REVISITING KURDISH QUESTION IN TURKEY: A HOPE FOR SOLUTION?

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ABSTRACT

The root of Kurdish problem goes back to late Ottoman era mid-1800s while has gained momentum and its scope widened with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. In the last 28 years, the conflict has been full of violence and its intensity has always been source of fears among the society in Turkey. It has been one of the most violence conflicts in the world in the last three decades when more than 40 thousand people lost their life. Kurdish conflict today, is considered by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) as a severe crises or a limited war. Kurdish problem, similar to other international political conflicts, is like an iceberg: what you see at the top is a small part of the conflict, but beneath what you get are perceptions, interests, values, culture, attitudes, needs, expectations, assumptions, suspicions, suppressions. This article analyzes the conflict in detail with its historical background, social, economic, cultural and political reasons, dynamics and actors, factors and elements that led the conflict escalation. In the last part, it focuses on policy proposal for resolution and argues that Kurdish problem is in a process of resolution yet there is a long way to go.

Keywords: Kurds, conflict, violence, Turkey, human rights.

ÖZET

Kürt sorununun kökleri Osmanlı'nın geç dönemlerine 1800'lere dayanmasına rağmen, 1923 yılında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşuyla hız kazanmış ve kapsamı genişlemiştir. Son 28 yılda bu çatışma, şiddet içermekte ve yoğunluğu Türkiye

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toplumunda ciddi bir korkunun kaynağını oluşturmaktadır. Son 30 yılda 40 binden fazla insanın hayatını kaybettiği dünyanın in çok şiddet barındıran çatışmalaından biri olmuştur. Heidelberg Uluslararası Çatışmaları Araştıma Enstitüsü (HIIK) tarafından Kürt sorunu şiddeetli bir kriz ya da sınırlı bir savaş olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Diğer benzer uluslararası siyasi çatışmalar gibi, Kürt sorunu da tıpkı bir aysberge benzer: Görünen çatışmanın ufak bir kısmıdır, fakat altında algılar, çıkarlar, değerler, kültür, davranışlar, ihtiyaçlar, varsayımlar, kuşkular ve baskılar var. Bu makale, tarihi arka planıyla, sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve siyasi nedenleriyle, dinamik ve aktörleriyle, çatışmayı tırmandıran tüm factor ve unruları analiz etmektedir. Son bölümde, çözüm önerileri üzerinde durmakta ve Kürt sorununun bir çözüm sürecinde bulunduğu, fakat gidilecek çok da yol olduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kürtler, çatışma, şiddet, Türkiye, insan hakları.

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Introduction

Kurdish question, with its social, economic, cultural and political dimensions, has been not only one of the main leading barriers to the nation and state building process but also obstructed democratization and realization of human rights in Turkey. As a multidimensional conflict, it has been described by some international experts such as Henri Barkey and Graham Fuller as the top and toughest problem in Turkey. They claim that "The ''Kurdish issue'' is Turkey's most difficult and painful problem, one that presents a vast moral dilemma for the country. The issue, feeds Turkey's continuing inflation and is the major source of human rights violations and the biggest irritant in Turkey's relations with the European Union" (Barkey and Fuller 1988, xi). Not only political analysts but the President Abdullah Gül also evaluated Kurdish issue as the number one problem of Turkey in May, 2009. Mr. President continued by saying "good things will happen" and "it needs to be solved" (Milliyet 2009). Almost four years have passed since the message was given by Mr. President, yet the Kurdish question still maintains its top position among problems of the country. Being a multidimensional conflict, it necessitates a multidimensional approach for solution. So far the governments in Turkey have failed to develop such a vision. Solving Kurdish question is deadly important for Turkey's future as pointed out by Keyman that "It is not possible to make Turkish modernity multicultural, Turkish democracy consolidated, Turkish economy sustainable, Turkish society a society of living together, and Turkish

foreign policy proactive, multidimensional, and effective, without resolving the Kurdish question" (Keyman 2012, 467-476).

This essay argues that in order to be able to solve such a complicated conflict, it needs to be understood correctly by all parties. For this reason, first the problem needs to be identified in detail with its social, economic, cultural and political background reasons. Then current situation of the conflict including the intensity, dynamics, actors and leading factors have to be analyzed; second, the abilities and potentialities as well as demands of the conflicting parties needs to be clarified and last but not the least possible solutions based on some sorts of strategic goals need to be developed. This piece of work is going to evaluate and analyze these points one by one.

Identifying the Kurdish Problem

Though the concept of "Kurdish problem" is widely used for naming the conflict, it is not a common agreed definition in Turkey. Other concepts used by different segments of the society for describing Kurdish problem are "Soth Eastern problem", "Underdevelopment question", "Terrorism problem" etc. Calling the conflict with different concepts, many times reflects ones perception of the problem. Therefore, even the naming of the question is quite problematic. Tayyip Erdogan is the first prime minister of Turkey who described the conflict as the "Kurdish question" in Diyarbakır in 2005 (Yenişafak 2012). Although it is not able to cover all dimensions of the conflict, I also do prefer to use the concept of "Kurdish problem". Because it is the most comprehensive term compared to the alternative concepts used to describe the problem. It is comprehensive in the way that it encompasses all the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of the conflict.

Kurdish problem, similar to the other international political conflicts, is like an iceberg: what you see at the top is a small part of the conflict, but beneath what you get are perceptions, interests, values, culture, attitudes, needs, expectations, assumptions, suspicions, suppressions. Thus in order to understand it properly, though very difficult, it needs to be analyzed in detail with its historical background, social, economic,

cultural and political reasons, dynamics and actors involved, factors and elements that led the conflict escalate.

Historical Background and the Nature of the Conflict

The roots of the conflict go back to the late Ottoman era, mid-1800s. The Kurds, "who constitute the largest ethnic bloc after the Arabs, Persians, and Turks in the Middle East"(Barkey and Fuller 1988: 5)., and the largest ethnic group[1] without its own state in the world (Gunter 2004, 197), during the time of the Ottoman Empire "along with other Muslims, were part of a broader Sunni Muslim core within a multiethnic empire" Barkey and Fuller 1988: 5). They "were already treated as a distinct group by the sultan in the sixteenth century, when a number of independent principalities or fiefdoms (emirates) were established." "(Barkey and Fuller 1988, 5-7). Despite some minor problems this system had been able to survive till 19th century. Barkey and Fuller argue that centralization attempts and more need for warfare in 19th century, caused Kurdish issue to emerge "(Barkey and Fuller 1988,7). They claim that:

> *By the nineteenth century, new factors induced gradual political change in the relationship between the Kurds and the Ottoman administration: increased imperial intervention in the Kurdish regions, levies for troops, and warfare between Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire that touched Kurdish areas increased challenges to the privileges of Kurdish overlords and a broader pattern of rebellion against Turkish rule throughout the empire. The empire's attempt at centralization was met with increased unrest in Kurdish areas, some of which was the result of recklessness by Kurdish chieftains intent on pursuing their own aggrandizement. Among these rebellious leaders, Mir Mehmet Pasha of Rewanduz and Bedirhan Bey of Cizre are the most famous. The revolts were suppressed at the cost of many lives. There were a total of fifty various Kurdish*

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[1] The population of Kurds is estimated between 30-35 million people half of which live in Turkey. Since none of the states that have Kurdish population officially counts Kurdish population, the number of people is calculated via estimation. In Gunter, M. Michael, "The Kurdish Question in perspective", *World Affairs, Vol.166, No.4, Spring 2004, p.198 the population is estimated around 27 million. According to CIA World fact book the total population of Kurds is about 30 million (7,8 million Kurds live in Iran, 4- 6 million in Iraq, 2 million in Syria and 14,4 million in Turkey.)*

insurrections against the Ottoman state, many involving the Kurds of today's
Iraq as well. These revolts, however, were not nationalistic in character.

Ethnically and linguistically[2] being different from their neighbors, the Kurds are sharing the same religious belief particularly with Arabs and Turks, as Sunni Muslims. Political unity has never been achieved in the last several hundred years. "[F]or at least the past five hundred years the Kurds have been divided between Persian and Ottoman Empires; in the past seventy years they have been yet further divided among the states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria" "(Barkey and Fuller 1988, 6).

During the WWI and independence wars Kurds fought against Western invaders together respectively with Ottomans and Turks hoping that after the liberation a joint state of Turks and Kurds will be established. Yet after the establishment of the Republic in 1923 the speeches and attitudes of Turkish leaders completely changed and new republic was claimed to be a Turkish republic. Since the late Ottoman era and establishment of the Republic which is based on Turkish identity, assimilation (Yeğen 2012, 2), securitization of the Kurdish question and even denial of Kurdish existence (Eralp 2009,1). it's claimed that there have been 28 Kurdish rebellion. Among them are Koçgiri (1921), Şeyh Said (1925), Ağrı (1926), Dersim (1937) and lastly the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party-1984). Except for PKK all the rest have been local and short, yet PKK was formed in 1979 and started armed rebellion in 1984 and continue today.

In early Republic era, Turkey renounced local Kurdish autonomy, people were "resettled, names of places and people were changed, the use of language was restricted, and the very existence of a Kurdish identity was adamantly denied" (Tocci 2008, 4). Since then more than 40 thousand people (security forces, PKK militant and civilians) lost their lives, massive human rights violations took place including burning of thousands of villages (TBMM, http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d24/7/7-3246s.pdf, 01.04.2013), harsh violence in the region, unlawful acts by security forces, decline of the economy of the region etc. Therefore, the

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[2] Unlike their Arab and Turkish negihbours Kurds, like Persians speak an indo-european language.

story of modern Kurdish problem has started and is continuing today. As the story proceeds it gains new dimensions that make the problem and possible solutions much more complicated.

In order to understand the problem a historical background may not be sufficient. The political, social, economic and cultural roots of the question need to be evaluated in detail. Table-1 gives some ideas about the reason and factors involved in Kurdish question. Vrbensky adds some structural and environmental factors (see table -2) some of which could be evaluated among political and some economic factors (Vrbensky 2009, 81).

Table 1. The Issues in Kurdish Question

Economic	Political	Security	Social	Relational
lack of infrastructure	Strong coercive institutions	Village guards	Unemployment and poverty	Mistrust between the state and Kurdish citizens
retarded development processes	election quotas	PKK	Weak social care (education, health etc)	Mistrust between state institutions and NGOs
conflict over ownership	human rights violations	Land mines	weakened social fabric and trauma	Social polarization
Illegal economy	legitimacy problem	Violence	conflict over collective rights (linguistic rights)	Village guards as a threat to group relations
Imbalance in Budget (more on defence)	conflicting views on the nature of the state (unitary v.s. Federal)			
Çelik, A. Betül, "Actors and Processes in the Kurdish Question: Exploring Different Alternatives to Peace", available at http://www.hyd.org.tr/staticfiles/files/actors_ and_processes_in_the_kurdish_question-betul_celik.pdf (12.12.2012)				

Political and Cultural Reasons: Political Structure and Identity Politics

The role of political structure, power-sharing, military role in the government, human rights, ideology, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences, identity, customs and cultural differences are among elements to be discussed and analyzed. As it was mentioned above the

establishment of the state based on a single ethnic identity and the processes of nation-building that aimed to create a homogeneous nation via elimination of ethnic, linguistic and religious differences is the basis of almost all political conflicts in Turkey, including Kurdish problem, Alewi question (religious) and headscarf issue (religious). The goal of formation a homogenous nation brought about the perception of security and the central role of security forces in politics. Any attempt to pluralist politics has been perceived as a threat to the very existence of the nation. And all political problems are securitized by the establishment in the state. This security perception led to creation of a deep state, gladio or stay behind forces that has shaped politics behind the closed doors for decades. Thus political regime has been far from democratization and political progress.

Since the beginning till 1950 there has been a one-party rule, a strong Kemalist ideology (based on Atatürk's principles and reformations) and a military-centered regime. Despite multi-party politics since 1950 there have been several military interventions in politics, once almost every ten years.[3] Turkey has been a part of Western democratic block during the Cold-War, it is member of almost all western oriented organizations, and it has official relations with the EU since 1963 Ankara Agreement and is in full membership negotiations since 2005 but still has a democratization problem. Indeed, almost all political problems in Turkey are the result of the lack of democratization. In recent years, driven by the EU membership process, there have been constitutional, legal and political reforms that enhance democratization processes, yet still there are traditional reflexes that sometimes appear impinging social and political transformation. Lack of political will for change until very recently has deepened the Kurdish question. As time passes the Kurdish question becomes more complicated that makes a possible solution a moving target.

The problem of democratization and nation-building process has generated cultural problems such as the ban on using Kurdish language in schools, in public and even sometimes in private daily life (Eralp 2009, 2), ban of Kurdish culture, Kurdish name of cities and other places.

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[3] Three traditipnal military coups (1960, 1971 and 1980), a post-modern coup (1997) and a military declaration in 2007.

Indeed, the ban of everything that is linked to Kurdish identity. Such an exclusionist and discriminatory policies have been strengthened once again with each military intervention. And the base of all political and cultural discriminatory policies has been totalitarian nationalist kemalist ideology. This ideological color of the regime has been reflected in all political, social, economic and cultural aspect of daily life. Of course, all this ideology-prone life-style is not limited with the Kurdish question. Cultural and identity based discrimination and limitations on differences have caused massive human rights violations against all segments of the society. That is why Turkey has been the number one country that has violated lost the human rights according to the statistics (18,5% of all violations since 1959) of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR 2012).

Social and Economic Reasons: Discriminatory Policies

In this section policies and applications regarding economy, trade, demography, education, equality and discrimination will be analyzed. Military budget until very recently was the number one in Turkey which shows not only the military dominance in politics but also one of the sources of bad economic performance till last decade. For instance, in 2002 per capita income in Turkey was about $3.500 (Güngör, 2011) but in 2011 it is $10.761 (Milliyet 2011). Economic growth in recent years is claimed to have a direct link with democratization, social and political reformations during Ak Party government in the last decade. It is claimed that one of the reason for conflict is also economic inequalities and underdevelopment of the Kurdish region. For instance, in terms of per capita income among the poorest 21 provinces there are 18 provinces from East and South East Regions of Turkey (Kurdish majority inhabitants). Furthermore, among the first 40 rich provinces there are only two from the region (Wikipedia 2012). There are also some claims that the region has been left deliberately undeveloped. And the example given is Diyarbakır, one of the central city of the Kurdish region and the hub of Kurdish nationalism. It's claimed that Diyarbakır in 1920s was among the three top the most industrialized city in Turkey while it is 66th among 81 today (dtso.org.tr 2012).

Table 2. Matrix of conflict characteristics/conditions as identified by academic literature.

Structural factors	Political and governance factors	Economic and social factors	Environmental factors	Cultural and perceptional factors
Role of neighbouring states/inter-state security concerns: - location in conflictprone neighbourhoods - undemocratic regions	Weak state and rule of law: - undermined political authority - inability to exercise control and provide services	Macro-economic problems: - failed macroeconomic policies - market access	Natural resource endowment Scarcities of resources: - land, forest, water, energy, minerals, sea passage, fishing grounds	cultural discriminations
high ethno-linguistic/ religious diversity	a weak rule of law	low level of growth	scarcity of resources	barriers to the usage of different languagues
one dominant ethnic group	Exclusionary national ideologies	income inequalities	environmental poollution	dicriminatory policies towards different ethnic and religious groups
History of conflict	Discriminatory political institutions:	high ratio of unemployment	existance of transboundry and inter boundry rivers	lack of belief and counscious freedom
Size of the population	discrimination in participation in government	vertical and horizontal economic inequalities	illegal waste trade	blaming others
Strength of the military	discrimination in participationin army, policy and justice	discriminatory policies in acces to economic and social facilities	energy resources	see others as the source of problems
Illicit and criminal activities	failure in social contract	economic discriminations	land degradation	dicscriminate against the differences
Kaynak: Vrbensky, Rastislav, 2009,s.81.				
Some points above are added by the author				

Education is another sphere of controversial politics and conflictual relationships. Education level among Kurdish society is quite low compared to the rest of the country. This has several reasons. First of all economic underdevelopment among the Kurdish population is considered to be number one for poor education records. Second, economic underdevelopment of Turkey has limited the governments to establish schools in all over the country, particularly in the Kurdish region until

1980s. Third, traditions and cultural understanding of Kurdish people is one of the barrier to schooling particularly the girls education. Last but not least, education in mother tongue (in Kurdish) is prohibited and the pupils have to go to school in a different language than the one they learned from their parents.

Equality and discrimination are two interlinked concepts that also go together in social and economic affairs in Turkey. In law and legal basis all citizens are considered to be equal yet, in social life, informally, there are many discriminatory policies. Kurdish is not allowed to be used in trade relations or in any other economic activity. Whether it is real or not, but Kurdish people perceive that they are discriminated in some jobs application particularly in military, police, diplomacy and other top ranking decision-making posts. Although the perception of being discriminated in public employment sector has been decreased in recent years as a result of democratic and political reforms, the politicized Kurds still have this sentiment. The important point here is perception, not the reality. And perceptions are mostly much more powerful than the reality itself.

Current Situation of the Conflict

In this section the dynamics of the conflict such as its duration, intensity, scope, recent development and the international environment as well as the actors involved will be briefly discussed. Kurdish problem as mentioned before has started in late Ottoman era in mid-1800s while has gained momentum and its scope widened with the establishment of Turkey in 1923. Kurdish conflict is considered by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict research (HIIK) as a severe crises or a limited war (HIIK 2010, 72-73). In the last 28 years, since the PKK's first armed attack, the conflict has been full of violence and its intensity has always been source of fears among the society in Turkey. It has been one of the most violence conflicts in the world in the last three decades when more than 40 thousand people lost their life (Özkan 2012).

The scope of the conflict covers political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, religious, democratic, human rights and basic freedoms of all people in Turkey, particularly Kurds. In the last three decades this

conflict has been affected not only domestic politics but also foreign policy of Turkey in the region and worldwide. It has limited Turkey to become an influential actor in terms of both politics and economics in the global affairs. Therefore Turkey, needs to solve this problem not one way or another, but in a peaceful and democratic way, if she is going to play a role of a regional or a global power. Current political elites of Turkey are well aware of this. And thus they have been taken steps for resolution in recent years. Kurdish opening that started in 2009 is one of them. In this period a number of improvement regarding democratization and recognition of Kurdish demands has been met. A Kurdish TV is running by the state tv station, TRT; Kurdish language has been an elective course in the schools; and also some departments and faculties that teach in Kurdish has been opened in universities etc.

The emergence of Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, Turkey's EU-membership desire and the Arab spring in the Middle East also created an international environment in which Kurdish question is much more easily discussed in the public and among the politicians. As a result of democratic and political reform in recent years political elites started to control politics in Turkey, unlike the previous times when the politics was dominated by military. This empowered the government to govern and take decisions on Kurdish question as well. Previous governments unfortunately had no power to decide on Kurdish question and other sensitive similar political issues. Current Government and of course Prime Minister Mr. Erdoğan, can and sometimes do take some steps for resolving the conflict. Yet it is very difficult to mention a similar progress on Kurdish side, where Kurdistan Workers Party-PKK (militants or military wing of Kurdish movement) is controlling all processes. Political wing of the Kurdish movement has been controlled by PKK and they have to follow what PKK decide. This inconsistency hardened the solution. And there are claims in the media that there are different trends among PKK decision-makers; some of them support a peaceful resolution while some are in favor of continuing fighting (Bayramoğlu 2012). Despite all these difficulties there are some attempts to resolve the conflict that are going to be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Actors Analysis: Who Wants What?

Though it is very difficult to talk about a unitary Kurdish actor that represents all Kurds in Turkey, it can be claimed that all Kurds demands in general are very similar. Thus without referring to any specific actor(s) we will just mention the Kurdish side and Turkish side or government to simplify, though this is not a correct usage in general. What the both sides want? In which situation a peaceful resolution is possible? Or do parties really want peace?

To begin with the last question, this is really a hard question to be answered by any political analyst. The reason is, because peace means different things to different parties of the conflict. Hence more, Turkey so far has been in favor of security measures but in recent years it is claimed to be PKK side that is in favor of violence and conflict. And these raise questions of does PKK really want peace? Of course the same question is valid for the government as well. The government, despite being initiated a Kurdish opening in 2009, has applied security and military strategies in the last months. In conflict management, peace comes to existence when all parties see no interests in fighting. Therefore, no one is sure whether all the parties of the conflict today have lost their hope in violence. But ups and downs in resolution processes are due to nature of such political conflicts in the world. Thus, there are sometimes fluctuations in resolution attempts for the Kurdish problem.

Based on the historical background as well as political, cultural, social and economic reasons of the question, there are several Kurdish demands that are counted by the report of International Crisis Group (ICG) of 2012. These are full language rights, an end to discrimination in Constitution and Laws, greater self-government, political representation, demobilization for insurgents and security for villagers (ICG 2012, 26-31), reformulation of citizenship that refer to none of the ethnic group, a new civilian and democratic constitution. Yet Barkey and Fuller mention a wider agenda that covers cultural concessions, economic progress, diminished security presence, legalization of Kurdish political parties, devolution of power and decentralization, decreasing the role of the military in politics, lat but not least a cultural and political autonomy for the Kurds (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 185-201).

On the other hand, the demand of Turkey historically, though are not discussed publicly, were basically assimilation and Turkification of Kurds. Yet assimilation politics failed and in recent years when AK Party government realized it can accommodate Kurdish identity without deep structural change of the state. For this the state's demands are roughly, removal of security concerns i.e. abolition of PKK, guarantee against secessionism i.e a partial cultural and political autonomy, keeping unitary state formation, limited language rights for Kurds and other ethnic groups.

A Democratic Opening Process: A Long Way to Go

Long and violence intensive conflict caused boredom and tiredness in the society and among the security forces. Some figures in both parties seem to realize to some extent that violence and security-based approach is not a proper tool to solve the conflict. Therefore, in recent years there are attempts to solve the Kurdish issue in peaceful and democratic ways. Kurdish opening or democratic opening that started in 2009 yet slowed down in 2011 is the most comprehensive policy attempt so far. Since then also a comprehensive literature have been produced on a democratic solution both domestically and internationally.[4]

Each piece of this literature has focused on similar strategies and objectives while they differ on detail. Before discussing special reports

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[4] Some samples of selected reports and publications on Kurdish question: ICG, *Turkey: PKK and a Kurdish Settlement,* Europe Report No.219, 11 september 2012, pp.26-31. Available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/219-turkey-the-pkk-and-a-kurdish-settlement. pdf; Barkey, Henri and Fuller, Graham, *Turkey's Kurdish Question,* New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 1998 ; Tocci, Nathalie and Kaliber, Alper, *Conflict Society and Transformation of Turkey's Kurdish Question,* SHUR WorkingPaperseries, SHUR wp 01/08, 2008, http://shur.luiss.it/files/2009/06/shurwp01-08.pdf ; Villellas, Ana, *Turkey and the Kurdish Question: Reflections on Peacebuilding,* ECP, 2011, http://escolapau.uab.es/img/qcp/turkey_kurdish.pdf ; Aktay, Yasin, Coşkun, Vahap ve Özipek, Berat, *Kürt Sorunu: Çözüm İçin Önerile(Kurdish Question: Proposals for Solution)r,* Ankara: SDE Yayını, 2011; Çandar, Cengiz, *Dağdan İniş:- PKK Nasıl Silah Bırakır?:Kürt Sorununun Şiddetten Aarındırılması (How PKK may Leave Guns?: Making Kurdish Question Violence Free),* İstanbul: TESEV, 2011; Kurban, Dilek ve Yolaçan, Serkan, *Kürt sorununun Çözümüne Dair Bir Yol Haritası: Bölgeden Hükümete Öneriler(A Roadmap for Kurdish Question: Policy Proposals from the Region to the Government),* İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 2008; Yayman, Hüseyin, *Şark Meselesinden Demokratik Açılıma Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası,(From East Issue to Democratic Opening Memory of Turkey's Kurdish Problem):* Ankara, SETA, 2011.

and publications on resolution, a very crucial point figured out by Keyman who claims that a democratic resolution to "the Kurdish question lies in (a) a critical analysis of state-centric Turkish modernity and its recent crisis, as the Kurdish identity has always been constructed as the Other of Turkish national identity; and (b) an attempt aiming at a democratic reconstruction of the political in Turkey, which sees a multicultural and differentiated understanding of constitutional citizenship as a constitutive norm of 'living together in diversity'"(Keyman 2012, 467-476).   So far there have been studies that follow the way proposed by Keyman. The very recent one is the report by International Crises Group (ICG). In response to the increase of violence in the last two years, it puts forward some proposals for both sides and international actors in order to establish an environment for progress. It called for a ceasefire, addressing "the legitimate, broad demands of Kurdish society for mother-language education, the lowering of national election thresholds, more decentralized local government and removal of discriminatory ethnic bias in the constitution and laws". Opening of space for peaceful Kurdish movements and activities via changing "the Anti-Terror Law, Penal Code and other legislation" and also "Help inform public opinion about the international legitimacy of multi-lingualism in education, ethnic diversity and wider powers for local government"(ICG 2012, ii). As mentioned above the ICG had formulated Kurdish demands that need to be met for a peaceful resolution. These demands were full language rights, an end to discrimination in Constitution and Laws, greater self-government, political representation, and demobilization for insurgents and security for villagers (ICG 2012, 26-31). It also encouraged international actors to take responsibility and action for helping resolving the conflict.

Another valuable work has been done by Özhan, and Ete who focus on parameters for a comprehensive solution in their article titled "A New agenda for the Kurdish Question" published in *Insight Turkey* in 2009. In their view the following four points needs to be taken into consideration for a realistic strategy: 1- Political initiatives needs to be taken. So far the strategies and policy for Kurdish question has been dominated by security forces. Such a security-based approach failed therefore a politician need to take the lead. 2- Kurdish question should be distinguished from terror. While combatting terrorism on one hand, structural, political and

constitutional reforms have to be realized in order to settle Kurdish question. 3- Establishing a balance between democracy and security. And lastly 4- Developing a new strategy in the fight against terror (Özhan and Ete 2009, 104-108). For solution they propose some policy proposals that covers reforms on political, economic, social and cultural affairs: (a) "Turkey needs to give up this security perspective and begin thinking and launching structural reforms that can face the complex dynamics of the Kurdish question"; (b) "Turkey must solve the Kurdish question "within Turkey" by eliminating the justifi cation for the ethnic discourse with structural reforms"; (c) security forces need to be restructured and controlled by the civilians; (d) the discourse and terminologies used needs to be freed from a conflict language; (e) PKK needs to be disarmament; (f) Space needs to be open for Kurdish political parties to develop politics on Kurdish problems; (g) a public administration reform needs to be realized; (h) barriers in front of using Kurdish language must be abolished; (i) economic development programmes needs to be implemented in order to overcome the region's underdevelopment problem(Özhan and Ete 2009, 108-113).

One of the most comprehensive and detailed work on resolution of Kurdish question has been done by TESEV, *A Roadmap for a Solution to the Kurdish Question: Policy proposals from the Region for the Government.* The repot claims that *"*Despite the fact that different segments of Kurdish society may have highly varied demands, the majority of Kurds, particularly those living in the region, do share similar demands on issues such as linguistic, political, and cultural rights, village guards, landmines, and affirmative action" (TESEV 2008, 5). This reports covers proposals on political steps to be taken such as disarmament of the PKK, dialogue with Kurdish political parties and dialogue with non-governmental organizations; constitutional and legal reforms including a new constitutions and legal reforms in other legislations; economic reforms that include GAP regional development project action plan, border trade, promoting tourism, industries and trade policies and developing agriculture in the region; social policies such as education, fighting against poverty, improvement the conditions of women, children and unemployment and internal displacement including returning to their homes, restructuring justice, compensation law, landmines and village guards issue (TESEV 2008). Indeed, some of the

Kurdish political, social, economic and cultural demands stressed above have been met in recent Kurdish opening, including the usage of Kurdish language in media, in school as elective course and in religious affairs.

All the reports and publications mentioned almost the same issues with different wordings. Yet what the reports lack is mentioning the demands of the state or Turkish side. As mentioned above currently the state demands basically the PKK disarmament, guarantee against secessionism and limited rights provided for the Kurds.

Concluding Remarks

Kurdish issue, as a multidimensional conflict, has to be dealt with a holistic approach. Its roots go back to late Ottoman era, but the dynamics of the conflict are quite alive today. The nationalist, militarist and undemocratic nation-building and state-building processes had made the problem, yet democratization process that began in 1950, so far, has not been able to solve it. Identification of the problem is itself very problematic. It means different things to different people. Even naming it is not easy; it is called as "Kurdish Question", "Problem of underdevelopment", "South Eastern problem" or a "Terror issue". Indeed, none of them covers all the aspects of the problem.

Kurdish demands are basically political autonomy, cultural rights including language and education in mother tongue, removal of social and legal discrimination and finally recovery of economic inequalities. In recent years some steps have been taken such as opening a Kurdish TV station by the state, Kurdish language as an elective course in the schools and Kurdish education in universities. But still it is far from satisfying Kurds.

Today, Kurdish question is considered to be a severe crisis or a limited war with heavy casualties. The problem is at a stage of transition: it either becomes deeper or turns into a real peace. It is open for both an escalation and transformation. The behavior of the actors and international climate will determine the direction. For now, the actors are in a position of uncertainty. As the solution delayed, new problems emerge. So called "Kurdish Opening" or "Democratic Opening" goes one step forward and two steps backward. The society is in favor of a

democratic solution but politics and perhaps combating parties are not that much sure about a peaceful solution. They might have some hopes and interests in violence. But no one will win. This is a conflict that everyone loses. The interest of all is in the peace. The last peace process that has started since December 2012 is, comparatively, approaching ahead smoothly, yet no one can anticipate the future.

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