's closing paragraphs; rather, it focuses on how relative theories are used for each case (based on different times) of the study's historical journey. In addition, it constructs the notional links between these theories. It therefore argues that the theories are applied not because of the intention for social engineering but because of the requirements of the identified nature of the research through the analysis of the historical processes of the transformation of political identity. Thus, this study utilises a *grounded theory* strategy by using three major theoretical frameworks in an integrative manner to explore, examine and analyse the social reality and social formation of Kurds by focusing on the transformation of their political economies and political identities. This study therefore proposes that, to understand the social reality, such as the Kurdish case, using one particular theoretical framework as a straitjacket may not be efficient; therefore, multi-disciplines, pluralities or heterogeneities of explanations and theories are essential to develop an integrated analysis. This study, hence, suggests that such an attempt can help to overcome the observed theoretical gap in Kurdish studies.

Chapter Seven present the concluding remarks as the outcome of the study, identifying the strengths and limitations of the research and the contribution made by this study to the field; it concludes with a guide for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED COUNTER-HEGEMONIC AGENCY IN THE CONTEXT OF DOUBLE MOVEMENT:**

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## 2.1 CREATING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: AN INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present the theoretical framework that is proposed for use in this research. It should be stated that the theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter emerged through an extensive research around the established research questions. In other words, adopting an inductive research methodology helped to locate a particular theoretical framework for each of the periods in modern Kurdish history, as this research aims to be theoretically and methodologically informed rather than being a rhetorical narrative.

As stated, after thorough exploration of the research questions, this research identified three related and significant theories of political economy, political science and sociology/international relations to analyse the three main periods in modern Kurdish history. Therefore, Karl Polanyi's *Great Transformation* (1944) is one of the essential frameworks, as part of a political economy approach, to be utilised in this research. In particular, Polanyi's concepts such as 'embeddedness/dis-embeddedness', 'transformation', 'double movement' or 'fictitious commodities' are essential to understand the initial part of modern Kurdish history. In addition, Antonio Gramsci's well-known 'Hegemony (political) theory' through discourses such as 'war of manoeuvre', 'war of position', 'historical bloc' or 'organic intellectual' is also utilised to locate the Kurdish positioning against the 'hegemonic' and 'assimilative' power of the strategies of the Turkish state. Consequently, this research can be considered a social laboratory as it also integrates a social constructivist approach which, as a methodological approach of experimenting with society and its political identity, helps us to comprehend the political identity construction in recent Kurdish history within 'social reality', 'socio-political knowledge', 'experience', 'values/tradition', 'language/discourse', 'opportunity space' and 'public sphere'. After locating how each of these theoretical frameworks is articulated in different parts of modern Kurdish history, this research attempts to connect each of these theories by integrating or grounding them to develop a comprehensive understanding through the grounded theory. In other words, each of these three identified theoretical frameworks is used to critically analyse the transformation or underdevelopment of Kurdish society.

This research, hence, will use Polanyi's notion of *Great Transformation* and utilise his anthropological/institutional method to explain the transformation processes or

incomplete modernisation/‘regression’ of Kurdish society from an institutionalist perspective within the political economy origin of the nineteenth century. Polanyi used and explained the (great) transformation of society in the nineteenth century and argues that the *laissez faire* principles in the form of the self-regulated market are the reason for the collapse of nineteenth-century political economy. In this respect, this research explores the relative roles of internal agencies and traditional institutions in the Kurdish transformation of political identity or the regression of the modernisation process of the Kurdish political economy within the Ottoman centralisation and later Kemalist homogenisation eras, running from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1950s.

The failure of the transformation of Kurdish society through internal dynamics with traditional institutions led to a crisis of authority in the changing politics and political economy of the larger macro or external environment, causing a hegemonic gap, which was simultaneously superseded by external Turkish power. After the formation of the Turkish state under the Kemalist regime and its leading class, the issue of hegemony became a problematic concern in a post-imperial society. The new order could not attain the hegemony of a ‘sectional society’ during the nation-building process, and the ‘new order’, namely the Kemalist regime, applied coercion instead of seeking the consent of the masses. The process therefore naturally ended in domination (dictatorship) rather than hegemony, as articulated by the Gramscian framework. Therefore, the new order created a new culture and values through their traditional intellectuals to support the new state or an imaginary nation without any sociological reality or base. However, in Gramscian terms, this new dominant and politically superior culture was never mobilised in society and never gained a social confirmation; hence, it never had social or political legitimacy and thus lacked a social contract. As a result, it turned into a ‘fictitious hegemony<sup>22</sup>’. This ascendancy has not existed as a social reality, nor has it helped to socially construct social practices and knowledge, meaning that it is a *domino* rather than *egomania*, which was an illusion for the ruling elites.

The power relationship is also a fruitful explanation through which to understand the relationship between agent (Kurds) and structure (the Turkish state), and, moreover,

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<sup>22</sup> It is adopted from Polanyi and Gramsci discourses (my interpretation).

superstructure (in our case, the EU). In other words, the resistance of Kurdish socio-political agents should be understood as a counter-hegemonic movement within the double movement framework against the dominant Kemalist regime. It should be noted that this socio-political mobilisation occurred under the leadership of the 'Kurdish historical bloc' that was first formed by *mirs* (emirate) and continued in a similar context through other agents in the form of *sheikh*<sup>23</sup> and *aghas*<sup>24</sup> as part of the evolving Kurdish political economy and social formation. These new actors attempted to deconstruct, through their organic intellectuals, the identity of Kurds, which was already designed and politically defined by the Kemalist project in the Turkification or nation-building process of the early 1920s. This de-constructing project of Kurdish internal dynamics was resumed by new and modern organisations in the 1960s and subsequently modified in different values, such as EU-originated universal democracy and human rights by the new(er) socio-political agents, particularly after the 1990s, leading to a new phase of Kurdish political economy.

Consequently, the social constructivist approach is considered a very useful device for critically analysing the modern, complex and multi-faceted identities of Kurdish society and its ability to use opportunity spaces in the public sphere in terms of language/dialects, religion/sects and geographical/state differences. In particular, for Kurds living in Turkey, where the EU accession process is still an on-going process, the approach provides a means to understand a new discourse, namely democratisation and liberalisation of the Kurdish political movement that is shaped in accordance - but with a different understanding - with European liberal, democratic and moderate values alongside a new, post-modern Kurdish social structure based on multi-identities and fragmented subgroups. By using social constructivism, this study also iconoclastically articulates the various sub-identities and their strategies, characters and discourses that allow them to use opportunity spaces in the Turkish public sphere.

This brief discussion hence rationalises and contextualises in regard to why it is considered essential to utilise these theoretical frameworks in understanding the dynamics and the changing nature of Kurdish political economy and transformation of

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<sup>23</sup> Islamic leaders, such as Sheikh Said or Sayyid Riza.

<sup>24</sup> Tribal leader.

political identity. This chapter thus aims to present the particularities of each of the theoretical frameworks mentioned, and therefore should be considered a useful guide to understanding the theoretical structure of the research and its terminology. The applications of each of these theoretical frameworks to the particular periods mentioned are presented in the following chapters.

## **2.2 RECONCEPTUALISING OF POLANYI'S POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE KURDISH CASE: THE NEW DOUBLE MOVEMENT, POST-EMBEDDENESS AND QUASI-SOCIETY**

Karl Polanyi, in the *Great Transformation* (1944), articulated the nineteenth century's knotty, imagined and constructed self-regulated market society and its 'false conversion'. Therefore, through the critical analysis presented in the *Great Transformation*, Polanyi enables the reader to see how the self-regulated market mechanism is exercised. He also explains how the new system (capitalist or liberal) replaces the old one (traditional and feudal) by creating new modern institutions by dis-embedding the economy from social and political life, resulting in a new form of social formation. As a result, labour, nature and money turned into 'fictitious commodities' by replacing the real economy-based transactions and relations of 'real commodities'. Therefore, such concepts as fictitious commodity and the double movement theory developed by Polanyi have been instrumental in helping us understand the transformation processes of pre-modern/agricultural society into modern/industrialised society within the modernist perspectives. Such a concept and theoretical framework have also been helpful in comprehending the emergence of today's complex, digital, technological and post-modern society, indicating another transformation.

The self-regulated market system instituted itself by substantially destroying society's natural mechanism through the consumption of society's indispensable essences - people and environment - namely, the former social formation. In other words, a primitive society's foundations in the form of social and cultural values were forced to transform into utopian and artificial institutions resulting in the creation of a 'quasi society'<sup>25</sup> in the nineteenth century. However, this perilous adventure of nineteenth-century society simultaneously constituted a problematic paradigm of its own system, along with an antagonistic double movement, which can basically be identified in the

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<sup>25</sup> My emphasis.

struggle between self-regulation, liberalist behaviour and the social-protectionist, anti-liberalist counter-movement.

In this context, Karl Polanyi's seminal contribution inspires intellectuals in different disciplines from political science to sociology, each of whom demonstrates Polanyi's contributions to the humanities in different ways. In identifying such power of his work, Polanyi (1944: 9) states in the prologue of his work that:

the message of this book is not only for the economist, though it has a powerful message for him; not only for historian, though it opens for him new paths; not only for the sociologist, though it conveys to him a deepened sense of what society means; not only for the political scientist, though it will help him to restate old issues and evaluate old doctrines, it is for every intelligent man who cares to advance beyond his present stage of social education, for every man who cares to know the society in which he lives, the crisis it has passed through, and the crises that are now upon us<sup>26</sup>.

While some might find such a self-claim rather too much, no one can disagree that his contribution provides a critical reading of the (inter)national political-economic and social origins of our time, which makes his theory eminent and discernible in human history by providing a critical reading of the past two centuries and shedding light on the 'crises' that have taken place and that will continue to haunt humankind. A Polanyian perspective also provides an institutionalist view, a comparative anthropological economic framework and a moral political economy to understand the transformations that the Western societies (and relatively non-Western ones) have been going through since the industrial revolution and that most of the developing has been going through since the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Polanyian perspectives help us to comprehend the concept of regional-interventionist planning, complex society and social(ist) democracy in the historical and modern mechanisms of the *Great Transformation*.

Due to the powerful exploratory and explanatory nature of Polanyi's framework, mainly consisting of concepts such as (dis)embeddedness, fictitious commodities and double movement, it is considered an essential theoretical framework for understanding the (non)transformation of Kurdish society and locating the fault lines of the (under)development trajectories of Kurdish society in the historical context, as

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<sup>26</sup> This explanation of Polanyi encourages us to utilise and test his thoughts for our case without having any doubts.



discussed and contextualised in the subsequent chapters. The following section, on the other hand, explores and discusses the details of Polanyi's *Great Transformation*.

### 2.2.1 The Emergence of the Self-regulated Liberal Market and Society

*New institutional mechanism was starting to act on Western society* (Polanyi, 1944).

The new social formation of the nineteenth century emerged through a unique process - economic liberalism - and since then various forms of *laissez-faire* have prevailed in most parts of the world. This new social formation in the form of market economy resulted in a new type of society, as the economic or productive system was entrusted to a self-acting device, namely the free market, an institutional system oriented to human beings in their everyday performance as well as the resources of nature (Polanyi, 1944). This new economic system - by exploiting institutions/principles such as the gold standard, liberalised production process, free trade, private property rights, commoditised labour, nature and money (subsequently turning into a medium of exchange and currency) - changed the structure of the existing society into a 'quasi-market society'.

Polanyi believed that the history of nineteenth-century society was a struggle to create new institutions under the name of 'economic improvement'. This is rather paradoxical, as the self-regulated system unintentionally created its own alternative while disregarding society's natural balance, transforming man and nature into commodities<sup>27</sup>. The founders of liberalism claimed that market economy/society spontaneously occurred by virtue of 'the invisible hand'. However, history can testify that the economy has always been enforced by different powers as the 'first best solution', as emphasised by the fact that the perfect market has never been fulfilled in real life. Indeed, *laissez-faire* itself has been planned and controlled many times by different actors; even liberal technocrats and contributors sometimes intervened in the economy to organise the market according to liberal policy.

It is here in particular that Polanyi advocates the reaction of society's anti-liberal movement to economic liberalism, which emerged spontaneously, because 'money-price' and 'gain-profit' had never been this definitive in the history of human civilisation. Moreover, he argues that the foundation of this new order is entirely

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<sup>27</sup> "There was nothing natural about *laissez-faire*; free markets could never have come into being merely by allowing things to take their course" (Polanyi, 1957: 139).

different from previous orders<sup>28</sup>. In exploring this further, Polanyi examines the economic system and social formation of primitive societies, such as archaic Asia, India and China; examining these tribally-based societies with the objective of identifying the trajectories of individual behaviour as an indication of internal dynamics, Polanyi concludes that, in such societies, individuals considered and prioritised social status and customs rather than economic advantage, interests and individual benefit, notwithstanding any mandatory issues such as survival, breeding, and so on. Thus, in these societies economic incentive were not the determining factor of individual behaviour in economic and financial as well as political matters. However, as explained by Polanyi, a self-regulating market system started to emerge. In this process, market economy gradually replaced the non-materialistic foundation of human relations with economic (capitalist) elements, such as ‘sale’, ‘purchase’ and ‘exchange’.

In scrutinising the nineteenth century’s transformation as theorised, Polanyi explored and analysed medieval England. He identified that the market society was born in England as the first industrialised country in the world. However, he argues that the replacement of society’s long-lasting and stable institutions with liberal/capitalist values caused inequality, resulting in an antagonistic and oppressive environment that destroyed the ‘social contract’ and peace between members of society during the industrialisation era. Moreover, the traditional mode of production or kinship of economic relations is transferred into the industrial or new capitalist system, which was something new for humanity<sup>29</sup>. This constituted the main axis of essential transformation in England.

It can, therefore, be argued that understanding a self-regulated market society requires one to comprehend the English transformation process, because the foundations of this transformation (*e.g.* the industrial revolution, the development of the gold standard, and free trade) were English contrivances. By examining the trajectories of English political economy, Polanyi reveals the evolution of society within the

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<sup>28</sup> The Ancient Egyptians, Chinese and Indian or tribal societies.

<sup>29</sup> “The kings and aristocracies of Europe formed an international of kinship; and the Roman Church provided them with a voluntary civil service ranging from the highest to the lowest rung of the social ladder in Southern and Central Europe” (Polanyi, 1957: 9).

industrialisation/mechanisation age, which took a major amount of manpower (labour) out of the economic system. For instance, the ‘enclosure method’<sup>30</sup> caused unemployment among small farmers and peasants to serve the interests of the rich and the aristocracy. Consequently, the balance within society had changed. Furthermore, the process of ‘society’s mutation’ in human history is what Polanyi explores, stating that “economic liberalism misread the history of the Industrial Revolution because it insisted on judging social events from the economic viewpoint” (1957: 33). This was against the nature of the existing society and its economic relationships.

It should be noted that this new order, namely the self-regulated market system, was formulated and founded on four institutions. In other words, Polanyi identified four pillars of this order: ‘the balance of power system’, ‘the international gold standard’, ‘the self-regulating market’, and ‘the liberal state’. As for the new international political system, it was essentialised around the market system and arranged by global powers under the peace institutions, utilising various ‘peace agreements’ and chastening all other minor actors in the new system - especially in the continent of Europe, which was the centre of the (great) transformation and new type of civilisation<sup>31</sup>.

This new mechanism was protected by *haute finance* through the ‘modern’ institutions of the self-regulated market system; according to Polanyi, the *haute finance* represents the catastrophe of the nineteenth century or self-regulating market economy system<sup>32</sup>. Such an institutional change coincided with the rise of the

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<sup>30</sup> Polanyi explained that, after the industrialisation process, the commodification of land began; therefore landowners (even the Church) started to draw borders and enclosures on their own territory. Thus, the privatisation process started, rendering some landless people unemployed and forcing them to move to the new industrialised cities and also becoming subjects for the fabric industry.

<sup>31</sup> This also indicates Polanyi’s Eurocentric orientation, as his theoretical framework is based on his observation of a particular geographical region, Europe.

<sup>32</sup> Coincidentally, Polanyi, in his book, gave the example of the Ottoman Empire’s (Turkey) failure and her financial obligations in 1875 after war and the Treaty of Berlin (1878), explaining how “the representatives of *haute finance* were charged with the administration of the bulk of Turkish finance. In numerous cases they engineered compromises between the Powers; in others, they prevented Turkey from creating difficulties on her own; in other again, they acted simply as the political agents of the Powers; in all, they served the money interests of the creditors and, if at all possible, of the capitalists who tried to make profits in that country. This task was greatly complicated by the fact that Debt Commission was *not* a body of representative of the private creditors, but an organ of Europe’s public law on which *haute finance* was only unofficially represented. But it was precisely in this amphibious capacity that it was able to bridge the gap between the political and the economic organisation of the age” (Polanyi, 1957: 15).

‘marginalist movement’ in the intellectual development of ‘economics’, resulting in the separation of economy from politics and society. Referring to the de-embeddedness of the economy and, hence, its financialisation, Polanyi (1957: 11) states that “organisationally, *haute finance* was the nucleus of the most complex institutions the history of man has produced”, and it became the superstructure of every national financial institution, as well as every political initiative. Thus, instead of ‘financing’ economic activity in an embedded sense, the new order brought the ‘financialisation’ of the economy by divorcing the real economy from the financing of it. In the process of the development of the capitalist market economy, natural resources and policies were controlled and managed by this new hegemonic power and assumed an untouchable position in the international arena under any condition; even a war between global actors could not impact upon the system. This also provides crucial evidence of how economy has been sequestered from politics. Therefore, the new ‘financial system’ based on global power began to influence large and small independent sovereign states through the construction of a new dynamic liberal mentality using international mechanisms and institutions, such as a gold standard institution.

Now, universal issues have been brought under the jurisdictions of international economic organisations, such as the International Money Fund and the World Bank, rather than the domestic political process. These institutions have provided and prioritised finance as the nucleus of humanity by maintaining the *status quo*. In other words, the globalisation era or the liberalisation of the international system prioritised the leadership of price index and money-centric aspects by replacing the moral economy principles, institutions and concepts of the previous social formation including concepts such as honour, aid, salvation and many other characteristics of *man*. The economic system was born by means of demolishing the substantial mechanism, in terms of annihilating human beings’ presence and social relations and replacing them with new principles.

### **2.2.2 Political Economy and the Discovery of Transformation**

*The nineteenth-century civilisation has collapsed* (Polanyi, 1944).

According to Polanyi (1944), the nature of the embedded economy has existed since primitive-archaic times. However, as he argues, with the creation of dis-embedded and fictitious commodities through commoditisation, the constitution of the idea of market economy caused the malaise of society.

The failure of the international system of the nineteenth century can be attributed to various factors such as the effect of the 1929 depressions, World War II and the post-war era within the revolutionary period, the replacing of the gold standard with the international monetary system, the surrender of liberal states to dictatorial regimes (which end with the disappearance of the peaceful period) and the nationalism of an international system. Hence, all these factors together brought about new economic systems in the international arena by destroying the old system, resulting in struggle and protective social responses. These responses can be defined as a struggle for the ‘transforming of transformation’.

Nevertheless, for Polanyi the first thing to be considered is not the transformation, but rather the speed of the transformation. In other words, the transformation is not directly the problem; the problem, according to Polanyi, is that the system emerged suddenly and hastily, when society was not ready and could not prepare itself for the changes. Hence, the essential issue is how society kept up with such a sudden change. As Polanyi states, if society could not handle the impact of the new conditions, dispersion, corruption and immorality would begin to spread through it.

It was no accident, therefore, that the transformation was accompanied by wars on an unprecedented scale, as wars and social upheavals facilitated the social transformation in an easier manner due to damage to the existing social formation and institutions. However, Polanyi argues for the continuity and essentiality of change, as, for him, “history was geared to social change; the fate of all nations was linked to their role in an institutional transformation” (Polanyi, 1957: 28). Therefore, Polanyi argues that society reacted to such a change in different ways, as he considers that the emerging economic power was destroying humanity. In other words, against the catastrophic effect of this transformation, society reacted from the base to the top of the social layers in different forms, such as the uprising of peasants against feudal segments in

the Mercantilist period and the precautions taken in the Tudor and earlier Stuart periods in England, with the power of the Crown and legislation utilised against the harm caused by the mechanical process in citizens' everyday lives. Among the mitigating strategies against the reactions, Polanyi (1957: 38) particularly mentions "employing the power of the central government to relieve the victims of transformation, and attempting to canalise process of change so as to make its course less devastating".

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that Polanyi articulated a distinct perspective from a classical Marxist economic position<sup>33</sup>; in other words he does not explain, and furthermore is not limited to, the relationships between economy and social and political issues within a purely economic determinist context, an approach he regards as excessively based on class. Therefore, he stated that "the class interests offer only a limited explanation of long-run movements in society, as the fate of classes is more often determined by needs of society rather than the fate of society determined by needs of classes" (Polanyi, 1957: 152). However, this does not mean Polanyi ignores socialist-based economic systems or is not concerned with the proletarian class; he believes that the working class could lead this anti-capitalist or countermovement against the damage caused by self-regulated principles to society in the context of collection action and protectionism<sup>34</sup>.

This also raises the question of 'why the alternative proletarian system that is against the dynamic of the capitalist system could not have achieved the transformation alone?'. This could be answered in a Polanyian framework by stating that, as society cannot be limited to a particular class circle, one class's desires cannot account for the entire society's demands, and thus social stability cannot be provided. This is because:

- (i) the definition and structure of class is unpredictable and can easily be changed by the social, economic and political conditions of the time, and
- (ii) economic matters are not enough to explain the notion of class and society in everyday life or in general, as classical socialists claim. In other words, economy

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<sup>33</sup> The point actually wants to specify the Marxist way of thinking.

<sup>34</sup> Gramsci also argues in a similar context but in a perspective of political theory; see the next section.

alone is not sufficient to determine society without non-economic relations or values, such as social, cultural or religious values, which are already embedded in the same turbine, contrary to the classic Marxist approach. As a result, the responsive and protectionist social movements have spontaneously conceptualised and melded within different backgrounds, but retain the same goal. This goal is to diminish the market economy's effect and protect social relations, which have been suffering for a long time. Naturally, this reaction was favoured by everyone from the mercantilist, to the fascist, to the socialist, or even the new liberal democrats who are against harming liberal principles without considering class or ideology. Articulating such a perspective caused Polanyi to become known as a 'sociological Marxist', in terms of his critical political economic approach.

Polanyi was also slightly conspicuous on colonialism and attempted to indicate how the empires (of white men) exploited powerless states (indigenous people) and destroyed those societies' codes and harmony, citing an example from Indian history<sup>35</sup>: Thus, the Polanyian position of objecting to the market system also constitutes a struggle against colonisation and exploitation by hegemonic powers. The main theme here is not poverty or starvation, as Polanyi explains through the Indian example, as such issues, *i.e.* land and human relations have existed as long as human beings have existed. However, the problematic circumstances largely began when society's internal dynamic and traditional institutions were demolished by the market economy's new structure while such societies did not have the means to adjust to the market system. The traditional values and principles such as redistribution and reciprocity, which had existed for generations, providing solidarity, reinforcement and cooperation between members of the community, could no longer work in a society based on a market economy. Since a market-based economic system does not facilitate cooperation between individuals, it is inevitable that society will face destruction. Hence, in this respect the problem of transformation is not poverty and a lack of sufficient production, as liberal scholars claim, but rather that the new capitalist production system causes the problems with its new superstructure and

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<sup>35</sup> "Indian masses in the second half of the nineteenth century did not die of hunger because they were exploited by Lancashire; they perished in the large numbers because the Indian village community had been demolished" (Polanyi, 1957: 160).

world-view of the economy and it has not represented the everyday conduct and expectations of individuals in those societies.

Nevertheless, the ‘imagined society’<sup>36</sup> of the self-regulating market system aimed to disembedding the economy from politics using the elements of the balance of power, the gold standard and the liberal state. As a result, the self-regulated market society began to circumscribe the economy; the demand for interest and gain or profit beguiles man into ignoring any social expectations, values and morals in various types of state and society<sup>37</sup>. Thus, the self-regulating market system at the same time became part of the imagined society in the form of nation states.

As opposed to the traditional functioning of the economies of traditional societies, in the market economy the price became an effective tool but also the main determining factor of economic and financial transactions. All the products/goods including services, sources and capital are directed by the price/money duo, which simultaneously determines labour, land and money as wages, rent and interest, despite the fact that such a transformation is against their nature as such factors in the traditional economy were never subject to trading or sale. However, the self-regulated market positioned them as ‘fictitious commodities’.

In this light, Polanyi examined how society reacts against these utopic and frightening institutions and focuses on some of those reactionary ideas and movements, particularly in the history of English political economy. These social actions, as reactionary forms, aimed at protecting society from capitalism. Therefore, the whole picture of the nineteenth century needs to be seen within the context of changing society and market relations: from a basic, traditional and feudal society into a complex, modern and industrialised one. Consequently, the characteristics of labour were changed; henceforth people’s productivity and willingness to work was determined by wages, and the workforce thus became a fragment of the market, and turned into a commodity. Similarly, land (nature) also used to be embedded into society, but with the market system it is now used for economic purposes and it also has a price, which is rent; hence, the commoditisation of land too. As a result, labour

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson’s (1983) ‘Imagined Communities’ is inspired to create such a term.

<sup>37</sup> Society can be shaped under different structures or regimes; such as religious, secular or national, even no matter what kind of system that the states hold, either democracy or dictatorship.



was commercialised via land reform: for instance, the liberalisation/individualisation of the land of feudal organisations and churches, creating ‘privatisation’ and big landlords, which resulted in small farmers losing their land, moving to cities and simultaneously joining the peasants as the unemployed in big, industrialised cities. However, the “money in such an economy is not a commodity; it has no usefulness in itself; its only use is to purchase goods to which price tags are attached, very much as they are in our shops today” (Polanyi, 1957: 197).

Moreover, as Polanyi (1944/57) articulates, money has a price; therefore it has been turned into a commodity (as have labour and land) and it has become an effective medium of exchange in the new self-regulated international system. Additionally, this is why Polanyi argues that the collapse of the ‘gold standard’ is also the failure of market economy, which later caused the emergence of interventionist action. He states that, at the heart of the transformation, there was a failure of the market utopia. Hence, if the market loses its legitimacy, the social protectionist movements will inevitably emerge and attempt to heal society’s bruises. In other words, since the perfect market system’s first best solution could not be attained, certain interventions and regulations in the economy have been inevitable to correct the ‘failures’ of the market system.

In this light, Polanyi has employed and examined two main effective institutions, namely ‘reciprocity’ and ‘redistribution’ which are based on *symmetry* and *centricity* principles, as alternative regulations of the market economy, and to display the similarity between old and new versions of economies in human life. These institutions and their outcomes were implemented by primitive societies. In such societies, the reciprocity refers to a kinship, friendship, neighbourhood, tribal, brotherhood or any non-economic relationship between members of the community in terms of human relations. In such a structure, the economy is not the determining and controlling factor of social relations, which implies, therefore, that in such a pre-capitalist society making stature, honour and reputation is more important than possessions, goods or profit. In addition, in such traditional societies the redistribution is based on ‘gifts’. In other words, it is a system for organising that, which is surplus to individuals’ needs. This is collected in a central location in order for the members of a community to satisfy their needs and obtain their requirements; thus, they

subsequently neither need nor demand more. Therefore, the surplus products (if there are any) are received by the leadership of the community to be used in essential situations such as entertaining a guest or relieving scarcity, as Polanyi demonstrated through his analysis of archaic societies<sup>38</sup>. In other words, he concomitantly compares the primary ('uncivilised') and modern ('civilised') economic systems, bringing economic history, anthropology and social economy onto our agenda. As Polanyi argues, the response of society against the self-regulated economy is hidden under the reach of reciprocity and redistribution of principles. Thus, whenever society succeeds in gaining relations of 're-reciprocity' and 're-redistribution', the damage caused by liberalism will be minimised, referring to the second best solution.

The notion of 'embeddedness' is another influential term developed by Polanyi to articulate the differences between pre-and post-capitalist societies in conjunction with reciprocity and redistribution. The reciprocity and distribution principles of social relations show how economy was an essential and integrative functional part of the society in an embedded sense. In other words, in the pre-capitalist society, economy was embedded in society's relationship with institutions and agents, which also included political, social and religious actors. Furthermore, he describes the importance of the institutions of such societies, such as the institution of 'households', which was mainly involved in distribution and reciprocity. Moreover, Polanyi argues that they together constituted the former economic mechanism, in terms of economic relationships within the archetype of the symmetry, centrality and autarchy practised by society.

In archaic times, individuals (families) never put their own interests/needs at the centre of the production process; the purpose was not self-sufficiency<sup>39</sup>. However, when gain and profit moved to the centre of the market, the households, as an institution of the former order, began to deteriorate. Thus, the main element of the market was replaced by 'gain' as the new behavioural norm, and in the process money became the only validity (which was inconsequential in primitive society); thus the

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<sup>38</sup> Polanyi (1957: 47) clearly explains that, in "this type of economy, reciprocity works mainly in regard to sexual organisation of society, that is family and kinship; redistribution is mainly effective in respect to all those who are under a common chief and is, therefore, of a territorial character".

<sup>39</sup> "The need for trade or market is no greater than in the case of the reciprocity or redistribution" (Polanyi, 1957: 53).

transformation of the system became active. In the new society, exchange is the new principle of economic behaviour. Consequently, the dis-embeddedness of economic institutions from the non-economic sphere emerged via a constructed market society; hence the impoverishment in analysing the functioning of modern, or for that matter, post-modern societies.

Consequently, society began to change; the new operating principles resulted in a new institution, namely the 'market', which has attempted to control society by taking over economic mechanisms. The result of such a process is explained by Polanyi (1957: 57) "instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in economic system". This implies a dialectical change in the social formations of society. In other words, the market economy has (politically) constructed a market society with the intention of corporeity and sustaining hegemonic power over the economy and society. Therefore, the market system decomposed economic institutions such as labour, nature, money and trade which, in traditional society, are based on friendship, kinship, neighbourhood, citizenship, celebration, adventure and those kinds of social values rather than the purely economic aim of exchange and gain or profit from society.

### **2.2.3 Resurrection of Society in a 'Double Movement Theory'**

*Social history in the nineteenth century was thus result of a double movement* (Polanyi, 1944)

While the Polanyian concept of 'embeddness' relates to the institutional formation of society, the *Double Movement Theory* is the centrepiece of Polanyi's work<sup>40</sup>. It exhibits the struggle of the agent or the (super)structure<sup>41</sup> in deconstructing the market economy's discourse through the mediation of interventionist activity in reactionary form and in the context of (social) protectionism or from individualistic to collectivist and from liberal to anti-liberal. For Polanyi (1944) the dynamics of modern society

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<sup>40</sup> "Our own interpretation of the double movement is, we find, borne out by the evidence. For if market economy was a threat to the human and natural components of the social fabric, as we insisted, what else would one expect than an urge on the part of a great variety of people to press for some sort of protection? This was what we found. Also one would expect this to happen without any theoretical or intellectual preconceptions on their part, and irrespective of their attitudes towards the principles underlying a market economy. Again this was the case [...] thus nothing could be more decisive than the evidence of history as to which of the two contending interpretations of the double movement was correct" (Polanyi, 1957: 150).

<sup>41</sup> Which means civil society in a Gramscian discourse. Structure is also taken as a state in Marxist literature.

were determined by a double movement in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the outline of this movement has shaped the political economy and social history of the era. As a result, for the sake of protecting society a countermovement emerged against the new self-regulation of market principles (economic liberalism and *laissez-faire*), while the market was researching different channels to expand (foundation of globalism) its hegemonic culture through its new and modern institutions.

It should be noted that alternative mobilisations protect individuals' and groups' freedoms against any abuse in the public sphere by self-regulated market principles. These counter-movements seek decommodification as a main anchor of society (human, nature and monetary value) and the re-embedding of the economy into social relations. Therefore, double movement is a binary numeration system or the antagonistic relations between two main actors that are constituted and oriented within the transformation of society.

In this respect, one might claim that this is a struggle of two 'great goals'; on the one hand it is related to assembling labour, land and money within society, because the commodification of these elements is undoubtedly the opposite of their nature. On the other hand, it aims to disembedding economic matters from social relations through new modern and capitalist institutions put in place by the market economy. In pre-nineteenth century civilisation (before the self-regulated market society) concurrently with the Mercantilist era, feudalist and guild systems prevented land and labour in particular from being commercialised due to the prevailing nature of social values, morals and customs, as opposed to the "satanic mills<sup>42</sup>".

It is argued that the people of the new society were deluded by liberalist principles and liberalism's radical belief that the market economy is constituted spontaneously and that individuals voluntarily conceded the hegemonic power of profit, gain and interests. Subsequently, these behaviours conquered the social mechanism within the central economic view that annihilates the existing (traditional) structure of human beings and nature until they revive and guard against that exterminator. In the double

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<sup>42</sup> Polanyi uses the concept in the Great Transformation (see 1957: 33-42).

movement account, society spontaneously started to protect its institutions and principles against the rogue self-regulated market economy<sup>43</sup>.

On the other front, protectionism is a new policy against the devastating power of the new social class and political/state agents. Hence, one side was characterised by a market that attempts to transform society into a self-regulated, liberal economy using the institutions of *laissez faire* and free trade led by the rich and aristocratic class, while the other side, the counter-movement front, protected society against the dangers of the market economy. In terms of the principle of social protection, the duo established associations such as syndicates and unions, which utilise demonstrations, strikes and similar tactics to resist the enforcement of the market economy. This perspective also employed forensic protection with restrictive legislation by the new working class and paternalist administrators under the saving of humanity and society's dignity, honour and man's right to live. As a result, the struggle was primarily between the self-regulated market economy and the self-protectionist counter-movement<sup>44</sup>.

Polanyi remarks upon the Speenhamland regulation in the history of England, stating that "the study of Speenhamland is the study of the birth of nineteenth century civilisation" (1957: 83). In this case, the Statute of Artificers (1563) and the Poor Law (1601-1834) in England were the starting points for protecting and enhancing human power to stop it from being turned into the subject of the labour market. Fundamentally, they aimed to restrict the emergence of the labour market in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. England achieved these objectives through the Speenhamland Law of 1799, which defended labour against the harmful impact of the industrialisation process. Similar protectionist intervention subsequently occurred for labour and also for land and money under the same protectionist goal, counter-positioning against and aiming to lessen the power sphere of the market economy.

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<sup>43</sup> "It can be personified as the action of two organising principles in society, each of them setting itself specific institutional aims, having the support of definite social forces and using its own distinctive methods" (Polanyi, 1957: 132).

<sup>44</sup> In other words, "this was a more than usual defensive behaviour of a society faced with change; it was a reaction against a dislocation which attacked the fabric of society, and which would have destroyed very organisation of production that the market had called into being" (Polanyi, 1957: 130).

Such responses, therefore, in a Polanyian lens were the first indication of, and attempt to prevent, the devastation of the market economy, particularly by a new actor, referring to the emergence of the working class, in terms of bourgeois endeavours to transform society into a self-regulated market economy through mechanisation, privatisation and free trade<sup>45</sup>. The masses - even small farmers - turned to pauperism and deprivation during the industrialisation process, and people, faced with the threat of starvation, were forced to sell their power and land to survive whilst disaffirming their values. This was a development that forces one to consider the 'road to serfdom' at the hands of the new market economy.

Within this framework, the Polanyian social protectionist perspective can be considered a source of inspiration and a guide for the new form of radical social political organisation of today, which preserves the identity of 'otherness' in terms of political and cultural approaches such as new social movements (specifically feminist, ethnic, religious, anarchist, immigrant and other isolated or disadvantaged groups) in a post-modern, neoliberal democratic global era.

#### **2.2.4 The New Alternative System: A Social(ist) Democracy or Post-transformation Era**

*The discovery of society is thus either the end or the rebirth of freedom* (Polanyi, 1944).

The crisis and failure of the self-regulated market economic system was the main trigger for the most chaotic, violent and devastating era in human history. The depressions, crises and World Wars, and the disembedding of economy from politics produced an antagonistic environment between political initiatives that simultaneously ended with anti-democratic results. Polanyi argues that industry is not the reason for the paradigm of the nineteenth century society; rather, he claims that the reason for this dilemma was the mechanism of the market and its new market society within new economic behaviour. Therefore, the new actors (the proletariat) who started the dynamic transformation from market economy to post-modern society began to demand more social, economic and political rights, such as the right to vote,

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<sup>45</sup> "Nineteenth-century civilisation was not destroyed by the external or internal attack of barbarians: its vitality was not sapped by the devastations of WWI nor the by the revolt of a socialist proletariat or a fascist lower-middle class. Its failure was not the outcome of some alleged laws of economics such as that of the falling rate of profit or of underconsumption or overproduction. It disintegrated as the result of an entirely different set of causes: the measures which society adopted in order not to be, in its turn, annihilated by the action of the self-regulating market" (Polanyi, 1957: 249).

and thus, accordingly, attained the necessary political power to be heard as an ‘equal’ partner of the new (capitalist) system. Therefore, the proletariat class could take the lead in the social protection process and they could expand the public sphere by demanding more opportunity spaces in self-regulating political and economic spheres.

In Europe, after devastating wars (especially World War Two), the working class was organised around the unions, syndicates, NGOs and social democrat political parties for the establishment of a social democratic regime as part of the double movement. “This is known as the counterrevolutionary phase of the post-war period” (Polanyi, 1957: 187) and occurred with the support of social and legal regulations. “Changes in the organisation of the international economy provide particular kinds of opportunities for states to act that, in turn, shape the extent to which social forces will be able to influence state’s policy” (Helperin, 2004b: 4). While such developments were happening, the liberals did not remain idle either and protected their rights through constitutional guarantees. The liberal state was constructed by liberal economic principles that implemented free trade, a free market and also provided legitimacy to control society as a legitimate actor; however, they need to create the norm of self-regulated market economy in the public sphere through the creation of social government principles (as in England), and can thus reduce the reaction of some groups.

Nevertheless, after the intervention of the counter-movement, which obtained power, all the pain and sorrow were limited, and labour, land and money were no longer commodities. Nonetheless, such counter-movements require the continued existence of the political system in order to continue and guarantee the advantages obtained through their efforts. As a result of such strong and opposing developments, people placed their hopes in extremist, non-libertarian and oppressive methods, such as fascism or socialism, in response to the non-functioning market economic system<sup>46</sup>. The collectivist countermovement naturally reacted to market society’s chaotic pose. Fascism, in particular, became an international political solution for society without

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<sup>46</sup> “The testimony of the facts contradicts the liberal thesis decisively. The antiliberal conspiracy is a pure invention. The great variety of forms in which the collectivist countermovement appeared was not due to any preference for socialism or nationalism on the part of concentered interests, but exclusively to the broader range of the vital social interests affected by the expanding market mechanism” (Polanyi, 1957:145).

any moral values and ideals of individual freedom. As a result, fascism diminished, restricted and damaged the balance of freedom for the sake of the economy; however, the fascist system failed against the impacts of the self-regulating market economy on labour, nature and money. Therefore, this represented an enormous delusion in European societies, which hoped to evade the detriments of liberalism through fascism. Further, there was no way for humanity to either endure the market economy's principles to internalise or indulge fascist principles without losing freedom, diversity and morality, unless social justice or a socialist regime could be an alternative<sup>47</sup>. Nevertheless, socialism could not deliver in terms of being an alternative to this dilemma, as was expected. The socialist front was morally opposed to the market economy, but failed to provide individualistic freedom for its followers, which was/is the essential element of this new society.

To reflect on the socialist system, Polanyi examined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and clarified the misreading and erroneous implementation of social justice and freedom by bureaucratic/authoritarian cadres. Since Russian society did not prepare itself economically, politically and educationally or use any other functional methods to achieve its revolutionary transformation, it was consequently shaped in an uneducated and peasant formula that could not assimilate into complex-Western society<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, Polanyi considers Hitler, Stalin and Roosevelt the crippled outcomes of liberal mentality.

Polanyi (1944) pleaded that there should be another way (based on democracy<sup>49</sup>), namely a third way, which can protect society from liberalism and also bring social balance against the oppressive regime by providing freedom to individuals and groups. Therefore, the issue of freedom has become a vital issue in the *Great Transformation*<sup>50</sup>. This view indicates once more that time divides the notion of Polanyi from orthodox Marxism or classic socialism, because planning and control are means of denying freedom. For Polanyi, it is the dilemma of self-regulating

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<sup>47</sup> In other words, "socialism is, essentially, the tendency inherent in an industrial civilisation to transcend the self-regulating market by consciously subordinating it to a democratic society" (Polanyi, 1957: 234).

<sup>48</sup> An idea, which echoes Gramsci, as the following section will highlight it.

<sup>49</sup> In this study this approach of Polanyi is combined with Gramsci's democratic offers through Mouffe and Laclau's (1985) *radical democracy* approach.

<sup>50</sup> see Polanyi (1944/57: 249-258).



market system in which the state makes economic plans versus the individual's (or citizens') freedom. In the self-regulating mechanism, political and economic institutions are separated; thus, the substance of freedom could be turned into purchase in an insecure and unjust environment. Thereby, the democratic control and principles, (e.g. individual participation, party elections, freedom of expression etc.) in the economy could protect society and became an institutional guarantee of the individual's freedom. In this respect, he pointed out that, when the state arranges a planning regulation, the control became a tool of necessity, thus becoming a threat to society's freedom. State planning and regulation are necessary to spread those liberties to all members of society. However, they pose a danger to those liberties as well. This is a dilemma for both self-regulating markets and socialist economies.

Moreover, in the Polanyian lens, governments have to intervene to correct the failed market system by using tools such as regulation and tax to ensure social equilibrium in such a wild capitalism, which mutated Western society and its institutions. At the same time, the government should consider the agent's freedom, which has to be distinguished from economic dependency; as a result, there should be a balance between freedom and economic relations and, therefore, people do not need to apply 'non-libertarian' methods such as fascism and socialism.

These developments are also the first instruments of the great transformation. The structure of market society started to change by internalising and endogenising some elements from a socialist worldview to produce the welfare state as a consequence of the socialist revolution in Russia, the fascist regime in Germany (and a large number of countries) and the New Deal in the US. Therefore, it can be argued that Polanyi would probably sympathise with all those currently seeking to develop new and more radical forms of democracy (Hart, 2008), as Polanyi's understanding of societal transformation is not purely based on an economic (determinist) approach, but as explained, on an integrated understanding.

### **2.2.5 Conclusion**

Polanyi has generally analysed the structure of society in moral and political economy. He also explained how the transformation has materialised through various dualities, which makes his *Great Transformation* (GT) a crucial reference and zenith source within political economy. Correspondingly, it was argued by some scholars

that the story of the *Great Transformation* is a kind of ‘Great Return’ (notably in the introduction to the French edition of GT). In this respect, it should be noted that, according to the GT, poverty, starvation and need are not the only economic issues that concern the liberal aristocrat. In other ways, understanding and interpreting economic relations was followed by the misreading of social events, and this is the struggle of re-embedding economy in society and rescuing labour, land and money from being ‘fiction commodities’ or decommodifying them. The concept of Polanyi has not taken part in the modernist account, even though Polanyi analysed the transformation process through European history and the GT sometimes sounds modernist. For Polanyi, liberal economy trounces human dignity, social values and individual freedom. However, “The end of market society means in no way the absence of market” (Polanyi, 1957: 252). The economic relation used to be embedded in society until it was paralysed in the nineteenth century, as man’s main purpose was not constituted on the basis of profit; the main elements of life were not subject to commodities or products. Therefore, the struggle by society simply aims at returning to an era of pre-self-regulating market society, where reciprocity and redistribution dominated economic relations. Hence, Polanyi utilised an anthropological and ethnological study to understand the economic relation of pre-‘modern’ societies, where economy was embedded in political and religious institutions in the context of moral (political) economy.

In this context, one might consider society’s structure in terms of a political economy approach; thus, the important turning points, social progress and struggles became deterministic factors in the process of a changing society. As a result, the new society becomes more complicated, diverse and varied: a plural society. Society attempts to re-embed the economy into social relations on a different level; hence, the notion of new transformation will be in another dimension. This ‘post-transformation’ would be able to re-embed the economy through *re-reciprocity* and *re-redistribution* by new social counter-movement(s). Therefore, the new transformation cannot be evaluated as going backwards, but rather, as going forward. Society has achieved and adapted the transformation of economic relations into social values once more. This remains the case despite the fact that liberalism itself has shifted to another stage in our time through information technology and digital processes under the name of globalisation or neo-liberal economic principles.

However, the technological development is the main difference between this contemporary era and the industrialisation of the nineteenth century's self-regulated market principles. In the contemporary era, neoliberal principles do not completely dominate society as they used to because of the strong antagonist counter-movement reactions. This new era, at the same time, has constructed its own automatic defence mechanism, which becomes part of the new system. For instance, in the contemporary era, knowledge, intellectual rights, and artistic products are a new type of human essence facing commercialisation or transformation into fictitious commodities. Additionally, a new type of 'radical society' was formulated to protect social values and eliminate the harms of the global capitalist economy spirit within post-embedding through 'collectivist counter powers', such as new charity organisations, professional bodies, global anti-liberal groups, environmental alliances, LGBT movements, ethnic national liberation mobilisation, devout religion organisation, human rights associations *etc.* Therefore, the new social protectionist countermovement has *re-transformed* society, in the context of a *re-institutionalisation* process.

Consequently, if one were to critically analyse the *Great Transformation*, then it would be reached in three different stages of reading of this theoretical account. The first level is the industrialisation or liberalisation of nineteenth-century civilisation, in terms of disembedding the economy from social, political and legal spheres through the implementation of the self-regulated market economy. The second understanding, on the other hand, is based upon the re-transformation and reconstruction of society's substantial essences. It aims at bringing them back into social, cultural and political relations via re-embedding counter and protectionist social movements.

The final stage is the post-transformation of complex society and the social democratic welfare system in a radical, antagonistic, democratic regime by the new socio-political movements, which protected individual freedom and furthered the right of 'others', such as the minority or 'marginal' actors in societies. This argument was predominantly developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), who are also restructuring the context of hegemony. Like Polanyi and Gramsci, they also decentralised the proletariat in society, offering instead a political and economic antagonism among society. Furthermore, Laclau and Mouffe argue that resistance to multiple forms of social domination and the working class should be leading these

diverse struggles, in a radical form of democratic context, which is a precondition for hegemonic power.

### **2.3 THE NEW CONCEPTION OF POLITICS: RE-UNDERSTANDING GRAMSCI'S HEGEMONY THEORY**

This chapter, as a theoretical framework of the study, also analyses the notion of hegemony, which is a central concept of Antonio Gramsci's study. We are discussing this theory immediately after the Polanyian approach. The reason for this is that the Polanyian political economy way of thinking helps us to analyse the transformation of the political and economic structure of Kurdish society in the nineteenth century. However, by the end of this period, many internal and external factors had changed. Therefore, a new relation occurred between 'new' Kurdish political agents and a 'new' Turkish state (republic of Turkey, 1923), which was based on hegemonic struggle. As Polanyi argued, civil society has become the terrain of capitalist hegemony, and the countermovement has spontaneously emerged against the negative impact of self-regulating market economy. However, Gramsci argues – aptly for the next period of the Kurdish case – that the countermovement is becoming organised consciously and deliberately against the hegemonic power. Therefore, as a result, the notion of hegemony as a new political way of thinking became a convenient method of analysing the new period of the Kurdish historical context in this study.

The idea of hegemony was first created and developed by the Russian Social Democratic movements in the 1880s, especially by young Marxists such as Plekhanov and Axelrod and other philosophers such as Struve, Martov and Trotsky. Similarly, Croce defined the concept of hegemony on the basis of leadership of the proletariat against absolutism and, finally, Lenin shaped the notion of hegemony before Gramsci conceptualised, formalised and located it at the centre of the Marxist world (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985/2001; Anderson, 1977; Bocock, 1986; Tekdemir, 2005a). The theory of hegemonic strategy was used and adopted in various aspects by Gramsci.

The meaning of hegemony as a concept is hidden between the environment and conditions of society. For instance, Gramsci suggested that Western/European civil society should utilise a passive revolution through a 'war of position' in comparison to the Eastern/Russian version of the bureaucratic revolution, which was achieved by exerting pressure through a 'war of manoeuvre'. Therefore, were one to endeavour to

understand the notion of hegemony, at the basic level, one would probably see that it is the ideological dominance of the ruling class over the subgroup(s) of political and civil society, although this definition concurrently determinates and circumscribes the idea of hegemony within modern and complex society. Furthermore, it could be argued that Gramsci designed and constructed cultural theory (predominantly the *passive revolution*) for European society<sup>51</sup> rather than Eastern society, where the function of civil society is less pronounced, in theoretical, cognitive terms. In other words, Gramsci attempted to emphasise that Western societies were reproduced through the construction of hegemonic social knowledge, which was provided with the consent of civil society. Therefore, cultural theory deals primarily with the public sphere or civil society, which is strongly embedded in Western society and functions as a ground for the exercise of power between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements within a dilemma of balance between consent and coercion. Moreover, this dichotomy can be characterised under two main components of society: state/political society and human agent/civil society.

In that respect, our reading of hegemony can be taken from various perspectives, even though Gramsci himself did not evaluate the notion of hegemony in a consistent and simple way in his well-known study *The Prison Notebooks* (1971/2003). Internalising hegemony in this methodological perspective is also a critical analysis of the concatenation and supplementary fragmentation of hegemony. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 65-66) have a different approach<sup>52</sup> to Gramscian thought and dividing his ideas into two different and contradictory ways; they argue that

In one interpretation, Gramsci was an eminent Italian theoretician whose conceptual innovations were related to the particular conditions of Italy's backwardness [...]. In short, Gramsci was an original theoretician and a political strategist of 'uneven development', but his concepts are scarcely relevant to the conditions of advanced capitalism. A second, divergent reading presents him as a theoretician of revolution in the West, whose strategic conception was based upon the complexity of advanced industrial civilisations and the density of their social and political relations<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> Because of this perspective Gramsci could be seen as a European or in different context as a Sociological or Post-Marxist intellectual.

<sup>52</sup> It is also known as the Neo-Gramscian or Euro-communist approach.

<sup>53</sup> The concept is also inspired the aim of this study, thus to employ and utilise the new-Gramscian approach for a country (Turkey) that carries both an Eastern and a Western identity and has a complex society made up of multiple and diverse cultures.

Therefore, this unbridgeable situation of the *Hegemony Theory* is adopted and employed by human sciences, especially by political science, including the disciplines of political theory, political sociology and international relations. Hence, through this method, hegemony can be separated into molecules (parts) via some of Gramsci's critical discourses and key notions, such as 'hegemony', 'civil society', 'historical bloc', 'traditional or organic intellectual', 'modern prince', 'war of manoeuvre', 'war of position' or 'passive revolution'. This section, then, investigates how the socio-political actors could reach hegemonic power (including internal and total power), thereby gaining legitimacy among (civil and political) society. In doing so, the study articulates the notion of hegemony in the context of different aims, such as autonomy, independence, socialism, liberalism, democracy and Europeanisation within the issues of ethnicity, identity, culture, religion and ideology by offering radical democracy, as a concept, which was developed by Mouffe and Laclau on the Gramscian approach.

The idea of hegemony is simultaneously based on the struggle of different actors. In other words, hegemony is a strategic targeting of powers to gain the consent of society or the use of methods of active 'war of manoeuvre', which suits the East, and 'war of position', which is more appropriate for and common in character with the West<sup>54</sup>. Salamini (1974) explored the notion that hegemony becomes, in Gramscian philosophy, the name of 'cultural and ideological direction', because the revolutionary experiences in the East (particularly in Russia) are not possible and appropriate for complex, developed and liberal societies. Thus, hegemony is a place of intellectual and cultural arguments. Furthermore, it is transformation process within embedded political, social and economic areas via the search for political opportunities. Clearly, the concept of hegemony broadly refers to cultural, intellectual and moral leadership exercises by establishment or dominant groups (Kebede, 2005).

On the other hand, according to Simms (2002: 564), "Gramsci used the term of hegemony to refer to a type of ideological leadership in which one class exercise authority over another through the control of popular beliefs and world view that is through the control of culture". In this light, hegemony can be conceptualised in terms of the construction of cultural, political, and social knowledge and the moral

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<sup>54</sup> This was mentioned in many different parts of *The Prison Notebook* as a stage of passive revolution.

leadership of the dominant power in a public sphere where the support of subordinate groups was fully gained and the new hegemonic order was valid in everyday life. Thus, hegemony maintains domination over subaltern classes with the aid of their active consent. Gramsci (1971) expresses this, in the *Prison Notebook*, as

*Hegemony = Domination + Consent.*

However, “hegemony is not to be confused with domination or with consent manufacturing” (Patnaik, 2004: 1122). After defining and formulating hegemony as a concept, the following section paves the ground for considering the debate on power relations, double movements and the transformation process between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic (internal or external) forces that are willing to withhold and gain legitimacy and leadership within the concepts of *domino* and *egomania*, in the social construction of knowledge and social reality<sup>55</sup>.

### **2.3.1 The Concept of Society: A Battlefield**

*Civil society is the ensemble of organisms commonly called private and that of political society or the State (Gramsci, 1971).*

There are two main aspects of Gramsci’s thoughts on the substance of society. Thus, he divided society into two different spheres or realms, namely political society and civil society, which together provide the emergence of the hegemonic concept. However, Gramsci considered civil society to be a terrain for hegemonic struggle that also makes it easy to achieve revolutionary transformation, particularly for Western society (his Eurocentric prediction). Moreover, he conceptualised the kind of environment and social conditions necessary to foster hegemonic power and gain the consent of subassemblies by diffusing political and civil society. Moreover, in his account, society became a place where struggle constitutes the battle between two fundamental actors on the hegemonic subject, in terms of power relations. Subsequently, hegemony can be seen in different dimensions: Initially, the hegemonic class controls the other fragments of society through moral, cultural and ideological superiority and at same time holds power and sources to correspond to those groups’ demands and interests. This provides the ruling actors with more legitimacy in the process of softly and slyly transforming the system. As a result, according to the

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<sup>55</sup> see the following section, which relatively analyses these discourses in a social constructivist theoretical approach.

Gramscian framework, gaining ‘total’ hegemonic power is the result of controlling political and civil societies. “The general notion of state includes elements which need to be referenced back to the notion of civil society - in the sense that one might say that *State= Political Society + Civil Society*” (Gramsci, 1971:263; emphasis is added).

Therefore, the hegemonic power is rooted in political and civil societies. Principally, it is a relation between dominant and dependent classes. Moreover, when the leading class lose the hegemonic administration, the existing system falls towards crisis and chaos. Afterwards, the coercive (*domino*) methods are applied instead of consent (*egomania*) by the hegemonic power that spontaneously triggered the response of the alternative (counter) hegemonic fraction and became the cause of struggle between two main actors<sup>56</sup>. This study contrasts those power relations in relation to new or post-modern social movements, which conceptualise ethnic or minority rights and the identity of ‘otherness<sup>57</sup>’; hence a Gramscian approach<sup>58</sup> will enable us to locate cultural theory in the context of a national liberation struggle. In other words, it will be fruitful to understand hegemonic relations beyond the dominance-resistance dichotomy. The second aspect of Gramscian thinking is the investigation of the methods, techniques and moments of the counter-hegemonic movement in terms of winning hegemony without using force, while considering the leadership of intellectuals (who are professionally and politically oriented) through cultural theory and democracy.

As mentioned earlier, Gramsci rejected the classical understanding of the Marxist view of the revolutionist road, as did Polanyi. Gramsci focuses on the human conscience and society’s consent instead of determinist, economist and materialist principles. Culture, ideology and knowledge replace the interpretation of Marxism in the transcendence of a capitalist-bourgeois system. Civil society is the centre point of that interpretation in a superstructure formula. In Gramsci’s new politics, civil society plays a key role as it has been located and focused in a similar manner to Marxist analysis. Leavy and Egan (2003: 806) argue that “civil society, in Gramsci's view, has

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<sup>56</sup> An idea that echoes Polanyi’s ‘double movement’ approach.

<sup>57</sup> The concept of ‘otherness’ is mentioned in the Polanyi section, which is also embedded in our case, see Chapter Six for more discussion on the idea of otherness, Kurdish identity and ‘non-otherising democracy’.

<sup>58</sup> The study employed the new-Gramscian approach to investigate the main subject in terms of political economy, political theory and interrelation theory disciplines.



a dual existence. As the ideological arena in which hegemony is secured, it represents part of the ‘extended state’, complementing the coercive potential of state agencies. However, the relative autonomy of civil society turns the ideological realm into a key site of political contestation among rival social groups and ideas”.

As a result, Gramsci (1971) divided society<sup>59</sup> into two major levels; the first is private/civil society while the second is political/state. Both correspond to the function of hegemony. Furthermore, the crucial point here is that civil society is not structured as Marx claimed when he argued that civil society is an economic relation between individuals or a relation of production. Gramsci, however, read the meaning of civil society differently and rearticulated it under the name of superstructure, which covers the reciprocity of relations in society within the unity of cultural, ideological, intellectual and common political interests of whole classes and components of society. In that respect, Bobbio (1979) claimed that Gramsci created a new concept and way of thinking in the Marxist tradition and claimed that, if one needs to reconstruct Gramsci’s thought, the key concept or starting point would be civil society. In this respect one may say that

Hegemony is rooted in the institutions of civil society, such as the church, the academy, and the media, which play a central role in ideological reproduction, providing legitimacy through the assertion of moral and intellectual leadership and the projection of a particular set of interests as the general interest. The institutions of civil society therefore represent a key source of stability (Levy and Egan, 2003: 805-6).

Gramsci thus conceived civil society as a superstructure and felt that the transformation from the old system to the new model would not be met with violence and protest, but rather by a process of contentious politics, which was intended to slowly expand and evaluate civil society. Transformation of the bourgeoisie framework to the socialist format is not an automated mechanism but a long and slow process which, at the same time, entails challenging the “common sense” of various groups.

The Gramscian approach is a fruitful way of understanding social responses and the consequences of counter-hegemonic movements in the economic, political, cultural, and intellectual fields of society. It also paves the way for considering the concept of

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<sup>59</sup> Sometimes this is used as a superstructure.

state and differences between ruler and ruled class by tending to construct an organic link between state apparatus (structure) and civil society (agency). It is mostly used by Gramsci for society or groups, which Gramsci calls ‘regulated society’, that do not constitute the state or state power; this also perfectly matches and substantiates the aim of this study to apply a Gramscian approach to the Kurdish case. In summary, whenever a hegemonic power reaches crisis point or loses its legitimacy, the counter-hegemonic movement simultaneously appears to renew the existing system within their interpretation of hegemony. This should be considered as deconstruction of hegemonic discourses; therefore civil society is the sphere of the ideological and cultural reproduction of this new order.

### **2.3.2 The Intellectuals: A Dynamo of Hegemony**

*All men are intellectuals, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals* (Gramsci, 1971).

The concept of the intellectual - in particular the organic base - is another crucial and conspicuous perspective of the Gramscian framework that relocated Marxist views into a different dimension, predominantly in a post-modern context. Consequently, the notion of the intellectual is central to the overall direction of his study. According to Gramsci<sup>60</sup>, the transformation of the society/system is only available under a “moral and cultural leadership” of intellectuals during the hegemonic struggle. As Simms (2002: 565) states, “intellectuals, that is, people like teachers, politicians, and theologians, who create and perpetuate cultural values, produce both hegemony and counter-hegemony”. Therefore, it can be seen that intellectual capability is not limited to a prominent stratum in a Gramscian outlook.

The notion of the intellectual must be understood in a very broad way, from a process of production to a cultural, political and governance sphere. Intellectuals, thus, are the function of organisation and education, and are embedded in all social strata. Hence, intellectuals are defined by leading, organising and untying functions, rather than simply being holders of knowledge and thinking skills. Essentially, the difference between intellectuals and non-intellectuals is founded on their ‘social function and

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<sup>60</sup> “A human mass does not distinguish itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders [...]. But the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advance and retreats, dispersal and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is sorely tried” (1971: 334).

practice'. "The intellectuals therefore have a role in all levels of society, not merely in spheres which are explicitly cultural, in the economic base and in both civil society and political society" (Sasson, 1987: 135). Moreover, intellectuals are the dominant actors who exercise power relations to reach social hegemony and political management via the support of the masses. In other words, the role of the intellectual is in the new construction process and new knowledge, which can achieve hegemonic power and the consent of all subaltern social groups, thus diffusing new culture to all other social classes. As a result, this new cultural leadership will provide passive revolution, which is expected subsequently to end with proletarian hegemony.

Gramsci's considerations on the function of intellectuals are essentially related to the question of hegemony. In order to do this, he showed how intellectuals had played a critical role in the French Revolution and also in the Italian reaction against the bourgeoisie (particularly in the *Risorgimento* era)<sup>61</sup>. Furthermore, examining Mussolini's and his intellectuals' (traditional) construction of the fascist project, he convincingly demonstrated how intellectuals were utilised as strategic tools by different groups/ideologies, such as liberalism, fascism or communism, to acquire the confidence and support of the masses as well as gaining legitimacy in the eye of the masses.

Indeed, according to Gramsci, the intellectuals were not an independent group in society, as they emerged among different social classes as part of their respective groups and they constructed a hegemonic system from their ideology, which is based on cultural and moral leadership. However, intellectuals appeared in two different contexts in the *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci invented what can be termed organically constituted intellectuals; thus every class had distinctive intellectuals, or "every social group owing its existence to the performance of an essential economic function 'organically' elaborates its own intellectuals" (Karabel, 1976, cited in Martin, 2002: 24). Proletariats must produce their own intellectuals to achieve full supremacy and manage to generate 'consciences and moral leadership' over the institution of civil society. James (1998: 74-75) is therefore of the opinion that "intellectuals were thus accorded the function of 'educating' the masses throughout civil society into the acceptance of the legitimacy of the social and political order as it was constituted

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<sup>61</sup> He wrote an essay about this process entitled "The Southern Questions" in 1926.

around the dominance of a particular class<sup>62</sup>”. It should be mentioned that Gramsci did not evaluate intellectuals as a class or a single group, but rather located and characterised them within the function of the organisation and transformation of the classes into a new format<sup>63</sup>.

In his conceptualisation of intellectuals, Gramsci combines intellectuals into two main categories. The first is ‘organic intellectuals’: these are mainly those who function according to fundamental class interests and also become tools of class transformation or the process of development of public intuitiveness. Secondly, there are ‘traditional intellectuals’ who exist as the remains of an earlier social formation’s legacy and resist the new hegemonic order. Therefore, this distinguishing factor helps to explain the method of transformation of the system.

As for “organic intellectuals<sup>64</sup>”, they emerged from specific groups, and are members of each social group from different professions or economic positions; they have a certain status to promote collective demand as cultural, moral *leaders*, and at the same time provide the links between base and (super) structure. The aim of these intellectuals is not to produce ideas; rather, it is their task to organise and unite the social forces with the objective of substituting a new concept for an old one or creating new knowledge/culture for society. In other words, the historically progressive new intellectuals are able to impact upon and dominate the traditional intellectuals in the assimilation process. Indeed, Gramsci suggests that organic intellectuals can be on the side of the proletariat, taking responsibility for the counter-hegemonic movement and providing support for the historical bloc in the passive revolution before reaching power. This is because they articulate the collective consciousness of the working class in the social, political and economic fields that brings together revolution and the formulation of the reconstruction of civil and political societies.

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<sup>62</sup> In substantiating this, Bhaduri (1995: 54-55) states that “Gramsci firmly believed that the new intellectuals and leaders of the working class should not be demagogues stirring the flood that they have excited with their fatuous fiery speeches they should educate the worker or shape his consciousness. Thus, we see that Gramsci’s contention was not only to study the intellectuals as such but also to create a new type of working class intellectuals’ mission for revolutionary transformation of society”.

<sup>63</sup> In Gramsci’s case, the culture of socialism is a suggestion to the subaltern and working class.

<sup>64</sup> Such as a political economist, industrial technician, engineer, manager, bureaucrat or trade union leader.

“Traditional intellectuals<sup>65</sup>”, on the other hand, according to Gramsci, no longer represent an authority and lose their function over social movements and their legitimacy in society. This is because “the nation of a traditional intellectual is primarily a historical one, that of an organic intellectual is much more sociological” (Bhaduri, 1995: 64). They belong to several hegemonic articulations in society, including the new order (culture), have links with the previous dominant power and also stand aloof from the new social context as an opposition group. In this respect, the conviction of the traditional intellectual became a standpoint for Gramsci’s notion of organic intellectual. These types of intellectuals share the same history, culture, and heritage, have a common language and act as elites, thus distancing themselves from the masses. The formation of this old style of intellectuals is thus the most interesting problem in terms of having an intellectual bloc to shift the dynamics of society. In other words, the new stratum must assimilate and complete hegemony over all other social layers. Thus far, either the organic or traditional role of intellectuals diffuses the hegemonic culture of a particular social class within historical and philosophical function, as they are pivotal or *socially constructed* rather than originally existent, and their transformation and impact begins through the economic and the social, and ends with politics<sup>66</sup>.

In summary, party politics became a crucial subject at the centre of the hegemony discussion. In particular, they became a necessity when intellectuals failed to educate and communicate with the masses. Intellectual/Party main functions are to construct a counter-hegemonic culture and distribute it among society, particularly among the ‘reluctant masses<sup>67</sup>’, through civil society institutions such as school, universities, religious places (e.g. church etc.), media, or trade unions. Therefore, the Party could help to achieve a social consensus on the political ground. As a result, this would bring the question of the leadership of *party politics* as the ultimate way to gain the consent of the working class on a particular agenda. In this respect, Gramsci (1971) argues that intellectuals cannot achieve cultural leadership as individuals and

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<sup>65</sup> Examples of traditional intellectuals include writer, artist, doctor, teacher, aristocrat, philosopher, and ecclesiastic.

<sup>66</sup> It also inspires the study to apply a social constructivist approach that analyses the ‘new’ hegemonic struggles and social and political ground of Kurds in Turkey.

<sup>67</sup> People who are under the control of hegemonic power but who do not have any consent; thus the leading group cannot gain legitimacy and must use coercive methods to lead the masses.

therefore need to assemble around a party. In the end, hegemony is a form of political leadership in some cases. Therefore, the role of the 'party' is different for each of the classes, which is wider than intellectuals' role in society, as reported by Martin (2002: 26) Karabel (1976) states that:

Gramsci's party consists of three elements: a mass base, a leadership group with a unifying and centralising function, and 'an intermediate element, which articulates the first element and second and maintains contact between them, not only physically but also morally and intellectually'. Intellectuals are thus seen as performing a mediating function to insure that elite and mass are bound together in a single dynamic entity.

One may mention that, after the new approach to civil society, the concept of organic intellectual became another decisive contribution by Gramsci to a Marxist account<sup>68</sup>. In other words, Gramsci suggests that, as a part of society, organic intellectuals should penetrate the masses through party politics in order to be able to educate them. As a result, the idea of commune or political party emerged in the public sphere and created reciprocal relations between agent, namely intellectual, and superstructure or civil society. In such a structure, the Party is an effective tool for the seizure of hegemonic power, which has to precede the subaltern groups and indeed provide moral, cultural and conscious leadership.

Therefore, Gramsci (1971) argues that, without a strong Party, there is no possibility of gaining hegemony. In fact, Gramsci admits that this idea was inspired by Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and hence proposes that the Communist Party be known as a 'modern prince'<sup>69</sup> - an alternative to union politics and individual heroes - by designing values that would be practised according to 'common sense' and unify all fragments of society under one roof. The modern prince became the organiser of a national-popular collective by disseminating intellectual and moral reform and cultural leadership. This is because the working class believe that the existing

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<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, McNally (2008: 657) distinctively indicates that "Gramsci, in fact, in elaborating his theory of the Party intellectuals, proposes a functional division of labour in line with these categories, with a cadre of economic intellectuals responsible for 'organising the social hegemony of a group', another for organising the 'domination of the state' and yet another responsible for organising 'the consent that comes from the prestige attached to the function in the world of production'".

<sup>69</sup> "The modern prince, the myth-prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism [political party], a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form" (Gramsci, 2003: 129).

capitalist system does not provide any opportunity spaces in political and economic spheres. Moreover, capitalism has divided them into various components such as syndicate, union, chambers, federations *etc.*, and has drawn a circle that limits the space in which they can move or causes them to exist on a periphery beyond the confined zone. What they needed was a new and alternative organism. Clearly, as Sasson (1987: 147) argues:

the party can succeed in this task to the extent that it can elaborate organic intellectuals and help the working class to develop an alternative hegemony involving a transformation of the mode of existence of intellectuals in society as a whole. It is on this basis that it will ‘win over’ the traditional intellectuals and transform their relationship with masses.

Generally, it is supposed that, as a result of independent, individual identity developed in the capitalist formation, the function of the intellectual became common practice by creating a ‘good sense’, a new counter-hegemonic culture which was different to the ‘common sense’ already discussed by Gramsci, and all of them, hence, needed to be members of political parties. In other words, political parties needed to build an organisation that spontaneously emerged from the struggle of the working class, and these leadership and organising roles, which are practised by the Party’s cadres, have to embody the everyday life realities of the masses through the educational programme, which will simultaneously help to develop the Party’s leadership capacity among the other classes. Holst (2009: 628) goes further, stating that

a fundamental aspect of the organising and leadership role of the Party is to build unity among all the social sectors/classes facing exploitation under capitalism. The primary classes in this unity are the industrial proletariat and the peasantry, but the Party must work to build unity even beyond these two classes.

In addition, the idea of a revolutionary party constituted *Partito Comunista d’Italia* (PCd’I) as the principal agent of revolution after “the factory council theory<sup>70</sup>” of Gramsci, which was followed and replaced by Mussolini’s Fascist regime - it was the goal of the proletariat to win, first through the council, and, if that was unsuccessful, through the Communist Party. Therefore, comprehending the pioneering duty of the

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<sup>70</sup> Gramsci considered factory councils to be leaders of resistant, working-class action. In the *Ordine Nuovo* Programme, “Factory councils were to be autonomous both from management and worker’s syndicates; they were to be transformative rather than integrative bodies, representing the workers as producers rather than as wage-earners, negating rather than affirming ‘capitalist legality,’ prefiguring in embryonic form the Proletarian State” (Adler 1977, cited in James Martin (ed.) 2002: 250, Vol. II).

Party would be fruitful in understanding the prevailing situation of the masses, because the Party acted among the public to diffuse socialist ideology, ethics, morality and culture through the notion of hegemony, and these new actors achieving leadership over the other classes implied a broad political pact under the one leadership. Moreover, the hegemony of the working class will be rooted among the masses and accomplished by an intellectual vanguard of the proletariat and, moreover, by the Revolutionist/Communist party through educating and training the masses in revolutionary ideas. This process of *transformation* is also a dialectical relationship between intellectual, party and the masses. Finally, one should ask whether the intellectual is an elemental and organic articulation of the concept of *historical bloc*, or whether, in fact, intellectuals did not exist as an independent class in real terms, but were formed through and emerged from various groups.

### **2.3.3 The ‘Great Assembly:’ Historical Bloc or the Way of the Passive Revolution**

Another strategic concept related to the notion of hegemony is the ‘historical bloc’, as articulated by Gramsci (1971), which is a successful, political, homogeneous bloc without internal contradiction and at the same time the intellectualisation and regulation of society. When intellectuals provide an environment<sup>71</sup> for the counter-hegemonic movement and bring all other groups under the proletarian cultural and moral leadership or relate different social and political forces to each other, that new assembly is called a “historical bloc”.

Basically, it is a particular group that dominates the other fragments of the bloc by gaining their consent and a unity/relationship between structure and superstructure in a social formation in terms of a historical vision. Sasson, therefore, argues that the historical bloc needs to be examined in two levels of analysis: “the first theoretical in which the concept helps to describe the relationship between two areas of abstract reality, the structure and superstructure, and the second concrete in the description of the linking of these two areas in real society” (1987: 121). In other words, the new progressive class constructed a new historical bloc as an alternative to the previous or practising one by creating its own hegemonic apparatuses. According to Gramsci,

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<sup>71</sup> It refers a proletariat’s cultural hegemony that formulated and shaped in socialist values.



intellectuals are not able to do this alone and without a collective force; thus, this process needs to be performed by the Party.

In the Gramscian world, “history is characterised by a series of historical blocs, or particular sets of power arrangements between civil society, economic and political groups. A historical bloc [therefore] is no less than a social order within a given historical epoch” (Spence, 2009: 209-10). According to Levy and Egan (2003: 810):

Gramsci’s theory of the historical bloc can be applied to contemporary politics by ‘building from a micro politics of autonomous opposition movements, whether derived from production relations or not’. Such movements might include feminism, environmentalism, racial and ethnic groupings, and their motivations can extend beyond economic concerns to include identity and social legitimacy, as argued by theorists of ‘new social movements’.

Therefore, through this historical bloc, hegemony is achievable, but historical blocs do not always have hegemonic characteristics and are intimately related with ideology, which may change in different periods. Consequently, Gramsci conceptualises this theory related to the construction of historical bloc through two politico-military strategies: firstly, the ‘war of manoeuvre’ or the power of forces and, secondly, the ‘war of position’, namely the deeply cultural transformation. Such concepts are particularly appropriate and fruitful in explaining the process of a constitutional and gradual path to hegemony in critically analysing and developing tactics according to concrete and specific historical conditions<sup>72</sup>.

Clearly, the idea of “war of position” or the trenches system is the source for a certain conception of the passive revolution, which is the technique the counter-hegemonic groups attempt to adopt in hegemonic crises through revolutionary parties. In other words, “the war of position is not only counterpoised on a tactical plane to the war of manoeuvre. It is also counterpoised on a class plane to ‘passive revolution’” (Gibbon 1983, cited in Martin, 2002: 508). As previously mentioned, this tactic is suitable for a complex, dichotomous and contemporary society in a peaceful environment. It is not like the war of manoeuvre strategy, which could be used directly in a complex

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<sup>72</sup> In the construction of historical bloc, for Gramsci, “the ideology, thus, serves as an elopement of ‘war of position’ in the international economic field - free competition and free exchange here corresponding to the war of movement - just as passive revolution does in the political field” (Gramsci, 1971: 120).

society due the complex society's industrialised and institutionalised structure; therefore the frontal attack would end badly. This implies that the Gramscian world requires society to be prepared for transformation through different channels, for example the conquering of all the agencies and institutions of civil society including universities, the media, unions, temples, *etc.* Undoubtedly, this is an 'evolution without revolution' process; the counter-hegemonic movement is itself transformed within the new hegemonic culture, while changing members of historical blocs, society and existing hegemonic systems. In this light, Femia (1981: 53) argues that Gramsci

... placed much emphasis on a distinction between 'organic' and 'conjunctural' dimension of revolutionary change. The former refers to gradual shift in the balance of social and cultural forces and corresponds to the 'war of position'. The latter refers to the realm of contingency to the momentary period of crisis in which political forces contend for the state power; it is the arena of political combat, of military confrontation roughly equivalent to the 'war of movement'.

In the condition of modern society, for instance, the hegemony of the working class would have to be self-conscious, general, common and deeply-rooted. The consequences of this range of possibilities are that the proletariat may find an effective unification in a socialist or radical democratic regime.

#### **2.3.4 Conclusion: The Others' Democracy**

Instead of concluding the Gramscian theoretical puzzle, one can continue from Gramsci's work to reach a context of 'imagined society'<sup>73</sup>. In other words, Gramsci was aiming to see a proletariat that was 'socially constructed' in a socialist hegemonic culture by organic intellectual moral leadership by aiming to develop a socialist-democratic system in modern society. Therefore, it can be argued that the new hegemonic scheme (which is effectively defined and harmonised with a socialist world view) might at the same time extend via a radical form of democracy, namely *radical democracy*<sup>74</sup>, through the involvement of producing reciprocity between structure and superstructure while covering 'extremist', 'other', and 'periphery' identities by supporting tolerance, acceptance and multiculturalism or a non-exclusive value system. Consequently, in the Gramscian sense, the process of hegemony

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<sup>73</sup> This is inspired by Anderson's 'Imagined Community' approach.

<sup>74</sup> see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985).

achieving democratic socialism is simply a question of acquiring the transformation or revolution of 'others'. According to Morera (1990: 36) Gramsci

... contends that the 'most realist and concrete' definition of the concept of democracy is to be drawn from the concept of hegemony; 'in a hegemonic group there is democracy between the leading group and the group that is led,' to the extent that the passage from the latter to the former is fostered. Clearly, he is thinking of two conditions for the existence of democracy: on the one hand, there must be participation of all individuals in formulating programmes and making decisions; on the other hand, there must be an open organisational structure such that no bureaucracy can become entrenched in the leadership positions.

The concept of democracy, thus, is embedded in the notion of hegemony in terms of a strong and complicated network of relationships.

Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001) claim that there are two different permeations of hegemony: 'democratic hegemony' and 'authoritarian hegemony'. In this light, if one were to consider these notions through the Gramscian theory of hegemony, one could easily contextualise them. For instance, democratic hegemony is consent of the people, in other words an *egomania*. On the other hand, an authoritarian hegemony is based on coercion, which is a *domino*, not hegemony. This division also shows how Gramsci is not very keen on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (Polanyi also had a similar approach); in other words he was against any group ruling without gaining hegemonic power. As a result, it can therefore be argued that the inclusive democratic culture is embracing monotype proletarian socialist culture in the new historical bloc during the hegemonic struggle. Thus, the relevance of proletariat hegemony to democratisation in both political (state) and civil (agent/public) societies is that it would be possible to utilise the method of the passive revolution. Consequently, the proletariat could have the chance to lead members/groups of the historical bloc through the consent and therefore become a leader of the counter-hegemonic movement, thus reaching a total hegemonic power.

In this new perspective, hegemony was understood as the democratic reconstruction of the nation around a new class core [...] the notion of hegemony as a merely external alliance of classes, the new strategy conceived democracy as a common ground which was not open to exclusive absorption by any one social sector (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 62).

It is, however, necessary to underline the fact that this process is not a passivity of the masses; it is more a transformation of the masses and the construction of a new *social*

*reality* in a peaceful way through democratic institutions (for example, the most effective of these is parliament) and, at the same time, the emergence of a new hegemonic framework within antagonistic and radical discourses in pluralism. On the other hand, Gramsci had great sensitivity regarding the concept of the differences between *domino* and *egomania* because his life was also intimately affected by Mussolini's Fascist regime; thus he rejected any totalitarian domination system, either from *Party* or state, employing a critical understanding of party politics that also extended to relations between leaders/rulers and the led/ruled and playing a crucial role in the debate on democracy<sup>75</sup>. Before going on to the next section, one may claim that this counter-movement context and the historical bloc are socially (and politically) constructed. Afterwards, intellectuals within party politics and historical bloc also constructed a counter-hegemonic identity. However, the Gramscian theory of hegemony falls woefully short of illuminating how such a counter-movement and therefore identity is actually constructed; as a result, it became less helpful for explaining the next period of the Kurdish historical context. To sum up, the Gramscian account paves the ground for considering interplay and hegemonic struggle between antagonist actors, such as periphery and centre, or between agents, structure and superstructure, in the social construction of identity and creation of opportunity spaces.

#### **2.4 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL IDENTITY**

As previously mentioned, this study's central focus is to read and re-conceptualise the subject in a theoretical and methodological manner rather than conducting a narrative study. Therefore, the previous two main sections focused on two important relevant theories in relation to the subject matter of this research with the objective of developing the foundation of the analysis of the Kurdish political economy and culture in a historical context. The concern in this section is to locate the third theoretical framework to explore the most recent transformation of Kurdish political identity and impacts of the internal and external dynamics. In other words, this section is concerned with providing a theoretical approach to social constructivism with the objective of applying this frame and its insights to the key puzzle of identity, strategy

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<sup>75</sup> In this respect, Gramsci examined Mussolini's Fascism, Stalin's Communism and Fordism/American Liberalism.

and political mobilisation of Kurdish society. This study, hence, argues that one may believe that social constructivism offers considerably improved explanatory power for the study of the transformation of the Kurdish political identity in Turkish political and cultural life, using post-modern approach as a guide with the assumption that identity is also a product of social construction *per se*. Smith (1999) argues that social constructivism is an approach rather than a theoretical orientation, and examines this approach from an 'inter-subjective' perspective that is basically the impact of ideas on objects within a social ontological understanding. Nevertheless, there is no common or single description that formulates social constructivism and its use in social or political sciences. However, Charmaz (2006: 189) defined social constructivism as

a theoretical perspective that assumes people create social reality(ies) through individual and collective actions. Rather than seeing the world as given, constructionist asks, how is it accomplished? Thus instead of assuming realities in external world-including global structures and local cultures - social constructionists study what people at a particular time and place take as real, how they construct their views and actions, when different constructions arise, whose construction became taken as definitive, and how that process ensues. Symbolic interactionism is a constructivist perspective, because it assumes that meaning and obdurate realities are the product of collective processes.

In substantiating this, Risse and Wiener (1999: 778) describe social constructivism as "a meta-theoretical approach offering an ontology which differs from, say, rational choice". Basically, social constructivism is the scientific knowledge of sociology; contemporarily, the sociologist of science is called a social constructivist. For instance, Ludwig Fleck, one of the first social constructivist researchers, was a physician who published a sociological account of the genesis of scientific knowledge in 1935, which read "[a] social construction is a cognitive categorisation comprising normative judgment, created by actors to make sense of a situation and to communicate this sense through discourses. In policy making, these categorisations are most notably applied to objectives, problems, and solutions" (Stone 1997, cited in Monpetit, 2005: 123). However, this cognitive mindset appears in our Kurdish case as the understanding and observing of the macro and micro environment and the significance of Kurdo social and political life by seeing how the meaning of Kurdish identity is created and categorised socially, i.e. confined within networks of the relationship between historical, cultural and political forms of knowledge.

In this light, the social constructivist approach, being the dialect between social practice and social structure, is applied to understand the emerging new *social reality* and political discourse, specifically the concept of new identity, which is designed as a fruitful guide with the social movement theory. From a theoretical perspective, hence, the social movement reading is an effective tool for the social constructivist approach.

The following subsections, hence, aim to discuss in detail the main constituents and the working mechanism of social constructivism. This model will be used in the following chapters, particularly in Chapter Five, to explain various sub-identities, subgroups, and their strategies and relations with mainstream Kurdish identity alongside their ability to use opportunity spaces in the public sphere.

#### **2.4.1 The Debate between ‘Agency’ and ‘Structure’**

According to social constructivists, the construction of life, thus sustained by social practice, is already founded on the basis of power relations. For instance, when hegemonic power practices ‘dominate culture’ in a society, this spontaneously creates and provides opportunities for alternative cultures and counter-hegemonic movements, which resist the dominant power, to deconstruct existing hegemonic discourses with the objective of creating opportunity spaces in the public sphere. This offers a central point by which to understand the social and political changes in a society and a state, which relates to Foucault’s (1969) notion of power relations. The post-modernists argue that power and resistance always operate together. Indeed, this relation is based on the ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ theoretical approaches within the reinforcement of the ‘agency’ and ‘structure’ aspects. It perfectly matches our Kurdish case, such as the relation between ‘leading’ Kurdish political agents and state structure that is based on the power relations, boundaries and opportunity spaces of using the *Kurdi* identity in the public sphere, in the context of the top-down aspect. Meanwhile, the different subagents of society also used their sub-Kurdishness via a bottom-up perspective as a basis for society to challenge the dominant Kurdish political mobilisation to expand its border of identity and public sphere. Therefore, in terms of state and agent or group and society relationships, some questions arise, such as:

What kind of agency/structure relationship do they have?

How do these relations affect both sides?

Who is leading and determining in that relationship?

These are central issues of the theoretical discussion on social constructivism. Therefore, these critical and analytical questions bring forward a social constructivist breakthrough at the centre point of the social agenda, within the agency and structure debate. This discussion is based upon the relationship between person and agent or the society and structure dichotomy. The pattern is cyclical in terms of how the effect on one determines the other through bottom-up and top-down routers. As Burr (1995: 96) states, “the top-down leaves discourse as a side-effect of social structure, and it therefore cannot be the focus for social change. The bottom-up view, worse still, cannot accommodate any kind of social constructionism, since the individual is a ‘given’ from which society arises and which therefore cannot be said to be logically prior to the social”. On the other hand, Derrida’s deconstruction cognition can be applied to articulate that relationship between agency and state, which can also be used to comprehend the restructuring of the new positions of these actors in terms of a social constructivist approach. Therefore, the social constructivist approach could re-read the social, political, cultural and even economic issues by attempting to reconceptualise the problematic questions of life.

Eventually, besides the debates on ‘reality and belief’ and ‘reality and knowledge’, the agency and structure relation became another problematic issue that social constructivism had to deal with, although it also built up a constitution for case-study (Kurds) of this research. As such, social constructivist researchers focus on the conflict resolution of the antagonistic relationship between agency and structure.

Rosamond (1999: 658), therefore, states that

Agents help to make their environment and their environment helps to make them. The environment within which the actors operate is an inter-subjective structure, which also contributes to the creation of norms governing behaviour and the boundaries of the possible. This means that not just interests, but also identities are bound up with these sociological processes.

Moreover, a group, after the construction of social reality, gains a strategic position. This is because a group is in the stage of implementing forms of this new outcome that have already been appropriated with their lifestyle. The group is therefore actively engaged in the processes of creating a new ideological perspective by using

critical analytical approach. Primarily, this function provides a chance for institutions to turn into a hegemonic movement and struggle against their environment - such as the state or society - because the people, who live in society and its social structure, have already had their personal choices influenced by the new tradition. In this case, socio-political behaviour and identity became a crucial factor for 'agency politics'.

#### **2.4.2 Re-reading the Old Testimony: De-constructing and Re-constructing Processes**

The emergence of post-modern epistemologies appears as a new doctrine to interpret the issues of humankind. As part of the post-modern approach, social constructivists are perceived as having a powerful and creative influence and as valuing social reality as it happens. The social constructivist accounts of identity, particularly by the two French post-structuralist theoreticians, Michel Foucault (1969) and Jacques Derrida (1967), focus on how identities are socially constructed within social reality in relation to discourses. Therefore, we are creating a social constructivist account by using several prominent representatives of this theoretical approach, predominantly Berger and Luckmann, but also Manheim and, occasionally, the legacy of Foucault and Derrida, due to the subject's complex, fragmental and multi-dynamic identity construction and transformation process and ambiguities definition of the social constructivist theoretical approach. Hence, at this point, discourse is contrasted with de-constructivism, which emerged as a post-modern view of social constructivism. Discourse is concerned with and examines how the social reality, identity, nation, art, and any other human subject are constructed via the structure of knowledge and language or vernaculars. In addition, the concept of social ideology is embedded in a more general interpretation of reality; it is built into the meaning of our understanding of reality. Burr (1995: 79) therefore maintains that

Social constructionists talk of the way in which discourses can be employed to keep people willingly in a condition of oppression; they have sometimes drawn upon the sociological notion of ideology. The concept of ideology is often used by social constructionists to talk about the way in which discourses obscure such power relations.

Consequently, according to social constructivism, 'ethnic identity' is a modern phenomenon, which emerged through political and cultural actors. Any identity can therefore be (de)constructed and re-constructed as a result of changing power



structure. A power relation operates in society in terms of understanding social constructivism. As Burr (1995: 82) states,

The explicit aim of the social constructionist is to ‘Deconstruct’ the discourses which uphold inequitable power relations and to demonstrate the way in which they obscure these; it is difficult to see how it is possible to do this without falling back upon some notion of ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ that the discourses are supposed to obscure.

Moreover, Burr (1995) argues that de-constructionism is a process of social constructionism, since social phenomena are constructed with a common language, shared culture, history and experience and produce social facts and values, for instance nation, religion, family, affinity and so on. Basically, the deconstruction of social reality is a kind of new process or re-reading of the old testimony. “[Social] constructivism helps here because it suggests that ‘external’ factors<sup>76</sup> are likely to be social constructions of ‘internal’ actors. The ‘inside–outside’ dichotomy is reinforced by a pervasive rationalism in conventional theoretical accounts” (Rosamond, 1999: 667). This is in order for social institutions such as the state, schools, parents, religious places, clubs, the community and military services with their rules, policies, procedures, practices and discourses to go about constituting various identities/ideologies. This situation, from a Foucauldian perspective, explains the ‘dividing practice’ that constitutes the reality into ‘surrealistic dualism’ and is the result of a discourse of the power-knowledge context. This can be continued with Derrida’s approach, which argues that all those socially constructed concepts can be interpreted in various ways, within contradictions and fragmentations, and cannot be traced back to a pre-construction pose. In other words, this relationship is not shaped in antagonism but is, rather, a complementary relationship that Foucault (1967) identifies when he draws attention to the relationship between power and resistance: if any power is practised, resistance also emerges.

### **2.4.3 The Basis of Social Constructivism: A Social Reality**

*The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality.*  
(Berger and Luckmann, 1967)

Social constructivist approaches emerged with (or after) other post-modern theories in the academic world, but they lacked a unified description or clear definition since they also had links with constructionism/deconstructionism, post-structuralism/post-

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<sup>76</sup> The external power is identified, in the Kurdish case, as the Turkish state and the European Union.

modernism and discourse analyses. This also made it very hard for the study to effectively and critically analyse and use social constructivism as an applicable model to explain the contemporary social structure, political culture and identity issues of Kurdish society as a research question. The notion of social constructivism is sometimes embedded in these paradigms. It also affected and was influenced by various new popular disciplines and intellectual approaches. Foucault's '*archaeology of knowledge*' and Derrida's '*de-constructionism*' are two great examples of this.

However, Rugie differentiated social constructivism into three variant formats. The first is a *neoclassical* view, which is based on inter-subjective meanings and is derived from Durkheim's and Weber's understandings of society or politico-social issues. The second is the *post-modernist* view, which is based on a decisive epistemological break with modernism and derived from the work of post-modern intellectuals such as Nietzsche, Foucault and Derrida. The third is the *naturalistic* view, which is based on the philosophical doctrine of scientific realism, derived from the work of Bhaskar (see Smith, 1999). Thus, having explored this differentiation, one might ask: 'why did the human sciences need social constructivism? What kind of needs and environment enabled social constructivism to sprout in such prominent disciplines?'. This could open a broad discussion, which is still on-going in the academic world, particularly in political science and the social sciences.

The concepts of 'language' and 'communication' and their practices among society and the state play an important role alongside the strategies and intellectual approach of (Kurdish) groups in the 'public space' and subsequently become the issue of social constructivism. Hence, the tool of language is the interaction between members of society and imparts a social knowledge, which is later transformed into social reality. In other words, the language ability provides a system that organises the knowledge of previous times and gives meaning to all those experiences that emerge as the outcome of language. Furthermore, Burr (1995: 62-63) argues that

Social constructionism is not limited to an interest in language and discourse, because social structure, social practices and their associated discourses are seen as all part of the same phenomenon. To understand the power inequalities in society properly, we need to examine how discursive practices serve to create and uphold particular forms of social life. If some people can be said to be more powerful than others, then we need to examine the discourses and representations, which uphold these inequalities.

The discourse has a wider meaning if it is compared with language, which is, at the same time, related to the social system and practices. Basically, the discourse exists and finds a space in the ‘text’<sup>77</sup>. In order to explain this, Derrida (1967) claims that there is nothing outside the text.

Discourses and political behaviours produce a ‘knowledge’<sup>78</sup> ability, which can give the ability to see changes, realities, meanings and information in society. Nevertheless, it should be clarified that it is not necessary for the social constructivist theoretical approach to always use discourse as an analytical approach in social issues or research, although the study does exactly this and focuses on the role of discourses in terms of relationships of alternative identities with agency, society and state. Further, the study utilises the discourses with other deterministic social and political elements rather than utilising and fulfilling discourses as a task through discourse analysis. In this respect, social constructivism goes beyond that and employs other techniques (apart from textual analysis) to examine issues that are relevant to society. Therefore, “social constructionism as a loose collection of theoretical perspectives and discourse analysis as an approach to doing social research do not coincide with each other in a one-to-one fashion” (Burr, 2003: 150). In this respect, one might say that social constructivism utilises language and discourse to discover the meaning of reality and attempts to understand the method of the construction of social reality. Social constructivists, therefore, can also argue that discourse may constitute the reality or perhaps agency. The concept of agency is extended in the social constructivist account, which simultaneously provides an opportunity for social constructivist theory to redefine the identity construction process, meaning of social reality, and content of knowledge. Because the individual is commonly seen as capable of being the first stage of the social constructivist process, it would be easier to see how social reality and identity is created through individuals.

On the other hand, some social constructivists, such as Andre Kukla (2000), argue that we are contriving everything about society rather than finding out about or exploring it and subsequently we are asking questions such as: ‘Is reality constructed

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<sup>77</sup> This can be conceptualised within written and spoken material such as newspapers, magazines, journals, speech, conversation, interviews, presentations, and so on.

<sup>78</sup> Through a Foucauldian lens, it can be seen that knowledge is power (sovereign power and disciplinary power).

by our activity? Do we collectively invent the world rather than discover it?' They claim that whoever attempts to answer these questions in the authorised manner will be labelled a social constructivist. In other words, social constructivism most often stands at the concurrence of two terminologies in sociology: the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of science. Thus, they could draw a line between constructivism and social constructivism. Furthermore, according to Kukla (2000: 4) "it is necessary to distinguish three issues that receive a great deal of play in constructivist literature; metaphysical thesis, epistemological thesis and semantic thesis". The 'social constructivism' often leaps between reality and the value system, which sometimes makes it difficult to explain the methodical phenomenon of social issues.

Therefore, 'social constructivism' emerged within this scientific necessity. Scholars such as Pinch and Bijker (1984) explain in their well-known study of the development of the penny-farthing bicycle how social agents create their own reality even though it is a scientific matter. They attempt to conceptualise the social shaping of technology or, conversely, the technological shaping of society. This also shows that social constructivists from different disciplines agree that scientific knowledge can be, and indeed has been, shown to be systematically socially created. In this light, there is an argument that claims there is nothing beyond discussions and philosophy in science other than a mere recognition that scientists are social persons and that knowledge is part of the social world (Sismondo, 1993). In addition, Sismondo (1993: 515) points out that:

'social construction' and 'construction' do not generally mean the same thing from one author to another, and even within the same work the terms are meant to draw our attention to several quite different types of phenomena; perhaps the fecundity of constructivist science studies is linked to a diversity of foundations<sup>79</sup>.

Eventually, Berger and Luckmann (who are well-known and distinguished social constructivists concerned with the construction process and type of knowledge in

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<sup>79</sup> Sismondo continues: "Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar talk about the construction of both facts and things, Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker about knowledge (until they apply it to technology). From Karin Knorr-Cetina one gets the impression that constructivism is a very specific research programme, but Pinch and Bijker call all recent sociology of scientific knowledge social constructivist" (1993: 516). All those scholars are seen as social constructivists in various disciplines.

terms of socio-cultural and socio-political lenses) presented a crucial contribution to the sociology of knowledge in their prominent book: *The Social Construction of Reality* (first published: 1966). Therefore, an analysis of their study reveals that (social) 'reality' occurred as one of the important elements of sociology, and, consequently, of politics and international relations as well. In other words, the social reality is socially constructed and created in social interaction, and this process of social construction should be focused through the sociology of knowledge.

'Socially constructed' usually means nothing more specific than 'of social origin' [...] Barry Barnes has developed an analysis of power such that power is almost entirely socially constructed. At the social level, he claims, power is a function of everybody's beliefs about power; a person is powerful because a sufficiently large number of people believe him or her to be [...] The field of gender studies [postmodernism] is where constructivist ideas have been used most [...] The vast amount of research on gender roles has created a rich picture of the ways in which social construction works. In short, work on gender and its 'deconstruction' has helped to develop the idea of social construction of objective realities. (Sismondo, 1993: 521-522).

Indeed, their main aim is to explain how social reality is constructed by relations between members of society and the impact of members' social practices, experiences and knowledge on the creation process of development. In this light, the relationship between individuality and collectivity is a dicephalous model, which means that people created the reality for society and this reality became the only validity for individuals in a vicious cycle. Within this framework, reality and knowledge are two very important terms for understanding society and its aspects. The meaning of this statement is that any social group or political agent attempting to construct (or de/re construct) identity needs to realise that the construction of social (political) values is nourished with experiences of social groups or nations. This belief system consists of historical culture, value, morality, ideologies, ideas and culture, or as a common sense, which are explored and theorised for an identity construction project. Therefore the creation of social knowledge and reality needs to be evaluated in harmony with the historical and cultural values or individuals' practices in everyday life; then (socially) constructed identity could gain legitimacy and acceptance in societies.

In a parallel way, Berger and Luckmann (1967: 16) argue that "the sociology of knowledge also must first of all concern itself with what people 'know' as reality in their 'everyday', non or pre-theoretical lives. In other words, common sense 'knowledge' rather 'ideas' must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge.

It is precisely this ‘knowledge’ that constitutes fabrics of meanings without which no society could exist” and it explains how identity is created and has different interpretations in society (as in the Kurdish case) by being built up in the intellectual dimension.

Knowledge about society is a realisation process of the public, in terms of producing and objectivising social reality; thus the sociology of knowledge is helpful in understanding the work of the social construction formula. Therefore, Berger and Luckmann (1967: 78) talk about two important elements of these processes: *institutionalisation* and *legitimation*:

The institutions, as historical and objective facilities, confront the individual as undeniable facts. The institutions are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes or not. He cannot wish them away [...] they have coercive power on him [...] the objective reality of institutions is not diminished if the individual does not understand their purpose or their mode of operation.

However, if the state’s institutions cannot create a coercive power over society and cannot constitute the dominant discourse and knowledge among members of society, the state will subsequently clash with society, which will bring a legitimation problem to the system and its institutions. The legitimation of institutions is founded on the basis of language and knowledge in society. In other words, language is the principle element of society that offers communication between its members. In the words of Berger and Luckmann (1967: 116-121): legitimation is analytically detached in four different levels. *Firstly*,

the fundamental legitimating ‘explanations’ are, so to speak, built into the vocabulary. *Second* level contains theoretical propositions in rudimentary form, *third* contains explicit theories by which an institutional sector is legitimated in terms of differentiated body of knowledge and symbolic universes which is the *final* body of theoretical tradition that integrates different provinces of meaning and encompasses the institutional order in a symbolic totality [...] provides a comprehensive integration of all discrete institutional processes. Institutions and roles are legitimated by locating them in a comprehensively meaningful world.

In addition, the concept of a ‘grammatical method’ is another issue of social constructivism that takes its place alongside language, discourse, knowledge and reality within the institutionalisation and legitimation aspects. The grammatical method is at the same time part of the language principle via helping users to create sentences and discourses in terms of expressing themselves and constructing identity/society. Harres (cited in Burr 1995: 127) notes that “the language of western

industrialised societies is dominated by the logic of exhortation and choice. The grammar or internal logic of our language-use therefore refers to the (culturally and historically specific) rules or traditions that people appear to follow when they construct accounts”. Again, the Kurdish case became an excellent example with the discussion on using the ‘X, W, Q’ letters in the public space and the division of meaning and pronunciation of vocabulary between state institutions and mainstream media on one hand and pro-Kurdish actors on the other. This included terms such as such as ‘*Newroz* or *Nevruz*’, Guerrilla or Terrorist, and Mr Ocalan or ‘Baby Killer’, alongside utterances of the acronym of the PKK (either ‘PeKeKe or PeKaKa’ in the case of pronouncing in Turkish).

Harres’ position on social constructivist ideas shows that linguistic/discourse exercises are very important elements in the construction of an identity, something which will also be argued in relation to this research in examining how Kemalist language - dominated by militarist, nationalist and secularist values - was used in the ‘political construction’ of Turkish society. This was naturally followed by the ‘social’ de-construction and then re-construction of a Kurdish identity, which was implemented by internal agents. Furthermore, it can also be argued that language and communication play an important role in the structure of society, which is problematic in Turkish society, especially between Kurds and Turks (see Chapters Five and Six). There has always been a lack of communication since the Republic was established, as a result of different languages, geographic conditions and prejudices between these two identities. This raised obstacles for both sides in understanding and empathising with each other. In these situations, the institutions of society had not emerged through healthy and natural processes. Moreover, the new Republican regime and its institutions’ language have the same problematic relation with minority or ‘other’ identities’ such as Islamic, *Alawite*, Christian, Jewish, leftist (socialist or communist), LGBT or atheist identities. Once again, Berger and Luckmann (1967: 125) therefore argue that:

a major occasion for the development of a universe maintaining conceptualisation arises when a society is confronted with another society having a greatly different history. The problem posed by such a confrontation is typically sharper than that posed by intra-societal heresies because here there is an alternative symbolic universe [...] It is much less shocking to the reality status of one’s own universe to have to deal with minority groups of deviants, whose contrariness is *ipso facto* defined as folly or wickedness than to confront

another society that views one's own definitions of reality as ignorant, mad or downright evil. It is one thing to have some individuals around, even if they band together as a minority group, who cannot or will not abide by institutional rules of cousinhood.

To sum up, this antagonistic relation between discourses and languages (or vernaculars) became a major reason for Kurdish political agencies and, moreover, sub-agencies, to construct their own identity by de-constructing or challenging the dominant one by mobilising within a 'counter' context and its transformation process. This new politics also offered a common language and identity that began to take shape within EU values.

As a result, after critically analysing all these social constructivism's elements simultaneously leads us to consider the following questions in Chapter Five in examining and exploring the post-1984 period in the 'post-modern' Kurdish history which is dominated by the pro-Kurdish political agent, namely PKK:

What kind of structure or opportunity space is available for Kurds in the Turkish political sphere?

How does the Kurdish movement fit into this context, when compared with Islamic movements?

What is the definition of the public sphere by Kurdish agents and what are they researching?

Do 'common living spaces' or opportunity spaces exist in this sphere?

Which EU-originated opportunity spaces are provided and how have these impacted the transformation of Kurdish political identity?

#### **2.4.4 Mechanism and Application of the Social Constructivist Framework**

After raising a number of theoretical questions, this section of the chapter seeks to build a theoretical foundation to understand the social construction process of the Kurdish socio-political identity in the post-1984 period, as aimed at by this study.

In general, identity *per se* is a product of social and political actors; a group's identity is an outcome of the process of de-constructing, constructing or re-constructing relations through interactivity with other agents and structures; at the same time, however, it is a re-negotiation process in terms of positioning in relation to changing power structure that is taking place around the individual and structure. In relation to this, Kurdish identity, as discussed so far, is a product of similar processes including de-construction, re-construction and periodisation by negotiating with different



agencies in a historical context. While bi-directional causality process in terms of the developments and changes in the macro-environment of Turkey having influences on the Kurdish identity process, the developments in the Kurdish micro-environments have implications for Turkish political culture. In other words, for example, the re-negotiation of the ‘implicit’ social contract by the Kurds as part of the new politics of Kurds have effectively influenced Turkey’s democratisation process by presenting some serious challenges to the *status quo*, thus confronting the long-term policy of the state towards the Kurdish issue. As a result, this re-negotiation process has also provided an environment in which it has become possible to consider radical concepts such as ‘democratic autonomy’ and “sovereign Kurdistan<sup>80</sup>” but also other ‘soft’ alternative solutions such as ‘equal citizenship’ in constitutional guarantee offered by Kurdish political agents. Due to such a negotiation process, the notion, meaning and definition of identity became a central issue of Turkish politics as much as Kurdish politics, and it has been contextualised in antagonistic relations since the establishment of the Republic.

As theoretically explained so far, social constructivism argues that the concepts of ‘identity’, ‘social reality’ and ‘knowledge’ are all constructed by and as products of social actors through their social, political and economic interests (Longhurst, 1989) within their social constructed perceptions, opinions and understandings. Thus, identities are shaped as a social reality and are socially constructed in the course of interests situated in political struggles, and legitimated by members of society. By legitimation is “meant socially objectivated ‘knowledge’ that serves to explain and justify the social order. Put differently, legitimation [provides] are answers to any questions about ‘why’ of institutional arrangements” (Berger, 1969: 29).

In responding to one of the main aim of this part, the social constructivist approach is utilised as a theoretical framework to understand development, progress and process of socio-political identity through the expansion and contraction of opportunity spaces in the public sphere in 1984 period, which is also marked with a new macro environment in Turkey that is neo-liberal economy supported by restricted democracy. Such a new environment offered a new and a larger opportunity space to

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<sup>80</sup> The term used by DTP MP Gulden Kisanak, on 6 September 2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=bdp-louder-in-its-autonomy-demand-at-diyarbakir-rally-2010-09-06> Access Date: [06 September 2010].

develop various identities ranging from pragmatism to militarism among the Kurds in Turkey. Thus, it became a crucial method for this chapter to apply to the social construction theory and methods of analysing identity issues for gaining a greater understanding of the ‘production of action’, behaviour, or practices of institutional politics. Therefore, this formulation contextualises the transformation of Kurdish identity, while it is important to mention that identity itself is attached by the discourse of social devices or agents.

As a result, the social constructivist mechanism operates on the construction of micro-identities of internal actors by investigating their discourses and strategies that have determined their access to the opportunity spaces in (Kurdish and Turkish) public spheres, as they have aimed at exerting their political influences on ‘common’ Kurdish identity through the particular discourses they have developed. In addition, the sub-identity or divergent agents in Kurdish socio-political life along with mainstream *Kurdi* identity are explored in this study. The EU is also involved in contributing to the transformation of Kurdish political identity by helping the process of expanding the ‘new’ opportunity spaces. However, before looking at EU influences, it is useful to see the impact of various internal actors on the present and operative political identity of Kurdish mobilisation by examining these subagents’ relations, strategies and discourses with the established *Kurdiness* and their capacity to use opportunity spaces, which also determines their proximity to the centre. The peripheral or subagents pose a challenge to the policies and politics of the leading Kurdish actors alongside the EU institutions, in terms of the democratisation or *EU-isation* process<sup>81</sup>.

In doing so, the opportunity space<sup>82</sup> provided a very fruitful explanation to show how social constructivism was operationalised in Kurdish society, and how privatised Kurdish identity finds space in the Turkish public sphere. Thus, opportunity space here means finding new political, economic, social and legal possibilities in the public sphere to different agents and structures. Therefore, this methodological approach

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<sup>81</sup> In this case, PKK and BDP agents are the main Kurdish actors; one has been fighting the Turkish state for almost 30 years while the other is leading a large majority of Kurdish people, with 36 MPs in Parliament (6 of them in prison) and 99 mayors in the region.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Opportunity space’ as a paradigm was utilized Yavuz (2003 and 2004) in understanding the trajectories of Islamic movements in Turkey in the same manner this study attempts with the Kurdish developments.

could help us to understand the transformation of ‘dominant’ Kurdish identity within the relationships between various sub-identities (hermeneutical) of society. At the same time, we will be able to see the internal impact and challenges of sub-identities on mainstream Kurdish identity that seeks opportunities in the peripheral and counter-hegemonic Kurdish public sphere. Yavuz (2003: 52) explains that “opportunity spaces are not simply mobilising structures, because the manner by which they adhere is through social interactions and expressive space rather than through formal or informal organisational structure”. In this respect, employing the ‘opportunity space’ is more convenient for this study to understand the transformation of the socio-political agents, which “brings micro and macro forces together and identifies the interactions between external and internal resources to indicate direction of changes” (Yavuz, 2005: 24). These opportunity spaces, particularly political and legal ones, play a formative role in the representation of Kurdishness in the Turkish public sphere and allowing the Kurds to define their own identity in everyday life.

In other words, the social constructivist framework - at the same time – develops a mechanism demonstrating how the excluded, individualised and privatised Kurdish political identity appears in the (Turkish) public sphere and how the leading pro-Kurdish political agents find opportunities in the public sphere through EU-originated opportunities. It also stresses the role of the EU, which provides an effective opportunity spaces in the on-going reinterpretation or ‘reconstruction’ of the Kurdish political identity process. Correspondingly, Yavuz (2003: 177) refers to “new political opportunity spaces, opened as a result of democratisation, to ‘separate’ Kurdish civil society and enhance Kurdish identity at the societal level”. However, one may draw attention to the fact that this development of Kurdish political agents is also contributing to the EU accession process and democratisation of the country.

Hence, the opportunity spaces based on either the state or society occurred as part of the hegemonic struggle has taken place between different agents and Turkish state in the post-1971 military intervention mainly, which came into existence in the post-1980 military *coup d’etat*. As a result, it could be said that the current transformation of Kurdish ‘mainstream’ political identity, which is still being led by the main pro-Kurdish political agents (namely PKK or BDP political party cultural line), is an outcome of the interplay between internal and external hegemonic struggles. Thus this

study, in this context, refers to the opportunity spaces as an operational aspect of the social constructivist theoretical approach. In the critical analysis of the transformation of political identity in Turkey's public sphere, the external factors played an important role<sup>83</sup>. However, in our case none of them were the main causes of the current transformation of the Kurdish view, as social and internal progress and development played major role in the observed shift.

In summary, social constructivism helps to determine the re-construction and transformation of identity by making reference to various internal forces as a result of re-negotiation between these forces. In this, opportunity space and its expansion play an important role in the articulation of re-negotiation process. Indeed, re-negotiation existed in the previous periods as assumed by Gramscian framework as well. However, social constructivist position has a different appeal in the sense of structure expanding the opportunity space by allowing the actors to exist to re-negotiate the process rather than as assumed by the Gramscian framework various stakeholders taking political manoeuvre to be able to enter re-negotiation. In this last historical chronology of the Kurds, thus, social constructivism working through opportunity space is considered to be the dominant theoretical framework to explain the observed transformation in Kurdish society and of the shift in the identity constructs of the Kurds. This study recognises the role played, by an external power that is the EU process, in expanding the opportunity space in Turkey in particular in favour of the Kurds as a *de facto* result. Thus, all these processes and institutions resulted in the new Kurdish identity and the transformation of Kurdish society, which has been facilitated by opportunity space as an 'facilitator outlet'. The impact of opportunity space as the tool of social constructivism is particularly visible in the strategies and positioning of various Kurdish groups in the post-1984 period, which is explained in detail in Chapter Five.

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<sup>83</sup> Such as the liberalisation of the country during the Ozal period (starting in 1984), the EU accession/democratisation process within the expanding public sphere through the Copenhagen criteria, AKP's policy towards the Kurds as a new government approach in terms of conservative, liberal and Islamic (with Ottoman/Turkish perspective) context has played an important role.

#### **2.4.6 Conclusion**

This section firstly attempted to examine the notion of the social constructivist approach in terms of a debate on “reality/belief”, “reality/knowledge”, “agency/structure” and “opportunity space” in public sphere issues. It endeavoured to discover how social constructivism could be understood in theoretical and methodological terms. Simultaneously, it discussed why the social constructivist approach is necessary within other post-modern political and social science approaches, in light of the work of distinguished social constructivists such as Burr, Berger and Luckmann, Mannheim, Knor-cetina, Kukla and Sismondo. Therefore, employing the concept of discourse and power relations in constructing and de-constructing dualism and opportunity spaces provides us with a broad foundation and helps us to study the transformation process of Kurdish political identity and to analyse different types of identities, along with their strategies and behaviours, in the Kurdish society. This study, thus, prioritises and concentrates on the various sub-identities of Kurdish society and the concept of opportunity spaces in different public spheres (particularly in Turkish, Kurdish and EU-originated areas) through a social constructivist account.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE POLITICAL ECONOMY AND TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF KURDISH SOCEITY:**

#### **UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF (NON)LINEAR- MODERNISATION, IN THE *FIN-DE-SIECLE* DURING THE LAST PERIOD OF OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

### 3.1 THE STUDY OF POLITICAL ECONOMY IN KURDISH SOCIETY: AN INTRODUCTION

While Chapter 2 established the theoretical foundations that inform this study, this chapter is the first analytical chapter aiming to explore and critically analyse the historical sources preventing the transformation of Kurdish society into a developed nation state. In doing so, and based on the discussion and also the rationale provided in Chapter 2, this chapter utilises Polanyi's 'Great Transformation' as a theoretical framework to inform the Kurdish (under)development by focusing on the last period of the Ottoman Empire until the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic, as the Kurds were the part of the Ottoman *millet* system.

This chapter, hence, brings forward the following questions:

- (i) What was the nature of social formation or the form of social life in Kurdish society in the last stage of the Ottoman Empire?
- (ii) What was the role of Kurdish internal agents and how was it performed in the social structure prevailing in the last stage of the Ottoman Empire?
- (iii) What impacts did the social structure have on society's transformation process, in terms of political and economic dimensions?
- (iv) How did internal dynamics lead or fail in the transformation of society?

Answering these questions provides an opportunity to study and explain the (non)linear modernisation or incomplete development, in terms of political economy, of the Kurds by making direct reference to modes of production and the concepts of modern institutions. In other words, utilising the framework offered by '*Great Transformation*' developed by Polanyi (1944) helps us to analyse the nature and content of the social formation through the concept of 'modes of production' within the political economy, cultural and anthropological (or ethnographic) approaches.

It should be noted that these concepts, frameworks and approaches help to locate the reason(s) behind the persistence of the 'base' to change into a modern society by insisting on an embedded and reciprocity-based economy. The context of the base has not exactly been easily observed and has not changed tremendously since the Kurds converted to Islam; as a result, the dynamic of society still keeps many traditional

institutions. Consequently, the Kurds were not integrated with (or interested in) modern institutions until recent times, *i.e.* the 1950s, as the everyday life of Kurds has been experienced and conceptualised in spiritual/religious values and customs, rather than capitalist and materialist concepts. Therefore the major reason for the failure of ‘Kurdish renovation’, as put forward in this *sui generis* frame by the academic world, is the claim that the Kurds have never possessed a durable state or state/bureaucratic culture. However, this study argues that micro dynamics and staunch loyalty to tradition including traditional social formation and a reciprocity-based economy are perhaps more important. In other words, the literature in relation to understanding the Kurdish (under)development is inadequate, as reference is mostly made to the external factors. Thus, the lack of systematic explanations for Kurdish (under)development has motivated this study to ask questions such as: *What internal factors impacted the modernisation process or resistance to the modernisation process in Kurdish society?*

In responding to this question, the modernist and linear developmentalist position argues that a lack of modern institutions, such as nation state, bourgeoisie, working class or civil society, constitutes an obstacle to Kurdish society’s modernisation process. This chapter, however, as mentioned, aims to go beyond such external or macro factors by analysing society’s aspiration to modernity as expressed and articulated by the contents of the base, namely the micro dynamics. The first traces of the Kurdish attempt at transformation in the modern meaning can be found in the late Ottoman era and early years of the Republic of Turkey, which in reality represents an era when the failure of the transformation and development of Kurdish society was heavily witnessed; thus, it is the era of missed opportunities.

The Kurds, similar to other ethnicities of the Ottoman Empire, lived within the Ottoman ‘*millet* system’, which is a reference to the multicultural system of the Empire. This system granted legal and political autonomy for different religious communities and allowed self-ruling systems run under their own ethnic and religious authorities. However, with the nineteenth century’s rising nationalism as the new ideology, such fragmentation triggered the emergence of national movements of various ethnic members of society wishing to build their own nation states, from the Christian Balkans to Armenia, later extending as far as the Muslim-Arab lands.



Unlike other ethnic and religious groups, the Kurds opted to stay with the Turks and therefore they were fighting together with the Turks in Anatolia to rebuild a 'post-Ottoman state', the Republic of Turkey.

During the decline of the Empire, political actors were searching for methods of saving the state and maintaining the unity of society. These political actors achieved this through political and social modernisation of the system with its imperial institutions under the political concept and institution of 'Ottomanism'.

In this process, the Young Turks or *Ittihad Terakki Cemmiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress - CUP) emerged as one of the important actors in the intellectual and political camp, whilst different suggestions and approaches were debated in the Empire regarding the reformation of the state's political structure. For instance, *Ottomanism (Tanzimatisation)*, Islamism (*Ummah*), and *Turanism* (unity of Turkic world) were suggested by different circles as a way of saving the Empire.

While the empire and various ethnic and religious groups were undergoing such historical changes, the Kurds, particularly the Kurdish elite<sup>84</sup>, were also involved in the conformance efforts of the Ottoman ruling class through their willingness to integrate into the new modern world order while retaining their power in the new system. However, this desire was interrupted by the emergence of Turkish nationalism through CUP, which aimed at homogenising Ottoman society with 'Turkic' values, via the construction of a 'new' type of subject. This 'new' subject should be a Muslim of the *Sunni-Hanefi* sect as well as of Turkish ethnicity. It eventually resulted in a response from non-Turks, especially Kurdish people, and led to the dispersal of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, CUP's transformation policy based on nationalism in every aspect of life destroyed the essence of society; this was accompanied by the emergence of the political mobilisation of ethnic and religious minorities, who had been marginalised from the 'New Order' settlement. Thus, the new rulers, namely the CUP governments, and the political and bureaucratic elite

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<sup>84</sup> The two founders of *Ittihad Terakki Cemmiyeti* - or four members in total - are Kurdish intellectuals Abdullah Javdet and Ishak Sukuti. Kurds have always been involved in progressive processes; even they involve to the establishing the Republic of Turkey.

began initially to exclude the non-Muslims, namely Armenians, Rums<sup>85</sup>, Assyrians (Syrian) and Jews, while assimilating non-Turkic Muslims - particularly Kurds, who mostly stood against the policy - including Laz, Balkanians, Caucasians and Arabs from the public sphere (see Yavuz, 2003a; 2004b).

Similar trends and transformation continued in the economic arena, as the government opened up the country to market economies as part of economic liberalisation but at the same time provided incentives to Turks to establish businesses with the objective of creating a nascent Turkish bourgeoisie (see Bugra, 1994b)<sup>86</sup>. A Kurdish angle to this new ordering process (from CUP to the Republic) was appearing in an *antagonistic* sense. Responding and reacting to the state-led industrialisation and economic development activity in the region, they protected its politico-cultural identity and pursued conflict in the context of double movement. In other words, some internal agents employed armed struggle to express their discontent with the establishment in the last stage of the Ottoman Empire and also in the ‘new Kemalist regime’, examples of which include the Sheikh Said (1925), Agri/Ararat (1926-28) and Dersim (1937) Rebellions, after the early years of the new Republic founded in 1923. As a consequence, the transformation of the Kurdish political economy was formed in the counter principles through contradictory terms with the semi-capitalist and nationalist state. Therefore, two determinist doctrines of the ‘double movement’ defined the dynamics of society during the period of transformation: On the one hand, an oppressive and national politico-economic state policy and, on the other hand, the socio-cultural protectionist agent’s angle. As Polanyi (1944: 132) stated, this was “the action of two organising principles in society, each of them setting itself specific institutional aims, having the support of definite social forces and using its own distinctive methods”.

Accordingly, this research argues that Kurdish transformation or the ‘cessation’ process needs to be read within this context. In other words, Kurdish resistance to the new system initiated by CUP during the Ottoman Empire and continued by the

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<sup>85</sup> The Greeks who lived in Anatolia after the conquering of Istanbul are called ‘Rum’; also, Kurdish people after this incident started to call the Turkish state ‘Roma Resh’ (Black Rum).

<sup>86</sup> After being exiled, the population exchanged or destroyed the Armenian and Rum minorities; in turn, the sector required new labour and patrons (cf. Keyder). On the other hand, Ayse Bugra (1994) explains this process very well in the “*State and Business in Modern Turkey; A comparative study*”. New York: State University of New York Press.

Kemalists in the new Republic was framed within wider politico-economic ramifications that promoted re-nationalisation, re-territorialisation and power-sharing aspirations. The risings and rebellions also attempted a redistribution of economic sources in the context of reciprocal relations, through protective local institutions. In this light, the Kurdish social formation, as part of micro dynamics, with its conventional character, plays an important economic, social and political role. This, for example, is related to responses to the market exchange as the new system of CUP through its traditional institutions with the objective of protecting the local economy from state interference. The Kurdish social formation or structure, hence, aimed at rejecting the new capitalising and nationalising order and instead further substantiated the internal agents' determination to protect the traditional formation of society including tribal/*aghas* and religious/*sheikh* institutions. The reason for this counteraction was that the new Ottoman-Turkic formula had serious consequences for Kurdish society, such as undermining and even dissolving the 'organic structure' of Kurdish society, via disembedding its economic, social and political practices from everyday life<sup>87</sup>. The new rules, laws and regulations that had been introduced during that time are evidence of this, including centralisation of the administration, land law (1858), mechanisation of production *etc.*, while these had already been embedded in social institutions, such as cultural, legal, political and moral institutions. Therefore, the problems were not the industrialisation process or being under long-term state authority in Kurdistan<sup>88</sup>. Rather, the relationship with the Turkish centre and Kurdish periphery had been problematised when the state practised an unfair, despotic and disparate policy regarding the nature of the social, political and economic system, within an unregulated market economy system.

Considering all these dynamics, employing the Polanyian perspective allows us to develop a much-needed historical perspective on the transformation process of Kurdish political and economic life, the institutional change and, thereafter, its responses. It also provides an alternative view on the pre-capitalist societies (such as: clan, tribe and indigenous groups) and their responses to the new orders imposed on them.

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<sup>87</sup> The idea was started by the Ottoman sultans' centralisation policy and afterwards was continued by the Young Turks and Kemalist rulers.

<sup>88</sup> Since the Turks came and met with the Kurds through Malazgirt in Anatolia (1071).

It is argued that traditional institutions are a product of long-standing social relationships. In the same vein, the Kurdish political economy operates in a larger social context with particular social practices; therefore, internal dynamics chose to negotiate, re-negotiate and develop a sociological, political and economic alternative, rather than uncritically accepting a fresh and 'modern' political and economic system offered by a new authority<sup>89</sup>. All the while, the traditional Ottoman imperial, religious, political and economic institutions were embedded in the interests of the new Turkish state to serve the legitimisation of the new regime in the social system, including the Kurdistan region. Furthermore, these relations became embedded in society and emerged as a double movement approach, which means that societal and self-protection agents turned against extensions or destruction of the nationalist political economy of state policy to protect their own and would, in turn, assist the prediction of future relations between Kurdish political agents and the Turkish state.

By adopting such a systemic and analytical approach to Kurdish history, this study aims to go beyond the usual narrative and narrow sense of social movement studies or the clichéd nationalist perspective predominantly employed and even used for a politically defined terminology of Kurdish study. Thus, the political economy perspective employed in this study attempts to introduce a new approach to Kurdish studies by focusing on the politico-economic relationship in regard to the political, social and anthropological conditions of the Kurdish society of the time. Such an attempt utilises the following terms and concepts: modes of production, industrialisation, institutionalism, development and modernisation.

### **3.2 MACRO (CENTRAL) ENVIRONMENT: THE OTTOMAN POLITICAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

It is necessary to specify, first of all, the nature of the external dynamic structure and the formulation of the social, political and economy codes of this central power, namely the Ottoman Empire, which can help us to understand and identify the micro dynamics or the social and political economy developments of the periphery or the Kurdistan region. Therefore, these macro and micro relations simultaneously impacted the Kurdish socio-cultural and political economy structures, causing them to follow a particular trajectory of (under)development through a double movement

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<sup>89</sup> This shows how those responses emerged and the aim of transformation achieved, or not.

perspective. The following sections, hence, aim to provide an understanding of the macro and micro dynamics and the changes that had taken place in them in producing the Kurdish political economy.

### 3.2.1 The Socio-Religious Structure of the Empire

It is hard to show any strong evidence in favour of homogenous ethnic or religious Ottoman identity, even though Turkomen and Islam, as ethnic and religious identities, dominated state and society. However, Ottomans benefited other traditions and systems in developing their own political identity and the structure. In evidencing this, among others, Inalcik (1978), Toynbee (1974) and Shinder (1978) argue that the Ottoman Empire inherited distinct traditions, from the heirs of Muslim Turkic/Arabic Empires, the Persian Empire and the Christian Roman Empire. As a result, two distinct fragments, *sarayli*<sup>90</sup> and *teba/reaya* are occurred within the social structure of society.

Therefore, the masses (*reaya*) as a subject, represented another segment of Ottoman society, dealing predominantly with agriculture and commerce, and were not seen very often in the political sphere. Simultaneously liable to pay taxes and serve the army, the *reaya* emerged from a different socio-economic layer. The people of the Empire were divided in social harmony, along lines of religious belief and faith, as opposed to race, national identity or strong class division. The daily lives of people also varied according to lifestyles and settlement. Generally, the middle class, such as merchants (craftsmen) and artisans, lived in urban areas where political, economic and social relations were strongly situated. However, the largest part of the population, peasants/farming families, were located in rural regions and worked in the agricultural industry (not dissimilar to medieval Europe).

After the nineteenth-century, particularly after the *Tanzimat* Reforms (1839), the classical social structure of the Ottoman Empire started to change amidst significant internal and external dynamics, including the emergence of a new demographic framework due to the rapid geographical expansion of the land, new internal actors,

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<sup>90</sup> Primarily, the ruling elites comprised, on the one hand, the Sultan's household, military segment (*seyfiye*) and religious institutions (*Sheikh ul-Islam*), and on the other hand, middle power actors, scientists (*ilmiye and kalemiye*) and *donme/devshirme* (converters), an oriented civil and military elite, formally defined as *kapikullu*, who were respectively trained at the *madrasas* (religious school) and *Enderun* (palace schools) as scribal officers for their professional education.

technological progress, transportation progress, and an industrial revolution. Hence a fresh style of economic relations appeared and the new political powers became major triggering factors in the transformation of Ottoman society (Karpas, 1973). This modernisation project was mainly aimed at the centralisation of administration, reinforcement and restructuring of the military system aiming to achieve the unity of society with the objective of gaining the 'old power'.

In the Ottoman Empire, the Muslims were the dominant group in society, but under the *millet* system they did not have privileged legal status over other religious groups (Faroqi, 1990)<sup>91</sup>. Despite this, the psychological superiority of Turks remained an important political reality, while the special position (*de facto* independency) of the Kurds had been acknowledged by the centre through its concession of major autonomy in the areas where they dominated, namely Kurdistan.

To sum up, towards the middle of the nineteenth century the social structures had fundamentally changed due to the failing system and the geographical shrinkage of the Empire<sup>92</sup>. The *millet* system remained formally valid, but with a new social and economic foundation. The new order was formulated after the impact of the external and internal factors<sup>93</sup>. This, however, could not stop the national awakenings in the Empire as evidenced by national uprisings by the constituents of the *millet* system.

### **3.2.2 The Imperial Political and Judicial Structures**

At first glance, the *Osmanli* political system can be described through the following constituents: a dynastic tyranny, praetorianism and the rule of religion, sultan, or venal bureaucracy (Shinder, 1978). In the Ottoman system, sovereignty was practised in religious (*sharia/sher'i*) and secular/cultural (*orfi*) codes, legitimated and attributed to the name of Allah (God) and implemented by the Sultan<sup>94</sup>. The religious legitimacy

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<sup>91</sup> The *millet* system, which was a product of a religious and cultural system and was the core of the traditional Ottoman social structure that at the same time provided a way of ruling a diverse ethnic and religious community, through the construction of an imperial citizenship.

<sup>92</sup> The Empire's late era, which is between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>93</sup> The modernisation and Westernisation process through *Tanzimat* and other regulations.

<sup>94</sup> see Inalcik, Inan-Islamoglu, Karpas, Kansu, and Weiker.

was the essential source of the Ottoman sustainability. Through Caliphate institutions, sultans enjoyed lengthy hegemonic power among the members of the *Ummah*<sup>95</sup>.

The Kurds, being Muslims, have been loyal to the Sultan through Caliphate institutions by having an implicit 'religious contract'. Kurdish, especially *Sunnite* Muslims, society was given priority protection until the dismantling of the Caliphate due to the particular religious link.

Fundamentally, the administrative system of the Ottoman Empire was constituted with central and peripheral (local) powers, but the sultan, an absolute ruler who used different agents to practise his authority, represented the centre (Kasaba, 1993; Weiker, 1968; Inalcik, 1974; Faroqhi, 1990; Shinder, 1978). The local administrations, on the other hand, constituted the other side of the bureaucratic system, which was founded by a *kadi/qadi* (judge) in legal as well as *subashi* political terms. This double mechanism was particularly applicable to newly-conquered or distant territories, such as the Balkans, the Mediterranean, North Africa or Kurdistan and Arabia (Barkey, 1994). In other words, until the centralisation era, parts of the specific and strategic peripheral territory were controlled by local leaders, who had *de facto* autonomy and shared the administration with regional civil servants (*uchbeyleri*), in the manner of Kurdistan's *mirs* who assumed the privileged role of governing the region. The new modernist system's legibility made it easy for the state to organise, administrate, tax and control a large population within a massive territory.

In addition, a third actor emerged and practised power in societal and public spheres: *Ayans* (notables), who had replaced *devshirme* janissaries (*sipahis*) and appeared in different positions, neither as a central government nor sub-government/civil servant (Karpas, 1974). *Ayans* started to share the role of the state (Hourani, 1974) in the periphery/regions to manage public land and accumulate taxes for the state. In their capacity, they brought a different perspective to the classical state views through the liberalisation of economic relations, the universalisation of trade, changes in modes of production, the development of market economies, augmentation of capital enterprises and attempts to invest in sectors besides agriculture. During the expansion of the self-regulating economy in Ottoman territory through international capitalist

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<sup>95</sup> Until the Caliph institutions was abolished by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1924.

agents, *ayans* were also intended to bring protection for individual property, freedom of trade (using surpluses) and the mobilisation of goods/labour in the Imperial territory, including Kurdistan. This is probably the most fundamental stage of the transformation of the Ottoman structure from its absolutist, semi-feudal, agricultural character into modernist and capitalist principles through industrialisation, mechanisation/mass production and international markets, which superseded the traditional institutions. Therefore, the Eastern-Islamic administrative system was influenced by a Western-modernisation culture in producing a new political economy representing the realities of change.

So, the centralisation/standardisation tendency had an impact on the peripheral autonomy (including Kurdistan's *de facto* position) financially and politically. Before such a transition took place, there was a social, political and economic agreement between the centre and the periphery that had been preserved by law (religious or custom) and provided a form of self-autonomy to the periphery, with the support of the state in financial and military matters. The judiciary constituted a major segment of the Ottoman bureaucratic class and was responsible for the application and explanation of law throughout the Empire's domains, a task of profound importance in Islamic societies (Pixely, 1976).

### **3.2.3 The Economic Structure of the Central Power**

The economic structure in the last period of the Ottoman Empire was mostly based on agricultural and pastoral nomadic modes of production in major rural areas, in terms of pre-capitalist relationships. There were also commercial relations and practices in urban settlements by domestic (and partly foreign) merchants. Predominantly, the Ottoman economic mechanism was formed in the "Asiatic mode of production"<sup>96</sup> as a semi-feudal type (Inalcik, 1969). The surplus of agricultural production was redistributed by the central power (with local apparatus) which took a certain amount in taxes from the agricultural and trade sectors, thus also ensuring political control over the economy. This function of the state was organised by the *timar* system (Inalcik, 1985). Thus, the *timar* system became a key fiscal/financial and political system for sustaining hegemonic power alongside the implementation of state

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<sup>96</sup> It mostly argues by Marxist scholars.



policy<sup>97</sup>. The *timar* system, hence, was a political economy mechanism for integrating social agents into the superstructure, thus enabling state involvement in the mode of production and the distribution of surplus. One can argue that this land-based economic system was traditional in Ottoman economic life as the main economic institution, which controlled the rise of the new actors, obtained power and provided the key link between structure and agent in the regions, where they had a hegemonic power.

Nevertheless, the centralisation of the state from the mid-nineteenth century onwards due to external changes forced the state, society and *timar* system to change. Consequently, a new type of land structure had emerged: the *timar* system was replaced by a tax-farmed leased system: *iltizam*. This gave tax-collecting rights to local potentates, or *ayans* (*multezims*) (Barkey, 1994). As a consequence, tax-farmers became one of the important players in the domestic market. Subsequently, they became an alternative political power against the centre, transforming and integrating Ottoman traditional agricultural production relations and social formation into the international (European) market economy by exchanging surpluses in increased demand by foreign merchants and utilising labour productivity in a money-dominant economy. In other words, this new system changed the mode of revenue collection from agricultural industry into a money-based economy. It provided commodities and agricultural surplus, and, therefore, became a cash source for the government.

In this context, the abolition of the *timar* system and land code issues in 1858 made it easy to gain private property (land), which deeply affected (even impacts Kurdistan, which was not part of the *timar* system). In this new emerging system, the land could have a price and be rented, and turned into a '(fictitious) commodity', hence moving from the embeddedness of a moral economy to a capitalist structure through disembodiment of the social values from economy. In spite of this, the Kurdish social structure based on traditional land relations. In such new system, the Kurds forced to transition, which was induced by big landowners (*sheikh/aghass*), who superseded the

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<sup>97</sup> “*Timar* was the generic term accorded to a system of land grants distributed for the purposes of supporting a provincial army. The beneficiaries of the grant were state officials empowered to collect the traditional product-tax of *ushr*, designated as their *timar*” (Islamoglu and Keyder, 1987: 48, as cited in Islamoglu-inan).

*mir* leadership; therefore these new actors brought sharecroppers into economic and social relations. After the new arrangements on land ownership, especially when some *aghas* were given large tracts of land by the central government for their collaboration, many small farmers disappeared and became unemployed. As a result, labour and land became commoditised. The economy issue is embedded in socio-political relations; thus, the production process was predominantly aimed at producing goods needed for Ottoman economic life rather than to gain money on the international market (Birdal, 2010; Barkey, 1994; Pamuk, 2004). But, the production relationship is not fully involved in a money-commodity circle, in terms of self-regulating market principles. In fact, the new modernist and capitalist transformation process of the Empire in Kurdistan was depended on the central government's divestment of the political power of Kurdish internal agents who were already operating in the region. The traditional Kurdish agricultural mode of production was forced to integrate the international capitalist system, through new introduced 'modern and capitalist' institutions. Conversely, the masses revolted against authority many times -including the historic *Celali Isyanlari* (rebellions) (1596-1610)- during the Ottoman modernisation (1806-1922) in the Kurdish region, which could be see as a sample of social protectionist reaction that later emerged in the context of the counter-hegemonic and national movement.

Sunar (1987, as reported by Inan-Islamoglu) argues that, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the political economy of the Empire, subjected to the dynamics of the European global market rather than just the necessities of the Empire itself, progressively evolved into a multifaceted socio-economic development. The Imperial political economy had a peripheral status in the complex international market until its demise. Beyond this, European merchants became important players in relations between the local Ottoman market and European global markets. At that time, the self-regulating market economy became the dominant mechanism of the European market exchange through the commercialisation of agriculture products and industrialisation.

In this context, Kurdish people sustained their own cultural and national values as well as economy. By creating the new commercial relations using the surplus from their household economy, the numbers of the middle classes (merchants, landlords

etc.) and small industrialists grew and became urbanised. Attempts were made to form their own Kurdish intelligentsia by sending their children to metropolitan or European schools to be educated in the environments in which nationalist discourses were the prevailing ideology. In other words, the Kurds shaped the political economy and cultural freedoms through the engagement with various opposition parties in the Empire's political transition and via establishment of political mobilisation with aiming of protects their cultural heritage. However, from the modernist point of view, they could not break down the traditional socio-economic structure and nor replace it with modern institutions, such as market economy, nation state etc. in the late nineteenth century.

On the contrary, Kurds challenged the construction of a market economy and the introduction of economic liberalism, which coming through industrialism and capitalism, as they insisted on their own 'moral economy' with embedding their social relations into economy relations. Equally, their main economic areas and agricultural production did not produce enough for the market economy, and did not utilise the competitive advantage principle, which made it difficult to integrate into the international economic system. Besides, another reason for the failure of the industrialisation of the region was an insufficiency of capital, entrepreneurs and institutions. Hence, all these domestic factors hold the modernisation of Kurdish society and turned Kurds into 'late developed society' in the modern and industrialised world, in the view of modernist approach.

Accordingly, one of the theoretical aims of this chapter is also to analyse the relationship between the central-Ottoman and periphery-Kurdistan structures through Kurdish social, political and economic dimensions. The Kurds were not affiliated directly with the Ottoman political economic structure, such as *timar* system and local governors or agents (e.g. janissaries, *ayans* ext.), until the capitalist, modernist and centralist process started. However, although Kurdistan was affected after this general transformation of the Empire, the core aim of the study is predominantly to focus on the internal dynamics, institutions and micro transformations. Therefore, the following sections assess the nature of the social formation or the 'base' of Kurdish political economy and its traditional and informal institutions.

### **3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE PERIPHERAL (MICRO) DOMAIN: LOOKING INTO THE SOCIAL FORMATION (BASE) OF KURDISH SOCIETY**

The (under)development or ‘inverse transformation’ or ‘great regression’ of the Kurds needs to be analysed with reference to both internal and external factors, as identified in the macro structure of the Ottoman Empire’s political economy in the previous sections. In this section, internal dynamics (institutions and actors/agents) and their role will be the main focus for understanding the transformation process. In doing so, for the purpose of contextualisation, the characteristic of Kurdish individual/group’s behaviour of political economy and the Kurdish-dominated region or Kurdistan is briefly examined.

The economic structure of the Kurdistan region is dominated by self-sufficient agricultural and livestock farming, where the mode of production is for local consumption. In searching for the reasons for the absence of a capitalisation and modernisation progress, natural conditions and a lack of innovation can be considered. However, looking from a multi-dimensional perspective, political, social and economic factors are all notable reasons for this desolation.

In the last century of the Ottoman Empire, while the centre was in the process of transforming, on the periphery the Kurds remained loyal to their social economy based on semi-feudal relations. However, in order to explain the reasons behind the failure of the transformation process between the 1800s and 1923, the traditional social structure and idiosyncratic character of the society also needs to be explored with the help of an anthropological and ethnographic focus. Focusing on the historical perspective with anthropological analysis and society’s inner relations through ethnographical reasoning can help to develop a fruitful discussion conducive to comprehending the transformation process of Kurdish society, in terms of political economy. Therefore, Kurdish modern history, until the Dersim Rebellion of 1938, is characterised as the period of missed opportunities or a ‘Lost Transformation’<sup>98</sup>.

Economic relations are an instituted process in social relations that defines the rules, which societies already practise, of everyday life while earning livelihoods. In contrast to modern, industrialised or self-regulating market societies, tribal-

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<sup>98</sup> This will be discussed in the next chapter, through a guide to Gramsci’s Hegemonic theory.

traditionalist society is dominated by informal and moral codes in economic relations. For instance, the behaviour of individuals is one of the major differences between tribal and market economy societies. Tribal (wo)men are concerned with economic issues related to social status, appreciation, and values and customs, rather than monetary, material advantages or interests; thus, traditional societies are marked by 'moral economy' in an embedded and reciprocal manner. Therefore, transferring traditional modes of production or kinship into industrial or capitalist societies implies destroying the social structure of the society, leading to an antagonistic environment, as experience has shown. For instance, according to Polanyi the Indian social structure was not destroyed by British colonialism; rather, societal relations and the social formation of society was ruptured after the traditional common land system changed through privatisation by splitting between clan members. The Kurds, however, resisted such changes during the Ottoman period by remaining loyal to their own moral economy distinct from market economy, despite the fact that such changes were sometimes imposed on the Kurds through coercive power during the Empire (and also in the Republican period). Thus, in order to analyse the responses of the Kurds towards the (imposed change), Kurdish tribes and their reciprocal and redistributive relations with their *agha/sheik* leadership should be considered an important case, as in the following sections.

### **3.3.1 The Formation of Everyday Life: Traditional and Cultural Institutions in an Anthropological Perspective**

The Kurdish social structure is based on kinship or tribal (*eshir*<sup>99</sup>) relations that are governed by custom, religious values and lineage. It is divided into a number of *eshirs* and then subdivided into *mal(s)* (houses) which, as basic political and economic units, emerged and were sustained according to Kurdish common law. Therefore, tribes emerged as the politico-economic institutions of society *par excellence* and became the dominant social organisations.

In identifying the various politico-economy features of Kurdish society, Mrs. Bishop Isabella L. Bird (1891: 314) observed the Kurdish society in 1891 and stated that Kurds "are wild and lawless mountaineers, paying taxes only when it suits them; brave, hardy, and warlike preserving their freedom by the sword; fierce, quarrel-some

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<sup>99</sup> In Kurdish.

among themselves”. Equally, van Bruinessen (1992: 53), pointing out the social structure of the Kurds and states that “if one looks from the bottom up instead of from the top down, the role of kinship is more obvious”. In providing further substantiation for these observations, Yalcin-Heckman (1991:39) explained that “kin ties are part of the total social tie between individuals, which allow for services, goods and sentiments to be cultivated and which demand maintenance through frequent contact. The kinship terminology does not differ for the tribal and non-tribal people”. Furthermore, M. E. Bozarslan (1966)<sup>100</sup> also argued that society was divided into four parts, which he compared with the Indian caste system and briefly defined: *aghas* (chieftains or tribal leaders); spiritual leaders (*sheikhs, melles, dedes* etc.); the bourgeoisie class (although it had not yet emerged in European contexts); and, finally, the masses such as peasants, farmers, and labourers, who had suffered most from the hierarchical scheme.

However, even in modern times, the social relations, according to Ekinci (2006), were determined by feudal values, although the contemporary dominant mode of production turned into capitalism in the Kurdish region. Furthermore, he gave a recent example that the PKK had been fighting against the Turkish state with approximately 6,000 militia members, while the number of village guardians (comprising Kurdish tribesmen), with their loyalty to the Turkish security forces, is 75,000. The village guardians are mostly led and influenced by *aghas/sheikhs*, which evidences the fact that the pre-capitalist institutions are still strong in society and that the capitalist transformation process is mainly based on a feudal superstructure<sup>101</sup>.

Even today, the Kurdish tribal structure dominates the political, social and economic institutions throughout the Kurdish region. Certain scholars<sup>102</sup> also tend to define the base of Kurdish society through a parallel approach, which could be fruitful for observing the constituent elements of society and demonstrating the life of the people, which is shaped by *eshir* (including non-tribesmen) and blood relationships, and embedded in a religious context. Accordingly, Yalcin-Heckman (1996) juxtaposed the

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<sup>100</sup> Bozarslan, M.E. (1966/2000), *Dogu'nun Sorunlari* (The Problems of the East), Istanbul, Avesta.

<sup>101</sup> This can also be added to the representation issue of the Kurds in TBMM; currently there are approximately 70 MPs from the ruling party, AKP, nearly 30 from the BDP pro-Kurdish Party and some others in CHP.

<sup>102</sup> Major Noel, Major E.B. Soane, Major W.R. Hay, Barth, Minorsky, Nikitine, and Martin van Bruissen.

criteria for the local denotations of tribes in the context of territory: the power of tradition, history and cultural symbols; or ethnic criteria. van Bruinessen also states that “the Kurdish tribe is a socio-political and generally also territorial (and therefore economic) unit based on descent and kinship, real or putative, with an inner oriented characteristic with emphasis on internal structure. This socio-political and informal structure is naturally divided into a number of sub-tribes, each in turn again divided into smaller units: clans, lineages, *etc.*” (van Bruinessen, 1992: 51). As a consequence, the feudal or tribal social structures are conceptualised and defined by limited economic growth and unemployment discourses in this respect.

It should be noted that the tribal social structures were founded on the unity of tribal members through relations of reciprocity, redistribution, solidarity or tacit agreement, which bolstered them against external threats. The affiliation of kinship was based on the terms of genealogical distance<sup>103</sup>. Nevertheless, also non-tribesmen also existed in society. Those people who were not affiliated with any tribes hoped that others would treat them as part of the system, even though they were not affiliated with any recognised *eshir*. Even, in contemporary times, the tribal political economy mechanism partly operates in the region. For instance, when it comes to deciding on which political party to vote for, in some cases the political behaviour of members of the tribe will depend on the ‘collection’ decision, which is decided mostly by the *agha* or prominent members of the tribe.

The tribal formulation of society was a crucial determinant of economic relations; the mode of production and surplus within the market economy, reciprocity, and redistribution through symmetry and centricity principles was embedded in tribal understanding of social phenomena. Subsequently, one can argue that the tribal leader (to be discussed shortly) was one of the first internal actors to play an important role in the Kurdish social context. *Aghas* at the same time play the role of mediators between the worlds outside and inside the tribe, in terms of transforming the tribe and integrating into the world economy (Minorsky, 1987). This is manifested through the gathering of surpluses necessary for capitalist development, or applying liberal economic principles in the agrarian-based economy for the transformation of society,

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<sup>103</sup> Even some *eshir* members called each other *qurap* or *pizmam*, meaning ‘the son of an uncle from the paternal side’.

from an agricultural, traditional, self-sufficient local household economy to a modern, industrialised, capitalised and liberal international system<sup>104</sup>.

Like Polanyi, who analysed archaic and tribal society, we also need to understand this historical and cultural character of Kurdish tribal life and the structure of society in order to be able to see the impact of these internal institutions, human relations, and socio-cultural and political factors on the (non)transformation process of Kurdish society, in a historical context.

In this respect, the method of using anthropological (maybe ethnographic) knowledge helps us to understand the dynamics of the Kurdish transformation process. If one looks at the anthropology of the Kurdish society in a historical context, one will inevitably see a famous proverb in action - ‘*Ser cheva ser sera*’ - which, as a very warm welcoming statement, means ‘over my eyes and head’. It illustrates the Kurdish *mevanperverti* (hospitality) (Jones, 1847; Stuart, 1856; Noel, 1919; Hay, 1921) was one of the finest features of the Kurdish character<sup>105</sup>.

As a result, the concept of hospitality has always been a defining characteristic of the Kurds when Kurds are discussed in the regions of Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Middle East, particularly by European/Western missionaries and travellers, and in the diaries and reports of secret agents. The accounts predominantly detail the generosity of *aghas* and guesthouses<sup>106</sup>, where the travellers could have food, tea and shelter<sup>107</sup>. Therefore, there are many historical incidents that prove the Kurds’ hospitality to their neighbours or visitors, which also provides the internal leadership with a political and economic opportunity to gain respect and legitimacy in society as a political agent.

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<sup>104</sup> In fact, they fail to transform the society while transforming themselves.

<sup>105</sup> As British Commander J. F. Jones (143-209) noted in his memoirs in 1847: “Our friend Kader Pasha, who received us very kindly, and entertained us with true Kurdish hospitality [...] In manners he is mild and gentlemanly and like all Kurds, frank and hospitable”. Equally, British Officer Robert Stuart reported (1856) in his private journal that hospitality was their [Kurds] first thought. Another British (secret) officer, Major Noel (1919: 11), indicated that “it was very noticeable that every British traveler referred to the friendliness, hospitality and kindness of the Kurds” (1919: 11). Hay (1921) afterwards said that hospitality was one of the finest features of the Kurd’s character.

<sup>106</sup> Every village has one; if not, the *agha*’s house provides this service.

<sup>107</sup> “Even enemies of the Kurds come to Kurdistan because they have reason to hope that they can find shelter. They know it is a custom of the Kurds to forgive their enemies when they are guests in their homes” (Nebez, 2006: 32).



The Kurds also received valuable gifts from guests, showing that tribal institutions were organised for economic purposes.

Despite all these positive emphases on Kurdish hospitality, this was seen as an important factor in the Kurdish failure to achieve a modern nation state and self-regulated capitalist principles through a modernist view. Kurdish nationalists argue that, when the Turks first arrived in Anatolia, the Kurds opened their tents and treated them as (Muslim) brothers and harmless guests, which resulted in their loss of hegemonic power.

Another aspect of the Kurdish character is generosity. Generosity complements hospitality and solidarity and supports the community, while the sharing or *khelat* (gift) on various occasions strengthens the reciprocal nature of society. Occasions when the generosity of gift-giving is shown include accidents, times of hardship, weddings, funerals and the celebration of a birth (especially if it is a boy). In addition, *sunnet* (circumcision for baby boy) is also considered a part of the Kurdish social structure, which created the institution of *kiriv*<sup>108</sup> implying the extension of familyhood beyond blood relations through the co-opting process. This kinship principle created a strong ‘annex kinship’ between families and tribes and provided strong connections, even in the absence of blood ties, between the members of society who may be practising different religions; for instance between Muslims and *Ezidi*<sup>109</sup> or *Alawite* and *Sunni*, though it is mostly practised among *Alawite* and *Ezidi* Kurds. Sweetnam (2004: 117-18) explains that “an important factor in interpersonal relationships, closely intertwined with the ideal of generosity, is balance. Balance can be achieved by reciprocity in gift-giving and in other kinds of giving as well [...] Reciprocal obligations, such as exchanging gifts or favors, are also very weighty for related people”.

As part of the micro constituents, respect and shame are idiosyncratic features of Kurdish society and which are practised in different ways. However, the crucial point is here that the person, including the leader or elites, must follow these certain

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<sup>108</sup> When boys are circumcised, parents ask a respected male who is known to them and who wants to be a part of their family through co-opting or as an ally to hold the boy on his lap while the boy has the operation, which is usually performed by a local circumciser.

<sup>109</sup> Kurdish national religion and linked with Zoroastrianism.

traditional values. Leading elites, *aghas*, *sheiks/sayyids* or *dedes* and intellectuals have always been treated with great respect and loyalty. In fact, these actors also take heavy responsibility for their subjects. Therefore, the moral institution settled in the social base as a part of that kinship and determined the practice, behaviour or approach of Kurdish society in social, political and economic spheres through external or internal dynamics.

Of equal significance is honour, which can primarily be expressed as *sheref* or *khaysiyet* in Kurdish. For instance, every single *mir* (Kurdish emirate-governor) enjoyed their own hegemonic space, and they were not willing to show obeisance or gather around one single power (as a *mir a miran* - grand seigneur). Moreover, recognising another *mir*'s hegemony was regarded as insulting among the leadership and, indeed, became an obstacle to creating unity and consolidating modern institutions and the nation state.

It should be noted that *khundar*, or the blood feud, is a long-term social reality and has been an important obstacle to alliances in Kurdish society. The reason behind conflict between tribes and their practising of power is to build a respected image in society. Initially, this creates alliances between sub-tribe units (Meho, 1968; Izaddy, 1992). However, in the big picture it destroys the unity of the nation due to conflict and violence. In this context, the establishment of the confederation of tribes to assemble and unite against outside intervention became an exception and was adopted only in necessary situations, such as threats to security. Therefore, pride and arrogance have been dissociative factors between Kurdish elites and constituted formidable impediments to unity and the development of a nation, in a modernist context.

Additionally, trust and belief (naivety) are also shown as internal and characteristic reasons for the failure of 'Kurdish Great Transformation', in other words losing the nineteenth-century society's 'opportunity spaces', such as modernisation, institutionalisation, capitalisation and nation state<sup>110</sup>. In turn, this led to a lack of

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<sup>110</sup> For example, "the Kurds not agreed with the Ottoman Sultan to fight against the Safavids, the Safavids would have taken the chance to rule. The foundation of the Ottoman Empire was based on the promise given to the Kurds that the Ottoman Sultan would respect the internal independence of the Kurdish principalities. Contracts were signed but the Ottoman Turks did not respect them" (Nebez, 2006: 49).

common interest or leadership that could lead society through progressive methods via a self-regulated market and a liberal state to secure this system, in terms of transformation of the Kurdish political economy context. At the same time this efficiency became an effective tool for external powers to use against the Kurdish bloc. As a result, modern Kurdish nationalists claim that the Kurds have long believed in Turkish, Persian and Arab brotherhoods and friendships, although they have often ended in disappointment, frustration and betrayal.

‘Marriage’ is also considered an important institution that generates social structures (also political economy) and allows a new person to become a member of a ‘*mal*’ (family, although not a typical nuclear family) or household economy. Yalcin-Heckman (1991: 99) sees *mal* as the “first communally recognised level of tribal membership and remarks that a *mal* is not a property owning group. Nevertheless, it is the social unit where a person or household’s tribal membership is most clearly defined or challenged”. Hence, the single household occurred as the foundation of social structure. The institution of *mal* is also involved with the economy via household relations. It should be noted that different types of marriages prevailed in society, and one of the most common marriages has been intermarriage, or endogamy, through marriage to a *dotmam* (daughter of uncle or cousin)<sup>111</sup>. This is a specific tie by members of a family (tribe) to keep them together; however, the reality is that marriages are mostly build of the intention of economy and cultural motivations. So, she or he will not be an ‘outsider’ and can easily adapt to the family and its customs by living in the same house with other family members and contributing to the household economy. On the other hand, the family wealth will not be split and does not go to a *kheri* (foreigner); accordingly, the family’s property and land can be transferred to the next generation of family members. Consequently, these relations created a resistance to the market economy and institutional changes. The link between social and economic relations remains an important factor in the transformation process.

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<sup>111</sup> There are a number of important songs and stories about loving *dotmam*.

The status of Kurdish women needs to be considered as part of the social formula and as crucial actors in the household economy<sup>112</sup>. Thus, the acceptance of women in the social and economic sphere empowered the household economy and enhanced self-sufficiency, reciprocity and redistribution principles, which again contributed to the delay in Kurdish society's integration with the (inter)national market and market economy. The record of daily life in Kurdish villages and towns was mainly based on oral tradition practised through *stran* (classic song) and *chirok* (story) by a *dengbej* (minstrel) or elder, evoking the communal lifestyle. This shows how they constructed an alternative lifestyle against the transformation of the traditional and local institutions, which at the same time indicates resistance to the modernist institutions of the nineteenth century<sup>113</sup>. Moreover, the Kurdish way of life is dominated by nomadic or semi-nomadic life. Most scholars agreed that Kurdish daily life is divided into a nomadic existence and village life in a pastoral way (Jwaideh, 2006; Nebez 2006; Meho, 1968; Izaddy, 1992). This shows that the Kurdish social structure and characteristics neither needed to be incorporated into nor depended on the external market for a long time.

This opens up a discussion and at the same time challenges the argument made by modernists that Islam and its value system is responsible for the failure of the Kurdish transformation process in economic, social and political spheres in the nineteenth century and post-Ottoman era. In fact, the Muslim Arabs and Muslim Albanians were equally under the control of Ottoman (Islamic) authorities, but they achieved the political and economic progress that transformed their society from an Ottomanist, politically scattered and agriculturally structured environment to the Ba'thist or

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<sup>112</sup> Robert (1876: 80) on his journey in 1856 noted that "the Kurdish women are free from the affected coyness of their Turkish Armenian sisters. In the crowd assembled [...] at the door of the tent were several women, and even the Bey's wives did not stand aloof". In further supporting this, Hay (1921: 43) states that "The Kurds treated their womenfolk with much more respect than do most Muhammadan races". Noel (1919: 4), also reflecting on his observation wrote, "we, of course, met with a friendly and hospitable welcome. What first struck one was that the women were unveiled and free. They argued with their men folk, joined in the conversation with us, and pushed their views and opinions to the fore with the greatest ease and naturalness". Furthermore, Jawaideh (2006: 41) explained that "most writers seem to agree that Kurdish women enjoy a remarkable degree of freedom in comparison with many Arab women, which is evident in a variety of ways. The Kurdish woman, unlike many Muslim women, is not secluded and does not wear the veil. It is not unusual for the Kurdish woman, acting as the head of the household in her husband's absence, to receive men as guests".

<sup>113</sup> According to Alison (1996: 30), "throughout their [Kurdish] history, the great part of the Kurds' perception of themselves, their past and their everyday lives has been transmitted orally; any serious study of Kurdish culture cannot afford to ignore the oral tradition".

Albanian national tribalism with integrated industry and self-regulated market economy<sup>114</sup>. Therefore, it is very difficult to explain the failure to take up the nineteenth-century's institutional opportunities only in a religious context. Nevertheless, one may argue that the Kurdish *sui generis* character and its idiosyncratic institutions, customs, values, and cultural and economic system also played an important role, and did not facilitate the nineteenth-century's inclusive transformation or renovation offers.

### **3.4 THE POLITICAL AGENTS OF KURDISH SOCIETY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

In the historic political structure of the Kurds, the concept of state is not embedded in society strongly and no particular Kurdish state dominated the region for a long time. For the Kurds the idea of having a state was not as attractive as the attainment of freedom or mobility in their territory and the sustenance of their cultural and religious institutions<sup>115</sup>. The privileged rights provided by the Ottoman regime as a substitute for statehood continued until the later part of the nineteenth century, arranging the political structure between the centre and the Kurds.

While the Kurds historically had no state, strong emirates/tribes have long been present in Kurdistan, and they have had a *de facto* independent position since pre-modern times among the big imperial powers. The Kurdish mountains are difficult to occupy or traverse; thus, the Kurds have been able to practise their 'middle power' and hegemony in the region. The *mir* (later replaced by *agha* or *sheikhs* institutions) was prominent in Kurdish society, especially during the *ayan* politics, and became a significant political figure in the Ottoman Empire. Unaffiliated with the Ottoman *timar* system, they did not pay tax and were not responsible for the provision of military forces to the state, until the Ottoman land regulation (*iltizam*) was implemented in the region through the centralisation policy. The regulation simultaneously impacted Kurdish society (particularly its leaders) socially (tribes), politically (*de facto* autonomy) and economically (losing tax advantages).

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<sup>114</sup> Nazih N. Ayubi (2001) *Over-stating the Arab State* is a very good source for that transformation.

<sup>115</sup> "Despite that fact that the Kurds are one of the most virile races in existence, that they occupy a very large portion of the Middle East [...] they are a collection of tribes without any cohesion and showing little desire for cohesion. They prefer to live in their mountain fastness and pay homage to whatever Government may be power, as long as it exercises little more than a nominal authority" (Hay 1921: 36).

Generally, the *mirs or aghas* never possessed unlimited power to govern their subjects, unlike the Persian Shah or Ottoman Padishah. Rather, in the *agha* system certain tribes did not have an *agha*, while others had many that were elected. As reported by Jawideh (2006), Kamuran Bedir Khan<sup>116</sup> states that “we have even seen a republic in the region of Shirnakh, where the chief was elected by the people” in the late nineteenth century. In addition, a tribal confederation existed as a political organisation for administrative and security reasons alongside *mirlik* (emirates) as part of Kurdish societal structure. According to van Bruinessen (1992: 163), there was an implicit social contract between the tribes and their rulers, and “the *Rojeki* (unity of *ashirets*) had the reputation of being more loyal to their *mirs* than any other tribe of Kurdistan, but when they were dissatisfied with any particular *mir* they deposed him and appointed one of his relatives in his stead”. However, these alliances were not effective and thus could not bring political unity to construct an ‘imagined community’ or use modern institutions to achieve the dynamic transition in the nineteenth century. The struggle between small-scale powers was an important reason for this failure, in the context of leadership.

Nevertheless, there remained the ability to control the mechanisms that existed in Kurdish socio-political economic life. An example is the institution of *Majlis*<sup>117</sup> (council), which was formed by *rû spî* (white beards; it means wise man), who were wise and elder members of society and had the power to take decisions on legal, social and political issues through suggestions to a ruler or member of society, but not as official decision-makers. According to tribal social codes, it was respected and obeyed by society and the confederation of tribes. In other words, the main function of the institution was to untangle conflicts by constructing justice mechanisms, which were legitimated by tribal customary law. These local institutions had replaced the gap in the state’s judicial apparatus and had become one of the most important animate principles of the tribal system that preserved customs and value systems, although they have never been defined by the modernist approach as a good example for the modern, complex, ‘civilised’ or industrialised society.

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<sup>116</sup> He is a member of one of the most important families of the Kurdish nationalist movement and an important nationalist activist.

<sup>117</sup> Still in existence in Kurdish society, the *Majlis* is regarded as a respected and reliable institution that resolves social and legal issues, rather than government agencies, in some cases.

Characteristically, tribesmen or the tribal system preferred not to be ruled by an outside ruler or state; accordingly, they would often assemble against external threats to their freedom, despite antagonism between one another. However, due to the relaxation of Kurdish *mir* politics, leadership was influenced by the Ottoman centralisation policy<sup>118</sup> and *mirs* lost their sovereignty, resulting in Kurdistan becoming an ordinary province of the Ottoman bureaucratic system (McDowall, 2000; Barth, 1953).

Therefore, new social actors emerged in the Kurdish geography, as the Istanbul-based palace sent *pashas* to the region to impose an effective Ottoman authority and establish hegemony among the Kurdish leaders. Some of the Kurdish *aghas* were deployed in the *pasha* system, which resulted in changes in the socio-economic relations and the communication and social network between the Kurdish periphery and centre, as well as empowering the central feudal system. The altering of the Kurdish traditional social structure was enacted alongside Sultan Abdul Hamid's constitution of military corps, the *Hamidiye Alaylari*<sup>119</sup>, among Kurdish *eshirs* at the end of the nineteenth century. It aimed to protect Ottoman territory against the Russian threat, as the Kurds were always seen as a safety valve by the state administration, as with the Persians in the Ottoman Empire, an example of the historical reality of the Kurds in the Middle East and Minor Asia. Importantly, this new mechanism also aimed at mitigating 'internal threats', such as the Armenians.

In the creation of *Hamidiye Alaylari*, the Sultan also opened 'Tribal Schools' (*Ashiret Mektepleri*) in Istanbul to train children<sup>120</sup> of Kurdish *aghas* and then employ them in administrative and military positions and present them with infinite authority. Subsequently, he created a large-scale cavalry among the tribes, primarily the *Sunni* tribes who had religious ties with the Sultan/Caliphate. This at the same time provided the new socio-political internal agent with prosperity and authority of the state, which changed the economic, religious (sects) and power balance of the region. However, the policy had a 'delphic character' apart from its visible aim.

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<sup>118</sup> It started with Sultan Mahmut II but became effective in the *Tanzimat* era.

<sup>119</sup> They are equally responsible for the Ottoman-Armenian Massacre/Genocide in the 1910s.

<sup>120</sup> They became leaders of Kurdish nationalist uprisings such as Kochgiri, Sheik Said after the post-Ottoman era in the new Turkish nation(alist) state. (Nuri Dersimi, Jibrani Halid Beg etc.).

It should be noted that a noticeable objective of the *Hamidiye Alaylari* was the control and restraint of the Kurdish awakening through the use of balanced politics and conflicts between tribes, slowly convincing them of the benefits of centralisation and/or passivisation politics in the region. The ultimate, and real, objective was to eliminate the hegemony of the Kurdish leaders and control them.

Equally powerful in the political sphere of the Kurds was religious institutions. The most effective and important internal dynamic in the existence of the Kurds, *tariqa* is highly noteworthy as, for instance, *Sunni Qadiri* and *Naqshbandi* (later on also *Nursi* and *Suleymanci*) and *Shia Jaafari* or differently *Alawite* were the most influential sectarian representations in the region due to the massive number of Kurds with Muslim-*Sunni* backgrounds following the dominant *Shafi mezheb* or school. *Kizilbashlik* represented an equally effective institution in society, among Kurdish *Alawites*. Beside these two Islamic interpretations, there was the ancient Kurdish religion, *Ezidi*, and the other major religions, which were not as influential as Islam, such as Eastern Christianity<sup>121</sup> or Judaism. The spiritual leaders, namely the *sheikhs*, *sayyids*, *mullahs* but also *dedes* and *pirs* appeared as prominent actors at the base of society, as a part of a religious group (*tariqa* or *jammata*) or sometimes independently. In addition to their religious role, they oriented and organised society and superseded the *mir* system, especially when the *mirs/aghas* authority had declined or disappeared. They appeared more in public spheres through their social networks, using their knowledge, charisma, rhetoric, attributes and loyalty. They also gained socio-political power through the long-standing, conventional and established social structure, which was based on religious and customary codes. *Sheiks* also had a non-religious, scientific (including artistic) knowledge and advised leaders of tribes, whether they were devout Muslims or not; secular (McDowall, 2000). The skill or ability of *sheikhs* emerged from their deep knowledge of religious and scientific literature, which was essential for society. In reflecting on the characteristics of religious life among the Kurds, Hay (1921: 38) states that the “Kurds are normally by no means fanatical; though they are powerfully influenced by their *sheikhs* and *mullahs* in whom they place most implicit trust”.

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<sup>121</sup> Chaldean or Assyrian.



In Kurdish society, the influence of religious leaders was more effective than the religion itself and the tribal outlook was largely stronger than religious settlements, while religion was not politicised. The concept of “*Hakimiyet Allah’indir*<sup>122</sup>”, which is used by political Islamic movements (such as Hizbullah<sup>123</sup>) to mobilise the masses, was not accepted and the dominantly religious Muslims did not acquiesce to be politicised under an ideological system. The religious leaders, who held the power of knowledge, did not limit their power to the spiritual world and subsequently played a crucial role in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism and organisation of the rebel counter-movement via promoting a (counter) cultural and moral leadership. Their role was extended to other spheres of society, including political, social, economic and literary.

To sum up, the notion of *mir/gha/sheikh* leadership had a special place in Kurdish society and they assembled around a leader, even though they could not achieve the unity of society. However, Kurdish leadership failed to use the opportunities that emerged in the nineteenth century and could not reconcile the classical mode of production with capitalist values, which in turn resulted in the failure to transform the tribal system into a nation state, resulting in a hegemonic problem that left society unable to act and thus politically ‘immobilised’ for a long time.

### **3.5 CODIFICATION OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF KURDISH TRANSFORMATION**

Returning to the Ottoman social and political structure and its relation with the Kurds, it should be mentioned that the evolution towards liberal economy principles began when *ayans* led trade relations with Europeans. However, it did not work effectively in the same way in the Kurdish region. The Kurdish internal institutions tried to develop the bazaar and existing economic relations in terms of surplus production and exchange. These institutions had until then arranged and defined the nature of the socio-economic relations between merchants, tribesman (peasants or farmers) and urban people through legitimate political power, traditional custom, values, norms, morals and religion, which structured daily activity and was not ordered by formal law. Nevertheless, the monetarised economy did not fit into the Kurdish political

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<sup>122</sup> Sovereignty belongs to God.

<sup>123</sup> Political Islamic group in Turkey, which aims to rule the country using Islamic rules.

economy as well as it had been adopted by other subjects of the Empire such as the Christians<sup>124</sup> and Jews, who controlled almost all the large-scale finance, industry, commerce and trade of the Empire for that time. The Kurds did not even attempt to fill up the political economy gap, which is occurred after excluding of these non-Muslim actors from Ottoman/Turkish political economy life, which noticeably demonstrates that money-based relations held little attraction to the traditional Kurdish society. However, the Ottoman economy remained peripheral in comparison to other modern-Western liberal economies<sup>125</sup>. The Kurdish economy, as a result, within the dependency of the Empire became the ‘periphery of periphery’. Although there were no strong economic relations between the central Ottoman Empire and peripheral Kurdistan region, as the relations was mainly dominated by politics. However, the Kurdish enclave had been beyond the reach of Ottoman authority. Hence, the political and economic relations materialised without any state intervention or formal regulation, although this does not mean there was no regulation or restriction in socio-economic relations in Kurdish society. Instead, the social networks and informal conventions existed through kinship affiliation between members and provided protection, regulation and persistent mechanisms. It is important to emphasise that the changing pattern of the social structure under the later stages of the Turkish Republic could be evidence of the institutional transformation of a traditional society into a market economy society in terms of increasing commoditisation, specialisation of products (agricultural) and the division of labour.

The impact of the Ottomans became visible in the Kurdish region once the balance of power shifted in the Ottoman political space (Ozoglu, 2004). In particular, the *Tanzimat* Reforms (1839) brought a new arrangement to the relationship between the Kurds and the Empire, essentialising the centralisation policy by tightly controlling the Kurdish mobilisation. The state restructured the function of the *mirs* and organised the region into districts or *sanjaks* under the new administrative units. The Sultan became more involved in Kurdish politics. Collecting soldiers and taxes became ordinary state practice in Kurdistan and became a crucial factor in the ending of the *mir*’s politics and the opening of the period of leadership by the *aghas/sheiks*. Some scholars (Besikci 1991; van Bruinssen, 1992a; McDowall, 1996 etc.) even argue that

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<sup>124</sup> Particularly the Armenians and Greeks.

<sup>125</sup> The liberalism in the Ottoman economic system mostly started after European trade involvement.

the situation turned the region into a semi-feudal or feudal formation. In this new arrangement, the mode of production and sharecropping are controlled by the state rather than being in the hands of the direct producers or owners. Thus, the power of redistribution was transferred to the political-judicial mechanisms of the state and its local representative (*pashas or aghas*). Power was sustained through property, contract law and the transposition of economic surpluses from the regional to the central economies.

The reign of the new order reversed the *de facto* autonomous administrative system switched to more centralised governance, causing the decomposition of relations between the leaders and the base of society. The new state-linked internal agencies, such as the *aghas/sheiks* or *Hamidiye Cavalry*, appeared in the region and provided opportunities for the state to control and protect its authority (Ozoglu, 2004). This new political entity restructured and reformatted Kurdish society by transforming their leadership cadres into the ‘officers of the state’, which directly impacted the codification of the political and economic origins of Kurdish transformation, as the Kurdish elite was co-opted into the system on the one hand, and the state was provided with legitimacy in the eyes of the Kurds on the other.

Meanwhile, the CUP<sup>126</sup> (1908-1917) was set up by the Young Turks as a political organisation/party to challenge the absolute power of the Sultan by essentialising ‘public power’ through the parliamentary regime and its institutions<sup>127</sup>. Hence, they saw themselves as representatives of modernity and Western values<sup>128</sup>, who would bring civilisation to imperial society, particularly tribal society<sup>129</sup>. In the process of

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<sup>126</sup> On 16 January 1916, a famous leader of the CUP, Enver Talat Pasha, ordered that: “The movable property left by the Armenians should be conserved for long-term preservation, and for the sake of an increase of Muslim businesses in our country, companies need to be established strictly made up of Muslims. Movable property should be given to them under suitable conditions that will guarantee the business’s steady consolidation. The founder, the management, and the representatives should be chosen from honorable leaders and the elite, and to allow tradesmen and agriculturists to participate in its dividends, the vouchers need to be half a lira or one lira and registered to their names to preclude that the capital falls in foreign hands. The growth of entrepreneurship in the minds of Muslim people needs to be monitored, and this endeavor and the results of its implementation need to be reported to the ministry step by step” (Ungor, 2011).

<sup>127</sup> The *Tanzimat* reform project emerged between 1839 and 1876 and proved an obstacle to Muslims becoming effectively involved in business.

<sup>128</sup> These are: secularism, enlightenment, reform and renaissance.

<sup>129</sup> see Hanioglu (1984).

developing their power base, in referring to their economic agenda they became “the vanguard of the nascent Turkish bourgeoisie” (Bugra, 1994) due to their attempt to engineer a new political economy based on Turkish ethnicity, as the economy was dominated mainly by non-Muslim subjects (Keyder, 1987). This caused a feeling of distrust among the non-Muslim subjects towards the state, as they were perceived as a threat to the political and economic system of the Muslim-Turkish nation<sup>130</sup>.

As a result, the new order in the Empire under CUP aimed to create a native, namely Turkish, bourgeoisie<sup>131</sup> by excluding the Greek and Armenian minorities from the economic sphere; they would be carried by the logic of the market as a bourgeoisie class of the new and developing capitalist or liberal system (Ungor, 2011; Keyder, 1987; Bugra, 1994).

Consequently, the majority of ex-citizens of the Empire were exiled, defused and assimilated after or during the last phases of the Ottoman Empire, which was followed by direct control of the economic system by a hegemonic power and the emergence of the Turkish bourgeoisie class dependent on the state and part of a national development project<sup>132</sup>. The CUP tradition of creating a nascent Turkish bourgeoisie with the means of the state continued in the new Turkish Republic as well. Such policies were first put into action by the CUP in 1908-1918 and maintained later by the Kemalists (led by the Republican People’s Party) when they came to power after the CUP, in 1923. The social and administrative transformation of the Empire was sustained by the Young Turks, who became a hegemonic power, superseded the Sultan’s regime and started to control and arrange the transformation of state/society. The crucial point is that they utilised nationalist discourse to centralise and reshape the structural dimensions of the state/society and implemented the capitalist principle through the ‘Turkification of industrialisation’. Merchants, finance, trade, agricultural surpluses and other components of the economic system

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<sup>130</sup> According to Osman Nuri Pasha, the Governor of Hicaz and Yemen *vilayet* (1882-1899), “Turks constituted the ‘fundamental element’ (*unsur-u asli*) of empire’. He bemoaned the fact that the majority of the soldiers in the Ottoman armies were Turks, for this meant that they were to be withdrawn from the agricultural labour force, and ‘as those versed in the science of economics well know, this is detrimental to production of wealth for the state as a whole” (Deringil, 2003: 328).

<sup>131</sup> The railways, companies, lands and banks were nationalised.

<sup>132</sup> For the census of industry and its distribution according to ethnic/religious background when the Young Turks were in power, see Ayse Bugra (1994), *State and Business in Modern Turkey*, pp.38-39.

were dominated and controlled by the non-Muslim citizens of the Empire and European passport holders (*Levantine*), who acquired privileged positions in Ottoman economic life. Thus, the parties used state authority (particularly the legal system) to change the modes of production and political economy by emphasising the importance of developing the economy of the ethnic Turkish population and to construct a Turkish national economy, which by definition excludes Kurds as well as other ethnicities, who essentialised their own identities.

As a result, the Turkification policy of the CUP (later Kemalists<sup>133</sup>) determined the character of the late Ottoman Empire's and early Republic of Turkey's political economy, and of the Kurdish political economy as a by-product through the institutionalisation of the state and promotion of political, economic and social change. For instance, the law encouraging industry in 1913 in the Ottoman Era, and another promoting industrial development in 1927 (four years after the establishment of the Republic) as part of the new Republic, provided the legal and formal face of this policy.

During the process of transformation of Kurdish political economy, the social, political and economic structures were changing within the macro environment or central administration modernisation and capitalisation project. In response to such changes, the response of the Kurds had been shaped in an evolutionary manner which can be formulated as a 'transformation in resistance', where a 'dual transformation' was taking place between the core and the periphery, defining the 'double movement' nature of the developments.

Within such a changing environment, the transformation of the Kurds needs to be read from different perspectives. On the one hand, Kurdish positioning was a resistance that started in opposition to outside factors or to the intervention of the Ottoman bureaucratic system. This forced the region to adapt and integrate the international politico-market system through various changes in the context of

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<sup>133</sup> The founder of the Republic of Turkey and source of the Kemalist ideas, Mustafa Kemal, stated in one of his speeches to local traders in Adana (Kilikya) on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1923 that "this country [Turkey] in the end stayed in the hands of its real owners. Armenians and others have no rights in this country. This fertile homeland is genuinely and intensely Turkish". My translation. By Ayşe Hur (2011), *Azinliklar nasil azinlik oldu?* (How minorities became a minority?). Available at: <http://www.durde.org/2011/04/azinliklar-nasil-azinlik-oldu/> Access Date: [2 May 2011].

political economy including the following: centralisation policy, the 1858 land law, detribalisation, deterritorialisation, the commercialisation of land/labour, the redistribution of economic accumulation, and economic dependency. Therefore, the modernisation and transformation of the economic and political system offered by a central authority reverberated with a negative image in Kurdistan. On the other hand, it progressed within the parameters of the base. The traditional character of the Kurds and their leadership was tied to the tendency to transformation, and the traditional institutions strove to preserve the existing structure against the ‘harmful’ influences of the new liberal or authoritarian principles. However, the internal dynamics or leaderships had missed the opportunity of the nineteenth century and could not build this era’s modern institutions; therefore, they failed to direct society, or complete a revolution, as the bourgeoisie had done in Europe.

In other words, as the Ottoman government sought to settle the Kurdish tribes through the new order and give economic funds to *aghas/sheikhs* and the upper strata of society, while privatising land for them, it subsequently destroyed the meaning of land as a common property in the tribal value system. As a result, following acquiescence to the centralisation project of the state, the *aghas/sheiks* gained lower levels of taxation for their territory and began to act like capitalist entrepreneurs through the use of a sharecropping system with the tribesmen. Some of them accepted the high official statutes to keep power (not hegemonic but applied coercively rather than consensually) in the region and settled in urban areas. As a result of shift in their perspectives and activities, they started to lose communication with the masses as they became individualised, which did not really suit the classic Kurdish character, and alienated or ignored the problems or demands of their own people. This created a patron-client relationship that destroyed the traditional social network and ties between Kurdish leaders and their subjects.

These changes caused social relations to become strictly economic in nature. In addition, internal agents could not support the groups that would institute more radical change. Moreover, they did not produce the conditions for a well-established merchant capital that would play a key role in commercialising agricultural products<sup>134</sup>. The driving forces, such as the bourgeoisie, urban middle class and

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<sup>134</sup> For instance, Muhammad Ali in Egypt.

factory labourers who could transform society from one stage to another through internationalisation, industrialisation and modernisation, could not be generated by the leadership within the Kurdish social structure. Therefore, the absence of these institutions rendered the leadership responsible for the failure of the transformation process in the nineteenth century, as they used the advantages only for their own household economy, ignoring the provision of services to wider society, and unsuccessfully redistributed the revenue through production or exchange processes. In the end they became agents between the centre and periphery, rather than being the leader of the periphery. In sum, they failed to adopt the new order (mainly, the market economy, a national state) of the nineteenth century.

Kurdish social structure constituted an important element of the nineteenth-century transformation project. The *mal*<sup>135</sup> (household) was the social and economic unit in Kurdish society; it was composed of wider family members, including married sons and their families, and the unit assumed a crucial role in the economy. The majority of *mal* worked their own land for the household economy, rather than using it for crops or animal products in Kurdistan, and this emerged as one of the challenging points in the transformation process. The notion of money was not dominant in the family; to produce, for instance, *thoraq* (cottage cheese) for the purpose of surplus to be exchanged for money was not a priority for members of the *mal* or for the *eshir*. Therefore, the transactional cost, which is part of the cost of production and necessary for the transformation of institutions, was not seen as a priority issue either. The total cost of production, which depended upon the inputs of land, labour and capital, was inherently involved with the protection of existing social values. This social behaviour generated an obstacle to self-regulated economic institutionalisation and adaptation to the market economy (North, 1990). Agriculturalism (partly trade) was a dominant economic activity articulated through various forms of social and political units<sup>136</sup>.

Kinship ties were also practised in economic relations, predominantly in exchange, and were regulated in the context of cultural and religious policies, which had designated individual behaviours (Glavanis, 1989). For instance, each *mal* had a

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<sup>135</sup> Meaning 'family' in Kurdish.

<sup>136</sup> Because of this, it is not a very prevalent economic activity.

socio-economic connection via informal activities, such as solidarity, collaboration, mutual support, cooperation, or the giving of gifts at births, weddings and deaths<sup>137</sup>. Valuable rights such as inheritance of agricultural land and endogamous (*dodmam*) marriage were notable cultural values in the alternative relationship context, which served to maintain economic relations<sup>138</sup>. Therefore, the commercialisation of crops in the Kurdish regions was not fully embedded in social relations in an economic manner. This was due to the fact that social conventions were deeply rooted in the existing economic mechanisms; for example, the use of the village fountain is an example of kinship cooperation provided at communal expense that did not prompt people to think about individual transformation costs. However, private ownership, like the right of land ownership<sup>139</sup>, was protected by tribal common law.

In Kurdish society, economic relations operated through the ‘women-dominated’ household economy and socially constructed and developed local markets (bazaars); therefore the economy was embedded in social relations without involvement with self-regulated market economy principles. This also allows us to consider the role and statute of marriage and women in Kurdish society, in the context of political economy. The bazaar as a tangible institution rested in traditional, cultural and kinship settings. It genuinely belonged to the ‘tribal mode of production’ and was shaped in a non-wage and non-capitalist form. However, it bore a number of distinctive deficiencies in a modern sense, such as the absence of formal (legal) rules (such as agreement), a lack of standardisation of prices and quality, no definite division of labour and skills, no big entrepreneurs (capital) and no liberal state intervention. One might think it was not a modern linear transformation process, but it can be called a “progressive transformation<sup>140</sup>” which created a distinctive system without self-regulating market principles and based on the trust, friendship, affinity, validity, understanding, statute or other cultural values that had already been constructed by society to protect and sustain traditional reciprocity and redistribution

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<sup>137</sup> “In kin-based societies, relations cast as filiations and affinity regulate most of their social interaction including politics and economics. Kinship acts as a social code that defines social positions as well as rights and obligation among the society’s members” (Sirman, 2007: 178).

<sup>138</sup> Eickelman (1981: 175) states that “institutions such as kinship, community, tribe responsibility and trust are subjectivity held ideas about social relations shared by members of society and embodied in rules, customs, symbols, actions, such as ritual and most everyday actions”.

<sup>139</sup> It transmits from family lineage.

<sup>140</sup> My emphasis.



relations from the impact of the market economy. Therefore, the long-established institutional structure was encouraged in political and economic relations. Following North's (1990) line of argument, the political and economic 'transaction cost' and the individual demands of the members of society were determined by choices; hence, the norms and behaviours were also reflected in changing attitudes because the self-regulating market principles not only impact the economy but also orient political and social life and relations that impact individual attitudes. Nevertheless, the economic relations were not designed by the social relations and did not become determinant factors in relations between members of society; they were not considered separate to social relations, which denied liberal principles, in terms of the Polanyian approach. Therefore, the Kurdish tribal and traditional system became an appropriate case for the Polanyian moralist from an institutionalist theoretical perspective.

This implies that the internal leadership and local/traditional institutions did not accommodate international institutions, in terms of a modernist approach. However, this raises a controversial question: if the traditional tribal system could not work, 'how have the Kurds survived until now among big powers and in a self-regulated market economy?'

One may argue that Kurdish society is formulated in an 'anarchic social order' which maintains the absence of the notion of a 'state.' There have been doubts about modernity and its tools in that it may constitute a danger to essential elements of the 'mountain society' and its own characteristics, particularly the feeling of liberty in a wider landscape and solidarity/kinship<sup>141</sup>. North (1990: 37) points out that "Kurds and endless other groups have persisted through centuries despite endless changes in their formal status". The Kurdish people shared conventional local norms and values within reciprocal relationships. For them, individual behaviour especially in market, was aimed at neither monetary goals nor profit. The motivation of tribesmen was shaped by the socio-religious concept mostly in spiritually, traditional *eshir* kinship, and altruism played an effective role in social norms, experience and knowledge in

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<sup>141</sup> For example, a well-known and respected Kurdish religio-intellectual Said-i Kurdi (Nursi) (1876-1960) refused to stay in Istanbul and rejected its artificial and fictitious modernity. Immediately afterwards, he turned to the desolate, savage but genuine, faithful and free mountains of Kurdistan, stating that "Kurdish mountains are the centre of absolute freedom' (my translation). (See more: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Ichtimai Receteler* [Social Prescriptions], 1990 Istanbul: Med-Zehra Matbacilik).

the economic mechanism. Of course, economic behaviour, the market, exchange and other economic activities existed. However, individual behaviour was not formulated in the utilitarian sense of maximising utility in the form of money, wealth or profit; instead, it formed a social statute based on reputation and a religiously-derived model. This perspective helps us to see the concept of the Kurdish modification and analytical framework of microeconomic theory, which is posed against the modernist central government transformation and international self-regulating market economy principles. Hence, it also shows how the Kurdish social structure (or character) became a main reason for the failure of the transformation process, from the modernist point of view.

This made it easier for the authorities to nationalise (or localise) industry, transform the ethnic/social origins of the industrial classes, and contribute to a substantial accumulation of capital for those 'new social actors'. Thus, it caused a fragmental response within society. In this respect, the context of Kurdish rebellions needs to be viewed with political economic understanding in the double movement approach as a social protectionist response; in other words, the Kurdish regional, traditional and social protectionist movement was emerging among society while central, modernist and self-regulating market principles were attempted to expanding their hegemony in Kurdistan's political economic life. Society creates a social protectionist mechanism to preserve its original structure and identity against the Ottoman centralisation project that afterwards led to a nationalist perspective by the CUP and its successor the Kemalists. Thus, in the post-Ottoman Turkish state's historiography, the evolution of nationalist bureaucratic/military interventions during the establishment of the new order (or institutional systems) reflects the view that, because of the struggles of the coercive social protectionism, such as the Kurdish countermovement, there were no other antagonist powers left after the Greeks and Armenians were eliminated from the economic, political and social spaces (which is discussed in the next chapter).

### **3.6 CONCLUSION: NON-LINEAR MODERNISATION AND COUNTER-TRANSFORMATION**

In the nineteenth century, relations between the Kurdish domestic agents or the internal dynamics and structure, namely the state, developed through the imposed political economy, which allowed individual property rights (land ownership) and tax revenue. In general, the fundamental elements of modernism such as the market

economy, industrialisation, capitalist transition, and liberal/bureaucratic and security-based regularisations impacted the form of the superstructure (civil society). In the Kurdish case, this process was not led by Kurdish internal dynamics, but rather partly proceeded under enforcement and imposition of Ottoman policies and international capital power, following the centralisation and liberalisation project of the Empire.

According to the modernist view, if society did not incorporate liberal and modern institutions and principles, it could not be categorised as an industrialised or developed society, which is shaped in national, liberal and democratic political principles. In this Eurocentric perspective, the measurement of development is determined by the level of adaptation to these institutions, which shows how much society had progressed in terms of political participation, social mobilisation, general welfare and technology. In other words, as part of the homogeneity sought by modernity, convergence to modernity is considered essential if a society is to be considered developed. Thus, farmers/peasants and bourgeoisie (merchants) were not the only players in the Kurdish case, as *mir*, *aghas* and *sheikhs*<sup>142</sup> held crucial roles and had an impact on the structural changes in agricultural and agrarian societies from a rural to an urban context to achieve the Western model of (linear) development. However, without a nation state, as the main framework for such a model to work, capitalism could not be developed to become the dominant mechanism, as stated by the liberal viewpoint.

In this respect, an examination of the Ottoman macro-level structure and its short-run transformation allows us to see the modification of the micro-level Kurdish framework in the long run. It is therefore imperative to understand the social protectionist perspective of Kurdish society regarding social actors and human interactions, through the persistence of non-modern, traditional and informal institutions, which are embedded in cultural archaeology and transmitted from that heritage.

The persistence of the institutional pattern that had been developed through tradition, customs and values plays a fundamental role in the evolution of Kurdish society to account for the political, social and economic system of Kurdish society within its

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<sup>142</sup> These actors controlled merchants and possessed a large amount of land at the same time.

informal networks. In other words, the Kurdish *mir* system within tribal tradition appeared in moral political economy and as an alternative model. This regional model attempted to deconstruct the notion of the great transformation of the nineteenth-century. Moreover, it was allied with a desire to protect what was a traditional structure when a self-regulating market economy/society offered a ‘new system’. Thus, the Kurdish transformation can be defined in a ‘contrary institutionalism and counter-transformation’ context, through its cultural heritage, personal character, kinship, leadership, and habitual and traditional institutions. Analysing the peripheral political economy of the Kurds brings out the critical importance of Kurdish social structure and its distinctive characteristics and relations to the centre, as explained by the Polanyian approach. Nevertheless, this study alone is not enough to correspond, match or meet all expectations in an attempt to provide definite answers to all questions. Yet it opens the discussion in this field as this chapter has done so far.

Having analysed the political economy formation of the Ottoman Empire, which experienced changes after interventions by external European capitalists and internal challengers, as the *ayans* demonstrated the effect of the transformation of the centre on the periphery, certain questions are raised<sup>143</sup>: *How did the Kurds respond to those new principles or adapt to these challenges in their region? How did they communicate with new actors or ruling classes during the state’s new policy in the region?*

When janissaries were supplanted by *ayans* in the socio-economic life of the Empire through the *Sened-i Ittifak* (Bill of Alliance) agreement in 1808, at the same time political power granted to *ayans* transformed them into an important facet of the Ottoman socio-economic structure.

Meanwhile, the Kurdish rulers (*mirs*) enjoyed their *de facto* independence in this power distribution era. The notable and religious leadership was controlling the region. However, they failed to develop the economy of Kurdistan to meet the needs of the international market and could not commercialise the Kurdish agriculture surplus, nor change the mode of production. Thus, the division of labour,

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<sup>143</sup> “The first important step in institutionalising the Empire’s integration into the political-economic logic of European capitalism was the trade convention of 1838 with England” (Keyder, 87:29).

commoditisation of products and materialisation of land, which represent determinist factors in the capitalist mode of production, did not occur.

Hence, it can be stated that society had therefore failed to adapt to the market economy. In addition, Kurdish lifestyles did not integrate with market economy mechanisms; Kurdish nomads and tribesmen were not self-materialists and were unwilling to produce a surplus for capitalist purposes. There is no strong evidence that homo-economicus as a behavioural norm overrode relations between members of society or the kinship of *eshirs*.

The concept of 'behavioural economism' and 'individualism' did not deeply penetrate into or become embedded in social relations. Therefore, tribesmen failed to integrate into the new 'economic men' concept, and the negative impacts of the industrialisation process in the Empire impacted and reshaped the social structures. The traditional values of society were detrimentally affected by the capitalist changeover. Polanyi articulated this situation in the case of England and argues that the morals of society - dignity, honour and values - were destroyed in the process of capitalisation on the streets of London and other parts of the country, when people were caught up in social and political economy transformations unawares, such as from feudal, traditional, agricultural and household economy into the industrial, modern and capitalist mode of production.

Reflecting on all this, such explanations do not mean that there were no economic institutions in Kurdistan: local markets (*bazaars*) existed in the region, but in a pre-money and non-capitalist mode of production or based on verbal agreement. Therefore, the market involvement of people and the 'commercialisation' of agriculture (including animal products) were limited, even though the commercial demands of the centre were increasing (especially demands from Europe). In contrast, the market economy required the tribal agricultural mode of production, such as sharecropping, as it is practised in kinship relations, to be articulated as a functional unit of the capitalist system, as it was embedded in social formation and tribal kinship. This attribution may be useful for an understanding of why there was a shortage of merchants, traders and a business class in Kurdish society. Moreover, this explains why they failed to occupy the positions of non-Muslim subjects after they

were excluded from Ottoman (afterwards Turkish) political and economic life through nationalist policies.

The concept of tradition, ecclesiasticism<sup>144</sup> and regionalisation embedded in the Kurdish socio-political discourse and economic sphere was dominated by local vernaculars and traditional nomadic, semi-feudal<sup>145</sup> production types that played an important role in the production of surpluses. Therefore, the historical analysis of the social structure made it easier to examine the transformation process of pre-industrialised economic relations (such as modes of production, exchange, the cost of transformation *etc.*) and the relations of the periphery with world capitalist development. Furthermore, it demonstrated whether it was possible to derive a unilinear-development or Western-shaped form of modernisation and development in a pre-capitalist society. As a consequence, the origins of the Kurdish political economy can be discovered in the social formation of the internal institutions and relations, which existed in a societal reality.

Within this context, the Kurdish model needs be examined in two ways: primarily, it was a peripheral economy with an underdeveloped background that resembled the political economy of the other colonised countries<sup>146</sup>. Secondly, the model has a problematic context for classical political economy, as there were/are no nation state and modern institutions or appropriate conditions such as industrialisation, commercialisation, legalisation of economic relations and productive forces, which had become an obstacle to the capitalist principle's penetration of the structure. Therefore, the necessary legal, political and economic conditions were hard to arrange in accordance with liberal principles, such as commercialised agricultural products and wages based on labour, which were to be integrated into society. Moreover, Kurdish society did not need to build financial institutions and an efficient capital market or to reduce the transformation costs both in terms of production and trade for a long time, as their traditional economy was 'financing-oriented' as opposed to financialisation-oriented, thus constituting interferences in achieving institutional transformation which resulted in missed opportunities in that era. They did not adapt

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<sup>144</sup> In the Kurdish case, a code of Islamic institutions

<sup>145</sup> The discourse used by some scholars; however, there is no consensus about terminology.

<sup>146</sup> As argued by Besikci and PKK's early years.

to the nineteenth-century's innovations and institutions, nor did a liberal, compatible market materialise to increase commerce. They strove for 'prestige', 'reputation' or material benefits and could not agree upon a 'historical bloc'<sup>147</sup> or a unity project concentrated on leading society's transformation in nineteenth-century institutionalism. Moreover, the economic relations of society did not accommodate a shift from the traditional structure to progressive productivity, nor to the development of the political, social and economic institutions into modern ones.

Transformation appeared when the self-regulated market principles were embedded in the mode of production and began to dissolve pre-capitalist modes of production. The pre-capitalist modes of production existed in society and determined economic relations. It has been noted that the existence of the *mir/gha/sheikh* as the superstructure of Kurdish society constructed a double movement, such as refusing to share their power with the centre or pay tax, and resisting the internationalisation of their regional market and the commoditisation of labour and land, which at the same time inspired rebellion against the external/central self-regulating originated policy. Therefore, in the Kurdish region the internal leaders challenged the central authority and enjoyed quasi-independence by not paying taxes, but rather collecting taxes from residents for their own administration. At the same time, they held economic control by utilising local sources for their own development programmes. In particular, the Empire's centralisation process, which reduced the political impact of those internal dynamics and reduced the meaning of classical kinship, led to the transformation of the social structure of society.

The relationship between tribesmen and peasants or farmers changed. This began to spoil the traditional tribal reciprocity and redistribution relations. In turn, land became a commodity and gained economic meaning, rather than being part of social relations. Thus, when considering the reciprocity, redistribution and exchange relationships of society, of particular significance is the meaning of 'land,' which bears a strong social, emotional and eco-political power structure, with a link to agriculture and stock farming as the predominant economic activities. However, the non-capitalist sharecropping institutions generated effective responses against the cyclical behaviour of the market economy. The transformation caused the economic dependency of small

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<sup>147</sup> A piece of Gramscian terminology (see Chapter Two), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

farmers and peasants who lost their surplus products to new actors: big land-owning elites with socio-economic control. The state institutions continued to force the agricultural and stockbreeding products to become part of the capitalist process of central policy. However, the peripheral economy was affected by this new situation. Firstly, it destroyed the Kurds' household economy and commoditised their surplus. Secondly, the redistribution process held by the central economy did not materialise unilaterally.

As discussed, internal agents were deeply involved in Ottoman structures and became members of *Meclis-i Ayan* (parliament), diplomats, pashas or local governors. They disconnected themselves from their relations with the masses and became civil servants who were on the payroll of the state and under legal regulation. *Istanbulian* Kurds<sup>148</sup> had a dichotomous perspective on Kurdish society's future, in the process of adapting the Ottoman to the European power of balance mechanisms. Some of the leaders were not willing to lose their privileged position, which they had gained under the Empire's auspices<sup>149</sup>. Therefore, they were not eager to lose their advantages during the collapse of the Ottoman regime, and lose their power source. The declining political power of the leadership forced the economic system to depend on a central system or dominant leadership (patron-client relationship) by creating a kind of semi-feudal relation and increasing labour division rather than kinship relations based on self-contained household economies. Most of the leaders were transformed *per se* from traditional, regional and tribal persons to become urbanite, modernist, (or positivist) and capitalist by using channels and opportunity spaces provided by central government; therefore, they played the role of agents between the structure and superstructure, providing an opportunity for the Ottomans to comfortably establish their political domination and manipulate agricultural revenues through direct involvement in sharing surpluses or exchanging and regulating land (such as the Land Code of 1858). In doing so, institutional transformation to some extent did take place in the pre-industrial society and resulted in the region distributing surpluses, with trading and revenues coming under the control of state institutions rather than socio-cultural institutions. As a consequence, the internal dynamics of Kurdish society

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<sup>148</sup> See Rohat Alakom (1998), *Eski Istanbul Kurtleri*, Istanbul: Avesta Yayinlari and scholars such as Ozoglu claim that leaders such as Sayyid Abdulkadir and Sharif Pasha were willing to come under Ottoman or British auspices.

<sup>149</sup> Sharif Pasha is an example of this in the SAK organisation.



played a major role in the failure of the transformation process that proved the Polanyian argument that the economy should be part of political/social relations, and any changes to the Kurdish political economy needed to gain legitimacy from society.

In other words, the domestic actors failed to create alternative institutions after the capitalisation process started in the centre; rather, they transmitted the old values into the new without first preparing the infrastructure. As a result, society suddenly perished and was dragged into poverty.

The capitalist involvement in economic relations inevitably had serious implications: large numbers of unemployed people emerged, and a crucial amount of free labour became available as people lost their freedom. Industrialisation changed the mode of production towards liberal principles and turned peasants, farmers and even artisans (e.g. *dengbej*, who always had the protection of *mirs*) into waged workers; this simultaneously created a rejection of the new ways, social structures, and living conditions.

Essentially, industrialisation and mechanisation became an important factor in excluding manpower from the economic field and resulted in increased unemployment among small farmers and peasants, simultaneously turning them into a semi-commodity. This can be attributed to the conditions of the economy, which were not ready for the new actors; the absence of industrialisation in the region constituted an obstacle for the Kurds and they, in turn, resisted the perceived unfair transformation. This shows that, from a Marxist approach, class division was not a priority issue for the Kurdish development process. Adaptation to capitalism in this context - the great transformation - meant that, when most peasants/farmers lost their land, the big owners controlled labour through economic coercion and compelled workers to work for payment. Indeed, the commoditised market system did not create an environment in which the peasantry could only be concerned with household production for the consumption of family members. In contrast, the old peasants/farmers and the new unemployed workforce were dispossessed and obligated to survive with wage labour (without specialisation and division). Once the new order controlled labour, as it did with land and crops, traditional social composition was broken down, but agricultural and industrial rearrangement did not take place. It

should be noted that, in Kurdistan, land was controlled by tribes and each tribe had their own part, which was protected by customary law.

As part of the political economy, the region was not liable to the Ottoman *timar* system where bureaucratic agents were meticulous in every aspect of political and economic principles. The bazaar economy involved local trade where the exchange institutions were not formulated and controlled by hegemonous monetary relations. In the new nineteenth-century societies, specialisation increased as the agricultural mode of production needed only small numbers of the labour force and markets became international and nationalist through revolutions that stimulated political systems. However, the rising costs of living stimulated the masses to mobilise and rebel against authority: the rebellions in the nineteenth century in the Kurdish region against the Ottomans aimed at the decentralisation and the redistribution of power, due to poverty, disparity and tyranny until the end of the nineteenth century. The same discontent was shown with the bureaucratic, centralised control system. In terms of trade, society had self-sufficient regional trade networks, which did not attempt to engage with the international market economy to protect social equity.

As for the social formation of Kurdish society, the socially constituted scheme of society was not defined by formal rules. The tribal economic system is an 'alternative mode of capitalist production' based on a moral economy and the parameters of its own ethical orders and value systems within a deep-rooted deconstruction of modernist discourse. The system is located in a regional economic system where individual and social interests do not intertwine; rather they embed within each other. However, this does not change the fact that internal dynamics could not develop the region's resources through corporations that were adapted to the international economic system.

In concluding, Kurdish transformation process has not completed at the end of the nineteenth-century and let Kurds became a 'late developed society, without having new modern and capitalist institutions. Therefore, in understanding the political economy of the Kurds in this last period of the Ottoman Empire, perhaps Said-i Kurdi should be recalled: in 1908, after identifying three enemies of the Kurds being 'poverty', 'ignorance and lack of education', and 'enmity and disunity', he called upon the Kurds to "protect three jewels we [Kurds] possess and to rid us [Kurds] of our

[Kurdish] enemies: education and learning; solidarity and patriotism, and self-reliance” (Said-i Nursi, 1990). This implies of constructing a particular knowledge to ensure Kurdish futures in the changing nature of the political economy. As can be seen in the following chapters, Kurdish activism perhaps have been successful in creating a particular knowledge in leading their particular strategies in each period in their response to the Turkish hegemony, but they have not been able to tackle solidarity and self-reliance due to ‘great regression’, which however, as Said-i Kurdi (1990) understood, required ‘great transformation’ in the form of sovereignty to achieve ‘peace’ (1990).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **BREAKPOINTS OF THE KURDISH HEGEMONIC STRUGGLE:**

#### **THE POLITICAL THEORY OF KURDISH COUNTER-HEGEMONIC MOVEMENT, IN TERMS OF PASSIVE “WAR OF POSITION” AND ANTAGONIST “WAR OF MANOEUVRE” STRATEGIES BETWEEN 1923 AND 1984**

#### **4.1 UNDERSTANDING THE HEGEMONIC STRUGGLE OF KURDISH POLITICAL AGENTS: AN INTRODUCTION**

The hegemonic gap in the Kurdish public sphere is constituted particularly after the unfinished transformation or ‘Great Regression’ of Kurdish society at the end of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Imperial era, through the failure of the political economy of internal Kurdish institutions, in a linear modernisation process, as discussed in the previous chapter. It was simultaneously superseded by a new and external hegemonic power, namely the Republic of Turkey, which was established in 1923 from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. However, this new hegemonic culture, the political culture of which is Kemalism that emerged from the so-called principles of its founding leader, had not obtained the consent of Kurdish society after the forming of the new state. Although Kemalism itself is the part of the counter-hegemonic movements that transformed from traditional and religious form to the modern and secular regime as a new hegemonic culture against the Ottoman traditional and imperial order. But it failed to establish a social contract with the Kurds and instead opted for the continued oppression of the Kurds under its Turkishness-oriented imaginary society construction. In response to this, there were always various internal hegemonic candidates (included external) in the Kurdistan region who aimed to reach hegemonic power through desired to assemble under a ‘historical bloc<sup>150</sup>’ in the Kurdish society.

After Polanyi’s political economy approach, which is utilised to identify the sources of the (non)transformation of Kurdish society, Gramsci’s political theory of hegemony is considered useful for understanding the long-term connection between the Ottoman/Turkish state line and the on-going Kurdish socio-political mobilisation, in a historical context. Thus, Gramsci’s political and philosophical theoretical framework is considered the main framework through which to analyse the impact of Turkish hegemony over the Kurds in the new modern nation state of the Turks. This is particularly useful for examining the trajectories of Kurdish identity development and political responses up to 1984 in the modern history of Turkey, as 1984 marks a new era itself.

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<sup>150</sup> The concept is one of Gramsci’s great contributions to the political science discipline.

It should be noted that hegemony (cultural) theory, which is labelled by Edward W. Said as “travelling theory<sup>151</sup>”, is considered appropriate for exploring, examining and analysing the dynamics in Kurdish society under the Republican hegemony until a shift in this hegemony occurred in 1984.

In utilising this particular approach, this chapter hence aims to provide a fresh theoretical framework for the subject matter by exploring how the Gramscian framework can help to locate the underpinning dynamics of Kurdish identity formation in this new era.

In doing so, this chapter is divided according to different and important turning points in a chronological perspective that mainly aims at conceptualising and hence exploring the 1923-1984 period, which is the period of struggle over socio-political hegemony for Kurdish existence by the Turkish state and the various emergent new positionings at different times on the Kurdish side. It is important to note that the stature of the Kurds as well as the Turks had changed with the establishment of the new Republics, as within the Ottoman political system both were subjects of the system, namely the Turkish Republics, the Kurds have been subordinated to the Turks. Thus, an entire paradigmatic change took place as the Turkish enjoyed the fruits of the “Great Transformation” while the Kurds found themselves trapped in this new state. It is equally important to state that, with the emergence of nation states in the region, the Kurds were segmented into different nation states, and their unity had been entirely broken for the second time in history following the Ottoman-Persian border agreement in the early seventh-century. Thus, the period represents entirely different realities and paradigms.

This chapter thus aims to answer some of the relevant questions such as the following: *How has the Turkish state dominated Kurdish society without gaining its consent? What kinds of responses have been mounted by Kurdish counter-movements? What tactics of struggle have been applied to gain either internal or external hegemonic powers and how have these been implemented?* These questions constitute the main discussion in this chapter and also provide the base to develop a critical analysis within the identified theoretical framework.

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<sup>151</sup> see Spanos, (2006: 24).

As the historiography shows, in developing a response to the hegemony in this new era, some socio-political agents in Kurdish society employed violence as a tactic to express their discontent with the evolving political developments and new political culture. This ranges from traditionalist religious leaders such as Sheikh Said in the early stages to the modern revolutionary *Partiya Karkere Kurdistan - PKK*<sup>152</sup> (Kurdistan Workers' Party) – from the mid-1970s onwards. In religiously and politically rationalising his uprising against the new Turkish state, Sheikh Said, in his *fatwa*, stated that there had been a “social contract” or ‘tacit agreement’ between the Kurds and Turks (Mumcu, 1992) since the Turks first entered Anatolia. In this social contract, according to Sheikh Said, religion was the deterministic factor, as the relations had been conceptualised and then socially constructed through Caliphate institutions and other religious sub-institutions (e.g. *madrasa*, *taqqiya*, ext.). Thus, for him, the substance of the social contract was religion, namely Islam. However, when Mustafa Kemal<sup>153</sup> abolished these (daily life) institutions of society, which had already been embedded in Islamic values, and then introduced the ‘new, modern institutions’ superseding their function and place with the objective of creating a Republic of Turkey as a nation state based on Turkishness, by socially engineering a ‘nation’ on the heritage of multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic imperial structure, the implicit social contract no longer existed, according to Sheikh Said. It affected the fraternity between Kurds and Turks that has existed for a long time. As a consequence, according to the Kurdish leadership this ‘hidden social agreement’ had expired, and they used this argument to legitimise the idea that Kurdish society has a right to claim self-determination, autonomy or independence (which meant hegemony in this case).

Such a narrative and claim aims to essentialise the Kurdish right to a “Great Transformation” through which to catch up and converge on a “Great Transformation”, as the Turks, with whom the Kurds had enjoyed the same stature under the Ottoman period, had now moved on to their “Great Transformation” while the Kurds remained subordinated to them within the Republic. Thus, the new statures of the two sides indicated an inconsistency with the historical narrative, and it was therefore the duty of the Kurds to overcome such an inconsistency and form a

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<sup>152</sup> In Kurdish initials.

<sup>153</sup> Founder of the Republic of Turkey and the source of Kemalist ideas.

developmental path to overcome the ‘fate’ of the Kurds. However, despite such demands, the rules of the game and the parameters of the political culture were not something to which the Kurds could easily respond from their traditional value system of moral economy, as Kemalism had already gradually instituted itself in every realm and sphere of everyday life as a hegemonic power, which is a Jacobean, authoritarian, political and economic development doctrine aimed at creating a Turkish-based nation state in an imaginary manner regardless of all ethnic, religious and other variations in the inherited society.

Hegemony is equated with ‘ideology’ and based on the consciousness or consent of society. Thus, the cultural leadership becomes a crucial factor in a hegemonic struggle, as the culture of dominant actors, such as beliefs, values and morals, needs to be accepted by subgroups of the society. As a result, this culture should be confirmed in a reciprocal relationship; therefore, the culture can turn into a “common sense” or social reality. However, in the Gramscian account, if the hegemonic candidate wants to gain the hegemonic power he must create a new culture, which is a ‘good sense’ (or the ‘best sense’<sup>154</sup>), and will thus be able to lead the masses. In this framework, the understanding of the concept of hegemony is also an amalgamation, particularly in the history of the Kurdish counter-movement.

The hegemony is conceptualised and defined in diverse formulas for each period due to the unpredictable strategy of internal dynamics. As a result, this chapter distinguishes these periods of struggles and signifies the meaning of hegemony for three respectful periods. In other words, the tactics and methods used by internal dynamics are based on reactive or situational politics and towards external power in the Kurdish context, which does not correspond exactly to Gramsci’s design for proletarian struggle. In the Gramscian world, insurgency was generally considered the only way of responding to the new structure. However, the consistency between Gramsci and the Kurdish counter-hegemonic movements can be easily established as the latter emerged against the state’s hegemonic power by building on the Gramscian tactics of “war of manoeuvre” and “war of position”. With these forms and tactics of responses, the Republican Kurdish history can be examined in three main political

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<sup>154</sup> The terminology created by the study to explain the 1960s’ organisations has striven to create a new cultural and moral leadership by providing a ‘new’ and ‘better’ culture.



and historic stages within their sub-periods and according to the Gramscian framework. It should be noted at the beginning that all of these uprisings failed for various socio-political reasons.

The first stage started in 1923, as a period of uprising with an armed struggle against state authority, namely the emergence of the new hegemonic power, the Republic of Turkey, in terms of the “war of manoeuvre”. This period continued until the end of the Dersim Rebellion in 1938<sup>155</sup>. Constitutive and sustained political agents in terms of social values, ties and structures marked the start of the response by the Kurdish counter-hegemonic movement against the hegemonic power. In other words, Kurdish *mirs*, *aghas* and *sheikhs*, who were later replaced by socio-political actors and institutions, played an important role in protecting the cultural, social, political and economic order of society through the utilisation of uprisings as a responsive or resistance method, which in turn constitutes a “war of manoeuvre<sup>156</sup>”. This is particularly important, as the new Turkish regime aimed at the denial of the existence of Kurdishness in any form; therefore, rebellions played an important role in the social and political memory of the Kurds in order to articulate their distinct nature. However, the hegemonic struggle of this entire period’s politics will be examined in terms of the ‘dual perspective’ within two fundamental models. The first sub-period (pre-1923) became entrenched in the cultural, tribal and religious context during the pre-modernist or nationalist era by traditional and local actors. Thus, this chapter aims to locate the historic roots of the hegemonic struggle, as there are those who argue that the pre-1923 Kurdish revolts were not wholly rooted in the national(ist) context in accordance with the modernist point of view. The post-1923 period, which began with modern, organised and institutional agents and their leadership, was shaped in the modernist and nationalist formula. Therefore, the 1923 establishment of the new Turkish Republic in the post-Ottoman era can be determined as a turning point in the ‘linear hegemony’ struggle.

After this, society entered another stage, which was the period between 1938 and 1960. This second period can be identified in the Gramscian account as a “war of

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<sup>155</sup> It restarted after the PKK led the Kurdish political movement in the 1980s.

<sup>156</sup> “I never liked and still dislike violent methods” Emir Kamuran Ali Bedir Khan (quoted, in Gavan 1958).

position” or a process of “passive revolution” which marks the second style of Kurdish response within a situational context<sup>157</sup>. However, this period is divided into two different sub-terms. The first was from 1938 until 1946, as the latter year marks the beginning of the multi-party system and hence represents the initial change in the ‘strong state tradition’. For the Kurds, this was the period of the ‘defensive years’, which Bozarlsan (2004) calls the “silent years”. The second sub-term within the period was between 1946 and 1960, which is the era of violence and *coups* in Turkish political culture. Following the failure of the “frontal attack” up to 1938, the passive strategy followed, as a different Kurdish hegemonic struggle proved challenging for the Kurdish movement, both in terms of recovery, education, adaptation and institutionalisation within the state mechanism, and/or engagement in the ‘passive struggle’. The modern Kurdish hegemonic movement emerged strongly in the 1938-46 and 1946-60 sub-periods, which have since been regarded as the ‘re-enlightenment’ process of Kurdish society. Consequently, internal actors began to use state institutions, following the neutralisation of the armed struggle of the Kurdish movements. It was within this process that a deconstruction process of Kurdish identity began to take place, which was commenced by the Turkish hegemonic power following the Kemalist nation-building project. However, the first step in Kurdish political mobilisation, or in the foundation of ‘*Kurdishness*’, can be located in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, when the children of the *mirs*, who were educated in the Imperial or European schools, discovered a nationalist culture and a role for Kurdish intellectualism in the Ottoman Empire. In the counter-hegemonic struggle in relation to intellectual and moral leadership, this initial process was supported in the Turkish Republic by the children of the *aghas/sheikhs* or the first generation of Kurdish nationalists and immigrants, whose forced exile into western Turkish cities under political or economy imperatives was accompanied by higher education at metropolitan universities in Istanbul and Ankara between the 1940s and 1960s.

The third main stage in the history of hegemonic struggle-line of the Kurds runs from 1960 until 1984 (the latter year marking the inception point of the PKK’s armed struggle which has continued to the present day). In this stage, the actors employed

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<sup>157</sup> Therefore, we will be using Gramsci’s terminology here, such as “Hegemony, War of manoeuvre, War of position-Passive revolution, Historical bloc (hegemonic bloc) or United front, Tranches, Base-Structure-Superstructure, Traditional and Organic intellectual, Moral (cultural) and Intellectual leadership, Civil and Political society, and Modern Prince”.

both strategies of Gramsci, it is a different form from previous stages, due the constructing a ‘Kurdish counter-hegemonic culture’ in civil society with the adoption of modern ideas, such as socialism, nationalism and secularism, and utilising this new culture to mobilise the society, particularly by the 1968 youth movements. Thus, this final period (1960-1984)<sup>158</sup> is emerged based on the heritage of the second main hegemonic struggle (1938-1960).

In the third period, counter-hegemonic movements attempted to embed their hegemony in Kurdish society, where they would be legitimised and would receive consent to lead society as “organic intellectuals”. These movements created a modern Kurdish culture and history that would ‘bridge’ the “imagined community<sup>159</sup>” with post-Ottoman Kurdish society and gain a hegemonic power internally and externally. It is worth to noting that most of those who had been educated in the Turkish universities in the period, particularly in science and civil engineering, sought to construct society in a tangible, scientific manner to develop society through buildings, manufacturing units, roads and bridges to overcome the ‘fate’ of the Kurds against nature, as the new ‘social engineers’ or ‘social entrepreneurs’. They strove for a self-sufficient society and built bridges through transnational values that bore an ironic similarity to the Kemalist social project during its nation-building process. This was to become a key attribute of the post-1960s Kurdish institutions and an opportunity for the nationalist awakening.

These Gramscian strategies had been applied in the Kurdish internal dynamic in a chronological manner, as opposed to the regular process. The strategies emerged according to the ‘situational politics’ as a response to the ‘situation’, as they were mostly determined by the external hegemonic power<sup>160</sup>, rather than by internal actors.

It is, however, not necessary to critique the historical context of the Kurds in terms of modern nationalism or within nationalist literature as articulated by Anderson’s

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<sup>158</sup> The next stage, the post-1984 will be discussed in the next chapter, in terms of EU-isation and the democratisation process of mainstream Kurdish identity. In this last period, political agents utilised both strategies of Gramsci before achieving the EU-isation or democratisation process, which began in predominantly 1999 and has lasted to the present.

<sup>159</sup> Benedict Anderson’s (1983) theory, through which he defined the nation as a community that is socially constructed by members of the community who believe in the same language, culture, symbols and other communal values.

<sup>160</sup> Ottoman Empire or Turkish Republic.

*Imagined Communities* (1983), Billing's 'Banal Nationalism' (1995), Kedourie's *Nationalism* (1960), Smith's *Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (1986) and *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999), and Gellner's *Nation and Nationalism* (1983). The reason is because of the subject's complex structure, mixed identity, multi-socio political agencies and it's (political economy) transformation process, which requires different theoretical framework than nationalism *per se*. Through a critical study of the nationalism literature, the study believes that the application of the Gramscian perspective, which does not limit the scale of analysis of the counter-movements within the context of nation or nation state, would be more helpful for the Kurdish case to understand the line of hegemonic struggle. Therefore it allows us to analyse the Kurdish case in a political ontology as it is not dominated by a nationalist theoretical framework (Huston, 2007; Biler and Morton, 2006).

## **4.2 THE STAGE OF THE “FRONTAL ATTACK” (1923-1938)**

### **4.2.1 The Resistance of the *Mirs* against the Ottoman Modernisation and Centralisation Hegemonic Project in the Pre-1923 Period**

Before delving into the modern counter-movement and institutional politics of the Kurdish hegemonic struggle, it is important to examine the pre-1923 period, particularly, after the '*Tanzimat* Reform' of 1839, as the foundation of post-1923 attacks. In the last decades of the Empire, as discussed previously, the Kurdish power centres aimed at extending their authority in Kurdistan by challenging Ottoman hegemony. However, the religious link was heavily embedded in Kurdish politics<sup>161</sup> under the Ottoman regime, mostly around Caliphate institutions<sup>162</sup>, and therefore success could not be achieved, since Kurds also considered that “the role of the Caliphate in maintaining Muslim unity was important, especially for those Muslim elements living in the ‘periphery’ of the political centre of the Ottoman/Turkish state” (Yegen, 1996: 221). In fact, leader cadres held high statuses in the Ottoman bureaucratic system, which in turn impacted the concept and nature of the struggle for decades to come.

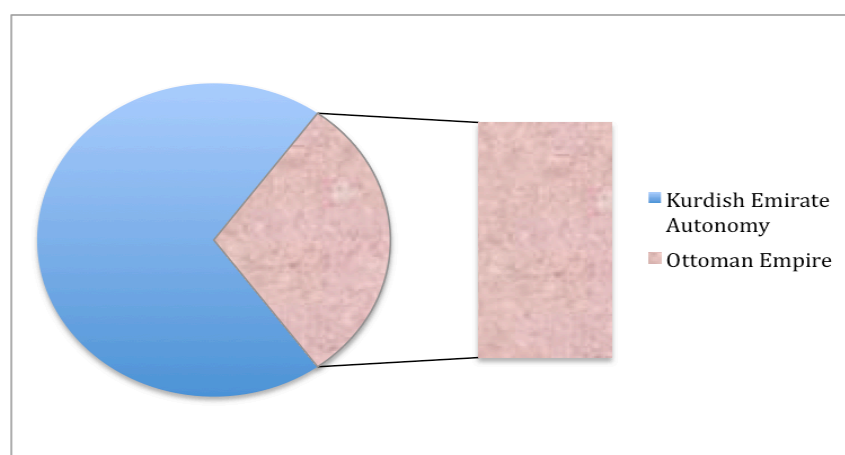
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<sup>161</sup> It is not shaped in a similar way for *Alevi/Alawite* Kurds; further, this religious was not as positive for periphery Kurdish *Alawite* identity and as it was for Sunni orthodox Kurds.

<sup>162</sup> To understand the potency of the Caliph towards the Kurds, one must look to Muhammad Pasha of Rawanduz. During the uprising of the Mir in 1834 a *fetwa* was given by state *mufti* which dictated that “whoever bears arms against the army of the Caliph is an unbeliever and his wife is thereby divorced him. The pronouncement of this anathema created a deep impression upon the Mir's followers [including Kurdish religious dignitaries such as his own *mufti*]” (Jwaideh, 1982: 172).

As a consequence, a new agreement or social contract emerged providing *de facto* independence for Kurdish *mirs*<sup>163</sup>, which paved the way for the emergence of the long-term autonomic structure of the Kurdish ruling system emerging under the Ottoman Empire. According to van Bruinessen, Jwaideh, McDowall, Huston and Olson among others, there is a strong link between the structure and agent that constituted an obstacle to the internal dynamics of society in raising their demand for a separate national state or full hegemonic power (see Figure 4.1). However, as mentioned, this chapter focuses on the struggle for hegemonic powers between internal and external actors, rather than the nationalist approaches with which Kurdish studies are usually concerned.

**Figure 4.1: De facto Independence of Kurdish Emirates in the Pre-1923 Period**



**Figure 4.1** shows the status and power relations within Kurdish internal dynamics in the Ottoman Imperial administration in the Kurdistan region in the pre-1923 period, which predates the establishment of the Turkish nation state<sup>164</sup>.

As discussed, the transformation of the Ottoman socio-political mechanism was followed by a centralisation and intervention policy by state institutions in the Kurdistan region that prompted Kurds to eliminate the external threat to their cultural structure and traditional authority, as the Ottoman's reform policies (Jwaideh, 1982;

<sup>163</sup> It started under the leadership of Idris-i Bitlis.

<sup>164</sup> All figures employed in this chapter are created by author, according to the socio-political condition of the period from 1923 to 1984.

Yegen 1996). The Kurdish social actors, hence, are essential as a leading force in resistance and struggle for hegemony.

For Gramsci, the state was an educator; however, in the Kurdish case the tribal institution replaced the role of the state through the distribution of hegemonic culture/power in the region as part of communal memory. Therefore, the struggle for hegemonic power occurred between tribes, with *mirs* as leaders. In this period, Abdulrahman Pasha, the Prince of Baban, had started the initial reaction against the Ottoman hegemonic culture in 1788; this continued with a protective counter-attack by Prince Ismail Pasha Badiani in the areas of Ahmedy, Duhok and Akra in 1830. This counter-movement was followed by the well-known rebellion of Mir Muhammad<sup>165</sup> of Rawanduz in 1834 (Mella, 2005). These counter-attacks had occurred after the state shifted its classic policy on the region and the centre was having difficulty in establishing the new rearrangement for the constitution of society. However, the state was able to defuse the *mirs*' uprisings due to the region's fragmental politics, unstable unity and complex social structure. For example, there had always been internal hegemonic power struggles between emirates (or tribes) seeking to gain the intellectual, moral and physical leadership of Kurdish society.

The struggle between Kurdish internal actors for obtain the hegemonic power has been a determining socio-political factor in the region that became a guiding motivation behind the establishment of alliances with *outsiders*. This intention proved a handicap, both to Kurdish unity and to success in the struggle against external powers<sup>166</sup>. As a consequence, the *mirs* endeavoured to extend their legitimacy over all other *eshirs* (tribes) as a "historical bloc" and to act as a 'tribune of Kurdish people' during the struggle with a central actor, through the Kurdish counter-hegemonic movement. Thus, they became cultural and ideological leaders in various spheres of the hegemonic struggle<sup>167</sup>.

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<sup>165</sup> He also had an investiture as Ottoman *pasha*.

<sup>166</sup> For instance, some Kurdish tribes united with the Ottoman army against Mir Muhammad's forces.

<sup>167</sup> For example, Jwaideh noted that "it will be recalled that Muhammad Pasha of Rawanduz invaded Behdinan twice, the first time to crush the Yazidis and no doubt to test the reaction of the Bahdinan Princes; and the second time to conquer the principality and make it part of his ephemeral empire (1982: 173).

In this period, an armed struggle or “war of manoeuvre” tactics were utilised for demanding a hegemonic power. It was noted in Chapter Two that hegemony could be protected by coercion<sup>168</sup>. Therefore the Kurds applied to the strategy of “war of manoeuvre”, which is heavily favoured over the “war of position” (it represents the process of social transformation) in this period, and was seen as the only way of reaching hegemony. It also denotes that in this period, the moment of coercion is embedded in hegemony, which is turned into a social reality. However, after the suppression of Mir Muhammad’s insurgency, Bedir Khan Beg<sup>169</sup> (McDowall, 2000; Ahmed/Lutfi, 1907) led a demanding of hegemonic power in 1847, as another powerful candidate.

Despite all this, the struggle for hegemony, both internally and externally, did not draw to an end, and a few years later it appeared under the leadership of Sheikh Ubeyduallah of Nehri<sup>170</sup>, in 1880. It has been argued that this was the last resistance against Ottoman hegemony, under a charismatic leadership (Olson, 1989; Jwadih, 1982; Ozoglu, 2004). However, this distinction did not change the result of the rebellion, which resulted in failure like previous ventures<sup>171</sup>. As a consequence, all the principalities vanished and Kurdish geography and society became completely subjugated to the Ottoman state’s rule. Thus, the Kurdish *mir* hegemony had been removed (Jwaideh, 1982; Mc Dowall, 2000). In this respect, Hilmi (1998) claims that the modernist and progressive Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid’s (II) aim was the obliteration of the Kurdish principalities and their national cohesion, because this would provide an opportunity for the Ottoman external power to gain legitimacy in the Kurdish ‘counter-region’.

Controversially, this external hegemonic demand was also an opportunity for a new type of leadership to emerge such as the *sheikhs/aghas*, in the Kurdish society, who superseded the *mirs* and took the opportunity to lead the “historical bloc” of the Kurdish movement. These new internal agents seized the opportunity to achieve full

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. Gramsci (1971/2003).

<sup>169</sup> Bedir Khan Beg, Mir of Bothan, like other charismatic leaders, had a strong religious streak (see Jwaideh, 1982).

<sup>170</sup> Some scholars (Jwaideh, 1982; McDowell, 1996) treat this rebellion as a starting point of modern Kurdish nationalism, as his aim was unity of Kurds and independent Kurdistan.

<sup>171</sup> Sheikh Ubeyduallah also sought an opportunity for Kurdish independence from Persia in 1880, after the failure of Kurdistan in Turkey.

supremacy of civil society to generate intellectual and moral leadership through an offering ‘new’ culture<sup>172</sup>. This cultural leadership was rooted in a religious knowledge, national identity, social charisma and protectionism. Thus, the *sheiks/aghas* as influential agents desired to fill the gap that emerged after the decline of Ottoman legitimacy and endeavoured to disintegrate the state’s modernist project, even through an armed struggle.

Therefore, this continuous uprisings, led by new actors such as Sheikh Said Barzinja, chief of the Hamawand tribe in Sulaymaniyah, in 1908, by Shiekh Abdulsalam in Bitlis, Ibrahim Pasha<sup>173</sup> of Milli Tribal Confederation, in 1909, and by Abdulqadir Ibn Derae, the leader of Karackachili, as well as the resistance around the River Euphrates (Jwaideh, 1982; Gavan, 1958; Olson, 1989; Mella, 2005) and the 1913 rebellion in Bitlis. This reaction politics also demonstrate that the hegemonic power of the Ottoman state was expiring in the region<sup>174</sup>.

Nevertheless, these rebels did not impair or obstruct the relationship between the Ottoman Sultan/Caliphate regime and the traditional/religious Kurdish ruling class. In this respect, the *Hamidiye Alaylari* (cavalry corps) or Imperial local troops played a crucial role and became a central point of the state’s security agenda in terms of domestic and cross-border (Armenian and Russian) issues (Suphandag, 2006; Nezan 1993). The Sultan utilised the educational strategy, such as *Ashiret Mektepleri* (Akpınar and Rogan, 2001) to engineer the cultural and moral leadership of Kurdish people, for which he also used *Hamidiye Cavalry* as tools in his hegemonic aspiration, but not giving up on the bifurcate approach. The *Hamidiye* strategy clearly demonstrated the state’s policy on Kurdish subjects and its potential outcomes in society (Duguid, 1973). Such policies aimed at providing full authority to the Centre through power-sharing and political cooperation with the co-optation of internal agents, who were the supreme power in the region, in terms of pan-Islamic culture.

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<sup>172</sup> “After the overthrow of the great princes, there was no secular person capable of commanding sufficient prestige among the people. The readiness with which the Kurds accepted the *sheikhs* as leaders shows the extent to which the Kurdish people felt the need for filling the power vacuum left by the disappearance of the princes” (Jwadih, 1982:214).

<sup>173</sup> He was also the formal General of Hammidiye Cavalry.

<sup>174</sup> “The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire gave the Kurds their opportunity to seek freedom their Turkish oppressors. Following the end of the war, intense political activity developed in Kurdistan” (Garan, 1958: 22).



The progressive (transformist) movement, namely the Young Turk movement or the CUP, emerged as a new actor in Ottoman politics in the later stages of the Empire as a counter-movement to challenge the Sultan's absolutism<sup>175</sup>. Thus, they were an intellectual leadership that pursued a revolutionist (and hegemonic) tract in terms of the positivism that they effectuated through the 1876 and 1908 *coup d'états*, followed by a new hegemonic order that sought Westernisation, modernism, enlightenment, secularism and a reformist culture that came to power through the declaration of Meshrutiyet (Constitutional Monarchy) II in 1908 after the first one was obliterated by Abdulhamid II in 1876. This new regime, or the new hegemonic culture in the Empire, was based on the parliamentary system, constitutional rules, and modern citizenship relations between the state and its subjects. As Kansu (2000) claims, this was a continuing battle between 'the old, absolutist mentality and the new, liberal worldview' agents. However, in Kurdistan, the state still recognised the autonomy or 'semi-hegemonic power' of regional leaders. The conservative and traditional Kurdish leaders in the imperial capital were not eager to be a part of the new movement that constituted a threat to their internal hegemonic power, which had been approved by the Sultan. The Kurdish modernist involvement in the establishment of the CUP was motivated by a belief that they could seize power, with the support of the Young Turks, and participate in the 'central' counter-hegemonic struggle<sup>176</sup>. This demonstrates that the Kurds sought an opportunity to gain hegemonic power through different channels in the late Ottoman era.

Nevertheless, the new hegemonic power lost its legitimacy among society, particularly with non-Muslims and non-Turks. In other words, when the Young Turks started to use Islamic discourse, they marginalised non-Muslim subjects of the Empire who dominated the economic and political spheres<sup>177</sup>. At the same time, the notion of who was a 'Turk' questioned the Ottoman aspect of the Young Turk movement, as they became more ethnocentric (Luke, 1936; Lewis, 1961; Ahmad, 1969; Zurcher, 1997, 2000). This was enacted through the changing of place names, which were in

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<sup>175</sup> Constituted from different fragments of society, they comprised Christians, Jews and Muslims, as well as non-Turk ethnic groups (Albanians, Kurds and Arabs).

<sup>176</sup> Two of the four founders were Kurds: Ishak Sukuti, Abdullah Cevdet and members of two distinguished families: Abdurrahman Bedirkhan (Chemberlitash school director) and Ismail Hakki Baban, also wali (governor) of Bagdad Suleman Nazif (member of Kurdish club) and *Melle Said-i Kurdi* (Nursi).

<sup>177</sup> see Chapter Three for the Turkification of business life.

Greek, Bulgarian and Armenian or Muslim Arab and Kurdish names, in 1915 (Nisanyan, 2001; Oktem, 2004) and the declaration of the deportation law in areas dominated by Armenian, Assyrian and Kurdish nations.

The Kurds had their fair share of suffering from the CUP's policies. During this period of oppression and ultra-nationalism, the Kurdish organisations, schools and presses were prohibited and notable figures imprisoned or exiled<sup>178</sup>. Kurds were in contact with the Liberal Union, which was under the leadership of Prince Sabahaddin and in opposition to the CUP's construction of a bloc as a counter-movement.

Throughout the uprisings of the late Ottoman era, the 1920-1921 *Kochgiri* rebellion by Alishan Beg and Nuri Dersimi remained a crucial point in the resistance of the Kurdish counter-movement against the new hegemonic candidate (Kemalists). It was the first serious battle between two new actors of the post-Ottoman era (McDowall, 2000; Dersimi, 1999)<sup>179</sup>. It can be posited that the counter-hegemonic movement of the Kurds not only opposed a parliamentary, 'modernist', Kemalist republic in modern times, but was also against the CUP's constitutional monarchy and ancient traditional sultanic/caliphate of the Ottoman regime, as Kurds have always been subject to containment. This argument results from a re-reading or re-interpretation of Turkish/Kurdish historiography. In other words, it derives from a parallel understanding of Kansu's (1997 and 2000) arguments<sup>180</sup>. In this respect, it can easily be claimed that the Kurdish socio-political movement has struggled from the late Ottoman era into the Kemalist nation-building process. There was no break in the Kurdish counter-movement between those two periods; only the goals and demanding of struggles (hegemony) were different.

The hegemonic struggle between *Turkification* and *Kurdishness* effectively started through the "war of manoeuvre", according to the formula of Gramsci's hegemony theory. This draws parallels with the Risorgimento's disastrous absence of politico-military leadership, which Gramsci identified as one of the crucial dimensions when

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<sup>178</sup> *Serbesti* magazine and Chemberlitash School (directed by members of Bedir Khan's family Abdurrahman Beg) were closed in 1909.

<sup>179</sup> Additionally, the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 – after the First World War - provided Kurdish internal actors with the opportunity to establish a Kurdish state and legitimise their hegemonic struggle through the winning of international consent Olson (1989).

<sup>180</sup> *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (1997); *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey, 1908-1913* (2000).

considering the problem of southern Italy. Thus, this new period is the subject of discussion in the next section.

#### **4.2.2 Initiation to the Institutional Politics: Deconstructing of the External Hegemonic Power via Uprisings in the Post-1923 Period**

The institutional politics of Kurds started in the pre-Kemalist period, but became more effective in the post-Kemalist period. The start of the Kurdish search for hegemony in modern times, as explained above, can be traced back to the Young Turks' Revolution of 1908<sup>181</sup>. In such activism, Kurdish dynamics were inspired and influenced by their admiration for modernism and Western institutions<sup>182</sup>, as many Kurdish thinkers/activists<sup>183</sup> who came from important families such as Shemdinan, Bedir Khans and Baban participated in the CUP during the formation period. According to Nezan (1993), the previous feudal Kurdish revolts were not organised by political organisations in a political framework until the Young Turks' 'revolution', (moreover the Republic). With the constitutional monarchy instituted in 1908, the Kurdish institutions emerged and conducted their activism in the new, relatively flexible, political and intellectual environment, with considerations towards the constitutional assurance of society. One may claim that, in this process, the Kurdish counter-hegemonic culture was radically shifting from cultural *Kurdism* to a more political Kurdish nationalism (Ozoglu, 2004). As a result, the constitutional period can be perceived as the source of Kurdish enlightenment, because the Kurdish intellectuals resided in Istanbul alongside *jammiyets* (organisations) producing magazines and newspapers<sup>184</sup> within a cultural and historical context that shirked Ottomanism in favour of Kurdishness. In this respect, the Kurdish ruling class established socio-cultural organisations like other ethno-religious subjects of Empire. The leadership mostly came from traditional (some of them secular) religious roots such as *mirs*, *aghas*, *begs*, *sheiks* or, as mentioned, from the emerging new Kurdish families. However, the individual and cult leadership of these actors was replaced by institutional politics after the emergence of various organisations, implying that

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<sup>181</sup> Two of the CUP founders (of four founding members) are Kurdish; Abdullah Cevdet and Ishak Sukuti.

<sup>182</sup> Liberalism, secularism, nationalism and positivism are some of them, which are products of Reform, Renaissance and the French Revolution.

<sup>183</sup> Sheikh Abdulkadir of Nehri (son of Sheikh Ubeydullah), Abdurrahman Bedir Khan, Hikmet Baban (Jwaideh, 1982).

<sup>184</sup> The first Kurdish journal published in 1898 under the name of *Kurdistan* in Cairo, Egypt.

various powers were still effective in such organisations; however, the political context and methods of searching for internal hegemonic power began to shift with modern ideas and mechanisms.

The institutionalisation of Kurdish interest around new organisations to assert their cultural identity also became possible due to the Young Turks' policies towards other ethnic groups, which provided a great opportunity for the intellectuals to create a new moral and cultural leadership in Kurdish society. The first of such organisations was established in Diyarbekir (Amid) in 1908<sup>185</sup>. There was also a political party, the Liberal Union Party, established (1909) by a group that sprang up from the CUP and included the Kurdish deputy, Lutfi Fikri, and a Kurdish intellectual, Abdullah Cevdet. These organisations mostly focused on social identity, literature and education, and published magazines and newspapers on Kurdish-related issues and aspects<sup>186</sup>.

Considering that the Kurdish masses in Istanbul were mainly labourers and street porters, who represented an important power in their own right, the establishment of such institutions by conducting social activities educated such Kurdish individuals as well as the general Kurdish masses beyond the Istanbul diaspora, while preparing the ground for the counter-movement and hegemonic power and for raising the consciousness of *Kurdi and Kurdistani* society<sup>187</sup>. These new institutions sought to conceptualise the meaning of Kurdishness and incorporate Western values,

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<sup>185</sup> Under the name of *Osmanli Kurd Ittihat ve Terraki Jemiyeti* (the Ottoman Kurdish Committee of Union and Progress), which was followed by *Kurd Teavun ve Terraki Jemiyeti* (the Kurdish Society for Cooperation and Progress) in 1908. *Hevi* (Hope-Kurdish Student Union) and *Kurdistan Mahibbur Jemiyeti* (Association of Friends of Kurdistan) were both established in 1912. In addition, the *Vilayet-i Sarkiyya Mudafi Hukuk Jemiyeti* (Association for the Defence of Eastern Provinces) and *Kurdistan Taali ve Taraqi Jemiyeti* (Society for the Rise and Progress of Kurdistan) by all well-known Kurdish intellectuals, including Sherif Pasha, Seid Abdulkhadir, Emin Ali Bedir Khan Beg and the Baban Families, were both founded in 1918.

<sup>186</sup> Such as: *Kurd Teavun ve Teraki Gazetesi*, *Kurdistan*, *Roja Kurd (Hevi)*, *Hatewa Kurd* and *Jin* in 1908-1912.

<sup>187</sup> Said-i Nursi had written the letter addressing the Kurdish porters in Istanbul, urging them to be aware of three important challenges facing the Kurdish nation: poverty, ignorance (illiteracy) and disorder (especially among the tribes). Simultaneously, he suggested three countermeasures: national unity, labour forces and national communications within science, art and alliances (Buduzaman Said-i Nursi in Tan, 2009).

particularly nationalism, which provided a cultural leadership for the new hegemonic struggle whereby the formation of a new Kurdish identity was envisaged<sup>188</sup>.

Initially, they formed a tribalship through two approaches. The first was based on religious principles within local affiliations (such as Abdulkhadir, from Shemdinians family/tribe), which supported regional autonomy and assembled around the *Istiklal-i Kurdistan Komitesi* (Committee for Liberation of Kurdistan) in Egypt in 1918. The second perspective was based on nationalism and secularism within global or Western liberal values (like Emin Ali from Bedir Khanis family) that desired an independent state (Ozoglu, 2004). However, both sub-groups were heavily surrounded by Kurdish tribal-cultural values and were active under the leadership of the *Kurd Istiklal Jemmiyeti* (the Committee for Kurdish Independence). Their goal was the creation and development of an alternative hegemony against Turkish administration through the transformation of politics and winning over the support of society through the creation of different intellectual and moral leaderships. Thus, nationalism became “common sense” and a tool to educate society through its own intellectuals with a view to establishing the foundation to reach hegemonic power. At the same time, it initiated contact with the Kemalists (CUP) despite the antagonistic relationship. As mentioned, the Kurdish revolts were responsive reactions; when the CUP produced national culture by “traditional” intellectuals, simultaneously the Kurdish organisations - which is replaced the *mir/sheikhs* traditional institutions - activated their own “organic” intellectuals within the consciousness of the masses.

The Kurdish leadership thus wanted to unify society in identity politics through the promotion of Kurdishness. The establishment of institutions are promoted Kurdish identity as the new political identity resulted in an apparatus of hegemony in society as, for the first time, *organic intellectuals* facilitated hegemonic discourses in society. In other words, the internal hegemonic actors provided organic intellectuals by employing the moral values of the social mechanism and a system of knowledge-based power. Kurdish political agents exercised intellectual and moral leadership by transforming the base through modern and nationalist conceptions with the aim of unity in theory and practice, which could only materialise through society (Jwaideh,

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<sup>188</sup> For instance, one of these clubs, *Kurt Nashri Ma'arif Jemmiyeti* (Society for Propagation of Kurdish Education) established a school in Chemberlitash, Istanbul, in 1908 (Jwaideh, 1982; Olson, 1989; Nezan, 1993; McDowall, 2000).

1982). These institutions were the organisers and teachers of tribal society that acted as mediators between the central-*Istanbulian* Kurdish elite and the peripheral-*Kurdistanian* subordinate subjects. They were organically linked in a society that was divided by religion and sects, strong dialects and different ideologies. In turn, it provided the appropriate conditions for society to define its new socio-political identity.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the nationalist perspective of the new state was emerging a counter-movement that based on the “politico-military”. This proved conducive to the circumstances in which the Kurdish leadership found itself after 1923. The Kemalist cadres became part of the Western and capitalist mechanism through secular, nationalist and liberal values, and attempted to impose their sovereignty (hegemony) in the Kurdistan region in various ways. The Kemalist institutions imposed their new cultural forms amongst every stratum of religious and tribal society. As a consequence, a modern (Western), homogenous form of the Centre’s political project appeared in Kurdistan. In turn, the old, anachronistic, multi-dialectical, religious Kurdish society that was located on the periphery reacted to the new hegemonic power. Thus far, the negative element of the ‘new order’s’ policy had enjoyed the upper hand over the positive constituent of the local dynamic. In doing so, it had acted as a representative of modernism in the ‘uncivilised’ region by disregarding the ancient socio-political structures of Kurdish society. ‘Kemalisation’ required a particular setting, a specific society (if it was not their intent to construct one) and a certain type of state<sup>189</sup>. The disappearance of the *mir/sheikh* type of ruling system and religious institutions in the Kurdistan region was one of the major consequences of Kemalist dominance. As a result, the introduction of Kemalism triggered the intellectual and cultural resistance in terms of ancient values and caused an extreme and brutal hegemonic conflict between both sides.

The new state lost its legitimacy in Kurdish society and embraced a policy of *Turkification* and *laicisation*, within the social (civil) and political (state) transformation of the private and public spheres. Thus, for the Kurds, the post-1923 periods (particularly 1918-1938) were shaped by rebellion politics (Romano, 2006) in

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<sup>189</sup> For instance, establishing a Turkish History Institution and Turkish Language Institution. Moreover, the Kemalist establishment composed an anthem for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic, which says “we created 10.000 million people of every age in 10 years”.

a “war of manoeuvre” (frontal attack) by the Kurdish hegemonic-movement<sup>190</sup>. Now, the Kurdish movement effectively transformed into institutional politics, which intellectually empowered the people, who, in turn, provided legitimacy in the modern nationalist, cultural and moral dimensions of leadership. The *Azadi Jemmiyeti* (Freedom or Committee of Independence) established in Erzurum in 1923 was a crucial example of this. The founder of this new approach originated from a military background (ex-Ottoman Pashas and *Hamidian Cavalier*)<sup>191</sup>.

The analysis of response of the new actors, as suggested before, indicates the hegemonic struggle with the Turkish national state as embedded and expressed in nationalist demands (McDowall, 2000). It could be argued that the establishment of various institutions should be considered a natural outcome of the Kurdish concept of collectivity (unity)<sup>192</sup>. In other words, the concept of collectivity was embodied and articulated in the political culture by the *jammiyats* (clubs). The hegemonic leadership of these socio-political institutions attempted to overcome and dominate the external Turkish hegemonic power and transform the political and economic control of the region, which was still shaped by traditional values and leadership. They also used uprisings or armed forces to constitute a counter-hegemonic movement, namely the Turkish hegemony. This is due to the fact that the deterministic Turkish state has been an external power, and opportunity space in Turkish politics did not provide a chance for those actors to become engaged in the political mechanism of the country with their own ethnic and religious identity.

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<sup>190</sup> “Independence cannot be won with purely military forces; it requires both military and politico-military ones. If the oppressed nation, in fact, before embarking on its struggle for independence, had to wait until the hegemonic state allowed it to organize its own army in the strict and technical sense of the word [...] The oppressed nation will therefore initially oppose the dominant military force with a force which is only ‘politico-military’, that is to say a form of political action which has the virtue of provoking repercussions of a military character” (Forgacs, 1988: 207 from SPN).

<sup>191</sup> The best-known founders of the *Azadi* Society were Jibranlı Halit Beg (Erzurum, ex-commander of *Hamadian* regiments), Blind Hussein Pasha (Haydaran tribe leader), Yusuf Ziya Beg (governor), Ekrem Bey, (from a well-respected Jemil Pasha family among Amed/Diyarbakir Kurds), Said Abdul Effendi (Istanbul), Saikh Said (a renowned religious leader, *Naqshinbandi*), Ihsan Nuri Pasha (a military captain) (Jwaideh, 1982; McDowall, 2000).

<sup>192</sup> There were also other organisations founded in these years, including the *Kurdistan Muhibban Jemmiyeti* (Society of the Friends of Kurdistan) and *Kurd Milliyet Firkasi* (Kurdish National Party) (Mumcu, 1991; McDowall, 2000; Olson, 1989).

This ‘double nature of hegemony’ leads us to redefine and to develop the concept of hegemonic theory. On the other hand, in order to hegemonies the Kurds, the external power, Kemalism, designated particular strategies to dominate the Kurds based on situational (positional) politics, rather than allowing an opportunity space for hegemonic domestic actors to determine their own political responses. This resulted in the emergence of a number of different positioning. In other words, the hegemonic strategies exercised by Kurdish agents were embedded in the Kurdish socio-political formation through the application of a “war of manoeuvre”, or “war of position”, which was not selected by Kurdish leaderships; rather, it was imposed by the outsider’s politics, mostly by the Turkish state’s policy.

In addition, the Kurdish actors constituted an association of tribes, which is based on a “common sense” and affiliation of tribes, and is dependent on these common traditional values. Nevertheless, the leadership still needed to gain total hegemonic power; the internal hegemony was already legitimised by society’s consciousness, but it was at the same time jeopardised by the threat of the Turkish state. Some of the *eshirs* did not stand up within the Kurdish bloc because of their particular position vis-à-vis the state, as the state engaged with some of the *eshirs* for its own legitimacy by educating the members of such tribes and giving them the chance to adopt the ‘new civilisation’ and new forms of society. *Why was that?*

This can be explained by the fact that the state was seeking new alliances in the political structure of the periphery for its legitimacy in substantiating its own hegemony within the idea of creating this new, imagined (Turkish ethnic) state. Therefore, it was necessary for state institutions to exercise their hegemonic culture over the entire area of the country and, most importantly, in the Kurdistan region. This strategy can be explained by the Gramscian position<sup>193</sup>. As a consequence, the local leadership assembled around customs and values and led the cultural leadership against the new ruler to defend the basic necessities of their existence. When they succeeded through force against outside forces, they began the second stage of gaining the consent of all internal agents. In this process, moreover, religion was

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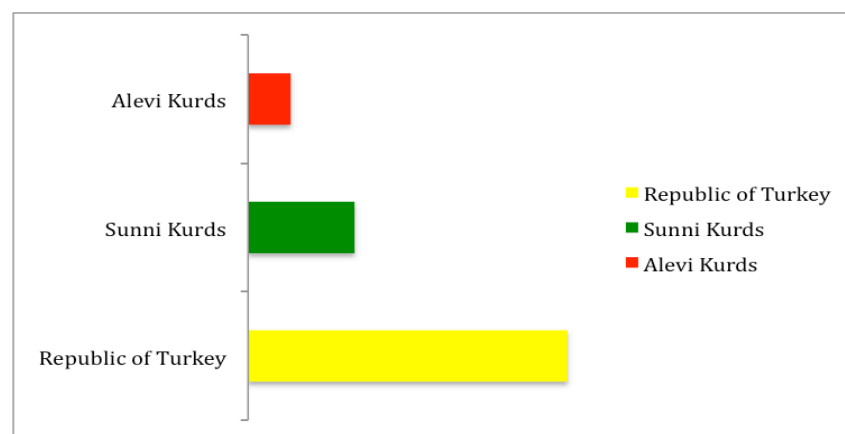
<sup>193</sup> Which he explained as follows: “when the pressure of coercion is exercised over the whole complex of society puritan ideologies develop which give an external form of persuasion and consent to the intrinsic use of force. But once the result has been achieved, if only to a degree, the pressure is fragmented” (Forgacs, 1988: 287).



turned into identity politics and became a means of responding to the Turkish hegemonic power, as the Centre aimed at excluding religion from the new identity, which therefore provided an opportunity for the Kurds to find refuge in religion in expressing their protest. Therefore, the two main religious perspectives (*Sunnism* and *Alawism*) dominated and led the Kurdish mobilisation, particularly after the establishment of the Turkish nation state (see Figure 4.2), both of which constituted the fault lines of the new regime.

The Figure 4.2 depicts the dynamics of Kurdish internal hegemonic power as shared by different segments of Kurdish society in terms of religion, dialect/language, ideologies and tribal diffractions and diversities<sup>194</sup>. Moreover, it indicates the external actor: the Turkish state's context of hegemony in the region after the post-imperial and new Republic era. Thus, it aims to illustrate the hierarchy of the constituents of hegemony and the situational positioning between the parameters of the hegemony.

**Figure 4.2: Struggle of Hegemonic Powers in the Post-1923 Era**



In the republic period, Mustafa Kemal followed the nationalistic ideology of the Young Turks, even though he set up the first independence congresses in the Kurdistan region (Erzurum, Sivas) in 1919 under the institutional association called Defence of the Rights of Anatolia and Thrace with the objective of saving the entire country from external ‘occupation’ (McDowall, 1992a; 1996; van Bruinessen, 1992a). This implied struggle for existence became an essential strategy for existence against this hegemonic power, which, as a modern hegemony, undertook strategies of oppression, which could not have been considered in any way in the Ottoman regime.

<sup>194</sup> see Chapter Three.

Mustafa Kemal's strategies and policies culminated in Kemalism and implied deprivation and exclusion for the Kurds from the social, economic and political life, resulting in their separate culture and identity being placed in jeopardy.

On October 29, 1923, soon after the end of the military clashes, Mustafa Kemal declared in the new Assembly that the new state was based on ethnic Turkishness (Nezan, 1993). The new state was officially and internationally recognised by the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. Eventually, on March 3, 1924, the institutions of the Caliphate which remained from the Ottoman structure, and which bonded various Muslim ethnicities together was abolished and all religious associations, *madrasas* and other organisations were banned, including Kurdish institutions, schools and publications, as they were embedded in religious spheres. Furthermore, speaking the Kurdish language in public was prohibited. Therefore, the Turkish ethnic identity took over the state discourse in terms of the nation-building process, while religion as the bond between Turks and the Kurds withered away from the public sphere, implying the removal of an implicit contract between these two ethnicities.

As a consequence, the denial of Kurdishness and Turkification of *Turkishness* became an official policy in 1924. Also, Kurds could not be defined as a minority under the Lausanne Treaty, which mainly defined 'minority'; as a non-Muslim religious minority. For instance, the changing of place names is one of the main characteristics of *Turkification* in the hegemonic cultural historical context. Such assimilation practices resulted in the denial of the cultural heritage of 'others' or 'them'. The state thus defined, politically reconstructed and socially engineered a particular culture within the modernist-positivist approach, a Westernised Turkish culture as a new identify for the Turks, which was also imposed on the 'identity of periphery' regardless of reactions from some Turkish circles but mainly from the Kurds. Such policies implied that the regime was/is illegitimate for the Kurds, who sought an alternative cultural supremacy for their own ethnicity. Consequently, going back to the question posed above, the Turkish regime had to 'buy' legitimacy and some Kurdish agents gave way to such demands in pursuit of their own interest at the expense of the larger Kurdish interest.

The new Kemalist policy that destroyed the trust between the two nations who believed in the fate of the union, as mentioned above, also caused the termination of

the hidden ‘social contract’, which was renewed for the third and final time during the ‘independence war’ (1919-1923). The war aimed to establish a new state after the collapse of the empire in opposition to the allied forces in the Ottoman territory without questioning the role of religion and the Caliph (Jwaideh, 1982). Thus, the ‘legitimacy’ of the state vanished during the Turkification process of the new regime; in addition to prohibiting the use of the Kurdish language, in order to prevent any counter-hegemony from developing, the state exiled their leading actors (religious and tribal leader and intellectuals) from Kurdistan to the Western side of the country, believing that they constituted a serious threat to the new nation state. The suppression of all religious institutions, the closing of all *madrasas, tariqas*<sup>195</sup>, the abolition of the caliphate and *sharia* laws, and the imposition of the Latin script implied that Kurdish social capital in the form of essentialised knowledge had to disappear, which was also the case for the Turks. However, Turks, at least, had a new opportunity to define themselves within the new parameters, including their religious tradition, as they were and are an essentialised ethnic group, which was not the case for the Kurds.

In doing all this, the new regime was aiming first at ‘emptying’ the concept of the traditional *Kurdi* identity; secondly, by secularising and nationalising with offering a ‘Turkified Kurd’, which is activated its new republic formulation on the Kurds. With such policies, therefore, the hegemony of the internal Kurdish leaders based on local, traditional and tribal kinships within religious (*Sunni* or *Alawite*) principles was implicitly invalid. In other words, the deterministic power, namely Kemalism, attempted to win hegemony over the post-Ottoman multi-religious and multi-ethnic society through the construction and imposition of a new value system for which the new hegemonic power strove to gain the consent of Kurdish society too. The Kurdish history, language and identity was redefined by the state, which claimed that they came from a Turkish ethnic background and lived in the mountains (thereby gaining the title ‘Mountain Turks’) and mixed their language with Persian and Arabic, both of which were considered uncivilised (Chaliand, 1994). The hegemony of the new

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<sup>195</sup> M. Kemal asked, “Could a civilised nation [sic] tolerate a mass of people, who let themselves be led by the nose by a herd of *sheikhs, dedes, sayyids, chelebis, babas, and amir*?” (McDowall, 2000:196).

movement as opposed to the *ancient regime* of Ottoman and the Kurds was turned into '*fictitious hegemony*' in the Kurdish region.

As a consequence, the Kemalist system produced a new (hegemonic) culture, which was one of the effective organs of the new society, through which it actively aimed to replace the Kurdish traditional and local network<sup>196</sup>. For Kurds, this implied enforced assimilation, because society did not accept the internalisation of this new culture; thus, the Kurdish intellectual and cultural leadership sought the right to react against it and aimed at exercising self-determination<sup>197</sup>. These Jacobean policies were developed through Jacobean modernism with principles of nationalism and secularism.

In this new attempt at defining identity, secularism and Turkish ethnicity remained as essential cornerstones. This could be formulated as<sup>198</sup>:

***Modern Turkish Citizen*** = *Muslim/secular* + *Turk/Turkified ethnicities* + *Capitalist/etatist*

Therefore, if one was (or is) not in this 'defined' identity or *cultural circle*, one would be easily eliminated from the public sphere and would simultaneously lose the opportunity to engage in the state's institutions. This, according to the Gramscian account, is a *domino* rather than *egomania*.

As a result, the Anatolian counter-movement, which was opposed to the Istanbul government's Imperial hegemonic culture, was conversely turned into a new hegemonic culture and therefore created its own alternative counter-hegemonic culture, namely the oppositional front established by the Kurds against the secular and nationalist domination. Indeed, such a process is a natural result of a dialectic system. Under the heavy force and domination of the new Republic, the Kurdish regional

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<sup>196</sup> This was done through a number of measures, called Kemalist principles, including the introduction of the following: Latin script which replaced Arabic in 1928; the Gregorian calendar in 1926; the European dress code including the Hat Law in 1925, etc.

<sup>197</sup> It also refers to the Wilson Principles and the Sèvres Agreement's articles 62, 63 and 64.

<sup>198</sup> Despite such secularism, the implicit recognition of a certain religious identity as opposed to minority religious identities was essentialised. As a consequence, the regime had/has a profile of a preferred type of citizen: *Sunni-Hanefi*-Muslim (but secular); a Turk (possibly from a different ethnic background through *Turkification*); a capitalist, who still remained loyal to etatism and was modern in the form of Westernised modern rather than modern as in multiple modern.

leaders - whose power was limited to their areas of influence - could not achieve rule over society because the leadership needed sovereignty to gain intellectual and cultural leadership to construct a new socio-political order and develop a proper and stable hegemony.

In order to protect their own identity against the new Turkish forces, the Kurds had no other option but to take up a rebellious position against the new Turkish state authority, as part of the new political culture. As a result, reactionary resistance politics in the context of Turkish and Kurdish history increased between 1925 and 1938. In other words, the Kurdish counter-movement was shaped by anti-Kemalist modernism and it created its own culture through its traditional, cultural and religious values, after establishing an ‘imagined national society’<sup>199</sup>.

It is important to note that the resistance of the Kurdish socio-political movement was not formulated and shaped by pure nationalism, as it emerged in the protective, reactionist and counter-hegemonic context. For example, the very first major uprising was the rebellion by Sheikh Said of Piran<sup>200</sup> (or Palu), the objective of which was the juxtaposition of the *Sharia* system with Kurdish values (which still lacked a consensus amidst the academic coterie) in 1925. It rejected Kemalist cultural sovereignty by using Islamic principles against laicism and Kurdishness against the Turkification. This rebellion with such internal consistency and legitimation shook the foundations of the new Kemalist regime during its founding year. According to Olson (1989) Sheikh Said’s rebellion differed from the pre-1923 rebellions, as it possessed the best armed and most consistently skilled military.

The upheaval led by Sheikh Said was organised by the *Azadi* national(ist) institution. The confederation form of the Kurdish tribes enabled the organisation to become a bloc and a frontal supremacy: for instance, according to Olson (1989) they even contacted pro-sultan groups. However, the Sheikh<sup>201</sup> was captured by the regime in June 1925; thus the rebellion only lasted about four months, and the mutiny became inefficacious (Olson 1989; McDowall, 2000; Mella, 2005). But, the rebellion of

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<sup>199</sup> Only Turkish ethnicity was used for the new citizen pro-type.

<sup>200</sup> The Kurdish name of the Dicle district (Diyarbakir Province). Palu is the district of the Elazig Province.

<sup>201</sup> He became the leader of the *Azadi* uprising, after the former president, Jibrani Halid Bey, was captured and executed by state forces.

Sheikh Said was not the last in the Kurdish counter-hegemonic movement and end of the resistance politics; despite resulting in heavy losses for the Kurdish leadership, it inspired the Kurds to challenge the Republic to this day through the newly-developed leadership cadres, after the majority of the Kurdish leadership of the time was wiped out through ‘hanging’ and uprooting<sup>202</sup>.

In an attempt to respond to the post-Sheikh Said developments, the *Khoybun* (Existence) League<sup>203</sup> was founded in Beirut in 1927 by Kurdish intellectuals<sup>204</sup> who started to prepare for another responsive initiative, using the strategy of “war of position” for preparation and to form alliances between Kurds. “In order to gain victory [hegemony] the *Khoyboun* organisations created internal, regional and international relations with chiefs of the Kurdish tribes and friendly neighbouring peoples” (Mella, 2005: 103). They invited all members of Kurdish society to join the new Kurdish movement. Their policy was based on the notion that ‘Kurdish wo/men are warriors<sup>205</sup>’, which also essentialised the fact that one need not be a professional to fight for one’s values.

In the post-Sheikh Said period, the Turkish state became actively involved in Kurdish politics and emerged as a candidate for hegemonic power in Kurdish society. When the *Khoyboun* attempted to expand the bloc with non-Kurds, particularly the Armenian national movement’s *Thasnak* Party, they were at the same time searching for other alliances with Greece, Italy, America and Britain. As a result, the counter-movement began to use tactics of “frontal attack” in the vicinity of Mount Ararat in the 1930s. *Khoybun* actively participated and led the Agri Dagi (Ararat) Rebellion (Ihsan Nuri Pasha, 1992; Camblibel, 2007a) by effectively managing a comprehensive bloc<sup>206</sup>. The organisation even managed to form a provisional state under the name of the Republic of Ararat with its own flag and state apparatus. The

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<sup>202</sup> Sukri Aga, leader of Merdisian tribe, also attempted a rebellion in 1926. However, he was captured and executed - as were other rebels - by the Turkish authorities after gathering information from Turkish spies in the movement (Mella, 2005).

<sup>203</sup> The Kurdish National League. It is also translated in English as ‘Independent’.

<sup>204</sup> Mir Jeladet Bedirkhan Beg was elected as the first president of the club.

<sup>205</sup> My explanation was inspired by Gramsci’s rhetoric, for whom ‘Every man is an intellectual’.

<sup>206</sup> The Agri Revolt was started by local *ashir* Jellalis from the Ba(ya)zid (Dogubayazit) region and the leader of the Broyi Heski Telli<sup>206</sup> (then directed by *Khoybun*) under the command of Ihsan Nuri Pasha, a former Ottoman Staff Major (Camblibel, 2007a; Ihsan Nuri Pasha, 1992).

rebellion became a ‘trans-Kurdish’ movement with support from Kurdish tribes in Iran, Syria, Lebanon and *Alawite* Kurdish tribes in the Ararat region. However, the Turkish regime succeeded in naturalising the revolt, which ended with exhaustive imprisonments, exiles and executions.

The failure of the Agri rebellions in the early 1930s was followed by the Dersim rebellion under the leadership of *Alawite* Kurds in 1937. In fact, the quest for hegemonic power in the region by the Kemalist regime through Turkification was continuing at full speed. In Dersim (Tunceli) it was implemented more seriously, because Dersim had always opposed Ottoman/Turkish authority in the rugged terrain<sup>207</sup>.

Nevertheless, the new state began with the deportation of the leadership to the Turkish culturally dominant area to enhance assimilation, and there was a state policy that forbade the use of the Kurdish language and cultural habits in daily life (Dersimi, 1997). Furthermore, it indicates that the struggle between the powers once more in the Kurdistan region was because of the Kurdish demand for their own hegemony. After Dersim, about 40,000 Kurds ‘genocide’ and 3,000 local civilians were deported (McDwall, 2000). It is important to identify that, with the suppression of the Dersim revolt, a particular period in Kurdish modern history came to an end (McDowall, 2000), and hence Dersim became the last counter-movement attack against the Kemalist state.

After the failure of these rebellions, the Kurdish leadership cadres, whether religious, intellectual or nationalist, were all removed from the political sphere (Bozarslan, 2004; Nezan, 1993; Romano, 2006). The post-rebellion period, after the 1937 uprising, witnessed a heavy assimilation process by the Turkish regime<sup>208</sup>. The consequences of the suppressed rebellions are essential for an understanding of the Kurdish strategies and the next period of the Kurdish historical, hegemonic, political context as, by destroying the Kurdish intellectual leadership, the Turkish regime aimed at destroying the social formation of Kurdish society. Despite all the heavy

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<sup>207</sup> “The Kurds of Dersim reacted to the rejection of the Sevres Treaty swiftly and violently, in a rebellion in the regions of Qoch-Kiri, which was suppressed by a big Turkish army commanded by Nureddin Pasha” (Garan, 1958:24).

<sup>208</sup> Changing Kurdish names of places or denying Kurdish identity, language and culture etc.

consequences, there was a slight probability that the mass of Kurdish society would again mobilise around the hegemonic demands in the post-rebellion period, although it lacked cultural leadership. However, these agents had no opportunity to arrange an environment in which they could achieve cultural and moral principles above their own society.

It should be noted that the “silent years” continued until 1946 under the heavy dominance of the one-party regime of the Republican values which did not recognise any opportunity space for Kurdishness and proudly aimed at Turkifying the ‘rest of the society’. However, the subversion of the strong state became a possibility when external interference resulted in multi-party politics, which opened a new page in Kurdish modern history. This is examined in the next section. Up to this point, the study has attempted to explain how the Gramscian mechanism/strategy, which is the “war of manoeuvre”, worked in the Kurdish case in the demand for hegemonic power. However, Gramsci mentions that the hegemony could be reached by means other than coercion, violence or frontal attack; there is also the “war of position”, which is a passive revolutionist method that should be used to gain the consent of civil society and, thus, political society, in the hegemonic struggle. The Kurds applied this strategy because of the conditions already discussed.

### **4.3 CHANGING THE STRATEGY OF STRUGGLE: THE ‘INERTIA OR INTERREGNUM PERIOD’ AND ‘PASSIVE TRANSFORMATION’ BETWEEN 1938 AND 1960**

#### **4.3.1 The Domination of the One-party (CHP) Regime until 1946**

During the unsuccessful rebellions of Kurdish socio-political institutional mobilisation in the early years of the new Republic, the authoritarian one-party system under the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*-CHP (Republican People’s Party) administered the country single-handedly from 1923, when the Republic was established, until the liberalisation process began through a multiparty system in 1950. During this period, the new civil, military and political elites had turned the state into a coercive instrument of Kemalism, withering the civil society component of the state, with the objective of socially and political engineering an imaginary Turkish society regardless of the ethnic differences and religious preferences. The society had no means of resisting such coercion and engineering, as the state



hegemonically dominated every sphere of public and even private life<sup>209</sup>. Hence, the absence of non-state institutions and a lack of effective intermediate institutions became a crucial problem in the transformation of democracy, as each and every institution was considered an official organ of the CHP domination.

In this period, the state was controlled by a bureaucratic, technocratic and authoritarian hegemonic culture, which can be defined as Jacobean modernism, having an antagonist relationship with the counter-movements, as the counter-movements were not even considered as having the right to exist<sup>210</sup>. As regards the Kurdish existence on the periphery of the new Republic, the authoritarian policies of the Kemalist regime resulted in the deportation of many Kurds from the region, thus the Kurdish counter-attack to Ankara appeared to be finished. Rebellious Kurdish elites had all been exiled, killed, or deported to western Turkey (Romano, 2006; Nezan 1993; Chailand, 1980 and 1994).

To understand the Jacobean nature of the Turkification, one has to refer to the commonly-used phrases and anthems even now, which were developed during the CHP's and hence Kemalist dominance. Phrases such as '*Türk Ogun, Calış, Güven!*' (Turk be proud, Work, and Trust) or '*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene!*' (How happy one who calls oneself a Turk!) emerged in this period, and are even now inscribed on the mountains in the Kurdish region.

As regards economic existence, an unofficial embargo prevailed against the Kurdish region. Very strict plans/programmes and militarised regulations were practised in the region, such as the *Şark İslahat Planı* (Eastern Reform Plan) in 1926, aiming at the assimilation and pacification of the geography. They officially (re)defined the geography and Kurdish language in public places, even on non-official (private) occasions. The Kurds, similar to the rest of the country, had to abandon their traditional and local customs and clothes which, according to the Republican values, appeared as symbols of backwardness to the Kemalist (modernist) elite. It should be

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<sup>209</sup> State = political society + civil society, by Gramsci.

<sup>210</sup> In this period "It proved impossible to function effectively without infringing the array of restrictive regulations concerning what might or might not be discussed in the public domain. Later it was the turn of associations, trade unions and other movements concerned with citizens' rights" (McDowall, 2000: 198).

noted that, in this period, the monopoly and homogenisation of linguistic policies became an effective approach in the Turkification process<sup>211</sup>.

To contextualise the realities of the period, the establishment of national unity through ‘one language, one state and one flag’ affected all minorities and their institutions (schools, magazines, organisations, etc.). Thus, against the existing social formation and culture, a new culture and social formation was being perpetrated through coercion as opposed to the consensus of the people, as people were not considered as existing but, as the CHP militancy put it, as ‘fasulyeler’ or ‘beans’, negating their existence through the policies of ‘for people despite people’. Lewis (1961) stated that these tribunals provided ‘dictatorial power’ to the government, as they were oppressive in nature and justified, for example, summary execution after show trials.

The hegemonic gap in Kurdistan, after the disappearance of the leadership cadres and deterioration of the traditional forms of society, was filled by the violent intervention of the Kemalist one-party figure that built the new hegemonic culture from the top-down, rather than prevailing upon the ground or masses through the bottom-up method. In other words, the removal of the Kurdish leadership by the Kemalists implied that the regime had proceeded to dictate a Western (positivist), *laicist*, capitalist and nationalist hegemonic culture to Kurdish society under the name of modernisation and progression<sup>212</sup>. The same indeed was true for Turkish society, but the Turks had already submitted to the ‘transformation of their society’ at large without much revolt and uprising.

The conception of state as developed by the dominant Kemalist elites that itself derives from nationalism and *laicism* (secularisation) principles would also result in an inevitable historical transformation of society through dominance rather than consensus. Authority and discipline were the only forces that persisted in the Kemalist dominance. Thus, central hegemony was shaped by oppressive and controlling

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<sup>211</sup> “Five million Kurds in Turkey are classed as Mountain Turks” (Emir Kamuran Ali Bedir Khan Forward in Kurdistan, in Gavan 1958). According to Sir Harry Luke (1936: 21), the British Lieutenant-Governor of Malta, stated in 1936 that “The Kurds are now left to Turkey, as a minority at all compact, of that mosaic of races that once composed the Ottoman Empire”.

<sup>212</sup> After the Treaty of Lausanne; “Kurdish cultural institutions were closed and Kurdish leaders arrested. Tragic and disastrous events followed. The Kurds revolted and fought back ceaselessly against Turkish onslaughts, culminating in 1925.” (Gavan, 1958: 24).

principles, whilst the periphery was forming in autonomous and spontaneous responses. This term proved a turning point for the Kurdish movement in which a new strategy was formed by new intellectuals: “Traditional intellectuals” had partially lost their function and they were having difficulty in representing the cultural self-consciousness and self-criticism and producing alternative channels for society as indispensable agents<sup>213</sup>.

As a consequence, regarding the Kurdish responses in this period, the “organic intellectuals” of Kurdish society were searching for opportunity spaces in the public and political spheres. Their goal was to develop civil institutions, to disseminate on the local scale and win the consent of members of society through traditional values that were derived from nationalist domination through cultural agency. They served to bridge the gap between the various identities of society, which was the ground of consensual hegemony, making people aware of the possibility of a new political structure as an alternative strategy. This was for the transformation of power relations in the sense of shifting from the military strategy of the war of manoeuvre, comprising frontal attacks, to a war of positions within the social bloc. However, this period for the Kurds became ‘immobile’ and stagnant due to oppressive policies and the traumatisation of Kurdish society. The passive strategy, such as organising in civil society or student unions and penetrating the media sector was, however, practised in defensive mode. The project of ‘Kurdish national unity’ could have been achieved through the mutuality and convening of the peasants, labourers, students, religiously-oriented individuals and groups, *Alawites*, secularists and socialists. In this respect, the function and role of the intellectuals is important for an understanding of the nature of transformation in Kurdish society, as they may have been active or passive in responding to the political developments, either individually or as a party (on behalf of the socio-political movement), and they needed to organise the coercion and consent of the masses.

The aim of the Kurdish elite newly emerging from the ashes of the rebellions was to provide a capable response and to transform the existing state order, through social and moral leadership, to enjoy cultural ascendancy and to rule with hegemonic power.

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<sup>213</sup> Particularly after the emergence of *Istiklal Mahkemeleri* (Liberation Tribunals) and *Takrir-i Sukun Kanunu* (the Law on the Maintenance of Order) in 1925.

Thus, the Kurds were brewing conditions under which they could challenge the existing regime by developing a counter-movement without depending on traditional intellectuals, as the traditional intellectuals, who remained an elite class, were influenced by the central power and were used as an effective channel to buy loyalties and provide legitimacy to the *Turkification* which aimed at cultural domination. In responding to this, and with an objective of representing society's interests as opposed to the policies of the 'centre', the intellectuals of the 1940s consequently aimed at creating an organic relationship with every member of society: rich or poor, devout Muslim or secular, *Alawite* or *Sunni*, agha or peasant, socialist or liberal, modern or traditional. The "organic intellectuals" of the new *politique* gained the consciousness of a very fragmented society that was based on a complex structure, in terms of religion, dialect and class, and became a driving force in the social and political field.

According to Gramsci (1971) "All man are intellectuals"; however, he continued by arguing that not all can fulfil the exact function of an intellectual, which is to lead, organise and educate. This explains the nature of the traditional Kurdish elite in this period of the Turkish Republic. The reference to education in Gramsci's position should not be relegated to mere formal school (university) education; for him, school is a crucial instrument for training individuals in terms of cultural and moral theory<sup>214</sup>.

As a result, the Kurds opened a new strategic period in their modern history by moving from the "frontal attack" to the "passive revolution" or 'revolution of restoration' process in the post-war period as, after all the 'damages' inflicted on its body, there was a need to restore its society and define and restore the identity of its society and people.

This period of "silent years", as the transforming period, was a time of expectation and hope created by the Kurdish cultural and political leadership. The new leadership

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<sup>214</sup> Gramsci perfectly advises, "the intellectual should not be specifically characterised by intellectual labour, but by the position of this intellectual labour in determinate social relations (including political ones). Second, with the emphasis upon social and political organisation rather than specific intellectual activity, Gramsci explicitly rejected a theory according to which intellectuals form an homogenous social group distinct from social classes, or even an independent class. 'There does not exist an independent class of intellectuals, but every class has its intellectuals'" (Thomas, 2009: 415). In more practical terms, according to Gramsci, whether a person can sew his/her ripped clothes or cook a meal does not make that person a tailor or a chef, as the structural relations to the object are important. Thus, the same applies for an intellectual.

did not compete with the Republic through violent strategies; rather, they endeavoured to penetrate the state's institutions and gradually modify them and use them to achieve a competitive advantage and implement 'planned politics' (command/control politics) leading to a social upheaval without armed struggle. This would reinforce their legitimacy (hegemony) and deconstruct the state's discursive hegemonic behaviour, which served as a "war of position" in political and civil society. Thus, they created a modern counter-movement politics, which could be extended through other counter-agents. Therefore, during the one-party system, the right wing/conservative parties, such as the Democrat Party-DP, also struggled against the Kemalist culture and gained an elusive opportunity to come into power in this period. The Kurds, hence, after 1938 had for the first time the chance to gain an opportunity space in the public sphere. In other words, the political parties that the Kurds organised became a crucial device for Kurdish organic intellectuals to operate their cultural identity in the political and social fields.

On the other hand, the development of the DP in the parliamentary regime was effectuated through the progressive developments in the country's economic, political, juridical and social life and the creation of an alternative culture that gained the assent of society, including the Kurds. Hereafter, the Kurds believed that the philosopher (intellectual leadership) could be the solution and created a "common sense" for all members, particularly through party politics (modern Prince) that made a 'social production of mode' for a new 'collective identity'. However, to achieve this goal, the state's official identity definition had to be deconstructed. Democracy - which the whole country needed - could provide the tools for this goal. As a result, the concept of the "democratic philosopher" was located in the centre of Kurdish politics, in this period<sup>215</sup>.

In this period the intellectuals were diverse in their ideological positioning in relation to the solution to the Kurdish problem and they were also more moderate in comparison to the previous period as well as the new generation of Kurdish

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<sup>215</sup> "The democratic philosopher is the conceptual form that (can be regarded as an intensified version of the organic intellectual) comprehends the political status of the specifically intellectual activities undertaken by the organic intellectuals of the working class movement. More politically focused figure. For Gramsci, the philosopher is a politician and the politician is the philosopher in the sense that both are actively engaged in constructing the 'terrains' (the superstructure of civil and political society)" (Thomas, 2009: 429).

intellectuals in the post-60s. Additionally, the nature of the Turkish state and the available opportunity space, albeit very limited, shaped the nature of Kurdish activism. Along with the new concept of the state and its regime (Kemalism), a new style of civil society was attempting to emerge in very complex structure based on a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society despite the heavy presence of the new Kemalist regime, which was still having a hegemonic crisis in society. This crisis could be read in a 'double perspective': ethnically for the Kurds, and religiously for the Islamists, who did not accept the 'new hegemonic Kemalist culture' voluntarily but suffered it coercively.

An important development in the process was the emergence of 'Turkified Kurds' or the Kurds submitted to the hegemony of the Kemalist state. While the new order rejected any reference to Kurdishness, at the same time it attempted to manage whatever Kurdishness was left. Therefore, the Kemalist regime established the domain of Kurdish identity and constructed an 'official' Kurdish identity expressed in Turkish values, as the latter was the dominant culture permeating coercively in society. Kemalism's denial policy at the same time defined the Kurdish identity. In this political, social and cultural engineering process, a social, political or economic right and meaning of 'Kurds' disappeared. As part of this new order, the justice system acted as part of the state apparatus and prioritised the expectations of the state rather than delivering justice<sup>216</sup>.

Under such harsh circumstances, the conditions were not ripening for political opportunity, as there was no opportunity space, which implied that any voice in favour of something beyond the official line of the state in any matter would have been persecuted. This was true not just for the Kurds, as the state institutions criminalised other minority groups through different policies which included, for example, the *Varlık Vergisi* (Wealth Tax)<sup>217</sup>, 1942 and the '6-7 September

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<sup>216</sup> For instance, in 1943 thirty-three Kurds were killed in Van's Ozalp town without trial on the orders of the Turkish general, Mustafa Muğlali who suspected them of smuggling; this incident has since become a lamentation in the poet Ahmet Arif's work 'the 33 Bullets'.

<sup>217</sup> The state took extra tax from rich citizens, but in practice this tax was for non-Muslim minorities (particularly, Jewish, Greeks and Armenians), who controlled large portions of the economy. Whether rich or poor, business professionals or not, if they could not pay the amount demanded within one month, they were exiled to labour camp in Askale (Erzurum province of the eastern country), where 21 died.

incident<sup>218</sup>, 1955. These were aggressive policies of the state towards the minorities, as part of the third stage of Turkification in business life and the exclusion of the small portion of Jewish, Armenians and Greeks from socio-political life after the emergence of the Kemalist era. Such policies were indeed pursued by the CUP in the last period of the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish political mechanism was forcing the Kurds to find different tactics to empower their counter-hegemonic movement in this interlude.

Nevertheless, Yuksel (1993) claims that, from the nineteenth century until the 1950s and 60s, Kurds, via the *Nakshibendi tariqah* (cult), stood against the modernist policy. This, as explained, prevented the Kurds at the same time from undergoing their ‘great transformation’, although it enabled them to protect themselves. In the Republican period, they continued with such an attitude, as they essentialised their traditional way of life and studied in the *madradas* instead of the new modern institutions (school or universities) and refused to be under the state order, even though most of them did not hold official identity cards as citizens. However, under the heavy presence of the Turkish hegemony, the resistance was becoming neutralised after they started to use spaces in state institutions and moved to cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, where they utilised opportunities in the economic, social and cultural spheres. Therefore, in the face of ‘pacified Kurds’, the new Kurdish initiatives for existence and struggle were still coming from the traditional leadership including *aghas/sheikhs*, who still attempted to provide an intellectual leadership in this era. It is important to state that the crucial point in this post-1938 and pre-1960 period was that Kurdish society’s formation was still not deeply divided in terms of political ideologies despite the initial emergence of new political positionings. Thus, the traditional leaders still managed to remain at the centre of Kurdish activism. However, their power was eroding in the face of Kurdish diffusion in ‘normal life’ through engaging with the state and emigrating to the big cities of Turkey with the hope of earning a livelihood. Such socio-political and demographic changes, which have entirely changed the Kurdish political landscape, were accelerated in particular with the democratic openings of Turkey in 1946, although these were limited.

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<sup>218</sup> Turkish masses attacked non-Muslims, particularly Greeks, Armenians and Jews who lived around the Beyoglu region of Istanbul, and looted their businesses (including churches and synagogues) on 6 and 7 September 1955.

### **4.3.2 The Emergence of Opportunity Spaces for Kurds in the State-institutional Sphere, in the 1946-1960 Sub-period**

Turkey moved to a multiparty political system in 1946 through the imposition of an external hegemonic power (USA) so that it could benefit from the Marshall Plan in the post-WW2 period. It should be noted that there were two attempts in the early 1920s to conduct politics through a multi-party system. However, they were short-lived experiences as, after allowing them to be created, the regime closed these political parties down on both occasions on the ground that they were not serving the interest of the state.

After the total hegemony of the CHP, such a move indicated that change was possible, and the strong state and its Kemalist regime could be subverted (see Hann, 1995). Thus, moving to a multi-party political system provided vital and significant elbow-room for the Kurds in Turkish social, cultural, economic, educational and political life. The contestation for the vote among political parties at the same time meant opportunities for Kurds in the form of recognition. This represented another stage (1946-60) of the hegemonic moment/model that was used by Kurdish internal actors, who redefined the meaning of state and incorporated political and civil society in this definition. Therefore, utilising the state apparatus and passive revolution became valuable techniques for the pre-1960 intellectuals and their long-term hegemonic struggle through developing and shaping 'public opinion', at least among the Kurds, which included newspapers, associations, clubs and seminars.

The concept of hegemony was reformulated in this context and period by interpreting the meaning of hegemony in terms of liberalisation/democratisation after the framework of centralisation/hegemony before 1923, and the institutionalising-nationalising/hegemony of the post-1923 years. This new era, after 1938-1946 period of inertia, brought an awakening and resurgence of the Kurdish counter-movement, which still used a passive strategy, but in an active defensive context.

The first party established in Turkey's political arena as part of the multi-party politics was formed by a businessman, Nuri Demirağ, under the name of *Millî Kalkınma Partisi* (National Development Party), which was influentially followed by the Democrat Party (hereafter DP) in 1946. The DP became the main opposition to the monopolist and uncontested CHP's regime under the leadership of Adnan



Menderes<sup>219</sup>. The DP became an important player in the transformation of the authoritarian system into liberal principles in the political and economic fields<sup>220</sup>. Therefore, the DP was brought to power by the ‘public’ in a landslide victory in 1950 for which the Kurds also provided great support, despite the fact that the first multi-party election in 1946 was rigged by the CHP to maintain its power.

It was clear that a ‘new hegemonic state culture’ had come to power through different social, political and economic cultural values yet within the strong state tradition of Kemalism. Regardless of this, the masses gave huge support to the party, as seen in the 1950 election victory, which was repeated two more times throughout the 1950s. As a counter-hegemonic institution of the centre, the DP challenged the Kemalist *élite*’s hegemonic culture, via the Islamic and capitalist (liberal) principles, and began to deconstruct the Kemalist system through the liberalisation context. The DP, as a new actor, was eager to seize the consent of society via the utilisation of religion as “common sense”, and particularly sought the support of the periphery, including the Kurdish *sheikhs* and *aghas*<sup>221</sup>.

In order to pre-empt the DP’s accession to power and to maintain its power, the CHP initiated some policies that aimed to please the public after it rigged the election (Jwaideh, 1982)<sup>222</sup>. While this did not ensure the maintenance of the CHP’s power, the socio-political and economic development of the country, including some impact in the Kurdish region, has been made possible through the multiparty system. Thus, this new regime provided opportunities for the Kurds after a long wait and facilitated the emergence of a new type of Kurdish elite including Kurdish Members of Parliament but with Turkish political and social identities. Therefore, the traditional

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<sup>219</sup> He became prime minister in 1950 and was later executed in a military coup in 1962. Other leading people with Menderes were Celal Bayar, Refik Koraltan and Fuad Koprulu.

<sup>220</sup> “The urban intelligentsia, the universities and the professionals, who had mostly supported the DP because it had promised political liberalisation” (Ahmad, 2003: 110).

<sup>221</sup> “Menderes tried to bolster his authority by forming a nationwide front called the ‘Fatherland Front’, whose aim was to isolate his critics and disarm the opposition [...] When this political maneuver failed to quell the opposition, the Democrats set up a committee, in April 1960, to investigate the opposition’s ‘subversive activities’, whose aim, they claimed, was to engineer a military revolt” (Ahmad, 2003: 115).

<sup>222</sup> For example, “In 1946, [...] development in the Kurdish areas of Turkey, where a program of agrarian reform and rural welfare was said to have been successfully launched” (Jwaideh, 1982: 639).

Kurdish identity, rooted in Islamic values, still refused to be recognised by the state apparatus.

During the emergence of the DP as an opposition party, which brought the hegemony question to the heart of the Kemalist state, the CHP also attempted to use the economy to gain the consent of the masses by pursuing land-reform legislation preceding the 1946 elections. Thus, the CHP endeavoured to construct a common sense to reach the consciousness of society, which was hegemony; therefore some Kurdish agents, particularly leftist, secular and *Alawite*, gathered around the CHP<sup>223</sup>.

Despite liberalising the economy and providing limited liberalisation for the political process, in the long run the DP pursued a dual policy towards the Kurds to achieve dissenting Kurdish support and to add them to their Turkish ‘conservative and liberal bloc’ against the CHP order. On the one hand, the DP policies prioritised religion to undermine the legitimacy of the CHP, thereby influencing Kurdish society. On the other hand, by committing itself to economic development, the DP gained the support of the Kurdish region, which had been left in the wilderness. For instance, the DP opened the region not only to Turkey’s other markets, but also to the international market by developing a network of transportation and liberating legislation by creating industrial and agricultural programmes.

Consequently, the Kurdish “war of manoeuvre” increasingly became a “war of position” by using the new opportunity space. It is important, however, to note that such changes did not come as a result of Kurdish dynamism forcing them; rather, the change became possible through two layers of external force or impact: the US and European impact, as international external hegemony, on Turkey, resulting in change in the political structure in Turkey, while change in Turkey and Turkish political structure, as external domestic hegemony, created opportunity space for the Kurds. However, the Kurdish intellectuals successfully employed new skills and knowledge in accordance with such external changes, as they referred to society’s consciousness

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<sup>223</sup> As yet unrecognised, the paths of Kurdish nationalism [strategy] and of Kurdish folk Islam were destined to part Company. When both resurfaced, after the first faltering gestures of democratic pluralism in the 1950s, the sheikhs generally encouraged their disciples to support conservative clerical or right-wing parties in national politics; Kurdish nationalists, on the other hand, sought strength from the political left. Each, in the fullness of time, was destined to become a *bête noir* for the other (McDowal, 2000: 211).

to create a common sense and ethical leadership with the objective of producing consent rather than coercion. As a result, some traditional and religious Kurdish notables could find opportunities to deconstruct the state's definition of Kurdishness by extending the hegemonic space for internal agents during the DP era by shunning engagement with the DP cadres.

It should be noted that the Kurds were located in the DP's 'alternative bloc', when the DP was struggling against the CHP-Kemalist hegemonic culture. Otherwise, the DP government did not principally differ from the CHP on Kurdish matters, as Kurdish intellectuals subsequently argued.

It is important also to identify the role of change in the international conditions, which also impacted Kurdish politics and provided the environment to integrate in the country's politics. For instance, the global hegemonic power struggle between the USA and the USSR provided Turkey with a crucial role in the Cold War era. In other words, the global actors were willing to incorporate Turkey, as a regional actor, into their blocs. As a result, as mentioned above, the US presented financial aid to Turkey under the Marshall Plan (1948-51) via the Truman Doctrine (1947), which at the same time impacted the domestic political sphere. The pro-capitalist, right-wing political parties gained an advantage in this environment and led to the country becoming part of the liberal bloc against the communist front by being a member of its alliance institutions, such as NATO<sup>224</sup>. As can be seen, the external conditions challenged the one-party oppressive system and partly helped opposition groups including the Kurds to benefit from but at the same time practise liberal and democratic rights.

As touched upon above, the rise of the Kurdish *agha/sheikh* politics in the context of modern institutions in this new area again coincided with multiparty politics; some of them became big landlords in the region and shifted their ties with the peasants/tribesmen from embeddedness based on reciprocal social formation to master-slave relations as dictated by capitalism, which undermined the preserved Kurdish social structure<sup>225</sup>.

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<sup>224</sup> Turkey's military support in Vietnam in 1952 provided an opportunity to become a strong member of NATO.

<sup>225</sup> Hamidiye politics also affected the social structure, after state intervention in the relations of members of society, and it destroyed the power balance, the traditional reciprocity and distribution.

The DP period can be summarised as the political production of the centre system attempting to engage with the Kurdish region for their votes and to create agents in support of the government; in turn, the centre's political parties could extend their patronage for votes and political support. The DP's economic and political policies resulted in some of the local leaders and large peasants/farmers migrating to the metropolis for new opportunities and channels through which to integrate into the system<sup>226</sup>. These regional leaders penetrated the state system first through political parties, particularly right/conservative parties<sup>227</sup>. Through such policies, the state under the DP was showing its proximity to religion to gain further legitimacy, which the CHP could not draw upon, but it was also offering a space for the Kurds by redefining *Kurdiness*. It is well known, for example, that Adnan Menderes himself invited Abdulmelik Firat to become a deputy.

Consequently, Kurdishness sought to position itself on the right and in the central political parties, which were mostly based on capitalist and religio-conservative yet Turkish nationalist principles. The Kurdish way of gaining hegemonic power both internally and externally was a historical process, a development from one institutional stage to another, which was at the same time a process of creating "common values" and alternative hegemonic culture to lead society and resist the dominant power. Nevertheless, after state intervention in Kurdish politics, the mobilisation of the Kurdish internal agents was accelerated and emerged in the liberal political development of the country.

Despite such developments, 'The 49s Case'<sup>228</sup> in 1958 shows that the antagonistic relationship between the state and the Kurdish counter-movement had revived. This

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<sup>226</sup> This provided many poor or middle-class students with a university education. Afterwards, they became leaders of the Kurdish counter-movement.

<sup>227</sup> For instance, Seyh Selahaddin from the Arwasi family, and Giyaseddin Emre, one of the Ohin Sheikhs and the grandson of Sheik Said Abdulmelik Firat, became deputies in the DP (Yuksel, 1993; Anter, 2000; Kaya, 2005).

<sup>228</sup> The Kurdish intellectual awakening (for instance Musa Anter's *Qimil* book) drew a response from the state and 50 Kurdish intellectuals from different ideologies were arrested; the young law student Mehmet Emin Batu (who died from gastrostaxis) made mention of this incident as the 49s case, who were accused of aiming to separate the country with the assistance of the foreign powers. The 50 included: Sevkettin Turan, Naci Kutlay, Ali Karahan, Koco Elbistan, Yavuz Camblibel, Mehmet Ali Dinler, Yavuz Kacar, Nurettin Yilmaz, Ziya Serefhanoglu, Hasan Akkus, Orfi Akkoyunlu, Selim Kilicoglu, Fevzi Avsar, Sahabettin Septioglu, Sait Elci, Sait Kirmizitoprak, Yasar Kaya, Faik Savas, Haydar Aksu, Ziya Acar, Fadil Budak, Halil Demirel, Esat Cemiloglu, Ferit Bilen, Mustafa

time an alternative response emerged from non-state-related Kurdish agents, using the device of civil society to reanimate the Kurdish counter-movement after the ‘frozen years’ between the failed 1938 Dersim uprising and the beginning of the 1946 multiparty system. This was part of the reaction and counter-process of the Kurdish identity that emerged after the state implemented the old policy towards Kurdish politicisation, such as the 49s (1959) and 23s (1963) cases<sup>229</sup> as well as ‘the 55 Aghas’ case and the arrest and confinement of 458 Kurdish community leaders in the Sivas Camp in 1960. The 55 *Agha, sheikh* and *melle* were sent into exile to over 30 western Turkish-dominated cities in 1960 after the *coup d'état* of 27 May (Cicek, 2010) and through the deportation law that attempted to neutralise the Kurdish intellectual class. Thus, after the 49s and 55 *Aghas* cases, the Kurdish counter-movement started to activate and prepared the conditions for the next stage of Kurdish activism through social and political consciousness, providing the base for the 1960s movements. This was inevitable, as the centre’s definition within the defined opportunity space was no longer acceptable to the Kurds, who were going through a new identity development under the limited liberalisation in Turkey under the DP. But, at the same time, the mentioned cases indicate the uncompromising attitude of the state towards the ‘bad Kurds’, who can be defined as the Kurds who did not want to be in the centre’s opportunity space.

The Kurdish intellectuals, furthermore, started to form their own political culture away from the centre by engaging with the process of recollecting the identity of society from a fragmented structure under the assimilative project, which was still ‘defining and designing identity’ for the Kurds. This was due to the fact that the Kurdish social institutions invested in counter-hegemonic education and institution-building in the 1950s era of limited liberalism by redefining their own identity beyond the definition imposed by the centre. Therefore, the Kurdish activism in various forms

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Nuri Direkeçigil, Necati Siyahkan, Hasan Ulus, Nazmi Balkas, Huseyin Oguz Uçok, Mehmet Nazım Cigdem, Fevzi Kartal, Mehmet Aydemir, Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım, Emin Kotan, Okkes Karadağ, Muhsin Savata, Turgut Akın, Sitki Elbistan, Serafettin Elci, Mustafa Ramanlı, Mehmet Ozer, Feyzullah Demirtaş, Cezmi Balkas, Halis Yokus, İsmet Balkas, Sait Bingöl, Mehmet Bilgin, and Fetullah Kakioglu. For more information, see Naci Kutlay (1994), Yavuz Camlibel (2007b) and Musa Anter (2000).

<sup>229</sup> Twenty-three Kurdish intellectuals (including students) were arrested.

emerged spontaneously, mainly through the publication of various magazines<sup>230</sup>. The establishment of these new means of identity formation indicate that, throughout the 1950s, the Kurds were regrouping and developing a social capital in terms of developing a new activism. Although the majority of Kurds were illiterate, “organic intellectuals” still tried to educate the masses and spread the hegemonic culture in Kurdish society via magazines, newspapers, conferences, seminars or street demonstrations with a belief that “every man is an intellectual”. At the same time, they utilised state socio-political institutions such as *Halk Evleri/Odalari* (public houses), which was a Kemalist cultural/secular institution, to easily disseminate to the masses. Thus, as Hann (1995) states, the Kurds were subverting the ‘strong state’ by using the means of the state to promote their own existence, despite the fact that those ‘means’ aimed at erasing their identity.

The intellectual and cultural reforms allowed Kurdish society to reconstruct its identity under the new circumstances by an exodus from long-term passivity to a new experience of the state in order to have a voice. In this way, the new cultural forms, as mentioned, were initiated to systematically define the new Kurdish identity through institutional agencies of Kurdish civil society. The emerging Kurdish elite, who had been educated in the big cities under the liberal policies of the 1950s, attempted to develop strategies to undermine the assimilative Turkish policy by focusing on the field of education, particularly the education of children, such as Musa Anter’s *Birina Resh* or the *Young Generation*, identifying the roles and duties of the young generation in holding up their Kurdish identity. Thus, they established student halls for university students to promote unity with their ‘*hemshericilik*’ (fellow countrymen), who would later control and lead the Kurdish institutions in the 1960s. These, for example, include *Dicle* and *Firat Dormitories* under the management of Musa Anter<sup>231</sup>.

This new strategy thus brought an end to passive revolution, but the state institutions indeed continued to control any attempt to recreate Kurdish identity, thus resulting in new ideological tranches. It is evident that the new strategy and the new political

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<sup>230</sup> Such as *Shark Postasi* (Eastern Post) in 1954, *Ileri Yurt* (Progressive Homeland) in 1958, *Dicle Kaynagi* (Source of Tigris) in 1958, *Barish Dunyasi* (World of Peace - Turkish liberal) and *Yon* (with a socialist approach).

<sup>231</sup> see *Hatiralarim* (My Memories), by Musa Anter (1991/2000).

construction by the Kurds could not arbitrarily occur around Kurdishness without external intervention due to the officially defined or constructed a ‘Turkified Kurdish citizen’ which enforced its own rationale. In this manner, the new intellectual leadership, as opposed to the old traditional leadership, needed to create their own cultural leadership, which is “good sense” (or joint values) in the Gramscian sense as a counter-hegemonic culture that struggles against the existing and officialised “common sense” provided by traditional intellectuals. In other words, the socially constructed ‘new Kurdish truth’ challenged the existing reality shaped by the Turkish state, as the latter was formulated in ‘state sense’ and produced a fixed, ‘fictitious’ identity for the Kurdish masses. As a consequence, both sides used ideology with ideas, beliefs and norms to gain hegemonic power over Kurdish society. The intellectuals did not experience challenges in this era in the application and utilisation of the state apparatus via political parties, which had various political ideologies of right, left or central origin, thus enabling them to integrate within the system and democratic framework.

This liberalisation process from 1946 onwards, however, was not something that the state apparatus could accept in general and, indeed, it was disturbed by the expansion of the cultural and political space the Kurds were developing. Thus, the contestation between the establishment or Kemalism of the state and the DP ended with the 1960 military *coup d’etat*. As Ahmad (2003) states, the Turkish intellectuals imagined the 27 May 1960 junta takeover as a revolution, which they managed to insert into the 1961 Constitution as a ‘revolution of the intellectuals’. However, this could not be verified, as it was a junta against the will of the people.

After the 1960 *coup* and the disappearance of the DP from Turkish political life following the hanging of the leadership cadres of the DP due to the accusation that they had deviated from the principles of Kemalism, the *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party; with Turkish initials-AP) was established<sup>232</sup>. It should be noted that, with the DP and later with the AP, the *Sunni* Kurds had a chance to integrate into the system through opportunity spaces provided for them through conservative political parties, while the *Alawite* Kurds could locate themselves and their political interest within the leftist

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<sup>232</sup> It was established and continues in the same vein under the interim leadership of Ragip Gumuspala and later under the permanent leadership of Suleyman Demirel; this party gained an absolute majority of Turkish society’s consent.

political institutions, such as the *Turkiye Ishchi Partisi* (TIP-Turkey Labour Party), as well as other underground or radical politics. These two main emerging Kurdish camps deeply impacted the alliance of Kurdish pressure groups after the 1960 coup, particular after the 1961 Constitution's liberal wave and the 1968 international socialist trends' influences, as well as through the impact of the '68-generation'. In other words, the DP, CHP, AP, YTP and TIP<sup>233</sup> were important developments in terms of what they offered to the Kurds: to have the opportunity to participate in the political system and to (de)construct the official identity of Kurdishness and awaken the Kurdish struggle for hegemonic power in a war of position after the destructive war of manoeuvre process. While this may not have been the main intention of the aforementioned political parties, however, political contestations for votes implied that the Kurds could also gain something in return. This 'return' for them was the redefinition of the Kurdish identity under the new circumstances and political parameters by using the available opportunity spaces. Importantly, despite the heavy presence of the Kemalist regime during this period, they managed to bring the peripheral, if not the essential, Kurdish claims into the main public sphere.

Lastly, this period, from 1946-1960, witnessed another formation of identity politics for the Kurds. The important consequence was that this new formation of Kurdish identity again occurred through the impact of the external hegemony, namely the opportunity space created by the Turkish establishment for its own sake, helping the Kurds in the process as well. Consequently, while different political elites with different ideas on the ways of organising the Kurdish future always existed in the Kurdish spheres, for the first time these differences began to be expressed through different political ideologies as a new political culture among the Kurds.

#### **4.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF PARTY POLITICS AND REDEFINING OF KURDISHNESS WITHIN THE NEW KNOWLEDGE BASE: 1960 AND 1984**

After the political openings and expansion of opportunity space were provided during the DP period, the contemporary model of political institutions in Kurdish society in the 1960s was formulated in a socialist political ideology that systematised the social movements. The new Kurdish organisations and the intellectuals who led those organisations located themselves within the heritage of the 1940s and 50s "organic

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<sup>233</sup> All in Turkish initials; in order Democrat Party, Republican People's Party, New Turkey Party, and Turkey's Labour Party.



intellectuals”, but they were shaped in a different world-view and used various passive as well as active strategies. Consequently, they constructed a new knowledge/culture mostly articulated as socialist/secular institutional politics.

It should be noted that, after the 1960 *coup*, the new Constitution of 1961 restructured the social, economic and political rights of the country<sup>234</sup>. While the practice of democratic rights was then possible, the new Constitution did not address the political and cultural identity of the Kurds, although liberalisation and modernisation were major elements of this progress. Therefore, the Kurdish political mobilisation was embedded in more flexible, anti-nationalist (Turkish), leftist organisations, which can be defined as ‘Civil Hegemony = War of Position = United Front’<sup>235</sup>.

The new Kurdish organisations first emerged through a historical consensus, which at the same time was analogous to the “factory council” experiment. This could then be linked to party politics in accordance with Gramscian thought and manifested as new revolutionary parties that were conducive to a “modern prince”, a new version of Machiavelli’s Prince. They acted and functioned as a “modern prince” to arrange Kurdish - particularly youth/student, labour and peasant - masses around collective and social consciousness, by creating socialist-cultural Kurdish hegemony in opposition to the prevailing *Turkified* state regime or the Kemalist imaginations.

These new Kurdish leftist organisations initially merged with the Turkish leftist organisations. Hence, civil society was the terrain in which they competed for cultural and political leadership, as the way to hegemonic power. Through this, they aimed at becoming a strategic actor in society and a rival to the state ideology that manifested itself as a revolutionist and modernist identity in the region and presented itself as an agent who brought the ‘renaissance’ to the underdeveloped Kurdish culture. Therefore, in this period, the Kurdish demands, or for that matter hegemonic inquiry, were defined as backward, from a socio-economic point of view, by state institutions. However, new Kurdish institutional politics started to challenge this official definition, which came from outside and did not appear in internal dynamics. Thus, it was a political, rather than social.

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<sup>234</sup> “The 1961 Constitution provided the people of Turkey with a greater degree of political freedom than they had ever enjoyed since the creation of the Republic” (Ahmad, 2003: 126).

<sup>235</sup> Gramsci’s articulation about the concept of civil hegemony.

This new development should also be contextualised within the aspirations of the new Kurdish intellectuals in terms of modernising for their own “great transformation” and hegemonic international and national discourse as well as within the international political developments. Yegen (1996; 1999) therefore claims that the Republican Turkish state excluded the original Kurdish identity and identified Kurdishness by employing a discourse of reactionary politics, tribal resistance and regional backwardness due to a lack of modernist ‘civilisation’. Moreover, the demands of Kurds for hegemonic power were seen as pre-modern, namely those of tribes, bandits or *sheikhs* cultural practices that were reminiscent of puritanical and obscurantist of the ‘ancient’ regimes<sup>236</sup>. In this respect, the modernist version of the Kurdish resistance emerged through the new ‘modernised intellectuals’ of the Kurds as a response and as a reaction, proving that they could locate and articulate the Kurdish struggle within modern terms, parameters and knowledge as opposed to the traditional and backward discourse and activism of the past. Thus, strangely, in their criticism of the past Kurdish activism, ironically they shared the same intellectual platform or approach with the Turkish establishment; however, they insisted on the continuation of the Kurdish struggle and activism with the new terms for a Kurdish hegemonic desire.

As a counter-discourse, the Kurdish leading actors employed the idea of *Dogu* (East), *Dogulu* (Eastern) and *Doguculuk* (Easterism) in an attempt to mitigate the use of any term directly referring to ‘Kurds’ or ‘Kurdistan’. They also developed relevant discourses to render legitimacy to the new terminology: anything Kurdish was illegal and it was forbidden to mention it, on legal grounds<sup>237</sup>. This discourse was practised through the ‘*Dogu Mitingleri*’<sup>238</sup> (Eastern Meeting) and the *Dogu Geceleri*<sup>239</sup> (Eastern Nights) with the TIP<sup>240</sup>, thus utilising a rich advocacy against state policy in the Eastern region, namely Kurdistan. They applied the socialist dictionary, summoning language that included colonialism, dependency, land reform, equal opportunities and

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<sup>236</sup> Points to the Ottoman sultanic and caliphate regime.

<sup>237</sup> It had continued until the 1980 *coup*.

<sup>238</sup> It occurred in Agri, Ankara, Batman, Diyarbakir, Dersim (Tunceli), Siverek and Silvan in 1967. For more information, see: Besikci (1992) and Gundogan (2005).

<sup>239</sup> Based on cultural activity, such as folk dance and song and traditional food and other local habits, see Gundogan (2005).

<sup>240</sup> The first chairman was Avni Erakalin, and afterwards, the well-known Mehmet Ali Aybar.

justice, to name but a few. At this stage the ideology strongly and deeply bifurcated among the Kurdish actors and in this period the disconnection of left-wing and right-wing Kurdish agents, particularly radical leftist organisations, treated feudalism and religion, *agha* and *sheik*, as a threat, indicating the differences as compared to the 1940s and 1950s.

While leftist movements were establishing and substantiating their position as the new leaders of Kurdish society, the traditional and Islamist Kurdish actors stood aloof from the leftist institutions due to political and economic interests and religious concerns; as a consequence, Kurdish society was split between the (Turkish) right and (Turkish) left political parties in the legal and informal spheres. It is, however, important to note that the leftist Kurds, similar to the Kurds following right-wing political parties, congruently did not apply a separatist or authentic Kurdish discourse in the first part of the 1960s, as the new Kurdish political activism, as expressed in leftism, sought opportunities in the existing system and looked to transform the system and gain hegemony throughout the country, which would have provided the Kurds with hegemonic power through the proletarian revolution against the comprador, bourgeoisie and religious authorities.

The leftist organisations comprised the *Devrimci Dogu Kultur Ocaklari*<sup>241</sup> (DDKO-Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Organisation), Dev-Gench<sup>242</sup> (Giant-Youth: the Federation of Youth Movements), labour movements such as *Devrimci Ishchi Sendikalari Konfederasyonu* (DISK-the Confederation of Revolutionary Labour Union) and political parties in the form of the TIP (Romano, 2006). They organised mass demonstrations and activities for labour rights and (social) democratic rights including activism related to Kurdish demands.

In this new turn of Kurdish political activism, the Kurdish political movement thus expressed itself as a radical leftist (e.g. Marxist/Leninist) and emphasises the class war, proletarian revolution or (socialist) democratic struggle with Turkish, leftist socio-political movements. However, the international Turkish left, who aimed to unite

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<sup>241</sup> The first chairman was Necmettin Buyukkaya and it closed following martial law in 1971.

<sup>242</sup> or the TKP-ML (Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist/Leninist), TIKKO (The Workers and Peasant Liberation Army of Turkey), THKO (The People's Liberation Army of Turkey), THKP-C (The People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey).

transnational labour movements, was not ready for ‘independent Kurdish identity’ or Kurdish hegemonic order. This position ironically was/is the same as that of the Turkish right, nationalists or Islamists. Islamists also advocate a transnational religious identity under the institution and concept of *Ummah* (Islamic community or the commonwealth), but they have never shown any sympathy with the Kurdish demands. The Turkish left and right, thus, were both against the idea of a distinctive Kurdish identity, which required an embodiment in Turkishness based on ‘*Misak-i Milli Sinirlari*’<sup>243</sup> (Borders of National Pact), which defines the national borders of the new Turkey after the Ottomans, or ‘Sèvres syndrome’. This internationalist yet Turkish-centred leftism resulted in many Kurdish leftists abandoning the Turkish left (socialist/Marxist-Leninist) organisations in the 1970s and creating the Kurdish-leftist groups that soon mushroomed in the Kurdish political sphere.

In an attempt to develop a larger political platform that was Kurdish in essence after the disappointments with the Turkish left, and as an extension of the Iraqi-Kurdish political experience, the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Turkey was established in 1965 as the first Kurdish organisation since *Azadi* and *Khoybun* (1925-1927). It was followed by the student organisation the DDKO (Revolutionary Eastern Culture Clubs) in 1969, which was the first legally recognised Kurdish organisation in Turkey and was later followed, as mentioned above, by the DDKD (Revolutionary Democratic Culture Associations) in 1975. Developments continued with the Turkey Kurdistan Socialist Party (1975) and *Kawa* (1976) which later fragmented into two groups: *Denge Kawa* (1977) and *Red Kawa* (1978). In a similar way, *Kawa Rizgari* (1977) and *Ala Rizgari* (1979) also divided into two different organisations. The Kurdistan National Liberationists (1978), *TEKOSIN*<sup>244</sup> (1978), *YEKBUN*<sup>245</sup> (1979), the Kurdistan Workers Party-PKK (1978) and the Kurdistan Socialist Movement (1980) bloomed in this period (Kahraman, 2007; Romano, 2006; McDowall, 2000). During the 1960s the *Ozgurluk Yolu* (the Freedom Path), *Roja Welat* (Sunshine of

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<sup>243</sup> After the National Pact of 1920, the Turkish national/liberation movement drew borders, which set forth claims for the new Turkish state after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>244</sup> In Kurdish, it means “Struggle”.

<sup>245</sup> In Kurdish, it means “Unity”.

Homeland), *Kawa*<sup>246</sup>, *Rizgari*<sup>247</sup>, *Denge Kawa*<sup>248</sup>, the *Dicle-Firat* (Tigris and Euphrates, 1962/3), *Deng* (Voice, 1963), *Roja Nu* (New Day, 1963), *Reya Rast* (Kurdish, The Right Way, 1963), *Yeni Akish* (New Current, 1966), and *Dogu* (East, 1969) all appeared. In this process, the DDKO's monthly bulletin was first published in 1970<sup>249</sup> by Kurdish political institutions as part of the new "organic intellectuals" that aimed to distribute their hegemonic culture based on socialist and secular Kurdish identities through educational tools, which is what Gramsci considers the way to hegemonic power.

Thus, such a change "signalled the critical shift in social mobilisation away from the *aghas* and semi-tribal peasantry, towards urban-based, modestly educated students and young professionals" (McDowall, 2000: 408). Therefore, the new leaders and intellectuals and the institutions they formed had a role since, being the 'new' organic intellectuals, they were organically related to both the base and the superstructure and these new agents strove to formulate an alternative identity or engage critically with a new counter-philosophy. The struggle against state hegemony in this new paradigm shift meant that they were precisely constructing the new identity in a historical context or at least developing it. Thus, their function was extended to cover all spheres of society in the context of "trench-systems of modern warfare", as Gramsci would identify.

These new Kurdish 'restoration movements', which aimed to restore the Kurdish identity of the pre-Republic period, had a novel and dynamic character. It was not just a simple reaction; it was a resistance that constructed a 'new equilibrium' by shifting the political power of the old traditional and religious internal forces but also moving away from the compromising intellectuals of the 1950s. As a distinguishing feature, they were also involved in organising the Kurdish demands through the left in the form of socialist and communist factions, articulated through student, labour, peasant

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<sup>246</sup> A name of a blacksmith hero, from Kurdish legend, who went to the mountains and assembled young Kurdish people against cruel King Dehak for Kurdish independency on *Newroz* (new year) day.

<sup>247</sup> In Kurdish, it means "Liberation".

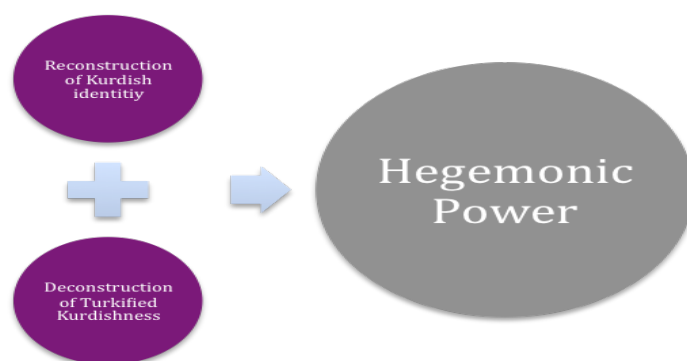
<sup>248</sup> It is a Kurdish word which means the "Voice of Kawa".

<sup>249</sup> see Gundogan (2005); Alis (2009) and Gunes (2012) for further analysis of this period.

and other subaltern masses who challenged the stifling and ossified state ideology (hegemony).

In explaining the transformation, Yavuz (2007: 63-4) notes that the “new intellectuals rather than tribal and religious leaders started to shape Kurdish identity. Under the 1961 constitution, Kurdish intellectuals expressed Kurdish concern and grievances in socialist idioms to promote the self-determination of the Kurds”. Consequently, the new intellectuals of this period initiated a process of transformation of the Kurdish identity via new intellectual and moral reform. Their ultimate goal was to reach a new concept of hegemony and redefine Kurdishness, because the existing Kurdish identity embedded within religion and customs had already gained legitimacy in society. However, that did not mean that the Kurdish historical context or social formation was negated, as these ‘productive forces’, as identified by Gramsci, were developed critically by these new “organic intellectuals”, thus shaping the identity for further movements.

**Figure 4.3: The Cultural and Moral Leadership since 1950s**



As Figure 4.3 depicts, the new organic intellectuals (institutions) attempted to create a new leadership by rearranging the Kurdish social structure and delegitimising the internal hegemonic relations with the objective of redefining the institutions of society to achieve social cohesion and create a new culture among the Kurds, which would be based on a socialist (later on it shifted to nationalism) and secular culture<sup>250</sup>. In

<sup>250</sup> Gundogan (2005: 2) interpreted that “a new form of Kurdish political dynamism began to rise especially among the Kurdish university students in metropolises like Ankara and Istanbul. This was a time during which Turkey underwent a significant social transformation, which then resulted in the emergence of a leftist movement with a voice higher than ever. A new group of Kurdish

this reconstruction of the new Kurdish identity, the important strategy was the deconstruction of the Turkified Kurdishness of the 1950s. In other words, the thesis (the new Kurdish identity) could only be possible by deconstructing the anti-thesis or the Turkified Kurdishness. For this, a new language of metaphors was employed to construct the contents of the new Kurdish identity, or reform the (old) Kurdish identity. For instance, the concept of *Newroz*, the New Year, as stated by Williams (1977; as cited by Aydin, 2005: 2), became “an ideological apparatus utilised for constructing counter-hegemony against the hegemonic culture. It is an element of the common-sense neglected or excluded by the hegemonic culture”. While Kurds insisted on the Kurdish authentic nature of *Newroz* in essentialising the Kurdish identity as opposed to Turkish identity, later in 1980s the Republic attempted to take over the celebrations of *Newroz* claiming its Turkish origin (as *Nevruz*), thereby aiming to deny the Kurdish authenticity. Yanik (2006) shows how this concept became a ground for hegemonic struggle between the Turkish state’s ‘*Nevruz*’ and the Kurdish countermovement’s ‘*Newroz*’, which is clearly explained by Demirer (2012)<sup>251</sup>.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is also to embark on a ‘double reading’ of hegemonic theory through the internal and external views. In this respect, these new counter-hegemonic agents, which struggled against the dominant ‘internal social identity’ and ‘external political identity’, attempted to create legitimate politics by constituting an intellectual, moral and cultural leadership with the objective of developing an authentic Kurdish identity beyond the Turkified version of it. In this attempt, they used both strategies: a “war of manoeuvre” and a “war of position”. This can be expressed as follows:

$$\textit{Total Hegemonic Power} = \textit{Internal hegemony} + \textit{External hegemony}$$

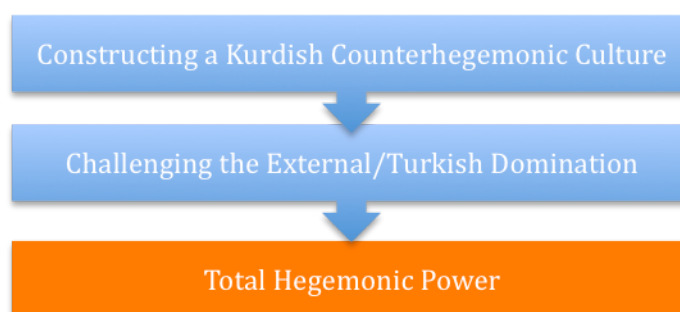
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intellectuals who were educated in the universities of Ankara and Istanbul were also among the activists of the leftist movements of the time”.

<sup>251</sup> The Turkish state (in 1923) did not accept *Newroz* as a public holiday, which it used to be in the Ottoman era; however, after the 1990s *Newroz* particularly featured in Kurdish national culture and the representation of freedom by the PKK, immediately after the state had accepted and conceptualised Turkishness by attributing it to Central Asian culture (the ancient territory of Turks) and naming it as *Nevruz*. See Demirer (2012), Ceremony, Symbol, Politics; The Celebration of *Newroz* and *Nevruz* in Turkey.

The hegemony in Kurdistan was embedded in the social structure and Kurdish idiosyncrasy. It is important to note that the hegemonic struggle was performed in different spheres during this period and that there were two hegemonic struggles discernible on the basis of the strategy of the Kurdish civil and political spheres. The first hegemonic struggle was constituted internally within the base of Kurdish society by the new actors with challenging the ancient cultural and social formation, while the second was a counter-process against the external Turkish state's artificial hegemonic power. This is schematised in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4. The Way of Gaining a Hegemonic Power After 1960s**



As a result, the “new organic intellectuals” attempted to construct a “new historical bloc” through the deconstruction of the old social structure, which can be explained and conceptualised, therefore, with reference to Gramsci<sup>252</sup>. The internal hegemonic power would help the Kurdish leadership to establish a system of stable consent and legitimacy for the prevailing Kurdish identity and produce socio-political transformations under the ‘new hegemonic candidate’, who could emerge a counter-responsive against external dominant power with mobilising Kurdish society. In this period, as discussed, the external state power dominated society using coercive force to gain hegemonic power instead of reaching this power with their consent. These new Kurdish radical movements thus demand the hegemonic power against the Turkish state in a ‘radical conception of democracy’.

In sum, essentially, this period was the formulation of gaining total hegemony in relation to the Kurdish reality, first through transformation, then by leading society

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<sup>252</sup> Whose “dialectical understanding of the relationship between structure and agency allows one to trace the contours and grids of different relational power interests across the regional and global landscape” (Bieler and Morton 2006: xxi).



with intellectual and moral leadership and, subsequently, by reducing the Turkish domination of the entire Kurdish society. This project related to new knowledge creation and a prevailing mechanism of theory and practices, precisely characterising the notion of total hegemony as a conception of the new order. The new social actors used a different language, discourse and symbols<sup>253</sup>, which were distinctive from the Kurdish vernacular history. The critical question remained, however: ‘what is the role of the new discourse in the construction of the counter-hegemonic movement, or how is agency related to the hegemonic struggle?’.

The socialists’ jargon, their ideas, culture and methods of action, which were reproducing the concepts of the time, became central to that agenda. Even today in the politics of the pro-Kurdish party, after two decades of cultural evolution, the socialist values manifest themselves in the theoretical and philosophical arena. In addition, the new discourse comprised a group of symbols of the reactionary politics that denote the new class defeating the mainstream ideas. Therefore, creating a new discourse that replaces the residues of the traditional struggle’s language is possible by using new meanings. The new Kurdish socio-political responses to traditional and conservative Kurdishness, as well as the Kemalist ideology, “gave the masses a ‘theoretical’ consciousness<sup>254</sup>”. Derived through the larger project of applying a new socialist, secular approach to language and developing a “good sense” within the intellectual leadership, the idea that struggle was progressing towards the fall of historical insurgents meant that the new institutions would play an important role in bringing total hegemony, and, hence, the counter-movement would become irreversible<sup>255</sup>. The new hegemonic movement was awarded hegemonic power (internal and external), and afterwards gained the social and political consciousness of the other alliances, which included their subaltern groups. It promoted the transforming society, the restructuring of Kemalist ideological formations, and pledged to change the function of the subaltern groups from a passive mass into an active revolutionary power in the 1960s and early 1970s.

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<sup>253</sup> Like the concept of *Newroz*, the Kurdish flag (in green, red and yellow).

<sup>254</sup> We were inspired by the phrase that Gramsci used for the factory council in his *Prison Notebooks*.

<sup>255</sup> “Organic intellectuals are to ‘make the people join in a criticism of themselves and their own weaknesses’, to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of people and to ‘construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make possible the intellectual progress of mass’” (Gramsci, 1971: 251 quoted in Robinson, A. in Andreas Biler and Adam D. Morton (ed.) 2006: 81).

During this period, some Turkish socialist (or communist) agents<sup>256</sup> joined the ‘Kurdish historical bloc’, but this time the Kurdish organisations were not part of the leftist group as in 1960s; rather, they were a founder of the new bloc. This bloc meant for Kurds that political and ideological alliance with different fragments and thus initiated a new concept of ‘free Kurdistan’, which was possible within an ideological and armed struggle. The bloc was not necessarily constituted by a single intellectual leadership; rather, it developed the intellectual level of society which provided an intellectual and moral leadership (hegemony) for the bloc, and which later assembled under a Kurdish political party. The rising intellectual level of society encouraged society to accept the emerging Kurdish hegemony as a new social alternative without any intervention or coercion. In other words, it is an ideological process and moreover a process of the ‘passive revolution’. Hence, the new philosophy challenged existing “common sense”, which is an Islamic and tribal culture, based on conservatism, male-dominated and unequal social relations. They desired to educate the masses<sup>257</sup> as ‘potential intellectuals’ through prison, magazines, newspapers and posters in the discursive realm. It also constituted the social functions and political dimension of these organisations and radical transformation attempts in a limited and directed mechanism. In this process, the new “organic intellectuals” provided moral and cultural legitimacy.

Nevertheless, this passive and intellectual ground is changed after 1980 *coup*. The 1980s saw the arrival of the PKK, one of the rare organisations to survive the *coup*’s brutal and devastating politics. PKK began to control most of the fragments of the Kurdish countermovement by starting a new insurgency, which marked the beginning of the modern struggle and also party politics, with ‘separate’ Kurdish identity and idea of ‘independent Kurdistan’. In this light, the crucial problem for the PKK was to make a connection (united front) between the various socio-political organisations of the 1968-generation. Moreover, the PKK realised that this socio-political movement would break down unless they included in their political consciousness the interests

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<sup>256</sup> Such as *Turkiye Kominist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist*; TKP/LM (included *Turkiye Ishchi*, *Koylu Kurtulush Ordusu-TIKKO*), *Turkiye Halk Kurtulush Partisi-Cephesi*; THKP-C, *Dev-Gench*, *Dev-Yol/Devrimci-Sol* (*Devrimci Halk Kurtulush Paritisi-Cephesi*; DHKP-C) etc.

<sup>257</sup> “Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed” (Gramsci, 1971: 350 quoted from Rupert, in Andreas Biler and Adam D. Morton (ed.), 2006: 97).

and struggles of other subaltern groups, and it started to co-opt other agents such as the youth/student organisations, including *Kawa* and *Rizgari*, and Turkish socialist organisations, for instance *Fashizme Karshi Birleshik Devrimci Cephe* (the Anti-Fascist United Revolutionary Front) (Gunes, 2012). This ‘extended’ the historical bloc based on demands for Kurdish rights and (socialist) democratic principles.

Therefore, the counter-hegemonic movement further oriented the transformation of society through the construction of a new political culture for a new social structure and political identity, mostly based on modernist, socialist, and secular principles, which later aggregated with nationalist and ethno-political participation, shaping the ‘EU-isation’ or democratisation process, which is explored further in the following chapter. The tactics of the “war of manoeuvre” were strongly applied again in 1984, particularly after the 1980 *coup*, due to the *coup*’s harsh policy on Kurdish organisations. Torturing members of the PKK with cruel, violent methods in the disreputable No. 5 Cell of Diyarbakir ‘Military’ Prison bestowed more power on the PKK among other Kurdish groups and also on society, as such brutal policies provided the legitimacy for the Kurdish demands (Zeydanlioglu, 2009). In this process in the early 1980s, a number of the PKK members in Diyarbakir Prison protested through hunger strike and self-immolation<sup>258</sup>, which provided them with more legitimacy in the region and created a narrative and legend in the legitimisation of the political culture of the PKK. It also demonstrated that the shifting strategy was determined once more by the external dynamic.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION: CONSENT (*EGOMANIA*) AND COERCION (*DOMINO*)**

The main objective of this chapter is to examine the response of the Kurdish counter-movement(s) and their strategies within a theoretical framework, in particular in the context of Gramscian hegemonic theory. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is a struggle between the ruling agents and historical blocs of socio-political (national) movements, which also attempts to construct and transform the hegemonic culture of the dominant power in various tactics. The Gramscian theoretical framework provides critical leverage for understanding the structure of Kurdish socio-political counter-hegemonic movements for certain periods (1923-1984) in modern Kurdish history, as

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<sup>258</sup> Actions of the well-respected Mazlum Dogan and four other prisoners, Necmi Oner, Esref Anyik, Mahmut Zengin and Ferhat Kutay in the legend of ‘the night of fours’ nationalist context. See Tan, (2009); Gunes (2012).

it was during this period that the Kurds attempted to reconstruct their identity and the nature of activism depending on the available opportunity space<sup>259</sup>.

Primarily, this chapter analyses the notion of hegemony in a dual perspective: on the one hand, it is an integral approach that requires further examination of the amalgam of hegemonic relations between different internal agents; on the other hand, it endeavours to comprehend the context of internal hegemonic struggle among various Kurdish actors by focusing on civil society and noting the different players in the strategies, features and intellectuals, in relation to designing the counter-politics depending on the nature of dominant hegemony. In addition, this chapter scrutinised the hegemonic struggle and demands for power between the internal and external dynamics in understanding the changing dynamics of the struggle for hegemony and the use of opportunity space available. The struggle to gain hegemonic culture was a power process through different tactics and strategies. In other words, it was a relationship between the dominant, ruling class and the ruled 'subjects' who organised as a counter-movement. Therefore, hegemony denotes a combination of the moral/cultural intellectual leadership that had already achieved the assent (consent) of society and the struggle against the substantial hegemonic power through the countermovement, which can use force (coercion) if necessary. As a consequence, it could be formulated as: *Hegemony = consent (war of position) + coercion (war of manoeuvre)*.

This chapter therefore explored how and in what ways the Kurdish (non-linear) political and cultural agents responded against the external line of the Ottoman/Turkish hegemonic state power, using different tactics (or strategy) within political vicissitudes, in different periods, by locating the objectives and the dominant actors. From a hegemonic point of view, the culture of hegemony among Kurdish society was socially constructed by various internal dynamics including "organic

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<sup>259</sup> Bellamy and Schecter (1993: 166-67) explained why Gramsci's theoretical framework needs to be studied: "First, because Gramsci's desire to relate theory to the understanding and making of history retains its validity even if the terms in which he conceived this relationship do not [...] Second [...] the dialectic between state and civil society to which he drew attention continues to be of fundamental importance for understanding the nature and exercise of political power within industrial societies. Finally, his remain of interest because an historical engagement with them, which examines the various forces moulding and motivating them, in showing distance which separates Gramsci's world from our own also teaches us about ourselves".

intellectuals” during the deconstruction of ‘state-defined Kurdishness’ that was politically constructed and identified by external powers through coercion rather than by the consent of society. As a result, the meaning of hegemony appeared in a different and amalgamated framework for each period, which is analysed and discussed in the chapter in a chronological and historical context. Therefore, demarcation lines between each period in this chapter are not arbitrarily chosen for the conducting of the critical analyses; rather, they are determined by crucial events and fundamental turning points in Kurdish socio-political history in Turkey in terms of the nature of hegemony.

The notion of hegemony needs to have a social and political foundation; although the Kurdish political actors objected to the morals, knowledge, discourse and institutions of Kemalism, the Kemalist movement emerged and developed as a counter-politics against the Ottoman imperial-cultural hegemony (Callinicos, 2010). However, the Kemalist cultural leadership turned into domination using oppressive policies rather than gaining people’s consent (*egomania*), which was a ‘regressive’ form of hegemony. The outcome of this top-down process of transformation in the mode of modernisation and contemporarisation was the establishment of a secular and nationalist system. Thus, the new order replaced the *ancient values* by imposing political and cultural unity rather than building it up over time and with the permission of society. As a result, the absence of consent-based hegemony in Kemalist ideology in Kurdistan generates the core basis of these counter-hegemonic movements seeking an alternative system, such as a ‘progressive hegemony’ within historical blocs, which was shaped within the historical context and evolved within post-modern values.

**Figure 4.5: Different Periods of Sense of Hegemony through Internal Dynamics**

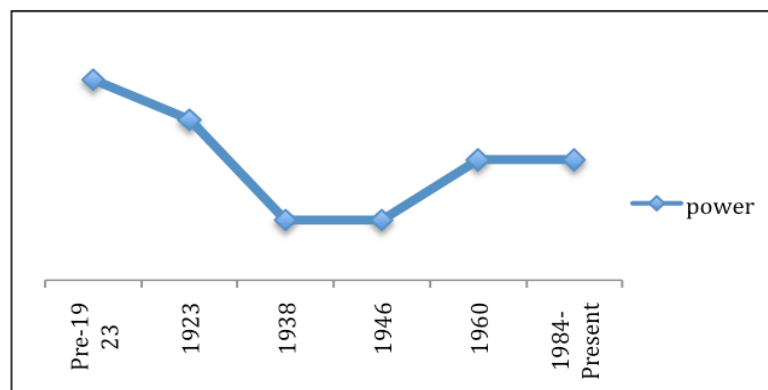


Figure 4.5 show that the different periods held a different sense of hegemony as mentioned, which is a product of the total power struggle of the Kurdish counter-movement in chronological order.

In the years preceding 1923, the internal hegemony had already been obtained by the Kurdish leadership as well as a fully-integrated society in the region and the incorporation of most tribes and different religious views. The political leadership had battled against the Ottoman external powers to retain political unity (autonomy) that had already been embedded in the social and cultural structure and provided a synergy of different fragments. When Istanbul imposed the centralisation politics and its culture in the region, the struggle for hegemonic power appeared between external powers and the internal hegemonic actors. Therefore, the chapter explored the content of hegemony in terms of the struggle between the centre and the periphery and the balance of the centralisation/hegemony line for this period. As a result, the local agent's reign is taken by a central power, the counter-movement spontaneously emerged and the actors applied the war of manoeuvre without generating an accurate "historical bloc".

The post-1923 period was still based on the war of manoeuvre strategy, amidst the emergence of institutional politics, and, thus, rebellion and armed struggle were still used as a tactic to revoke the hegemonic power, particularly during the uprisings of the Sheiks Said (1925), Ararat (Agri-1932) and Dersim (Tunceli-1937). The struggle of war of manoeuvre, which is transformed violently or gained through hegemonic struggle, was implemented in this period; Gramsci suggests that civil society in most Eastern countries is not effective in dealing with such hegemonic issues. The idea of hegemony existed in institutional politics, and the internal dynamics were for the first time effectively assembled under the same organisation by intellectual and cultural leadership, which was different from the mere 'unity of tribes'. It also institutionalised the concept of hegemony, and the hegemonic relationship, consequently, became based on two grounds: on the one hand, it aimed to protect an ancient culture and socio-political structures of society, such as religion, identity, tradition, morals and values; on the other hand, it marked the beginning of an institutional response by various Kurdish organisations. This implied institutionalisation beyond personal leadership in Kurdish political culture. The old

leadership, such as *mirs*, *agha* and *sheikhs*, were still in charge, but they employed modern ideologies and tools by unifying under socio-political organisations that had emerged in the last era of Empire.

The counter-movement emerged against the new Republican governing (not hegemonic) and oppressive culture, which was neither legitimised nor accepted by Kurdish society. According to Gramsci's initial formulation, the construction of a new state could be the outcome of the founder's culture embedded in civil society and should allow citizens to be represented and to participate in the new order, a right that was denied and rejected by the Kemalist cultural leadership, eventually producing a counter-culture. However, the end of this period (post-1923) also began with the practice of Turkification, secularisation and the hegemonic cultural leadership by Kemalism of Kurdish society, particularly after the failure of rebellions and uprisings. It also caused the "silent years" of the Kurdish counter-movement, from the suppression of the Dersim uprising in 1938 to the end of the one-party system in 1946 due to the loss of entire leadership cadres in the on-going uprisings.

Between 1946 and 1960, the period of passive revolution was enacted through the intellectuals and new political order. Gramsci utilises this strategy for the West when civil society conducts the process of transformation effectively. Therefore, the hegemonic struggle in this period was understood in a liberalisation or democratisation context. In this era, on the one hand, the Kurdish agents were integrating with the various institutions within the state and also employing state apparatus in articulating their concerns to shape the new identity. In other words, traditional and religious members of the leadership, such as *aghas* or *sheiks*, reappeared and penetrated the right-wing political party, the DP, and its successor, the AP. Conversely, the modern and secular leftist members established a presence in the TIP and YTP. On the other hand, some Kurdish subgroups came together around public organisations to establish an alternative culture in the non-state nor non-violent sense to continue the hegemonic struggle in the public and political sphere, after the long-term<sup>260</sup>.

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<sup>260</sup> Including *Shark Postasi*, *Ileri Yurt*, *Dicle Kaynagi*, *Barish Dunyasi*, *Yon* magazines or the *Dicle* and *Firat* student dormitories.

With the initiation of a multiparty political system in Turkey in 1946, the new circumstances of the country provided Kurdish agents with more opportunity spaces and became one of the elements in the revitalisation of the Kurdish counter-movement. Therefore, the organic intellectuals appeared in Kurdish society, thus forming the basis of an active cultural construction, although the traditional principles and relations were still prevalent in this period. As a result, the new alternative culture and philosophy, as well as the leadership, found substantial reciprocity between members of society through the cultural leadership of organic intellectuals, under a wide ‘multi-bloc’, which included all members of society, traditional and modern, *agha* or peasant, socialist or Islamist, *Sunni* or *Alawite*.

The hegemony was embedded in the form of parliamentarism and a bureaucratic, institutionally representative regime with a new type of political culture. It was based on the passive struggle, and the leadership started to use legal political parties to challenge the existing regime in the parliament, as well as universities, magazines or other ways to raise awareness among the people in an attempt to develop the “war of position” or passive revolution process. Therefore, the intellectual, moral and cultural leadership conducted a long-term strategy in counter-politics as a ‘traditional progressive movement’ to construct and occupy new spaces for alternative identities in the form of moral values, consciousness and culture through education, community activities, popular relations and political parties. In other words, the new political approach and democratic practices of the state, as well as complex civil society, guided Kurdish intellectuals towards a ‘war of position’ and they engaged in a system to gain the moral support of a whole society. Consequently, they could construct an alternative hegemony in the Kemalist semi-democratic system, gaining social power from the traditional tribal and religious social structure. Therefore, the ‘modernised’ *agha/sheiks*-led cadres were rooted in political parties of right-wing/conservative leanings, even though these parties were represented or dominated by Turkishness; either the secular, urban Kemalist-CHP or religious, rural Anatolians-DP/AP thought the same about Kurdish issues. If these actors impacted the parties, of which they were members, it would make it easier to change the state policy towards the Kurds and at the same time they could coalesce all MPs from different parties to create a modern entity, which could be an ‘intellectual national bloc’. Due to their *Kurdi* socio-tribal relations, roots and identity, there was no strong division or obstacle to



unity among various Kurdish factions, although there were always religious or ideological differences<sup>261</sup>.

The analysis and discussion so far indicate the crucial point that Kurdish politics were embedded in the state's regime and operated in the state apparatus for the first time. Therefore, they might transform the central power of Kemalism and its hegemony that was based only on domination, without the consent of the people. In other words, they could create divisions in the substantial hegemony and permeate it while deriving a passive revolution, which was systematically transformed through a non-violent context, whereby Kemalism could be successfully opposed. However, occasionally the Kurdish leadership project was interrupted by state policies such as 'the Sivas Camp' or 'the 55 *Aghas*' deportation both in 1960, and 'the 49s case' (1959); these incidents curtailed the Kurdish passive tendency as the masses began to demand social transformation and the search for power through an alternative system outside the dominant culture.

In the next sub-period (1960-1984) of modern Kurdish history, which is the another crucial period of concern of this chapter, the hegemony can be understood in terms of a broadened role for the masses, which provided society with the power to control and orient political and social activities within the spirit of the "factory council" experiment of "the Prison Notebooks". Hegemonic politics were rising in the socialist culture in this era; however, they would shift later with identity or ethno-politics, which was a nationalisation/hegemony correlation. In other words, hegemony was formulated through national demands. In this 'new social movement', the practice of power takes place directly in the field. Hence, they moved beyond a defensive politics to a transformative politics, creating their own hegemonic conception of Kurdish society on both internal and external grounds. The condition that was verified by the outsider forced them to employ both tactics at the same time. Their "organic culture" was embodied in the heritage of the 1950s' intellectual productivity, which had already educated society in 'Kurdishness' and constructed a 'common consciousness' and morality for society. Nevertheless, conducting passive methods was not good enough for hegemony. The "war of position" was using moral/intellectual reforms

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<sup>261</sup> Anter (2000) explained in his book that traditional and Muslim Kurds were collaborating with communist and urban Kurds during the 49s case. Abdulmelik Firat (in Kaya 2004) also mentions a similar idea during the incident of the Sivas Camp.

that prepared leading agents for self-governance in the formidable system, using bulk in an obliging way that could not derive the leadership of the public. Therefore, they had to prepare to apply the “war of manoeuvre”, while at the same time striving to achieve emplacement in the existing regime. However, the content of the “war of manoeuvre” appeared different from previous attempts; it involved modern ‘guerrilla tactics’ like other socialist organisations all around the world. These new leading actors were inspired by the heritage of the 1940s and 1950s generation politics, and they developed, changed and transformed it with that legacy and ended up with a ‘new’ knowledge or culture after deconstructing the state discourse. Thus, in a Foucauldian sense, ‘the new knowledge’ as opposed to the ‘religious’ knowledge of the past provided a new power of transformation in developing counter-hegemony.

It should be noted that the application of one of these tactics, which spontaneously emerged in the Kurdish struggle, was mostly determined or directed by state policy in the context of Kurdish politics in the sense of how much opportunity space was provided to the Kurds in articulating their identity and activism of existence. This new agent sometime later deviated from the Turkish leftist movements and created its own ‘ideology politics’ by shifting socialist jargon interspersed with national or identity politics: from the internationalist-socialist line to the nationalist-Kurdishness line. But this did not hinder the emergence of the ‘new Kurdish historical bloc’, which was constructing new alignments and forces that could challenge the dominion of the networks.

The main challenge of this period was to determine how they could pursue their strategic plan, which was first to restructure the traditional framework of society and create a new culture that provided them with an internal hegemonic power led beyond society’s existing values, culture and identity. Secondly, it was necessary to redefine relations with the external hegemonic power to gain total hegemonic power. In this respect, Gramsci appears to have inferred the following: leadership is a condition for domination and the consent of the people (dictatorship of the proletariat), which provides the hegemony as a condition for the revolution or transformation to socialism. This formulation in this period of the Kurdish struggle can be seen as a modernist, socialist and secular cultural leadership of the ‘new organic intellectuals’, although it subsequently turned into national demands and ethnic politics and became

an on-going process of the historic Kurdish politics. Achieving hegemonic power was a condition of transformation to a social(ist) or *radical democracy*, so that they could operate freely in the region. This is why a democratic autonomy or democratic republic was offered by the PKK recently. Therefore, the notion of hegemony eventually gained a new meaning, in the ‘EU-isation’ and democratisation in the context of radical democracy or ‘non-otherising democracy’, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six as a ‘continuing process’ of the Kurdish hegemonic struggle, within the social construction of identity process. The new actors or fragments of sophisticated oppositional politics emerged in a *radical democracy* hypothesis and aimed at unity-in-diversity; as a result, they built an alternative culture against the first ancient social structure of society and then against the Turkified official cultural domination. In other words, they aimed to develop their counter-hegemonic capacities, and the original Kurdish identity and culture would resist the assimilation policy of the state. The PKK, particularly after 1984, adopted the strategy and favoured the fostering of unity across diverse institutions; it began to play a crucial role in that process as a dominating force in defining the new hegemony, as will be discussing in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY:**

#### **MULTIPLITIES AND PLURALITIES OF KURDS IN THE CONTEXT OF 'EU-ISATION' AND 'NON-OTHERISING DEMOCRACY'**

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters explore the Kurdish identity construct within the Kurdish internal hegemony and Turkish external hegemony struggles. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, in the post-1946 period, the impact of foreign hegemony in constructing Kurdish and Turkish identities by expanding the opportunity space has been a real determining factor. In other words, expansion of democracy in Turkey has been, in most of the time, due to foreign-external impact, such as the Marshall Plan, NATO membership, and European Economic Community (EEC) and later the European Union (EU) process, as membership to these institutions required democratisation in Turkey. Engaging with such processes and transnational institutions implied that the Kemalist regime had to compromise to expand the opportunity space for the larger public, which indirectly meant the expansion of Kurdish rights and activism. While the impact of NATO and Marshall Plan process could be implicitly seen in the analysis provided in the earlier chapter covering 1946-1960 period, the strong and effective impact of the EU process can be seen in the post-1980 period, as Turkey in this period (particularly post-1999) began to heavily involve in the EU process.

It is, thus, the central aim of this chapter to explore the domestic effects of the EU as an external dynamic within democratisation, institutionalisation and non-securitisation processes, on both the regeneration of the *Kurdi(ish)* political strategy, and transformation of the *Kurdi* political identity and political culture. This process has also redistributing power and resources, which in turn simultaneously influenced Turkey's democratisation process. As mentioned, the EU served as an external political dynamic; affecting Turkish and Kurdish identity re-formations, and has continuously raised criticisms regarding the continuing violations of the political and cultural rights of the Kurds in Turkey.

In a paradigmatic shift in Kurdish activism, 1980s experienced a more active Kurdish activism developing a strong counter-hegemonic movement aiming to dominate the Kurdish society and engage with the Turkish state as the representatives of the Kurdish society. Thus, the armed conflict between the Turkish army and Kurdish armed forces continued to intensify since its first hostilities commenced in 1984. The conflict is estimated to have caused the deaths of approximately 40,000 people so far

since 1984. The 1990s in particular witnessed heavy conflict with the destruction of over 3,000 villages and the displacement of over 3 million people in the Kurdish region (Kurban, *et al.*, 2008). It seems that cycle of violence has again set in with armed combat recently. As a result, this chapter's aim is to focus on the effect of the internal socio-political agents on the mainstream *Kurdi* identity through their capacity to use the opportunity spaces in public sphere(s) alongside active involvement of the external dynamics on the processes of political transformation of Kurdish 'national movement' and social construction of a new Kurdish political identity resulting into 'EU-ising of *Kurdi* identity'. The EU process simultaneously provides an opportunity to promote peace and stability within the inner democratisation of the Kurdish political agent.

The cultural and political impact of the renewed armed conflict on the Kurdish identity is notably important in the post-1984 period, while the conflict is an on-going reality affecting a large part of Kurdish cities in the region. Consequently, the cycle of violence constructs new identities. As mentioned, the chapter attempts to examine the role of various Kurdish internal and external actors in the form of Turkish state and its agencies.

## **5.2. UNDERSTANDING TRAJECTORIES OF KURDISH IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE POST-1990 PERIOD**

The competing definition of 'socio-political reality' can be conceptually and socially understood in different ways in society. In particular, the 'newcomer' internal actor of society attempt to redefine the 'fact' in socially constructed manner according to his/her own perceptions, which was already defined by the state or political movement itself. The difficulty is that when one particular group uses its own definition of Kurdish reality whereby to create hegemony over other definitions offered. Such a monopolistic or hegemonic definition of Kurdish reality and identity inhibits social change and also debilitates the social space of dialogue and communication. In should also be noted that 'Kurdishness' can be internally designed by three distinct agents<sup>262</sup>, which offer a discursive cognition in the form of intellectual discussion as an agenda to investigate the emerging of a new 'EU-ising Kurdish identity'.

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<sup>262</sup> *Kurdi*-secular, socialist; *Kurdi*-Islamist and Pragmatist, oppurtunist Kurds.

The concept of EU-isation has been deployed by Kurdish initiatives in Turkey within the framework of democratic values that were central to the Kurdish movements, in general in the post-1990 but in particular in the post-1999 period. This process assumed that the EU accession process would stop armed conflict, open the dialogue channels, establish a peaceful resolution ensuring the democratic freedoms, such as freedom of thought and freedom of expression, minority and cultural rights and social justice/equity.

As a response to the EU accession process' moderation impact, the EU-ising which can be coined as liberalisation of Kurdish politics is led and socially-internally constructed by Kurdish agents, as the EU's political-external construction and framing of the Kurdish politics, in terms of its relation with the Turkish Republic is not totally embedded by Kurdish dynamics. Therefore, the EU's offer of individual rights does not coincide with Kurdish demands of an 'independent state', 'national rights' or 'democratic autonomy' in the existing state boundaries. Thus, it must be noted that this chapter is not directly concerned with the EU as a causal factor, rather it focuses on the opportunity spaces that are presented by EU and its institutions in terms of the expansion and consolidation of democracy in Turkey. Moreover, the EU's soft-power has challenged the domestic political and legal grounds of Turkey and the relations with the structure and agents as a superstructure. Consequently, such an impact on the super-structural dimension in relation with internal dynamics and power networks has, by definition, influenced the macro (Turkish politics) and micro politics (Kurdish politics).

Since 1990s, the 'modern knowledge of Kurdishness' and its political discourses in line with the modernisation of Kurdish society and politics have emerged. An indication of this is the new Kurdish identity that has been defined through internal and external re-negotiation process leading to the deconstruction of the emergent but also imposed Kurdish identities in particular in post-1999 period. The observed change, in particular, in local power as a gain for Kurdish political activism in the national governance system as a result of the Kurdish national struggle should be considered as an important achievements despite the heavy handed policies of the junta regime stretching from 1980 onward. The emergence of new knowledge in defining the Kurdish identity and activism, hence, helped to re-construct the

mainstream Kurdishness through social constructivism. In other words, with the emergence of such particular knowledge there was an imperative for all the Kurdish stakeholders to take part in the struggle in various ways and levels, but also having created such a knowledge, in Foucauldian sense, provided opportunity for those holding such knowledge to define the essence of the knowledge in the Kurdish modern times, as it happened in the post-1980 period.

It needs to be pointed out that the question of and ‘redefining’ identity in the Kurdish society became an important matter with the liberalisation and democratisation of this socio-political movement as opposed to the traditional forms of defining identity. Considering that the concept of identity is concreted by Kurdish agents, predominantly by the PKK after 1984, through a strong social and political process in contrast to the values of the larger Kurdish society the importance of the internal debate can be better understood. Therefore through new mobilisation and knowledge various internal agents politically and socially created sub-identity. Moreover, they promote the values, culture, language and original Kurdish heritage and at the same time resist against the central, monopolist and hegemonic definition of Kurdish identity either by Turkish state or dominance Kurdish representative. Consequently, the counter-definition of identity created by a counter-movement through many different ways. As a result, in this ‘post-modern’ world, the contemporarily defined Kurdishness by the PKK is challenged by a fragmented and complex structure of the society. In other words, apart from the dominant nationalist, modern, and secular *Kurdiness*, there are also sub-identities and different agents ‘re-appeared’ among Kurdish society in the postmodern era defined as the post-1999 period. The chapter is formulated and conceptualised this dynamic under the context of ‘Many Kurds’. Moreover, the chapter examines varied identities and strategies of members of the Kurdish society, in terms of the nationalisation and democratisation process by mapping their identities and strategies. As a result, the chapter considers three main and distinctive characters of the Kurdish political identities/discourses, alongside EU’s impact on identity construction.

The post-1984 period was the beginning of the armed struggle and constitution of the identity differences of Kurdish society. These diverse identities are socially constructed in their own way but also under the political conditions of the macro



environment namely Turkey within the social, political and economic opportunities it provided since the 1960s.

In the new political activism and identities, Kurds have been still reacting to the state policy of creating a nationalist context and they have also made references to the legacy of previous uprisings, even though all these former historical counterattacks against the state's hegemonic structure failed and were suppressed heavily by the state's armed forces, as discussed previously. So these activist Kurds, namely the PKK members or sympathizers and pro-BDP-line, became the most 'politicised' members of the society. There are also opportunist-Kurds emerged in this time, who are already involved, integrated or assimilated within the political economy structure of the country. Whilst some groups were shaping in Islamic orientation and identified themselves within *Kurdi Islamic* context that impact on their conception of Kurdish identity, which distinguishes them from the state and the secular and leftist Kurdish actors and profiled them in *sue generis* character.

It should be noted that all these dissimilar agents of the society are formulated in conventional Kurdish social structure articulated through the language/dialect, religion/sect, territory/region and class/gender diversities.

In understanding the differences in various clusters of Kurdish identity in mapping out the identity, discourses are utilised to define all these groups vis-à-vis their strategies, practices, media, publications, speeches and socio-political behaviours. Therefore, in a post-structuralist sense, this chapter aims to find out the identity characteristics of the main Kurdish political identity clusters through social constructivist reading with the help social constructivist methods to understand the underlying meaning of various Kurdish political thought and action.

**Table 5.1: Mapping the Actors and Representatives of the Kurdish Socio-Political Identity**

<b>Identities</b>			
<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Kurdi-Secular Identity</b>	<b>Kurdi-Islamic Identity</b>	<b>Opportunist, Pragmatist Kurdish Identity</b>
<b>Pro-active Militant</b>	PKK (organised)	Hizbullah (organised)	Village Guards; Tribes e.g. Bucak, Jirki etc. (group)
<b>Active Accommodative</b>	Based on same human capital with the PKK. The pro-Kurdish political party-linear: HEP,DEP, OZDEP,HADEP, DEHAP,DTP, BDP; Societal Institutions such as DTK, KCK, IHD, TAYDER, Saturday Mothers (organised)	Modern Kurdiyan <i>Nurcu</i> (Zehra etc.) (organised); Mustazaflar-Der, Hur-Par (Pro-Hizbullah); Traditionalist <i>Tariqahs Madrasas</i> etc. (group)	NGOs, for instance KAMER, DTAM, or GUNSIAD (organised) The Kurdish politician, bureaucrat, or artists (individual) in Turkish public sphere. And some of the Islamic organisations.
<b>Defensive Opportunist or Pragmatist</b>	Non-PKK buttressed or PKK-sceptic Kurdish parties; PSK, HAK-PAR, KADEP or Intellectuals, such as Umit Firat, Muhsin Kizilkaya, Orhan Miroglu etc. (individual)	Istanbul based Islamic groups in the region, such as <i>Nurcus</i> (Gulenci, Suleymanci etc.) Movements (organised)	Urban Assimilated Turkified Kurds (individual); or Turkified of the local Kurdish tribes (group)

Accordingly, this chapter aims to explore and explain the different approaches and identities among Kurdish political agents and also explores the politicisation and future of these fragments. After exploring all these various internal dynamics, it will be easier to see how the EU as an external soft-power involves and impacts the ‘new’ Kurdish political discourse/culture through Turkey’s democratisation process.

By explaining the identity construction process, it is possible to map the (sub)identities and groups of the ‘new’ Kurdish society, as depicted in Table 5.1. In doing so, three main political identity clusters are identified: ‘Kurdish secular identity’, ‘Kurdish Islamic identity’ and ‘Opportunist Kurdish identities’ (mostly state-linked). In identifying these groups, their strategies are taken into account in terms of articulating Kurdish identity. These strategies are: ‘pro-active militancy’,

‘being active-accommodative’, and ‘being defensive or pragmatist’. Thus, according to these strategies, the Kurdish political identities are mapped out.

Each of these political identity clusters and their respective agents as well as their strategies are discussed in the following sections. The limited space does not allow to cover and discuss in detail all of these individuals and institutions; and therefore by analysing the main actors through general patterns, generalisations are made to identify the emergent identities.

### **5.3 THE MODERN, SECULARISED AND NATIONALISED *KURDI*(SH)NESS**

#### **5.3.1 (Re)construction of Identity**

In Chapter Four, the secularisation and nationalisation of Kurdish identity in modern values is partly conceptualised, when the historical transition of Kurdish identity is discussed. This section explores further through various actors in the process.

As discussed above, since the establishment of the new Turkish state in 1923, the Kurds expressed their discontent with it through various means including military uprising. They began resistance against the new politics and its institutions, through ‘deconstructing’ the official meaning of identity by showing its ‘real origin’. They also managed to get the support of the Kurdish mass in various periods with giving expression to their demands and needs.

The ‘Kurdi’ identity, as discussed, has emerged in a dual counterattack mobilisation. In other words, opposing both the hegemony of the coercive culture of the state and the domination of the conventional code of the Kurdish social structure that was shaped in dominant Islamic, tribal and masculine values constitute the contents of this dual counterattack. In doing so, the new Kurdish socio-political actors attempted to deconstruct an official definition of Kurdishness in an attempt to redefine a new ‘encompassing Kurdish identity’ with a different set of moral values and cultural structure. Particularly, after the 1980 *coup d’état*, Kurdish socio-political mobilisation created an alternative and modern Kurdish identity as a discourse but also as a process. ‘Newrozification’ is one of the examples, which was shaped in socialist, secular and nationalist context through dominating its own public spaces<sup>263</sup>.

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<sup>263</sup> “From the 1970s onwards, the construction of the relations of differences of the newly formed Kurdish political parties and groups were done on the basis of the myth of *Newroz*. The myth

It should be noted that in this new period, this ‘identity building’ process is mainly led by pro-*Kurdi* socialist cadres<sup>264</sup>. The sources of this new identity is traced back to the Kurdish ancient peoples who had lived for thousands of years in the Caucasus, Asia Minor, and the Middle East<sup>265</sup>. In addition, with an attempt of providing further legitimacy, the new identity formation period is formulated as a continuation of the rebellious Kurdish legacy and heritage in the beginning of the twentieth century. The agents of this new identity used the discourse of the fragmental structure of Kurdish society in terms of religion, language or territorial differences among *Kurdi* society. In other words, religious plurality in the form of the *Zoroastrianism*, *Ezidizm*, *Alawite* and Islam or ‘dialects’ *Zazaki*, *Sorani*, and *Kurmanji* along side with Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey (including former Soviet states<sup>266</sup>) geographic plurality are all embodied in this ‘genuine’ and ‘politicised’ *Kurdiness*.

The new identity formation is different than the mainstream character of Turkey’s traditional *Sunni/Shafi*, *Kurmanji* speaker of Kurds<sup>267</sup>. Additionally the adaptation of socialist and feminist discourse within underdevelopment, counter-colony, counter-feudal and counter-religion discourses also help the emergence of a separate and new Kurdishness, under the aim of ‘independent Kurdistan’. Thus, having different knowledge sources and knowledge is articulated in the emergence of new Kurdish identity. In establishing the differences between the old and the new identity, Gunter (1990: 60) defines the old Kurdish identity as “feudal and comprador exploitation, tribalism, religious sectarianism and the slave-like dependence of women’. Socialism would be ‘the first stage of this [new] society’”. Thus, the reproduction of Kurdish identity in this period is different than traditional, conservative, tribal and male-

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allowed the Kurdish national movement to trace the origins of the Kurds to the ancient Medes and reactivated/recreated *Newroz* and the legend of the Kawa as the myth of origin” (Gunes, 2012: 33) also see Aydin, D. (2005) and Demirer, Y. (2012).

<sup>264</sup> As it mentioned in previous chapter that after 1980 coup, PKK was the only Kurdish agent stayed alive and arose among Socialist/Marxist Kurdish socio-political organisation, during the oppressive and radical state politics.

<sup>265</sup> see Chapter One.

<sup>266</sup> Such as Armenian, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

<sup>267</sup> There are varies sub-organisations created by PKK under unifying Kurdish society like, the Union of Patriotic Women of Kurdistan; Union of Patriotic Worker of Kurdistan; the Union of revolutionary Youth of Kurdistan; as well as religious the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan; the Union of *Alawites* of Kurdistan; the Union of *Ezidi* of Kurdistan and varies NGOs in European countries (Gunes, 2012).

dominated ‘regional Kurdishness’, which has still been under the influence of Turkish hegemonic culture. Since the religion and feudal structure is exposed to be abused by external power, e.g. Turkish establishment, which is also seen an obstacle for the unification or nationalisation process by Kurdish socialist movements, the new Kurdish identity formation particularly aimed at a new identity away from these two historically important structures. Accordingly, the ideal Kurd is defined and formulated in the culture of a “historical bloc”. One may formulated this context as a

***Kurd***= *Secular + Socialist + Kurdish (or non-Kurdish) speaker + from ‘Great Kurdistan’ (four parts)*

In this new identity construct, Kurdish speaker is expected to embrace the other Kurdish dialects/languages as well as broad geographical area. One may see the articulation of this through analysing the strategies of recruiting members for the PKK, who are drawn from the whole Kurdish dominant region in Mesopotamia as well as Kurdish diaspora from other geographical areas such as Western world, and most heavily from the European diaspora. Thus, the new Kurdish identity, hence, has rejected the imposed confinement of the prevailing nation states over the Kurds. This separate and independent (new) *Kurdiness* has become a dominant position and *de facto* identity among Kurdish society. It should be noted that even the state institutions understand these new identity in its ‘enemy’ definition through the ‘low level’ war with PKK.

According to Yavuz and Ozcan (2006: 106) this new identity is mainly a “secular, anti-traditional and usually supported by newly urbanised and university educated Kurds, who do not have deep tribal ties”, which has been developed as an alternative to the *politically* constructed ‘official and assimilated’ Kurdishness. In other words, the thesis of ‘Mountain Turks’ that conceptualises the identity of Kurds in modern Turkey has been deconstructed by these secular Kurdish nationalists for promoting their own counter-culture project, which legitimised this new identity through making reference to the ancient Kurdish heritage (such as Meds *etc.*) as a historical legacy. In this identity formation strategy, the historical Kurdish actors were respected as prominent historical characters contributed to ‘Kurdishness<sup>268</sup>’. These symbolic

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<sup>268</sup> Includes Ahmed-i Xani (Khani), Jigerkhun, Bedir Khan family. In addition, legacy important events including the short-lived Republic of Ararat (1936) and Republic of Mahabad (1945).

elements are utilised as historic heritages and memories of society to politicise and create an alternative culture and identity against the *status quo*. The deconstruction and afterwards reconstruction processes is effectively implemented by *Kurdi* ‘organic intellectuals’<sup>269</sup>. These actors constructed a new counter hegemonic culture, in a Gramscian sense for society and intertwined with party politics, as a ‘modern prince’, as it discussed in the theoretical and previous chapters.

### **5.3.2 Agents and their Strategies**

After the brief introduction to the new identity construction among the secular and nationalist circles, this section aims to explore the agents and their strategies in these identity circles.

#### **5.3.2.1 The Group of Armed Struggle: PKK**

The *Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) or the PKK is the main agent carrying out an armed struggle and *pro-active militant* agenda as part of Kurdish struggle for freedom and democratic rights since mid-1970s but actively since 1984. The PKK is considered as the central or the leading agent of modern(ist)/secular *Kurdi* national identity, which considers the internal salvation of the Kurds in the abolishment of traditional structure of the Kurdish society which includes tribal structures, religious orientation and institutions and the gender structure of the society.

The PKK emerged with other socialist or communist (Marxist-Leninist or Maoist) Kurdish youth/student organisation in 1970s under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan (aka ‘Apo’<sup>270</sup>) (Gunter, 1990; Imset, 1992; McDowall, 2000; Romano, 2006; White, 2000). It was founded on the Marxist/Leninist<sup>271</sup> ideological positioning within socialist tactics and strategy in 1970s. Initially, it operated through three different institutions as the centre of party’s decision making aspects in relations to three

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<sup>269</sup> The role of organic intellectuals is discussed in previous chapter. see Chapter Four.

<sup>270</sup> When they appeared on the public ground, they first known as an Apocular, the nickname of Abdullah (Apo) Ocalan.

<sup>271</sup> White (2000) claimed PKK mostly used Stalinist and nationalist approaches.

different realm: the PKK is the political wing, ERNK<sup>272</sup> organised the civil activism and ARGK<sup>273</sup> constituted the army.

In 1988, the party cadres issued a declaration that the aspiration of the PKK is to create an independent and democratic society, in first “North Kurdistan” (Turkey) and then in all other parts of Kurdistan through establishing a Marxist-Leninist state (Imset, 1992; Ozcan, 2006; Marcus, 2007). As part of identity construction, the imagination of Kurdistan is important to stress as part of the discourse; but also instead of using Eastern or Southeastern Turkey, the reference was made to “Northern Kurdistan”, which implies that PKK situated its discourse by covering all the traditional defined borders of Kurdistan beyond the existing nation states. Secondly, being a salvation movement, similar to its counterparts in other parts of the world, PKK’s main identity is defined as Marxism, which indeed did not have any historical or present reality in Kurdish political economy.

The organisation’s structure is based on ‘congress’ and it actively performed guerrilla war tactics, namely ‘hit-and-run’ operations and at the same time uses diplomacy effectively and has built a relationship with European supporters and produced a ‘situational politics’ on the balance of the political and economic interest between regional countries such as Syria, Iraq and Iran with Turkey. In addition, the PKK has a ‘dual struggle strategy<sup>274</sup>’, as on the one hand it attempted to achieve unity of the Kurdish national movement through attacking the traditional and ordinary structure of society and its representations, such as state-supported *aghas*, *sheikhs* or *eshirs*, and, it has struggled against other Kurdish socio-political institutions<sup>275</sup>. On the other hand, it considered the external obstacles that are ‘in front of the Kurdish revolution’ – namely the state and its agents including the ultra-nationalist groups (*ulkuculer*) and Turkish Left organisation “social chauvinist<sup>276</sup>”, who were against the ‘independent

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<sup>272</sup> The National Liberation Front of Kurdistan.

<sup>273</sup> The People’ Liberation Army of Kurdistan.

<sup>274</sup> In Chapter Four, we have explained in terms of hegemony theory.

<sup>275</sup> Clashes with PSK, Rizgari and etc. to over tower its leadership in the region and among society, which is end up with killing some members of those organisations, for instance suspicious death of PSK member Mustafa Camlibel in Dogubayazit city, east of country in 1979.

<sup>276</sup> Used by PKK during the construction of the party structure for the organisation like *Devrimci Halkin Birliđi* (People’s Revolutionary Unity) and *Halkin Kurtulushu* (People’s Liberation) (Gunes, 2012).

Kurdistan' idea, as well as right-wing conservative and religious elements as being the supporter of the Turkish as degrading forces.

In the strategies of the PKK, the characteristics of all 1960-70s *Kurdi* institutions can be found, but with different methods, as PKK also used armed struggle effectively as a tactic. Thus, the first significant armed attacks against the state security forces were in Eruh and Semdinli towns in southeast of Turkey or Northern Kurdistan, which is a Kurdish dominated region, on August 15, 1984<sup>277</sup>. In understanding as to why a militarist option was chosen, Romano (2006) explains that civil society was demolished under the 1980 *coup*, the only form of dissent method was seen for the PKK to employ 'violent subversion and guerrilla war', which was the beginning of another cycle of aggressive and antagonistic relations between state and Kurds and a direct struggle against the Turkish state's hegemonic culture for almost thirty years<sup>278</sup>. According to van Bruinessen (2000), the PKK had radical and violent approach to respond to the Kurdish enquires among other socio-political institutions as a response of being strongly concerned with the Kurdistan as a colony of Turkey<sup>279</sup>. In other words, in their imagination, colonial relationship with the Turkish state should be ended in any way including the militarist action, as the earlier strategies since Dersim Uprising in 1938 only made Kurds further subservient to the state. Until 1984, various Kurdish social and political organisations employed and utilised civil tactics, such as publishing magazines, newspaper, bulletins, demonstrations and strikes to give voice to the Kurdish demands and to appropriate Kurdishness by using local networks (Imset, 1992). The PKK has constituted three stages for the independence of Kurdistan, which are: 'strategic defence', 'strategic balance' and 'strategic offense', under its modern leadership.

Thus, Ocalan clarifies this by arguing, "Defence is in one way to wait at guard and try to build ones own force" (Imset, 1992: 98). Therefore, the PKK has first focused on decentralising the power of the state and the right of 'self-determination'. In addition, concern over 'independent Kurdistan' idea rather than a 'universalist demand' of the

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<sup>277</sup> Before this attack the most important arm conflict that PKK had with traditional, tribal and state linked agha of Bucaks Mehemet Celal Bucak in Urfa district in 1979.

<sup>278</sup> It is established by under leading of Abdullah Ocalan, with other six members Mazlum Dogan, Mehmet Hayri Durmus, Cemil Bayik, Mehmet Karasungur, Sahin Donmez and only women member Kesire Yildirim (Ocalan's wife) in Lice –seen first in Ankara- on November 27, 1978.

<sup>279</sup> Besikci (1991) explains the discourse of colonisation in Kurdish case.



other's leftist organisations implied that PKK refused passive revolutionist methods<sup>280</sup>.

The 'undeclared war' and violence between the PKK and the state produced more radical politics in the country, which at the same time has 'terrorised' the region. In 1983, the state introduced an 'Emergency Law' in the region, which showed people in the region to see the violent, brutal face of the state once more. Consequently, locals were forced to leave their homeland, some of them had to find refuge in the western cities, as more than 3,200 villages were destroyed and nearly three million people moved to the metropolises of the Kurdish region and the western cities of Turkey. Therefore, a new emigrant generation grew in Metropolitan cities, like Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Mersin within poverty, unequal and miss-opportunity. Having lost everything and not having the necessary education and skills, the Kurds in the large cities in the other parts of Turkey were forced into economic, political and social misery with an objective to undermine the Kurdish dignity to overcome them, namely psychological war on the side of the state. This created the perfect environment for the PKK to initiate the *serhildan* (Kurdish intifada) mobilisation into the big Turkish cities, which meant the mass mobilisation of local, ordinary Kurds (included children) conflicting with state security forces on the streets in a Palestinian style intifada. The military engagement between the PKK and the state resulted in an accelerating conflict between the state and the Kurdish citizens in mid-1990s resulting in thousands of people being killed or wounded in the last thirty years of the conflict. The conflict has been an everyday matter between the various security forces and the expanding Kurdish population including executive summaries, village burning and evacuation, disappeared individuals, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment including children *etc.*

This new Kurdish identity substantiated itself through the idea of 'rights can be earned' and not 'given' through armed struggle and the national emancipation discourse in this activism allowed PKK to move from marginality to the very centre of socio-political mobilisation<sup>281</sup>. White (2000) found through his interview with

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<sup>280</sup> "The political program of the second congress declared that the Kurdish revolution would begin with weak forces against a strong enemy in a semi-feudal colony as a national war of liberation or long-term popular war" (Gunter, 1990: 71).

<sup>281</sup> In this study we are not aiming to deeply analysing the reasons of why PKK became a dominant actor and leading Kurdish national struggle among these socio-political institutions.

Ocalan that the leader of the organisation mentioned the PKK camp as a sort of ‘social laboratory’, for a future state’s structure, who also claims that the PKK employed the idea of ‘Socialist New Man’ from Stalinist paradigm and radically adapted it for its purposes. Thus, “the PKK has successfully manipulated the traditional system of authority to forge a new Kurdish identity in Turkish Kurdistan, primarily in pursuit of nation-building tasks” (White, 2000: 142). Furthermore, “the PKK believe that they are not fighting for political power as an end itself. They want to change [change] Kurdish society. They talk [of] a new human being, of women who are free, of religious tolerance, modern scientific thinking. They consider themselves Marxist Leninists, but reject a dogmatic approach” (Menon, 1995: 669). As a consequence, traditional, religious and, hence, historical constants of the Kurdish social structures became a target for the party. Apart from that, the PKK has also created a ‘heroism politics’, especially after the Diyarbekir prison resistance during the military junta early 1980s by well-known members, whose legacy was used in *Newroz* celebrations or any activities by the Party to mobilise masses<sup>282</sup>.

The PKK has not always used armed struggle in its antagonistic relation with Turkish state, it also created civil institutions in its structure. Since 1990s, from time to time they applied unilateral ceasefire that has provided an opportunity to present and open a way of dialogue with state institutions and to contribute to the democratisation process of the country (McDowall, 2000).

It should be noted that as a passive revolutionist strategy, the PKK utilised varied tools and tactics. Principally, after the Fourth Congress in 1990 the ‘civilisation process’ was progressing. At this event the most prominent change was that the idea of a separate and independent Kurdistan was transformed into such alternatives as a federalism or autonomy, within the Turkey as an ‘Unitarian state’. This strategy was disseminated through various instruments, including the media in general, particularly through film, TV, radio, music and social media (internet sources), which were

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<sup>282</sup> Such as Mazlum Dogan, who protested torture and violence in the No: 5 Cell of Diyarbekir Prison and fired himself on *Newroz* Day (1982) and defined as a modern Kawa, the founder of *Newroz* rebellion against Assyrian for Medes, ancient of Kurds, by party members. It followed with four other members (Mahmut Zengin, Ferhat Kutay, Necmi Oner and Esref Yanik) that remembered ‘night of four.’ Kemal Pir, who died in hunger strike with Mehmet Hayri Durmus, and other like Akif Yilmaz and Ali Cicek in Diyarbekir Prison, July 14, 1982. Or Mahsun Korkmaz, he died in 1986. He was well-respected guerrilla commander of PKK’s armed force.

applied very effectively to construct social ‘common values’ and morals, through a person or identity<sup>283</sup>. In other words, the PKK also used the media as tactical tools in the struggle to express demands. Especially TV broadcasting activities initiated by the PKK mainly in Kurdish language enhanced its popularity but also expanded its outreach beyond its ideological position. Kurdish broadcasting started in European cities; first with MED TV (Median), after MEDYA TV (Median), and ROJ TV<sup>284</sup> (Day) and recently in 2012, the new Kurdish satellite channels, *Sterk* (Star) and *Nuche* (News) channels were launched. This pro-PKK broadcasting line is also part of the new Kurdish politics as part of the process of shaping the new Kurdish identity<sup>285</sup>. It is a power balance of politics in a triangular relation between Kurdish political movement (agent), Turkey (structure) and EU (superstructure); besides, it arranges the *serhildan* politics. By using all these elements including Kurdish TV channels, the PKK intensified the resistance through various layers of the Kurdish society beyond its military cadres. Funerals of the ‘martyred guerrillas’ and as well as other activists and celebrations, such as *Newroz*, became an instrument for mass protest and street demonstration.

As can be seen, the party has attempted to employ both the ‘strategy of position’ and ‘strategy of manoeuvre’ in expanding and disseminating its cultural leadership and legitimating its hegemonic power via gaining consent of more people among the society<sup>286</sup>. This was coupled with diplomatic ties with various institutions and individuals in Turkey, the EU and beyond.

In the late 1990s, the PKK had also attached some of Turkish radical and illegal left parties to its “historical bloc” such as Revolutionist People’s Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C), after its conflicted relationship with so many of them during the establishment process. On the other hand, lobby activities by diaspora Kurds in mainly Europe, America, as well as Canada, Australia and South Africa implied that the “historical bloc” extended with Western and other international societies. On the

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<sup>283</sup> Abdullah Ocalan says, “I have struggled to develop a new type of Kurdish person, a new identity amongst Kurds, one that is informed and capable of making a stand for Kurdish demands. This is what I have been preparing my people for” (White, 2000: 185).

<sup>284</sup> Their licence cancelled by host countries under ‘terror law’.

<sup>285</sup> see Hassanpour (1992) and Seyholislami (2011).

<sup>286</sup> “The Fifth Congress [1995] of the PKK was held corresponding to these diplomatic moves toward improving the party’s image” (Gunter, 1997: 51), and included applying cease-fires.

other hand, in the post 2000-period, the Islamic and other religious elements, including all other religious minorities, and discourses integrated in party politics, in terms of democratisation process of the organisation and extending the “historical bloc”. Even there was a general amnesty offered by the Party to village guards, in 1991 (Imset, 1992; Ozcan, 2006; Marcus, 2007).

While the PKK insurgency has been transforming into a national liberation struggle in the post-1990s era, since the IV Congress the struggle is formulated in “democratic solution projects”. Nevertheless, the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999 was a crucial turning point for the movement<sup>287</sup>. Through his engagement with the state and its extensions during his prison life, Ocalan found a new opportunity space to re-define the identity of the radical Kurdish politics. The emergence of this new opportunity space is also coincided with the Turkish state’s increased motivation in engaging with the EU accession process for which a number of reforms were undertaken during the early 2000s. “Kurdish problem has shifted from the military to the social and political spheres” (Yavuz and Ozcan, 2006: 103). Thus, the EU hegemony over Turkey eased the Turkish hegemony over Kurdish hegemony and hence such ‘ease’ created some opportunity spaces for the Kurds, and hence Turks, to search for new strategies in dealing with the Kurdish demands and Turkish resistance to such demands. An important consequence of this has been the extension of the Kurdish activism into the democratic process of ‘political party’ system within the parliament, which is explored in detail in the following section.

### **5.3.2.2 Pro-Kurdish Political Party Linear: DTP, BDP**

The PKK as the dominant Kurdish national political agents, as mentioned above, shifted its policies to seek for ‘idea of independent Kurdistan’ to more moderate demands such as autonomy, federation or recently ‘equal citizenship’. In this, the capture of Ocalan in 1999 also provided a crucial impact in developing these agents towards also political sphere from the ‘realm of the mountains’. In addition to such internal dynamics, there were also external facilitator factors. For example, from the beginning of the 1990s, the president, Turgut Ozal challenged the Kemalist system and used the state’s devices and institutions to practice liberalist principles in the

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<sup>287</sup> After Ocalan’s egresses from Syria and searching appropriate place in Europe to ask political asylum seeker rights to couple of state (Russia, Greece or Italy). He declared, ‘My presence here testifies to a change in the strategy of the Kurdish national movement’” (White, 2000: 182).

political and economic spheres. In further attempting to facilitate the process and undermine the existing political status quo, Ozal also expressed his Kurdish ethnic origin. As part of his liberalisation policies, he initiated the changes for the Kurdish language to be used under certain conditions, such as songs and singing. As part of his liberalisation policies, for the first time he started using the term ‘Kurdish Question’ despite the fact that the military campaign of the PKK commenced during his premiership in 1984. Thus, after a long political silent process of the *coup*, Ozal’s presence as the ‘open’ President of the country opened new opportunity spaces including the first Kurdish language newspaper *Rojname* (Newspaper) and pro-Kurdi *Yeni Ulke*<sup>288</sup> were published, in 1991 (McDowall, 2000), although many negative legal and psychological obstacles still remained.

Under Ozal’s Presidentship, the Prime minister Suleyman Demirel also accepted the ‘Kurdish reality’ at his Diyarbakir visit in 1991 as a reflection of the relaxation of state official ideology. After, it became a tradition for Turkish prime ministers to go to the region, mostly Diyarbakir, because of its historical mission (known the unofficial capital city of Kurds), and declare their acceptance of the Kurdish reality. For instance, Mesut Yilmaz in 1999 during his visit to Diyarbakir stated openly that “the road to the EU pass through Diyarbakir”. In addition, many years later, Erdogan also accepted the state’s mistakes on Kurdish issue in his 2005 Diyarbakir speech and stated that “the Kurdish problem is my problem”.

In this same period, Turkey’s EU relations have also enhanced; and in particular in the post-1999 period EU-accession process resulted in a series of political, legal and policy reforms. This has had positive impact in the transformation of the Kurdish politics.

The securitising and militarising of the Kurdish issue, thus, has dramatically transformed into civil, liberal and institutional politics gradually from early 1990s. Thus, the new official approach towards the Kurdish ‘question’ or ‘problem’ opened more spaces for the *Kurdi* movement in the Turkic public sphere. On the other hand, the PKK itself has transformed its radical Marxist understanding of politics into social democratic values and harmonised with its struggle to promote and facilitate the new

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<sup>288</sup> The New Country.

process. At the same time it used a strategy of cease-fire to create a dialogue sphere. This shows important progress, because the PKK aimed at to be seen as a political organisation rather than ‘terrorist organisation’ by the centre, and the pro-Kurdish political party-line, namely the legal *Kurdi*(sh) party leadership has argued that the state needs to provide an opportunity space to search for peaceful and democratic solutions, while the outlawed PKK could reduce the ‘terrorising’ elements of the Kurdish conflict<sup>289</sup>.

Additionally, certain Turkish civil society organisations or the NGOs have attempted to understand the Kurdish problem, within a democratic, liberal and social approach and empathy. As a consequence, alongside these changes in social and political spheres, the general attitudes and values of the Kurdish movement were also changing. It is argued that there was a social contract between the two sides and they wanted to use state opportunities similar to those in the Ottoman era and the building processes of the Republic. The discourse of ‘self-determination’ in accordance of UN Charter/Article 1 and 2 is vitalised by *Kurdi* politics federalism, cultural or democratic autonomy, further decentralisation, regional self-governance also appear on the country’s agenda.

Due to this liberalisation process, more Kurdish ‘civil’ actors penetrated into the ‘legal’ political sphere and these new agents employ the “war of position” strategy in the struggle for Kurdish ‘national demands’. The Kurdish political struggle becomes effectively associated with ‘intellectual elites’, organisations and social strata and articulating and systematising the demands that correspond to Kurdish society. They began to seek solutions under the country’s political, intellectual, and legal ground, within parliamentary legitimacy. Although, their democratic street protests/marches sometimes terrorised by state security forces (Gunter, 1997; McDowall, 2000), particularly during the *Newroz* celebration or the funeral of ‘un-known killed’, which turned into a ‘violent relation’ between the Kurdish political mobilisation and state

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<sup>289</sup> In 1990 HEP parliaments speech say that “PKK is not terrorist movement” (Gurbey, 1996). In many years later, in a more liberalised political environment of Turkey, the co-chair of the DTP (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* – Democratic Society Party) Emine Ayna, stated this particular relations between the Kurdish political wings and the PKK: “we are at the same point in terms of the definition of the problem and its solution. ‘Concerning the Kurdish question, the difference we have with the PKK is that they are conducting an armed campaign and we are conducting a political struggle’” (Gunes, 2012: 172).

security forces, in terms of the power struggle to gain legitimacy, in the region<sup>290</sup>. Thus, on the one hand with the expansion of the opportunity space, there was positive development, while on the other hand, antagonistic relations continued.

The new and ‘peripheral’ mobilisation has become part of the transformation of Turkey’s democratisation process, through challenging the state’s rigid political and judicial system. Moreover, they re-read the ‘Kurdish fact’ in social, political and economic equality, justice, liberalisation and living together through democratic values and its institutions. Nevertheless, all this progress and changes should not imply that the ‘politicised’ *Kurdi* movements were submitting to the state’s hegemonic power; besides, the tactics of ‘light war of manoeuvre’ was also still utilised by the masses like hunger strike, protest, demonstration, clashes with state forces during strikes or industrial action (shout-down shops), which showed the strategy of the struggle relocated from the mountains to the cities. Both passive and active tactics were being used at the same time. The PKK and pro-*Kurdi*(sh) political parties have played an important role in organising these social movements.

The Kurdish demands were after the oppressive 1980 *coup* era conceptualised and sounded in the legal political ground by *Kurdi* political actors, through Turkish *Sosyal Demokrat Halkchi Parti-SHP* (Social Democrat People’s Party, 1985). Hence, the MPs of Kurdish origin with Kurdish ticket had an opportunity to bring forward Kurdish affairs and to challenge the regime’s Kurdish policy in the parliament. However, by mid-1990s, the democracy of country was still not ready to handle a ‘separate’ Kurdish identity, which seen the reaction after political activity of these MPs, who challenged and forced the regime on the Kurdish policy<sup>291</sup>. The SHP could no longer accept the Kurdish MPs prioritising the Kurdish issue, and as a result, they were expelled from SHP.

After such an experience under the wings of the SHP, *Halkin Emek Partisi-HEP* (Labour Party of People) had been inaugurated as a first pro-Kurdish political party, by former SHP cadre on June 7, 1990. Kurdish demands and rights became the

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<sup>290</sup> For instance, in 1992 March it caused death of approximately 100 civilians.

<sup>291</sup> For example, attending to the International Kurdish Conference in Paris held by Paris Kurdish Institute end the expelled of the party members and MP Kenan Sonmez, Ismail Hakkı Onal, Ahmet Turk, Mehmet Ali Eren, Adnan Ekmen, Mahmut Alınak and Salih Sumer on December 16, 1989.

priority for this political institution. The *Ozgurluk ve Eshitlik Partisi*-OZEP (Freedom and Equity Party) was also established in similar principals by former -Kurdish origin- SHP MPs in 1992, but in the same year they dissolved the party and joined to HEP. Therefore, HEP is participated following election and gained 18 MPs, through local collations with SHP in 1991. However, the country's politics and democracy, as mentioned, were not ready to see a separate Kurdish identity, the ethnicity based politics. Hence the cultural discourse of HEP was not greeted by right-wing, conservative (nationalist and Islamist) or Kemalist political parties and media, even by the judiciary system. As a consequence, eleven members of Constitutional Court, July 14, 1993 unanimously closed the HEP on the ground of prioritising Kurdish demand. In this environment *the Ozgurluk ve Demokrasi Patisi*-OZDEP (Freedom and Democracy Party) was already founded as alternative against possibility of the ending HEP.

In spite of this, the Constitutional Court opened a case against OZDEP with a similar reason as its predecessor: 'separatism and terror' and a link with the PKK. Before the court's decision, the leadership of OZDEP decided to abolish their party. These legal and political clashes determined the nature of the relationship between pro-Kurdish party and state institutions. In such an environment, to continue to remain within the political process, the *Demokrasi Partisi* - DEP (Democracy Party) was set up by political coterie under leadership of Yasar Kaya on May 7, 1993. It also closed on June 16, 1994 by the Constitutional Court.

Nevertheless, on May 14, 1994 *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* - HADEP (People's Democracy Party) replaced the gap, which is occurred after DEP closure, even though all political, social, psychological pressure and killing continued. In the 1999 election, the HADEP gained 37 mayoralties in the region. However, as a *déjà vu* when HADEP closed by the Constitutional Court on the ground of 'separatism and terror', on March 13, 2003<sup>292</sup>. The *Demokratik Halk Partisi* - DEHAP was waiting to replace HADEP's place<sup>293</sup>.

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<sup>292</sup> The party was closed down due to article 68 and 69 of Constitution and political party law no. 2820 article 101 and 103 - not different result from other pro-Kurdi party line - for being a centre of illegal activities, also aiding and supporting PKK according.

<sup>293</sup> The Party management abolished the party against any possible closure on November 19, 2005.



Finally but not lastly, the *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* - DTP (Democratic Society Party) was constituted through two chairpersons (November 9, 2005). It stands out as a first example of a co-chair system in Turkey's democratic life. Ahmet Turk and Aysel Tugluk became co-chairpersons for the party leadership. DTP assembled social democrat or socialist political actors under the roof of 'candidate of thousand hopes', in 2007 election and reached 21 MPs in the parliament (including former president of the Human Rights Association – IHD, Akin Birdal; and Turkish leftist Freedom and Solidarity Party-ODP Chairman Ufuk Uras). They started a new context and constructed a new discourse, through the *Turkiyelileshme* (Turkeyness) project and solidarity with other 'isolated identities' such as socialists, *Alawites*, Assyrians or LGBT and also by trying to extend their 'historical bloc' for Kurdish counter-hegemonic struggle. The inevitable end came on November 27, 2007 and the party closure case opened against DTP due to operates 'against the territorial and national integrity of the state' and concluded with closure on December 11, 2009. All these closures should be considered as an indication of the establishment of rejecting the democratic positioning of the Kurdish politics, which also dramatically shows that Turkish parliamentary system is turning into a 'cemetery of political parties'.

*Barish ve Demokrasi Partisi*- BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) was established soon after in 2008 to represent the Kurdish demands at the parliament, as the new successor of pro-Kurdi party lines, which and won 36 seats at the June 2011 election with 5.8% vote of whole country but nearly 80% of the region<sup>294</sup>. It made another fresh yet not complete start in its attempt to lead the Kurdish politics in Turkey's political life. However, a number of elected MPs were in prison for their political activism, which were hoped to be released after their election; this was not allowed by the Turkish regime. It should also be noted that BDP is currently holding an important number<sup>295</sup> of local governments and their mayorship in the region, and have become a very effective tool for Kurdish agents to practice their politics among people. All these are a vindication of the Kurdish adamant attitude towards political solution to the Kurdish 'problem'.

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<sup>294</sup> see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13740147>

<sup>295</sup> 99 Mayors hold by BDP.

Within the line of the HEP, OZEP, OZDEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP (all closed) and BDP. As the aim of the Kurdish elite was to put forward the Democratic Republic discourse as a solution to the Kurdish problem within the available opportunity spaces in Turkey's public sphere. In this process of Kurdish political struggle for 'democratic society' to ensure the rights of the Kurds, violence has been the main constant. It is important to highlight that these political parties started to challenge the relation of the centre-periphery, within economic backwardness and equal opportunities of social, political and cultural life. As an evidence for this, the BDP held municipalities, despite all the on-going persecution, started to use Kurdish language in their municipal work in an attempt to integrate the larger population with the services provided, who have been alienated from such services for so many years, as they opened discussion of multi-language services<sup>296</sup>. In addition, they reverted the names of important places into Kurdish in the region.

One of the crucial points about these party-lines is that they consistently use the discourses of 'democracy', 'freedom', 'equity', 'people' and 'peace' and locate them within Kurdish national demands. They also utilise similar name, policy, colour, symbols and emblems of parties as a representative of ethnic politics. In addition, an important characteristics of the Kurdish parties has been their direct involvement with EU institutions, at the official level, with a desire to decentralise and redistribute the power of state so that further opportunity spaces for democratisation can be possible, as it is believed that with further democratisation it would be possible to expand the Kurdish rights in Turkey.

The new Kurdish counter hegemony has other stakeholders to disseminate the idea of Kurdishness and national demands through media devices. However, this agent also was accused with involving 'terrorist activity' by the state, because of their approach to the PKK and they also faced bans and closure<sup>297</sup>. Similar to the political parties, the

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<sup>296</sup> Especially, Abdullah Demirbas, Mayor of Sur, Diyarbakir operated this policy, however he was relieved of his duty by court for that reason, in 2007.

<sup>297</sup> Daily newspapers such as *Ulkede Ozgur Gundem*, *Gundem*, *Yashamda Gundem*, *Guncel*, *Gunluk and Gerçek Demokrasi* (all in Turkish), *Azadiya Welat*, *Rojev* (in Kurdish), or weekly *Yedinci Gun*, *Haftaya Bakish*, *Yashamda Demokrasi*, *Toplumsal Demokrasi*, *Oteki Bakish* (in Turkish), or *Firat and Dicle* news agencies have closed for a short time or shutdown indefinitely. The international broadcasting Kurdish TV (MED, ROJ etc.) also became an important issue between European countries and Turkey due to Turkey's accusation of accusing these channels being the propaganda centers of the PKK resulting in pressure for closing these TVs.

print media and broadcasts also use a similar name as their predecessor and apply a discourse of ‘agenda’, ‘life’, ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, and ‘peace’. Recently, the social media such as Twitter, Facebook or blogs used that inspired from ‘Arab Spring’, by pro-Kurdish agents to challenge state policy on Kurdish demands and gain attention of European or international society. Thus, Kurdish search for sustaining of a counter Kurdish hegemony against the imposition of the Turkish state continues through political and cultural means by use of various platforms including political parties and political participations, NGOs, various news media and other electronic and virtual outlets.

### **5.3.2.3 PKK-sceptic but ‘Kurdophile’ Agents: PSK, HAK-PAR**

Apart from PKK and ‘PKK resembles’ political parties, the state have not tolerate any other ‘Kurdi based’ political party either, which were formulated on the Kurdish demands beyond PKK’s formulations. For example, Former Minister Serafettin Elci’s liberal, *Demokratik Kitle Partisi* - DKP (Democratic Mass Party) established in 1997 and Constitutional Court closed it down on the grounds of using ‘separatist’ propaganda on February 26, 1999. Elci was again voted a chairman for the newer political party established in 2006 as a replacement, called *Katilimci Demokrasi Partisi* - *KADEP* (Participatory Democracy Party)<sup>298</sup>.

There are also other political parties operating in Turkish and Kurdish politics, which are founded mostly by PKK’s rivals, as in some cases the competition and even animosity can be traced back to 1960s. For example, Kemal Burkay’s *Partiye Sosyalista Kurdistan* – PSK always located itself as an opposition to PKK, which did not practice on legal political ground either. However, the PSK leadership and its European inheritor KOMKAR supported the *Hak ve Ozgurlukler Partisi* - *HAK-PAR* (Rights and Liberties Party) in Turkey’s political sphere in recent years<sup>299</sup>. The ‘PKK-sceptic’ Kurdish intellectuals established HAK-PAR in 2002 under Abdulmelik Firat’s leadership, who was Sheik Said’s grandson. They focus on Kurdish rights, mostly demanding a federal solution for Kurdish people, although they have different

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<sup>298</sup> Elci was one of the MP of BDP in the current parliament (2012).

<sup>299</sup> For instance, recently Kemal Burkay has been turned to Turkey after 31 years exile in Europe and he became a leader of the HAK-PAR (2012).

approach than the ‘pro-PKK’ political culture. Its former chairman Bayram Bozyel comes from 1960s movement and was a charter member of *Demokrasi ve Degishim Partisi-DDP* (Democracy and Transformation Party), 1994, which was closed down by Constitutional Court in 1995. On the other hand, the *Demokrasi ve Barish Partisi-DBP* (later joined to HAK-PAR) and leftist *Ozgurluk ve Sosyalizm Partisi - OSP* (Freedom and Socialism Party) are other Kurdish origin political parties existing in Kurdish social and political spheres, without organic link with pro-PKK institutions. Although the political orientation of OSP socialist and aiming to provide a socialist recipe for the Kurdish problem, like many, the HAK-PAR has also Islamic and traditional character.

Apart from political parties and their leadership or members, there are also Kurdish intellectuals, mainly left-wing oriented, who have appeared independently from PKK’s politics. For example, Ibrahim Guclu, a former leader of another famous 1960’s organisation *Ala Rizgari* (after TEVGER), appeared a crucial competitor to the PKK position. He was active in political parties, first DKP and after HAK-PAR; however he could not continue with political parties and became involved in the establishment of the Kurdish National Unity Movement (TEVKURD) and decided mainly remained within intellectual activities. Other Kurdish intellectuals, such as Umit Firat, Muhsin Kizilkaya, Orhan Miroglu, Orhan Kotan, Yilmaz Camlibel, Sitki Zilan and Abdurrahman Onen<sup>300</sup> as well as Tarik Ziya Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Ahmet Zeki Okcuoğlu, Mehmet Metiner, Enver Sezgin, Sirac Bilgin, Lokman Polat, Lutfi Baksi, Hatice Yasar, and the State Kurdish broadcasting, TRT 6’s (*shesh*) staff Firat Ceweri, İhsan Aksoy ve Abdulcelil Candan each has contemplated the solution for the Kurdish matter through different interpretations, which creates a contradiction and antagonist relation between them and PKK as well as pro-PKK intellectuals and political parties<sup>301</sup>.

It should be noted that the main distinctive characteristic of these actors is based on the strategy/tactics of hegemonic struggle for Kurdish demands. They position

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<sup>300</sup> Orhan Miroglu (2012), *Aydinlarin Siyasi Gucu* (The Political Power of Intellectuals), Taraf Newspaper, 31 March 2012.

<sup>301</sup> These names published under the name of “good Kurds and bad Kurds” by famous Oda TV as they claimed the list was according to Dr. Bahoz Erdal, one of the leader of PKK, 17 January 2011. see <http://www.odatv.com/n.php?n=iste-isim-isim-iyi-kurtler-ve-kotu-kurtler-2201101200>

themselves with non-violence by only focusing on fighting for the expansion of democracy and human rights as opposed to armed struggle. Therefore, they are more in defensive and passive politics. Their counter-PKK and anti-violence perspective provides them to find more opportunity space in the Turkish public sphere than the ‘other nationalist’ or ‘bad Kurds’ could have. However, as an organisation they have very low support from society, which makes it difficult for them to carve a larger space in the new opportunity space in Kurdish society and in larger Turkey’s society. However, it is important to identify that having plurality helps to liberalise or democratise Kurdish political culture. This is an ongoing process, and therefore new ‘internal’ actors will continue to emerge with their own patterns of politics and more civil movements willing to operate legally.

As can be seen, while the Kurds in general developed counter hegemonic position against the Republican Turkish hegemony, it seems that various counter-hegemonies have risen as well against the main hegemonic power in the Kurdish socio-political domain.

#### **5.3.2.4 Defensive Civic Institutions: IHD, DTK, DISA**

In the mapping of Kurdish strategies and identities, in addition to political movements and intellectual positioning, a number of civic institutions taking part in the organisation of Kurdish activism are identified.

From the Kurdish NGOs point of view, the discourse of human rights and human rights institutions became a centre point in Kurdish agenda and seen as representative of Kurdish demands, especially in 1990s. For example, *Insan Haklari Dernegi* - IHD (Human Rights Association) was founded in Ankara in 1986, and it is one of the leading and most notable of these non-governmental/state or civil institutions with many branches and thousands of members all around the country. It mostly focuses on Kurdish human rights issues, tortures, abuses and harassments. Due to these activities the IHD has been subjected to constant persecution, arrests, detention, and its members have been targeted for extrajudicial killings<sup>302</sup>.

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<sup>302</sup> For example, Vedat Aydin who was the chairman of Diyarbekir IHD was subjected to summary execution in 1991. And Saddik Tan member of Diyarbekir IHD in 1992; Kemal Kilic member of Urfa IHD in 1993; Metin Can, chairman of Elazig IHD in 1993 also killed similar way (Muller, 1996 cited in Olson ed.).

Kurdish Human Rights Project - KHRP a European based pro-Kurdish rightist institution, established in London in 1992 by Kerim Yildiz<sup>303</sup>. Remained an important civil organisation until recently aimed at helping Kurds with human rights issues and educating the society to use the legal channels to advocate and express themselves in the existing system specially in European ground<sup>304</sup>. Hence, the human rights issue of Turkey became a source of representation of the Kurdish struggle in the European political, judicial and public sphere that affected also the EU's policy towards the Kurdish issue.

However, after the shifting of international politics on human rights and national struggle movement, particularly after 9/11 incidents and the Turkish state's change policy towards the Kurdish issue, changes have also been observed in pro-Kurdish position as well. The engagement with the EU in particular played an important role in this change. In responding to the impact of the EU engagement, the Democratic Progress Initiative- DPI is founded after KHRP closed in London in 2012 by some former members of the KHRP with the objective of helping the stakeholders in Turkey to understand the process of conflict resolution<sup>305</sup>. In addition, the Centre for Turkey Studies and Development established in April 2011 by Kurdish (diaspora) lobbyist, in London, which arranges activities, mostly in London and Istanbul with well-know Turkish, English MPs, journalists, universities and institutions for searching appropriate conflict resolution and peace conditions<sup>306</sup>. In line of the same institutional developments, the EU Turkey Civic Commission – EUTCC was also

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<sup>303</sup> It recently closed 2011 and replaced by Democratic Progress Initiative. This also shows the Kurdish agent transforming their politics that applicable with Turkey's political life and new international order.

<sup>304</sup> Yildiz states (cites by Graves, 2012) that “the KHRP was set up to remind Turkey of their national and international obligations and to use the Human Rights channels available. Through these mechanisms, we were able, for the first time in history, to open up a gateway for people to take their cases directly to the international and regional courts such as the European Court of Human Rights [...] We believe that we have succeeded through those cases. For example, Turkey had to lift the state of emergency, and abolish the death penalty, as well as make payment of compensation to victims and make changes regarding the state of detention”.

<sup>305</sup> Director is Kerim Yildiz, former director of the KHRP. Working with Yilmaz Ensarioglu, Mehmet Asutay, Hasan Cemal, Cengiz Candar, Ali Bayramoglu, Ahmet Insel Nihal Kaplan, Mithat Sancar and Bejan Matur etc. and also with Galatasaray University (Istanbul), Kings College (University of London). See <http://www.democraticprogress.org/>

<sup>306</sup> The founder and director of this ‘non-partisan’ organisation is Ibrahim Dogus, worked for Kurdish community many years one of the objective of CTSD is provides debates focusing on Turkey's internal (e.g. Kurdish) and international issues. See <http://www.centre-for-turkey-studies.org/>

established in 2004 and lobbies in the EU Parliament, arranges conferences and invites state linked institutions (individuals), European and Kurdish actors to dialogue and peace spaces for conflict-resolution<sup>307</sup>.

These pro-Kurdish think tanks or human rights organisations publish regular reports to reach the attention of Turkish, European and international societies. Moreover, they read the Kurdish agenda, through lenses of international institutions like Amnesty International, Human Right Watch's report, UN, and EU human rights regulation or in democratic and liberal principles; and struggled against the state's law (Anti-terror, Assaulting of Turkishness) or institutions (State Security Courts-DGM and National Security Council-MGK or Higher Educational Council-YOK). However, they have been accused by state institutions of being a 'voice' of the PKK and so many cases opened against them on the grounds of involvement in separatist activities.

Other accommodative actors are active in the public sphere, as cultural, linguistic and solidarity institutions. They believe in Kurdish cultural, social and economic rights and have searched for opportunity spaces in public sphere. For example, *Mezopotamya Kultur Merkezi* (Mesopotamia Cultural Centre) - MKM; The Kurdish Institute of Istanbul (also in the EU and USA), which was founded in 1992; TZP Kurdish language movement founded in 2006 and organised informal languages activity or *Sarmashik Yoksullukla Mucadele ve Surdurulebilir Kalkınma Dernegi* (Ivy Association of Struggle for Poverty and Sustainable Development) - SYMSKD. Most of them are seen by the Turkish State as one of PKK's legal affiliates in social and political life. According to the Chairman of SYMSKD, Selcuk Mizrakli, they have 7,400 people, who regularly donate to the organisation, through which they do help 3,150 families to cover their basic needs and give scholarships to 120 students. However, he complained that they are under political and legal pressures of the state, being accused of connection with PKK as acting like its urban structure.

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<sup>307</sup> It has founded by KHRP (UK), Rafto Foundation (Norway) and Medico International (Germany) organisations. Their aim is "favours Turkish membership in the European Union. Provided the EU insists on full compliance, in law and in practice, with the Copenhagen criteria in all its aspects, Turkey will become a genuine democracy, with "respect for and protection of minorities". This will resolve one of the most difficult political problems that Turkey has so far failed to even recognise and that has been a festering sore in Turkey for decades, namely the Kurdish problem" <http://www.eutcc.org/articles/5/about.ehtml>

In addition, many other defensive and accommodative pro-Kurdish civil society organisations or think-thanks operates in social, political, judicial and economic spheres: *Demokratik Toplum Kongresi* (Democratic Society Congress) - DTK, *Halkların Demokratik Kongresi* (Peoples' Democratic Congress) - HDK, or Diyarbakir Institute for Political and Social Research - DISA are some of the prominent such institutions.

All of these groups seek to consolidate 'civic institutions' by reconstituting the reciprocal relations between state and Kurdish citizens through redefining the 'Kurdish problem' in political, social, economic aspects of everyday life, and aiming to carve a sphere for Kurdishness to exist beyond the private sphere to the public sphere. At the same time these groups, in promoting pluralism endeavours to form an intellectual, peaceful dialogue environment. Thus, they actively delve into possible ways to integrate *Kurdiness* and its demands into the social and political sphere, through applying the internationally legitimated universal human rights. In particular, linguistic, cultural, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, alongside with liberal and democratic discourses.

As the discussion so far implies, the Kurdish organisations and individuals attempt to organise a "historical bloc" in challenging the hegemony of the Turkish state. On January 11, 2012 many of these accommodative agents also joined a declaration organised by BDP, HAK-PAR, KADEP, OSP, DTK, TEV-KURD and *Devrimci Demokratik Kurt Hareketi* (TDSK). The leadership publicised a declaration in Diyarbakir to work and move together towards contextualised Kurdish demands and rights including political status; such as self-determination of rights in Kurdistan, particularly in the new constitutional building process. This verifies the explicit or implicit aim of creating a "historical bloc" despite the differences and even competition, as the central issue remains to be the existence of Kurdishness.

## **5.4 TRADITIONAL, CONSERVATIVE AND ISLAMI KURDINESS**

### **5.4.1 Sustaining the Substantial Identity**

Islamic values and morals have been preserved in Kurdish society for a long time, since they converted to Islam in seventh century AD. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Islamic value system, along with *tariqah* institutions all have traditionally played



a crucial role in the Kurdish social structure. In addition, Kurds played an important role in Islamic history and produced many religious scholars in the Islamic world<sup>308</sup>. The concept of *ummah* is embedded in the culture of Kurdish masses. Kurds never destroy the nature of *ummah*, the element of the Islamic social cements, in the region since they became Muslims. And they always fight alongside Turkish (or other) Muslim brothers, from very early history to Ottoman times and continue the ‘independent war’ of new state, even though nationalism captures the whole Muslim world (pan-Turkish, Arab and Persian) in this period. Therefore, they had protested the nation state concept that believed that this model, which was coming from the West and its modernist, occidentalist or orientalist institutions, was a threat for the unity of *ummah*. Therefore, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, they acknowledged the ‘Islamic fraternity’ with Turkish ‘brethren’ in forming the post-Ottoman state in Anatolia including Kurdistan<sup>309</sup>. For Kurds religion does not only enter significantly into social life, as it has an important role in social construction of reality, it is also a deterministic social factor for humanity. Berger (1969: 28), therefore, states that:

Religion has played a strategic part in the human enterprise of world-building. Religion implies the farthest reach of man’s self-externalisation, of his infusion of reality with his own meanings. Religion implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant.

Through Karl Mannheim’s social constructivism point of view it can be stated that the Kurdish society is divided into socio-political groups, which produce their social locations and construct their ‘scope of knowledge’. Therefore, the relation between those inner groups of society transpires in the area of competition and antagonistic relations to one another, which can be seen through ‘power relation’ of social and political life. Thus the exercise of power is associated with relations between different fragments of society as much as with a central state. One of such groups is formulated within the ‘Islamic value system’ and has gained legitimacy through religious principles, which is constructed as social reality and embedded in everyday life. “Religion thus serves to maintain the reality of that socially constructed world within

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<sup>308</sup> see details in Mufid’s (2012), *Islam tarihinde Kurt ulemasi ve gunumuze bakish*, (The Kurdish Intellectuals in Islamic history and in today’s point of view), Yeni Safak Newspaper, <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/Yazarlar/?i=31192&y=MufitYuksel>

<sup>309</sup> see Houston (2001: 178).

which men exist in their everyday lives” (Berger, 1969: 42) whereby a meaning is given to the everyday life<sup>310</sup>.

It should be noted that whenever the State divided Islam from the public sphere and secularised society as a result of modernity, it has at the same time incurred problematic relations with Islamic but also religiously determined Kurdish identity until the 1950s.

In the *Kurdi* Islamic point of view, some internal political agents have also begun the process of secularisation incommensurate with the developments in the Ottoman and later in the Republican centre. This implied that some “sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols” (Berger, 1969: 106). Hence, Kurdishness also has decomposed along side with religious tutelage that is separated from institutional sphere in Turkey and beyond. Because, secularisation designed whole life styles and “is more than a social-structural process. It affects the totality of cultural life and of ideation, and may be observed in the decline of religious contents in the arts, in philosophy, in literature” (Berger, 1969: 107). Moreover, due to the hegemonising power of secularism prevailing in the world, religion is no longer legitimates the whole society, nor thus identity. Consequently, religious agents seek to maintain their particular sub-identity and compete with internal and external opponents.

McDowall (2000: 431) argued that “the religious impulse had always been a complex issue [for Kurds as well as Turks]. Observant Sunni Kurds felt drawn into the wider orbit of Sunni Islam in Turkey and had responded to the liberalisation introduced by parties of the Right in the 1950s”. Therefore, religious ties and networks is one of the main reasons to have continued relation with Turkish society (furthermore with the State), which created a crucial obstacle to Kurdish nationalists gaining a national unity of Kurds. It is, therefore, argued and commonly referred in an opportunist but also apologetic sense that Islam is the only common tie between Kurds and Turks and the current conflict between them can easily be solved with Islamic frameworks, within Islam’s stance on ethnic and national rights including the Kurdish rights.

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<sup>310</sup> Furthermore, “religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality” (Berger, 1969: 32).

Apart from 1960-1980 period, *Kurdi* Islamists are also against the Turkish nationalism, who have mobilised in a counter-hegemony identity, versus the Turkish sovereignty in the Kurdish society. Moreover, as the recent debate in Turkey indicates, they argue that observed Islamic approach articulated in the Turkish society itself failed to address the Kurdish demands. Therefore, they do also blame Turkish Muslims for being ‘arrogant’ and ‘ignorant’ of basic Kurdish demands, such as linguistic and cultural rights. As a consequence, *Kurdi* Islamists’ are against a ‘Statist, and Turkic Islamic’ approach, as much as they are against the Jacobin, laicise and oppressive modernist policy of state, or secular, Marxist Leninist Kurdish ideology and discourses. However, in recent years, due to diverging from Turkish Islamic position, an understanding has been observed between Islamically-oriented Kurds and the mainstream Kurdish political agent.

Consequently, the devout Muslim Kurds defined *Kurdiness*, within the Islamic discourse, and constructed a sort of ‘passive nationalism’ and at the same time searching for a way to bring their *Kurdi* Islamist identity into the public sphere with the objective of expanding among Kurdish society. Yavuz and Ozcan (2006: 107) described them as “Muslim-Kurds, those who stress Islamic values and normally identify with religion rather than ethnicity but also feel Kurdish when confronted with the choice of Turkish identity”. According to Houston (2001: 177):

Kurdish Islamist discourse is concerned to show that on the contrary Islam does not cancel ethnic subjectivity, and that such subjectivity is not a Western innovation [...] If the democratisation of the political structure in Turkey proves incapable of granting such rights, Kurdish Islamic discourse finds no objection in Islam, or in Islamic law, to their realisation through a federation, or by autonomy, or in the independent state for Kurds.

Consequently, this approach creates refractions on the ‘brotherhood-fraternity’ of Turkish and Kurdish Muslims<sup>311</sup>. The Islamic Kurdish intellectual, Ramazan Deger complains of being labelled as ‘Kurdist’, when one makes references to Kurdish demands among Islamists, as he stated: “if you put the Kurdish problem on the agenda, you are a Kurdish nationalist” (Houston, 2001: 175). Thus, they also became subject to the Kemalist state’s persecution for, one, being a Muslim and, two, being

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<sup>311</sup> For instance, Abdulmelik Firat, who was one of the politically active grandsons of Sheik Said, changed his attitudes and supported the pro-Kurdi HADEP instead of conservative parties or the Turkish Islamist *Refah Partisi*-RP (Welfare Party) in 1996 Houston (2001).

Kurd, different than their Turkish fellow religious counterparts. This constitutes an ambivalent situation for the Islamically oriented Kurds and fosters complex relations with Marxist Kurds and that encourages them in constructing a Kurdish Islamic discourse, which is distinguishable from both Kurdish Socialists and Turkish Islamists, as well as the Kemalist state discourse informed religiosity. This new activism and discourse by the Kurdish Islamic groups has shaped a new type of sub-identity on political and social ground.

Nevertheless, this new perspective also expresses differences between ‘intellectually constructed formal Kurdianness’ and ‘existentially practices of daily Kurdianness’. Furthermore, for this pattern of identity Kurdianness presented to society, which was exposed to modernity, nationalism and secularism. However, as mentioned before, “it would be wrong to assume that Kurdish Islamists are necessarily anti-PKK because of its avowed anti-religiosity [though organisation’s 1991 pamphlet on religion shows, there seems to have been a strategic change in the rhetoric of the PKK leadership towards Islam]” (Houston, 2001: 184). As a result, the Kurdish Islamists had created their own ‘isle of identity.’ They also applied Kurdish -Islamic- heritage, for instance the legacy of Kurdish Mir Selahaddin Eyyubi remains one of the most respected and iconic image of Islam, who saved Al-Quds or Jerusalem from the crusades in the medieval age and became a ‘hero’ of Kurdish Islamic identity. Likewise, Sheikh Said the leader of 1925 rebellion, alongside other *sheiks* rebellions is another decisive contributor in shaping this new identity. Despite its contested identity by his Turkish followers, Said-i Nursi’s (Kurdi) moderate Islamic culture remains an important heritage to rationalise the importance of Islamic within Kurdish circles in defining the new Kurdish Islamic identity.

Similar to anyone else, Kurdish Islamic oriented individuals’ knowledge of identity is embedded in everyday life, through commonsense, values and tradition, which are simultaneously constructed and turn into their ‘social reality’ and this context is legitimised by the ‘Islamic belief system’. The *Kurdi* identity emerged as a sub-identity under Islamic identity. Thus, the Kurdish identity is reshaped with political and cultural Islam since the last period of the Ottoman Empire. This approach maintains its ‘symbolic universe’<sup>312</sup> and discourse through available Islamic Kurdish

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<sup>312</sup> The term used by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

heritage. Moreover they developed a religious “language game<sup>313</sup>”, for example, words like ‘*ummah*’, ‘*tevhid*’, ‘*Jihad*’, ‘*mustadafeen*’ (*oppressed*), ‘*shariah*’, ‘salvation’ or ‘brotherhood’, which are create a ‘social fact’ for their subjects. In particular, Kurdish Islamists’ essentialisation of ‘*mustadafeen*’ is an important concept to consider, which carried important messages for the rest of the Kurdish and mainly to Turkish society.

This identity of the intellectual and its role is different and contradictory, when compared with secular *Kurdi* intellectuals. It functions more in Mannheim’s ‘intellectual’ rather than Gramsci’s ‘organic’ sense. They act as a “mechanism of transmission” and formulate or arrange a system of belief for distributing or transmitting to the Kurdish society, in terms of responsibility of being a ‘devout Muslim’. Thus, they are required to produce the legitimacy that vindicates their identity against an opposing one, via intellectual apparatus. The ‘hermeneutics’ of the world obtained via the dynamic of Islamic values, can be synthesised with a world-view and sometimes provide solutions to the issues of society (humankind). They construct a *Kurdi* identity in Islamic morals; they therefore argue that there is no need to be secularised in order to have a national identity. The Kurdish Islamists also explores the Kurdish problem in a pro-*Kurdi* approach to offer an Islamic blueprint, at the same time however they go into competition with other (secular) *Kurdi* groups but also Turkish Islamic groups over the dominance of the Kurdish identity sphere, which has sometimes resulted in clashes or violence.

Therefore it is very useful here to understand the groups’ strategy and its relation with other groups, in terms of a theoretical framework, namely the social constructivist approach in this chapter. In other words, “Mannheim’s work is useful for its stress on the way in which groups exist in relations of political struggle, and for the manner in which knowledge is related to a plurality of groups. However relations between these groups must be specified and further investigated” (Longhurst, 1989: 89-90).

The Kurdish Islamic groups created a ‘*Kurdi Islami*’ discourse, in doing so they also distinguished themselves from the Islamic world (including Turks; Akel, 2012) due to unresponsive attitudes and the mute reactions of the Islamic world on Kurdish

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<sup>313</sup> In the phrase of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.

demands. For instance, as Besikci (1991) states after March 16, the 1988 Halabja Massacre of Saddam Hussein (Iraq), on 20 March 1988, in the Islamic Conference held in Kuwait, they declared such condemnation of Bulgarian atrocities against the minority Turks, Greek Cypriot atrocities against the Turks, Israeli atrocities against Palestinians and Soviet Union atrocities in Afghanistan due to their oppressive and assimilative policy on Muslim minorities. However, none of these forty-two member countries mentioned anything about Kurdish assimilation in the region, nor the serious chemical attacks and genocide that caused more than 5,000 Kurds' deaths, by the Iraqi government. Therefore, they argue that their statute is like being a 'mis-treated stepbrother' in their relations with Turkish Muslims and moreover they became as an orphan of the Islamic world (Shinnavi, 1992).

It should be noted that the Kurdish Islamic groups cannot be examined as a homogenous entity as Islamic and Kurdishness is articulated in different ways and with different combinations among the Kurdish Islamic groups. The next section focuses, hence, on agents and their strategies.

#### **5.4.2 Agents and their Strategies**

##### **5.4.2.1 Armed Group: Kurdish Hizbullah for Turkish Objectives**

As mentioned a distinction can also be made between *Kurdi* Islamic movements. The pro-active and armed agent of this identity's representative in modern sense was/is *Hizbullahi Kurdi* or Kurdish Hizbullah (The Party of Allah; no connection with *Shia* Hezbollah of Lebanon). It emerged in anti-ethnic, hence as a defender of *ummah*, and anti-secular Islamic principles amongst Kurdish society mainly in Kurdish cities of Batman, Diyarbakir and Shirnak, which expressed itself in a militancy context. Their reference for legitimisation has been the Kurdish identity and their *Kurdi* background with glorying the Kurdish Islamic history and Kurdish contribution to Islamic world. However, the Kurdishness used as cultural, traditional, customary or linguistic typeset rather than as a nationalist concept. Hizbullah was established under the leadership of Huseyin (Durmaz) Velioglu in Batman, in 1979<sup>314</sup>. According to Imset (1992) in 1979, the Iran Islamic Revolution influenced some Islamist radicals in the Kurdish

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<sup>314</sup> He has changed his surname from Durmaz to Velioglu in 1978 and was killed in an armed clash with the state forces in Beykoz, Istanbul in 2000.

region leading to the establishment of Hizbullah under the *Menzil* Bookstore<sup>315</sup> by Fidan Gungor. It should be noted that is a distinctive characteristic and systematised structure of radical Islamic groups to assemble and emerge around *Islami* bookshops. Besides that most of ‘Islamic origin movements’ also used same method to be mobilised.

*Menzilci* (rangers or guardians) can be considered as one of the first fragments of Hizbullah, in retrospect. The organisation was comprised of two main approaches and strategies due to different views on the methods of struggle. *Menzilcis* advocated the passive struggle via intellectual and cultural leadership. On the other hand, the *ilimci* (scientists), being the more active of the two, were eager to use violence and armed struggle for the hegemonic struggle, in terms of achieving Islamic revolution in Turkey as a contribution of Kurds as being the ‘slave of Allah’.

The differences in the methodological approach to the struggle resulted in divergence and contestation between these two groups over hegemony. Some years later, they had armed struggles against each other (1991-1995) and over a 100 people died as a result of this internal struggle, which was won with *Ilimciler* or Hizbullah. Altsoy (who is the heir of Velioglu) in his book (2004) explained the reason of why they created the Hizbullah organisation, which they called ‘*jemaat*’ (congregation)<sup>316</sup>. He states, it was a necessity part of Islamic duty and responsibility for Muslims to have such organisations that follow Islamic values in terms of *takva* (devotion), self-sacrifice, piety and Islamic brotherhood as a voluntary association of Muslims.

In addition to aiming to build Islamic character, they also employed the discourse of anti-imperialism, (notably, leftist groups’ used same discourse). However, they collided with Kurdish leftists and argue that *ummah* is the answer for Kurds, because Islamic does not allow any discrimination over ethnicity. Moreover, they constructed their discourse around concepts of *zalim* (oppressor) and *mazlum* (oppressed) relations by arguing that a Muslim is supposed to help *mazlum(s)*, irrespective of religion, language and colour or ethnic origins. As they argued, therefore, they

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<sup>315</sup> or *Vahdet*.

<sup>316</sup> Isa Altsoy, as a typical underground organisation leader published book under pseudonym I. Bagasi, is current leader of Hizbullah lives in Germany or Iran not exactly known. He became leader after Huseyin Velioglu killed in an arm conflict with police in Beykoz-Istanbul.

developed the struggle as a counter-movement against *zalim(s)* in any part of world by making reference to Khomeini's slogan: "everyday is *Ashura*, everyday is Kerbela". Hence, Kurds, in their conceptualisation, are *mazlum* in the region and the 'Kurdish problem' is a result of the western modernism, especially nationalist ideas that were imported by pioneer or collaborator people to the Islamic world. It simultaneously destroyed the unity of Muslims, while at the same time it became a crucial problem for the whole Muslim world (Altsoy, 2004). They considered the PKK and other secular organisations perpetuating this modernist attitude among the Kurds, and therefore due to their *Ummatic* position, they vehemently opposed and clashed with the PKK, resulting into many killings.

Hizbullah's strategy is bifurcated: on the one hand, it is based on *teblig* (notification) and *dava* (invitation), as a "war of position" as a moderate or passive side of the struggle, and process of propaganda and gaining the consent of society, via constructing an Islamic outlook. On the other hand, in developing counter-hegemony against the PKK but also the secular state, *jihad* (war/strive) in the form of frontal attack or "war of manoeuvre" was adapted by Hizbullah through using arms and violence. Hence, their struggle, in their metaphor, was between the 'soldiers of *Allah* (God)' versus 'soldiers of *Sheytan* (Satan)'. Subsequently, they sanctified death with the discourse of *shadet*<sup>317</sup> (martyrdom), notably they prefer to use the context of *shadet*, instead of *sehit* (martyr), because the term of *sehit* is also used by secular, state security forces (army or police) and armed leftist groups. The *Ilimci*<sup>318</sup> or Hizbullah also accused *Menzilci* for jeopardizing the unity of Muslims and garbling Islamic values and, hence, for being *munafik* (hypocrite or not actual Muslim), for which they made references to similar examples of *munafiks* in the Prophet's era, and adding that *Menzilci* acted as a *nifak* (faction/separatist) group. Consequently, the Islamic identity intensively became politicised<sup>319</sup>. These *Kurdi* groups began to compete with secular Kurdish parties and their modernist, secular, socialist (Marxist/Leninist) and nationalist ideas, which are constitutionally oxymoronic with traditional Kurdish social structure and character. In justifying thus, Altsoy (2004: 72-

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<sup>317</sup> One dies for cause of Allah and became always alive and present in terms of Islamic belief, who also believed goes to *cannah* (heaven).

<sup>318</sup> This group was battled with PKK.

<sup>319</sup> As I mentioned in the Chapter Three under social structure section that Kurds not eager to politicised religion (including Islam), for very long time.



73) in expressing the Hizbullah position states that “they [PKK] devastated the Kurdish belief and culture through alienating people from Islamic values and leading them to emulate western society, under the liberation or independence aspiration, what Kemalist regime was trying to achieve and failed for a century”<sup>320</sup>. This, hence for them constituted the justification to wage a war against the PKK for the hegemony of Allah through their own party, Hizbullah.

As a result, Hizbullah see *per se* a main competitor with its *sui generis* objective and strategies against the national, secular, and socialist context of the PKK that have been already leading the ‘liberation movement’ in the region. They accused PKK, as the continuation of Kemalist framework, which for them was looking for an opportunity to gain the *khulamlik* (shepherd or server) position in Kemalism. They considered PKK as an ally of Israel and the USA, which, for them did not suit to character of Muslim Kurdish people. Gunter (1997: 71) states that “the anti-PKK *Hizbullahs* consisted of pro-Islamic Kurds who objected to the atheism of the Marxist PKK and its goal of splitting off an independent Kurdish state from Turkey. They also believed that the PKK was cooperating with the Armenians to divide the Muslim people of Turkey”.

Additionally, they claimed that the PKK as a *gayr-ı Islami* (non-Islamic) actor cannot be a representative of the Kurdish people and their rights, since they bring *nifak* (division and bad deeds) in Kurdish society. This approach also allowed them to build unity with particularly radical Turkish Islamic groups and other Islamic extremist (inter)national organisations, parties and movements in Kurdistan (or abroad).

Notably, Hizbullah very often used the term of ‘Kurdistan’, which is not common for *Islami* background movements. However, their reference was a geographic area rather than ‘a national or ethnic territory’ for the Kurds’. They also blamed the traditional and local Islamic institutions such as *madarasas* and *tariqahs* with backwardness and illiberality, who, for Hizbullah, were also the representative of wrong-Islamic approaches and stand passive and inefficient against western/modern, secular (atheist) Kemalist and also nationalist, secular (atheist) and ‘communist’ PKK<sup>321</sup>.

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<sup>320</sup> The author’s translation.

<sup>321</sup> see Yuksel, (1991: 126).

Consequently, Hizbullah easily justified the use of violence against the ‘unbelievers’. Houston (2001: 186) argues that “though this last position may be thought favourable for the military’s campaign against the PKK (and there have been many rumours that in the Kurdish areas of Turkey *Hizbullah* was initially supported by state), anti-PKK Kurdish Muslims are no less backward in defending their ethnic specificity”. McDowall (2000: 422) in support of this added that “its [Hizbullah] attention on Kurdistan, where it saw the secular nationalist movement a prime enemy, because of its close association with atheistic Communism and because it challenged the Turkish Right with which the Islamic tendency was so closely associated”. Hizbullah argued that the PKK’s success is not because of the PKK’s ideology, skills, strategy, tactics, politics or mobilisation, but rather because of ‘TC’s (Republic of Turkey: notably PKK use the same acronym/discourse to define state) wrong policy/illegitimacy among local people (Altsoy, 2004).

An important part of the controversy is that Hizbullah is seen as Turkish ‘state’s project’ in the Kurdish region by other secular or religious groups and individuals, which became a general knowledge and belief. It was also accused of having secret links and allegiances with security forces, which illegally operated against pro-Kurdish/PKK institutions, in counter-guerrilla tactics and trained with arms by state security forces. In 1991, Hizbullah started assassinating pro-PKK intellectuals, journalists and sympathiser and bombing their institutions<sup>322</sup>. McDowalls (2000) claims that by end of 1993 over 500 hundred pro-PKK activists, trade unionists and members of the secular nationalist left had been killed. Some Hizbullah militants were arrested and charged with responsibility for a number of such unjustified murder cases. This new actor for counter-hegemony, namely Hizbullah, produced more violence, threat and fear in the region and at the times religious legitimacy, was invariably an effective tool for them<sup>323</sup>. In addition, “The amount of immunity this flank of the Kurdish Hizbullah enjoyed soon earned its nickname of ‘Hizbul-contra’

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<sup>322</sup> Dorian Jones (2007) states “in the 1990s, the group was responsible for hundreds of deaths in the region. Most victims are believed to have ties with the PKK, referred to by Hizbullah as the “party of the infidel.” Liberal intellectuals and moderate Islamists were also targeted. Many of the victims were filmed and recorded being tortured before execution” from *ISN Security Watch*, September 25 “*Tricks Transition in Kurdish Turkey*”.

<sup>323</sup> Berger explains that “whenever a society must motivate its members to kill or to risk their lives, thus consenting to being placed in extreme marginal situations, religious legitimations become important” (969: 44-45).

in reference to public suspicion of its contra-guerrilla background” (Imset, 1992: 124). Such collaborations were common knowledge among the public in the region.

These clashes continued for many years and resulted in hundreds of deaths among the Kurdish internal groups. Remarkably, it was argued that despite Hizbullah's obvious anti-Kemalists pose they avoided attacking the state apparatus. It is, however, important to mention that Hizbullah's attacks were not confined to PKK members; however, after eliminating Fidan Gungor and Menzilciler, Hizbullah continued acts of violence against other Islamic groups and respected members of Kurdish Islamic circles. A number of known leading Islamic scholar and activists were assassinated by Hizbullah, which justified the common name given to them by ordinary people: ‘Hizbul-Sheytan’.

An important aspect of Hizbullah's violence was the nature of ‘violence’, as it developed its own torture and assassination methods. In most cases, leading Islamic Kurdish activists were assassinated from behind with very large knives or from behind with a gun. Their torture technique, as known ‘*domuz bagi*’ (tied pig) made it terribly difficult as to how an Islamic group could use such methods of violence.

It should be noted that Hizbullah activities and leadership was ceased in 2000 by Turkish security forces with an attempt to remove all the evidence demonstrating the collaboration of state with Hizbullah. After kidnapping the leaders of Kurdish Islamic group, Zehra, in October 1999, state security forces stormed a number of buildings in Istanbul and discovered ‘many murdered’ and ‘buried’ individuals all with ‘pig tie’ in those buildings. In one such location, the leadership cadre of Hizbullah including Velioglu was killed in gunfire exchanges between the security forces and Velioglu. This was followed a number of operations against Hizbullah resulting in large arrests and imprisonment. While this brought a temporary end for the end of creating a internal counter-hegemony, it is important to identify that the emergence of Hizbullah and its tactics and killings should not be considered as a natural outcome of the Kurdish society but, as many believes, as a result of the manipulation of the Turkish state to create a counter inter hegemonic struggle against the PKK so that ‘brothers should kill each, while the Turks watch<sup>324</sup>’.

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<sup>324</sup> This indeed resembles Israel's involvement in creating Hamas with the objective of undermining the PLO or Al-Fetah so that the Palestinian struggle should not gain strength.

In 2011, a new manifesto of Hizbullah showed that the aim and strategy of the organisation was transforming, particularly they shifted their Kurdish policy, by mentioning the Kurdiness more than ever. On January 3, the important leader cadres of Hizbullah were released due to uncertain decisions; however, due to the shock impact of this, some of them were arrested and imprisoned. They again appeared in Kurdish politics, after 11 years. The leadership declared seventeen-pages of a 'new' manifesto of regenerated Hizbullah in new discourses, on January 17, 2012. The declaration summarised and formulated the goal, principle and strategy of Hizbullah in 'Northern Kurdistan'<sup>325</sup> for Kurdish people<sup>326</sup>.

Hizbullah moved into a new stage in their existence; as they had been active through a NGO called Mustazaf-der (the Association of the Oppressed) until it closed by the state in the summer of 2012, which mainly worked in the mobilisation of the civil society through religious activism. This has led them to move towards political platform and in the later months of 2012, they began to the process of establishing an Islamic Kurdish political party (Cakir, 2012: December 09).

As can be seen, Hizbullah emerged with an attempt to form internal counter-hegemonic movement against the PKK while collaborated with the main hegemonic power, the Turkish state. However, by following PKK's strategy as well, it is now in the process of moving into legitimate political sphere through establishing a new

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<sup>325</sup> Hizbullah adopted PKK's discourse by also using the same terminology for the geographical segments of Kurdistan - defining the east and southeast part of Turkey as North Kurdistan.

<sup>326</sup> My interpretation: "The Hizbullah, in its new manifesto, rejects denial, assimilation and oppressive policy towards Kurdish people and states that it will stand against and resist it; moreover it will fight with its all potential. Hizbullah considers the Kurdish issue in terms of the Islamic worldview, thus the solution is also offered in an Islamic value system, which determines its method of struggle too [...]. The Hizbullah congregation is prepared to discuss any options for solutions such as constitutional offer or autonomy, federation and independents, which can assure the Islamic and human rights of Kurdish people. It will at the same time struggle for Kurdish language to become an official language in public institutions and in education life, moreover to be used in every part of public sphere to serve Kurdish people [...]. Hizbullah believe that the Islamic states, congregation and groups, who hold the same aim and targets should be assembled and create a league together, combining their forces for same goal [...]. Hizbullah does not see any necessity to struggle with any other congregation, institution, group, party and political organisation, no matter their ideology and belief, unless they are attacked, which is engendered and legitimated by their self-defence rights [this part for PKK-BDP]". Available at: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1076008&CategoryID=77> Access Date: [18 January 2012].

political party with an Islamist positioning. It can be seen that PKK still determines the ‘rules of the game’ in the larger Kurdish periphery.

#### **5.4.2.2 Accommodative Agents: *Zehra*, AZADI**

Islamic ground has turned into a power struggle between Hizbullah, the state and PKK due to sensitivity and to the importance for gaining Kurdish people’s consent, for whom religion remains an important value system embedded in everyday life. In this respect, the PKK transformed its policy of religion and interoperates with Islamic politics differently to a traditional Marxist group. Consequently, there are pro-*Kurdi* or PKK organisations that also appeared in the post-1980 period like *Partiya Islame Kurdistan*-PIK (Party of Islamic Kurdistan) and also (weak and unorganised) Islamic movements demanding Kurdish rights, appropriating the heritage of Sheik Said rebellion and his *Kurdi* Islamic character, and applying armed attacks at the same time.

*Kurdi* ‘*Nurcu*<sup>327</sup>’ (light or follower of *Nursi*) groups, followers of Kurdish Islamic scholar Said-i Kurdi, known as Said Nursi, have mostly acted as a sub-identity in the Kurdish activism as accommodative agents. The Kurdish *Nurcu* groups are detached from other mostly Turkish *Nurcu* groups in terms of interpretation of Kurdish issue. In other words, the Kurdish *Nurcus* are disconnected from Turkish groups, in the same way as Kurdish leftists were from the main stream left in Turkey, as Turkish *Nurcus* worked in Turkifying the identity and the discourse of Said Nursi, while Turkish *Nurcus* remained ignorant of the Kurdish demands and denying a separate Kurdish identity.

According to Islamic organisations style, Kurdish *Nurcus* also established a publishing house, *Tenvir Nesriyat*, and published the magazine *Dava* (*Invitation*; but also meant objective/struggle), in 1989. The group was named *Med-Zehra*<sup>328</sup>, under the leadership of Mehmet Sıddık Dursun (nickname is Seyhanzade), who named his discourse around the concept of *hizb-ul Kur’an* (the party of the Quran) (Atacan, 2001).

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<sup>327</sup> Who are disciples of well-respected religious Kurdish intellectual *Beddiuzzaman* Said Nursi (Kurdi).

<sup>328</sup> It is a connotation of *Meddrese-u Zehra* that Said had wished to establish, in Van province Kurdistan region.

*Med-Zehra* aimed at to become a counter-hegemony in opposition to other *Nurcu* in particular and other Islamic groups in Turkey in general; but also a sub-Kurdish identity in relation to PKK. They opened the Turkified identity of *Beddiuzaman* Said-i Nursi to discussion by deconstructing the state centred Turkish defined identity of Said-i Nursi that is not contending his ethnic origin and cultural sensitivity. Hence, the context of Said-i Nursi is reconstructed as a Said-i Kurdi through re-formulating his cultural Kurdishness in a counter-hegemonic discourse, in a similar way of struggle between the state's *Nevruz* definition and PKK's *Newroz* discourses<sup>329</sup>. Because, Said himself, in his early work and speeches focused on his Kurdish identity and the Kurdistan problem, who was aiming at opening a university in Kurdistan and wishing to have the Kurdish language recognised as one of the main languages, and petitioned with the Ottoman Sultan for the development of Kurdish region<sup>330</sup>. He struggled in various level for the Kurdish demands to be met. Left Istanbul's pseudo modernity to Kurdistan's mountain, as he described the 'centre for the absolute freedom' to continue his 'invitation' for the Kurdish development, despite Turkish claims, as evidenced from his writings in his writings, actions, intents and behaviour Said was aware of his ethnicity constructed through Islamic understanding; and he signed his work with the name of Said-i Kurdi until the repressive times of the Republic.

It should be noted that the Kurdi *Nurcus* argue that the western style of nationalism jeopardized the 'Unity of *ummet-i Muhammad*' and they, through Said-i Nursi's work namely *Risale-i Nur*, defined nationalism according to the concept of *ummatic framework* rather than western nationalism, as western nationalism is considered reversing Muslims to the *Jahiliyya devri* (pre-Islamic era of ignorance). According to Said-i Kurdi like the other Western institutions nationalism also does not fit with the Muslim world (thus to Kurds), who redefines and interprets the western nationalism into Muslim society, via dividing into two different contexts (Atacan, 2001: 127):

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<sup>329</sup> see Demirer (2012) and Chapter Four.

<sup>330</sup> According to Nursi, language was an important determinant of human fate (*Insanda kaderin sikkesi lisandır*). Thus he wanted to establish a university, *Medreset-ul Zehra*, to improve the level of education provided to the Kurdish people. At this university, three languages were to be used. Arabic was obligatory (*vacip*), Kurdish was permissible (*caiz*), and Turkish was necessary (*lazım*) (Atacan 2001: 126-127).

Negative forms of nationalism harm people by benefiting from the destruction of others. They have created many problems for Muslims historically (Ummayyad, French, and other nationalisms), and remain a great danger for the Muslim world today. In contrast, positive nationalism emanates from the needs of a society, and carries the potential to improve the solidarity and strength of the Muslim brotherhood. Thus, positive nationalism could work to serve and defend Islam.

As a result, they accused Turkish *Nurcu* (particularly *Gulenci Group*<sup>331</sup>) adopting negative nationalism and distorting *Ustad's*<sup>332</sup> work and reads in nationalist approach. For instance, the term of 'Kurdistan' and 'Kurds' in his books in later years appeared in Fetullah Gulen's Group and other groups' reprints as '*Dogu Ulkesi*' (Eastern country) or '*Dogu Halki*' (Eastern People) or 'peasant' and 'tribal' people. Med-Zehra, thus, page by page revealed all these distortions and re-printed Risale-i Nur in the original form by Tenvir and later Nubihar publications. They also claimed and evidenced that "certain paragraphs, most of which were concerned with the political regime of Turkey, have been removed from the original text" (Atacan, 2001: 123). This continued to place the blame Turkish *Nurcus* for being nationalist and Turkifying the Nursi and his discourse. In understanding the prevailing Turkish nationalism among the *Nurcu* groups, an example can be given from Fetullah Gulen's discourse<sup>333</sup>.

According to *Kurdi Nurcus* (such as *Dava*), some of *Nurcu* groups deny Said's Kurdishness: they attempted to prove that he was a *sayyid* (biological heir to Prophet), thus not an Arab. However, they could not prove, which led these Turkish *Nurcus* to portray Said as a Turkish, and mention his identity in nationalist way, even though nationalism is forbidden in Quran<sup>334</sup>. Dursun (*Seyhanzade*) the owner of the former *Dava* magazine (Med-Zahra group), and the leader of the later established Tenvir group and publications, complains that "our Muslim Turkish friends understand everything from an Islamic point of view except when it comes to the Kurdish issue. Then they think like a Turk" (Atacan, 2001: 135). Subsequently, an internal

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<sup>331</sup> Followers of Fetullah Gulen.

<sup>332</sup> Said calls as *Ustad* (Master) by his followers.

<sup>333</sup> In an interview, Fetullah Gulen was asked as to why Gulen did not visit and show his respect to *Beddiuzzaman* Said-i Nursi while he was a follower and *Ustad* was still alive. Gulen replied stating that because he was an ultra Turkish nationalist (Turanist) and therefore could not accept the fact that 'such a mind', namely Said-i Nursi came out from those people, the Kurds.

<sup>334</sup> see Atacan, (2001: 123-24).

hegemonic struggle constituted through Said's ethnic origin among *Nurcus* ensued. In terms of the contemplating a solution for the Kurdish issue, Med-Zehra always articulated the notion of Islamic confederation<sup>335</sup>.

As the experience with Kurdish *Nurcus* indicates, they applied passive struggle strategies and created Med-Zehra group and *Dava* magazine as a tool of struggle to gain hegemony in the Kurdish realm through claiming Islamicity. This is well-identified in the discourse developed<sup>336</sup>. About Kurdistan (referred to as a geographical area), they argue that Kurds had their special power, since contract between Yavuz Selim and Idris-i Bitlis during the Ottoman Empire, Kurds could use their language and enjoy *de facto* autonomy, which is broken after new Republic founded, and Kurds became assimilated by Turkish ethno-nationalism, an echo of Sheikh Said arguments. Moreover, "Med-Zehra believed that the two men [Said-i Kurdi and Sheikh Said] shared similar ideas and opinions, besides belonging to the same land, the same nation, and being nourished by the same culture (Kurdish territory, ethnicity, and culture)" (Atacan, 2001: 129). *Kurdi Nurcus* also struggle against the Turkish nationalism (particularly in Islamic values), with the inspiration traced back to the Hussein's (grandson of Prophet) struggle, who represented Islamic values and fight against Yezid and his Arab nationalism<sup>337</sup>.

*Kurdi(sh) Nurcu*, like *Kurdi* leftist went through a number of evolutionary period and organisation form as well through division and co-optation. For example in 1990, Med-Zehra splatted over strategies and personality clashes. Izzeddin Yildirim formed *Zehra Egitim ve Kultur Vakfi* (Zehra Education and Culture Foundation) which captured the majority of the previous Med-Zehra constituency. Consequently, Dursun organised under *Tenvir* publications, while Zehra established Nubihar publication which have come the main Kurdish language publication with Islamic orientation. While both situating themselves around mainly Said-i Kurdi (and also Sheikh Said;

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<sup>335</sup> "Med-Zehra believes that every ethnic group should have its own state and these states, in turn, should form an Islamic federation. This approach would ultimately lead to some changes in the existing borders of Turkey by establishing a Kurdish Islamic Republic" (Atacan, 2001: 125).

<sup>336</sup> For example, citing Said-i Nursi, Seyhanzade points out, "we can neither accept nor reject the current regime. Rejection requires power that we do not yet have. Thus Islamic scholars agree that if conditions are not ripe, that is, if one does not have power, action cannot be taken. If one acts from a powerless position, a major suppression of Muslims may result, which could block future development of the Islamic movement" (Atacan, 2001: 121).

<sup>337</sup> It is a same argument with Shia Muslim or Alawite even though they are Sunni (Shafi) Muslim.



but Sheikh Said has been more emphasised by Tenvir), Zehra did not aim to develop counter-hegemonic progress against the dominance of the PKK and its political existence in the Kurdish sphere. In other words, Zehra mostly applies a mild politics, through only focus on intellectual activity, publication and education of young students within Islamic discourse justified Kurdish identity. Therefore, Zehra group has become counter-hegemonic power against the state and other religious groups; but identified itself as a parallel hegemony position with the Kurdianness expressed that dominated by the PKK. Such as the Kurdish language based magazine Nubihar, which has recently celebrated its twentieth year, has been an important contribution of Zehra in developing Kurdish thinking and Kurdish language thinking intellectuals.

While Tenvir shrunk entirely and confined to Bingol city, Zehra made important inroads in the Kurdish and main Turkish cities by organising the Kurdish. This implied that the Kurdish *Nurcu* was not only competing with Turkish *Nurcus*, they were competing on the same audience with Hizbullah, which made them easy target of Hizbullah's paramilitary actions<sup>338</sup>. This was considered a particular strategy to eliminate the presence of Zehra group to become a main stakeholder in the Kurdish issues by the state, and therefore it is considered that Hizbullah executed the plan; as Zehra files and ranks lost direction but faced intimidation by the state in the process and also they lost every asset they had during the so-called postmodern military *coup d'etat* in 1997, as they were accused of Islamism and their assets were confiscated. The main for this has been their insistence on the Islamicness of Kurdish identity and how Islam justifies Kurdish search for their rights. In addition, and importantly, Zehra did not wage a war against PKK and did not consider taking side of groups which opposed to PKK; as mentioned, Zehra preferred to develop parallel hegemony vis-à-vis PKK; this was not acceptable for the establishment, as Zehra tacitly supported Kurdish political parties in elections as well.

After the silent years, Zehra has been re-organising in local associations focusing on publication, education, and provision of accommodation for young university students, social and civil society activism. Nubihar magazines still is an important

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<sup>338</sup> As mentioned above, as a result, Izzettin Yıldırım and his comrade Şehid Avcı kidnapped in Istanbul on December 29, 1999 and their tortured bodies founded on January 28, 2000. Hizbullah was blamed for being responsible of this harsh slaughter, as proved by the video-recordings of the torture when Velioglu was killed in clashes with police in Istanbul.

publication in the Kurdish language sphere. Thus, Zehra has been trying to come back in the last five years.

In relation to the Hizbullah's aggressive position against Zehra, the power-knowledge relation might be referred to in this situation. These two different agents used Islamic and *Kurdi* discourses from different angles and strategies, however their human capital comes from same sources. *Kurdi*-Islamic knowledge produced for society that needs power to execute it<sup>339</sup>. This antagonistic relationship of Hizbullah, can be sometimes seen even with Kurdish mosque preachers, in the region, for controlling and practising the mosque's activity (Quran teaching, commune *etc.*) that also sometimes ends with violence and even death. In this analysis, however, the impact of external agents should also be taken into account, namely the establishment aiming to use Hizbullah for its own against the PKK but also against the uncompressing Islamic individuals and groups. Therefore, the knowledge-power relation was shifted with the central hegemony's direct manipulation of one side, namely Hizbullah. In other words, Hizbullah could not create counter-hegemony by using its knowledge and hence could not claim power; only the external power provided the position for creating counter-hegemony.

In addition to the mentioned groups, in recent years, new *Kurdi* Islamic groups have emerged in the region including AZADI Initiative as a very new Islamic Kurdish actor<sup>340</sup> in Diyarbakir June 2012. 'Azadi' means 'freedom' in Kurdish, which was used by the organisation that started Sheik Said rebellion, 1925. Because this new soft- power and intellectual actor situates itself with the same discourse and struggle. As the initiative argues, they legitimise the establishment of the group by making reference to 'Islamic responsibility' towards '*Islamic and Kurdayeti*' people. The group also defends the rights of '*Kurdistani*' people in Kurdistan through non-violent methods. They claimed the period of either being 'Kurd' or 'Muslim' has finished; and therefore called for an Islamic moral stance for Kurdish struggle; as part of this, they took up the 'Uludere (Roboski) massacre' case, for which they created a

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<sup>339</sup> "Power produces knowledge that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Smart, 2004: 76).

<sup>340</sup> *Ji Bo Maf, Dad u Azadiye Inisiyatifa Islami Ya Kurdistane*, the original name in Kurdish.

webpage to seek justice for the slaughter of thirty-four Kurdish youth by the Turkish regime in December 2012<sup>341</sup>.

#### **5.4.2.3 Primordial and Local Institutions: *Tariqahs and Madrasas***

In addition to the organised religious groups in modern sense and in modern times, Kurdish sphere has always been dominated by *tariqahs*, mainly by *Qadiriyya* and *Nakshibendi sufi*-culture. These have always been strong in shaping everyday religious life, but also in education on a macro level among Kurdish society and on a micro level among tribes.

After the abolishment of Janissary institutions and its sect *Bektashi*, Ottomans adopted *Nakshibendi* discipline which resulted in empowering their role in society and also created strong relations with the state institutions. However, the Republic's modernisation/Westernisation process disrupted this engagement up to the Democrat Party era<sup>342</sup>. With the multiparty politics providing religious freedoms, *Nakshibendi* determined the actors of Turkish politics from Erbakan, Ozal and Erdogan in Turkey among others.

*Nakshibendis* in the Kurdish region, including, as discussed Sheikh Said, were against the new imported ideas such as nationalism and secularism of the modern Turkey, which, as they also considered, destroyed the social contract between two nations, which had been established through Islamic brotherhood. Therefore, this led to a significant number of rebellions against the new order led by the *Nakshibendi* tradition (Bitlis or Seikh Said rebellions).

In examining the social formation of the Kurdish society, it should be noted that the institute of *madarasas*, religious seminaries, constituted a very effective tool of this agent, namely *Nakshidendi* order, via promoting *melles/seydas* for educating the society. However, with the Republic banning religious order, they practised their activism and socio-cultural function as underground institutions; this did not stopped them being active, as during the radical *laicist* single-party era even they still promoted the '*madrasa* manner' and culture in developing the Kurdish language and literature. They rejected state's dominate culture (based on modernism and

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<sup>341</sup> <http://www.uludereicinadalet.com/index.php?s=2>

<sup>342</sup> see Chapter Four's relevant part.

secularism) and its official institutions, including religious institutions, therefore they also offered Arabic and Kurdish Islamic education to the Kurdish society, in contrast to the modern Turkish movement, such as Gulen's modern, state-linked and *Turki-Sunni-Hanefi* institutions. The *melles* and *seydas* have not very happy with the Islamic world's ignorance of the 'ummah of Mohammed', Kurds and their 'sufferings'.

These *madrasas* were regional networks of *Shafi* Islam, interwoven and embedded Islam and Kurdiness into everyday life. They have strove to premeditating and shaping daily life, through Islamic values and practices, which have financially survived by society's voluntary economic assistance. They perceive Modernity and its institutionalisation as a threat to Kurdish traditional and Islamic values, as their cultural understanding of *Kurdiness* is very strong due anti-modernist behaviour and lifestyle, since the Ottoman modernisation project. Thus, they preserve themselves from any influences of these new institutions.

As mentioned before, particularly in the Republic transformation process or nation building process of Kemalist, they resisted against new 'modern regime', and not get involved with socio-political and economic life<sup>343</sup>. For instance, they are not educated in state school, not registered their marriage state institutions and not applied to state legal and security functions, in any matter or not possessing an official identity, until they were forced (state oppressive rules and their 'necessary' engagement with state institutions, like military services).

Kurdish *Nurcus* and *madrasa/melles* positioned as an alternative and different Islamic counter actors that promoted *Shafi-Kurdi* Islamic oriented in the region against the state supported Islamic approach and organisations. However, as an accommodative agent they also strived or offered to renew the social contract between both Islamic nations. These new social contract needs to build up on the universal human rights, linguistic and cultural rights or freedom of expression and freedom of thought, in the context of democratic principles. *Tariqahs* have also acted as a part of alternative to the *radikal-selefs* (actor-predecessor) extremist or radical groups (Yuksel, 1991), as they believed these groups (that were suspected to have a link with the Turkish state) focused only on Iran, Afghanistan and Palestine rather than Kurdish problems.

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<sup>343</sup> see Chapter Four, they (of course not all) were first against Jon Turks and after Kemalists.

Today, the impact of *madrasas* and *melles-saydas* is not very strong in social and political life, because of simply modernisation, nationalisation, secularisation or technology *etc.* within the Kurdish society. This was contributed through PKK's delegitimising efforts of the *tariqahs*, as PKK, in its modernist attitude, considers *tariqahs* as part of the reasons why Kurds failed. However they are still leading a major number of people in the region. It should be mentioned that some of them are also influenced by these new modern institutions and integrated or utilise the system (Yuksel, 1991)<sup>344</sup>.

In 2012, *melles*, thus *madrasas* still play important role in Kurdish society and involved with Kurdish national mobilisation due leading civil obedience, such as *sivil cuma namazlari* (civilian *jumma* prayer) outside mosques against official preachment and religious (*Sunni-hanefi*) approach and attend the street demonstration with carrying Qur'an. Therefore, to prevent counter-hegemony against its religious discourse, AKP initiated the state '*melles* project' in 2012, run by the Directorate of Religious Affairs with an attempt to gain advantages from regional *melles*' roles. The project aims to recruit 1,000 *melles* with providing them official positions, namely *imam* (state's prayer leader). Thus, the state recruits these non-state school educated people as a civil servants for mosques, which is seen another Hamidiye or village guardian project by the pro-Kurdish or nationalist movements, in terms of hegemonic struggle between both actors. This, the government/state expects will prevent a religious counter hegemony in Kurdish language to appear, and therefore they consider this co-optation as a new process of 'internalising' the potential threat.

#### **5.4.2.4 Subcontractor and Outsider Islamic groups: *Nurcu***

The urbanised (Istanbul origin) Islamic based *Nurcu* groups such as *Gulenci*, *Kirkinci* or other Islamic groups such as *Suleyamanci* are not really effective in the region/society, because of their reputation as a representative or institution of the state and also due to region's strong *tariqah/shafi* culture. However, still they operate in the region and incorporate significant number of Kurdish young people; which they do

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<sup>344</sup> According to Yuksel (1991) well known *melles* such as Jigerkhun (Melle Seyhmus), Melle Hasan-i Hisyar, Melle Bekir (from Vartinis), Melle Hamid (Norsin) and M. Emin Bozarlan became Kurdish nationalists, in Marxist/Leninist, or atheist perspective. And led young people in this ideology for Kurdish liberation. Or in contradistinction to that some of these *actors* became MP and used opportunity spaces in public sphere.

also in the main Turkish cities by providing opportunities to the Kurdish university students with the objective of co-optation. These urban groups are mostly from *Sunni-Hanefi* background and their strategies permeate around state's Turkish-Islamic culture, which have no problems in obeying state authority and integrated to a modern city life style. On the other hand, the region's *Kurdi* and *Sunni-Shafi* school tradition locates in peripheral area and rejects being affiliated with the Kemalist (secular-Turkish) state and unattached with regime's modern/secular life. Such strategic distinctions creates difficulties for Istanbulian groups to penetrate in the region, although Islamic values constitute a cohesive factor between Muslim societies and some of important *alims* (Islamic scholar), whom they follow coming from the region Said-i Nursi or Seyyid Abdulhakim Arvasi (Arvasi family).

It is argued that these statist Islamic groups' perspective towards the Kurdish demands or people are not different than the State's assimilation programmes, which utilise religious culture instead of Kemalist modernism. For instance, *Gulen* Movement operates in the region; according to Yavuz (2003), Gulen is a "Turko-Ottoman nationalist" thus he and his organisation is state centred and uses civil society and market economy to gain socio-economic power. These mainstream Islamic agents practise in almost every part of Kurdish regions by using various apparatus to penetrate into society. They have set up *dershanes* (education training centre) and *yurts* (dormitory) for poor students, and TV channels, newspaper, and magazines and orienting people in the context of Turkish and *Hanefi-Muslim*<sup>345</sup>.

This so-called Islamic education, as Houston (2001: 154) puts it, "heralds an old assimilationism that Kurdish Islamism will not take kindly to". It should be noted that the use of religious tools, namely *Sunni/Hanefi* Islamic view, can be traced back to the *coup* of 1980, which aimed to internalise all opposition through a 'soft-Islam' under the framework of Turkish-Islamic synthesis, which is funded and supported by USA foreign policy against threat of the communist 'red line' for the western capitalist, liberal democratic system, and used Islam as a 'green safety valve'<sup>346</sup>. While it may be considered as Kemalist firm approach towards Islamic movement being relaxed resulting in more opportunity spaces for Islamic agents in the public

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<sup>345</sup> Gulen disciples established *Zaman* Newspaper; they also founded magazines, weekly and TVs.

<sup>346</sup> Islam is symbolised with green and communism with red colours.

sphere that continued and extended with the Ozal era due to Ozal's Islamic/*Naqshibendi* identity. Therefore, some Kurdish Islamic *tariqas* also benefited from this expanded opportunity space (Yavuz, 2003) and developed their movements within the state's Islamic project and gained crucial opportunities. As a consequence, new political Islamic discourses, particularly Erbakan's '*adil duzen*' (just order) and '*Islam kardeshligi*' (Islamic brotherhood), emerged in Turkey, after all this progress, especially the relaxation of the Kemalist 'laicism' in Turkey's politics. Ali Bulac<sup>347</sup> (2012) sees this new concept as a definition of identity that is based on moral and spiritual values and a 'regional integration' project, which is rooted in Abdulhamid's utopian idea of 'Islamic Unity'. However, this new Islamic politics are not totally hegemonies in the Kurdish region<sup>348</sup>. The context of *ummah* which is main fulcrum for statist Islamic groups in relations with Kurdish Islamic mass, could not operated after nation(alist) state building process and thus induced the concept of nationalism embedded in Islamic societies and created discourses such as Turkish Islam, Kurdish Islam or Arabic Islam in modern Turkey.

The presence of AKP in government since 2001, as a so-called Islamic government, have legitimised the state in the eyes of conservative and religious Turks even further; and therefore, the treatment of Kurds at the hand of the AKP government is no longer seen 'as Islamically unacceptable'. Thus, state's co-optation of the religion into its system through AKP has been a successful project. Therefore, the debate is currently is around Turkish and Kurdish Islam reflecting the earlier separation of left as Turkish and Kurdish left in 1970s. The religiously oriented Kurds find it no longer the arrogant religious language used by AKP in furthering the state's objective against the Kurds acceptable despite the communalities being Islam. This will shape AKP's future in the region, but it will pave way for new religious identities to emerge in the region (Cakir, 2012: December 11).

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<sup>347</sup> Prominent Islamic intellectuals use international discourses in Islamic context, Daily *Zaman* March 1, 2012 "28 Subat, Erbakan ve Cemattler" (28 February, Erbakan and Jammats) Available at: <http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazar.do?yazino=1252892&title=28-subat-erbakan-ve-cemaatler> Access Date: [01 March 2012].

<sup>348</sup> For instance "one reader of *Dava*, a teacher from Batman, wrote that there were two groups of Muslims in Turkey. The first was composed of Turkish Muslims who were racist and imperialist; this group made up about 95 per cent of the population. The second group comprised Kurds. The author believed that, unfortunately, 95 per cent of Kurds had no national consciousness and thus were likely to imitate Turks and treat them well. These Kurds had the 'soul of slaves' and could easily betray their own people" (Atacan, 2001: 135).

## **5.5 OPPORTUNIST, PRAGMATIST OR STATE-LINKED ‘TURKIFIED KURDISHNESS’**

### **5.5.1 Hybridisation of Identity**

As mentioned earlier, Islam is a common value system for Turks and Kurds leading a communality and brotherhood, which is embedded and consolidated through an ‘implicit social contract’. However, when the new republican world-view opted for a ‘new prototype’ of identity based on ethnicity-based society, for which Turkishness was chosen among the post-Ottoman society.

As social constructivism suggests, identity is created by certain social internal agents in an interactive manner and it is assumed they play a formative role to develop these social-political identities within their discourses. Hence, sometimes this identity can be constructed or re-constructed in terms of balance of power. In this case, one may argue that the hegemonic Kemalist project ‘politically constructed’ rather than socially constructed as an ‘official identity’ for the people of Turkey in general and for the Kurds in particular, which resulted in the removal of all sign of *Kurdiness* (and Islamic) from the public sphere (Yavuz, 1996), and puts Kurds under strict control of the state as a part of ‘civilising process’ of the region. In other words, the nation-constructing processes attempted to assimilate Kurds in the socio-political life. The assimilation, deportation (forced migration) and displacement were employed in nation building project. The whole society was regulated and planned according to the Kemalist tenants. The power of balance was destroyed in favour of monopolisation process, namely institutionalising Kemalism. This new hegemonic power replaced most traditional institutions by entirely cleansing the civil society from its foundation by replacing the official and single political party CHP’s offices. In this new political culture, identity is formulated and recognised through the hermeneutics of Turkishness and integration of Kemalist cultural products.

In the Kemalist order, the political, cultural and social realm is defined narrowly, which makes it harder to participate in these spaces as ‘one’, who is patently excluded from the Turkish public sphere. Therefore, a body of Kurdish ‘private persons’ failed to assemble and represent its identity in public sphere. Therefore, the ‘distribution of Kurdish origin or heretic identity knowledge’ is interrupted and ‘stock of



knowledge<sup>349</sup>, in relation to Kurdish (and Islamic heritage) became invalid through further institutionalisation of Kemalism, which was soon replaced by a ‘new knowledge of Turkification’.

Because, the social reality or identity is a product of society, the transmission of social reality to a new generation enabled a fundamental social dialectic to appear in its system. So the Kurdish objectives are not being learnt any more by a new generation through the socialisation process and it is limited and internalised in subjective reality, which implies that it is only practised and legitimated in individual or private spheres. Thus, ethnic identity (Kurdish) and religious identity (Islamic) was forced to be privatised entirely and, consequently, both were cleansed from public sphere (Yavuz, 2000). Moreover, the transition of identity is obstructed, after which it intervened and offered a new identity. Ultimately, Kurdishness does not exist in the public sphere any more and continues only in the private sphere, within limited sources if individuals are willing to sustain it with its entire burden.

‘Turkification/secularisation’ or ‘Turkification/Islamisation’ projects are created the opportunity spaces in social, political and economic spaces for individual to exist in the forms defined by Kemalism. As Besikci states (1991: 4), “the Kurds can enjoy basic freedoms and benefit from the principle of equal treatment as long as they deny their ethnic identity”. In other words, Kurds have always and Islamic oriented individuals until recent times could not participate in public sphere with their ethnic and religious identities respectively, as the definition of those who aim to be part of it was provided. This implied that they could only survive in the observed public sphere as ‘pretended Turks’ despite the fact that they accent would immediately indicate their Kurdishness (Laizer, 1991). The imposed ‘objective’ form in terms of identity obliged some Kurds (and religiously oriented individuals) to find opportunity spaces in the public sphere by utilising pragmatic strategies. Relevantly, Yavuz and Ozcan (2006: 106) define this “group of Kurds - known as ‘occasional Kurds’ very much assimilated within Turkey and prefer to be active among centre-right and centre-left parties”.

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<sup>349</sup> see Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Such Kurds had a chance to find a place in the public sphere, via integration or assimilation; which implied that they would have access to the socio-politico-economic advantages offered through the iron grasp of the state. However, this ‘hybrid identity’ has also a very fragmental structure due to their different emerging processes, within their respective backgrounds in education, location or their propensity of expressing their consent. Consequently, this creates the term and measurement device, which is the ‘level of Kurdishness within its Turkishness’ or feeling of identity, thus bringing forward the question of *how one defines oneself, in terms of identity?* It has also parallel understanding in the line of assimilation, integration or exploitation of this sub-group, in Turkish and Kurdish society. This complex identity emerged in a matrix due to different levels and the way to be involved with Turkishness as a Kurd, which is shaped in terms of the conscious, constraint or opportunity (interests) dimensions.

According to the Jacobean definition of Kemalism, any type of articulation of ethnic and cultural difference was and is perceived as a threat to cultural and national unity and is strictly prohibited. In relation to this, on the basis of Kemalist definition of the Turkish nation and the resulting principle of equality, any expression of Kurdish identity is forbidden and persecuted. As members of the Turkish nation, the Kurds have equal rights in all aspects; however the right to care for and develop their ethnicity, culture and language is not included in the understanding of equity (Gurbey cited in Olson, 1996). Thus, with Kurdish identity there is no social, educational, political and economic equity and opportunity in the public sphere. While Laizer (1991) identifies that by not claiming the Kurdish identity one can even become Prime Minister in Turkey, in support of this, Besikci (1991: 18) states that “those Kurds who want to make an effort to retain their identity cannot even become janitors in public services. But if he [she] has denied his [her] Kurdish identity, his own self, he can be anything”.

As a consequence, obeying the Turkish hegemonic order can symbolically defines as the process of ‘*Mankutlashma*<sup>350</sup>’, which means denying and effacing the people’s memory in relation to their heritage, language, history and culture with the objective of creating a new individual. This was the main aim of Kemalism in its imaginary

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<sup>350</sup> From Aitmatov’s (1980) novel.

society paradigm, which is best explained by the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Anthem of the Republic, which includes that line that ‘in ten years we created ten million people from every age’, namely *mankutlashma*. A Kurd who is accepting of, or obeying the Turkishness, could accomplish in some certain level in socio-political-economic opportunities of the public sphere. The new order’s nationalising and homogenising strategy, on different religious and ethnic identities at the same time created a great opportunity for some members of the society to be embodied and integrated within the hegemonic system and benefit from its political, cultural, educational and economic devices. Hence, as mentioned before, Besikci (1991: 4) states that “those who deny their ethnic identity, their Kurdish identity, those who are Turkified and say ‘How happy the one who says I am a Turk’ can enter any profession: member of parliament, student, athlete, country administrator, provincial governor, judge, businessman, soldier, teacher, state minister, professor etc.”. This process could be seen through the Ottoman *devshirme*<sup>351</sup> system that was employed by the new state in relation to the Kurds to integrate them into ‘new order’ or Turkicise them<sup>352</sup>.

Even so, this ‘amalgamated identity’ is not organised in a group context most of time, because of its individual, situational and opportunist character; thus there is no intellectual stratum among this identity and its members to be scrutinised, even though there were intellectuals, who could be defined or seen in that group. Therefore, the role and function of intellectuals usually can be defined or interpreted in Foucault’s formulation of intellectuals, who distinguishes the role and function of intellectuals into two different categories. The traditional role of Foucault’s ‘specific intellectuals’ may be ascribed to this type of Kurdish intellectuals. Because, Foucault (as cited by Smart, 2004: 67) argues that the specific intellectuals are “working not in the modality of the ‘universal,’ the ‘exemplary,’ the ‘just-and-true-for-all’, but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them”. As a consequence the ‘forms of knowledge’ is reinterpreted and redistributed by the state, via these intellectuals to the individuals, who mostly live

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<sup>351</sup> The Christian boys from who comes from conquest area educated and trained to be *Yenicheri* (Janissaries) or bureaucrats in the Place for Sultan’s services (see Chapter Three).

<sup>352</sup> According to Abdulmelik Firat in the daily *Ozgur Politika* (Free Politics), in 1995; the Ottoman were never able to *devshirme* (trained and assimilated) Kurds, in the *Enderun* Schools of Place, but Kemalist Republic was able and create so many *jesh(s)* (apostate, denier or traitor) in a very short time.

together with Turks in metropolitan areas. Hence, the original language, history and identity of these ‘relocated Kurds’ have been blocked, prohibited and disqualified through a system of power and intellectuals, who have become a principal agent of this process, who at the same time evoke the context of Gramsci’s ‘traditional intellectual’. To evidence this, Mehmet Ziya (1876-1924), a Kurdish intellectual, can be given as an example: as under the pseudonym Ziya Gokalp was one of the main founders and theoretician of Turkish nationalism and could be a fulcrum point or inspiration for the context of this intellectuality<sup>353</sup>.

Gokalp was himself a Kurd, but he denied his Kurdishness even though he could speak Kurdish and moreover had done some work in the Kurdish language and was involved with Kurdish national organisation in the late Ottoman era. In other words, he ‘felt as a Turk’ even though his ancestors were from non-Turkish roots. He created the *Turkchuluk* (principle of Turkism) based on *Turanism* (the larger Turkish land from Anatolia to Chinese steps) influenced by Durkheimian sociology, which is also the foundation of his ‘sociology of knowledge’<sup>354</sup>, constructed as ‘*ulku*’ or ‘theory of ideal’<sup>355</sup>. This particular notion of knowledge can be explained as a “self-knowledge of society, which is born when men become aware of the existence and value of the social group to which they belong” (Heyd, 1950: 48).

Gokalp argues this could be possible through social shock, crisis, transformation or revaluation. “He does not explicitly suggest giving the Kurds cultural autonomy; he seems to anticipate that they would be assimilated by the Turks” (Heyd, 1950: 132). However, he was also against the concept of *umma* (therefore *millet* system too) and favoured the identity in modern nationalism idea<sup>356</sup>. Although he did not deny Islamic cognitive discourse, he believed that Islam could merge with Turkish culture, values, customs or nationalism, not as a dominant dynamic. Furthermore, he was eager to

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<sup>353</sup> He was born in Chermik, Diyarbekir Provinces.

<sup>354</sup> The chapter was also inspired by sociology of knowledge, in social constructivist approach of theoretical framework, through Berger and Luckmann and Manheim.

<sup>355</sup> He glorifies the pre-Islamic history of Turks with non-Turkish subjects such as Khun Attila or Mongol Jenghiz Khan in Central Asia or Sumerians and Hittites in Anatolia.

<sup>356</sup> He defines nation as “a society consisting of people who speak the same language, have had same education and re-united in their religious, moral and aesthetic ideals- in short, those who have a common culture and religion” (Heyd, 1950: 63).

achieve the idea of *Turanism*, which aims at uniting the Turkic world, from the Balkans to Central Asia and at the same time materialising the context of *ulku*.

As the preceding discussion identifies, the definition of public sphere in the Kemalist Turkey then and even now has not allowed plural identities to be expressed, which constrained the individual choices: either taking up struggle from the lowest (expressing opinion) to the highest level (armed struggle) and facing the consequences, or accepting the imposed definition and survive within the system without revealing individual colour, *i.e.* identity. As long as one does not claim the identity, life temporarily can offer opportunities to the individuals, such as the case that the governing party in Turkey, the AKP, has the highest number of Kurdish MPs, perhaps three times of the pro-Kurdish party BDP.

After this introduction, the following section aims to map out the identities and strategies of these ‘opportunist’ Kurds.

## **5.5.2 Agents and Their Strategies**

### **5.5.2.1 Paramilitary Group: Village Guards**

The ‘Village Guards’ system was founded as a paramilitary, proactive and semi-official agent by the state. Hence, the state locates a convenient role directly to be involved with Kurdish identity and society’s structure. The ‘temporary’ village guard system can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire, which was seen as a heritage and modern version of the *Hamidiye Alaylari* by cognisance of national *Kurdiness*. Besides, it was first designed after the establishment of the Republic due to policing and protecting Anatolian villages against bandits (Imset, 1992). However, it had been demolished by Ismet Inonu (a Kurd himself) in aiming to destroy the ‘feudal system’ and bring ‘modernisation’ and ‘civilisation’ to the region.

When PKK began its guerrilla campaign in 1984, Ozal’s administration once more applied this vintage model to protect the country, via local accesses to combat PKK militarism through co-optation system. McDowall (2002) argues it is a simulation of Iraq’s Kurdish *jesh* system. Thus, on April 1985 the necessity procedure was arranged and ‘temporary village guard’ system again was established in modern Turkey to be used against PKK. According to Gurbey (1996) the number of this paramilitary group was estimated to be sixty-seventy thousand by early 1996. On the other hand,

Romano (2006) states that it has transformed the character of clashes and strategy of the Turkish army towards PKK's guerrilla tactics<sup>357</sup>. Hence, the tribes became the state's prominent address, with its leadership, tribal *aghas*, for this project<sup>358</sup>. Thus, the state started to search local partners to implement the new relationship between authority and periphery against an 'official enemy'. There were two main reasons why tribes are accepted to be part of that system. One, it is a good opportunity to gain advantage of state and its institutions in poor and isolated socio-economic conditions of the region, as the state offered financial gains in return for the services. Secondly, it was the pressure that they had from both sides (state and PKK); thus having arms and financial aid enabled them to sustain their role in the region, in terms of balancing the power struggle, within its idiosyncratic antagonistic environment. It should be noted that as a modernising power, the PKK aimed at removing the feudal structure which implied that by finding refuge in the state, the tribes aimed at ensuring their sustainability.

These village guard tribes and individuals are predominantly not under the domino of Turkish cultural hegemony and live in their social structure, in the region, even though they have limited ties with non-village guard or pro-PKK tribes. The relation with the state is based on the political and economic interests, rather than being assimilated or integrated, it is a business relationship of sorts, which can be located and theoretised within 'client-patron' relationship. The state had the first bargain with Jirki *eshir* in Adiyaman<sup>359</sup>. However, it worked in different ways for each *eshir*; for instance some tribes accepted the system, because of the economic and politic advantages; for some it is a good opportunity to be recognised by state institutions<sup>360</sup>.

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<sup>357</sup> "The intent was to have at least a half-dozen or so village guards in the smaller villages, with larger numbers of bigger communities. The selective intensive offered by the government to Kurds willing to enter the system were significant; apart from being spread harassment by security forces, attractive financial carrots were offered" (Romano, 2006: 82).

<sup>358</sup> Such as *Alan, Jirki, Gevdan, Giravyn, Goyan, Helilan, Izdinan, Mengelan, Mukusan, Pinyanish, Shidan, Zevkan* and etc. (Imset, 1992).

<sup>359</sup> In 1975 Jirki tribes had trouble with the state governor and after, they had an arm conflict with the authorities and killed 6 gendarmes, thus became criminalised. After 10 years of anarchy, the state offers them freedom and dismisses the case under condition of joining the village guards system (Imset, 1992).

<sup>360</sup> For example, *aghas* such as Tahir Adiyaman, Adiyaman; Salih Kaya, Hakkari; Mustafa Zeydan Van have economically awarded with state's buildings construction jobs or flexibility on export and import rules in borders (Imset, 1992).

Their peripheral and denying identity nature is considered important in modern Kemalist regime. Additionally, having supportive power amongst the other tribes became very attractive for some *aghas* to use their authority in their local areas. At the same time, they could preserve their existing structure against PKK's attack (PKK's earlier policy was against feudal actors). In fact, sometimes the state also forced them to be part of the system and repressed them, giving them two choices: 'join or leave'. Hence, the state organised meetings with the *aghas* like in Hakkari or Van in 1989 to encourage (or force) tribes to become part of the system. When the state was attempting strategically to maintain and gain tribes for the system, at the same time PKK and social pressure was forcing these tribes to move away from the system. Consequently, by the end of 1989 many of these tribes ceased fire against the PKK. These new actors in the cycle of violence simultaneously were changing the structure of society, via destroying the old reciprocity and redistribution relations of *eshir* formulation and changing the balance of power<sup>361</sup>. It should be mentioned that the 'village guard' system in a way is the replication of the 'rentier' or reciprocity system.

After establishment of the system, village guards, including their family members became a priority target for the PKK<sup>362</sup>. Some of the tribes came to the terms with their positioning with the PKK by understanding the unsustainable nature of the war, and therefore they withdrew from their voluntary or implicit mandatory duty being a village guard. Their integration or assimilation within Turkish identity is very complex issue to understand that needs a detail research.

#### **5.5.2.2 Immobile, Occasional and Integrated Agents: Urbanised or 'White Kurds'**

Urban Kurds are another agent of this 'sub-identity' and their '*archaeology of knowledge*' is shaped, in two different circumstances. On the one hand, they reside in particularly western cities. Historically, this has been due to the Ottoman Empire's 'displacement' policy. The Republic also deported Kurdish citizens to different

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<sup>361</sup> see Chapter Three.

<sup>362</sup> The unprofessional ordinary Kurdish tribe men could not really successfully protect the state structure against professional modern guerrilla warfare in Kurdish dominant area. According to McDowall (2000: 423) "as a result the security forces found themselves having to provide protection to the village guards and during the 1987 it seemed the PKK would destroy the system as enrolment dropped from 20,000 to 6,000".

places, under pre-text of security, economic, social or political reasons with the objective of easily controlling or assimilating them by Turkish culture (Diken, 2005). In other words, many Kurdish tribes were displaced to different parts of Anatolia and were assimilated in dominant Turkish culture, since the time of the Ottomans until recent years in modern Republic (Diken, 2005). With the rise of PKK and its military engagement, the Turkish state, as mentioned, undertook the policy of forced evacuations resulting in displacement of large population mainly moving to the large metropolises of Turkey; they were expected to disappear within the ‘wilderness’ in the big cities in their struggle of everyday life so that they should not consider the Kurdish struggle.

On the other hand, the assimilated or *Turkicised* identity of Kurds was a product of the line of the Turkification process, from *Ittihatci* to the Kemalist élites. It is also important to mention that in the post-1950 period, with the expansion of industrialisation in Turkey around certain cities, such as Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir, Adana, Mersin etc, large numbers of Kurds moved to such cities with the hope of having a better life and job. In addition to the forced migration, such voluntary migration has been an important explanation of the process leading to ‘forgetting the Kurdishness’. Some of these, who went through the loss of collective memory together with the much earlier forced migrants may be called ‘white Kurds’.

These originally ethnic Kurds function in ‘opportunity spaces’ provide by the centre and enjoy state and its institutional sources, at the same time use regional connections (*eshirs* or relatives) to gain statute in bureaucracy, political and economic life, via their educational and economic advantages too. This agent is constituted by a few different groups<sup>363</sup>. One of the components is mostly politicians who are located in the big cities but have strong ties with the region. They enjoy state’s sources, moreover created sort of ‘rentier economy’, during their relationship with the locals that also provides them power in the state’s institutions.

Some of the Kurds who stayed in the Kurdish region also benefited from the opportunity spaces resulting in *Turkification*, as they created substantial economic,

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<sup>363</sup> Yavuz and Ozcan (2006) have also very similar thought on the matrix of the Kurdish identity.



political or institutional relations with the state and its apparatus. They are mostly the businessmen, members of business associations or some NGOs.

The final sub-category is those individual Kurds, who mostly exiled or migrated to the western part of the country in reason of political oppression or economic dependency and predominantly, assimilated by Turkish identity and culture and do not have any physical ties or only very weak memories and limited relations with their roots or ancestors. In other words, the hegemonic Turkish culture is either by consent or coercive policies within the Kurdish temperament, transformed them into Turkishness. “Some of these Kurds have done what the state wanted them to. They have married Turks, or they have decided not to teach their children to speak *Kurmanji*, the Kurdish language that is most widespread in Turkey. They have taken their place in the mainstream Turkish economy and learned to enjoy Turkish food, pop music, and soap operas. In short, they have become the Turks that the state always insisted they were” (de Bellaigue, 2007: 1)<sup>364</sup>.

Most of these agents (individual or group) found an opportunity in right, conservative and Islamic-based political parties, which mostly use religious discourse to be attractive to peripheral and masses’ interest and needs. Such an engagement provided an opportunity to be able to appear in the public sphere.

Due to being individuals and individual political behaviour towards Kurdish identity, it is terribly difficult to define their political identity and strategy. In order to understand further, observing their discursive practices or behaviours and analysing their discourse, through speeches, interviews, would be essential and fruitful for

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<sup>364</sup> Houston (2001) also points out this context through interviewing with Mehmet Pamak, one of ex-leaders of *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*-MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) a very radical, extremist, ultra nationalist party. Mehmet confessed that his family originally comes from provinces of Van, a Kurdish dominant region and they exiled to western Canakkale, during ‘Zilan massacre’ and he explained how he and his family were badly treated by locals (called them ‘Kurds with Tails’) when they immigrated to the city and after why he became a Turkish nationalist, who is not anymore (probably threat is gone). Zilan Massacre is happened during the Ararat (Agri) Rebellion, in 1930s, so many Kurds including children, women and elderly killed by army operation in Zilan Valley located in Ercis district, Van. According daily (Kemalist) *Cumhuriyet*, 15, 000 people other claims 47, 000 people through survivor.

setting the particularities of their identities, as they, individually, have an indeterminate, blurred and amalgam approach to the Kurdish nationalism<sup>365</sup>.

It is important to note also that, as mentioned, a large number of Kurds were forced to move to the metropolises of Turkey in the post 1984 period, with the hope in the side of the establishment that they would loose their particular identities in the process. However, while their settling down to have a decent life has been a great struggle, their political activism resulted in sustaining and even creating a new and radical as well as *Kurdified* Kurdish identity (Akiner, 2010a; 2010b). Thus, the expectation of the establishment did not come true for most of the members of this cluster, as they have theoretised their everyday Kurdish life and interpreted in a radical forms (Akiner, 2010a; 2010b) by accusing the hegemony for all their difficulties of Kurdishness and their life in the metropolises.

### **5.5.2.3 State Associative Regional NGOs: GUNSIAD, KAMER**

The role of Kurdish origin civil society institutions is also important to consider under the scope of this identity that is mentioned above. They are set up and operate their functions for locals, in the region. For instance, economic origin GUNSIAD<sup>366</sup> that demands the Kurdish rights in different perspective, as a different agent from pro-*Kurdi* BDP or PKK. But at the same time, announced that they are against the decision of *Yuksekk Secim Kurulu* (High Election Committee), which denied the MP-ship of Hatip Dicle elected by Kurdish BDP in the 2011 elections. Other than this, they have strong economic communication channels with the state and its institutions.

Women rights movements like KADER<sup>367</sup> or KAMER<sup>368</sup> also publicise anti-violence declaration and call PKK to ceasefire for ongoing 'war'. Both chairpersons Cigdem Aydin and Nebahat Akkoc also attended the invitation of Prime minister Erdogan for 'National Unity and Brotherhood Project' in 2010<sup>369</sup>, which is first constituted as a

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<sup>365</sup> The PKK leader captured and his image in front of Turkish flag awake some of this agent nationalist consious.

<sup>366</sup> *Guneydogu Sanayiciler ve Ishadamlari Dernegi* (Southeastern Anatolian Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association).

<sup>367</sup> *Kadin Adaylari Destekleme ve Egitme Dernegi*-(Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates).

<sup>368</sup> *Kadin Merkezi* (Women Centre Charity).

<sup>369</sup> <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/123480-ka-der-ve-kamerden-demokratik-acilim-icin-oneriler>, July 16, 2010

‘Kurdish Opening’ project for searching solutions to the Kurdish problem. They were treated as interlocutors for regional issues by state. They did not have problems with engaging with the state apparatus.

The socio-political think-tank institutions DITAM<sup>370</sup> aimed to contribute towards social issues, through academic research, they advocated the right to education in the mother tongue and at the same time criticised the PKK’s armed struggle. 45 NGOs<sup>371</sup>, including the Islamic oriented civil-organisations stood against the violence in the region, after the Turkish military’s warplane bombed the border of Turkey and Iraq and caused 34 civilian deaths in Uludere (Roboski) village (Shirnak district). They publicised a joint declaration, through education and cultural association AYDER to stop armed struggle between the PKK and Turkish military, with the emotional appeal that so that Kurdish and Turkish mother’s tears could stop immediately.

Nevertheless, such NGOs have positive relations with state institutions due to their alternative and parallel identity away from national Kurdish movements, namely BDP and PKK, which provided them with access to state apparatus easier than ‘other (or bad) Kurds’.

There were also ‘shadow organisations’, which were few, small and very marginal and seen on the socio-political ground after the emergence of a gap between the civil initiatives of the pro-Kurdi national movement, during the KCK operations. *Selam Anadolu Hareketi*<sup>372</sup> (Anatolian Peace Movement) is one of them. It has Islamic origin and argues that the only way of peace in the country is ceasefire of PKK and surrender of PKK guerrillas (it is also state conditionality). Moreover, they call PKK

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<sup>370</sup> *Dicle Toplumsal Arastirmalar Merkezi* (Tigris Communal Research Centre).

<sup>371</sup> Signed by Anadolu Genchlik, Ay-Der, Bayindir Memur-Sen, Bem-Bir-Sen, Birlik-Haber-Sen, Buro Memur Sen, Cami-Der, Charıklı Dernegi, Diyarbakır İnsani Yardım Dernegi, Dem-Der, Dicle Fırat Diyalog Grubu, Din-Bir-Sen, Diyanet-Sen, Dogu Batı Kardeshlik Platformu, Egitim-Bir-Sen, Enerji-Bir-Sen, Gonul Koprusu Dernegi, Hayat-Der, Hizmet-Der, Hur-Der, Islah-Der, Ihvan-Der, Ikra-Der, Ilim-Der, Imam Hatip Yardimlashma ve Dayanishma-Der, Insan ve Erdem, Irshad-Der, Koy-Der, Memur-Sen, Mustazaf-Der, Og-Der, Ozgur-Der, Ozgur-Eğitim-Sen, Saglik-Sen, Sahabe-Der, Sek-Der, Safak-Der, Sefkat-Der, Sura-Der, Toc-Bir-Sen, Ulashtirma Memur-Sen, Yeni Ihya-Der, Yetim-Der, Ufuk-Der, Yusufi-Der.

<sup>372</sup> It was established by a few high school students in 1990s and appeared in the public space in the 2000s. Galip Ilhaner, the leader of movement was a candidate of the Liberal Democrat Party in the 2011 election, who used his vote for the AKP and was accused by locals of another project of AKP, the division of the Kurdish vote.

to abandon ‘Zoroastrianism’ and be “Muslim”, via abjure<sup>373</sup>. They also suggested the famous Diyarbekir Prison converted into a mosque instead of transforming into museum project that discuss by civil societies for contributing ‘social peace’ in the country between state and society.

## **5.6 THE KURDO-EU RELATIONS: THE IMPACT OF ‘EU-ISATION’ ON THE ‘REDEFINITION’ OF *KURDINESS* WITHIN TURKEY’S DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS**

Turkey’s EU accession process constituted as one of the main motivations of Kurdo-Euro relations alongside significant population of Kurdish diaspora, in Europe. The current ‘EU-ising of Kurdi(sh)ness<sup>374</sup>’ formation process has been shaped by two different factors or this new political culture was formed by both external and internal dynamics in the context of ‘post-modern’ Kurdish social structure. On the one hand, the domestic political factors began to impact the transformation process of Kurdish political identity, when the country’s political atmosphere had changed from an authoritarian, militarist regime into a civilian and (semi)democratic one. The political culture in the country was back to normal after particularly-1980 *coup*. Thus, Turkey’s ‘new politics’ mainly due to the aggressive liberalisation of economy created an ‘opportunity space’ for Kurdish actors as well to find a space for themselves within the public sphere. Therefore, the internal agents find chances to lead and determine the Kurdish politics again. *Kurdi* national movement (pro-Kurdish political parties or PKK) has also shifted its strategy especially after 1999s and towards to ‘EU-isation’ during the country’s effective EU accession process, which is at the same time promoted and challenged by the new context of Kurdish socio-political structure with its diverse sub-identities.

On the other hand, the impact of external forces/factors should be considered and analysed carefully, which started with the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and was followed with the end of the ‘Cold War’ era. The western society’s critics on arm struggles, particularly after the antagonistic discourse

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<sup>373</sup> see <http://www.selamanadolu.com>

<sup>374</sup> This term is offered by the study, it means adapting the EU’s institutional values, such as democracy, human rights, liberalism, secularism *etc.* instead of becoming European or culturally Europeanising. This transformation is a product of the EU enlargement/accession process and promotional identity constructed politically rather than the gradually and socially constructed as a social reality.

developed by the Islamist organisations (Al-Qaeda *etc.*) towards the Western powers resulting in with so many deaths of civilians in the USA and Europe (UK, Spain or France) also encouraged the Kurdish political actors to search for mild methods and legitimated channels (as was the case with IRA in the case of Northern Ireland conflict).

Turkey's EU accession process and EU institutions, hence, which have had a central influence in the Kurdish political agenda, is the main trigger of the 'EU-isation of Kurdi(sh)ness'. The European norms and values such as the 'Copenhagen Criteria' were perceived as symbols of liberty, welfare and hope, in both Kurdish society and Turkey for the salvation of their respective societies. In line with these developments, the Kurdish understanding of politics evolved from the radical Marxist tradition, into more moderate, compromised and (social) democratic standards. In other words, the external hegemony, in the case the EU, imposed changes for the democratisation of Turkey, which, particularly since 1999s, resulted in the expansion of democratic freedoms in Turkey. At the heart of the EU reform policies, there have always been the Kurdish rights which explicitly stated. Thus, external hegemony has shaped the central hegemony in Turkey so that the counter hegemony, namely the Kurds, could have an opportunity space for their existence and development. This hence led to the EU-isation of the Kurdish identity in the form of democratic Kurdish identity with moving to political activism alongside the PKK.

It is important to assert that change in the Turkish political culture and institutionalisation of democracy in Turkey has always been due to the external inferences (Asutay, 2006), which began with moving to multi-party politics due to the Marshall Plan offered by the USA in later 1940s to the EU project commences since late 1960s. Thus, accommodating the Kurdish demands in the Turkish system, despite not being enough, has been due to such external process beside Kurdish social, political and military forces.

In reflecting on the EU process, Gunter (1997: 101) through diaspora point of view states that:

This new strategy developed by the Kurdish diaspora has sometimes been termed the 'Europeanisation' of the Kurdish movement. Europeanisation consists of the development and use of a Kurdish network in Europe whose aim is to promote Kurdish rights in Turkey through the European supranational

system. The means available are exclusively democratic: Petitions, demonstrations, lobbying, and political representation.

As the historical account indicates, whenever Kurds demanded any basic rights it resulted in denial and brutality, due to the reason of separation. However, the EU accession process and its' institutions forced to reduce impact of this mood (*Sèvres Syndrome*<sup>375</sup>) and moderated the country's legal, political and cultural environment to be harmonised with European values. Turkey and EU relations have always been complicated, since Turkey applied to join the European Economic Commission in the 1963 Ankara Agreement. However, the December 2004 Brussels summit was a big step for the country in accession procedure, which opened membership negotiation for Turkey. It also created a positive atmosphere and an enormous prospect, to open a dialogue between two litigious actors, state and Kurdish movement and to reach peaceful resolution on a long-standing issue.

On the other hand, the concept of EU-isation has been deployed by Kurdish initiatives (legal or illegal) in Turkey within the framework of democratic values that were central to the Kurdish movements, in the post-1999 period. In this context, Moustakis and Chaudhuri (2005: 84-5) argue that

it is possible that the search of the Kurdish people for the right to legitimacy may be coming to an end. Under the auspices of the EU, the path to Westernisation and modernisation would include the southeast, which is bound to benefit from increased investment (via the Southeastern Anatolian Project and others). Better economic conditions and employment opportunities, the lack of which played a prominent role in the growing popularity of the PKK in the 1970s, will greatly aid an assimilation process that could integrate the Kurdish population of the southeast with the rest of Turkey.

Because, it was supposed that the EU accession process would stop armed conflict, open the dialogue channels; establish a peaceful resolution ensuring the democratic freedoms like freedom of thought and freedom of expression, minority and cultural rights and social justice/equity. In this light, Moustakis and Chaudhuri (2005) asking a relevant question: *how can the EU provide the Turkish Kurds with legal recognition and a safer living environment?* The answer to this is contained in the Copenhagen Criteria, which state that EU membership conditionality requires that the candidate country to achieve political stability and democracy. In response to the Copenhagen

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<sup>375</sup> The fear of division, The Republic of Turkey established after First World War and collapse of Ottoman (Turkish) Empire in earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, thus Turks always have a fear of division again.

Criteria, and in an attempt to exhibit the state's capacity for amending its poor human rights records, Turkey has already adopted 143 new laws and developed the short-lived Kurdish opening in 2009<sup>376</sup>.

The EU-isation process is offered new political opportunities to the Kurdish national politics and provides more spaces, through supranational apparatus, such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice, the Council of Europe, and the European Court of Human Rights. The EU encourages the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), to transform the political and legal system within Copenhagen Criteria, via adopting reform packages to incorporate laws consistent with democratic rights; even though mainly Kemalist based militarist side not eager to conduct such reforms. Nevertheless, the EU also set conditions and space for the Kurdish elite to consider replacing their methods with more democratic ones, and promote Kurdish armed forces to stop the on-going war by declaring unilateral ceasefires in response to its direct impact in shaping the democratisation of Turkey. In this respect, the PKK took a number of steps for initiating a peace process by calling on the government for involvement in the country's political life.

In this transformation, the EU is considered as an external political dynamic. Therefore, EU and Kurdish relations are considered within the framework of EU's ongoing criticism regarding Turkey's social, political and cultural situation with the objective of constructing a viable opportunity space for the Kurds for the sustaining of their ethnicity. Subsequently, EU involvement has increased significantly since the year 2000 when compared with the 1990s, which also caused the Turkish state and institutions to be involved in a more democratic manner in Kurdishness more than ever<sup>377</sup>.

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<sup>376</sup> It has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Protocol 6 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

<sup>377</sup> For example the establishment of a state TV channel TRT 6 (shesh- in Kurdish) that broadcasts in Kurdish and allowing universities to use Kurdish in higher education in some level, such as University of Mardin Artuklu opened an undergraduate programme in Kurdish language and literature or some – mostly – private university (e.g. University of Bilgi etc.) opened under the elective language course, which created opportunities for AKP government to gain the sympathy of the Kurdish society are most noteworthy.

As a result, the EU had been significantly influential on the AKP government in this period (2008-9-10 Progress Reports), in particular until 2011 elections. The EU had at the same time urged the pro-Kurdish party DTP (now BDP) and all its elected members to distance themselves clearly from the PKK, which use violence, while appealing to all parties to contribute to a peaceful solution that would enhance the stability, prosperity and integrity of the Turkish state (2008 Progress Report). All of these messages directly emanating from the EU forced the leading Kurdish nationalist movements to change their methods and ways for struggle as some of them managed to directly engage with the EU institutions. In this respect, along with the redefined Kurdish identity and transformation, the demands of the Kurdish society deviated from ‘independent Kurdish identity’ to common constitutional citizenship in which the Kurdish existence is essentialised. In addition to macro level reforms requested by the EU process, also other activities including sending symbolic ‘peace groups’<sup>378</sup> to show their sincerity, demanding more democratic rights for Kurds under the Republic of Turkey, together with the release of imprisoned PKK members and Abdullah Ocalan. Ocalan’s capture in 1999 is also important point in this process, which resulted in Kurdish leadership to appeal for social peace. In addition, European Kurds have had a direct and effective impact on the Kurdish movement in Turkey. Their efforts mostly included diplomatic lobbying in EU and raising awareness of the international society.

The EU as a superstructure, hence, endeavours to build a relationship between structure (Turkish state) and agent (Kurds) whereby it has influenced Kurdish policy in the sense that they felt obligated to adopt European values, while impacting the Kurdish transformation, especially, as a result of Turkey’s EU accession process (2011 and 2012 Reports). In other words, “until the 1990s, it was rare that people would publicly refer to ‘Kurds’ in reference to an ethnic group in Turkey. The ‘Kurd’ category was avoided in official documents as well as in the mainstream public-political discourse. The use of the word ‘Kurd’ in the mainstream media can demonstrate this” (Somer, 2004: 246). However, the post-1999s period is also a stage of the Kurdish movement obtained a formal political representation in TBMM under

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<sup>378</sup> After three years (2009-2012), 7 of them already arrested and prisoned, ranging between 6 months to 16 years.

<http://www.cnnturk.com/2012/turkiye/04/24/pkknin.baris.grubuna.ceza.yagdi/658522.0/index.html>



pro-*Kurdi* political parties. This stage demonstrated a double movement structure and an on-going polarisation of Turkey's political life between two opposite sides. These two sides are generalised as status quos, political society (state) and pro-changes, and civil society, who demands democratisation process.

As a result, the Kurds have started to see opportunity spaces within the 'European sphere' related changes in Turkey and therefore they remained as the most active and prominent pursuers for demanding rights, in the process of full EU membership (Yavuz, 2006). For instance, the 2010 EU report on Turkey mentioned that EU financial support has been provided to *civil society* development under the 'Civil Society Facility', in particular to enhance civil society organisations' capacities. Yavuz (2006: 3) argues that "Turkey's accession process to the EU helped to domesticate and force not only state but also the anti-systemic actors to change their perceptions and strategies and to adopt EU norms as the point reference to create a new social contract in Turkey". Moreover, technical assistance was provided to the Turkish administration promoting good governance practices on support of active citizenship. In 2010 funding was also provided to encourage a *civil society dialogue* between Turkey and the EU in the areas of political criteria and media. Thus, Turkey's participation in EU programs and agencies has been co-financed and projects in areas such as media, youth, academic institutions, local authorities, cultural organisations/centres and civil society organisations have been supported.

Initially, Kurdish initiatives also became part of this process particularly effectively utilising civil society sphere through various non-state/governmental organisations and activity, whilst the initiation of the EU accession process catalysed and modified state views on the Kurdish question. Especially, the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria, such as the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities and cultural rights. The EU's soft-power forces and somewhat secures positive transformations and reforms in legal, political and cultural fields, which eventually caused the breakdown of the official state view that considered Turkey's 'Kurdish matrix' as a taboo. Moreover, the EU provided legitimacy for requesting recognition of more individual and cultural rights and liberties that aim to improve the living conditions of Kurds and help voice the Kurdish identity.

In 2008 (recently 2011 and 2012), the European Commission Progress Report on Turkey urges “the leaders of political parties to seriously seek dialogue and to agree in a spirit of compromise, on a reform agenda for the modernisation of Turkey towards a stable, democratic, pluralist, secular and prosperous society, guided by respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and based on the rule of law” (2008 Report). Therefore, in a way the EU offered a route to achieving liberty, democratic and multi-cultural environment<sup>379</sup>.

Nowadays, the EU has unpredictable relations with the Kurdish actors and it plays an important role in furthering the transformation of the relations between the Kurds and the state. European bureaucrats frequently visit Diyarbakir, at least as much as they visit Ankara. However, that does not change the fact the EU is still criticised by Kurdish internal dynamics.

On a macro level, the EU conditionality on the candidate country and in the micro level the European Parliament critics on Turkey’s human rights record, the lack of freedom of expression or party closure still encourage Kurdish leading cadre to support the EU-isation of country in general, its movement in particular (2012 Report). From the Kurdish point of view, the EU still challenged Turkey’s policy on the incidents such as protecting citizens from state violence<sup>380</sup>. In addition, the Kurdish agents have mobilised resources in institutional politics and Europeanised the Kurdish demands to on the agendas of European actors and thus through multilanguage policy and any other cultural activities Kurdish agents especially municipalities is challenging and extending the political sphere of Turkish state through also funding they secure from the EU bodies.

It should be noted that Turkey’s observed strategy to become a regional leader in the Middle East and also AKP’s self confidence after winning several elections resulted in ‘slowing down’ in the EU process, and therefore politicians commenced making

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<sup>379</sup> Nevertheless, the rule like ‘insulting Turkishness’ under Article 301 or the other provision of the Turkish penal code (like TTC16), the Anti-Terror Law and the Press Law are criminalised and restrict freedom of expression, which also mentioned by 2010 EU report. And it creates obstacles to the process of Kurdish transformation of political identity.

<sup>380</sup> like the *Newroz* clashes, an un-armed street demonstration caused serious number of killed civilians in Sirnak provinces, in 1992 (again after 20 years later, the celebration end with clashes between both sides and caused BDP member, Haci Zengin’s death, 18 March, 2012) or encourages the government to give national, cultural and linguistic rights of non-Turks, namely Kurds.

comments on ‘whether Turkey would in the future like to be part of the EU’ by referring to ‘the European unwillingness of having a large Muslim state’ within the EU. Considering, as mentioned, that the expansion of democracy in Turkey has been due to external hegemony, this slow down perhaps can be considered has influenced the recent turn by the AKP from its Kurdish openings. The near future would shed further light on this in exploring the reactions of the Kurdish and Turkish actors and agents in this process.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

The construction of identity is considered to be social process, which has political, economic, cultural and historical dimensions. In the case of Kurds, that process influenced by various Kurdish agents in the different time periods resulting in the transformation of Kurdish identity. As a result, one of the objectives of the chapter is to understand their discourses alongside their strategy and character through employed a discursive terminology, which “provide agents with a multitude of identities in various subject positions and are continuously transformed through the addition and combination of new articulations” (Diez, 2001: 98)<sup>381</sup>.

The Euro-centric, western style nationalisms served as the ultimate figure in contemporary political ground that was generated by hegemonic Kurdish agent and it subsequently affected other Kurdish actors of the society, such as Islamic background groups or passive and defensive ‘urban Kurds’. Hence, most members of society already or partly accepted the form of *Kurdi* identity, which is constructed by leading Kurdish political agent (PKK), in terms of cultural or linguistic demands. However, the other (non-PKK) internal dynamics of the society are attempted to extend the content of this socially constructed *Kurdiness*, during the (post)modern or EU-isation process, within a post-hegemonic structure that at the same time provides new ‘historical bloc’ for Kurdish political mobilisation.

Therefore, the new Kurdish politics emerged in intellectual and institutional framework, while a new, modern and national identity was constructed by politicising Kurdish groups, especially, under PKK’s leadership, after 1980s. The PKK is the main and dominant agent of Kurdish political national movement and mobilises the

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<sup>381</sup> In Christiansen *et. al.* (2001).

majority of Kurdish society, in various socio-political and economic spaces. Nevertheless, after 1990s development (EU-isation is effectively originated) of a new conceptual bridge appeared and the Kurdish political discourse was a variation of local, Marxist and monism form to the inter-regional, (social)democratic, and multi contextual. The transformation of *Kurdi* politics has affected in bilateral angles, in other words, the new 'EU-isation of Kurdi' has been shaped by internal and external dynamics, in the context of new post-modern social structure. Distinctive internal sub-identities, and approaches, within their tactics emerged in a complex modern society. They are launched to dispute the limitation of *Kurdi* identity on Kurdish politics and challenge the PKK's policy and methodology. In other words, the contemporary Kurdish identity, which has already been operating was challenged by various competitive sub-groups that already seek to redefine the meaning of a modern *Kurdi* identity, within their everyday life. Hence, each actor has distinctive methodology and understanding of the struggle and strategies in expressing Kurdish identity.

As a consequence, this chapter discussed and demonstrated three main conceptual groups, among Kurdish society by examining their strategy, tactics and discourse, in a cognitive map and also considered their ability to use opportunity space in public sphere. The nature of these identities are derived and defined from their strategies, world-view/ideology, tactics, publishes, discourses and intellectuals. On the other hand, these different social layers and fragments have reacted to the policy of the state on Kurdishness. The 'politicised' Kurdish agent (legal or not) play a key role in the political institutionalism of Kurdish groups by mobilising them to take a part in the political system and thus alleviate limitation and challenge political participation in the existing regime. The 'urbanised' agents, who have economic and politic interests with operating systems, are accepted by the regime when integrating with the 'system', in the social, economic and political sphere, in an opportunist and pragmatist way. The non-secular, religious group that avoid both sides (state and PKK), and construct their own Kurdish identity, through traditional and Islamic context. However, these identities - according to Wittgenstein - have a 'family resemblance' to one another, although they have very different approaches and developments. Joining off the same roots, heritage, history, regional area, tradition, and customs are often forms these different discourses or ideologies. The reality of

everyday life is also important to be understood in this respect. Thus, the Kurdish case has been examined here as a sort of heuristic application of these theories and their synthesis.

In the context of everyday life, the Kurdish individuals, who have been excluded by the outsiders (such as Turk) and appeared in various sub-identities, as a secular or religious, *Alawite* or *Sunni*, urban or rural, in terms of ‘typificatory’. It is on a face-to-face interaction between members of society that created its own groups as strong or weak, majority or minority. Although this chapter may not be able to deeply identify and contextualise their characteristics, it can be argued that they have been sharing a common culture, heritage, native values, orientation or other idiosyncratic feature of the society. All these agencies have employed different tactics and strategies on the context of identity, within various meanings, hermeneutics, understanding, reading and discourses. And mostly eliminate the ‘outsider’s’ (negative) interpretation and continue to construct an ‘insider’ knowledge. However, through their various characteristic, approaches, tactics and strategies, this chapter attempted to indicate the complex and complicated modern Kurdish socio-political structure, besides its multi-religious, linguistic, socio-economic and geographical differentiation.

In analysing the Kurdish socio-political agent(s) in Turkey, the process of EU-isation, as one of the external and positive determiner which has impacted the transformation of Kurdish political identity, discourse and culture, within providing opportunity spaces, in Turkish political (state) and public (civil) spheres. This EU originated opportunity is simultaneously and spontaneously challenges the classic policy of state and also promotes and stimulates different Kurdish approaches to be operating in the form of political movements. It is a new politics, in democratisation or ‘EU-isation’ context, for *Kurdi* agents.

It should be noted that this study’s aim is not to focus on the European identity *per se*, which can perhaps explain the conceptual division between ‘Europeanisation’ and ‘EU-isation’. As the Europeanisation is mostly ‘social constructivist’ process for European society, which is already constructed through European social reality, values, cultures and ‘archaeology of knowledge’ and it simultaneously legitimated by the internal European actors or member of European society, therefore it is a political project and political construction process for our –Kurdish- case, in respect. So, on

the other hand, the 'EU-isation' is supported by EU's enlargement or EU accession process, much rather by institutional politics to unite 'peripheral Europe' with the 'central Europe', and it is based on strategic, security, energy, economic, and political interests. Thus, it is a 'political constructivist' project and process of 'commodification of Europeanism', which is at the same time, constituted contrary identities (European or from EU) for Europe through essentialisation of multiple-modernities and different approaches on the European politics. Thus, it is EU-isation, through its mandatory influences in requiring convergence in democratic values of the Europe.

As a result, the political Kurdish identity influenced by European liberal, democratic, secular and 'civilised' values, through bureaucratic and compromise role of 'EU's soft power', which is promoted by EU institutions not directly by European society. This study, therefore, argue that the EU external power does not penetrate directly into the country's politics. The EU allied itself with pro-democratic internal dynamics and supplies liberal and democratic values, at the same time expanding the public sphere. In other words, this study argues that the 're-arrangement' of Kurdish political identity (included culture and discourse) cannot be explained only with the EU-isation process, despite crucially providing new opportunity spaces. So when applied the 'EU-isation' for Kurdishness, this study meant that Kurds are not becoming European themselves, but their political culture, habits and methodology is being influenced by EU institutions and its international human rights, democratic and liberal responsibility and as well as, its role in Turkey's accession process.

The EU provides opportunities for more spaces in the Turkish public sphere for a 'marginalised Kurdish movement' to gain certain power. It also allows us easily to examine the effect of the EU's analytical and political role, which has made a substantial contribution to the Kurdishness that enjoys a more comfortable manoeuvre and relaxation, through EU's impact on the state. Eventually, the new social and political spaces are emerging, after the 'EU-isation of country', relaxing of state control on the Kurdish identity and seeking of Kurdish agents for expanding the limitations of the public sphere, via constructing counter-political and social spheres. On the other hand, these actors achieved also some certain 'opportunity spaces', through EU institutions (NGOs, Copenhagen Criteria *etc.*), local governments

(mayors), parliamentary powers (MPs), diaspora (lobby functions, financial support), intellectuals (dynamic power, a network, communication) and media (TV, newspaper and internet/social media), which all play an important role in the transformation process. Such direct engagement helps these actors to construct their own reading of democracy as well, which is *otekileshtirmeyen demokrasi* ('non-otherising democracy') in the context of radical democracy.

This chapter examines the actors, strategies, identities and the process of transformation, which also focuses on the role of internal and external dynamics, resulting in changes on social and political identity of Kurds. Therefore, the questions about the ultimate status of both social 'reality' and 'knowledge' of Kurdish political initiatives is raised in concerning with and analysing the social construction of identity(ies) process, within the triangular concepts of substructure (agent), structure (state) and superstructure (EU) relations. The new political situation is an alternative to the antagonistic environment that dominated politics and to the long-term modernisation processes in Turkey.

In recent times, however, the relation between the Kurdish agent and the Turkish structure was at a watershed again. It seems the government has gone backed to its security policy on the Kurdish issue, which may be attributable to the 'slowing down' in the EU-accession process. In other words, pro-Kurdish actors argue that the new hegemonic actor, AKP, which is assembled mild-Islamic, mild-nationalist and capitalist values, has also begun to implement the '*AKP-isation* of the Kurdish issue', through using Turkish-Islamic values, in a new Ottoman sense. Ironically, this has been practised by Kemalist coterie since the republic established, which denied Kurdish reality and force the Kurdishness to be embodied in state definition and at the same time, marginalised the movement of the *Kurdi* agents' in the public sphere. More lately, these developments have affected the democratisation and EU-isation process of the country and its actors and affected the recent trajectories of the Kurdish narrative and activism.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **TRIPARTISM RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AGENT, STRUCTURE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE IN THE CASE OF KURDS, TURKEY, AND THE EU:**

#### **AN INTERPRETETIVE DISSCUSSION**



## **6.1 THE REIFICATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: AN INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to examine the role and responsibility of internal dynamics (in the form of socio-political agents) both in advancing the transformation of Kurdish society and in the process of (re)constructing the institutions, political identity, and political culture of the Kurds within a changing political setting. The study therefore focuses predominantly on actors or agents and their strategies, behaviour, and discourses since the beginning of the twentieth century in an attempt to understand the (failure of the) Kurdish transformation and the development and changing nature of Kurdish identity. Crucially, this research aims to explore the politico-economic developments in recent Kurdish history by locating them within certain theoretical frameworks. To this end, Chapters Three, Four, and Five provide a critical discussion on the developments occurring in both Kurdish politics and its political economy. From an analysis of Kurdish history, with regard to theoretical considerations, it is apparent that those specified frameworks can be used to locate the aforementioned developments within the sphere of Kurdish politics.

It is then the aim of this chapter to discuss the theoretically-informed nature of the research by engaging with the theoretical frameworks that were presented in Chapter Two, alongside the analysis offered in the following chapters. In terms of functionality, this chapter aims to provide an integrated discussion of the research questions by filtering the contributions of the earlier chapters in which it is argued that a combination of theories, regardless of how they differ in terms of their respective ideological positions, offers a more efficient way of looking at reality. These theories are, however, united through social and political issues on the level of Kurdish reality. In other words, this research argues that rather than imposing a particular theoretical framework on the material so as to understand the dynamic nature of identity construction and political economy, particular theories can instead be used for the respective period in Kurdish history.

To understand the notion of identity or the transformation of the socio-political identity of Kurdish society through internal agents, such a research subject requires a comprehensive strategy and a methodological approach due to the complex social, political, and economic structures and interactions that have been largely overlooked

by theories of nationalism<sup>382</sup>. In other words, it inevitably became a necessity to demonstrate the seemingly stagnant but dynamic context of Kurdish history, its different actors stemming from different periods. In response to such complexities, this study is critically organised into three main sections that adhere to Kurdish history, each of which endeavours to explain that particular era and the relevant political economy, social structure, and identity construction as part of the transformation process of the Kurdish “political movement”. What remains constant within each historical stage is the Kurds’ struggle against hegemonic power in order to preserve their identity, culture, and authority; the strategies employed to achieve this goal do, however, differ in each period. Each period has also observed the emergence of new institutions and politics through the Kurdish attempt to deconstruct the process by which identity is formed, reconstructing it within the domestic impact of the superstructure that runs from democratisation attempts in Turkey to the EU and EU-isation.

In order to respond to each period and its relevant identity construction strategies, this study employs three different theoretical frameworks (as a triangular model) that are related to political economy, political knowledge (discourse), and socio-political (internal or external) relations. This formulation is further supported by Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* approach in examining the pre-modern period (or the nineteenth century); Gramsci’s “Hegemonic Theory” lends weight to the analysis of the modern period, and with the social constructivist approach to exploring the concept of identity formation in the “postmodern” period of *Kurdi*<sup>383</sup> society as completes this tripartite method of investigation. Such differences in the theoretical frameworks that are relevant to each period are in turn linked to each period’s unique composition and the construction of the socio-political economy.

This study argues that each period differs greatly in terms of its content and actors, which attempt to explain the entire Kurdish history with regard to the political culture

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<sup>382</sup> The literature of Kurdish studies is predominantly defined by nationalist theories.

<sup>383</sup> The term of *Kurdi* refers to the pro-Kurdish and national perspective; moreover, it addresses historical and cultural Kurdishness (Kurdiness) without the impacts and interpretations of external dominant power, such as the Turkish state. It is a term that is aligned against the officially defined “Kurdishness”. As a result, *Kurdi* represents the “national consciousness” or the sensitivity of the Kurdish rights and demands.

and political economy of Turkey (from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey). The use of only one theoretical framework would therefore fail to provide an authentic assessment of the material in question. This does not necessarily mean that the theories all have to work in conjunction with one another. There are, however, common links between the theories; these links are associated with the ideas of civil society, double movement, counter-tendency, and agency. The narrative developed here thus provides evidence to support and conceptualise the theoretical framework.

The following sections consequently offer a discussion based on the earlier chapters in relation to each of the conceived periods with the objective of explaining how each of the theoretical frameworks for the respective period is relevant when explaining the changing nature of Kurdish identity, its formation and constituents.

## **6.2 THE KURDISH ‘GREAT REGRESSION’ IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND THE FORMATION OF THE TURKISH ‘FICTITIOUS NATION-STATE’**

To comprehend the transformation process of Kurdish agents, the nature of the transformation process itself, and the emergence and transformation of Kurdish identity, it is essential to trace the problematic issues back to Kurdish history, with especial reference to the modernisation and nationalisation eras of the Turks during the Ottoman period (as is discussed in Chapter Three). This locates the foundational issues, yet it also, and more importantly, explains why the linear development process did not take place for the Kurds, which is documented in the Polanyian account. In other words, this study argues that the transformation of the Kurdish political identity and its related contemporary movements are interlinked with the late nineteenth-century Ottoman political economy and politics. For the Kurds were at the periphery of the Ottoman centre as a *de facto* independent regional power; the Ottomans went through their own transformation into Turkishness from the late nineteenth century onwards during the periods associated with modernisation and the building of the “nation-state”. Initially, it is therefore necessary to examine the central structure and then explore its relationship with the peripheral area, the Kurdistan in an attempt to identify the macro and micro relations. As a result, the Ottoman Empire’s social, political, and economic structures should be considered as pivotal and decisive factors in revealing the impact of the centre’s modernisation process on the transformation of the periphery, which in this case is Kurdistan. This particular transformative

relationship enables the use of a top-down, or macro, perspective in the study; it also aids the analysis of the contradictions between the two powers in terms of socio-political tensions.

It should be noted that by the nineteenth century, the Ottoman traditionally formulated regime had turned into a modernist, semi-secular *millet* system. During the change experienced by the entire Imperial structure through *Tanzimat* and other reform processes, new actors of local and regional governance emerged, such as *ayans*; the relationship between these new actors resulted in a new political economy and governance (as is discussed in Chapter Three). These new agents, with the assistance of international capital, transformed the absolute political power and agricultural Imperial political economy into liberalesque principles. This new political economic system, emphasising such methods as tax-farmer mechanism, thus superseded the traditional *timar* system. Indeed, the *timar* was a key unit of fiscal and political policy that enabled the state to penetrate into the modes of production and the distribution of surplus within the Empire. Following the design of a surplus cash crops market, the ordinary peasants and farmers became a semi-labouring class, and the new type of bourgeois class (the *ayan*) became semi-independent, gaining political power via the “re-sharing” of the central power. This action had ramifications throughout the political system and it was followed by a modification of the regime into the CUP’s monarchic constitutional system with the declaration of the first constitution in 1876 until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Consequently, the combination of this new modernist progress and these institutions in the form of social, political, and economic spheres (to create an entirely new political economy in effect) directly impacted the relationships existing between the state and its subjects (or citizens), between subjects and subjects, and between the centre and the periphery, as is illustrated in detail in Chapter Three. Due to such essential changes taking place in the centre with the aim of convergence with the new international political economy, the traditional Kurdish agriculture-based mode of production was also forced to integrate with the international capitalist system through new modern and self-regulated market institutions.

In this respect, Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* (1944) is considered to be a theoretical framework (see Chapter Two), as it offers an institutional and moral view

of world history, which is relevant to both Ottoman and Kurdish history. This study thus attempts to utilise Polanyi's concepts and analytical tools to understand this period within Kurdish society and its transformational process. Further, Polanyi's statement that 'the nineteenth-century civilisation had collapsed' equally provides a potential explanation of Kurdish history.

As one of the leading social theorists and political economists, Polanyi, as explained in the theoretical chapter, argues that the rise of the self-regulated and market-based society occurred after the destruction and rescindment of the economic relations of the nineteenth-century traditional society, which were governed by the principles of reciprocity, redistribution, and house-holding. These principles were further embedded in the social and political relations of a particular social formation that was developed through a particular historical context of a particular society. Given that the Ottoman, and the Kurdish, political economy and social formation had such features within the period Polanyi describes, his "Great Transformation" (or in this case non-transformation) is considered to be the theoretical framework for this initial period of Kurdish political economy and identity formation, from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire to the establishment of modern Turkey.

Consequently, this provides an analytical tool with which to understand why Kurdish society could not follow the linear modernisation and institutionalism that was so successfully developed in Western societies; by extension, this thereby indicates the reason for the Kurdish non-transformation. In addition, Polanyi's framework permits an enquiry into the role of leadership in this process or its perceived failure therein. Furthermore, a relevant question that Polanyi helps to formulate is that detailing the consequence of the "Great Regression" of Kurdish society, as opposed to that of the "Great Transformation", especially after the incomplete modernisation. Subsequently, the Kurdish "Great Regression or Transformation" process in the nineteenth century (until 1923) is examined in Chapter Three using *Polanyiesque* discourse; the distinctive premises, as voiced by Polanyi, provide a theoretical formulation that can be applied for the analysis of the challenges to the Kurdish political economy during

the period in question<sup>384</sup>. The *Kurdi* political economy in this period appeared as “non-modern” or “Western”, “non-industrial”, and “disorganised”; it represented a pre-capitalist mode of production or, in the words of Polanyian followers, a traditional society in its ancient, tribal, semi-feudal, and religious superstructure.

This antecedent system allows the examination of how the transformation and linear modernisation process could not have taken place through the following concepts: the “modes of production”, “knowledge of Kurdish historiography”, “knowledge of culture”, and “knowledge of response or struggle” (see Chapter Three). With the use of this institutional and moral economy context, this study has endeavours to understand the role of the traditional institutions and internal dynamics as the agents in this particular period that are perceived as responsible for the non-transformation and, by extension, for the later “big failure” of Kurdish society, resulting in it “missing the opportunities” provided for the renewal of Kurdish society in the nineteenth century.

To explain the Polanyian position better in the Kurdish case, Polanyi’s formulation of the political dimension was discursively reiterated using his theoretical formulation and tools. For instance, Polanyi argues that the problem was not exactly the emergence or transformation of society into a market system, as the “market” has always existed since the dawn of civilisation. The paradigm shift was that, in this new political economy, the economy itself was separated from social life (and thus from its morality), resulting in the commercialisation of nature, labour, and money (as fictitious commodities) into purely materialist and liberal principles, even though it is against their intrinsic characteristics. In other words, the economy had always worked in an embedded manner until the emergence of this new economic paradigm (a self-regulated market), which resulted in the economy diverging from its embedded base. According to Polanyi and contrary to liberal assertions, such a transformation is not representative of a spontaneous or natural process, and it therefore created a problem for the nature of society.

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<sup>384</sup> These premises include such factors as the system of embeddedness within the context of fictitious commodities, the double movement approach or the discourse of “dis-embeddedness”, “fictitious commodities”, “reciprocity”, “redistribution”, and “social protectionism”.

This is a particularly relevant point in terms of Kurdish society, as it did not follow this “jump” away from the natural process; the Kurds continued to progress within their traditional norms, while the rest of the Ottoman societies were attempting to make the “jump” into the new political economy by following the Western experience. In addition to the crucial and deterministic external factors, there are other important internal factors that constitute obstacles in the face of, or are responsible for, the incomplete “great transformation” of the Kurds in the nineteenth-century’s self-regulating, industrialising, and modern institutionalising processes. In this era, the Ottoman-central and Kurdish-peripheral systems have had reciprocal relations, but the Imperial-macro political economy was not a collimator for the Kurdish-micro political economy. The notion of the ‘*Kurdi* political economy’ occurred internally through the structure of the base, which is “embedded” in tribal and religious values, and through its leadership, which is composed of traditional (*mir*, *agha*) or religious (*sheikh*, *sayyid*, or *melle* and *dede*) agents. This political economy system predominantly represents a moral economy.

The economic, social, political, and religious relations are “embedded” in non-economic institutions within the society. Moreover, the profit motivation is not very deterministic because economic behaviour is grounded in both the cultural realm and religious spirituality. In this respect, self-sufficiency is dominant in the economy through the household economy (endogamy-marriage endorses this economic system). According to Polanyian assessment, Kurdish individual behaviour is again different from that which is exhibited in capitalist society, and individual motivation is without the expectation of any reciprocal condition *quid pro quo*, in terms of honour, reputation, a gift (*khelat*), kinship, and the solidarity of the *eshir* (tribal) mechanism (see Chapter Three). Correspondingly, the social structure of the *Kurdi* society remained static and traditional, aiming to progress within its norms. An examination of the Kurdish society of the time shows that it was built on tribal (*eshir*) and religious values, making the maintenance of social ties or relations crucial for the survival of such a kinship-oriented society. As can be seen, the social and identity formation of society was expressed through the pre-capitalist social forms in this particular era<sup>385</sup>.

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<sup>385</sup> As explained in Chapter Two, Polanyi (1944: 46) points out that in such societies “individual economic interest is rarely paramount, for the community keeps all of its members from starving

In accordance with Polanyi's definition of traditional societies, the political economy of Kurdish society was then mainly a redistributive, reciprocity-based political economy with an emphasis on house-holding functions, which are in turn based on *eshiri* and *Islami* aspects. The political economy of Kurdish society in the aforementioned era, with its political economy and social relations, thus adheres to the Polanyian approach. Accordingly, this explains why Kurdish society could not produce a "Great Transformation" of its own. It is also essential to note that, in the Polanyian approach, such a traditional social formation and political economy is dependent on the centrality of social morality, symmetry, and self-sufficiency. The Kurdish tribal political economy behaviour is grounded on such traditional and cultural realities. The superstructure of such a political economy is constituted by tribes in terms of "kinship-oriented" power and *sheiks'* influences (religious order), which provided the religious legitimacy for the tribal leader. In this scenario, the relationship between the *agha*, or tribal leader, and the "subjects", and that between the *sheikh* and the followers, is based on social-tribal and religious norms. Thus, the relationship was not economy-oriented or self-interest-oriented; there was also no economic expectation. Ultimately, the Kurdish economy was not monetised or profit-oriented.

The social order therefore subordinates economic relations and operates in a collective and non-competitive context, which is more important than economic interests. Further, the market is deregulated, and ownership is not shaped within the capitalist form. The "reciprocity" and "redistribution" direct and characterise the economic relations of Kurdish society in this period through the symmetry and centrality principles that Polanyi attributes to tribal or ancient societies (see Chapter Three). Consequently, Polanyi's "Great Transformation" is a useful device for explaining the political, economic, and social changes that occurred in the nineteenth-century *Kurdi*(sh) political economy.

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unless it is itself borne down by catastrophe, in which case interests are again threatened collectively, not individually. The maintenance of social ties, on the other hand, is crucial. First, by disregarding the accepted code of honour or generosity, the individual cuts himself off from the community and becomes an outcast; second, in the long run, all social obligations are reciprocal and their fulfilment best serves the individual's give-and-take interests".



After the strong intervention of the state in the Kurdish political economy, the organic unity, however, dissolves and economic behaviour is “dis-embedded” from the *eshir* fabric that forces the land and labour (or money) to turn into “fictitious commodities”. This intervention simultaneously caused the “double movement” of Ottoman, externally-based, self-regulated political and economy expansion, and Kurdish regional-political traditionalism or social protectionism. The role of internal agents is, however, the central reason for the “un-progressive transformation”. In other words, the leadership could not lead society into linear modernisation, thereby failing to turn the antecedent institutions – which are the essence of resistance to transformation – into capitalist or modern institutions; or, after the system settled, it could not preserve society against the oppression of the central, self-regulating market system in the process of “re-redistribution”, “re-reciprocity”, “re-embedding”, or “de-commoditisation” in terms of Polanyi’s theoretical account. As a result, the Kurds missed the opportunity of the nineteenth century’s “progressive transformation”, and this process turned into a “Great Regression” for the Kurdish society from a modernist perspective. The relationship between Kurdish agency (internal dynamic) and the Turkish state (external dynamic) is one of transmutation after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Eventually, the Kurdish political economy was theoretically divided into two sections: the evolution of the Kurdish society and the responses to this change in a protectionist or counter-context<sup>386</sup>. Polanyi also argues that such a transformation results in “fictitious political relations” (see Chapter Three). Exploring Kurdish history thus provides further evidence of the validity of Polanyi’s position in the case of the Kurdish political economy.

Chapter Three thus argues that the Kurdish process of transformation is actually an account of two transformations. The first is that of the centre, or the Ottoman transformation, which occurred in the early nineteenth century with the rise of centralisation and the modernisation project. Indeed, it simultaneously “dis-embedded” the Kurdish *mir*, or *eshir*, code of political economy life. The second transformation is that of the peripheral counter-transformation which emerged after the demise of the structure of the *raison d’être* for existence and which became a “re-

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<sup>386</sup> From a cultural perspective, this double movement appears to be the struggle between two different cultural systems. Two antagonistic actors seek to present competing views, disturbing their systems of culture and belief.

embedding” struggle of the “protectionist movement” in terms of a double movement (or one may call it a dualist context). As a result, these circumstances derived from the Kurdish historical process enable the investigation of these two different processes from a top-down view and from an alternative bottom-up analysis. In other words, it became possible, after focusing on the “base” and its structure through a bottom-up approach, to formulate the following question:

(i) Why did this dual approach<sup>387</sup> and an alternative non-economic cultural vision fail to produce possible institutional developments in the nineteenth century?

Although this study is not definitive, it is an attempt to open a debate on the role of internal dynamics in this “incomplete” transformation process in the nineteenth century. In this respect, the essentialisation of the ‘*Kurdi* political economy’ system is turned into a necessity. By assessing whether this was separate from the Ottoman Empire (the internal capitalist system) or whether it existed as an alternative economic mechanism based on ancient institutions with tribal and religious ethics, it is argued that the tribe (*eshir*) acted as the political-economic institution and was embedded in social relations that were designed with both religious and moral solidarity, honour, respect (statute), shame, hospitality, or generosity norms (see Chapter Three). It is such identified characteristics and political economy features that even thwarted the imposed change from the centre in an attempt to essentialise the “sacrosanct” nature of its own structure.

Such analyses are missing from the Kurdish studies that are related to the Kurdish historical context of social, political, and national agents. Rather than adopting a critical political economy approach to understand the Kurdish lack of transformation, the use of a nationalistic approach to Kurdish studies ignores the impact of political economy actors, the modes of production, the relationship between the commodity and the individual, and the impact of this on the authority and individual relationships in the form of Kurdish narratives. The role of internal dynamics had slim attention in this respect.

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<sup>387</sup> This dual approach incorporates liberal and international capital principles and traditional and local values and institutions.

Further, the impact of the external dynamics on all of these aforementioned factors also posits an additional oversight. In other words, this study argues, by adopting such an approach, identifies the shortcomings in conceptualising Kurdish politics within nationalist theory, which is merely concerned with the ethnic politics of Kurdish agents and their national demands and liberation movement without focusing on the pressing nature of the internal and external political economy. Despite focusing on non-state agents and the peripheral moral economy, engaging with the political economy approach provides the opportunity to locate the impact of internal and external dynamics in shaping the variables of the Kurdish society, politics, and its economy in an intersecting manner.

Alongside the Polanyian approach, this study attempts to modify Polanyi's distinctive Eurocentric perception of the non-European case, which has similar features to those of the ancient, or "primitive", societies that Polanyi engaged with and analysed in detail through ethnographic research. As a result, rather than testing the Polanyian theoretical concept, this study employs the tools, institutions, and articulated dynamics of *The Great Transformation* to determine whether Kurdish society had used its agency and identity to complete the linear modernisation and development in the nineteenth century. In other words, instead of searching for certain results and verifying or testing Polanyi's theories, this research instead focuses on the process itself. This research, however, spontaneously reached the conclusion that Kurdish society had failed to achieve the great transformation that Polanyi had theorised and that it had further lost opportunities to transform its traditional institutional mechanism into an industrial, modern, and self-regulated market. Kurdish society also did not make a serious effort to create a nation-state during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, unlike other ethnic groups: an omission in which the inherent characteristics, social structure, institutions, agents, and external conditions of the Kurds played a crucial role.

It is important to highlight two important points from the Polanyian perspective: the rise of intervention in the form of self-regulating market principles within its political consequences, and Polanyi's account of society or the agent's response in the form of

protectionism as part of the articulation of “double movement<sup>388</sup>”. These political economy features of reaction and protectionism have dominated modern Kurdish history.

### **6.3 SOCIAL PROTECTIONISM IN COUNTERMOVE: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL PROTECTIONIST KURDISH STRUGGLE WITH HEGEMONIC DEMAND, IN THE *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE***

The explanation of how Polanyi’s mechanism worked in relation to the Kurdish case leads to a need to justify the reason why this study could not continue with this theoretical instrument to explain the next stage of the Kurdish political trajectories and needs of the Gramsci’s hegemonic theory. The study based on an inductive perspective rather than deductive approach, which generally offers to create a template for the narrative. Therefore it is not the duty of the study to act as a “social engineer”.

Further, the study does not imply the absence of any link between these two theories; on the contrary, these two post-Marxist thinkers share many similarities on social, political, and economic issues. Polanyi argued that the self-regulated market is linked with the concept of the modern nation-state in the history of the nineteenth century. In addition, the absence of leadership and a modern nation-state (without the capitalist mode of production), combined with the failure of the Kurdish protectionist to the “post-Sultanic transformation”, created a *hegemonic gap* in Kurdish society that was infiltrated or replaced by the modern Turkish state. Although the new Turkish Republic assumed an equally new political economy and political identity construction, another stage of Kurdish history, as expressed in the form of the hegemonic struggle between Kurdish agents and the new Turkish state, also emerged in this era. In this respect, Polanyi’s transformational, institutional, and moral formulation was no longer qualified to explain the violent struggle of armed socio-political movement and its hegemonic demands within different strategies in the case

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<sup>388</sup> Polanyi put this formulation quite cogently in that there are two organising principles within society which work simultaneously: ‘On the one hand there was economic liberalism, “aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market that relied on the support of the trading classes and mostly used *laissez-faire* and free trade as its methods”. On the other hand there was “social protection which aimed at the conversion of man and nature as well as productive organisation, relying on the support of those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market – primarily, but not exclusively – the working and landed classes” (1957: 132) (quoted in Birchfield, 1999: 39).

of the Kurds. It also explains the theoretical foundation and the reason behind the transition from Polanyi's aspect to the context of Gramscian hegemony.

Polanyi did not place significant emphasis on the role of counter-hegemonic agents and their unequal power relations with the centre. This inequality is essential as it played an important role in determining the Kurdish historical trajectory. As a result, in the second stage of the *Kurdi* history the protectionist reaction determined the nature of the Kurds' strategy after their failure even to attempt to establish their own nation-state for a modern transformation, which indeed was not in the imagination of the Kurds. This protectionist reaction against the modern infiltration of the new Turkish state aimed to conserve the original society and maintain the struggle to "dis-embed" the economy from self-regulated principles and to "re-embed" it into social and political life. Such an aim was in turn replaced by the hegemonic power struggle, gaining a cultural and intellectual moral leadership through different strategies and tactics, and by means of various internal dynamics.

This new era involving Kurdish agents and the transformation process can no longer be explained by Polanyi's framework. Indeed, the nature of the developments of the time, as is explained in Chapter Two, fits into the "hegemony theory" of Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony itself is the politics of transformation; it brings the dialectical interaction between the leading existing order and the counter position. Rebelling against hegemony implies that one is a rebel against the existing system while simultaneously creating an alternative or new order with a view to disembodying the leading culture from society. It is also a complex concept that includes agency and the transformation of identity. As the dialectic of the process necessitates, hegemony needs to construct a "historical bloc" from various fragments of society round the counter-hegemonic movement through cultural and intellectual leadership. Such conceptualisation in the form of "radical process" rather than "linear modernisation" is beyond the remit of Polanyi's framework, as he does not have a strong notion of hegemony. According to this argument, Polanyi should thus be read in conjunction with Gramsci's discourse. Burawoy explicitly argues that

Gramsci's and Polanyi's engagement with failed revolutions in the West, the rise of fascism, and the Soviet Revolution trumped their opposite social origins, their divergent political trajectories, and their different national *milieux* to lead them independently to a similar *Sociological Marxism*. They both

envisioned a socialism built on the foundations of society: a separate space apart from but connected to both the economy and the state (2003: 207).

Chapter Three mainly explored the developments in the transformation of the Kurdish political economy in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century through a Polanyian formulation underpinned by the notion that the Kurdish nature was an obstacle to the linear development of society and that the impact of external power, namely the Turkish state, prevented any Kurdish transformation. Chapter Four thus aims to analyse how the Gramscian perspective contributes to this foundation in explaining the developments in the twentieth-century transformation of Kurdish political identity. As is discussed in Chapter Four, different actors constitute the “historical bloc” of the Kurds in different historical periods. The strategies of the Gramscian account (manoeuvre or position) are employed by the respective leaders of these historical blocs (including their organic intellectuals) who are mostly responding to the stance of the external hegemonic powers. In other words, the state’s tendency towards the Kurds was a deterministic factor in these strategies. Hegemonic relations appeared as a result of this action. These relations were between the internal Kurdish (socio-political) leadership and the external (state) power. Correspondingly, this struggle emerges in the “historical bloc” itself, either when internal hegemonic candidates do not gain the inner hegemonic power or when the counter-hegemonic culture is not distributed among society.

It should be mentioned that Gramsci, on a similar level to Polanyi, also signified the importance of the leadership for leading and representing the interests (and identity) of society as “Euro-Marxist”, “sociological Marxist” or “heterodox Marxist”. Silver and Arrighi (2003: 327) argue that “Polanyi puts forward a theory of class leadership with some analogies with Gramsci’s conceptualising of hegemony. For a class/group to lead, it must also protect other classes/groups”. This is then the crucial reason why this study utilises these two important post-Marxist<sup>389</sup> theoretical frameworks that draw upon the importance of the notion of society<sup>390</sup> within historical specificity for

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<sup>389</sup> For instance, Burawoy emphasises that ‘Marxism was the spectre that haunted the *fin-de-siècle* intellectual landscape, shaping the terrain upon which Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and Pareto would build their own original theoretical edifices. The Russian Revolution took Marxism in entirely new directions, again forcing a reaction from bourgeois social theory’ (2003: 194).

<sup>390</sup> For Gramsci, society is civil society, which is always understood in its contradictory connection to the state (such as trade unions, political parties, mass education and other voluntary organisations)

the Kurdish case. As a Gramscian reading would reveal, Kurds are a stabilising conservative force, yet they are equally a new “social movement” that challenges neoliberalism in Polanyi’s sense (Bond, 2005). Such an attempt does, however, need to be modified because of the Eurocentric approaches of Polanyi and Gramsci, as they aim to explain a particular part of European history with their culturally relative understanding. From this perspective<sup>391</sup>, “Polanyi’s model is undergirded by a broad and rather ambiguous definition of society, hence his underdeveloped sense of agency [in other words hegemony] is useful complemented by Gramsci’s work” (Birchfield, 1999: 39). This research therefore initially focused on the dialectic between state-market-society in a Polanyian sense to analyse the Kurdish trajectory, as is explained in Chapter Three; it then used Gramscian state-agent-society in Chapter Four to explore the nature and structure of the transformation in the Kurdish political economy and in its political identity (Burawoy, 2005; Bond, 2005; Birchfield, 1999; Silver and Arrighi, 2003; Gill, 2005; Munck, 2010). Each of these theoretical frameworks thus explains the Kurdish case by situating it within a particular period in history. For example, the responsive reaction is shaped in the “double movement” for one and in the counter-movement for the other. Moreover, the “double movement” of Polanyi is in some ways reminiscent of Gramsci’s suggestion of counter-movement. The transformation process of Polanyi emerges in Gramsci’s formulation in terms of

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[...] was a new terrain of struggle that connected the state to the rhythms of everyday life. For Polanyi society is ‘active society’, which is always understood in its contradictory tension with the market (such as trade unions, cooperatives, factory movement, political parties or Christian movements) [...] had an autonomy of its own: from saving the market from its destructive tendencies, it would become a fetter on the market, threatening to transcend and subordinate it” (Burawoy, 2003: 198-206). Gramsci’s ‘civil society combines with the state to absorb political challenges to capitalism. Gramsci, therefore, describes capitalism as a transition within capitalism from political dictatorship to political hegemony, which occurs in the West but not the East. Polanyi’s “active society” thwarts the commodification of labor, land, and money. Here the transition is from market despotism [a self-regulating market] to market regulation, which occurs in Europe but not in colonies [...]. They drew attention to the backwardness of their native Hungary and Italy but always in ways relative to the future of Western Europe and the United States. Looking in another direction, East rather than West, their analysis of the European periphery could be applied to the Third World. Gramsci’s disquisition on Italy’s Southern Question and his later ‘Notes on Italian History’, for example, contain the ingredients for the study of peripheral nations, the articulation of the modern industrial sector, and a semi-feudal agrarian sector’ (Burawoy, 2003: 220).

<sup>391</sup> Birchfield states “The marriage of these thinkers is by no means a blissful one, nor are the ideological divisions between the two entirely unproblematic. However, the advantage of opening up a critical dialogue between the two far exceeds the disadvantage of pairing two otherwise very intellectually distinct thinkers” (1999: 28).

passive revolution. It is the new form of power that transformed identity, the actor or institutions, and the strategy of movement (society). Furthermore, the meaning of hegemony has been signified differently by various Kurdish counter-hegemonic movements against the existing hegemonic culture in the *Kurdi* historical context<sup>392</sup>.

Gramsci's formulation of hegemony therefore operates in a complex way in the case of the Kurds. The notion of hegemony for the Kurds initially meant preserving the *de facto* statute in pre-modern times; this struggle was later shaped around nationalism (to dispose a separate Kurdish state after the post-Ottoman period) with the demands of the modern era. Moreover, the hegemonic request is animated in the identity politics (protecting the Kurds' Kurdishness against Turkification) during the advanced-modern period and finally in the postmodern era when the notion of hegemony was embedded in the context of democracy. In other words, Kurds have struggled (legally or illegally) for democratic values (that have originated from the EU), and they have challenged the existing "democratic" system with "other" citizens and identity<sup>393</sup> of the country to attain democratic constitutions or to have their own hegemonic domain in terms of a "democratic republic", "democratic autonomy", or an "independent state".

The theories of Polanyi and Gramsci are critical and complementary in terms of contributing to the research questions of this study through the context of political economy and political theory, whereby they also implicitly plant the seed of a *radical democracy* even though their foundations lie within Euro-centrism. According to Birchfield, "Gramsci's radical democracy theory is rooted in the appreciation of his conviction that 'tutta la vita e politica,' which already establishes a strong affinity with Polanyi" (Birchfield, 1999: 40). In other words, both Gramsci and Polanyi at the end of their discussion suggest a democratic system formulated with socialist values as a "third way"<sup>394</sup>. Indeed, they draw attention to the importance of civil society; for

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<sup>392</sup> This hegemonic culture has also been undergoing a change from the traditional Ottoman Imperial regime to the Kemalist modernist nationalist system or the recent AKP statist culture, which is based on Islamic, nationalist, and capitalist values.

<sup>393</sup> *Alawites*, "non-nationalist" leftists, "non-nationalist" Islamists, non-Muslims, or non-heterosexual groups.

<sup>394</sup> To the non-democratic approach voiced by the alternative capitalism and communism. Skocpol (1984: 53), however argues that 'Polanyi sought a third way between the utopianism of those which imagined that issues of political power and social conflict would automatically disappear as a result



instead of emphasising the classic “proletarian dictatorship”, they justify the leadership of the proletariat, who could gain power among civil society to transform the system in terms of a socialist structure. In other words, democracy or democratic socialism engendered in the Polanyi’s theory of class leadership through the double movement’s protectionist movement and also in the Gramsci’s conceptualisation of hegemony theory through the counter-hegemonic movement. This idea of hegemony was, however, developed by post-Marxist or Euro-Marxist scholars under the term “radical democracy” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). This critical political epistemology at the same time encourages the study to apply and analyse the radical democracy in the Kurdish case through its interpretation as the ‘non-otherising’ democracy (see Chapter Five).

#### **6.4 RE-READING HISTORY OF KURDISH COUNTER-HEGEMONY**

The previous discussion demonstrated the link between Polanyi and Gramsci, explaining different periods, actors, and relations of the Kurdish society and the rational behind why a single theoretical approach could not be pursued. For the sake of this contextualising and to establish the subject into theory, how the hegemonic relations started and continued within the Kurdish society through different internal and external agents needs to be reiterated. Moreover, to understand the following analysis, the Gramscian terminology, or the discourses that Gramsci provided in the *Prison Notebooks* (1971), must be simultaneously clarified before proceeding with the Kurdish case via this Gramscian framework. As a result, this study proposes a number of questions regarding the Kurdish case within this theoretical framework. These questions are as follows:

- (i) What is the “historical bloc” and who constitutes it?
- (ii) Who were the candidates for a hegemonic power or on the side of hegemonic relations?
- (iii) How does hegemonic power work?
- (iv) Which agents (intellectuals) create the counter-hegemonic culture or “good sense”?

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of revolutionary transformation, and the resignation of those who believed that it was futile to use radical action to create a better society’.

(v) What strategies were used, and how does the “war of manoeuvre” or “war of position” work?

(vi) When did they employ these Gramscian strategies and in what conditions?

In the second stage of Kurdish history (explored in Chapter Four), this study initially identifies the competition between the Kurds and the Kemalist regime of the new Turkish Republic for hegemonic power, which is based on the nationalism and secularism culture and created by a modernist Jacobean approach as an imaginary sense.

In this regard, the aim of Chapter Four was to analyse the responses to the Kurdish counter-movement within Gramsci’s hegemony theory with its conceived strategy and tactical offers. The dimension of hegemony designed for the political reality of the period following 1923 is based on the relation of two main hegemonic candidates in the region. Consequently, hegemony intrinsically appeared in a dual perspective through Kemalist hegemonic ascendancy and its counter-hegemonic Kurdish political movement. The Kemalist system is interpreted within the concept of hegemony solely as the function of domination practices in the context of coercion without consent, which created competition between the hegemonic candidates in the Kurdistan region. External dominant power (the state) was aligned against the Kurdish socio-political and regional leaders. This new period in Kurdish history is therefore explored within the hegemony theory of Gramsci, which seeks to understand how Kurds were forced to endure a ‘subservient status’ in the absence of internal Kurdish hegemony. Following this development, the study then examines the Kurds’ struggle against the external (or Kemalist) hegemony and the internal traditional Kurdish leadership through recently created social and political institutions as part of the new identity construction. In other words, the research on the post-1923 period of *Kurdi* political history, which is related to the struggle of Kurdish socio-political agents against Kemalism, led this study to consider a hegemonic reading in an attempt to understand the process of transformation that affected Kurdish political identity during this particular era. The notion of hegemony is, however, not easy to understand and it

cannot be readily applied to the Kurdish case<sup>395</sup>. This study is thus divided by two different senses of hegemony (inner and outer), and it also endeavours to explain the different meanings of hegemony for the respective periods of the Kurdish case due to the complexity of the subject.

With the exception of the hegemonic struggle between external (the state) and internal (Kurdish agents) powers in the Kurdistan region from the period of the Ottoman Empire to the present, there is also the inner hegemonic struggle among various Kurdish actors in Kurdish society for internal hegemonic power. The meaning of hegemony can thus be seen in the encounter with the internal agents who aimed to gain 'inner hegemonic culture' over all Kurdish society and achieve intellectual and moral leadership. Conversely, it is a struggle between the internal (among the Kurds) and the external (against the Turkish state) for a 'total hegemonic power' that is the sum of consent (*egomonia*) and coercive (*domino*) approaches respectively. As a result, an attempt is made in Chapter Four to 're-theorise' and rearticulate the hegemony in ethnic or identity politics and examine the notion of hegemony differently for each sub-period, given that the context of hegemony is shaped by different goals. In addition, it should be recalled that Gramsci theorised the notion of hegemony for class struggle. 'Class', however, remains a suggestive insight into the Kurdish case within national demand. In this respect, the analysis aims to employ the complex mechanism of this combination and focus on the interim struggle between inner actors for hegemonic cultural, and intellectual, leadership during their counter-responses to the state 'domination'. Consequently, this part of Kurdish history is constructed around the vicissitudes of the notion of hegemony. The hegemony line is broken within different periods according to their importance as turning points in the context of Kurdish history; the meaning of hegemony is therefore differentiated for each period, as depicted in Table 6.1.

Due to the complex structure of hegemony in the context of Kurdish politics and history, its meaning is therefore shaped and embedded within each period of *Kurdi* history itself. Consequently, this 'linear' process of hegemonic struggle from 1923 to 1984, which was covered in Chapter Four, is divided into three main hegemonic

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<sup>395</sup> Birchfield (1990: 40) states that "Gramsci's conceptualisation of the relationship between structure and agency, articulated through his theory of hegemony, provides a deeper understanding of the formation and nature of counter-movements".

stages as parts of the hegemonic project (within their respective sub-terms) in a historical and chronological context. The first main period could be called a frontal attack or the genesis of the *Kurdi* counter-hegemonic movements between 1923 and 1938 (including the pre-1923 era). From 1938 to 1960, a second period can be divided into the years of passive struggle, or the “silent years”, and a later stage (between 1946 and 1960) is shaped through a rhetorical characteristic of “organic intellectuals”, which is also the term of transition from the “war of manoeuvre” to the “war of position” strategy. In addition, there is a final stage from 1960 to 1984, encompassing the emergence of lineages of hegemony in terms of institutional politics as a new cultural, moral, and ideological leadership in the Kurdish counter-hegemony history. Moreover, the final stage is defined by the political theoretical approach which is related to agent, structure, superstructure, strategies, knowledge, discourse, and philosophy. This final stage, however, continues in a different dimension from 1984 to the present, which is based on identity politics and opportunity spaces; it is analysed in Chapter Five through a social constructivist approach within a Gramscian template. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the breakdown of history into such periods is not done arbitrarily, as each one of them represents a particular turning point in the socio-political developments of Kurdish society. Each of these periods and their sub-periods are thus examined through the articulation of hegemony in a unique manner according to the developments related to the agents (actors), characters, conditions, strategies, and methods that are identified and mapped in Figure 6.1. As a result, Chapter Four aims to seek an ontological register, whereby the structure of the hegemonic struggle is explained. Correspondingly, the structures employed by the agents in each period are also unpredictable and are mainly based on reactionary politics<sup>396</sup>.

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<sup>396</sup> Piote (1981) argues that “in Gramsci, the war of position precedes the war of movement [...] the transition from the strategy of a “frontal attack” to that of the war of position indicates an historically necessary change in revolutionary praxis” (quoted in Salamini, 1981: 131).

**Table 6.1: Archaeology of the Kurdish Hegemonic Struggle**

<b>Chronological Period</b>	<b>Agent/Actor</b>	<b>Tactic/Strategy</b>	<b>Hegemony</b>
<b>Stage 1: 1923-1938 (Pre-1923)</b>	<i>Mirs</i> (Emirate)	War of manoeuvre – armed struggle (Desultory armed struggle)	Centralisation or <i>Tanzimatiation</i> – Modernisation (Against external power: Regionalism or Centralism)
<b>Post-1923</b>	Pre-modern Organisations (Azadi and Khoybun) and Traditional <i>Aghas</i> and <i>Sheiks</i>	War of manoeuvre – armed struggle (Institutional politics – modern devices)	Nationalism or Turkification (Against external power: homogeneous or heterogeneous)
<b>Stage 2: 1938-1960 1938-1946 (Sub-Period)</b>	Traditional intellectuals (Immobile)	War of position (Defensive struggle)	Identity or Kemalism (Against external power: modernity or backwardness)
<b>1946-1960</b>	Organic intellectuals	War of position (Passive struggle)	Liberalism or Democracy (Against external power: mass or popular)
<b>Stage 3: 1960-1984</b>	New Youth/Student Organisations (“Modern Prince”) (DDKO, KUK, Rizgari, KAWA, KIP, PSK, PKK)	War of position (Very active way)	Socialism and Secularism (Against internal power: and external power: redefinition of identity)
<b>Stage 4: 1984-Present 1984-1990 (Sub-Period)</b>	PKK	War of manoeuvre – armed struggle	Identity or modern Kurdiness emerged (Against external power)
<b>1990-Present (Sub-Period)</b>	PKK, “Many Kurds” (“Postmodern Prince”)	Predominantly war of position (Passive revolution)	Postmodern Kurdiness in EU-isation or Democratisation (Against internal and external agents: redefinition of identity and extension of democracy)

## 6.5 THE POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY OF THE *KURDI* 'POSTMODERN' AND 'COUNTER-HISTORICAL BLOC'

In the previous period (1923 to 1984), which is also the second case of this study, the process of the Kurdish hegemonic struggle has been discussed before analysing the last period (or case), which is named as the 'postmodern era' of Kurdish society. For this new term, the study employed a new critical perspective on the Kurdish social reality and expanding of Kurdish political identity (see Chapter Five). The Kurdish society moved beyond the hegemonic struggle through impact of the internal and sub-identity politics. It is therefore a time for a hermeneutic of the identity politics, which thereby establishes the foundations for an understanding of the different sub-identities roles in the Kurdish political mobilisation that were discussed in Chapter Five. These sub-identities are shaped both in a homogenic ideology (nationalism) and via a similar traditional cultural code, reciprocity, and social structure. A significant motivation for this study was the need to carry on discussion into 'new' identity politics through a social constructivist approach, rather than using only Gramsci's hegemony theory.

These post-*Kurdi* modern social groups internally challenge mainstream Kurdish identity. And they force to expanding this identity 'boundaries', which constructed by dominant Kurdish political agent, while the 'new', external (EU superstructure) dynamic became influential on the Kurdish politics<sup>397</sup>. Thus, these socio-political groups could gain more "opportunity spaces" in the public sphere, (or in Gramscian account in "historical bloc"), rather than simply struggling only for hegemonic power. These domestic actors do, however, share quite similar cultural and traditional values; the distinction is mostly based on their identity, strategy, and discourses. However, these sub-agents are not resistant to the modern and current *Kurdi* identity, which was constructed by a leading Kurdish agent (which is first founded by the movement of the 1960s and then was completed by the PKK). They all accepted the content, structure, values, morals, beliefs, or demands of *Kurdiness*, at certain levels (see Figure 6.2). Moreover, even the state recognises that this *Kurdiness* offered by PKK to some extent, such as through criminalising or terrorising it. Instead of deconstructing the existing, modern and socially-constructed *Kurdi* identity, which still contains traditional social relations, rather these sub-groups have attempted to challenge the mainstream *Kurdi* identity by using 'opportunity spaces' in the Turkish

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<sup>397</sup> *Kurdian* is a different way of saying Kurdish or Kurdishness.

(and Kurdish) public sphere that has been extended by EU institutional impacts during the country's accession process. These sub-agents strive to extend their individual terrain in the context of a new or postmodern Kurdish society. Thus, the hegemony is full of internal contradictions, while it still stands against the external hegemonic power.

In the final stage of this study, the focus shifted to the ongoing process that started in 1984, which is itself broken down into two separate sub-periods. Thus, in the context of modern identity construction, the period of 1984 to 1999 represents where the “war of manoeuvre” was actively used, while in the latter part of the period from the 1990s onward (especially after 1999 with Ocalan's capture and the Helsinki Summit) the strategy largely shifted to the tactics of a “war of position” within *Kurdi* politics. During this period, nationalist demands or ethnic politics were increasingly prioritised over socialist discourse.

The new, modern, and secular *Kurdi* identity, which is based on the heritage of the 1960s and 1970s through its latest organic intellectuals and their cultural practices, has the potential for critical elaboration, and it challenges the traditional, tribal, and religious Kurdish identity and its intellectual, moral, and cultural values: the “good sense” of the Gramscian context, which is explained in Chapters Two and Four. This new agent developed the “good sense” and was transformed into the “best sense” (my interpretation) as a new cultural and moral value for society, which could provide them with an internal hegemonic power<sup>398</sup>.

A distinguishing feature of the identity transformation in this period is that of the newest “historical bloc” (in which the EU is an important actor) which has exerted its power over the opportunity space to achieve hegemonic leadership, which is defined as “aspirational hegemony” by Howson (2006, in Howson and Smith, 2008). This approach also resulted in the acquisition of strategies to demand social justice and political and constitutional rights (including linguistic, cultural, or even autonomous rights) through the work of organic intellectuals and via passive struggle. The pro-Kurdish agents (namely the PKK or the BDP line) are considered to be strong candidates for this leadership with their cultural domination and political, hegemonic,

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<sup>398</sup> This ‘best sense’ is interpreted as the liberalisation, democratisation, or the EU-isation of culture.

internal, and external discourse within Kurdish society. During the following postmodern era of *Kurdi* society (as defined by this study), the different groups or identities of the postmodern historical bloc challenge the existing hegemonic culture of the PKK (relevantly the BDP line) for its democratic deficiencies alongside those of the EU institutions, since the EU also aims to become involved in Turkish domestic matters for the purpose of democratic reform.

The formulation of a Gramscian hegemonic perspective needs to be supported by a social constructivist approach in order to understand these complex and formative relations, which are led by various sub-identities. In other words, since the identities and strategies of the period are identified with social constructivism, the social constructivist approach has the potential to be the theoretical framework with which to examine the period in question<sup>399</sup>. Social constructivism can therefore be considered as an overall theoretical framework for explaining the developments and transformation in Kurdish identity (including any changes within its political economy). In the previously identified periods, other theoretical frameworks were found to be more strongly articulated, such as the Polanyian and Gramscian positions. In this ongoing period, due to the internal transformation in Kurdish society and the transformation in Turkey as a whole, which functioned as an external transformation for the Kurds, social constructivism appears to be the dominant and prevailing theoretical position that is utilised in order to understand the transformation of political identity.

It is argued that this recent political identity transformation and, by extension, the construction of the new 'EU-ising Kurdi' identity could be brought about only in a democratic, legalistic, and parliamentary manner in the recent political environment; it could also provide more opportunity spaces in the Turkish public sphere for politicised Kurds (see Chapter Five). As a result, the new democratic hegemonic bloc, or the postmodern *Kurdi* historical bloc, was primarily understood as winning the consent of groups that fell under the label of 'other' by defending their demands and

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<sup>399</sup> According to Hung *et al.* (2011: 162), "from a social constructivist point of view, the work on identity would imply the meaning-making and dialogic processes of conceiving self-understanding. In other words, adopting the social constructivist notion that all knowledge is socially constructed as a meaning-making process, identity is the social construction or meaning-making about one's self".



representing their identities within a *radical democracy* approach, rather than through the use of violence or monopolisation<sup>400</sup>. Therefore, the PKK and BDP line, as representatives of a majority of these politicised Kurds, became the dominant actors and gained internal hegemonic power before attaining a total hegemonic culture; consequently, this led to them becoming the ruling leaders. Equally, this makes the agency a critical dimension for the projection of identity.

This section then indicates the link between Gramscian hegemonic and social constructivist theoretical approaches; further, the reason why Gramsci's pure hegemonic theory alone could not explain this period is also explored. Indeed, it is related to the position of identity politics in a postmodern manner as a crucial element within this stage, requiring the social constructivist approach to explain the ongoing transformation process. It should be stated that the social construction of identity is a production of social agents, or that it is a social-making process (as reified in discourse and narrative) which recognises the importance of agency and the transformative identity process or internal self-transformation. A question, however, remains, for if identity is predominantly the product of social groupings, social relations, or the construction of the social reality, how could such an identity transformation be brought about? Actual experience, however, indicates that a predominantly political identity and its context is always a subject for the processes of construction, deconstruction, or reconstruction in Kurdish history and in any other society.

The Gramscian hegemonic perspective cannot answer this question and it also resists describing the new emerging social reality and opportunity spaces, or extending the existing identity politics and forcing them to embrace other identities of Kurdish society among the postmodern "historical bloc". This resistance to such actions avoids the notion of stability in identity, since Gramsci's understanding explores the importance of language, culture, or sense (both common and good, as is explored in

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<sup>400</sup> *Emek, Demokrasi, ve Ozgurluk Bloğu* (The Labour, Democracy, and Freedom Bloc) assembled with Turkish socialists, social democrat parties, individual non-Muslims, LGBT activists, and artists achieved thirty-six MPs in the election on the 12 June 2011; in the 2007 election they united under *Bin Umut Adaylari* (Candidates for Thousand Hopes) and achieved twenty-three MPs, or they had institutional relations with the EU and international society through lobbying, diasporic events, or diplomacy.

Chapters Two and Five) in the project of social and political transformation<sup>401</sup>. Hence the social constructivist approach carries the study into another dimension.

In conjunction with the main elements of social constructivism, the social reality, including the production of social and political identity, is socially constructed, preserved, and shared: “the basic contention of the sociology of knowledge, as Berger and Luckmann have put it, is that social reality is socially constructed, socially maintained, and socially distributed in ongoing ‘objective’ social processes, the objective of empirical investigation by social scientists” (Salamini, 1974: 374). Again according to Berger and Luckmann, philosophies continue to ask discursive questions “pertaining to the ultimate status of ‘reality’; sociology, on the contrary, by investigating the variation of types of knowledge, is forced to attribute it to structural differentiation of societies” (Salamini, 1974: 374). Moreover, Karl Mannheim “has tended to identify ‘knowledge’ and ‘ideology’”. In his view the social structure is the determinative factor explaining not only the diversity but also the content of human thought; consequently, every mode of thought is ideological in nature” (Salamini, 1974: 374)<sup>402</sup>. These are the prominent social constructivists; they all agree on the necessity of designating knowledge and ideology in the identity construction and production process that Gramsci disregarded in the hegemony discussion. For hegemony theory, the social reality is essentially meant to be only a political reality, and the concept of common sense is proposed only in a political interpretation.

It should be noted that the relationship between social constructivism and hegemony theory has not been uniformly understood. Therefore, the link between Chapter Four and Chapter Five of this study has created a crucial opportunity to develop this relation. Furthermore, to develop the political of knowledge in a social constructivist approach and in order to expound on its relationship with Gramsci’s theoretical

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<sup>401</sup> Salamini (1974: 375) claims that ‘Gramsci, though he has never defined himself as a sociologist, has concerned himself with the most traditional problems of the sociology of knowledge [...]. He has not elaborated a systematic theory of knowledge; he has, nevertheless, formulated certain very useful hermeneutic criteria for socio-historical analysis’.

<sup>402</sup> Mannheim is the founder of the “sociology of knowledge” and designed social constructivism as one of the theoretical frameworks or methodologies. “As for Mannheim, the ideologisation of thought is not total. Natural sciences are exempted from the limitations of existential determination. For Gramsci, all thought is ideological, including science. ‘Without man, what can reality be? All science is linked human need and the activity of man’ (Gramsci, 1966: 55). Reality, in fact, is always perceived and classified according to human needs” (Salamini, 1978: 376).

analysis, which is shaped in Marxist epistemology and by a form of 'critical consciousness' could be deeply discussed by the social constructivism in the context of (Kurdish) identity and opportunity spaces issues<sup>403</sup>. In other words, this study locates the social constructivist account within the Gramscian template in order to be able to analyse the ongoing Kurdish political identity transformation process. Salamini (1981), however, claims that Gramsci's theoretical framework is discussed through social constructivism, such as the relationship between philosophy and sociology, theory and ideology, and the problem of objectivity. The cognition and discourse is, nevertheless, an element of social reality; as a result, the group cognition changes the group member's behaviour, identity, and the social reality.

Conversely, Gramsci communicates these elements of reality in a different sense; the hegemonic struggle is still an ongoing process, be it internal or external, but the context of the struggle changes rather than creating counter-identity; the sub-groups, including the EU superstructure, challenge the existing identity. It is therefore ultimate a hegemonic theory. The postmodern hegemonic struggle of the Kurds is not only the struggle of ethnic politics in the form of Kurds versus Turks, but it is also an articulated struggle over democracy, pluralism, multiculturalism, and multi-identities, whereby Turkish democratic opportunity space is forced to expand for the rest of the people in Turkey. This implies that Kurdish resistance, counter-hegemony, and social constructivist strategies have positive consequences for the whole of Turkey. The concept of the Kurdish hegemonic culture and identity and how it is socially constructed therefore need to be examined more carefully. Indeed, it also makes social constructivism the most appropriate theoretical approach to understand the process of identity constructivism within the internal groups and within the EU.

In this 'post era', the structure of Kurdish society is more flexible than before, stretching beyond the modern description, unmoored in classic identity, linked with different groups, cultures, and identities, and even forged by diaspora and transnational institutions that include the EU. This can best be described in the concept of Habermas' (1991) public sphere within its "opportunity spaces". Thus, before attaining total political hegemony as the ultimate goal of the hegemonic

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<sup>403</sup> Gramsci also wrote on the understanding of sociology as a part of political consciousness: Gramsci, A. (1962), *Critical Remarks on the Popular Outline of Sociology, Collected Works*, Warsaw.

struggle, the main Kurdish political agents had to solve the issue of identity and arrange the transformation process with the formation of the new “historical bloc”. Moreover, this new “historical bloc” has given many Kurdish socio-political agents the power to exercise ideological and political hegemony in a new era; it is thus effectively creating a new hegemonic system in essence. In this context, the role of sub-groups with their identity, intellectuals’ EU institutions as a superstructure is of fundamental importance<sup>404</sup>. Additionally, both Gramscian and social constructivist perspectives have drawn attention to the role of the intellectuals; such a role is a necessity for many socio-political issues. To distinguish this combination of theoretical approaches, these sub-agents and their strategies and relations with substantial and modern ‘Kurdi’ identity need to be delineated clearly and concisely. Furthermore, how the social constructivist theoretical approach works in the Kurdish case as a third and last applicable model needs to be examined. This last model of the study concerns the various identities of the society that have been shaping in a new social and political structure and new opportunity spaces in Turkey’s public sphere.

#### **6.6 COGNITIVE OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION PROCESS: THE ‘EU-ISING OF *KURDINESS*’**

The social constructivist theoretical approach was employed to explain how Kurdish identity was constructed by deconstructing its officially designated incarnation, which was itself formulated through a denial of genuine Kurdish identity and a desire to mould it into Turkishness via the hegemonic struggles. After this identity construction, the internal and external factors (sub-agents and EU institutionalism) challenged this socially constructed identity to expand its definition, which is a re-defining of Kurdish identity that is based on a new negotiation process (see Chapter Five). In this renegotiation process on the content of the Kurdish identity and its ‘boundaries’, many agents attribute the development trajectories of the postmodern Kurdish political identity within its democratising and ‘EU-ising’ tendency, especially

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<sup>404</sup> Mao Tse-tung wrote that “a correct policy towards intellectuals is one important condition or the victory of the revolution.” The view that enjoys a certain prestige today in the non-Marxist world is that of Karl Mannheim. His sociology of knowledge, an approach based on the fundamental propositions of the “existential determination of knowledge”, although it derogates knowledge, accords intellectuals a privileged position in the attainment of objective thought. He inconsistently postulates the existence of objective criteria for integrating and synthesising the various particular views assured by the classless position of the “socially unattached intellectuals” (Salamini, 1981: 102).

after 1999<sup>405</sup>. This study accepted this process as a new mode of politics via 'EU-isation', metanarrative and 'non-otherising democracy' dimensions. In terms of the debate on agent, structure, and superstructure triangular relations it should be considered a constructivist process. Such experiences affect socio-political life and the nature of the movement by having diverse internal agents and external dynamics and by giving rise to an initiative for identity transformation or for the expansion of the concept of identity with a particular dialectic of hegemony. This cultural identity logic has always been based in a realm of tradition as a 'social reality'; it is a historically continuous construction that adapts to changing circumstances while remaining true to a perceived essence of *Kurdiness*. In other words, the category of actors and their patterns of practice or underlying interests are all socially constructed<sup>406</sup>. Chapter Five is therefore driven by the social constructivist theory, which offers a fruitful methodology in order to comprehend the particular social reality and knowledge, discourses, strategies, sub-identities, behaviour, and actions of agents in social and political life. Social constructivism for the Kurdish case focuses on the identity issue and considers the process of the construction of identity (including political identity) and opportunity spaces in the public sphere<sup>407</sup>. In this case, it could be argued that agents perform their identity towards the object as well as other agents; norms or linguistic construction (otherwise known as discourses) correspondingly become important elements in the reproduction of identity.

As a result, one of the objectives of Chapter Five is to understand these agents' discourses alongside their strategy and character through the use of a discursive terminology. Language, on both the Turkish and Kurdish sides, that uses Kurdish or implies *Kurdiness* in Turkish conversely seems more than just a tool for conversation; instead, it appears as a Wittgensteinian (1921) constructivist account (Christiansen *et al.*, 2001). This is due, as language game theory assumes, to meaning and language,

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<sup>405</sup> see Chapter Five for a discussion of the differences between the Europeanisation and EU-isation contexts.

<sup>406</sup> 'Recent treatments of collective identity question the essentialism of collective attributes and images. Anti-essentialist inquiries promote the social construction of identity as a more viable basis of the collective self. Other works stress the problems inherent in collective categorisation, presenting a postmodern challenge to arguments of unified group experiences' (Cerulo, 1997: 387).

<sup>407</sup> In such a process, 'Social constructionism drives a multifaceted literature on national identity. A rich collection of socio-historical works on commemoration, narrative, and symbolisation chart the ways in which actors, particularly elites, create, manipulate, or dismantle the identities of nations, citizenships, allies, and enemies' (Cerulo, 1997: 390).

alongside discourse. Language, and by extension discourse, is central to the constitution of identity (in the dialectical relationship between ideology, identity, and strategy). Consequently, the focus in Chapter Five shifted to the language used by groups in a vernacular sense within the context of a social constructivist theoretical framework. Such frameworks included the use of Foucauldian (1969) terms to see power relations or political functions when defining the meaning of society and Derridean (1967) terminology for gauging change or opening up new spaces in the process of an alternative construction of identity; for example, the discussion on the pronunciation of *Newroz* or *Nevruz*.

Consequently, Chapter Five is divided into two different parts to examine the impact of internal and external dynamics on the transformation of the *Kurdi* political identity; this examination also extends to a view of the practices of these dynamics in terms of their discourses or any other social facts that were constructed. Furthermore, the study aimed to understand their ability to use the opportunity space in the public sphere. When searching rationally for the impact of the EU and its institutions, which is the external actor in this case, the study also focused within society itself to discover the endogenous impacts or challenges of various sub-identities that were constructed by different agents; these agents are conceptualised through the term ‘many Kurds’<sup>408</sup> by the study to refer to the challenges. In other words, despite the modern, dominant, and actively re-constructed macro, or mainstream, *Kurdi* identity (the *Kurdified* Kurdish people), there were different sub-groups and individuals appearing in the new, complex, and postmodern Kurdish society of everyday life<sup>409</sup>. As a result, these various instruments acted and produced different micro sub-identities that challenged the existing *Kurdi* identity and required it to be extended to the public sphere through a social constructivist framework (see Chapter Five). Therefore, in terms of the various identities, daily life became one of the predominant grounds for competition on some levels among these internal representatives, apart from the external determiner(s).

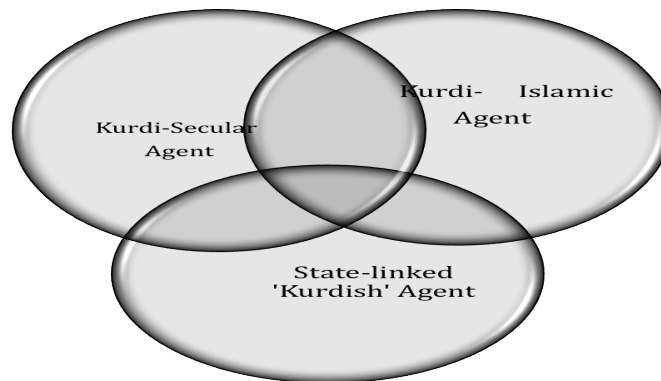
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<sup>408</sup> This term addresses the various Kurdish internal agents and the multi-structured nature of Kurdish society.

<sup>409</sup> As Rey Koslowski (2001) emphasises, “a [social] constructivist approach is useful [...] It facilitates a way of assessing and understanding aspects of an emergent polity in that it seeks to identify the characteristics and meaning of new institutions. Drawing on socio-historical institutionalism, constructivists stress the role of routinized practices and the unintended and intended consequences of institution-building” (quoted in Risse and Wiener, 2001: 199 in Christiansen *et al.*).

All these challenges and their respective results simultaneously provide an opportunity for *Kurdi* identity to become an essential, common, or *de facto* axiom for every member of Kurdish society. In addition, the finding of spaces in the Turkish public sphere by *Kurdi* identity ensures that it will thus inevitably become a force of the inner, or micro, democratisation (namely Kurdish society) or of the country's macro democratisation project (in this case, that of Turkey's project). Before discussing the EU-isation process of the main Kurdish political agents (here the leading and hegemonic actors are the PKK and BDP line) and its discourse, it is necessary to draw a map to determinate the constituents of society, its sub-agents and their identity, alongside the mainstream *Kurdi* identity. Each of these three sets of people constructs its own social reality and influences the dominant, actual, or modern *Kurdi* identity<sup>410</sup>. As depicted in Figure 6.1, these three main agents do normally agree on the *Kurdi* identity to a certain degree and share many common traditional, historical, and cultural values, regardless of their differences.

**Figure 6.1: The Intersections in Various *Kurdi* Identities**



In Figure 6.1, the intersection area highlights the three main Kurdish identities that share a common identity, which in turn became a mainstream identity for Kurdish society and for these actors by their sharing of the same values, culture, morals, and traditional relations at a certain level of understanding. This identity is even accepted by the Turkish state as representative of Kurdish demands on a different scale. In making these distinctions, the identities and their strategies are mapped out. This study, especially with regard to Chapter Five, does not intend to suggest that these

<sup>410</sup> These sets of people are as follows: *Kurdi*-secular, or socialist, agents, *Kurdi*-Islamic agents, and state-linked, or opportunist, Kurdish agents.

three socio-political driving forces are the only ones in existence<sup>411</sup>. Further, this study does not deny that they are causally related or that these identities are completely independent of one another.

Indeed, Chapter Five sought to define and contextualise the character and ideology of Kurdish, placing some of the groups or people into these definitions through their discourses, strategies, tactics, intellects, and identities, which are practised in daily life or in relations with outsiders. An attempt was thus made to map the identities and strategies of various groups or agents (see Figure 5.1). In this mapping process, observations of the everyday actions of these groups were valuable in combination with their discourses; this process was made possible through a social constructivist perspective, thereby suggesting that the internal and external division, or the inside-outside dichotomy, created a theoretical account to articulate the deconstruction or reconstruction process or its transformation.

It should be emphasised that the recent developments have demonstrated that the Kurdish political agents have moved towards a transition to passive revolutionist strategies through EU-isation, liberalisation, and democratisation. Further, these political agents have predominantly found opportunity spaces in the EU-oriented change in Turkey through human, minority, cultural, and linguistic rights; this has occurred through political parties, NGOs, regional mayors, or by directly engaging with the EU institutions<sup>412</sup>. Although these agents have somewhat accomplished these ends without rejecting the necessity of armed struggle or frontal attack, this option still exists because of the real conditions imposed by the macro power or the security mindset of the Turkish state.

In Chapter Five, the study attempted to evaluate the social construction of sub-identities by various sub-Kurdish agents, in doing so it analysed them through their strategies, discourses, ideologies, and characters within 'postmodern' Kurdish society. Moreover, this study argues that three main identities have been developed in Kurdish

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<sup>411</sup> Naturally, there are many differences within society in terms of religion and its sects (*Ezidi*, Christians, or *Alawite* and *Sunni*), language and dialects (*Kurmanji* and *Zazaki*), geography and location (region and diaspora, or urban and rural), class (bourgeois and labour or peasant), and gender (women or non-heterosexual); these differences should all be discussed in other studies.

<sup>412</sup> In supporting this process and as is reported by Howe (2000: 37), Hasan Kaya, the chairman of the Kurdish Institute, states that "there has been 'an improvement' in the situation since Europeans have been talking with Turkey about Kurdish problems. He expressed the hope that as Turkey moves towards membership in the EU, Kurds would gain the right to learn in Kurdish, as well as in Turkish and English. The institute, he has said, was opened in 1992 as a company — it could not obtain official recognition as an association — and it publishes *Zend*, a tri-monthly academic journal, and Kurdish textbooks".



society during this period. It further examines their impact on the transformation of the Kurdish mainstream political identity during the use of opportunity spaces, alongside EU-originated opportunity spaces, within the Turkish public sphere in terms of a bottom-up context. Each identity's sub-agents, however, access opportunity spaces, which are Kurdish-society-oriented, Turkish-state-oriented, and EU-institutionally-originated. In doing so, the study first considers the process of Turkey's liberalisation of the political economy in the period following the 1980s, especially after 1984, through the new President's (Ozal's) self-regulated market economy and society project, which provided large opportunity spaces for some sub-agents of the Kurds to penetrate the system and thereby benefit from the regime<sup>413</sup>. Therefore, the subject's content required the use of the social constructivist theoretical mechanism. In sum up, the study analysed the social construction process of these sub-identities and the transformation of mainstream socio-political identity in Kurdish society. As a result, it determined that this transformation process accrued through gaining more opportunity spaces in public spheres. This new politics had an impact on the Kurdish national politics, and it simultaneously triggered the development of the EU-sing of Kurdish identity, which also challenges the country's EU accession and democratisation process in the context of the *non-otherising democracy*.

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<sup>413</sup> This period in particular occurred immediately after the negative impact of the coup in 1980.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

## 7.1 CONCLUSION

The Kurds have been identified as the largest ethnic population (approximately between 30-40 billions) in the world without a nation state. The modern political statute of the Kurds was shaped after the First World War (1918) and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire; hence they predominantly started to live in a quadripartite system separated under four nation states. Today the biggest Kurdish population lives in the modern Turkey (numbering an estimated 15 to 20 million). Therefore, the identity, politics and national demands have been part of social, political and economic life for the Kurds and for the nation state where they have been living, in the nation-state culture of the world, as these nation states attempted to create imaginary states based on Turkishness, Iraqiness, Iranianess or Syrianess.

The on-going armed conflict between Turkey and PKK, Turkey's EU accession process and the country's relations with the Europe and USA, and the impact of these on democratisation of Turkey and Kurdish rights and on Kurdish political culture and identity attracted this study to focus on Kurds in Turkey and their political economy, political culture and identity politics. Hence, these factors raised questions, such as: *Why did the Kurds could not achieve 'great transformation'? What factors have caused the transformation of Kurdish political economy and identity? How does the transformation of the Kurdish political identity impact their national demands and Turkey's democratisation process? How does the political economy of this struggle influence this alteration? What are the roles of internal agents? Which social and traditional institutions are involved in this process? And how are the external dynamics (EU) involved with the internal democratisation (EU-isation) process in producing the modern Kurdish identity?*

As a result, by following these questions and undertaking critical studies on these aspects related to the Kurdish political economy and political identity, this study divided the Kurdish historical context into three different main periods by employing three distinguished theories aiming to explain each of these periods. In doing so, the study examined the substance of the subject and its aims and objectives in the five main cognitive processes. As mentioned, the research subject undoubtedly requires a comprehensive strategy and methodological approach due to the complex social, political and economic structure of the subject in a post-modern era in which theory

of nationalism has paid little attention, particularly, to the political economy of the Kurdish political (national) agents in producing the Kurdish realities:

(i) In Chapter Two, the study first carefully proposes three theoretical frameworks with the aim of providing the reader with a guide for understanding the theoretical terminology/discourse, mechanism and methodology as a preparation process or foundation of the study. This theoretical framework is employed by subsequent chapters respectively to discuss the emergence of the Kurdish political economies and political hegemonic struggle and socio-political identities relevant to each period.

(ii) Eventually, each of the theoretical formulations is implemented in the following analytical chapters. As a result, the third Chapter examines the first main period of Kurdish historical context from the late nineteenth century until 1923, which also constituted the second cognitive process of the study after the theoretical chapter. Therefore, the chapter focuses on the non-linear modernisation or transformation process of the Kurdish political economy in the nineteenth century using the *Great Transformation* theoretical model developed by Karl Polanyi, which primarily explains the nineteenth century's change of political and economic realities in developing the modern economy as opposed to the moral economy. In doing so, the study concentrates on the social structure of the society, character of the base, traditional institutions and internal agents; moreover it looks at their roles, responsibilities and relationship with the central power (or macro political economic environment) in the transformation process up till the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923. According to the modernist perspective, in that era pre-modern institutions, pre-capitalist mode of production and non-market-based relations thwarted the transformation of society from a traditional, tribal and feudal character to a modern, capitalist and self-regulating market system. And the leadership of the society vertically modernised itself in relation to the macro environment (the Centre), but did not horizontally disseminate it into the base, which led to the observed 'Great Regression' of Kurdish society in this period. In other words, the Kurds could not fit into the new social formation or could not develop their society as a whole into the requirement of modern social formation, and therefore they failed to transform their society into a modern one. This also explains as to why they mainly remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire rather than breaking away similar to other ethnicities.

(iii) The third cognitive and discursive process of the study is the subsequent (second) main historical period of the subject, analysing the strategies, discourses and responses of the internal dynamics shaping the hegemonic struggle of the late-modern society's socio-political agencies against the (Turkish) state, in Chapter Four using the *Hegemony Theory* developed by Antonio Gramsci as a theoretical framework, as necessitated by the realities of this particular period. Consequently, the chapter investigates internal dynamics' inner and also external hegemonic struggle for a hegemonic power, particularly for the period between 1923 and 1984. This stage is predominantly based on political identity transformation via emerging new political culture by "organic intellectuals". In other words, after indicating the developments in the Kurdish political economy and identity transformation in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century through the Polanyian approach, the study in this period considers the progress of Kurdish political culture and political identity transformation within the context of hegemony, rather than the nationalist concept.

(iv) The fourth cognitive process of the study in Chapter Five examines the third and final main stage or case of the historical context of Kurdish transformation of political identity. In other words, this chapter analyses the various sub-identities of new or post-modern Kurdish socio-political structure and their ability to use opportunity spaces in the Turkish public sphere. At the same time, it examines the on-going process of changing the political identity with its discourses and culture that started from 1984, particularly from post-1999 to the present. In doing so, the study examines how these internal or sub-groups and their identities impact the transformation of existing modern *Kurdi* identity alongside the domestic impact of an external power, namely the EU, through a social constructivist theoretical approach. Furthermore, it articulates how the internal dynamics have challenged generally the constructed nature of the Turkish public sphere and specifically or internally the Kurdish public spheres with the help of the opportunity spaces created by the change in Turkey originated by the EU-accession process.

(v) Ultimately, in Chapter Six, which is the fifth and last cognitive and discursive process of the research, the study provides an integrated and contextualised discussion on the theoretically informed nature of this research by engaging with the theoretical

frameworks and using grounded theory to examine the theoretical formulations on the subject's cases or periods presented in the empirical Chapters Three, Four and Five. Furthermore, this part of the study examines how the historical context of Kurds is explained in a certain theoretical account, which occurred and required research progression within the subject's narrative. Hence, in overall, this research examines how the mechanism and formulation of each of these theoretical frameworks ("Great Transformation", "Hegemony" and "Social Constructivism") and their methodology work in the exploration and examination of the Kurdish case.

As a result, the Kurdish historical struggle, in responding to the imaginary state understanding of the central hegemony, namely the Turkish state, has produced an "imagined community" in the form of a modern Kurdish identity that emerged through a deconstruction-construction-reconstruction of the social formation of the Kurdish society through social construction. Through negotiating and re-negotiating according to the opportunity space offered by the Turkish state's political culture, the Kurds deconstructed the centre hegemony but also their own political identity and political economies to construct new versions in each of the period mentioned which lead to reconstruction in the subsequent period. Therefore the study argues that the transformation of the Kurdish political identity became a central and also an on-going issue for the Kurdish demands and Turkey's political life. By way of using a triangular theoretical *modus operandi* within interdisciplinary political economy, political theory and social (political) constructivism approach, hence, this study aimed at theorising everyday life in the form of political economy and political identity of the Kurds.

In conclusion, this research proposes that social realities, such as the Kurdish issue, cannot be explained only one theoretical framework; as a number of independent factor interacts and inter-plays to produce a social reality; and therefore in order to be able to capture all these dynamics one needs to consider multi-theories and multi-disciplinary approaches, as this study has done.

## **7.2 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS**

### **7.2.1 Strengths**

First of all, the study attempts to construct a well-built theoretical framework, which distinguishes it from other studies on Kurds and Kurdistan. Hence, it is heavily based

on leading theories of political science and international relations disciplines but at the same time employs epistemological and ontological perspective instead of a pure narrative method in developing the grand narrative through grounded theory in mind. This study eagerly aims to contribute to the lack of theoretical approach of the Kurdish studies. In conducting the research, archives, texts, discourse, secondary sources and qualitative data were obtained with meticulous and wider research, but in the context of an inductive approach rather than a deductive strategy. Therefore, the observation and critical and direct engagement with the subject became crucial approach, which allowed the study to explore, examine and explain the research questions exhaustively.

It should be noted that the research, axiologically, was also empowered by the experiences, language and communication skills (Turkish and Kurdish) of the researcher, which allowed the researcher to investigate the subject beyond shallowly context by aiming to the deeper and insider meaning through avoiding a possible ‘outsider’ Occidental or Eurocentric perspective. However, despite the inevitable involvement of the researchers values, the analyses are conducted in an objective, academic and cognitive way by keeping subjectivity and emotional approach away.

As an additional strength, furthermore, this study used the grounded theory, and hence grounded these multiple theories to offer alternative answers, rather than using social engineering and explaining the subject utilising a predetermined template. Therefore, as mentioned above, this study acknowledges the changing nature of a particular subject and the need to capture these changes in each period through a particular theoretical framework. Thus, a research subject, such as the one in this study, requires the use of multiple theories to conduct an efficient and realistic analysis by directly recognising the distinctions each period may exhibit in terms of defining political culture and political economy.

As the analyses show, the study strives to draw compelling attention to the political economy, as the majority of the Kurdish studies are dominated by the nationalism theories; this study, therefore, ascertain that not much attention is paid to the Kurdish political economy. Thus, the study attempts to contribute the observed gap in relation to the political economy approach in examining the late-modern and late developing Kurdish society in the nineteenth century, while criticising the modernist point of

view, particularly in the empirical chapters. Furthermore, the classical political economy approach was also expanded by using the political economy discipline for the peripheral, non-governmental or ‘stateless actors’, which may not necessarily be a usual subject for political economy approach<sup>414</sup>.

One of the strengths of the study is the role and responsibilities of internal dynamics/factors of Kurdish political life rather than well-known external dynamics/factors, such as Turkey. In doing so, this study also partly employs an anthropological perspective to locate how the characteristics of the people impact their political economy, political culture and socio-political transformation, as in Turkey, with the influence of their long-term, traditional institutions.

Another strength of this study is that the study lies in the context of identity itself and contemplates various sub-identities of post-modern Kurdish society alongside the counter-hegemonic constitution of ‘mainstream’ Kurdish identity, which is mostly avoided in Kurdish case studies. Therefore, this research focuses on sub-agents’ “imagined community”, in other words their different social reality, political knowledge, agents, intellectuals, discourses and strategies, by looking at their possibilities or abilities to use opportunity spaces and their demands to be represented in the public sphere within *sui generis* characters and strategies.

Consequently, the study links the research question with the democracy struggle (through its hermeneutic, ‘non-otherising democracy’) of the country (Turkey) and underlines the transformation of the political identity in the recent years within EU-originated opportunity spaces that contribute to the peace-building, liberalising and EU-ising of the whole country. It also emphasises the relationship of NGOs or non-state actors (Kurdish agents) with the transnational institutions (*e.g.* EU etc.).

Finally, it should be highlighted, as an important contribution, that the study endeavoured to create its own terminology and discourse that could be a reading guide for future researches. In other words, an alternative metaphor is aimed at to be developed to render a different reading to the Kurdish studies.

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<sup>414</sup> Frederick Engels says “political economy, in the widest sense, is the science of the laws governing the production and exchange of the material means of subsistence in human society” (quoted in Kulikov, 1989: 11).



### **7.2.2 Limitations**

This study is a novel attempt to provide a different reading of the Kurdish political economy and identity through particular metaphors used. In addition to having the identified strengths, as listed above, attempting such a framework implies certain and inevitable limitations, which need to be mentioned.

It should be noted that delving into identity issues is a complicated matter, and discussing the Kurdish identity even gets complicated, due to its complex, multi-layered structure, which is perplexing. Kurdishness is disarticulated and unfolded among many countries; thus it has relations with many different cultures/nations. As a result, the Kurds are located in a transnational and inter-geographic context with different languages/dialects; they are multi-religious (and multi-sect) a feature that resulted from an abstruse situation, even though the study converges on Kurds in Turkey, who still have difficulty avoiding these fragments and purely focuses on the main subject. Additionally, the social structure of society is shaped by non-modern and traditional institutions that are functioning and interwoven within political and economic life for a long time and it became a very difficult issue to understand the transformation of the social, political and economy dimensions. In other words, the religious and tribal relations embedded in many areas generate an obscurity making it difficult to comprehend the society deeply from modern institutional axes.

Another limitation that may be pointed out here is the subject's dynamism, unpredictable formation and political sensitivity. Turkish state (including society) policy towards Kurdish demands and Kurdish identity is in a variable condition, while the country witnesses prolonged political impasses. The armed conflict between Turkish armed forces and Kurdish national(ist) fighters is an on-going process that comprises violence and escalates the political polarisation. At the time of writing (late 2012), people still are dying almost every day in a culture of conflict and violence that ensues from any issue regarding the subject that has become very emotional and susceptible for both sides, in such an antagonistic environment. It also presents obstacles to the study in terms of sourcing objective information. In addition, it generally creates a security problem for the academic life to 'freely' concentrate on the subject's related issues or makes the academics brood before they begin research. This results in a lack of wider academic sources for the study to employ.

It is also problematic for the study to posit exact agents - neither groups nor individuals - into sub-identities of the society, which have already been analysed. It is certainly not possible to determine or fix these agents within these identities; therefore they are not fully envisaged beyond doubt by the study. Instead the study uses their idiosyncratic characters, discourses and strategies to contextualise these sub-identities/cultures. Also these identities are intermingling with each other or in some cases have absorbed Turkishness to a certain degree. Additionally, being away from the country and, thus, the region, sometimes created obstacles in assessing the data of the study, concurrently, although, the study was achieved using textual analysis and discourse analysis rather than aiming to gather primary data due to the complexity of the issue, but also due to focusing on theoretical explanations.

### **7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

While this study attempted to provide a different reading and interpretation of the Kurdish political economy and political identity, future studies should open a deep discussion on the outcomes, arguments and analysis of this study through long-term theoretical, empirical and critical processes. Particularly, the political economy approach of the study should be considered for expansion, rather than the subject being flattened and limited by nationalist theories. Therefore, the research subject needs to be considered with a prominent and *de novo* theoretical approach of political science, international relations or sociology disciplines, thus avoiding an academic coterie perspective.

Besides, future research needs to contemplate the sub-identities of the recent or 'post-modern' Kurdish society, beyond the counter-hegemonic, pro-Kurdi(sh), and 'mainstream' Kurdish political identity. It is argued by the study that these sub-agents internally challenge and re-articulate (redefine rather than reconstruct) a common, (socially) constructed and *de facto* Kurdi identity; these socio-political subcultures at the same time attempt to expand the Kurdish public sphere, as much as they strive to expand the opportunity spaces of the Turkish public sphere through mostly EU-originated opportunity spaces (democratisation, liberalisation, human rights, rule of law, cultural and linguistic rights or freedom of belief, thought *etc.*). Therefore, future research must specify, identify and describe these sub-agents, for instance focusing on *madrasa*, *melle* (Kurdi-Shafi-Islamic origin) and *dede* (Kurdish Alawite) identities

that are effectively practised in the society and regions as social praxis and traditional institutions.

Finally, future studies should envisage a detailed research on the reciprocity and direct relations of non-state Kurdish organisations and EU institutions, in a comparative study. Moreover they must concentrate on outcomes of these relations on the Kurdish identity, as well as its influences on the issues such as peace-building, political dialogue (in a conflict resolution), regional energy, security politics, democratisation (EU-isation) and the development of Turkey's political economy.

#### **7.4 EPILOGUE**

This study aims to theoretically explore and examine the transformation of political economy and identity of the Kurdish society (of Turkey) in a historical context from the nineteenth century until the present. In doing so, it is critically analysis the transformation of the political economy of the Kurdish society in the nineteenth century, the reaction of the Kurdish peripheral and 'protectionist movement' against the Centre in the context of hegemony and social constructions of Kurdish identity by various internal dynamics within its political construction projects by external dynamics. It articulates the non-modernisation, non-transformation, pre-capitalist mode of production, traditional institutions, social structure, protective movement in double context between hegemonic powers, and social reality, producing identities in a de/re-construction process, thus leading to 'imagined sub-cultures', relationships of the agents, structure and superstructure *etc.* which are all presented in the empirical chapters of this research.

The research presented in this study is articulated in the introduction chapter, theoretical framework chapters and critical analysis-based empirical chapters, and in the discussion chapter that features the grounding of theories within subject content evidences that the research questions have been answered; hence the aim and objectives of this study have been fulfilled, in the context of political economy, political theory and social (or international relations) constructivist disciplines.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1

Figure 1: Map of Kurdistan by Eurominority



Figure 2: Kurdish Area and Kurdistan by New York Times



Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/23/opinion/sunday/the-new-world.html> Access Date: [28 September 2012].

**Figure 3: Kurdish Tribal Confederacies and Family Clans**



**Figure 4: Maps of Kurdish Speaking Areas**



Figure 5: Map of Modern Turkey



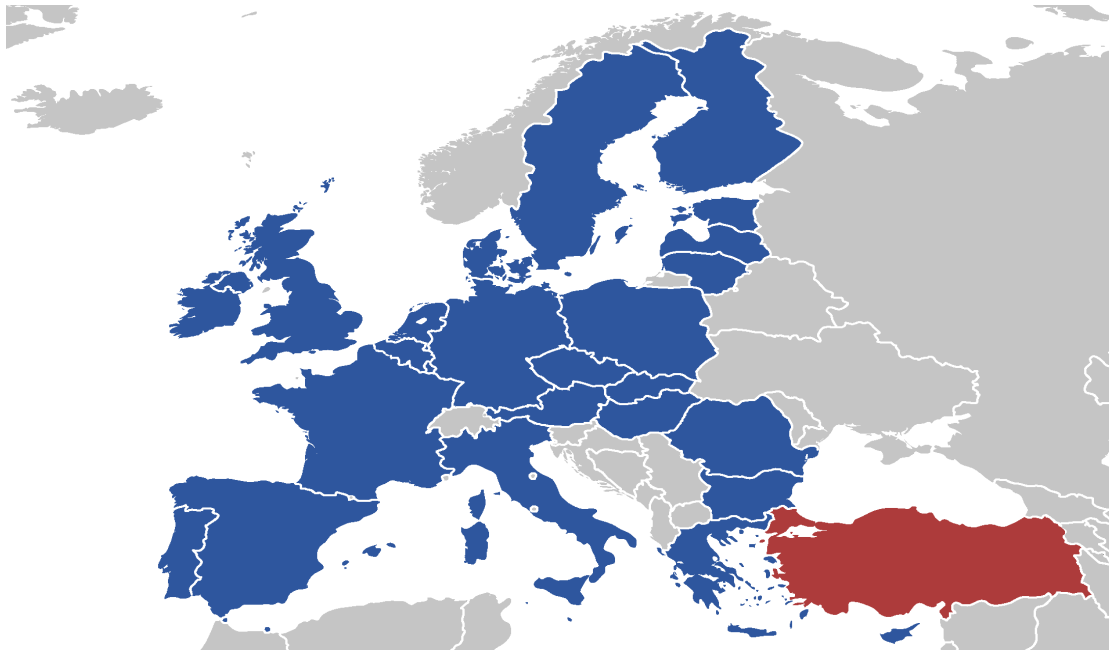
Source: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/europe/turkey/> Access Date: [29.09.12].

Figure 6: Map of Turkey



Source: [http://europa.eu/abc/maps/applicants/turkey\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/maps/applicants/turkey_en.htm) Access Date: [30 September 2012].

**Figure 7: European Union (EU) and Turkey**



**Figure 8: EU States and Turkey on the Map**



Source: [http://europa.eu/abc/maps/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/maps/index_en.htm) Access Date: [02 October 2012].



## Appendix 2\*

### CRUCIAL MOMENTS FOR THE KURDISH HISTORIOGRAPHY IN TURKEY

1514	the contract between Sultan Selim and Idrisi Bitlis.
1639	Kasr-i Shrin Agreement between Ottoman and Persian Empires for dividing Kurdistan into two parts.
03 November 1839	the <i>Tanzimat Fermani</i> (Reforms).
June 1847	the Bedirkhan Beg Uprising.
23 December 1876	constitutional ( <i>Meshuritiyet I</i> ) regime of the Young Turks.
August 1880	the Sheikh Ubeydullah Uprising.
1890-1891	the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry by Sultan Abdulhamid II.
21 September 1892	<i>Ashiret Mektepleri</i> (Tribal Schools) created by Sultan Abdulhamid II.
27 April 1898	the first Kurdish newspaper, 'Kurdistan' is founded by Mithad Bedirkhan, in Egypt.
24 July 1908	the second period/coup ( <i>Meshuritiyet II</i> ) of Young Turks government.
28 July 1914	World War One.
24 April 1915	the Armenian genocide by the Ottoman CUP's elite.
30 December 1918	the <i>Kurdistan Teali Jamiyati</i> is founded.
10 August 1920	the Treaty of Sèvres.
06 March 1921	the Kochgiri Rebellion.
01 November 1922	destroying the Sultanate regime by Kemalist cadre.
23 April 1923	establishment of the Republic of Turkey.
24 July 1923	the Treaty of Lausanne.

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\* This chart is created by author.

03 March 1924	abolishment of the Caliphate institution.
13 February 1925	Sheik Said Rebellion.
05 October 1927	the Khoybun organization was founded in Lebanon.
1926-30	Agri/Ararat Rebellions.
1937-38	Dersim (Tunceli) Rebellion.
30 July 1943	slaughter of 33 Kurdish villagers by General Mustapha Muglali, Ozalp village, Van province.
07 January 1946	the establishment of the Democrat Party.
21 July 1946	end of CHP's one-party regime, the multiparty system.
09 August 1949	Turkey became a member of the Council of Europe.
18 February 1952	Turkey became an official partner of NATO.
17 December 1959	50 Kurdish intellectuals and students were arrested, however one died due to sickness and the incident became known as case of the 49's.
27 May 1960	<i>coup d'état</i> by Turkish army.
28 May 1960	the 55s incident 55 <i>aghas</i> exile by coup's government.
03 February 1961	the establishment of the Labour Party of Turkey (TIP).
12 September 1963	the Ankara agreement between Turkey and EEC.
29 June 1963	the 23s incidents.
12 March 1971	<i>coup d'état</i> by army.
19 December 1978	the Marash massacre against <i>Alevis</i> (mostly Kurds).
12 September 1980	<i>coup d'état</i> by army.
14 July 1982	Diyarbakir prison struggle the four PKK members Hayri Durmus, Kemal Pir, Akif Yılmaz and Ali Cicek made self-immolation against brutal torture policy.
06 November 1983	Turgut Ozal became a president and the activation of the liberalisation of politics and economy.
15 August 1984	the PKK start armed struggle against Turkish state.
26 March 1985	the village guard system is founded.

19 July 1987	the OHAL system (emergency state rule) started in the Kurdish region, in seven provinces.
07 June 1990	the establishment of HEP the pro-Kurdish political party.
02 July 1993	Sivas massacre 33 <i>Alevi</i> intellectuals and artisans are slaughtered.
05 March 1993	six Kurdish DEP MP arrested.
28 February 1997	the post-modern <i>coup</i> .
16 February 1999	Abdullah Ocalan the leader of PKK is captured in Kenya and brought to Turkey.
12 December 1999	Turkey became an official candidate for full membership.
11 September 2001	the 9/11 incidents happened, Al-Qaeda suicide attack against the USA, New York and Washington.
03 November 2002	AKP won the election R.T. Erdogan became president.
21 October 2007	Kurdish opening started by AKP government.
01 January 2009	the Kurdish language TRT 6 ( <i>shesh</i> ) state TV launched
28 May 2009	under KCK operation many Kurdish activists, included politicians, academicians, journalists etc. are arrested, in 2012 they number in the thousands (some claims the number reach approx. 8.000 people).
19 October 2009	the 34 Kurdish PKK guerillas come to
29 April 2009	the unilateral cease-fire is announced by PKK.
08 February 2011	the Oslo Meetings/Negotiations between PKK and MIT, the Turkish Secret Intelligence Agency.
17 October 2011	university of Mardin Artuklu began the country's first Kurdish undergraduate classes.
28 December 2011	34 Kurdish civilians (most of them between 12-19) were killed by Turkish war plane near Roboski village of Uludere district in Shirnak province.
11 June 2012	the Kurdish language became optional language in secondary school started from 2012-2013 education year.

August 2012

the Dicle News Agency (DIHA) Journalists uncovered the incident about Kurdish children political prisoner, who are charged in the throwing-stone to the police forces in the street demonstration have raped by other prisoners, in Pozanti Prison, Adana province.

21 March 2013

historical “peace building” process started between Turkish state and PKK with through Abdullah Ocalan and Recep Tayyip Erdogan initiatives.

## Appendix 3\*

**Figure 1: A Sample Case for the Civil Obedience:**

Kurdish Muslims boycotts Religious Affairs origin *khutbas* and make *jumma* pray outside of the state controlled mosques under guide of an independent and non-civil servant *imam*



Available at: <http://www.facebook.com/AltanTanSayfasi/posts/259961820786417>  
Access Date [14 October 2012].

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\* On the cardboard is written that “the one who deny our language could not teach us our religion”.

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