THE IMPACT OF THE KURDISH QUESTION ON TURKEY'S RELATIONS

WITH ITS MIDDLE EASTERN NEIGHBORS

AND THE EUROPEAN UNION BETWEEN 2002-2012

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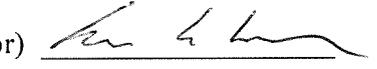
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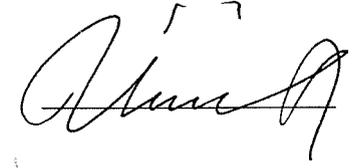
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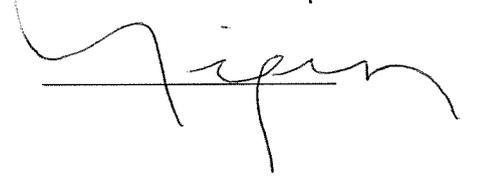
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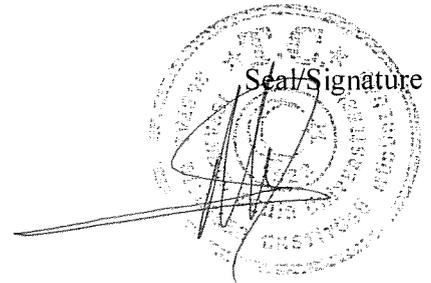
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes the "Kurdish Question" from an International Relations perspective. Focusing on the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey's relations in the last decade with its Middle Eastern neighbors, i.e. Iran, Syria, and Iraq, and with the European Union; this study shows how Turkey-Middle East and Turkey-EU relations are shaped differently. In the search for reasons for this difference, Realist and Liberal IR theories are used. The main argument of this thesis is that Turkey's relations with the EU and Middle East are different due to the different types of international systems employed in the corresponding areas. The international systems in the EU and Middle East are best explained by Liberalism and Realism respectively; and thus, Turkey's relations concerning the Kurdish Question with the EU gains meaning through the lens of Liberal IR theory, whereas Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors becomes clear through the perspective of Realist IR theory.

Keywords: Turkey, Kurdish Question, International Relations, European Union, Middle East, Realism, Liberalism

ÖZ

KÜRT MESELESİNİN TÜRKİYE'NİN ORTA DOĞU KOMŞULARI
VE AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ İLE OLAN İLİŞKİLERİNE ETKİSİ (2002-2012)

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Bu tez, Kürt sorunu Uluslararası İlişkiler disiplini açısından analiz etmektedir. Türkiye'nin son on yılda Orta Doğu komşuları (İran, Suriye ve Irak) ve Avrupa Birliği ile olan ilişkileri üzerinde Kürt meselesinin etkisine odaklanan bu çalışma, Türkiye-Orta Doğu ve Türkiye-AB ilişkilerinin nasıl farklı şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Bu farklılıkların sebepleri araştırılırken, Realist ve Liberal Uluslararası İlişkiler teorileri kullanılmıştır. Tezin ana görüşü olarak, Türkiye'nin Orta Doğu ve AB ile olan ilişkilerinin farklılığının nedeninin, Orta Doğu ve AB'de farklı uluslararası sistemler bulunması olduğu öne sürülmüştür. AB'de ve Orta Doğu'da bulunan uluslararası sistemlerin en iyi şekilde sırasıyla Liberalizm ve Realizm ile açıklanabileceği; bu nedenle de, Kürt meselesi ele alındığında, Türkiye'nin AB ve Orta Doğu ile ilişkilerinin yine Liberal ve Realist Uluslararası İlişkiler teorileri kullanılarak anlam kazanacağı savunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Kürt Sorunu, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Avrupa Birliği, Orta Doğu, Realizm, Liberalizm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People Party)

DEHAP: Demokratik Halkın Partisi (Democratic People's Party)

DEP: Demokrasi Partisi (Democracy Party)

DGM: Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi (State Security Court)

DTH: Demokratik Toplum Hareketi (Democratic Society Movement)

DTP: Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)

ECHR: European Court of Human Rights

EU: the European Union

FDP: Forcibly Displaced People

GAP: Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (Southeastern Anatolia Project)

HADEP: Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democracy Party)

HRW: Human Rights Watch

IR: International Relations

ITC: Iraqi Turcoman Front

İHD: İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association)

KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party

KDPI: Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran

KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government

MHP: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)

OPC: Operation Provide Comfort

PACE: Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe

PJAK: Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê (The Party of Free Life of Kurdistan)

PKK: Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

PUK: the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

PYD: Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (Democratic Union Party)

RTÜK: Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu (Supreme Board of Radio and Television)

SETA: Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research)

SHP: Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti (Social Democrat Populist Party)

TBMM: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Turkish Grand National Assembly)

TESEV: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı (Foundation for Economic and Social Research of Turkey)

TRT: Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurulu (Radio and Television Board of Turkey)

TSK: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri (Turkish Armed Forces)

UN: the United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees

YSK: Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (Higher Board of Election)

INTRODUCTION

The Kurdish question is one of the main problems of contemporary Turkey and is the subject of numerous academic studies. This thesis will approach the Kurdish question from the International Relations (IR) perspective. Focusing on the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey's foreign affairs, the ultimate purpose of this thesis is to discuss how and why Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the European Union are shaped differently.

Chapter I, titled "Formulating the Research Question", provides the theoretical framework, the scope of the research, and the methodology. Two theories of IR are used in this study: Realism and Liberalism. They are offered as theories that explain, as far as the Kurdish question is concerned, Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors, and the EU, respectively. In order to use the theories properly, this thesis uses two different units of analysis. One is the "EU" as a multinational system, as an example for Liberalism; and the other is the "nation-state-oriented system" in the Middle East, as an example for Realism. From this perspective, this study takes a picture of Turkey's relations with two different types of international systems. The time period which the study focuses on is the last decade, in other words, the period of the AKP government. The data for analysis is collected through a systematic newspaper scan and examination of official documents.

Chapter II, titled "The Impact of the Kurdish Question on Turkish-EU Relations", shows how the Kurdish question influences Turkey's relations with the EU and why Liberal IR theory provides an explanation for these relations. In this chapter, Turkish-EU relations are analyzed under four sections, each of which addresses a different aspect of the question. The first section is "the retrial of Öcalan", which focuses on the "human rights" and "justice" aspects of the question. The second is "closure of the Kurdish parties and banning Kurdish politicians",

which focuses on the "political freedom" and "freedom of expression" aspects of the question. The third section is "the usage of Kurdish language", which focuses on the "cultural freedom" and "freedom of language" aspects of the question. The fourth and last is "debates around the law 5233", which focuses on the "citizenship rights" and "civic citizenship" aspects of the question. Through this analysis, the second chapter argues that Turkish-EU relations concerning the Kurdish question are shaped by Liberal behaviors and can be explained through Liberalism.

Chapter III is titled "The Impact of the Kurdish Question on Turkey's Relations with its Middle Eastern Neighbors." This chapter focuses on Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, and Iraq. The reason for the selection of these countries is that they contain sizeable Kurdish populations. Hence, the Kurdish question becomes a crucial part of the relations among these countries. Providing a brief history of Turkey's relations with each of these states and the role of the Kurdish question in these relations, the third chapter argues that Turkey's conflicts as well as cooperation with its Middle Eastern neighbors, as far as the Kurdish question is concerned, are shaped around the principles of "security of the state", "territorial integrity", and "balance of power." Since these principles are among its main features, Realism best explains Turkey's relationship with Iran, Syria, and Iraq, in particular reference to the Kurdish question.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the last decade of Turkey's foreign affairs focusing on the Kurdish question. This dissertation also contributes to the literature in the sense that it takes a picture of Turkey's relations with two different international systems, comparing and contrasting Turkey's relations with the EU and Middle East, via focusing on the transnational Kurdish question and using two different IR theories, namely Liberalism and Realism.

Chapter I: Formulating the Research Question

1. The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Foreign Affairs

Numerous academic studies in the fields of sociology, anthropology, politics, and history focus on different aspects of the Kurdish "question".[1] Today, one can argue that Turkey is mentally far away from the days during which people denied the existence of Kurds and ridiculously argued that the word "Kurd" comes from the sound of one's walking on snow.[2] Those who claimed there was no such thing as the Kurdish question believed that terrorism could be stopped solely through armed fighting.[3] The thirty-year war between the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK) which until today took more than 30,000 lives, has painfully taught the Turkish State one certain thing: there is such a thing called "Kurds", and they have certain problems in Turkey.

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[1] Among the most prominent works, one can see: Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997; Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1990; Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, London, Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Zed Books, 1992; David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds: Third Edition*, I. B. Tauris, 2004; Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* [The Kurdish question in State Discourse] İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006; Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* [From Future Turks to So-Called Citizens: The Republic and the Kurds] İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006; Mesut Yeğen, *Son Kürt İsyanı* [Last Kurdish Insurrection] İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011; Christopher Houston, *Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves*, New York: Berg, 2008; Robert W. Olson, *The Kurdish question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998*, Costa Mesa, Calif: Mazda Publishers, 1998; Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict*, London; Portland, Or: Frank Cass, 1997; Abbas Vali, *Kurds and the State in Iran: The Making of Kurdish Identity*, I.B. Tauris, 2011.

[2] Kenan Evren, who was the leader of the 1980 *coup d'état* and the 7th president of Turkey, is claimed to be the one who came up with this idea. Actually, there is no proof that he publically announced this. However, Baskın Oran writes that in Evren's Hakkari speech, because the lieutenants he sent there before already talked about it, he did not find it necessary to mention that the word "Kurd" does not imply a separate race; instead, it is a word which was related to the sound of people's walking on the snow in that region. Baskın Oran, *Kenan Evren'in Yazılmamış Anıları* [Kenan Evren's Unwritten Memoirs], Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1989, p. 147.

[3] Here, I do not mean that these ideas are completely eradicated. Indeed they exist, yet they do not absolutely dominate the public opinion, state discourse and academia any more.

The problems experienced by the Kurds in Turkey have their roots in history. The modern Turkish Republic, established in 1923, aimed to base its existence on a unified ethnic nation. The Turkish nation, which lived within the borders drawn by the Lausanne Treaty, was now one nation – having one language, one flag, and simply one identity. Thus, in order to deal with the heterogeneity of the people living in Turkey, the governments applied assimilationist policies upon the ethnic groups other than Turks. The Kurds, the largest ethnic minority in Turkey, who showed their lack of acceptance of and resistance to these policies with different levels of intensity throughout the history of Turkey, are still concerned with getting their full rights for education in their native language, freedom of speech, unrestricted performance of cultural traits, and equal and just treatment as being the Kurdish citizens of the Republic of Turkey. [4]

The struggle of the Kurds and the governmental policies stemming from state ideology were interesting enough to attract academic attention. A number of academic studies were developed concerning the Kurdish issue. The Turkish State's method of treatment towards the Kurds, especially as coping with terror is concerned, is a problem in the relations between Turkey and the European Union, of which Turkey has been trying to become a member for decades. Meanwhile, the sensitive balance of power in the Middle East causes at times very tense relations between Turkey and its neighbors, namely Iran, Iraq, and Syria, due to the fact that they contain important populations of Kurds within their borders. In addition, two US-led wars against Iraq, one in 1991 and the other in 2003, also affected Turkey's relations with the United States as being its closest ally in the Middle East. This crucial position of the Kurds clearly makes them a subject of study from the perspective of International Relations.

Kemal Kirişçi, a prominent Turkish scholar, offers an evaluation of Turkey's position as being a country that has lands in both the European and Asian continents. Referring to the structure of the European Union, which proves to be successful in providing peace among its members and in establishing a supra-national body of

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[4] For enlightening analyses about the relations between the Turkish State and the Kurds, and former's approach to the latter, see Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* [The Kurdish question in State Discourse] İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006; Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* [From Future Turks to So-Called Citizens: The Republic and the Kurds] İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006.

government to which every member nation state shows obedience, Kirişçi sees Kantian Idealism as the main principle of the EU. On the other side, he observes Hobbesian Realism in the Middle East, mainly due to the sensitive balance of power and nonexistence of any multinational governmental system; and due to the relations among countries in the region that include threats, enforcement, and wars. Taking these into consideration, Kirişçi views Turkey as a country between "Kantian" and "Hobbesian" worlds.[5]

Imagining Turkey as a country between Kantian and Hobbesian worlds invited me to look at the Kurdish question from this perspective. It appears that Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU are shaped differently, which is also valid as one focuses on the Kurdish question. Turkey had serious problems with Iran, Iraq, and Syria, as far as Kurds are concerned. These three countries are the ones that have sizeable Kurdish minorities, thus Turkey has been very much alerted about the policies in these states concerning the Kurds. In the last decades, Turkey also frequently blamed its Middle Eastern neighbors for providing shelter for the PKK, which is listed as a terrorist group by the United States, the EU and Turkey, to provoke its Kurdish population and force the Turkish State to reconcile with the demands of these countries. Hence the Turkish State's understanding of the issue caused serious tensions between Turkey and its neighboring countries. This tension was reflected in the water crisis, for instance, as far as the relations with Syria is concerned, in the cross-border military operations considering the relations with Iraq, and in the diplomatic tensions in Turkish-Iranian relations.

The European Union

Turkey's relations with the EU, meanwhile, have also not been free of problems with reference to the Kurdish issue. However, the content and nature of these difficulties are quite different from those existing between Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbors. Turkey, as a country so far unsuccessfully trying to be a part of the European Union since the 1960s, has certain chronic problems that have been continuously addressed by the European Union to be solved immediately.

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[5] Kemal Kirişçi, *Between Europe and the Middle East: The Transformation of Turkish Policy*, Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 8, No. 1, March 2004, p. 40.

Turkey's lack of success in implementing a full democracy, completely abolishing torture, and respecting and protecting the rights of its citizens are among the problems that are also directly related to the treatment of the Turkish State towards its Kurdish citizens. The EU's pressure on Turkey was intensified after accepting Turkey as an official candidate state in 1999 to make amendments in the Turkish Constitution in order to meet the Copenhagen criteria. The expected changes were addressing the Kurds as the largest ethnic minority in Turkey – establishing one fifth of the population.[6] The two different types of relations of Turkey, with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU, invites me to ask why these relations are shaped differently and search for the reasons behind them through focusing on the Kurdish question in Turkey.

At first glance, it may be thought that this problem has a simple explanation. Due to its geography and demographic nature, Turkey has tense relationships with its Middle Eastern neighbors. Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbors have Kurdish populations on both sides of their borders. On the other side, the relations with the EU are far away from these geographic and demographic pressures, though it is still a reality that the Kurdish lobbies in Europe work hard for their people back in their motherlands. My intention here is not to deny that this approach offers an explanation to the situation. However, it is a fact that the mentality behind the relations of Turkey with both the EU and the Middle East remains understudied. So, by applying Kirişçi's Hobbesian-Kantian-worlds-approach to the Kurdish question in Turkey, I develop a hypothesis that argues Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU concerning the Kurdish question are highly influenced by the system, structure, and mentality in the Middle East and the EU. From this perspective, this study contributes to the literature as it compares and contrasts Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU through focusing on the Kurdish question and through using two different theories to explain these relations.

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[6] From the perspective of the Turkish State, it is problematic to call the Kurds an ethnic minority. The pressure on Turkey was about democracy and human rights, which 'actually' addressed the Kurds as a minority; yet the Turkish State was ideologically not accepting any ethnic group as a minority referring to the Lausanne Treaty.

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To make my argument clear, the liberal approach[7] of the European Union as an international system approaches the Kurdish question from the perspectives of human rights, civic citizenship, cultural rights, freedom of language and expression, equal and just treatment, and abolishment of torture. Yet, on the Middle Eastern side, none of these titles seems to be a subject of concern; instead, the argumentations center around the issues of security of the state, territorial integrity, mutual respect to borders, continuation of the existing balance of power, and non-interference of each other's internal affairs.[8] This proves the difference of mentality behind the relations of Turkey with these two worlds.

2. Theoretical Framework

International Relations (IR) as an academic discipline has been a playground for two distinct theories, namely Realism and Liberalism. Although the ideas of both theories go back to classical thinkers such as Kant, Grotius, and Machiavelli, it is argued that IR has become an academic discipline after the First World War.[9] The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which is accepted to be the starting point of nation states as the main actors in inter-state relations, was in no sense affected by liberal thinking. WWI, however, started a period imbued with liberal thought, mainly due to the continuing impacts of the devastating war. The US president of the time, Woodrow Wilson, was one of the main figures behind this liberalism.[10] Yet, the economic crisis of 1929, the emergence of extremist nationalisms in Europe and Japan, and the subsequent outbreak of World War II signaled the re-emergence of the realist approach in IR. The Cold War period, via establishing a bipolarized world and

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[7] Kirişçi's "Kantianism", which he uses to describe the EU, is a radical evaluation of liberalist understanding in the International Relations. Hence, from this point on I prefer to call the EU as a liberalist structure. For broader information about Kantianism, one can see A. Nuri Yurdusev, *'Uluslararası İlişkiler' Öncesi* [Before International Relations] in Atila Eralp et al., *Devlet, Sistem ve Kimlik: Uluslararası İlişkilerde Temel Yaklaşımlar* [State, System and Identity: Fundamental Approaches in International Relations], Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007, pp. 51-53.

[8] The term "internal affairs" is quite important as the Kurdish question is concerned. Each Kurdish-populated state in the Middle East is very much suspicious of the other whether it is running policies to provoke the Kurds living in that country to create problems and threaten territorial integrity.

[9] Atila Eralp, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Disiplininin Oluşumu: İdealizm-Realizm Tartışması* [The Formation of IR Discipline: Idealism-Realism Debate] in *Devlet, Sistem ve Kimlik*, p. 59.

[10] Tim Dunne, *Liberalism* in John Baylis et al., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 113; Atila Eralp, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Disiplininin Oluşumu*, p. 63.

a relatively stable international system depending on power balance had been an appropriate arena for Realism to gain power. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the effects of globalism again brought certain powerful challenges to Realism in IR.

Realism and Liberalism should not be taken as unified and integrated bodies of theories. Throughout the 20th century, severe challenges confronting each theory paved the way for new evaluations and as a result they have evolved into multiple streams. While realist thinking is grouped under three broad titles, namely classical, structural, and neo-classical realism; liberal IR theory has two versions called classical liberalism and neo-liberalism.[11] However, one should note here that although the current point on which these two theories stand seems quite complicated, their main assumptions stand almost unchanged. The intention of this work is to provide these main assumptions and utilize them as the base for the present research.

The starting point here will be the Realist theory. The main assumptions of Realism can be stated as following[12]:

a) *The sovereign nation-state is the main actor*: Since the Treaty of Westphalia, the sovereign nation-states have been accepted as the main actors in the international arena. A supra-national governance system and a peace system are seen to be illusive. In realist understanding, a nation state cannot trust another one.

b) *The security and survival of the state is the main purpose*: The main purpose of the state is to provide for its survival and security. Hence, a state can take any measure to protect itself if it feels threatened by others.

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[11] Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, *Realism*; and Steven L. Lamy, *Contemporary Mainstream Approaches: Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism* in *The Globalization of World Politics*, pp. 92-105 and 126-139.

[12] The following summary of the main ideas of Realism and Liberalism are assembled and organized from Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Knopf, 1960; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, Columbia University Press, 2001; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979; Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, 2010; Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford University Press, 2010; Michael P. Sullivan, *Theories of International Relations: Transition vs. Persistence*, Palgrave, 2001; John Baylis et al., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; and Atila Eralp et al., *Devlet, Sistem ve Kimlik: Uluslararası İlişkilerde Temel Yaklaşımlar* [State, System and Identity: Fundamental Approaches in International Relations], İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007.

c) *International system is characterized by anarchy*: International system is an anarchical one, because there is no supra-national power, and the relations among states necessitate continual conflict. The states have to fight to secure their interests, which results in an unstable arena. Hence, eternal peace is not possible.

d) *States are rational actors*: A state always follows its interests in every action. Realism believes that gains are relative, that is, one state's gain means the other's loss.

e) *International politics is defined by power*: The main feature that defines international politics is power. The more a state gains power, the more it will be able to assert its wishes. Hence, for every state to provide for its existence and security, the balance of power is the most crucial thing to be maintained. None of the states should be so powerful as to be able to undermine the other's authority. Power is generally understood to be military power.

f) *The actions of the state are not defined by morality*: States act according to political imperatives rather than moral ones. Yet this does not mean that the acts of the state are totally immoral; instead, a state has dual moral standards. It behaves differently towards its citizens and foreigners. To protect the community inside, it kills the ones outside. So, in a sense, the state accepts the former as a moral choice.

Now, let us move on to the main assumptions of Liberalism:

i) *The main aim in international politics is the prevention of war and provision of peace*: The consequences of the First World War created an intention to arrange international relations to prevent war and provide peace. To create a peaceful international arena was not an illusion.

ii) *International law and institutions should be created*: The first and most crucial step to provide for international peace is to create international law and institutions, and supra-national bodies to regulate the behaviors of states. These law and institutions are to serve the common benefits of the member states, and to create solutions to the problems among them.

iii) *International relations should be shaped by moderation and compromise*: Instead of enforcements or wars, states should seek solutions through moderation and

compromise. International institutions will provide help for this. States have to find reasonable solutions to their problems.

iv) *An open diplomacy should be followed in international relations*: In order to avoid mutual suspicions and perceptions of threat, states should follow open diplomacy rather than secret agendas and meetings.

v) *Progress is likely in international relations*: Having conflicts among the states does not mean that their issues are going to last forever. Conflicts can be solved and progress can be made in international relations. Hence, the international arena is not necessarily anarchical.

As to how to apply these two theories to my research, I argue that the European Union is an example for liberal IR theory through its international system (the Union), supra-national bodies (the Commission, the Council, the Parliament, the Court etc.), durable peace, ways of compromise (International Law), and open diplomacy (the Treaties). This liberal understanding of politics, which is also dependent on Kant's idealism, prioritizes democracy, republican governorship, human rights, freedom of expression, cultural freedom, tolerance of differences, and civic citizenship.[13] These traits of Liberalism can be easily read in the relations between Turkey and the EU. Chapter II shows how these liberal features gain prominence in EU-Turkey relations as far as the Kurdish question is concerned. My argument is that since the EU has a liberal structure, its approach to the Kurdish question occurs from a liberal perspective and its actions through liberal principles.

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[13] To provide universal (and eternal) peace, Kant offers a "pacifistic union" (*foedus pacificium*) to be established. He counts six prerequisites for this establishment: 1) No peace treaty should save any reservation which may lead to another war in the future; 2) no country should be annexed by another one through heritage, exchange, purchase or charity; 3) professional and settled armies should be abolished gradually; 4) no debt agreement should be made which is related to the foreign affairs of the state; 5) no state should intervene to other's formation and governance through using force; and 6) a state which fights another one should not allow actions which would make mutual trust in peace time impossible. Kant also adds three decisive conditions for the *foedus pacificium*: 1) Every state should be governed by a republic and have a republican constitution; 2) International Law should depend on the federalism of free nations; and 3) the borders of the cosmopolitan law should be drawn by the principles of universal hospitality. According to Kant, a republican constitution has to base on three principles: a) the principle of freedom of all members of the society as human beings; b) the principle of subordination of every governed person to one and general legislation; and c) the principle of equality of everyone as citizens. This summary of Kantianism gives reason to believe that the structure of the EU has been highly influenced by Kant's understanding. See Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* [To Eternal Peace: A Philosophical Draft].

In short, EU-Turkey relations concerning the Kurdish question gain meaning through the perspective of Liberalism.

On the other hand, my argumentation claims that the situation in the Middle East and the relations among the Middle Eastern states, specifically among Iran, Iraq, and Syria, are cases that are best explained through the lens of Realism. The lack of existence of an international system, a supra-national body, an international society; coupled with continuing tension, uncompromising relations, sensitive balance of power, frequently occurring diplomatic tensions and physical wars, threats, and enforcements lead us to conclude that Realism best explains the relations among these countries. This realist understanding of politics is reflected in the Middle East as non-democratic regimes – which call themselves "republics" – and strong dictatorships which silence the opposition, undermine or totally block human rights and freedom of expression and culture, and apply torture through the hands of the state. The security of the state gains prominence in international relations operating at the expense of the society. From this point of view, as Chapter III shows, Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors concerning the Kurdish question are very much shaped by realpolitik. Since there is a realist understanding of international relations in the Middle East, I argue that Turkey's relations with these neighbors, as far as the Kurdish issue is concerned, gains meaning through the lenses of Realist principles.

3. The Scope of the Research

The time period of interest of this research is the period between November 2002 and April 2012. This period coincides with the still ongoing period of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government. There are several reasons for selecting this time frame. Firstly, the AKP period is a new period in Turkish politics in the sense that in the 2002 general elections, Turkish voters eliminated all the decades-old political parties and politicians from the political scene. This date signaled the beginning of a new era. Secondly, the AKP has been the first party to establish a

government on its own since 1991.[14] After a decade of political instability, the coalition government period in Turkish politics ended, which meant that now there was a political party which held the support of an important part of the public and which had the power in the parliament to make decisions and apply them. Thirdly, this period has been a period during which Turkey came to the closest point of becoming an EU member since the first agreement between the two sides in 1963. Finally, Turkey started effective foreign policies to become a regional power during this period, especially after the appointment of the current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to the office in 2009.[15] These four features of the last decade show that in order to develop a better understanding of the problem, this period should be studied from the perspective of the Kurdish question.

When I say "the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey's relations", I refer to a two-sided approach. On the one hand, the Kurdish question influences and changes the type of relations of Turkey with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU. On the other hand, the evolving relations of Turkey with the Middle East or EU change the direction in which this issue is heading in Turkey. These two processes may be very much related. To give an example, the closure of Kurdish parties and ban on Kurdish politicians strained the relations between Turkey and the EU, since the latter evaluates the situation as the former's blocking of democratic principles. This is one side of the relationship. On the other hand, to meet the freedom of expression criteria of the EU, Turkey released decade-long jailed Kurdish leaders and allowed them to reenter politics. If we look at the Middle Eastern side, the possibility of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq worries Turkey in regard to its own Kurds. Meanwhile, Turkey launches military

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[14] Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p. 147.

[15] Kösebalaban argues that foreign policy is a reflection of power that derives from identity. Hence, it is necessary to examine identity formations in Turkey to understand Turkish foreign policy. He outlines four major ideological perspectives in Turkish politics: Islamic Liberalism, Secularist Liberalism, Islamic Nationalism, and Secularist Nationalism. The AKP is a representative of Islamic Liberalism. Kösebalaban opines that Turkey's globalist and assertive foreign policy of the last decade is an outcome of Islamic-Liberal identity, which was very much reflected in the theorization and works of Davutoğlu, who was the chief foreign policy advisor to the government before he assumed the post. For this argument, see his *Turkish Foreign Policy*. For Ahmet Davutoğlu's assessment of Turkey's strategic situation in the region and its foreign policy, see Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* [Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Location], Küre Yayınları, 2009. For an evaluation of his ideas and Turkish foreign policy during the AKP government, see Alexander Murinson, *The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 42, No. 6, November 2006, pp. 945-964.

operations in the very same area because it believes that the PKK members within its borders are organically related to that place. These examples can be seen throughout the research.

As to the unit of analysis, I introduce the European Union as a "union" on the one side and the Middle Eastern countries as "nation-states" on the other as two different units. There is reason for that. In order to understand how liberal principles work in Turkish-EU relations, one has to focus on the relations with the *Union* itself, because it is the Union that carries out these principles. The influence of Liberalism can be seen in the relations of Turkey as it addresses the Union. The relations with specific European countries can still be shaped by principles of Realism. For instance, Turkey's relations with the EU can be different from those with Greece in the sense that Greece can bring up certain nation-state problems such as the air space issue, and tension can be created between two countries. [16] However, Greece can still support Turkey's EU membership. Yet on the Middle Eastern side, due to the non-existence of such an international system, the unit of analysis will be nation states. It is more logical to utilize Liberal and Realist IR theories through using these different units of analysis.

As this thesis focuses on the Kurdish question and its impact on Turkey's foreign affairs from an International Relations perspective, it leaves certain important aspects of the question out of its scope. One of these aspects is the economy. How Turkey's economic relations with other countries influence the Kurdish question, or what kind of an impact Turkey's domestic economic policies and those of other countries have on the Kurds constitute one aspect absent from this study. Another facet is more sociological: the impact of the social policies, state-citizen relations, and social structures in Turkey and the other countries are also not considered in this study. A third aspect here is the geographic one: although the importance of geography in thinking about the Kurdish question is lightly touched upon, the impact of Kurdish geographical distribution and the demographic structure of the region vis à vis the Kurdish question is another piece this thesis leaves aside. The fourth characteristic in this sense is identity and policy making. This issue is mentioned in the conclusion in more detail. The identities and ideologies of policy

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[16] For a detailed history of Greece-Turkey relations in 1990s, see Baskın Oran (ed.), *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents*, University of Utah Press, 2010, pp. 790-817.

makers in Turkey and other countries influencing the Kurdish question in the region are also not focused on in this study. Since this thesis concentrates on the international relations of Turkey with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU from an IR perspective, I have to admit the above mentioned central aspects for a more comprehensive analysis of the Kurdish question are missing. A broader emphasis instead is put on the nature and the content of Turkey's relations with two different international systems regarding the Kurdish question and how and why they are shaped differently.

4. Methodology of the Research

Throughout my research, I make use of primary and secondary literature. Primary literature is obtained through official documents and newspaper scanning. For official documents, I used the websites of two Turkish Ministries, namely the Foreign Ministry and the European Union Ministry of Turkey; and the official website of the EU. The newspaper content analysis was carried out through scanning the *Hürriyet (Turkish) Daily News* website, which is in English, and widely referred to in academic studies. The news about Turkish-EU relations was searched using the keywords "Turkey", "Kurds", and "EU." More than 1,400 news articles appeared, which were thoroughly scanned for this research. For Turkey-Middle East relations, another search was made using the keywords "Turkey", "Kurds", and "Iran" or "Iraq" or "Syria." Approximately 3,000 news items in total appeared which were also scanned for this research. In addition, *The New York Times*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Radikal*, and *Zaman* newspapers were made use of. The secondary literature was reached through library research. Academic works about the issue have been reviewed in order to establish an appropriate theoretical framework and to see which aspects of this issue have been studied in the academia. One can see the works reached in the references section. This section also includes the books and journal articles to which I do not directly refer to in this study. Yet I felt obliged to mention them because they provided me with a broader understanding of the issue.

Chapter II: The Impact of the Kurdish Question on Turkish-EU Relations

Introduction

In this chapter, I will show how Turkey's relations with the European Union are influenced by the Kurdish question in Turkey, and how liberal theory helps us explain these relations. To analyze the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-EU relations, I will focus on certain cases, including "the retrial of Öcalan", "closure of the Kurdish parties and banning Kurdish politicians", "the usage of the Kurdish language", and "the debates around the law 5233". Each case in this analysis focuses on a certain aspect of the Kurdish question in Turkey, and evaluates how the EU approaches the issue. The main intention is to show that the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-EU relations between 2002 and 2012 are shaped around the principles of "human rights" and "justice", "political freedom" and "freedom of expression", "cultural freedom" and "freedom of language", "citizenship rights" and "civic citizenship" – which indicate that Liberalism is the most appropriate theory in explaining Turkish-EU relations.

Turkish-EU Relations concerning the Kurdish Question

1. The Retrial of Abdullah Öcalan

Abdullah Öcalan, who is widely known in Turkey as "Apo", is the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is listed as a terrorist group by the United States, the EU member states, and Turkey. Öcalan established the PKK in 1978 with the aim of overthrowing the Turkish authority in certain Kurdish-majority cities in eastern and southeastern Turkey. The PKK decided to use violence to reach its target; and once the target was reached, it was going to establish a separate state

based on communist ideology. The PKK started its physical attacks against Turkey in 1984. From the first day onwards, Turkey has seen this issue as a matter of separatist terrorism. Thus, it was the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) who became the leading actor in overcoming this problem. The war between the TSK and the PKK continued during the 1990s and named those years as "bloody" in public. In 1999, Öcalan was abducted by the Turkish security forces in Kenya. The Turkish Court tried him and sentenced him to death for treason. However, under the harmonization laws that Turkey adopted in order to become an EU member, Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002. Öcalan's punishment was subsequently converted to lifetime imprisonment on the Island of İmralı. After Öcalan's capture, the PKK announced a unilateral cease-fire and the fighting stopped. Yet it called off its cease-fire five years later. Today, the so-called "low-intensified war" between the TSK and PKK still continues, which took almost 40,000 lives until today.

The situation of Öcalan is a sensitive one in Turkey. In the mainstream Turkish media, he is frequently referred to as a "terrorist leader", "head of separatists", or "baby killer." He is pictured as the greatest betrayer of the Turkish State, who is responsible from the deaths of thousands of people. Hence, things become quite complicated when any initiative is taken which seems to favor him. One has to keep this sensitive situation of Öcalan in mind to understand what the ECHR decision about Öcalan's retrial meant for Turkey.[17] The first ruling of the European Court came in 2003, declaring that Öcalan did not receive a fair trial; and in May 2005, the Court's highest authority "upheld this decision."[18] The reason for this verdict was that "Öcalan's ability to defend himself had been restricted" through preventing his lawyers from properly contacting him. In addition, the existence of a

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[17] Although the ECHR is not an EU institution, it is quite influential in EU-Turkey relations. The ECHR is a supra-national court based in Strasbourg. It was established by the European Convention of Human Rights and examines violation complaints about the contracting states. These contracting states are the ones that are included in the Council of Europe. These states number 47 for today, among which Turkey is also included. Although the ECHR is not an institution of the EU, its decisions are binding; they have to be applied by the members of the Council of Europe. The verdicts of the ECHR concerning the Council of Europe members also provide official feedback to the EU about the current situation of that country. Hence, the decisions of the ECHR, especially as far as the Kurdish question is concerned, constitute a crucial part in examining Turkish-EU relations.
[18] The New York Times, *European Court Urges Turkey to Grant Kurdish Leader a New Trial*, May 13, 2005. Available at:
http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F00B11FE3A540C708DDDAC0894DD404482

military judge in the court was also evaluated as a "violation."[19] After the decision of the ECHR, Öcalan demanded a retrial from Turkey. However, in May 2006, the Ankara 11th Criminal Court rejected the application of Öcalan for his retrial and ruled that it was impossible to retry him under current laws.[20]

The decisions of the ECHR were not welcomed by Turkey. Although the government declared that it respected the court verdict due to its binding position, there were politicians who argued that the retrial of Öcalan would not make any change in his punishment. The then Foreign Minister Yaşar Yakış argued that "even if he is retried, the same sentence will be given."[21] The strictest political opposition to the verdict came from the "idealists" of the MHP (Nationalist Action Party), who viewed the decision as Europe's anti-Turkish stance on human rights.[22] The CHP (Republican People's Party) also showed its irritation about the verdict. Haluk Koç, a lawmaker from the CHP, blamed the government for being "amateurish and inept while the decision was being finalized by the Court." The then leader of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, implied that he saw the retrial of Öcalan as unacceptable.[23] The military wing, as being the main actor in the Kurdish question, also did not remain silent. Then General Hurşit Tolon, who was the commander of the First Army, insisted that Öcalan's trial and punishment were fair. He also implied that "the trial was conducted in line with our constitution and laws. The punishment against the terrorist leader has found its place in the conscience of the Turkish people."[24] The fear of the Turkish bureaucracy and military was that a retrial decision may ignite unrest in the public due to the sensitivity of Öcalan's situation. However, this did not happen. The Turkish Court ignored the ECHR decision and rejected the appeal.

Although Öcalan's situation in Turkey is extremely sensitive and the approaches to him are very subjective and emotional, and although the PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by the EU, the European Court could still look

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[19] Hürriyet Daily News, *ECHR call for Ocalan retrial met grimly by Turkey*, May 13, 2005. News articles belonging to Hürriyet Daily News are available at: www.hurriyetdailynews.com. Also see Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, *Europaeischer Gerichtshof: Öcalan-Prozess in der Türkei war unfair* [European Court: Öcalan-Process in Turkey was unfair], May 12, 2005. Available at: http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europaeischer-gerichtshof-oecalan-prozess-in-der-tuerkei-war-unfair-1232764.html

[20] Hürriyet Daily News, *Court rejects Öcalan's retrial*, May 6, 2006.

[21] Hürriyet Daily News, *Öcalan ruling sparks fresh dispute with Europe*, March 13, 2003.

[22] Hürriyet Daily News, *PKK leader Öcalan denied retrial*, July 27, 2006.

[23] Hürriyet Daily News, *Öcalan anxiety grips Ankara*, May 12, 2005.

[24] Hürriyet Daily News, *Öcalan anxiety grips Ankara*, May 12, 2005.

at the situation of Öcalan from a human rights and justice perspective. According to the EU, every person – though labeled as a serious criminal – has the right to be fairly judged.[25] The European Court decided that Öcalan's trial was not fair regardless of who he was. This was an issue of human rights and justice in the eyes of the EU. However, since Turkey's approach is relatively subjective, it could not fully appreciate this objectivity. In the end, the Turkish Court rejected a retrial of Öcalan. However, this became an example of how the EU approached the Kurdish issue in Turkey from the perspective of "human rights" and "justice" in the case of the "retrial of Öcalan."

2. Closure of the Kurdish Parties and the Banning of Kurdish Politicians

Party closures and political bans are frequent occurrences in Turkish politics. In total twenty-six political parties have been closed by the Constitutional Court since 1950. There are various reasons for these closures and bans, and having an alleged relationship with the PKK is one reason which has been frequently used as an excuse to close Kurdish parties and ban its politicians in Turkey. However, implementing a pluralist democracy, which is seen as a necessity by the EU, requires all voices in the public to be represented in the Parliament.[26] Hence, party closures due to ideological concerns are not acceptable in the eyes of the EU. In the EU's stance, this situation amounts to a limitation of "political freedom" and "freedom of expression."

Historically, there has never been any obstacle for politicians of Kurdish origin to take part in Turkish politics.[27] However, parties built on Kurdish ethnic

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[25] Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights on the right to a fair trial reads: "In the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge against him, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Judgment shall be pronounced publicly but the press and public may be excluded from all or part of the trial in the interests of morals, public order or national security in a democratic society, where the interests of juveniles or the protection of the private life of the parties so require, or to the extent strictly necessary in the opinion of the court in special circumstances where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice."

[26] In this sense, the 10% threshold used in the elections is also a major problem in Turkish democracy. This threshold is a serious obstacle in front of the pluralist representation in Turkey. Some even go so far to claim that this threshold is used to keep the Kurdish parties out of the Turkish Parliament.

[27] Yet they should not imply their Kurdishness and act with their "Turkish citizen-identities." As a famous example, Şerafettin Elçi was found guilty and imprisoned because he said "I am a Kurd. And there are Kurds in Turkey."

identity have always been regarded suspiciously by the Turkish State and almost all of them were eventually closed. Kurdish political parties have been seen by the Turkish State as the mouthpiece for the PKK in Turkish politics. Various Kurdish politicians' lack of will in condemning the PKK increased the level of suspicion, which created tension in Turkish politics. However, the closure of these parties and banning their politicians has never been appreciated by the EU. In contrast to the Turkish position, the Union does not assess the closures and bans from the perspective of terrorism. Instead, the EU evaluates them as restrictions on freedom of expression and political participation, which is the main tenet of Liberalism.

Closing Kurdish parties and banning their politicians are important aspects of the Kurdish question in Turkey. To show how this issue influences Turkish-EU relations and how the EU approaches to it, I will focus on three cases: the closure of the HADEP (People's Democracy Party), the retrial of Leyla Zana and her friends, and the closure of the DTP (Democratic Society Party).

The Closure of the HADEP

The HADEP was one of the pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey. It was established in 1994 as the successor of another closed party, DEP (Democracy Party). It took part in the 1995 and 1999 general elections and won thirty-seven local municipalities in the 1999 local elections. In 2002, instead of HADEP, DEHAP (Democratic People's Party, another Kurdish party established in 1997) participated in the general elections via a decision of the Higher Election Board (YSK).[28] This party received more than 6% of the votes and gained the majority of the votes in eastern and southeastern cities of Turkey. However, due to the electoral threshold of ten percent, it was unable to enter the Parliament.[29]

The decision to close HADEP came at a time when Turkish-EU relations were relatively tense. On March 11, 2003, the European Commission warned Turkey to find a solution to the Cyprus problem because Cyprus was going to be an EU

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[28] Hürriyet Daily News, *The DEHAP closure syndrome*, September 25, 2003.
[29] 2002 elections was another example for the representation problem in Turkish democracy. That year, only two parties could reach the threshold, AKP and CHP. Yet they had 54% of the votes in total, which meant that 46% of the population did not have a say in Turkish politics.

member soon.[30] Since the existence of Turkish control in Northern Cyprus was not internationally recognized, this warning implied that Turkey would be an occupier in EU lands if this issue was not immediately solved. This warning strained the relations. The day after, the European Court of Human Rights criticized Turkey in its decision that the jailed PKK leader Öcalan was not fairly judged. This declaration caused more tension.[31] The Constitutional Court's decision to close HADEP with the conviction of having relationship with the PKK came right after these events, on the 13th of March.[32]

At a time when the EU was putting pressure on Turkey regarding the Cyprus issue and Öcalan's retrial was being discussed, the closure of HADEP came as a surprise that was expected to hinder Turkey's progress towards EU membership. The EU was expecting Turkey to grant broader rights to its Kurds and abolish obstacles in their freedom of expression. The decision of the Constitutional Court was evaluated by the EU as an attempt to politically silence the Kurds in Turkey. It was also a sign of the lack of implementation of the applied reforms. Hence, the EU organs harshly reacted to the closure of HADEP. European Commission spokesman Jean-Christophe Filori criticized Turkey by stating that "this [decision] is an outcome which runs counter to the reform spirit which Turkey has been pursuing for some time now."[33] He also added: "We have certain doubts, at least in regard to the compatibility of this verdict with a certain view of pluralism which one would take to characterize a modern democracy."[34] Joost Lagendijk, who is an MEP (Member of European Parliament) and the Co-Chairman of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, strongly criticized Turkey. He said that "[t]he decision by the Turkish Constitutional Court to outlaw HADEP shows yet again that the suppression of political freedom continues in Turkey. Sadly, even the reform laws adopted previously in order to guarantee the activities of political parties have not changed much in reality."[35] As it is clearly seen through the statements above, the European Union did not evaluate this issue as a fight against a terrorist group like Turkey did;

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[30] Hürriyet Daily News, *In bitter exchange of fire with EU, Turkey bans pro-Kurdish party*, March 16, 2003.

[31] Hürriyet Daily News, *In bitter exchange of fire with EU, Turkey bans pro-Kurdish party*, March 16, 2003.

[32] Hürriyet Daily News, *HADEP closed, DEHAP in row,* March 14, 2003.

[33] Hürriyet Daily News, *Closure of pro-Kurdish party draws international reaction*, March 15, 2003.

[34] Hürriyet Daily News, *Closure of pro-Kurdish party draws international reaction*, March 15, 2003.

[35] Hürriyet Daily News, *Closure of pro-Kurdish party draws international reaction*, March 15, 2003.

instead, it blamed Turkey for restricting freedom of expression and political freedom. "Freedom of expression" and "political freedom" are two main tenets of Liberalism, which explains the harsh criticisms of the EU in regard to closure.

The Retrial of Leyla Zana and Her Friends

The situation of Leyla Zana is another example that shows that EU-Turkey relations are shaped by a liberal and democratic discourse influenced by the liberal understanding of the Union as far as the Kurdish question is concerned. The case of Zana provides further evidence for the EU's assessment of the situation from the point of political freedom and freedom of expression. Leyla Zana is an eminent personality in Turkish politics. She is a politician of Kurdish origin who was elected to the Parliament in 1991 from the city of Diyarbakır as a member of the SHP (Social Democrat Populist Party). During the swearing-in ceremony, she came up to the bench with a bandana of green, yellow and red colors, which are the colors of the PKK flag. After she completed her oath, she spoke one sentence in Kurdish.[36] She received harsh reaction for her dress and talk, which contributed to the suspicious approach of the Turkish State to the use of the Kurdish language and any appearance of Kurdish identity. Three years later, after a speech they gave in the United States, Zana and her three colleagues, Hatip Dicle, Selim Sadak, and Orhan Doğan were sentenced to 15 years in prison for making PKK's propaganda.[37]

However, the EU again approached this issue differently than Turkey. This imprisonment was evaluated negatively by the EU, which saw this event as another restriction of freedom of expression. In May 2003, the European Court decided that Zana and her friends had not been fairly judged.[38] Hence, it demanded a retrial. This time Turkey accepted this demand. This retrial was considered by the EU to be a trial of Turkey in regards to its level of freedom of expression. However, the Turkish Court gave them the same sentence it gave nine years ago.[39] Although the symbolic retrial meant a lot for Turkey's progress, this verdict created disappointment in the

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[36] The sentence she said was: "Ez vê sondê li ser navê gelê kurd û tirk dixwîm" (I give this oath for the brotherhood of Kurdish and Turkish peoples).
[37] Hürriyet Daily News, *Court rejects releasing ex-MP's 11th time*, February 21, 2004.
[38] Hürriyet Daily News, *Court rejects releasing ex-MP's 11th time*, February 21, 2004.
[39] Hürriyet Daily News, *Court rejects releasing ex-MP's 11th time*, February 21, 2004.

EU. Lagendijk argued that "no one would believe Turkey was making progress if Leyla Zana's trial continued in this way and the defendants remained in prison."[40] Yet in 2004, Turkey abolished the DGMs (State Security Courts) that convicted Zana and her friends.[41] Their case was directed to the civil court. On June 9, 2004, the court released these four politicians. This new verdict was evaluated as broadening freedom of expression and as a crucial step towards the EU. European Parliament President Pat Cox expressed that he was satisfied with the decision. European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee President Elmor Brok praised the decision of the court and the abolishment of the DGMs in a written statement. EU Enlargement Commissioner Guenter Verheugen asserted that "today's decision is a sign that the implementation of political reforms, which Turkey has been introducing in the past two years, is gaining ground."[42] The head of the EU Commission Representation to Turkey, Hans Joerg Kretschmer, assessed the decision as a "very positive move."[43] The decision to release Zana and her friends also received positive reactions from international human rights organizations. Amnesty International welcomed the decision and added that the release should be unconditional and Zana and her associates should not be retried. Human Rights Watch (HRW) even described this event as a new era in Turkey's human rights record.[44] One month after the "release" decision, the court lifted the political bans on Zana and her friends and allowed them to reenter politics.

The situation of Leyla Zana has been a significant part of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Her courage to assert her Kurdish ethnicity and to use her native

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[40] Hürriyet Daily News, *Court rejects releasing ex-MP's 11th time*, February 21, 2004.

[41] Burhanettin Duran argues that the AKP government "used foreign policy as a tool to transform the domestic politics." He mentions the abolishment of the DGMs as an example case. In this sense, the case of Leyla Zana supports Duran's argument as Turkey tried to soften political limitations on the Kurdish identity referring to the EU accession process and EU's pressures. See Ali Aslan's interview with Burhanettin Duran, *Türk dış politikasında 'medeniyet derinliği' arayışı var* [There is a quest for 'civilization depth' in Turkish foreign policy] in Anlayış Dergisi, October 2008. Available at: http://www.anlayis.net/makaleGoster.aspx?dergiid=65&makaleid=5375. Ali Resul Usul agrees with Duran on this. See Ali Resul Usul, *Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri 2010* [Turkish-EUropean Union Relations 2010] in Burhanettin Duran, Kemal İnat and Mesut Özcan, *Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı 2010* [Turkish Foreign Policy Almanac 2010], SETA Yayınları, 2011, p. 204. İlhan Uzgel also mentions that the EU was a tool used in Turkey's transition period. See his interview in Birgün Newspaper on December 18, 2011, available at:
http://www.birgun.net/politics_index.php?news_code=1324211017&day=18&month=12&year=2011

[42] The New York Times, *Turks Free 4 Kurds Whose Jailing Irked European Union*, June 10, 2004. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/10/world/turks-free-4-kurds-whose-jailing-irked-european-union.html

[43] Hürriyet Daily News, *Human Rights Watch: Turkey entering new era*, June 11, 2004.

[44] Hürriyet Daily News, *Human Rights Watch: Turkey entering new era*, June 11, 2004.

language has made her an important personality. She raised her voice for more rights for Kurdish people. Hence, her conviction and imprisonment has been evaluated by the EU as a restriction of freedom of expression and political participation. Yet Turkey was punishing her for making PKK's propaganda. Regardless of what she said in her speeches, this shows a significant difference in Turkey's and the EU's approaches to the Kurdish issue. In Zana's case, the EU addressed the issue from a "freedom of expression" perspective and demanded a retrial, yet the re-conviction of Zana influenced Turkish-EU relations negatively. Subsequently, her release had a positive impact on the relations. From this perspective, Liberalism offers an explanation for why the EU pressured Turkey to release the politicians in Zana's case.

The Closure of the DTP

The DTP's (Democratic Society Party) closure by the Constitutional Court was again evaluated by the EU as a restriction of "freedom of expression" and "political freedom."

After the civil court lifted Zana and her friends' political bans, they returned to politics. Zana and Doğan started a new political movement. It was called the Democratic Society Movement (DTH). In August 2005, the DEHAP (the HADEP's successor) dissolved itself and joined Zana's movement to work for the good of the Kurdish people in Turkey.[45] In November 2005, a new Kurdish party was established which named itself the Democratic Society Party (DTP).

The approaches of other political parties in the Parliament to the DTP were as suspicious as they were to its predecessors. Due to its "guilty" past, its "dangerous aspirations" such as helping the PKK and dividing the country were creating fear in Turkish bureaucracy and military. Hence, condemnation of the PKK by the DTP was seen as a prerequisite for the elimination of suspicions. Only then could the other parties develop "normal political relations" with the DTP. However, the DTP did not do what other parties expected it to do. In the 2007 general elections, twenty-one

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[45] Hürriyet Daily News, *DEHAP Dissolved, joins Zana's movement*, August 18, 2005.

DTP members entered the Parliament as independent MPs (Member of Parliament), which was a number enough to establish a political group. With their entrance, the tension was carried to the Parliament. Prime Minister Erdoğan had been refusing for a long time to officially meet Ahmet Türk, the leader of the DTP, unless he clearly condemned the PKK.[46] Instead of condemnation, DTP members made further statements that increased the suspicions. For instance, Veysi Dilekçi said: "The PKK is a reality of this country, we have to accept that. We have an emotional relationship with it, not an organic one."[47] Or, in an interview published on a German website, Emine Ayna declared: "We do not support the PKK, yet we do not see it as a terrorist organization, either."[48] These kinds of statements are perceived by the Turkish State as clear support for the PKK. Such ideas have never been known to survive Turkish politics. Actually, EU's pressure on Turkey to broaden freedom of expression was directly related to the permission of the State for these kinds of ideas. However, Turkey again failed this test. In December 2009, the Constitutional Court decided to close the DTP with the conviction of becoming a center for separatist actions.[49]

It was mentioned before that the EU listed the PKK as a terrorist organization and supported Turkey's fight against it. However, the EU strictly opposes the punishment of political, i.e. non-violent approaches to the issue. The DTP's closure was an example of that. As soon as the closure case was opened, the PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) expressed concern about the judicial proceedings. A statement made by Lluís Maria de Puig, the president of the PACE, declared that "the dissolution of political parties should be regarded as an exceptional measure, to be applied only in cases where the party concerned uses violence or threatens civil peace and the democratic, constitutional order of the country."[50] After the closure decision was made public by the Constitutional Court, the EU expressed serious concerns over the decision, including a senior EU official

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[46] Hürriyet Daily News, *Solution through more democracy*, April 5, 2006.
[47] "DTP'li başkan: PKK ile duygusal bağımız var [A principle of the DTP: We have emotional relationship with the PKK]." Available at: http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=528527
[48] "Staat würde die Kurden "in die Berge treiben" [The State would push the Kurds to the mountains]." Available at: http://derstandard.at/3148408
[49] "Anayasa Mahkemesi DTP'yi oybirliğiyle kapattı [Constitutional Court voted unanimously to close down the DTP]." Available at:
http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=968755&CategoryID=9
8. Also see: The New York Times, *Turkey Bans Kurdish Party*, December 11, 2009. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/12/world/europe/12istanbul.html
[50] Hürriyet Daily News, *PACE concerned about DTP closure case*, October 6, 2008.

asserting that this closure might hinder the government's attempt to broaden the rights of the Kurds in Turkey.[51] The reason for these criticisms was Turkey's shift from EU's liberal principles through blocking political freedoms. From this perspective, the closure of the DTP has been another sign of the EU's approach to the Kurdish issue from "freedom of expression" and "political freedom" aspects.

3. The Usage of the Kurdish Language

The journey of the usage of the Kurdish language in Turkey is a good example to show how the Kurdish question in Turkey is influenced by its relations with the EU. Liberalism, which favors cultural freedom, explains the demands by the EU from Turkey to totally abolish the limits of the usage of the Kurdish language. In this part, the introduction of Kurdish-teaching courses and Kurdish-broadcasting television channels will be focused on to portray the progress of the use of the Kurdish language in Turkey, how it is affected by the demands of the EU, and how the EU approaches the Kurdish question from the perspective of "cultural freedom" and "freedom of language."

Since its establishment, the Turkish Republic has been advocating an ideology that denies the existence of different ethnicities other than Turks. The term "minority" has been perceived by the State as religious minorities. Hence, Kurds in Turkey were seen as a part of Turkey's "founder majority." One can see that this idea prevailed in the State discourse until recently, and is still alive even today. To give an example, in a statement he made in 2007, the then President of Turkey, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, clearly mentioned that the Kurds were not a minority, instead a part of the majority.[52] Another example can be given from a statement given by the predecessor of Sezer, Süleyman Demirel. He argued that EU's statements about the Kurds being a minority clearly showed that "the Turks have been unsuccessful in

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[51] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey edges further toward EU*, December 20, 2009. In 2009, with the initiative of the government, a process called "Democratic Opening" started. This initiative was also known as the Kurdish Opening. The attempt mentioned by the EU official addresses this opening. For a study including the AKP government's Kurdish policy, see the report "*Şark Meselesinden Demokratik Açılıma: Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası* [From Eastern Question to Democratic Opening: Turkey's Kurdish question Memory]", prepared in 2011 by Hüseyin Yayman from the SETA Foundation.

[52] Hürriyet Daily News, *Sezer calls Kurds a part of majority*, January 11, 2007.

explaining the Kurdish question to Europe."[53] He meant that Turkey was unable to make it clear that the Kurds were an intrinsic part of the majority in Turkey. This ideology of the State, which dates back to the establishment of the Republic, inevitably necessitated the rejection of Kurdish ethnicity. Since language is one of the most crucial constituents of an ethnic culture, the banning of the Kurdish language played an important role in this rejection, starting from the very first years of the Republic.

The rejection of Kurdish ethnicity and banning its language continued until nearly two decades ago. It was the early 1990s when politicians started to talk about the Kurdish reality. After a long period during which even everyday usage of the Kurdish language was prohibited, Turgut Özal was going to be the politician who lifted this ban in everyday life.[54] With the EU's acceptance of Turkey as an official candidate in 1999, things have started to change. In 2002, to meet the Copenhagen Criteria, the Turkish Parliament approved a harmonization law[55] that provided the Kurds with the freedom to learn their language.[56] The law also allowed them to broadcast in Kurdish. From this date on, Kurdish courses and TV channels have been opened. These changes, as it will be discussed in detail, clearly show how the EU's approach to the Kurdish question, from the perspective of cultural rights, influences Turkey's attempts regarding this issue. Here, Liberal theory offers an explanation for why the Union puts pressure on Turkey to broaden the cultural rights of the Kurds in Turkey.

The process of opening Kurdish courses and television channels has not been free of problems. Although the reform packages, approved by the TBMM one by one in a short period of time, received EU's support, the Turkish government's lack of success in fully implementing these reforms attracted the Union's criticism. Indeed,

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[53] Hürriyet Daily News, *Demirel: 'We failed to explain the Kurdish problem'*, July 27, 2004.

[54] Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey*, p. 135

[55] These reform packages created tension between the government and military, since the latter was thinking that the provision of the Kurds with broader cultural rights would increase the threat of separatism in Turkey. Here, it is possible to track the traces of Turkish military's traditional stance as the protector of the state vis-à-vis the governments. For government-military relations in Turkey, see Ümit Cizre, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri: Bir İkilemin Anatomisi* [Justice Party-Military Relations: Anatomy of a Dilemma], İletişim Yayınları, 2002; Ümit Cizre, *The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy*, Comparative Politics, Vol. 29, No. 2, January 1997, pp. 151-166; William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, Routledge, 1994.

[56] Third harmonization law allowed education and broadcasts in local dialects, which opened the way for education and broadcasting in Kurdish language.

it was not logical to expect a state, which prohibited the usage of the Kurdish language for almost eighty years, to lift the bans and put the law in practice in just one day. In this sense, certain obstacles to Kurdish courses and broadcasts have been created by means of bureaucracy. The Kurdish language course in the city of Batman was an example case in this subject. After the law was put into force, a Kurdish course was decided to be opened in Batman in early 2003. This course was one of the first tests of Turkey's implementation of the reforms. Yet in October 2003, the manager of the course, Aydın Unesi, mentioned that it was unable to start teaching because the building failed to pass inspection. The inspectors claimed that the width of the doors were 5 centimeters narrower than they should be. The manager of the course argued that these kinds of obstacles were created by the Ministry to delay the opening of the course.[57] In November 2003, having finished all of the physical requirements and paper work, the course was still waiting for approval from Ankara. As well as the manager, 200 registered students were waiting for the same approval.[58]

The European Union, which put pressure on Turkey to grant its Kurds broader cultural rights, was watching Turkey's steps closely. Hence, Turkey's lack of success in implementing the language reform found a place for itself in the European Commission's November 5 Progress Report for Turkey. Criticizing the attitude of the Turkish State, the report claimed that "[n]o progress was made on the implementation of the August 2002 reform package on the learning of the different languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives. A number of applications to establish such language courses have been rejected by the authorities on the grounds that the curricula focus on culture and history and not on language teaching. Moreover, there are certain stringent regulatory requirements, which in practice prevent the classes from being established."[59] The EU's concern on implementation of language reforms provides further evidence for its approach to the Kurdish question from the liberal perspective, which favors unlimited freedom of culture and language.

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[57] Hürriyet Daily News, *Official support extended to Kurdish language center*, October 23, 2003.
[58] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurdish language courses on hold in Turkey despite EU reforms*, November 7, 2003.
[59] See 2003 Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession, p. 38. One can reach the report via following address:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2003/rr_tk_final_en.pdf

Another problem-creating case in implementing the language reforms was the opening of Kurdish TV channels. The reforms necessitated the abolishment of limits over broadcasts in different languages. Turkey decided to start Kurdish broadcasting through the hands of the State instead of allowing private TV channels to operate. One important reason for this attitude was the State's distrust of Kurdish broadcasts in the sense that there was the continual possibility for them to broadcast in favor of the PKK.[60] Hence, in the beginning, Turkey decided to reach this goal by itself. On June 9, 2004, the TRT (Radio and Television Institution of Turkey) aired its first Kurdish broadcast.[61] This was the same day when Leyla Zana and her friends were released by the court. Thus, these two events happening at the same time received the EU's compliments.[62] However, as in the case of the introduction of Kurdish language courses, local attempts to establish Kurdish television crashed the walls of bureaucracy.[63] Local entrepreneurs who attempted to open local Kurdish TV channels had to wait until March 2006 to reach their aim. On March 9, 2006, the RTÜK (Supreme Board of Radio and Television) approved the broadcast of two local TV channels in Diyarbakır, namely Gün TV and Söz TV.[64] Yet, they were not unrestricted in their airing time. There were forty-five minutes per day and four-hours per week limits for the programs in local dialects. In addition, all TV programs in Kurdish required Turkish subtitles, which meant technical difficulties for the stations.[65]

These limitations over Kurdish broadcasting attracted the EU's criticism. In a tough speech against Turkey, Joost Lagendijk, who is an MEP and Turkish-EU Joint Parliament Committee Co-Chairman, criticized Turkey for the time limitations over the TV programs. Asserting that the EU was pushing Turkey towards full recognition of the cultural rights of the Kurds, he mentioned that it was not possible to understand why certain limitations in Kurdish broadcastings were needed.[66] TV

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[60] This suspicion of the Turkish State has been a point of problem even in its relations with certain European countries. Denmark is an example for that. ROJ TV, which broadcasts from Denmark and which Turkey argues to be a mouthpiece of the PKK, creates problems between Turkey and Denmark. Turkey insistently pressures Denmark to close the TV channel, which sometimes causes tense relations.
[61] Hürriyet Daily News, *TRT begins airing Kurdish broadcasts*, June 10, 2004.
[62] Hürriyet Daily News, *Human Rights Watch: Turkey entering new era*, June 11, 2004.
[63] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurdish broadcasts to begin in January*, December 29, 2005.
[64] Hürriyet Daily News, *RTÜK approves Kurdish broadcasts*, March 9, 2006.
[65] Hürriyet Daily News, *RTÜK approves Kurdish broadcasts*, March 9, 2006.
[66] Hürriyet Daily News, *Lagendijk speaks tough against Turkey*, May 4, 2006.

stations also complained about this application. They said that they could not present forty-five minutes of news every day, and if they wanted to show a movie, then forty-five minutes fell short. After these complaints about the limits and the EU's criticism of the issue, the RTÜK decided to lift the limit for cultural shows. Yet it did not touch the limitations over the news and debate programs.[67]

With the initiative of the PM Erdoğan in 2008, the TRT opened a channel named TRT 6 which airs different programs in the Kurdish language 24 hours a day. However, it is not more than a cultural TV channel that is argued to be far away from fulfilling the needs of the Kurds for unrestricted performance of their cultural traits, including the use of their language. And the channel is still under state control. From this perspective, Turkey still seems to have a long way to go to meet the Copenhagen criteria.

The adventure of the Kurdish language courses and TV channels indicate that the EU approaches to the Kurdish question in Turkey from the point of cultural rights. Restriction over the Kurdish language was an important aspect of the Kurdish issue. Turkey took steps to overcome this problem under pressure from the EU. Turkey's steps were sometimes encouraged by the EU. Yet sometimes they faced harsh criticisms. This part of the chapter indicates that the EU was concerned with the cultural rights of the Kurds, a position that is better explained by Liberal theory. It was also a good example to show how the EU's liberal approach to the issue changed Turkey's attitudes towards the problem; and also how Turkish-EU relations were in turn influenced by Turkey's attitudes.

4. The Debates around the Law 5233

The Law for Compensating Damages Arising from Terror and War against Terror, shortly known as the Law 5233, is another case which deals with an important aspect of the Kurdish question in Turkey, and which shows that the EU approaches to the Kurdish question from the perspective of civic citizenship and citizenship rights, which are among the features of Liberalism. Thus, the EU

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[67] Hürriyet Daily News, *Limits on Kurdish movies and music lifted*, June 13, 2006.

considers the compensation of the Kurdish citizens' losses during the 1990s that were caused by the Turkish State's strategy to fight terrorism.

When the PKK's attacks against Turkey started to accelerate, the Turkish State found a solution for controlling the terror in declaring an emergency state in certain eastern and southeastern cities of Turkey in 1987. It is not among the aims of this study to examine the effectiveness of the emergency rule in coping with terror, yet the saying "bloody 90s" provides us with some clues. However, what is to our interest is that the emergency rule leaders, who were military staff, were granted an authority in their areas which was almost unchecked by any other power. The aim here was to allow them to be able to decide, act and respond to attacks quickly. Yet their authority caused serious undermining of human rights and citizenship rights in the region. For instance, the Kurds, who were accused of having relations with the PKK, faced serious physical and psychological torture in the prisons established by the emergency state. Another example in this case, which is the main issue of this part, was the decision to vacate certain villages and destroy them. The reason of this decision was the suspicion that these villages were used by the PKK as shelters and logistical bases. This decision was implemented by the army throughout the 1990s.

Emptying and destroying Kurdish villages resulted in serious problems. First, the living spaces of a huge number of people were taken from them. Second, since this measure was taken without any former social and economic preparations, it caused serious shortcomings for both the migrating people and the migrated areas. Third and most importantly, this process created a new category of people known as "forcibly displaced people" (FDP).[68] The FDP were forced to leave their villages, their livestock and everything they had; and to establish a new life in a place that they had not seen before. Inevitably, this process has caused serious physical and emotional damage.[69]

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[68] These people are also referred to as "internally displaced people" or IDP. Both usages seem to have political concerns. Since the case of these people includes the hands of the State, I prefer to use the term FDP rather than IDP to underline the measure taken and force used by the Turkish State.

[69] In late 2003, The New York Times released a story that mentioned FDP cases started to be heard in Turkish courts. It also included some displacement stories. See The New York Times, *Kurds Are Finally Heard: Turkey Burned Our Villages*, October 24, 2003. Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/24/world/kurds-are-finally-heard-turkey-burned-our-villages.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm

The Law 5233 was approved in the TBMM in July 2004 and came into force in October 2004, to compensate for the FDP's physical damages and help them to return their homes. There were two apparent reasons for this new law. One of them was the complaint made by the FDP to the European Court of Human Rights. The ECHR found the Turkish State guilty in these cases which amounted to negative points for Turkey in its human rights record. The other reason was that the ECHR was sentencing Turkey to pay a huge amount of compensation money to the applying FDP. This attitude of the EU forced Turkey to come up with a law that would compensate FDP's damages and allow them to return their homes.[70]

Nearly half a year after the Law 5233 went into force, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report concerning the issue on March 8, 2005.[71] This report examined the progress presented by Turkey to the EU in the implementation of the law. The report criticized Turkey on a number of issues. One criticism was in terms of the presented numbers of the displaced people and the returnees. According to the report, more than 3000 villages were destroyed and approximately 2 million people were displaced. However, Turkey claimed that this number was around 400,000.[72] The HRW did not find this number realistic. Another unrealistic number was that of the returnees: the report claimed that the figures presented by Turkey to the EU showing that nearly 125,000 Kurds returned to their homes were too high. The other point of criticism was in terms of application of the law. The HRW reported that Turkey had failed to ease the ways for the displaced Kurds to return. The State could not even provide electricity, telephone lines, and schools for the returnees.[73]

In addition to the HRW report, we receive further information from the statements of a Turkish NGO, Human Rights Association (İHD). The İHD was very much concerned with the progresses in the implementation of the Law 5233. Selahattin Demirtaş, the head of İHD's Diyarbakır office, stated that besides Turkish

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[70] For an evaluation of the implementation of this law, one can see the TESEV report prepared by Dilek Kurban and Mesut Yeğen, "Adaletin Kıyısında: Zorunlu Göç Sonrasında Devlet ve Kürtler / 5233 Sayılı Tazminat Yasasının Bir Değerlendirmesi-Van Örneği [On the Shore of Justice: The State and Kurds after the Forced Migration / An Evaluation of the Compensation Law 5233-The Case of Van]", published in 2012.
[71] The report was titled "Still Critical: Prospects in 2005 for Internally Displaced Kurds in Turkey."
[72] Still Critical: Prospects in 2005 for Internally Displaced Kurds in Turkey, pp. 13-15.
[73] Hürriyet Daily News, *Human Rights report criticizes Turkey over not doing enough for 1000s of displaced*, March 9, 2005.

government's inadequate and arbitrary support to the returnees, the village guards[74] had seized the farming lands and homes the Kurds had left behind.[75]

However, amid the criticisms against Turkey's implementations, it appeared that certain positive events also occurred. According to Metin Çorabatır, who was the spokesman for the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in Turkey, "[the] recent reforms coupled with Turkey's EU candidacy is making a visible positive impact in decreasing the number of people who seek asylum in Europe while increasing the number who want to return to their villages from big cities in Turkey."[76] In addition to this optimistic picture, Turkey also started a plan to speed up and facilitate the returns and accelerate the payment of compensation under pressure by the EU.[77] Yet one should note that in total, these optimistic figures do not possess much place.

The convictions of the ECHR against the Turkish State considering the FDPs in Turkey provides evidence that the EU approaches to the Kurdish question from "civic citizenship" and "citizenship rights" perspectives. The pressure coming from the EU and the ECHR forced Turkey to pass a law that organized the return of the displaced people to their homes and compensate their damages. Since these people are mostly Kurds, their displacement has become an intrinsic part of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Hence, EU's perception of the Kurdish question from the point of citizenship rights influenced Turkey's approach to the question in the same manner. In other words, the Law 5233 is another example that shows that Liberalism is a proper theory to explain EU-Turkey relations considering the Kurdish question.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed how Turkish-EU relations are affected by the Kurdish question in Turkey, how the EU approaches the question from a liberal perspective due to its liberal structure, and how Liberalism offers an explanation for

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[74] Village guard system was created by the Turkish State to cope with terror. Certain locals were armed by the State and used as paramilitary forces against the PKK. This system, which still continues, has been criticized since it causes certain power abuses among locals.

[75] Hürriyet Daily News, *Legacy of strife haunts Kurdish villagers in Turkey*, July 10, 2005.

[76] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey's displaced persons key for its social peace*, May 15, 2005.

[77] Hürriyet Daily News, *Legacy of strife haunts Kurdish villagers in Turkey*, July 10, 2005.

Turkish-EU relations as far as the Kurdish question is concerned. This chapter provided evidence for these arguments. Through the newspaper scan I conducted, I collected information about certain cases which were brought together under four titles, each focusing on a different aspect of the Kurdish question, to show that the EU approached the Kurdish question in Turkey from the perspectives of "human rights" and "justice", "freedom of expression" and "political freedom", "cultural freedom" and "freedom of language", and "citizenship rights" and "civic citizenship." These cases were the retrial of Öcalan, bans over Kurdish parties and politicians, the usage of the Kurdish language, and the debates around the Law 5233. Through examining these cases, this chapter provided evidence for our starting hypothesis which claimed that Turkey's relations with the EU, as far as the Kurdish question is concerned, are influenced by the liberal structure of the EU and the debates around the question are shaped around the liberal principles of human rights, freedom of expression, culture and language, citizenship rights, political freedom, and justice. Hence, it can be argued that EU-Turkey relations can be understood through using the glasses of Liberalism.

Chapter III: The Impact of the Kurdish Question on Turkey's Relations with its Middle Eastern Neighbors

Introduction

This chapter analyzes Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors via focusing on the Kurdish question. Three neighbors of Turkey were selected for this study, namely Iran, Syria, and Iraq, due to the fact that they contain large Kurdish populations within their borders. From this perspective, the Kurdish question plays a crucial role in Turkey's relations with these countries. By concentrating on certain cases, the ultimate aim of this chapter is to show that Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors, in regards to the Kurdish question, are shaped around the principles of security, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and balance of power, which include enforcement, threat, interference in domestic affairs, and military intervention. As well as their disputes, cooperation among these countries is also shaped around the security of their states, territorial integrity, and balance of power. These features suggest that Realism is the most explanatory theory in explaining these relations.

Part I: Turkish-Iranian Relations

The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations since the late 1800s

Iran is a country that has been experiencing a Kurdish problem similar to Turkey. Following WWI, as the Russian and Ottoman Empires were dissolving, Iran managed to avoid this fate. Bayat argues that this was an outcome of a continuous

historical tradition of state and a sense of national identity existing in Iran.[78] As soon as the world war came to an end, Iran's greatest concern appeared to be the suppression of armed local groups, Kurds being the most powerful among them. The repression of Simko Agha, who was a powerful Kurdish figure settled in Western Azerbaijan, happened in 1922.[79] The next targets were the groups in Southern and Central Kurdistan. Iran managed to control these groups one by one. The Kurdish nationalist movements in these early decades of the 20th century were not strong enough to challenge Iranian national identity. In addition, these insurrections remained mainly on a tribal base.[80]

In the meantime, Turkey was dealing with similar problems. In 1925, a major Kurdish uprising, the Sheikh Said rebellion, started in the city of Diyarbakır. The Turkish army suppressed this uprising heavy-handedly. In 1930, another insurrection occurred under the leadership of Ihsan Nouri Pasha, who was a military general of Iranian origin in the Ottoman army, in the mountainous Ağrı (Ararat) region. This uprising was a turning point in Turkish-Iranian relations. In the late 1920s, some Kurdish nationalists saw Iran as an ally against Arabs and Turks. There were two reasons for this: the similarity between the Kurdish and Persian languages and the pan-Iranist policies followed by Iran. Iran was under the assumption that it could bring together its different ethnic minorities under the umbrella of pan-Iranism. However, this assumption was seriously tested in the 1930 Ağrı rebellion in Turkey. During this rebellion, Turkey threatened Iran with bombing unless it stopped supporting the rebels. Realizing that bilateral relations with Turkey were approaching a dangerous point, Iran relinquished its support to the Kurds and allowed Turkey to pursue the rebels inside its borders in order to destroy them.[81]

Following the Ağrı Dağı (Ararat Mountain) rebellion, Iran and Turkey signed three important agreements. The Turko-Iran Frontier Treaty in 1932, with an addition in 1937, made adjustments in the Turkish-Iranian border to provide better control within the borders. The other two agreements, the Treaty of Conciliation, Judicial Settlement and Arbitration, and the Treaty of Friendship, both signed in 1932, aimed

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[78] Kaveh Bayat, *Iran and the "Kurdish question"*, Middle East Report, The Kurds and the Future, No. 247, Summer 2008, p. 29.
[79] After his defeat, Simko Agha found refuge in Turkey. Then he went to Iraq. In 1930, Iran managed to assassinate him.
[80] Bayat, *Iran and the "Kurdish question"*, p. 31.
[81] Ibid., p. 32.

to overcome similar Kurdish problems of both countries together. According to Olson, these three treaties "constituted the new bases of Iran's relations with Turkey."[82] Bayat opines that starting from the late 1880s Iran perceived the Kurdish uprisings and nationalist movements to be the ploys of external powers, especially those of Britain. This perception had two important results. One of them was that Iran ignored the grievances of Kurdish people within its boundaries. The other result was that it opted for agreements with external powers to solve this problem.[83] It appears that Turkey also found this solution necessary for its territorial integrity. The three agreements between Iran and Turkey in 1932, which were going to establish the basis of Turkish-Iranian relations until the early 1990s, were a reflection of this mentality in both countries.

In 1937, another Kurdish rebellion broke out in Dersim, which was to be the last major Kurdish insurrection in Turkey until the emergence of the PKK. The Turkish army also managed to suppress this uprising. The role of the Turkish air forces was crucial in this suppression due to the heavy bombardment of Dersim. This would silence the Kurdish nationalist movement for approximately half a century. However, the Iranian experience was different. In 1941, Russian and British forces entered Iran to put an end to Reza Shah's rule. Local groups, including the Kurds, gained power with the weapons of the dissolved Iranian army. In 1946, another important event for the Kurdish movement took place. With the initiative of the Soviets, a Kurdish republic was established within the borders of Iran.[84] The Republic of Mahabad, which was the first, the only, and the last independent Kurdish state, survived only one year.

The establishment of the Republic of Mahabad contributed to Kurdish ethnic identity and carried the Kurdish issue onto the international platform.[85] Yet it did not cause any drastic change in Turkish-Iranian relations.[86] It appears that until the Islamic revolution in 1979 in Iran, neither country provided support for the Kurds

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[82] Robert Olson, *The Kurdish question and Turkish-Iranian Relations: From World War I to 1998*, Mazda Publishers, 1998, p. 24.

[83] Bayat, *Iran and the "Kurdish question"*, p. 31.

[84] Vali disagrees with the idea that the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad solely based on the Soviets initiative. He argues that a Kurdish national identity worked behind the establishment process. See Abbas Vali, *Kurds and the State in Iran: The Making of Kurdish Identity*, I.B. Tauris, 2011.

[85] Kaveh Bayat, *The Ethnic Question in Iran*, Middle East Report, No. 237, Winter 2005, pp. 43-44.

[86] Olson, *The Kurdish question and Turkish-Iranian Relations*, p. 25.

within each other's borders. However, the power game between these two neighbors continued during this period. In the Kurdish region of Iraq, Turkey and Iran were competing to gain more power in the region through "playing with and against the … KDP and PUK."[87]

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed significant developments considering the Kurdish question in both countries. During the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988, in spite of pressure by the United States to take measures against Iran, Turkey remained neutral. Hence, the trade between the two countries was boosted. Meanwhile, Turkey was facing a new threat against its territorial integrity: the PKK started its attacks against the Turkish army in 1984. Amid these problems, a new dimension was added to the Kurdish question with Saddam Hussain's attacks against the Kurds in northern Iraq at the end of the decade. During the crackdown of the Kurdish uprising in 1991, hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees fleeing the wrath of Saddam, flooded the Turkish border. Besides failing to provide proper shelter for these refugees, Turkey was also suspicious that the PKK would make use of this turmoil to increase its attacks against Turkey. The humanitarian crisis in Iraq attracted international attention. To stop Saddam's attacks, the Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) was established in 1991. The mission of the OPC was to provide a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, protecting the Kurdish population from the possible attacks of Saddam.

In 1984, Turkey signed a hot pursuit agreement with Baghdad. This agreement allowed the Turkish Armed Forces to follow the PKK members into the borders of northern Iraq. When Turkey wanted to sign a similar agreement with Iran, Tehran rejected it.[88] However, Ankara and Tehran made a security agreement in which both countries promised to prevent activities against each other. What was meant here were activities by the PKK in Iran and those by the Mujahedeen-i Khalk in Turkey.[89]

Although Iran refused to sign a hot pursuit treaty, Turkey's agreement with Iraq disturbed Iran during the 1990s. In 1992, 1995, and 1997 Turkey launched three major attacks into northern Iraq. Iran remained silent in 1992. Yet the other two

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[87] Ibid., p. 27.
[88] Ibid., p. 31.
[89] Ibid., p. 31.

incursions faced strong criticism from Iran. Iran was uncomfortable with Turkey's cross-border operations since it was concerned that Turkey would increase its power in the oil producing regions of northern Iraq and even shift its southern border to seize the oil fields. However, it appears that Iran's fear of the Kurdish question was greater than its suspicions about Turkey. In 1993, Turkey, Iran, and Syria signed tripartite security agreements to prevent PKK activities in their borders. Although Iran criticized Turkey and stated that the 1995 incursion was a border violation, it still attended the following security meeting, declaring that Iran was against terrorism and the division of Iraq.[90]

The agreements between Iran and Turkey to overcome the Kurdish question were serving both countries' interests. Despite the fact that Turkey suspected that Iran covertly provided help for the PKK in Iraq, Iran, and Europe and even though Iran suspected that Turkey sheltered Mujahedeen-i Khalk in Iraq and Turkey, both countries continued a "plausible deniability" considering this issue.[91] Actually, there are a number of realpolitik reasons for Turkey-Iran cooperation against the Kurdish question in the Middle East. Firstly, if an independent Kurdish state existed in northern Iraq, it could stir the Kurds of both countries. Secondly, Iran feared that if it used the Kurdish card against Turkey, Turkey could use the Azeri card against Iran. Thirdly, geo-politic and geostrategic interests of both countries necessitated cooperation over the Kurdish question. Most importantly, the shares of oil and natural gas distribution required agreement. These reasons explain the cooperation of Iran and Turkey to keep the Kurds within their borders under control.

As one last word, it is important to note that although both countries followed realpolitik measures to keep their Kurds away from any possible unrest that could lead to segregation; they also carried out certain reforms for their Kurdish population. As it was the case in Turkey with its EU accession process, Iran also lifted certain limitations over its Kurds during the Khatami period. During this period, Kurds could make publications in their native language, which contributed to the Kurdish national identity in Iran.[92] However, reforms in both countries do not influence the two countries' relations as much as the concern to maintain order does.

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[90] Ibid., p. 44.
[91] Ibid., p. 27.
[92] Bayat, *Iran and the "Kurdish question"*, pp. 34-35.

In the next section, I will deal with how these concerns were shaped in the last decade and how Realism appears to be the theory that best explains Turkish-Iranian relations considering the Kurdish question.

The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Iranian Relations since 2002

This section analyzes Iran-Turkey relations in regards to the Kurdish question and tries to show how these relations are shaped by realpolitik concerns such as territorial integrity, security of the state, balance of power, and maintaining status quo. Thus Realism is the best theory which offers an explanation for these relations.

The relations between Turkey and Iran evolved into a different path in the last decade compared to the 1980s and 1990s. Those years were marked by tension and disagreement between the two countries, mainly due to Turkey's accusations that Iran supported radical Islamism in Turkey and the PKK in Iran and Iraq. However, the last decade witnessed a considerable improvement in the relations between the two. One very significant reason for this change was the US-led war in Iraq, which awakened realpolitik concerns of both Turkey and Iran.

The US-led war against the Saddam regime was different from the one in 1991. At that time Turkey and Iran were not so much concerned about the US intervention. However, as mentioned above, after the 1991 war, a no-fly zone was established in northern Iraq, where the Kurds lived. This protected zone proved an opportunity for the Kurds to create a *de facto* autonomous region. Hence, when George W. Bush expressed his intention of overthrowing the Saddam regime, both Turkey and Iran raised serious concerns about the possibility of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. The concerns of these two countries were mainly based on three "dangers": a) an independent Kurdish state would lead to unrest among the Kurdish populations within their borders; b) this unrest would lead to an escalation in terrorist attacks; and c) this would eventually lead to disintegration of the Kurds from Turkey and Iran, and to be subsequently integrated into a newly-founded Kurdish state. These realpolitik concerns imply that Turkish-Iranian relations in the last decade were shaped around the principles of territorial integrity, security, and maintenance of balance of power and the status quo. Recall from the

first chapter that Realism argues that international arena is defined by power struggles and the nation states as the main actors try to keep the power balance to provide their security and territorial integrity. In this sense, the features of Turkish-Iranian relations, as will be discussed in detail below, contribute to our thesis that Realism offers an explanation for these relations as far as the Kurdish question is concerned.

The Kurdish Unrest in Iran and Turkey

One of the greatest fears in the Middle East was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, which would result in unrest among Kurdish populations in both Turkey and Iran to gain broader rights and even to separate. These concerns were made explicit from the very beginning of a possible US attack against Iraq to topple the Saddam regime, which would pave the way to turn an already *de facto* Kurdish state into an independent entity. After the US entered Iraq, common statements from Iran and Turkey increased. When the then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül visited Iran in 2004 to offer his condolences for an earthquake in Iran, Iranian president Khatami stated "the security of the Turkish State is also the security of our own. Like Turkey, we also do not want a Kurdish state in northern Iraq."[93] Similar emphasis was placed on the avoidance of the disintegration of Iraq to prevent separatism and instability in the region.

Turkish and Iranian concerns about the spread of unrest and nationalist movements among their Kurdish populations soon proved to be valid. Certain events occurred in both countries that reflected Kurdish unrest. Although the authorities in northern Iraq had long tried to assure the leaders of Iran and Turkey that they had no ambition to create a separate and independent Kurdish state, these events caused more suspicion in Turkey and Iran. In March 2004, Iraq signed an interim constitution that declared Kurdish as an official language and recognized the Kurdish authority. After this declaration, Iranian Kurds assembled to celebrate this event. However, the celebrations turned violent and clashes with police forces occurred.

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[93] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran reassures Turkey on border security*, January 12, 2004.

This event contributed to Iran's fears about its Kurdish population's nationalist ambitions.[94]

A similar event occurred in Turkey, though not violent, one year later in Newroz (New Year in Kurdish) celebrations in the city of Diyarbakır. A day organized by the DEHAP brought famous Kurdish politicians together. The rally was an expression of Kurdish nationalism. During the celebration, attendants used pro-Öcalan slogans and carried flags symbolizing Democratic Confederalism, which is an idea that aims to bring all Kurds in the Middle East, i.e. in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria together under the roof a single state.[95] These ideas presented in the rally showed that Turkey was justified in its suspicions that a Kurdish state in northern Iraq would ignite nationalism and separatist ideas within its borders.

The events that increased Iran's concerns continued with the election of Massoud Barzani as the first president of Iraqi Kurdistan. Following the election, it was reported that "hundreds of Iranian Kurds clashed violently with police" in the town of Mahabad.[96] One may recall that Mahabad was the city that hosted the only independent Kurdish state in world history. It is still dominated by the Kurdish population in Iran and seen as a traditional center of Kurdish nationalism. These events showed that Turkey's and Iran's fears of spreading unrest and nationalism among their Kurds appeared to come true, which was caused by the success of the Kurds in northern Iraq to establish an autonomous Kurdish entity.

Escalating Terror and Concerns about the Security of the State

Another common realpolitik concern of Iran and Turkey regarding their Kurdish populations was that a successful Kurdish state in Iraq and the unrest among their Kurds would increase separatist terrorism within their borders. After 2004, terrorist attacks in both Iran and Turkey increased. What is to our interest is that both countries were alerted from the perspective of security of the state and territorial integrity and became closer to each other as a result of this realpolitik concern, which

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[94] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurdish unrest stirs old regional fears*, March 21, 2004. An Iranian analyst argued that the unrest also included the response against "the banning of reformists in last month's Iranian election as well as joy at the constitutional gains by their fellow Kurds in Iraq."
[95] Hürriyet Daily News, *Nevroz celebrated with enthusiasm in Diyarbakır*, March 22, 2005.
[96] Hürriyet Daily News, *Riot erupts in Iranian hotbed of Kurdish nationalism*, June 16, 2005.

provides further evidence that Turkish-Iranian relations concerning the Kurdish question can be explained through Realism.

The years following 2005 have witnessed a number of clashes between Iranian security forces and a Kurdish group named as PJAK (The Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), which is the Iranian wing of the PKK. In August 2005, in two separate clashes between the PJAK and the Iranian police force in the towns of Urmia and Oshnavieh, seven policemen were killed by the PJAK members. Following these clashes, the unrest spread to the Kurdish town of Saqqez. Two people died and 145 were arrested in a rally in which protesters damaged state buildings and banks.[97] It was the same week when another police officer and several Kurds died in an attempt by the Iranian police to save three hostages held by the PJAK. After this event, it was reported that the hostages were released.[98]

Another clash occurred between Iranian border guards and PJAK members in November 2005, in which one militant was killed and the other was captured. At that time, it was reported that during the clashes in the last months, at least 120 Iranian policemen were killed.[99] The violence continued. In February 2006, several demonstrators among the ones who were protesting the PKK leader Öcalan's imprisonment on the anniversary of his capture were also killed.[100] In March 2006, three members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards were killed by the PJAK.[101] The next month, Iranian police arrested seven members of the PJAK.[102]

Iran's fight against the Iranian wing of the PKK, the PJAK, did not remain limited to the borders of Iran. In April 2006, Iran launched two missile attacks within a week into northern Iraq and bombed the shelters of the PKK that were close to the Iranian border.[103] This was followed by another attack in August, in which both the Turkish and Iranian armies opened artillery fire on the PKK camps in Hakurk, an

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[97] Hürriyet Daily News, *Washington urges Tehran to respect Kurds' rights*, August 10, 2005. Also see: New York Times, *Unrest in Iran's Kurdish Region Has Left 17 Dead; Hundreds Have Been Wounded*, August 14, 2005. Available at:
http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30E15F63E5A0C778DDDA10894DD404482
[98] Hürriyet Daily News, *PKK violence mounts in Iran, Syria*, August 17, 2005.
[99] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran police kill PKK-linked Kurd in clashes*, November 14, 2005.
[100] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iranian police clash with PKK supporters*, February 20, 2006.
[101] Hürriyet Daily News, *Diplomacy Newsline*, March 31, 2006.
[102] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran arrests seven members of PKK-linked group*, April 11, 2006.
[103] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran launches missile attack on PKK-linked group in Iraq*, April 22, 2006 and *Iran launches second attack on PKK in one week*, April 28, 2006.

area which stands on the intersection of the Turkish, Iranian, and Iraqi borders.[104] Although both the Turkish and Iranian sides refused to state it was a cooperative attack, it was reported that both armies opened fire simultaneously. In March 2007, Iran was still threatening Iraq that it would pursue the members of PJAK into northern Iraq if Iraq failed to expel them from border zones.[105]

Iran's fight against the Kurds was not limited to the physical level. In May 2006, Iran became concerned about a couple of new TV stations broadcasting from Sweden, namely Komela TV and Rojhelat TV, which were set up by Iranian communists and the KDPI (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran).[106] Iran accused these TV channels of making separatist propaganda against Iran. In a similar case, Iran had been successful through diplomatic efforts to prevent the broadcasts of TISK TV, which wanted to be the voice of KDPI's military wing. However, this time the Iranian government prepared a bill that brought penalties for anyone who watches these two channels. It was also reported that Iranian officials had already started to collect satellite antennas and implement fines in many cities including Mahabad. In addition, the Iranian government also raised concerns about Roj TV, which was a channel that Turkey argued to be a mouthpiece of the PKK. These attempts indicated that Iran also fought against the Kurds at the cultural level.

Iran's fight against the PKK and its Iranian wing, the PJAK, and the agreement between Iran and Turkey to provide border security through mutual operations was an indication of how realpolitik concerns such as territorial integrity and the security of the state brought these two states closer.[107] It is again Realism that provides the meaning for this closeness to overcome the Kurdish question after decades-long disagreement and mutual accusations between Iran and Turkey. The cooperative stance of both countries towards the issue marked a turning point in Turkish-Iranian relations. In the past decades both Turkey and Iran accused each other of providing support for the PKK and Mujahedeen-i Khalk respectively. However, we see that in January 2004, Mohammad Khatami, then Iran's president, assured Abdullah Gül that "there would be no security threat against Turkey arising

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[104] Hürriyet Daily News, *Report: Turkey, Iran open fire on PKK camps in Iraq*, August 14, 2006.
[105] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran threatens to pursue Pejak inside Iraq*, March 1, 2007.
[106] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran seeks ban on pro-PKK satellite broadcasts*, May 12, 2006.
[107] As Iran was fighting against the PKK, Turkey promised to act against the Mujahedeen-i Khalk, which is an organization against the Iranian government.

from Iranian territory."[108] This statement implied the end of Iran's implicit backing of the PKK, which created tension between Iran and Turkey in the past decades; and the start of an explicit fight against it. The news in July 2004 marked this starting point.[109] In August 2005, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi, referring to the fight against the PKK, said "Turkey and Iran are cooperating to protect their borders and ensure security."[110] This cooperation between the two countries became even stronger in early 2007, according to an analyst, when US reluctance to fight the PKK in northern Iraq pushed Turkey closer to Iran for its own security and integrity.[111] When Iranian President Ahmedinejad paid a visit to Turkey in late 2007, the fight against the PKK and the PJAK was on the agenda.[112]

The apparent cooperation and closeness between Iran and Turkey against the Kurdish threat stemming from the establishment of a Kurdish entity in northern Iraq, which was a realpolitik concern threatening the territorial integrity and security of the two states through igniting nationalism and separatism, show how the relations between Iran and Turkey considering the Kurdish question gained meaning through the lens of Realism. Besides this cooperation, Realism also offers an explanation for the conflict of these two powers in northern Iraq in the sense that their support for two main Kurdish powers in northern Iraq, the KDP and PUK, resulted in a balance of Turkish and Iranian powers in the region; and "balance of power" is an important feature of Realism to explain international relations. Although Iran and Turkey were brought closer with the aim of securing their states and borders against the Kurdish threat, their conflict remained in northern Iraq. Both countries respected their areas of influence in northern Iraq and did not allow the other to take any measure to ruin the balance of power. Both the cooperation between Iran and Turkey and their efforts to maintain a balance of power in northern Iraq concerning the Kurdish question can be explained through Realism.

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[108] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran reassures Turkey on border security*, January 12, 2004.
[109] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkish Press Scanner*, July 9, 2004 and *Turkish Press Scanner*, July 10, 2004.
[110] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iran vows to continue anti-PKK cooperation with Turkey*, August 15, 2005.
[111] This idea was mentioned by Ömer Taşpınar from the Brookings Institution in Washington. See Hürriyet Daily News, *'Fight against PKK unites Turkey, Iran'*, February 5, 2007. Also see: The New York Times, *Turkey and Iran Unite to Attack Kurdish Rebels*, June 6, 2008. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/06/world/europe/06kurdish.html
[112] Hürriyet Daily News, *Ahmadinejad seeks to improve Iran image with Ankara visit*, December 11, 2007.

To sum up, this part aimed to show that Turkish-Iranian relations concerning the Kurdish question gained meaning through the glasses of Realism, which argues that international relations are shaped around security of the nation states, their territorial integrity, and the maintenance of the balance of power. In our case, the emergence of a Kurdish government in northern Iraq created fears in both countries. These fears were realpolitik concerns that assumed that a Kurdish state in northern Iraq would cause unrest among the Kurdish populations in both Turkey and Iran, an increase in terrorism, and might eventually lead to separation. Hence, Turkey and Iran sought ways to cooperate against their Kurdish questions to prevent these "dangers." Their cooperation was shaped around the principles of territorial integrity, the security of the state and balance of power. From this perspective, their relations concerning the Kurdish question are shaped around Realist traits and can be explained through Realism.

Part II: Turkish-Syrian Relations

The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Syrian Relations in the 20th Century

It is not possible to understand the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-Syrian relations without considering two serious problems between the two neighbors: the Hatay (Alexandretta) problem and the water dispute. It appears that after the rise of the PKK, Syria used the PKK as leverage to put pressure on Turkey to force the country to come to terms with certain subjects. Turkey responded in the same manner. Hence, tension, threatening, and enforcement have never stopped between these two neighbors. Here, I will show what these two problems meant and what kind of a role the Kurdish question played.

The Treaty of Sevres, which marked the end of the WWI, promised a Kurdish state in the Middle East if the Kurds could prove to the allied powers their ability and will to govern themselves. However, the struggle of the new Turkish movement which led to the Treaty of Lausanne changed this situation. The new treaty did not

even mention the possibility of a Kurdish state.[113] Instead, the Kurds were spread around four different states: Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

It is argued that Syria, under a French mandate, tended to use the Kurdish question in Turkey to weaken its neighbor in the early years of the Republic; as it did in the 1990s through providing shelter for the PKK.[114] Syria provided shelter for the Khoybun group in the 1920s, which was based in Damascus. It is known that this Kurdish group helped the insurgents in Turkey during the Ağrı rebellion in 1930. However, after international agreements and pressures, France gave up its support to this group.[115]

The Treaty of Lausanne postponed the situation of Alexandretta (known as Hatay today) to a later date to be arranged in bilateral discussions between Turkey and Syria under the French mandate. In 1939, a plebiscite was held in Alexandretta that resulted in approval for integration into Turkey. However, Syria declared this plebiscite as unacceptable, because Turkey, it argued, expelled the inhabitants of the city and moved its citizens there. Hence, Syrians perceived this city as their own land that was annexed by Turkey with the help of the French. They continued to depict the city as being within their borders on Syrian maps. This situation continued until 2005, when President Beshar al-Assad gave up the territorial claim. Until then, this problem negatively affected the relations between Turkey and Syria.

As mentioned earlier, the Kurds in Turkey seemed to be silent after 1939 until the emergence of the PKK in the late 1970s. This date also marked new problem between Turkey and Syria: the water dispute. The dispute between the two countries concerning the water coming from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers was not new. However, in the early 1980s, this problem gained a new shape. Until the 1980s, Turkey was using these rivers for the production of electricity. Yet after 1980, the already existing project of GAP (South Eastern Anatolia Project) was transformed into a regional development program. This project planned to build a number of dams on these two rivers in order to provide both electricity and more land for

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[113] Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Turco-Syrian Frontier and the Kurds*, Bulletin of International News, Vol. 5, No. 10, 1928, pp. 3-6.
[114] Robert Olson, *The Kurdish question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War: Geopolitical and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle* East, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1992, pp. 483-484.
[115] Ibid., p. 484.

agriculture in southeastern Anatolia. This meant that less water would flow into Syria. This concern occupied the next two decades in the relations between Syria and Turkey. [116]

One should note that the GAP project was much more than a water dispute for both Turkey and Syria. In Turkey, it became a "national project" which would provide regional development and prosperity, as well as national unity and solidarity. The idea of regional development was also deriving from the rising attacks of the PKK. Through increasing wealth, prosperity, and the living standards of the people in the region, the support for terror would decrease. In this respect, the GAP project also became a political issue, which was used and also supported by all political parties during election rallies. The completion of this project was seen as instrumental for the economic development of the southeastern Anatolian region and thus for preventing terrorism.

Meanwhile, the GAP project can also be regarded as a power game between Turkey and Syria. Syria was planning to use the water of Tigris and Euphrates to increase irrigable lands to improve agriculture. However, according to Syria, Turkey was limiting the water as the upper stream country, claiming sovereignty over the waters of both rivers. Syria opposed this and claimed that those rivers were international waters and it had to receive its share. In this manner, Syria and Iraq (which was also suffering from the same problem) came together and managed to convince the Arab League to warn Turkey about this issue. The control over the waters, hence, was to become an international power game between Syria and Turkey in the following two decades.[117]

The physical attacks of the PKK against the Turkish army started at a time when Syria was left alone in front of Turkey in the above-mentioned power game. The Iraq-Iran war between 1980 and 1988 threw Iraq out of the game.[118] Syria started to seek new ways to gain power; and PKK's emergence helped. Syria supported Abdullah Öcalan and sheltered members of the PKK within its borders and in the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon under its occupation. Syria's support created serious

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[116] Ali Çarkoğlu and Mine Eder, *Domestic Concerns and the Water Conflict over the Euphrates-Tigris River Basin*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2001, p. 41.
[117] Ibid., pp. 58-59.
[118] Ibid., p. 59.

tension with Turkey; however Syria continued its support to weaken Turkey in the region and to force it to come to terms with Syria.[119] In 1989 and 1992, certain agreements were made between the two countries. These agreements were concerning the water flow to Syria and the border security between two countries. On these dates, Turkey promised to increase the flowing water to Syria and Syria promised that it would not support the PKK anymore. Yet it appears that these agreements were not so successful because Turkey continued to blame Syria for providing shelter for the PKK during the 1990s.

1998 was a turning point in Turkish-Syrian relations. In a period when the clashes between the PKK and the Turkish army reached its peak, Turkey seriously threatened Syria with war unless the latter stopped its support for the PKK and expelled Öcalan. In the face of a war with Turkey, Syria chose to reconcile.[120] It expelled Öcalan and Turkey captured him the following year, and thereafter Turkish-Syrian relations began to improve. In 2000 and 2001 new agreements concerning the water flow, border security, and trade were made, and the new president of the state, Beshar al-Assad, gave hope for further improvement in the relations.

The history of Turkish-Syrian relations until 2000 is full of tension, threats, and enforcement, all of which suggest that Realism is a valid theory in explaining these relations. It is also possible to evaluate the place of the Kurdish question in Turkish-Syrian relations from the same perspective. Until 2000, Syria used the PKK as a tool to weaken Turkey and force it to reply to Syria's demands, especially considering the water dispute. However, the relations have undergone a change with the beginning of 21st century. The description of this change and the impact of the Kurdish question on the relations between Turkey and Syria are the topics of the next section.

The Kurdish Question and Turkish-Syrian Relations after 2002

In the previous section, it was mentioned that Syria used the Kurdish question as a lever against Turkey to force it to comply with its demands concerning the water

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[119] Olson, *The Kurdish question in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, p. 477.
[120] Çarkoğlu and Eder, *Domestic Concerns and the Water Conflict*, p. 68.

dispute and territorial problems. This predicament was a good example to show that the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey-Syria relations can be explained by Realism, because Realist theory asserts that the international arena is defined by anarchy, that is, nation states struggle in a power game to gain the upper hand to protect their interests and the security of their states and territories against others. After 2000, the Kurdish question continued to be a lever in the relations between Turkey and Syria, yet this time to improve the bilateral relations. As well as the disputes, the rapprochement between the two countries gained meaning through Realism, because the relations are still shaped around security, territorial integrity, and balance of power. This section aims to elaborate on this idea.

Similar to Iran, Syria was also very much concerned about the US attack on Iraq, in the sense that a decade-long *de facto* autonomy of the Kurds and a possible Kurdish state in northern Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein would ignite nationalism among its Kurds and lead to attempts for secessionism. As it will be put in detail below, the events after 2002 showed that Syria was valid in its concerns. Hence, to provide border security and territorial integrity, and to further improve the political and economic ties with Turkey, it appears that Syria used the Kurdish question (especially through fighting the PKK) as a tool to stand closer to Turkey.

The Kurdish Unrest in Syria

The situation of the Kurds in Syria has been more or less similar to that of their counterparts in Turkey. They have been living in a country that refused to recognize them as an ethnic minority and treated them as Syrians, banning their basic rights such as education and publication in Kurdish. Actually, it can be argued that the Kurds in Syria are in a worse situation compared to the ones in Turkey. Today, it is estimated that there are 1.5 to 2 million Kurds living in Syria, approximately 200,000 of whom are denied Syrian nationality; hence they live with a red identity card which shows that they are foreigners. They cannot vote, own property, go to state schools, or work for the government. In addition, there are another estimated 100,000 Kurds who are not recognized at all, and are called the "maktoumeen", a word meaning "hidden" or "concealed" in Arabic. These Kurds cannot even go to hospitals or get married. These Kurds, most of whom are settled in the poor northern provinces of Hasakah and Qamishli, maintain a low-standard of life in Syria.

Although it was not likely that one would witness any rioting among the Kurds in Syria living under the strict Bashar regime, Kurdish unrest after 2002 was no surprise due to their predicament in Syria. It was late 2002 when some Syrian Kurds started to mention their demands for basic rights.[121] An example case was in December 2002, when the leaders of the Yikiti Kurdish Party, Hasan Saleh and Marwan Osman, organized a demonstration attended by approximately a hundred Kurds demanding full citizenship and equal rights. One month later, the Syrian Security Court[122] tried these two Kurdish leaders for "fomenting sectarian issues".[123]

Things started to get out of control when certain Arab and Kurdish groups became involved in a conflict on the 12th of March 2004, after a soccer game played in the town of Qamishli. In the riots that continued for two days following the conflict, it was reported that at least 15 people were killed.[124] After these riots, during which the angry crowds burned vehicles and damaged buildings, schools remained closed for a few days due to the fear of renewed clashes in the city.[125] After a couple of days, the clashes spread to Aleppo, the country's second largest city. On March 18, Syrian security forces fought with a Kurdish rioting group, which reportedly caused the deaths of at least five Kurds and three policemen.[126] Following this clash, the problem became more complicated when some Syrian Kurds opened fire on the homes of the police officers in northeastern Syria.[127] During these riots, although the slogans of the protesters and the banners carried were calling for more rights for the Kurds of Syria, Syrian officials strictly denied that the demonstrations reflected ethnic conflict; instead, they were political games of external powers. For instance, in a statement he made, the Vice President Abdel-Halim Khaddam said, "Syria's national unity would not be breached by the riots", and he accused "unspecified

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[121] Hürriyet Daily News, *With an eye on their Iraqi brothers, Syria's Kurds speak out about their suffering and hopes*, November 2, 2002.
[122] Syrian Security Court was established by the emergency rule in 1963. Besides the continuance of the state of emergency in Syria since then, what is striking is that the decisions of the court cannot be appealed.
[123] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syria to try party leaders over Kurdish protest*, February 11, 2003.
[124] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurdish riots in Syria die down after stern warnings*, March 15, 2004. Also see: The New York Times, *Kurdish Unrest Spreads in Syria; Up to 15 Dead, Scores Wounded*, March 14, 2004. Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/14/world/kurdish-unrest-spreads-in-syria-up-to-15-dead-scores-wounded.html?pagewanted=2&gwh=129783735774A520DB5D9073B389CF80
[125] Hürriyet Daily News, *Life easing back to normal in north Syria*, March 16, 2004.
[126] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurds battle Syrian police*, March 18, 2004.
[127] Hürriyet Daily News, *Tension in Syria rages on*, March 19, 2004.

foreigners" of "trying to benefit from these incidents."[128] However, this idea was denied by certain Kurds. A Kurdish tribal leader, Ibrahim Darwish, implied that they "only want the good of [their] country" and that they could not be accused of "dealing with outsiders."[129] In the following days, the physical tension died down, leaving a number of dead, wounded, and detained behind.

These events provided evidence for the Syrian regime that it was right in its concerns. The Kurdish success in northern Iraq had caused unrest among its Kurdish population. However, the Syrian government did not choose to improve the condition of the Kurds. Instead, the events evolved into clashes between the Kurdish groups and Syrian police forces. Syria, fearing an escalation of the movements and secessionism, opted for improvement of ties with Turkey to maintain its security and territorial integrity. From this perspective, Syria's cooperation with Turkey to crackdown on the PKK was a crucial move.

Turkish-Syrian Cooperation against the PKK

A shift in tense relations between Turkey and Syria was signaled when Hafez al-Assad accepted to reconcile with Turkey and to expel the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan. After Hafez died and his son, Bashar, took his post, hopes were increased to establish warmer relations between Syria and Turkey. Certain security agreements were made between the two countries in 1998, 2000, and 2001. In these agreements Syria pledged to stop its support for the PKK. With the start of the US-led Iraqi war, Syria's fear of its own Kurds to foment unrest and secessionism increased, and an effective cooperation with Turkey against the PKK took place as of 2003. This was a strategic step by Syria to improve ties with Turkey. The next step is to show how this cooperation occurred.

The cooperation of Syria with Turkey against any kind of terrorism including the PKK, took place in two ways: extradition and judgment. In March 2003, two leading figures of the PKK in Syria and Lebanon, namely Selahattin Canavar and Hayri Kaner respectively, were captured and handed over to Turkey.[130] It was

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[128] Hürriyet Daily News, *Tension in Syria rages on*, March 19, 2004.
[129] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurdish leader: 'Mistakes should not be corrected by mistakes'*, March 22, 2004.
[130] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkish Press Scanner*, March 19, 2003.

reported that with these two, the number of high-ranking PKK members delivered to Turkey increased to seven. After the bomb attacks in Istanbul in 2003, Syria captured and handed over to Turkey 22 suspects linked to the Al-Qaeda organization in a short period of time.[131] This willingness of Syria was evaluated as a positive step for the rapprochement of the two countries. As a show of gratitude, Turkey even planned to dispatch a six-member parliamentary delegation to Syria.

Shortly thereafter, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad paid a historic visit to Turkey on the 6th of January 2004. This marked a crucial point in the history of Turkish-Syrian relations with Assad being the first president of Syria to visit Turkey.[132] Before he began his visit, Bashar stated that Turkey and Syria had serious problems in the past due to Syria's relations with the PKK, but "now, there [were] no PKK activities or presence of any sort in Syria."[133] He also mentioned that for him, there was no water problem between Syria and Turkey. In addition, he emphasized his country's red lines about Iraq. He asserted that the disintegration of Iraq was not acceptable, underlining that Syria would have "serious concerns over any separatist movement by the Kurds or other groups in the country."[134] These statements he made before his arrival in Turkey and his red lines were very similar to Turkey's and were reflections of the spectacular rapprochement of two countries. During Bashar's visit, another significant agreement was signed which brought the two countries even closer. Bashar signed an agreement about turning Hatay, the subject of a long-lasting dispute between the two countries into a border trade center. This important signature was perceived as a sign of the elimination of the Hatay problem.[135] As a result, his historic visit to Turkey was assessed as "burial of the old enmity" and "opening of a new era" in Turkish-Syrian relations.[136]

After Bashar al-Assad's visit to Turkey, a series of trials and imprisonments began in Syria. In December 2004, a Syrian court sentenced a Syrian citizen of Kurdish origin belonging to the PKK to four years of imprisonment on the conviction

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[131] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syrian cooperation hailed*, December 3, 2003.
[132] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syrian president starts historic visit today*, January 6, 2004. Also see: The New York Times, *World Briefing/Middle East: Syrian President in First Visit To Turkey*, January 7, 2004. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/07/world/world-briefing-middle-east-syrian-president-in-first-visit-to-turkey.html?gwh=8987AEC85D898FA54BA7369421E37DB8
[133] Hürriyet Daily News, *New perspectives in ties*, January 5, 2004.
[134] Hürriyet Daily News, *New perspectives in ties*, January 5, 2004.
[135] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkish Press Scanner*, January 9, 2004.
[136] Hürriyet Daily News, *Assad's visit buries old enmity, opens new era*, January 11, 2004.

of "sedition and harming relations with a friendly country."[137] The "friendly country" was an apparent reference to Turkey. The importance of this imprisonment was that it was the first example of its kind. In a short period of time, others followed. In May 2005, the Syrian State Security Court sentenced three members of the PKK, Rashad Sheikhi, Abdou al-Amir, and Azad Ahmad, to two and a half years of imprisonment. A Syrian lawyer and human rights activist, Anwar Bunni, stated "this [sentence] came because of rapprochement between Syria and Turkey."[138]

On the 21st of July 2005, the Interior Minister of Syria Ghazi Kanaan implied that Syria was "working together with Turkey to fight the terrorist group (the PKK)."[139] Although he did not elaborate on how his country was cooperating with Turkey, it seems that it was apparent as the next imprisonment of four Kurds with the conviction of belonging to the PKK came only five days after his statement. Syrian State Security Court sentenced Zakaria Rasheed, Hussein Kanbar, Mahammed Hassan Abdul-Rahman, and Mohamed Ma'amou to two and a half years imprisonment.[140] In the following month, the same court sentenced another three Kurds, namely Mustapha Khalil, Abdul-Karim Allo, and Mohammad Nouman to 30 months in jail.[141] In February 2006, an additional three Kurds faced imprisonment for the same conviction.[142]

Transforming Relations after Public Riots in Syria

It is crucial here to address the change in relations between Syria and Turkey after the emergence of public riots against the al-Assad regime, which is perceived as a part of what is called the "Arab Spring" in certain Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunis, and Libya. In March 2011, clashes began between the Syrian regime and dissidents, which then turned into a fight between the Syrian army and opposition forces throughout the country. Turkey's stance on these clashes has been a cautious one. At first, Turkey sought a way to soften the al-Assad regime and attempt certain reforms to establish a democracy and meet public demands. However, as the fight became tougher and turned into bloodshed in Syria, Turkey decided to oppose the

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[137] Hürriyet Daily News, *Shorts Diplomacy II*, December 28, 2004.
[138] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syrian court jails three Kurds for separatism*, May 23, 2005.
[139] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syria says cooperating with Turkey against PKK*, July 21, 2005.
[140] Hürriyet Daily News, *Diplomacy Newsline*, July 26, 2005.
[141] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syria jails three members of Kurdish party*, August 29, 2005.
[142] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syrian court jails three Kurds for belonging to PKK*, February 14, 2006.

regime. Hence, the improving relations of the last decade have been turned upside down. As this dissertation is being written, the turmoil is still continuing in Syria. This is not the place to discuss an unfinished fight and its possible effects; however, what is to our interest here is that there is reason to believe that Syria has again started to play the Kurdish card against Turkey as punishment for its opposition. It is argued that Bashar al-Assad has been clearing the way for the PYD (Democratic Union Party), which is seen as a PKK affiliate, to organize in northern Syria in order to pose a threat against Turkey's fight with the PKK.[143] It was reported that the PYD has been acting together with the Syrian regime to suppress the opposition groups in Syria.[144] Mohammad Bassam Imadi, who is an opposition figure, argued that the allowance of Salih Muslim Muhammed (the leader of the PYD since 2010 who was not allowed to enter Syria before) to enter Syria was a clear sign of this cooperation.[145] This move can also be evaluated as a threatening message from Syria to Turkey. These events prove that Syria is again using the Kurdish card against Turkey to compel Turkey to act with caution towards the Syrian regime.

The cases mentioned in this section show that as Syria's fears of unrest among its Kurdish population inspired by the Kurdish success in northern Iraq began to be realized, it opted to improve its ties with Turkey to prevent any possible Kurdish secessionist movement. In this context, Syria's cooperation with Turkey to crackdown on the PKK appeared to be a proper move for further rapprochement. The Kurdish card was a lever used by Syria against Turkey for enforcement throughout the 1990s. Since the inception of the war in Iraq, Syria used it again as a lever, yet this time to move closer to Turkey. The reason was with the beginning of the war in Iraq, Syria felt a threat against the security of its state and its territorial integrity. Yet after the emergence of public revolts against the Syrian regime, Syria again started to use the Kurdish card as a tool to punish Turkey's opposition to its policies. Hence, it is possible to argue that the evolution of the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-Syrian relations in the last two decades provides further evidence for our thesis that Realism is a valid theory in explaining the relations between the two countries, and that these relations are shaped around Realist traits as far as the Kurdish question is concerned.

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[143] Hürriyet Daily News, *Assad to play Kurdish card against Turkey, report says*, November 9, 2011.
[144] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syria regime 'using' PKK, dissident says*, January 26, 2012.
[145] Hürriyet Daily News, *Syria regime 'using' PKK, dissident says*, January 26, 2012.

Part III: Turkish-Iraqi Relations

A Brief History of the Kurds in Northern Iraq

The history of the Kurds living in today's northern Iraq reserves an exclusive place in Kurdish studies, because the Kurds constitute the largest percentage in Iraq compared to other countries containing Kurdish populations.[146] After the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, when the Allied Powers decided on how to partition the Ottoman Empire, Britain established a Hashemite monarchy in Iraq without taking the demographic structure of the land into consideration. The British forces opted to control the land by providing the traditional minority Sunni powers with certain authority in Iraq. In the 1920s, Britain also invited Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji, who was a powerful Kurdish figure, to become the governor of Mosul. However, Barzinji, who saw himself as the king of Kurdistan, revolted against Britain. Hence, Britain suppressed his movement.[147]

In 1932, Britain granted independence to Iraq under King Faisal.[148] Yet it also retained its military bases in Iraq. In 1941, a military coup occurred in Iraq. Fearing that its oil supplies would be cut, Britain intervened. The Anglo-Iraqi war lasted one month. After the war, Britain restored the Hashemite government and occupied Iraq. The British occupation ended in 1947. The Hashemite monarchy was only able to survive until 1958. The Iraqi army then took the control of the country after a coup, which is known as the 14 July Revolution. In 1968, the Socialist Ba'ath Party assumed power in Iraq. In 1979, Saddam Hussein was to take the leadership in the party, and then subsequently governed the country until the 2003 war.

It was the early 1930s when Mullah Mustapha Barzani emerged as a leader. Although his fame came from his religious personality as he was a Naqshbandi sheikh, he soon became a national leader to most of the Kurds. His leadership led to

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[146] Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2008, p. 11.

[147] Ibid., p. 12.

[148] With Britain's declaration of independence for Iraq, Barzinji started another uprising in 1932 which was suppressed by the Iraqi army with the help of British Air Forces. See Kutbettin Kılıç, *Kuzey Irak: Etnik Bir Sorunun Arkeolojisi* [Northern Iraq: Archeology of an Ethnic Problem] in Kemal İnat, Burhanettin Duran and Muhittin Ataman (eds.), *Dünya Çatışmaları: Çatışma Bölgeleri ve Konular* [World Conflicts: Conflict Areas and Topics], Vol. 1, Nobel Yayın, 2010, p. 225.

the establishment of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1947. He spent a decade in exile after 1948, during which his fame grew as he successfully led his followers along border areas to Russia. He returned to Iraq in 1958. His power as a Kurdish leader reached its peak in 1970 when he "negotiated the March Manifesto of 1970, which theoretically provided for Kurdish autonomy under his rule."[149] However, both the end of US's and Iran's support due to the concessions they received from Iraqi government, and Talabani's fight against him, he was totally defeated in 1975.

This was the date that witnessed the rise of his son, Massoud Barzani, as the new leader of the KDP, and Jalal Talabani, Mustapha Barzani's son-in-law, who established the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). It is not possible to say that these two Kurdish parties agreed with each other on all occasions. They had an ambiguous relationship that "alternated between cooperation and bloody conflict."[150] Yet they also continued their fight against the Saddam regime in Iraq. After the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988, these two groups were severely affected by Saddam's al-Anfal campaign against the Kurds. In particular the infamous Halabja massacre in 1988, in which chemical weapons were used, caused the deaths of a great number of Kurds.

Struggling with economic shortcomings, Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait in 1990 and declared the country to be a province of Iraq. This occupation threatened Western powers' interests, especially those of the US, since Kuwait was an important oil-producing country. Hence, the UN demanded Iraq to withdraw its powers from Kuwait. Saddam rejected, and the coalition powers entered Iraq in 1991. After Saddam's army was defeated, the Kurdish groups in Iraq started an uprising against the Iraqi regime. Saddam responded harshly, which resulted in another massacre. Hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees fled to Turkey, fleeing the wrath of Saddam. Turkey was unprepared for such a movement and failed to provide proper shelter for the refugees. A number of Kurds died because of unhealthy conditions. This humanitarian crisis attracted international attention and the UN passed a resolution that called for protection for the Kurds in northern Iraq. Following the resolution, American, Turkish, British, and French forces established a

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[149] Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending*, p. 13.
[150] Ibid., p. 13.

no-fly zone in northern Iraq, covering the northern area of the 36th parallel. This protection was called Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) and its forces were called Poised Hammer, and were settled in the İncirlik military base in Turkey.

The protected zone, which lasted until the Iraqi war in 2003, was a turning point for the Kurds in northern Iraq. Although Turkey strictly opposed a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, through the OPC, it actually helped the establishment of a *de facto* Kurdish autonomy. In 1992, the KDP and PUK managed to merge their interests and opted to hold elections in order to establish a parliament for a federated state in northern Iraq. In the end, a parliament was established which consisted of equal members from the KDP and PUK, and a small number of Christians.[151] However, this cooperation did not last long. In 1994, civil war broke out between the two Kurdish parties. In 1998, Washington succeeded to bring Barzani and Talabani together to make peace. In 2002, a reunified parliament held a meeting for the first time after 1994, only five months before US intervention in Iraq. An interim government was established to prepare a constitution. In October 2005, the constitution was adapted and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was established.

The Kurdish question and Turkish-Iraqi Relations

The impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-Iraqi relations has an important place in this study. The reason is that today's Iraq is the only country that hosts a *de jure* Kurdish authority. From this perspective, Turkey has had an ambiguous relationship with Iraq. On the one hand, Turkey long refused to recognize the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as an official interlocutor and hence turned its face towards the government in Baghdad; yet on the other hand, it was forced to sit on the same table with the northern Iraqi Kurds to settle crucial problems concerning its Kurdish question. These problems mostly concerned the territorial integrity of Turkey and Iraq, the security of the Turkish State, coping with terror, and Turkey's cross border military operations. Focusing on these debates, the main aim of this part is to show how Realism aids in explaining Turkish-Iraqi

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[151] Michael M. Gunter, *A de facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq*, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1993, p. 299.

relations considering the Kurdish question. To reach this target, two cases are chosen, which will take a picture of Turkish-Iraqi relations: the issues around Kirkuk and Turkey's military activity in Iraq due to the fights against the PKK.

Debates around the Situation in Kirkuk

The debate on the political and demographic situation of Kirkuk is an excellent case that summarizes the Iraqi Kurds' ambitions, Turkey's stance towards them, and the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-Iraqi relations. Kirkuk is an oil-producing city with approximately 900,000 inhabitants from different origins including Kurdish, Arab, and Turcoman, situated on the northern side of Baghdad. After the Gulf War in 1991, Saddam managed to keep Kirkuk under his control. The situation of this city was of great importance to Turkey. One of the main fears of Turkey from the war in Iraq was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which would cause unrest and secessionist movements among its restive Kurds. The importance of Kirkuk speaks to this point. In case Iraqi Kurds managed to assume power in Kirkuk, they could use the wealth of the oil-hub city to establish an independent state. Hence, Turkey always objected Kurdish control in Kirkuk and advocated its dependence on a central Iraqi government in Baghdad.

It was early 2003 when the Iraqi Kurds gave the first signals that they would return to the city of Kirkuk, even through using force if necessary, after Saddam's control over the city collapsed.[152] However, to keep Turkey's suspicious focus on the demographic situation of the city away, Kurdish leaders continued to officially claim that a Kurdish flow into the city would not be a primary concern, at least until the war in Iraq was over.[153] Apparently to ease Turkish concerns, the PUK leader Jalal Talabani said in a statement he made on 21st of March 2003, that the "PUK and KDP would not allow displaced Kurds to return to Kirkuk before the war ends and things return to normal."[154] He also stated that his "dream is not for Kurdistan", but for a "federal parliamentary democracy [under a unified Iraqi state]." These statements

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[152] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi Kurds vow to return to oil hub if war begins*, March 14, 2003.
[153] Turkish authorities were wary of a *fait accompli* in Kirkuk by the Kurds to turn it into a Kurdish-controlled area. Hence, Turkey insistently declared that it would not accept a *fait accompli* in Kirkuk, along with its perception of an independent Kurdish state as *casus belli*.
[154] Hürriyet Daily News, *Talabani: My dream is for Iraq and not for Kurdistan*, March 21, 2003.

were necessary to distract Turkish attention from the city of Kirkuk and prospects of the establishment of a Kurdish state.

Turkey's concerns over Kirkuk even led to the establishment of a consulting mechanism between Turkey, the USA, the KDP, the PUK, and the Turcomans, mainly to "prevent a possible migration to cities like Kirkuk and Mosul."[155] The Turcomans were also included in this mechanism because their representation in the city was a sensitive issue for Turkey, both in providing their security and keeping the balance of power in Kirkuk among different fractions. At this point, the Turcomans were on the side of the Turks. Ahmet Muratlı, then representative of the ITC (Iraqi Turcoman Front) in Turkey, implied that they "do not want any immigration to Mosul or Kirkuk ... We will see the real ethnic structure of these cities."[156] Turcomans in Iraq shared the same concern with Turkey that the Kurds would flow into Kirkuk to constitute an ethnic dominance in the city. Being a majority in Kirkuk would allow the Iraqi Kurds to decide the fate of the city after the war and also to control its wealth power. This situation was unacceptable for both Turkey and for the Turcomans in Iraq.

Another important point of concern for Turkey about Kirkuk was the possibility of seizure of the city by the Kurdish peshmarga forces. Although the PUK and KDP had openly promised that their forces would not enter Mosul and Kirkuk, Turkey's unease increased due to the news arriving from the region. In April 2003, American newspaper Washington Post reported that the then Chief of General Staff of the Turkish army Hilmi Özkök was receiving "a briefing everyday about the position and strength of Iraqi Kurdish militias advancing slowly toward the oil cities of Kirkuk and Mosul in northern Iraq", also reminding that "Turkey considers Kurdish control of the Iraqi oil fields a security threat."[157] Turkey's fears were realized. On April 11, 2003, it was reported that Kurdish fighters belonging to the PUK entered Kirkuk.[158] This situation left Turkey with two options: to enter Iraq or to leave Kirkuk to the Kurds. However, a military option was not likely for Turkey, because it had lost its chance to do so with the parliamentary rejection of what is

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[155] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turcomans: Khalilzad setting conditions for advisory committee inclusion*, March 21, 2003.
[156] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turcomans seeking a US type provincial structure in Iraq*, April 8, 2003.
[157] Hürriyet Daily News, *WP: Gen. Ozkok faces tough choice in Iraq*, April 10, 2003.
[158] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey's unease held in check by US*, April 11, 2003.

known as the "March 1 resolution", which asked for Turkish Parliament's permission to allow US forces to use Turkish lands as a military base to launch attacks against Iraq. Hence, Turkey was forced to rely upon US promises that it would remove Kurdish forces from Kirkuk. In the following days, news kept on coming from the region that the peshmargas were still in the city and the residents were looting government offices.[159] However, the Kurdish military existence did not last long. Within a few days, US forces started to take control of the city of Kirkuk.[160] Kirkuk's short term occupation by Kurdish forces and Turkey's response to it show the sensitivity of Turkey about this issue and how it sees Kurdish dominance in Kirkuk as a reason to enter Iraq. This is very much related to Turkey's fear of "power-gaining Kurds" in northern Iraq. Massoud Barzani's statement "Let us be clear, we had agreed with the Americans that Turkey would not enter northern Iraq and in exchange we do not enter Kirkuk and Mosul"[161] clearly underlines the relationship between Kurdish dominance in Kirkuk and Turkey's military move into northern Iraq.

Turkey's concerns about Kirkuk did not end when US forces took control of the city. Although the city was brought under US control, it appeared that certain peshmarga elements remained in Kirkuk despite assurance to Turkey.[162] In addition, Iraqi Kurds were not holding their promises that there would not be any effort to change the demographic structure of the city. On the 23rd of April 2003, a crowd consisting of Arab men and women protested the recent actions by the Kurds in front of the main administrative building in Kirkuk, claiming that they were looted and threatened by the Kurds and forced to leave the city.[163] Turkey's suspicions reached their peak when a retired general of the US army, Jay Garner, stated that "Kirkuk is a Kurdish city" in a visit he paid to northern Iraq.[164] Being disturbed by this statement, Turkey asked for an explanation from the US. After a short period of time, the Prime Minister of the PUK, Barham Saleh, visited Turkey to listen to Turkish concerns and

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[159] Hürriyet Daily News, *ITC calls for U.S.-Turkish committee to investigate Kirkuk events*, April 12, 2003.
[160] Hürriyet Daily News, *Gul demands swift order in Iraq as US calm N. Iraq cities*, April 14, 2003.
[161] Hürriyet Daily News, *Barzani urges US to establish Iraqi rule soon*, April 15, 2003.
[162] Hürriyet Daily News, *Ankara concerned that Iraqi Kurds are acting too independent minded*, April 20, 2003.
[163] Hürriyet Daily News, *Arabs in Kirkuk say forced to leave homes by Kurds*, April 23, 2003.
[164] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey conveys uneasiness on Garner's remarks to US*, April 25, 2003.

explain the background of the retired general's statement about Kirkuk.[165] Although the official discourse remained the same, subsequent events would show that Iraqi Kurds would not give up on Kirkuk. Turkey's traditional stance towards the Kurdish issue, that is, to contain Kurdish threats in neighboring countries through agreements with either the hosting state or the great powers outside, was collapsing in Iraq. The US made it clear that it would not allow Turkey to take measures in Iraq with the infamous "Sulaymaniyya incident", which is known in Turkey as the "hood case (çuval olayı)." In July 2003, US forces detained 11 Turkish soldiers stationed in northern Iraq to fight the PKK and held them while putting hoods on their heads.[166] Besides straining US-Turkey relations, this event was a message to Turkey to find another way to approach to the Kurdish issue.

As of May 2003, Kurds in Iraq started to explicitly mention their wish to move Kurds back to Kirkuk. Massoud Barzani said on May 31 that "work was under way to bring home Kurds expelled under Saddam Hussein's Arabization policy."[167] This statement was meaningful in the sense that it came after the election of a Kurd as the mayor of Kirkuk by the newly founded council of the city. On July 1, a clearer statement was made by Barham Saleh, saying that the Arabization policy "must be reversed for Iraq to be peaceful."[168] The French news agency AFP reported that the representatives of the KDP and PUK even consider Kirkuk as the capital city of Kurdistan.[169] As 2003 drew to a close, news considering the "Kurdization" coming from Kirkuk increased.[170] These events caused escalated uneasiness in Turkey regarding the city. In the middle of 2004, although the Kurdish move to the city accelerated, Turkey was still defending the preservation of power balance in Kirkuk to keep Iraq unified and underlining that it would not allow any *fait accompli* to bring the city under Kurdish control.[171]

This was the time when conflicting statements appeared by the two most influential Kurdish leaders, Talabani and Barzani. In a Turkey visit, Talabani

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[165] Hürriyet Daily News, *Saleh visits Turkey to discuss latest developments*, April 29, 2003.
[166] Hürriyet Daily News, *US move to detain Turkish soldiers in N. Iraq draws ire in Ankara as relations face new crisis*, July 7, 2003.
[167] Hürriyet Daily News, *Barzani hails election, says Kurds freed from fear*, May 31, 2003.
[168] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi Kurds seek reversal of "ethnic cleansing"*, July 1, 2003.
[169] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurds want to see Kirkuk as capital city of 'Kurdistan'*, July 31, 2003.
[170] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkmens seek US to end Kurdish domination in Kirkuk*, September 21, 2003.
[171] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey: No fait accompli in Kirkuk*, June 22, 2004.

asserted that "Kurds had no intention to dominate the oil-rich city of Kirkuk" and that they were ready to share power with the Arabs and Turcomans.[172] He was also insistently underlining that they do not seek the disintegration of Iraq.[173] However, only two weeks after Talabani's remarks, Barzani "reiterated the Kurdish claim for the oil-rich northern Iraq city Kirkuk" and said that they "would not make any compromise on that."[174] These conflicting statements and escalating dispute over the control of the city forced Turkey to bring this issue to the table in a regional summit of Iraq's neighbors, held in July 2004 in Cairo. Then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül mentioned that the status of the city was vital to Iraq's stability and the conflicts should be overcome quickly.[175] However, nothing seemed to change to ease Turkey's concerns, as Barzani declared Kirkuk to be "the heart of Kurdistan. We are ready to fight and sacrifice our soul to preserve its identity."[176]

Turkey's concerns about the situation in and the future of Kirkuk and Iraq continued in 2005. Fearing its own Kurds, Turkey retained its discourse, which strictly opposed the "Kurdification" attempt in Kirkuk, which was believed to lead to an independent Kurdish state and disintegration of Iraq.[177] Turkey was still mentioning the establishment of such a state as a cause of war. This approach of Turkey was very much reflected in the statements of the bureaucracy and military, which were perceived by Kurdish authorities in Iraq as clear interference in their domestic politics. Referring to the demographic changes and escalating turmoil in the city, Foreign Minister Gül stated on 27th of January 2005, "spoiling the demographic structure of Kirkuk would be a serious threat for the future of all of Iraq. Turkey is very worried about the reports of the demographic manipulation."[178] He also added: "Nobody should expect Ankara to sit back and watch if developments there spill over, destabilizing neighboring Iraq." Then Deputy Chief of Staff, General İlker Başbuğ made a similar warning to Iraq, implying that "tensions in Kirkuk could lead

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[172] Hürriyet Daily News, *Talabani assures Ankara on Kirkuk*, June 24, 2004.
[173] Hürriyet Daily News, *Talabani says Iraq's Kurds not after independence*, July 2, 2004.
[174] Hürriyet Daily News, *Barzani: 'Kirkuk belongs to Kurds'*, July 6, 2004.
[175] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey pleas with neighbors on Kirkuk*, July 23, 2004.
[176] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kurdish leaders in Ankara*, September 8, 2004.
[177] For debates around Kirkuk in the foreign media, see The New York Times, *The Coming Clash Over Kirkuk*, February 9, 2005. Available at:
http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F60C11F6345F0C7A8CDDAB0894DD404482. Also see: The New York Times, *Kurds are Flocking to Kirkuk, Laying Claim to Land and Oil*, December 29, 2005. Available at:
http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F70A15FC38540C7A8EDDAB0994DD404482
[178] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey won't sit back over Kirkuk spillover*, January 28, 2005.

to clashes in Iraq that could draw Turkey into the dispute."[179] Turkey's open threats that it would intervene if anything happened against its interest in northern Iraq attracted criticism from Iraqis. Evaluating these statements as interference in domestic politics, then Foreign Minister of Iraqi Interim Government, Hoshyar Zebari, stated, "no country has the right to speak out on Kirkuk. The people of Iraq will decide on the fate of Kirkuk."[180]

Turkish fears of a Kurdish-dominated Kirkuk appeared to come true in the January 30 elections held in Iraq.[181] In the Tamim province, which includes the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, Kurds won approximately 60% of the votes. In Kirkuk, Kurds gained power especially in the local elections.[182] Turkey did not remain silent about this situation. Implying its discomfort regarding the results, the Turkish side stated that "the elections had failed to produce a parliament truly representative of the people because of low turnout and the manipulation of votes in some areas, [and by these means] certain groups made unjust gains", which in fact referred to the Kurdish victory in the elections.[183] To these claims, Zebari responded, "Turkey should not worry about the Kurdish success in the Iraqi elections, as Iraq will remain a country having friendly ties with neighboring Turkey."[184] This statement was addressing Turkey's concerns regarding Kurdish separatism in northern Iraq that was feared to ignite unrest among the Kurds in Turkey.

After the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, a referendum date was set as December 2007 to decide the fate of Kirkuk, whether to integrate it into the autonomous Kurdish region. As 2006 drew to a close, the importance of Kirkuk for Iraqi Kurds found its reflection in the words of the spokesman of the Iraqi Kurdish autonomous regional parliament, Adnan Mufti: "Iraqi Kurds consider Kirkuk to be a red line."[185] This statement gives a clue about how Iraqi Kurds were determined to seize power in the oil-hub city. Meanwhile, tension was continuously escalating in the region. Hence, in December 6, 2006, an

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[179] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey won't sit back over Kirkuk spillover*, January 28, 2005.
[180] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkey won't sit back over Kirkuk spillover*, January 28, 2005.
[181] The New York Times, *Bush Hails Iraq Vote as 'a Resounding Success'*, January 30, 2005. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/30/international/middleeast/30cnd-reac.html
[182] Hürriyet Daily News, *Zebari says Turkey's poll worries misplaced*, February 15, 2005.
[183] Hürriyet Daily News, *Zebari says Turkey's poll worries misplaced*, February 15, 2005.
[184] Hürriyet Daily News, *Zebari says Turkey's poll worries misplaced*, February 15, 2005.
[185] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kirkuk 'red line' for Iraqi Kurds, says Mufti*, December 19, 2006.

American study group headed by former US Republican Secretary of State James A. Baker and former Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton presented to George W. Bush a report regarding the situation in Kirkuk.[186] In this report, the group suggested the postponement of the referendum in Kirkuk, because "a referendum on the future of Kirkuk would be explosive ... given the very dangerous situation in [the city]."[187] The regional Kurdish Parliament in Arbil immediately assembled with an extraordinary agenda and declared that it rejected the report.[188] In the beginning of 2007, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan warned Iraqi Kurdish groups that they should not try to assume control of Kirkuk, and said that "Turkey would not stand by amid growing tensions among ethnic Turkmens, Arabs, and Kurds in [Kirkuk]."[189] This statement indicated that Turkey's anti-Kurdish stance to the issue continued. Erdoğan's statements faced harsh criticism from the Iraqi side. Iraq's deputy prime minister, Bahram Saleh, implied that Iraq was trying to improve its relations with Turkey, but this required "respecting Iraqi sovereignty. For Turkey ... interfering in domestic affairs of Iraq is utterly unacceptable." He added: "This is fundamentally a matter for the people of Iraq, nobody else."[190]

The debates around the fate of Kirkuk seemed to slow down after the referendum was postponed to an undetermined date. However, these debates beautifully summarize how Turkey's relations with Iraq are influenced by the Kurdish question. Kirkuk is an oil-rich city; hence its control was a matter of dispute. Iraqi Kurds argued that it was a Kurdish city, yet Saddam's Arabization policy in the 1990s had driven the Kurds away from the city. After the US-led war, Kurds wanted to go back and take the control of the city. Fearing that this move would provide a base for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which

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[186] For an analysis about the report, see The New York Times, *Can They All Get Along in Iraq? The Report Says They Have To*, December 8, 2006. Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/08/world/middleeast/08assess.html?pagewanted=print&gwh=E02F76EE4451946DC80C4CA70113B91D

[187] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kirkuk 'red line' for Iraqi Kurds, says Mufti*, December 19, 2006. Another report regarding the situation in Kirkuk titled as "Iraq and the Kurds: Resolving the Kirkuk Crisis" was published by International Crisis Group in April 19, 2007; which also suggested abandoning or postponing the referendum in Kirkuk. Recommendation no. 15 of the report read: "Promise to protect the Kurdish region in exchange for the Kurdistan Regional Government's agreement to abandon, or at least postpone, its referendum bid." To reach the report, visit:
http://www.rcusa.org/uploads/pdfs/ICG,%20Iraq%20and%20the%20Kurds,%204-18-07.pdf

[188] Hürriyet Daily News, *Kirkuk 'red line' for Iraqi Kurds, says Mufti*, December 19, 2006.

[189] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi Kurdish officials reject Turkish statements on Kirkuk*, January 30, 2007.

[190] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi Kurdish officials reject Turkish statements on Kirkuk*, January 30, 2007.

would stir Turkey's already restive Kurds, Turkey was strictly opposed to it. Turkey, which feared a Kurdish secessionism in its territory, openly stated that it viewed Kurdish rule as a threat to its security. Turkey apparently approached this issue in northern Iraq from the perspective of security of the state and territorial integrity, which led its interference to domestic politics in Iraq – which are among the main tenets of Realist IR theory to explain international relations. From this perspective, focusing on the evolution of the events in Kirkuk and Turkey's stance to them, it is possible to argue that Realism is the theory that explains the Turkish-Iraqi relations considering the Kurdish question.

The Fight against the PKK and Turkey's Blurring Red Lines

The next step in this section is to take a picture of Turkey's changing approach to the Kurdish authority in northern Iraq and show how its so-called "red lines" have been blurring in recent years. Focusing on Turkey's search for overcoming the PKK problem, this section shows that Turkey's "security of the state" approach in dealing with its Kurdish question, which caused the denial of the Kurdish existence in northern Iraq before, now becomes a reason for rapprochement.

It was mentioned before that Turkey traditionally opposed the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq and declared this as a "casus belli." Hence, after the 2003 Iraqi war, Turkey insistently underlined the importance of keeping Iraq united. Turkey, in its stance to Iraq, both during the interim government period and after the establishment of the permanent Iraqi government, paid attention to use the government in Baghdad as an official interlocutor. Although Turkey held many talks with Iraqi Kurds during this period, it did this via mentioning the Kurds as members of the Baghdad government. Turkey, until very recently, never saw the autonomous Kurdish authority in northern Iraq as an official interlocutor. This policy was parallel to Turkish traditional fears and discourse. The recognition of a Kurdish authority was perceived by Turkey as the same as the recognition of a Kurdish entity, which would then affect its own Kurds. However, it is apparent that this stance has been changing recently. Turkey's red lines are blurring. Turkish authorities are accepting the reality that they have to sit on the table with Iraqi Kurds, after recognizing them as the rulers of northern Iraq, and only then it can solve its problems within the region. Turkey's struggle to contain the threat of the PKK in the

last decade is a good example of this change. To provide the security of its state, Turkey now tries to overcome this problem through cooperation with the northern Iraqi government, contrary to its traditional policy to ignore that authority.

The rejection of the March 1 resolution in the Turkish Parliament meant in a way that Turkey was "out of the game" in Iraq. Turkey lost its chance to have a say in the future of Iraq. To overcome its concerns, such as the protection of Turcomans, the provision of power balance in Kirkuk (to not to leave it to Kurdish hands), the prevention of an independent Kurdish state, and the destruction of the PKK bases in mountainous northern Iraq; Turkey had no choice but to put pressure on the American and Iraqi governments.[191] Although some attempts were made by the US to use Turkish soldiers in Iraq, the Iraqis (especially the Kurds) were strictly against a Turkish military presence in Iraq, so that the US had to step back from this decision. As a result, Turkey insistently pressured the US and Iraq to fight the PKK in northern Iraq. Yet, while doing this, it failed to address Kurdish authority in northern Iraq.

In 2006, a trilateral mechanism was established to ease Turkish concerns and act against the PKK presence in northern Iraq.[192] At the table were Turkey, the USA, and Iraq. However, this mechanism never started to act properly. The main reason was Turkey's reluctance to recognize Iraqi Kurds as the representatives of the KRG. The USA and Iraq wanted to use Iraqi Kurds in this mechanism; however, Turkey wanted to view these Kurds under a central Baghdad government. Yet the Kurds were expecting Turkey to accept them as the officials of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Hence stuck in a deadlock, the mechanism never worked. Another important reason of the failure of this mechanism was Turkish military's strict approach to the Iraqi Kurds as "one and the same" with the PKK.[193] The Turkish military argued that the PKK had the "Iraqi Kurdish leadership's full backing." As a concrete example for that, Murat Karayılan's speech on a Barzani-controlled TV

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[191] Turkey also managed to receive certain promises. For instance, see: The New York Times, *U.S. Will Help Turks Stop Kurdish Inroads From Iraq*, April 25, 2006. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/25/world/middleeast/25cnd-rice.html?hp&ex=1146024000&en=0fbb5a6bcbcd719e&ei=5094&partner=homepage&gwh=55EB81 76FF8BA2A3E2C2FF439F5FECA9

[192] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi Kurd representation may jeopardize tripartite PKK talks*, September 13, 2006.

[193] Hürriyet Daily News, *PKK and Iraqi Kurds are 'one and the same,' Turk military believes*, November 19, 2006.

channel was shown. This lack of confidence between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds lead to rejection of their representation, which in turn caused the collapse of the mechanism.

The rejection of Kurdish representatives by Turkey left the problems without a solution. Turkey was insisting on its traditional discourse. Turkey again turned its face towards the government in Iraq. It also managed to get promises from the Iraqi government to not allow any terrorist organization to operate from Iraqi lands.[194] However, what the Iraqi government did could not be more than President Talabani's "asking" the PKK to stop fighting.[195] In October 2007, Jalal Talabani openly admitted that Baghdad would be "unable to hand over the leaders of the PKK."[196] It appears that the Iraqi Kurds were determined to force Turkey to sit on the table with the representatives of the KRG. The same month, Talabani made another statement arguing that Turkey's fight against the PKK could not be complete without "active involvement of Iraqi Kurds in diplomatic talks." Barham Saleh openly mentioned that "Ankara should accept a Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq as a political interlocutor to resolve the problem over the PKK's presence in Iraq."[197] Saleh also added that Turkey's rejection of KRG officials in tripartite meetings was unacceptable and that the KRG was the one "with the *de facto* authority on the ground. If you want a solution, we cannot sideline the KRG."[198]

Turkey's stubbornness in refusing to accept the Kurdish entity continued even after it became apparent that there would be no solution to the PKK problem without its help. Following its traditional approach to the issue, Turkey decided to launch a ground military operation into northern Iraq after escalating terrorist attacks in late 2007. It started with air force bombings of PKK shelters in northern Iraq, which was followed by land forces' incursion into the region on the 21st of February 2008. At first, the US did not oppose. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that US had "full solidarity with Turkey on the PKK issue."[199] Amid criticisms from the Baghdad

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[194] Hürriyet Daily News, *US push for Turk-Iraqi Kurd cooperation against PKK going nowhere*, June 20, 2007.
[195] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraq forced to pressure PKK*, October 18, 2007.
[196] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraq unable to hand over PKK leaders to Turkey: Talabani*, October 22, 2007.
[197] Hürriyet Daily News, *'No solution to PKK without Iraqi Kurds'*, October 24, 2007.
[198] Hürriyet Daily News, *'No solution to PKK without Iraqi Kurds'*, October 24, 2007.
[199] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi president to visit Turkey following ground operation*, March 5, 2008.

government, the Turkish side also declined to give a schedule of the military operation.[200] However, one week after the ground operation started, George W. Bush personally intervened to "urge Turkey to withdraw as quickly as possible."[201] The following day, the Turkish military announced that it has finished its operation in northern Iraq. Turkey's last ground operation to Iraq lasted only 8 days.

Turkey's military operation did not put an end to the PKK's existence in northern Iraq. Apparently Turkish authorities came to accept the reality that the traditional approach to the Kurdish entity in northern Iraq would not provide benefit for Turkey any more. In accordance, the first signals of change in the Turkish official stance to Kurdish authority came in April 2008. Then Turkish Foreign Minister, Ali Babacan, implied that "Turkey will seek closer cooperation with the Kurdish leaders of northern Iraq to curb outlawed PKK members from taking refuge in their region." He also added: "In the coming days, you can expect increasing contacts on various levels with the administration of northern Iraq."[202] These remarks were signaling a softening on Turkey's opposing stance to Iraqi Kurdish authority. On October 30, 2009, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu paid a historic visit to Arbil that "marked a big step toward normalization of Turkey's relations with the KRG."[203] In June 2010, Barzani paid a visit to Ankara, pledging "all efforts to stop PKK violence", yet also underlining Iraqi Kurds' "reluctance to fight their kins."[204] In September 2011, Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Siniroğlu paid a two-day visit to Iraq, this time holding talks with both Talabani and Barzani, in order to provide their help to fight the PKK within Iraq.[205] Ankara also demanded from Barzani to cut PKK's logistic channels. In November, Massoud Barzani came to Istanbul on Turkey's invitation to "discuss possible means to jointly fight the PKK."[206]

This traffic of official visits occurring between Baghdad, northern Iraq, and Turkey apparently indicates the blurring of Turkey's traditional red lines. Recently, Turkey seems to have decided to recognize and cooperate with the Kurdish authority

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[200] Hürriyet Daily News, *Envoy tells no timetable for troop pullout*, February 28, 2008.
[201] Hürriyet Daily News, *Iraqi president to visit Turkey following ground operation*, March 5, 2008.
[202] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turkish FM signals closer dialogue with Iraqi Kurds*, April 29, 2008.
[203] Ufuk Ulutaş, *Turkish Foreign Policy in 2009: A Year of Pro-activity*, Insight Turkey, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2010, p. 4.
[204] Hürriyet Daily News, *Turks seek more trade with Iraqi Kurds despite tensions*, June 27, 2010.
[205] Hürriyet Daily News, *We are considering Iraq incursion, says minister*, September 13, 2011.
[206] Hürriyet Daily News, *Ankara gives double-barrel anti-PKK fight*, November 14, 2011.

in northern Iraq, mainly to fight the PKK and maintain its security and territorial integrity. Hence, it is possible to argue that Turkey has opted for a change, from denial to recognition of the Kurdish entity in northern Iraq, for the same reason of its refusal before: security of the Turkish State and provision of its territorial integrity. From this point of view, Realism offers help to understand the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-Iraqi relations.

Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter was to show that Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors containing Kurdish populations, i.e. Iran, Syria, and Iraq, are shaped around Realist traits and can be explained through the lens of Realism as far as the Kurdish question is concerned. It is argued that the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey's relations has been around the principles of security of the state, territorial integrity, and balance of power, which include enforcement, threat, interference in domestic affairs, and military intervention; which are among the main features of Realism. As well as the disputes, the cooperation of Turkey with its neighbors concerning the Kurdish question can also be explained by Realism, in the sense that they occur to protect the interests and territory of these states and provide their security.

Turkey and Iran have similar Kurdish problems, yet at different levels. These two neighbors long suspected each other of using certain groups such as the PKK and Mujahedeen-i Khalk against each other. Both also saw their Kurdish problems as ones that can be solved through cooperating with other states. From this perspective, Turkey and Iran have signed a number of security agreements, which Turkey believed would provide security along its Iranian border. However, mutual suspicions and tension continued. The US-led war in Iraq and the possibility of the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq changed the way Turkish-Iranian relations were headed. Both countries established better relations and improved cooperation against the Kurdish question, fearing that unrest among their restive Kurds would threaten their territorial integrity and the security of their states.

Turkey's relations with Syria were also filled with tension until the late 1990s. Two main problems between two countries, namely the Hatay (Alexandretta) problem and the water dispute, long occupied an important place in their relations. In the power game between Turkey and Syria, the latter used the Kurdish card as a lever against Turkey, through providing shelter and support for the PKK, to weaken Turkey's power in the region. Yet after the Iraqi war in 2003, Syria decided to cooperate with Turkey to help it overcome its own PKK problem. The reason was that Syria also feared, as did Turkey, that its own Kurds would seek more rights and even independence; inspired by the success of the Kurds in Iraq. From this perspective, Syria continued to use the Kurdish card as a tool, yet this time to establish closer ties with Turkey. It appears that focusing on the Kurdish question, Syrian-Turkish relations were also shaped around the principles of security of the state, territorial integrity, and balance of power.

The impact of the Kurdish question on Turkish-Iraqi relations reserved an exclusive place in this study, because Iraq is the only country in which Kurds have *de jure* authority. Hence, Turkey had an ambiguous relationship with the Kurds in Iraq. On the one hand, Turkey feared that recognition of the Kurdish entity in northern Iraq would cause unrest and secessionist movements among its Kurds; it thus refused to accept the *de facto* or *de jure* Kurdish authority as an interlocutor and turned its face towards the Baghdad government. Yet on the other hand, it came to realize that it would not be able to overcome its problems concerning its Kurdish question without the help of the Kurdish authority in Iraq. Turkey long tried to deal with the PKK problem through seeking agreement with the Iraqi government and USA; which was a period including threat, tension, and interference in domestic affairs and military intervention. The debate around the demographic and political situation of Kirkuk and military existence of Turkey in northern Iraq were good examples describing Turkish-Iraqi relations. Turkey, after refusing for a long time to recognize the Kurdish authority in northern Iraq because of its fears about its own Kurds, recently came to change its red lines for the same concerns. It is possible to argue that to provide security of the state and its territorial integrity, Turkey has started to view the Kurdish authority in northern Iraq as an official interlocutor and to seek cooperation with it to overcome its problems concerning the Kurdish question.

As was presented in detail in this chapter, Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors concerning the Kurdish question are shaped around the principles of security of the state, territorial integrity, and balance of power, which include enforcement, threat, interference in domestic affairs, and military intervention; as well as cooperation. Hence, the evidence provided in this chapter contributes to our thesis, focusing on the Kurdish question; Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors are influenced by Realist traits and can be explained through Realism.

CONCLUSION

This study started with the hypothesis that the Kurdish question has different effects on Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the European Union. Using International Relations' two major theories, Realism and Liberalism, it was argued that the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey's relations is parallel to the type of international systems with which it interacts. This study evaluated the system in the EU as a liberal one. Hence, it was proven that the Turkish-EU relations considering the Kurdish question could be evaluated from the perspective of Liberalism. Meanwhile, the international system in the Middle East is more appropriately explained by Realism. Therefore, the impact of the Kurdish question on Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors was shaped around Realist traits and explained by Realism. Testing this hypothesis constituted the main body of this study. Besides shedding light on the last decade of Turkey's foreign relations, this study also contributes to the literature in the sense that it takes a picture of Turkey's relations with two different international systems, the EU and Middle East, via focusing on the transnational Kurdish question and using two different theories. The data to test the hypothesis was obtained through newspaper scans. For this task a widely respected English-language newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News* was selected. A detailed search in the Internet archives of the newspaper covered the news about Turkey, Kurds, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the EU, between November 2002 and April 2012. In addition, *The New York Times*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Radikal*, and *Zaman* newspapers were also used. Then, the data was organized and analyzed.

I confidently argue the results in this study strongly support the argument in the starting hypothesis. The theoretical framework in the first chapter stated that we have two ways of looking at the foreign relations of Turkey: if they are shaped around "human rights" and "justice", "freedom of expression" and "political freedom", "cultural freedom" and "freedom of language", "citizenship rights" and "civic citizenship", then Liberalism is a proper theory to understand these relations.

If they are shaped around "security of the state", "territorial integrity" and "balance of power", which may on the one hand include enforcement, threat, and interference in domestic affairs and military intervention; yet on the other hand may lead to cooperation, then Realism would be the most relevant theory to explain these relations. Throughout the research, this definition was followed.

The data collected for Turkish-EU relations considering the Kurdish question provides clear support for the idea that Liberalism offers an explanation for these relations. In Chapter II, I organized this data under four main titles, each of which dealt with a different aspect of the Kurdish question in Turkey. The first title was "the retrial of Abdullah Öcalan", which discussed the perception of the PKK and its leader in Turkey on the one hand and the EU's approach to the issue from the perspectives of "human rights" and "justice" on the other. The second title was "closure of the Kurdish parties and banning Kurdish politicians", which evaluated the Kurdish question in Turkish politics and the EU's approach to the problem from the perspectives of "freedom of expression" and "political freedom". The third title was "the usage of the Kurdish language", which shed light on the cultural aspect of the Kurdish question and the EU's approach from the perspectives of "cultural freedom" and "freedom of language". The fourth and last title was "the debates around the law 5233", which emphasized the state policies concerning the Kurdish question and the EU's approach to the issue from the perspectives of "citizenship rights" and "civic citizenship". These four sections demonstrated that Turkey's relations with the EU, as far as the Kurdish question is concerned, are shaped around liberal traits and can be explained by Liberalism.

Chapter III focuses on Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors. Iran, Iraq, and Syria were selected for this study, since the Kurdish population in the Middle East is spread among these countries. The data collected for this chapter indicated a different type of relationship compared to the one with the EU. This time, the Kurdish question was influencing Turkey's relations around the "security of the state", "territorial integrity", and "balance of power"; rather than "human rights", "freedom", and "justice." To show how Turkey's relations are shaped with each neighbor, I divided the chapter into three parts; focusing on Iran, Syria, and Iraq. And each part consisted of two sections, focusing on the history of Turkey's relations

with the country, especially concerning the Kurdish question; and the shape Turkey's relations have taken in the last decade. In this sense, Chapter III gave me the chance to take a picture of Turkey's relations with the Middle East considering the Kurdish question.

The US-led war in Iraq in 2003 was an important event that concerned all Middle Eastern countries. One of the greatest concerns of Turkey was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Turkey believed this would inevitably cause unrest and secessionist movements among its already restive Kurds. Hence, it appears that until very recently, Turkish official discourse mainly opposed anything "Kurdish" in northern Iraq. Turkey was not alone in this sense. Iran and Syria also contain Kurdish populations and they had similar concerns as Turkey. Since all countries perceived a Kurdish state as a security threat, the war in Iraq and the growing Kurdish concern brought Turkey closer with Iran and Syria. Turkey's decades-long tension and disagreement with these countries concerning the Kurdish question now turned into a close cooperation to keep the Kurds under control. This cooperation was especially seen in the measures taken against the PKK in Iran and Syria. However, it was also touched upon in Chapter III that Turkey's relations with Syria again changed direction after the public riots started in Syria in 2011.

Turkey's relations with Iraq constitute a special place. Today, Iraq is the only country that hosts a Kurdish political entity. Knowing well that Turkey had traditionally followed an anti-Kurdish stance in northern Iraq, it was quite interesting to track changes in Turkish policy regarding the Iraqi Kurds. Turkey refused to recognize any Kurdish entity in northern Iraq for a long time. This would mean, according to Turkey, it was treated the same as the recognition of a Kurdish state controlling northern Iraq. Turkey always tried to make the Baghdad government as the official interlocutor, which also included the Kurdish authorities. However, Baghdad was far from asserting any control in northern Iraq. Turkey unsuccessfully tried to overcome its PKK problem without addressing the northern Iraqi Kurds and even launched a ground attack into northern Iraq on its own authority and alone. Turkey acted on the concerns of its security and territorial integrity. After the military incursion, Turkey's red lines started to blur. For the same reason before, that

is, to provide its security and territorial integrity, Turkey started to address the Kurdish authority in northern Iraq and seek cooperation with it. Until very recently, Turkey held on to its traditional anti-Kurdish stance in northern Iraq, which was evaluated in detail through focusing on debates around Kirkuk in Chapter III.

This study showed that the Kurdish question influences Turkey's relations with the Middle East around the principles of "security of the state", "territorial integrity", and "balance of power". From this perspective, Realism explains these relations. It is not possible to see that Liberal principles like "human rights", "freedom", and "justice" are as effective as the Realist principles in Turkey's relations with Iran, Iraq, and Syria. In contrast, Turkey-EU relations concerning the Kurdish question are occupied by concerns like "human rights", "freedom", and "justice", which can be explained by Liberalism. This shows us that Turkey's relations with these two different systems are shaped differently. As a result, this study provides proof for the starting hypothesis concerning the Kurdish question, that Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the EU differ parallel to the type of international systems it interacts with; which can be explained through Realist and Liberal IR theories respectively.

In addition to these, the results I reached through this research allows me to draw two further conclusions. The first one pertains to the applicability of the two mainstream IR theories I used in international politics. The present research shows that neither of these theories is universally applicable. In the case of Turkey, through focusing on the Kurdish question, this thesis makes it clear that Turkey's relationship with two different international systems, both of which concern the same issue, can be explained by using two different theories. The main reason behind this is because Turkey's foreign relations cannot be reduced to a single level (to the nation-state level, for instance); instead, what establishes Turkey's position in the international arena is defined also by its interaction in another levels (e.g. the EU). As a result, it is impossible to comprehensively analyze Turkey's foreign affairs without taking into consideration its position with respect to different international structures. Since different international systems require different theories to be used to explain one state's relations with others, neither of these theories is enough by itself to offer a sufficient explanation for international relations. In any other case, including outside

of Turkey, I believe, this point should be taken into consideration to establish comprehensive analyses of international relations.

The second conclusion I draw is more related to further research. The present thesis does not investigate the motives behind the mentioned international politics. It only mentions two different international structures and discusses Turkey's position between them while focusing solely on a specific issue. However, it is also crucial to ask the question of why, for instance, the EU is qualified as a representative of Liberal IR theory, and why the Middle East of Realist IR theory. Here, I feel myself obliged to borrow Alexander Wendt's term of "political culture", where he explains that there are three structures of international systems that cause different international politics to occur: Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian.[207] He argues that "the structure of the international system is its 'culture'", which he calls "political culture."[208] He goes on: "Its political culture is the most fundamental fact about the structure of an international system, giving meaning to power and content to interests."[209] From this perspective, studying these political cultures helps to develop a better understanding of different international politics, which is also applicable to this research. This constructivist approach of Wendt allows one to ask certain questions that this dissertation presently keeps out of its scope. To give very broad examples, one question is that of what makes Europe able to approach to the Kurdish question from the perspectives of human rights, freedom, and justice. Another question considers Turkey via asking why the present government was looking for a solution to the Kurdish question under the umbrella of the EU in the early 2000s. One last question may ask why Kurds' rights cannot become a main factor that shapes, just like the concerns around security and balance of power, the relations among Middle Eastern countries concerning the Kurds. If one imagines this study as one on the horizontal axis, further questions similar to those mentioned above from a constructivist perspective would provide the vertical dimension of the issue that would give a broader understanding. However, from the point of view of this thesis, this point is addressed as further research projects.

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[207] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press (Virtual Publishing), 2003, p. 249.
[208] Ibid., p. 250.
[209] Ibid., p. 250.

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