

Journal of Global Analysis

Formation of Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey: From Social Movement Theories Perspective By Rahman Dag

Abstract

Current politics in Turkey proves that the roots of the Kurdish question have to be taken under strict examination in order to diagnose the problem so that a permanent solution might be found. With this in mind, this paper tries to explain the emergence of the pro-Kurdish nationalist movement, the PKK, via social movement theories. What makes this paper significant is that it examines the process of emergence in three phases via three different social movement theories. For Turkey's single party era (1923-1950), relative deprivation theory is applied. In the second phase, political opportunity theory is matched with the onset of the multi-party system under the rule of the Democrat Party (1950-1960). Finally resource mobilization theory is applied to the time period between 1960 and 1980. In general, the theoretical approaches chosen are selected in accordance with certain socio-political realities of Turkey. This helps to explain how an ethnic minority ended up with a socially – but not legally – representative organization when they are relatively deprived and obstructed politically. If not all, a certain amount of mobilization of the Kurdish people could result in a social movement, be it is legal or illegal.

Keywords: *Relative Deprivation, Political Opportunity Structure, Resource Mobilization, Kurdish Nationalism, Turkey*

Dr. Rahman Dag is Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Administration at Adiyaman University and the head of Cesran International Turkey Desk.

Formation of Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey: From Social Movement Theories Perspective

Introduction

One of the striking issues debated in Turkey since the inception of the Republic of Turkey has been the so-called 'Kurdish Question'. This arose due to the core ideology of the state, Kemalism aiming at forming a western style nationalist (Turkish) and secular state. This core ideology excluded opponents from the state apparatus including political, social and economic spheres in single party era (1923-1946). Thanks to transformation from the single party to the multi-party political structure since 1946, the next term in which state policies over Kurdish issue has gradually but not officially loosen its pressure and led Kurds to 'do politics' under the condition that they act as if they were ethnically Turks. Nevertheless, even this relative flexibility was adequate to threaten the core ideology, and the military intervened into civil political affairs to restore the official state ideology, after which it then withdrew into their barracks immediately after they took certain constitutional precautions. Since then and up until the 1980 coup d'état, ethnically Kurdish youth studying university and traditional leading Kurdish figures mobilized themselves. Within a decade after the 1980 coup d'état the Kurdish nationalist movement has institutionalized itself with the most prominent group becoming the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan).

This short chronology is crucial in terms of comprehending the emergence of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey. I will do this from a social movement theory perspective. However, instead of employing a single theory to explain the Kurdish nationalist movement, I believe that each of these phases should be examined with via related though distinct theories. Based on this argument, I will apply 'relative deprivation theory' for the single party era, 'political opportunity structure' for the Democrat Party era covering time period from 1950-60 and 'resource mobilization theory' for the time period ending with the 1980 coup d'état.

These distinctive methods of explaining the emergence of Kurdish nationalist social movement are needed because the Kurdish nationalist movement experienced a specific phenomenon of Turkish politics – that is, their existence as a distinct group having been officially and practically denied, accepting their attendance into politics only as a citizen of the Turkish Republic affiliated with the ethnically Turkish majority. This led to the social polarization of youth who formed their own legal and illegal social groups that maintained their awareness of their linguistic, cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. Once their legal or illegal existence still did not

get approval from state officials, the legitimacy of illegal armed groups gradually accelerated among Kurds.

Relative Deprivation Theory and Single Party Era

Relative deprivation is a theory used to understand and explain the very deep roots of social movements. The basic assumption of this perspective is that disadvantaged position of one group of people compared to others is the main reason for grievances in the disadvantaged group. This idea was advocated by David Aberle (1966), James Davies (1969), and Ted Gurr (1970). To simplify the implementation of these theories, the paper will only focus on relative deprivation of identities following short explanations of the rest. To make it clear, a pattern in social structure determined by the majority towards minority groups breaks down and subordinate groups realize their deprivation compared to the super-ordinate or majority groups. This process ends up with the competition triggered by subordinate groups to compensate their deprivations and arrive at the level of super-ordinate group (Park, 1939). This approach is based on political economic condition of these two groups but I think relations or in his words competition should not be restricted into political economic conditions alone, but also cultural and ethnic conditions that are necessarily part of the analysis.

Thanks to Walter G. Runciman, the concept of relative deprivation, as a general definition is given as “If A, who does not have something but wants it, compares himself to B, who does have it, then A is relatively deprived with reference to B” (Runciman, 1966; Geschwender, 1978). He actually investigates social injustice via use of the concept of relative deprivation, classified into three main parts¹: (Zeitlin, 1935) social or class, economic and political not with a sense of social movement.

Ted Robert Gurr employs relative deprivation to justify emergence of a social movement, activity or collective behaviour. He responds the question of why people are rebelling. In his answer, he argues that when people are not satisfied with their condition and deprived of something they do not have but desire to have and something possessed by others, these people will seek to bridge the gap by using certain means ranging from individual to collective and even mass movements, something which could force society to experience a revolution. To legitimate and theorize his argument, he employs the frustration-aggression model (Berkowitz, 1965), which simply means that people could be physically aggressive when they are frustrated psychologically. If they fail to reach what they want peacefully, this condition has a strong potential for violence between groups who try to obtain ‘the thing’ and try to prevent it. Beneath these circumstances, he argues that there is a correlation between relative deprivation and the impetus to violence and later a revolutionary movement depending on whether this fails or not. In his words, relative deprivation is “...to denote the tension that develops from a discrepancy

between the “ought” and the “is” of collective value satisfaction, and that disposes men to violence” (Gurr, 1970: 23). The ‘ought’, here, represents what people expected and the ‘is’ represents the reality that they are not satisfied with.

Throughout the single party era the Republican People Party, established by Turkey’s first leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was the only ruling party and the state’s Kurdish policy was based on denying and then assimilating Kurds, unless they were not integrated into the state which was dominated by Turkish nationalism. (Yeğen, 2007) The harsh responses given to Şeyh Sait, Ağrı and Dersim rebellions by the government and the settlement acts and reports about Kurds explicitly proves the assimilation policy of the state. As a part of assimilation process, apart from a few years after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, even mouthing the word ‘Kurd’ and any phrase including this word was officially and practically abandoned by the government up until the beginning of 1990s. This is in spite of the statements in the Turkish Assembly and in the international conferences by ruling elites of the state such as Atatürk himself, the first president of the Turkey and İsmet İnönü (Macfie, 1994; Kazancıgil and Ozbudun, 1981), the first prime minister of Turkey, who claimed that the fundamental elements of the Turkish republic were both Turks and Kurds (Oran, 2008; Hatipoğlu, 1992).

Together with four more pillars of Kemal Atatürk’s ‘isms’, populism, republicanism, statist, revolutionarism, both nationalism and secularism were also strictly implemented in Turkey and then by constitutionalizing of these six pillars of Atatürk in the late 1930s, they became the state’s official ideology which had to be followed by incumbents. This came to be known as Kemalism (Dumont, 1984; Kadioğlu, 1996; Tanil, 2003). That also created a new official identity which had to be applied to all people in either public or private areas: for instance, “what people ate, how they dressed, how they looked physically ...what language they spoke (Aslan, 2011). This policy naturally created a considerable backlash among those who were not ethnically Turks and those who were pious religious people, applying to both Turks and Kurds. Atatürk’s reign was centred on eliminating these two dissidents from Turkish politics by imposing so-called modernization reforms.² Atatürk and his foundational political party, the Republican People Party (RPP) dominated the Turkish politics by integration all party institution with state institutions (Zürcher, 2009) until the end of the Second World War when Turkey transformed from a single party regime to a multi-party one.

Regarding Kurdish nationalism I think the most significant obstacle Kurds have had to face has been the ‘identity’ one, something which influences everything ranging from social to economic aspects. Nevertheless, Kurdish ethnic identity has always been neglected, assimilated, or taken under control and so that it has been deemed an illegal identity that could not be publicly expressed. They always had to define themselves as

something other than their original identity. That is to say, an ethnically Kurdish person could not have a solid trade company unless s/he confines her/his ethnic identity. Their existence was not approved by the state, something which naturally shapes society, too.

An important episode in the state's treatment of Kurds is the Şeyh Said rebellion in 1925. This was driven by Kurdish nationalist and religious reasons. A Kurdish nationalist group called '*Azadi*' (meaning freedom) in Kurdish and formed by ex-Ottoman Kurdish officers and intellectuals in 1923 provided for the mobilization of Kurds in the region. As a result of this strategy, Sheikh Said became involved in this organization because of the esteemed and high-ranking religious position he enjoyed among Kurds. Both figures had resented the abolishment of the caliphate by Atatürk and were against the repressive policy of the Republic over Kurds as it forced them, according to the constitution declared in 1924, to abandon the use of Kurdish language in public and education (Haig, 2003) in addition to enforced resettlement of influential Kurdish notables in the west of the country (Zürcher, 2009).

As soon as the significance of the rebellion was predicted by the government, the first thing which was done was to replace Fethi Okyar, the Prime Minister at that time with İsmet İnönü who was considered more able to manage the situation, even if it took harsh measures. He utilized this event as an excuse to declare martial law in 21st February and to pass the '*Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu*' (the Maintenance of Order Act) in 4 March in 1925. Thanks to Martial Law, independent tribunals were formed in Diyarbakir and Ankara just as was the case during the independent war. These tribunals' judges were chosen among the deputies and their verdicts were absolute and there was no appeal process. Based on the absolute power taken from the Laws, firstly all papers were closed down and then opposition party, the Progressive Republican Party, was banned by the independent tribunal after it charged its members of being in contact with Kurdish insurgents (Ahmad, 2008). By doing so, the government had an absolute and unquestionable power and as a component of this power, independent tribunal sentenced Şeyh Said and his close associates to death, which was executed without any delay.

All actions based on the denial of Kurdish identity and applied by the Turkish government did not work however and it can even be said to have accelerated a Kurdish counter reaction. Thus, the remnants of the Şeyh Said Rebellion and left-leaning Kurdish intellectuals who fled to neighbouring countries achieved in establishing another organization called the National Kurdish League. This came with the assistance of Hoyboun³ (meaning independence, in Kurdish) which brought together influential members of several preceding Kurdish groups (the Association for the Recovery of Kurdistan, Kurdish Social Committee and the Society for Kurdish Independence) in Lebanon in order to launch another more organized revolt in Mount Ararat that began in 1929. This was led by İhsan

Nuri Pasha, another ex-Ottoman military officer as part of the Mount Ararat revolt that was nonetheless ultimately crushed by the government. This rebellion was followed by Dersim revolt in 1938 again as a reaction towards the denial of their ethnic identity. The reaction of the government was more brutal than ever before and it shared the same destiny as previous revolts when the leader of the revolt, Sayyid Rıza was captured and immediately hanged.

The single party era can be defined as the worse period Kurds have experienced and which caused reactions from leading figures of many social groups among the Kurds. Regarding deprivation, it firstly started with issues concerning the status of the Kurds and then turned into lowest socio-economic conditions when compared to the other parts of the state. This does not mean that these two deprivations are not linked to one other. These two factors have been fuelling each other to promote rising up against the injustices coming from the state. Despite all this, collective rebellions or anything resembling them did not occur. The other level of interaction in terms of Kurd-centre relations during the multi-party era helps to explain why, since new communication channels were reopened through which prominent figures and notables could again begin to communicate with the government and engage in politics.

Political Opportunity: Kurdish Nationalism in Multi-party System, 1950-1960

As a result of this dramatic change, in the first free election fought between the RPP and the Democrat Party (DP) in 1950, Atatürk's RPP was defeated by the opposition DP and it obtained adequate votes to form a single party government. During this term, up until 1960, dissidents found a channel to participate into politics to dissipate their grievances. In other words, the reign of the DP government was actually an invisible and unofficial battle between the established state structure and mass population which could not fully become accustomed to the imposed political and social structures. This term ended however when the self-professed guardians of the republic and Kemalist state ideology, the Turkish Army, perceiving itself as to have the right to protect the initial state structure against internal and external threats (Cooper, 2002).

The importance of political process to mass movement mobilization was first proposed by James Rule and Charles Tilly in their article *Political Process in Revolutionary France, 1830-1832* (Rule and Tilly, 1975). This was turned into an approach or a model by McAdam (1982) as an alternative to classical approaches and resource mobilization theory. In his work, he applied the theory on black movements in America. He claimed that there is no one single phrase in social movement but several phases from emergence to decay so it is better to refer it as a *process* instead of focusing only one stage. And, it is, above all, a political issue rather than a psychological one. For him, political process is more explanatory for social movements (McAdam, 1982).

The basic assumption of the model is that wealth and power, which are requirements for mobilization are only concentrated in a small number of people in America so that the rest of the people, referred to as the 'excluded group' is deprived of inclusion in decision making processes on issues affect their lives. As it is clearly explained in preceding paragraphs, ethnic Kurds were severely deprived of their identity in Turkey too. This feature is considered as a political 'structure' which routinely operates itself. From my perspective, this concept seems to be equal to the concept of status quo in political science. Therefore, any challenge against the status quo is obviously not warmly received but would be taken as a hostile initiation against the structure. As Tilly indicates, the conservative power holders would "resist changes which would threaten their current realization of interests even more than they seek changes which would enhance their interests" (Tilly, 1978). Gamson goes further and even claims that conservative power holders "keep unrepresented groups from developing solidarity and politically organizing, and ... discourage their effective entry into the competitive establishment if and as they become organized" (Gamson, 1968). Viewed from this perspective, proponents of political process claim that the emergence and then evolution and finally success or failure of a social movements depend on mostly the political structure of a given society instead of neither individual commitments nor resource capacity as a requirement of mobilization. To Doug McAdam "movements develop in response to an on-going process of interaction between movement groups and the larger socio-political environment they seek to change" (McAdam, 1982: 40).

In this model, there are several fundamental necessities vital not only emergence of but also development and success of a social movement. These are: having an organization ready for directing resources into required areas and for facilitating mobilization (the level of organization)⁴; second, the cognitive liberation or being conscious on achieving at target among members, and lastly – perhaps be the most important one – having a political structure letting insurgents or aggrieved groups to be a part of politics, known as 'political opportunity' (Eisinger, 1973; Romano, 2006). These conditions, according to the model, are believed to be fundamental requirements for generation of a social movement and its success.

From this perspective, in such a closed system in which there is no alternative for aggrieved groups, the possibility of emergence of mass movement arises but the way it grows might not be peaceful. It has not been mentioned in the model, but I think it should be said that the model's presumptions are only applicable in a more or less democratic societies in which even aggrieved groups of people have certain rights would be used for mobilization and organization. I can say that the political process model is only applicable into society whose political system leaves even a small room for mobilization against grievances.

It is an undeniable fact that the political transformation from a single party to multi-party system paved the way for distinct ideas to be heard,⁵ which

would lead to social movements developing and then political parties. In the multi-party era, as remnants of the Kurdish rebellions, Kurdish aghas and tribes cooperated with the government. In the previous era, the Turkish political scene did not include most of the Kurdish elites because of the nationalization policy, unless they cooperated or were integrated into secular-nationalist political structures. During this era until 1960s, there were no representatives of Kurdish people but aghas in the Kurdish region, who exchanged the numbers of votes they have with personal privileges and basic infrastructure (Taspinar, 2005) so that schools, main roads and hospitals appeared in the Kurdish region (Nezan, 1980). Returning aghas and tribal leaders now became entrepreneurs, landlords or wholesalers, whose main concern became the underdevelopment of Kurdish cities and not Kurdish nationalism. Thus, in the reign of the DP, the Kurdish Question was perceived as centred on the economic backwardness of Kurdish regions, which created another cover for the denial of Kurdish ethnic identity. When the ongoing feudal structure of Kurdish society was combined with this economic underdevelopment, the Kurdish Question was recast as a socio-economic problem of the East emanating from the feudal structure of the region. Indeed, in recent years successive governments of Turkey have used this definition. There was no official flexibility in the denial of Kurdish ethnic identity but in practice several types of albeit minority views that resented this could be found in both Kurdish and leftist Turkish groups, which would lead to the emergence of illegal Kurdish nationalist groups, the most important of which is the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK-Kurdish Labour/Workers Party), which is obviously a long-term result of the denial of Kurdish identity (Saatci, 2002).

Resource Mobilization: Kurdish Nationalism, 1960-1980

Resource mobilization theory, as indicated in the name, claims that resources are core elements and that they have to be mobilized in order for emergence of social organization (Jenkins, 1983). Basically, only grievances, reactions, deprivations or unrest in a group of people are not adequate to procreate a social movement (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Another distinctive point separating this theory from collective behaviour or mass movements is that it argues that all participants⁶ of a social movement are rational. They consider their potential gains or losses and then scale them. If the benefits outweigh the possible costs then people join to a social movement. In this sense, it can be said that resource mobilization theory accepts members of a social movement as rational actors becoming more organized through the establishment of an organization which facilitates the effective use of resources (human resources,⁷ money, media and any connections with politicians, other organizations and associations, and technology for facilitating mobilization⁸).

As argued by Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, one of the striking points of resource mobilization theory is the assumption of that “there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement if the movement is effectively organized and has at its disposal the power and resources of some established elite group” (Turner and Killian, 1972). They provide the example of McCharty, a senator of the USA, who created an extreme movement within American society without any deprivation or grievances but nonetheless sparking a collective behaviour. McCharty and Zald go further and claim that “grievances and discontent may be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations” (1977: 1215). From this perspective, they suggest that it is better to focus on power struggles within a system instead of looking at discontents among individuals in order to understand the emergence of a social movement.

The theory, from my point of view seems to be consistent within American context but at the same time fails to consider differences in social movements. For instance, it is hard to examine an anti-nuclear movement or environmental movement and a nationalist or ethnic movement with the same criteria and consider them at the same level. Regarding the subject of the paper, it appears sound that grievances have indeed been apparent within society for many years but never turned into a collective social and later political movement *unless* they organize themselves and gain a considerable amount of help from a third party. Oberschall suggests that in real life, oppressed communities generally are assisted by the other groups who have better resources or establish an alignment mostly relying on exchanging their resources (1973). This argument is also advocated by Jenkins and Perrow, who give the example of farmer workers using boycott as their tactic. Their action is ineffective in attracting the attention of masses but with the support of liberals and organized labour movements this multiplies their effectiveness towards decision makers (1977: 264). It seems true that power struggle in a given society could increase or decrease the emergence or effectiveness of a social movement by supporting or denouncing it.

Mobilization of the pro-Kurdish Social Movement

The mobilization of Kurdish ethnic identity into a political force can be said to have commenced with the so-called ‘49’s event’ in 1959 when university students for the first time protested against the denial of Kurdish rights. This event occurred when one of the Republican People’s Party’s representatives from Niğde province, Asim Eren, brought a question before parliament and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. In this question, he asked whether or not the Turkish government would kill the same number of Kurds in Turkey as the number of Turkmens who were killed by Kurds in Iraq based on the principle of retaliation. 102 Kurdish students studying in Istanbul University sent a telegraph to condemn what Asim Eren said to the Prime Ministry and the Republican People’s Party

headquarters Çamlıbel, 2007: 15). This was reported in the headline '102 Üniversiteli Kürtlük iddiasında bulundu' (102 University Students claimed themselves to be Kurdist) by the Akşam newspaper on 16 April, 1959. Among those who were arrested for the so-called 'Kurdist activities' there was not yet a clear distinction between leftist or conservative groups. Their common point of reference was not ideological but ethnic awareness. In his memoirs, Naci Kutlay states that most of the inmates thought that they would have been punished severely and even sentenced to the death penalty. It was not because they did really something terrible but because they knew that Kurds had been punished without any rational reasons except for the fact that they were Kurds (1998: 92).

By this time, future leaders of the Kurdish nationalist movement were growing up in boarding schools and universities. For instance, Kemal Burkay, Naci Kutlay and Musa Anter were educated in boarding schools in which they realized their different ethnic origin and discussed the suppression of their ethnic rights (Marcus, 2007: 26-27; Watts, 2007: 54). While studying law in Istanbul University, Musa Anter's initiatives of two student hostels, namely *Fırat* and *Dicle* became a sort of meeting place for students coming from different parts of Kurdish populated areas of Turkey. Tarık Ziya Ekinci who later became secretary-general of the Turkish Workers Party, Yusuf Azizoğlu who was Democrat Party deputy, Faik Bucak who was founder of KDPT (Kurdistan Democrat Party in Turkey), as well as Ali Karahan, Ziya Şerefhanoğlu, Edip Altınakar, Enver Aytekin, and Necat Cemiloğlu all experienced the atmosphere of these student hostels (McDowal, 2010: 405; Alış, 2012: 61). In addition, young Kurdish students coming from the eastern cities to major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara were seeking other students coming from similar backgrounds in the east. The process in which these students were realizing their differences in all aspects carries them into next level by organizing cultural activities, 'Eastern nights', unofficial associations, and visiting their Kurdish friends would lead to larger mobilization among ordinary people in the East (Gundogan, 2011: 408). Spreading socialist and also nationalist ideas among Kurdish students in major cities was almost entirely based on personal close relations (Burkay, 2002: 132) until it would lead to the forming of a socialist political party, the TWP.

These young Kurds attending boarding schools and university would turn into pioneering intellectuals promulgating the ethnic awareness among Kurds and challenge traditional notables. This last factor would be a major part of declining tribal and traditional ties (Romano, 2006: 42). It is an undeniable fact that the role of intellectuals in mobilizing people into a social movement can be seen in the Kurdish case, just as in other social movement cases.

Educated Kurdish people who were students influenced by leftist ideologies participated in the Turkish Worker Party. This was the first

mass leftist political party in Turkey and it gave space for Kurds to air their resentment and grievances (Yavuz, 2001). In the party, they were not known as the Kurdish group, but the 'Eastern Group'. They managed to have an article in the party programme in the 4th congress in 1970 accepted, wherein the existence of Kurdish ethnicity was officially declared. The article stated that "there is a Kurdish people in Turkey..." and was part of the reason given by the state when it closed the party in 1971 (Taspinar, 2005: 92). Kurdish intellectuals in the party were one of the major forces to push for ethnic awareness as well as to draw attention to the economic backwardness of the region. By opening branches in small towns far from the centre and campaigning before local and general elections, they influenced people to reconsider their ethnic origin, the position of notables (sheiks, aghas and tribal leaders) in their midst, and established parties' assimilationist policies. This active propaganda drives, despite the regime's official and unofficial barriers against it, gradually mobilized Kurds to attend the party's activities. For instance, meetings organized by socialist or generally leftist Kurdish groups with the help of Turkish Worker Party were held in eastern cities where Kurds mostly lived in order to protest the government's assimilation, economic and social policies against them; they were referred to as 'Eastern Meetings' (Doğu Mitingleri).⁹

Social, economic, cultural and political deprivations forced educated Kurds – whether from leftist or conservative circles – to mobilize. Therefore, when they reached at an unbearable level and the most democratic constitution of Turkey coincided with that, it was inevitable that educated leftist and conservative Kurdish elites would do something to change established social, political and economic structures in Turkey. As a result of that, several leftist and conservative Kurdish groups were established, albeit illegally.¹⁰ They were none-violent groups and they hoped that the freedoms provided by the 1961 constitution could be used to alter the conditions which Kurds found themselves in.

Most of the legal means to change these deprivations of Kurdish people were employed by leftist and at that time, some conservative Kurdish groups. Yet, the response of the established state structure was not positive and in 1970, another coup d'état reconsolidated a militaristic, nationalist and secularist state ideology against all oppositional groups. By doing so, a political channel through which minority groups could enter was shut down. Mostly leftist supports but also a considerable number of people from rightist groups were arrested and punished severely. Within this decade, from 1960 to 1970, Kurdish nationalists gained considerable experience in both legal and illegal activities. It would not be wrong to claim that Kurdish groups employed both legal and illegal means to obtain their basic rights, especially recognition of their ethnic identity albeit up until then unsuccessfully.

As a result of that, from 1970 to 1980, illegal Kurdish groups separated

themselves from Turkish left since mainstream Turkish leftist movements did not consider the Kurdish Question as primary concern of theirs. They thought that Turkey's main problem lay in the question of regime. As soon as a socialist or to less communist revolution had succeeded, they argued, Kurds would have their all rights under a new regime (Ekinçi, 1999: 288; Taspınar, 2005: 90). What was expected did not occur, an idea made all the more bitter with the 1970 coup d'état. On the contrary, Kurds had to face more severe repercussions taken by the government. Yet, with the mobilization of ethnically conscience Kurdish intellectuals already in motion, and thanks to the migration of Kurds who settled near one another in city centres,¹¹ this increased the number of educated political activists and members of the Turkish Worker Party in eastern cities and with it the first time the potential for a mobilized Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkish history had occurred.

This potential had been manipulated by illegal Kurdish organizations and most of them armed themselves against nationalist state forces and also against radicalized Turkish nationalist groups. Within these highly politicized social conditions, fights between leftist and rightist groups¹² became a routine part of everyday life in most of cities in Turkey. It can be argued that the years from 1970 to 1980 were the years in which most of the university students as well as ordinary people were politicised and mobilized.

Regarding resource mobilization theory, social movement organizations have a key role in achieving the goals of a movement.¹³ One of the implementations of this theory is in the Kurdish case and it cannot be said that these Kurdish nationalist social movement organizations achieved what they aimed but it is an undeniable fact that social movement organizations played a crucial role in massification of the movement to the extent that we can speak of a Kurdish nationalist movement. Today's public support for Kurdish nationalist political parties, from the People's Labour Party (Halkın Emek Partisi-HEP) to the People's Democracy Party (Halkların Demokrasi Partisi-HDP), was based on the work of the disciples of the PKK.

To sum up, since the mid-1950s a "combination of economic deprivations, social injustice and physical displacement as well as ideas of ethnic identity" (McDowell, 2010: 404) constituted an atmosphere of revolt by the late 1970s. The struggle between these generally leftist (but some rightist groups too) reached the level of armed struggle ending with deaths among university students and other youths. Under the highly radicalized society such as in bureaucracy, trade unions, associations and even security forces, (Dodd, 1990: 47), Turkey experienced one more coup d'état in 1980 which brought some order but did not totally sweep away the disorder brewing in the country. Before that, it seems highly possible that the resources that the politicized Kurds had were mobilized among university students and intellectuals, which would ultimately

generate the leading figures in the pro-Kurdish organizations that later sprung up.

Conclusion

Relying on the explanations above, relative deprivation theory matches with the socio-political conditions during the single party era but did not result in a revolution. Yet, Kurdish insurgencies occurring during that era have been used as myths and reference points for getting political avenue and them for mobilizing Kurdish masses. Following that, political opportunity structure presented an alternate way through which Kurds could obtain their place in politics so that they could do politics to get what they wanted. Thanks to the multi-party politics era, there was more flexibility for parties to approve of the Kurdish identity but did not transform these into legal processes and left the door open for potential Kurdish insurgencies within the nation-state structure.

Resource mobilization theory emphasizes rationality to explain participation of people in movements and available resource for the continuation of such movements, an idea propounded by McCarthy and Zald (1973) and Oberschall (1973). This has been used here to explain the emergence of pro-Kurdish movements in Turkey. Indeed, Shorter and Tilly sum this up well, “individuals are not magically mobilized for participation in some group enterprise, regardless how angry, sullen, hostile or frustrated they may feel. Their aggression may be channelled to collective ends only through the coordinating, directing functions of an organization, be it formal or informal” (Shorter and Tilly, 1974: 38). From this perspective, the severe deprivations of Kurds during the single party era (and to some extent even today) led to social unrest and eventually to social movements designed to challenge these indignities.

In general, “the institutionalization of a system creates the possibility that ‘anti-systems’ or groups with negative orientations towards its premises, will develop within it” (Eisenstadt, 1964: 247). As clearly expressed here, the Kemalist state structure itself created its own enemies since it suppressed any differences which did not fit into its basic premises about what constituted the ideal citizen. Deprived groups however have always sought resist their inferior status throughout history. The mass mobilization of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey was part of the wide oppositional groups in the country offering alternative modernization projects against the Kemalist mainstream. In other words, as Blumer states, “social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest, and derive motive power on one hand, from wishes and hopes for a new scheme or system of living” (Blumer, 1957: 99). These two identities hoped for the day in which they could explicitly express their identity and eventually, created their own social movement to fight for their ideas, norms and values which are contradictory to the official state ideology.

Notes:

1. Beside these three main parts, unemployment can be considered as a combination of all these parts since those people are generally from working class backgrounds, economically poor and politically ineffective. Therefore, there are more studies on the influence of unemployment on social movements, generally revolutions (Zeitlin, 1966; Zawadzki and Lazarsfeld, 1935).
2. Relying on nationalism theories, Cetin in his article claims that nations are not product of natural process but a social construction and that nationalism needs a homogenous society to build itself on. That is why Atatürk sought to create a Turkish nation-state by suppressing the Ottoman remnants, which was associated with the old Islamic and multi-ethnic characteristics of the Empire (Çetin, 2004; Anderson, 2006).
3. It was a Kurdish nationalist party formed in 1927 in Lebanon under the presidency of Celadet Bedirhan. Indeed, the party consisted of ex-members of the banned Kurdish organization established in the late Ottoman Empire. They believed that only war could help them obtain independence through an organized military struggle. They therefore launched the Ağrı Rebellion (McDowall, 2010).
4. It is thought that, in the absence of an indigenous and highly organized institution or organization, the insurgents' life span would be short-term, localized and ephemeral. By this same token, Oberschall emphasizes that the capability of an aggrieved group to constitute a social movement is highly reliant on having an individual 'infrastructure' which is able to link that aggrieved groups into a solid political action (Oberschall, 1973). The key component of such an organized organization is considered to be four: members, established structure of solidarity incentives, communication networks and leaders (McAdam, 1982: 44). Furthermore, cognitive liberation is a kind of demolition of established pre-acceptance of the idea that aggrieved groups cannot get involved in the political decision process and they are worth taking into account while political decisions are being taken. Yet, in the first instance people from that group begin to act, for instance by organising a protest, and they notice that their action at least disturbed decision makers and created more burdens on them if they keep ignoring the existence of such a social movement, that situation creates a cognition (or hope) that they could be successful and obtain what they desire for. That is cognitive liberation, which has to occur before the real practical success. As a result of this process, the commitment of members of aggrieved groups to the movement will definitely and dramatically increase. In short, it is more or less a sort of transformation of conscience from being incapable, despite the fact that they know their condition is poor, to being

confident that they can change their conditions and attain what they are looking for (McAdam, 1982: 51).

5. Hugh Poulton argues that the Democrat Party rein was not too different from the Republican Party rein as the essence of the 1924 constitution remained the same, which had rules tending towards an authoritarian state structure and as leading member of the Democrat Party were driven from the Republican Party. So the argues that the authoritarian single party regime was handed over from one to another (Poulton, 1997: 131; Natali, 2005: 92).
6. Participation is one of the vital issues in the process of emergence of a social movement, and is something emphasized by resource mobilization theory. This is not as simple as it may at first appear however: it is a more complicated process when trying to understand what factors are important to participation decisions (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987: 519; Passy and Giugni, 2001: 23-153).
7. Human resources mean, in this context, the rise in the number of formal or informal members of a movement. In this sense, the concept of recruitment gains more importance in resource mobilization theory (Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson, 1980).
8. The ways in which these recourses, especially technology can be used to mobilize people and for recruitments is extensively examined by Pamela E. Oliver and Gerald Marwell in their article of Mobilizing Technologies for Collective Action (1992).
9. Eastern Meetings or the meeting of the East was simultaneously and anonymously organized by people of the east to express cultural, economic and political dissatisfactions (Watts, 2007: 65). In the organizing committee, there were several illegal Kurdish student organizations, as well as members of Turkish Worker's Party. The slogans chanted in the meeting could be taken as proof of the meeting's major raison d'etre which was a demand for basic rights without having an ethnically separatist knowledge (Gundogan, 2011: 414). Thanks to these meetings, public awareness of Kurdish people rose and then several more Kurdish associations were formed to promote Kurdish ethnic identity, to persuade the government to recognize Kurdish ethnicity and to gain more cultural rights. The most effective of these was "Doğu Devrimci Kültür Ocakları" (Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East). The first of these meetings took place in Diyarbakır and then 5 others in the eastern regions and 1 more in Ankara. This also can be read as an example of the traditional representatives of Kurds gradually handing over their position to leftist and nationalist Kurdish groups (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 109; McDowall, 2010: 410). Another of these was 'Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu' (The Federation of Revolutionary Youth of Turkey), in short, *Dev-Genç*, which was again a leftist organization established

based on freedom of association led by 1961 constitution. Its major argument was that capitalist and imperialist policies of Turkey had been major reason behind the denial of Kurdish ethnic origin and lack of economic backwardness of Anatolia. Members were not restricted to Kurds alone but included general revolutionary youth regardless of their ethnic origin. In terms of the Kurdish side, the domination of aghas, tribal leaders and sheiks over Kurdish populated area was also related to Turkey's policies of injustice against Kurds. Therefore, they believed that a leftist revolution in Turkey would bring a solution to the conservative established social structure and economic underdevelopment of eastern areas (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 109-110). It can be said that the union of Turkish and Kurdish students and youths under a leftist ideology allowed the proliferation of Kurdish movements in these leftist organizations (Romano, 2006: 42). As will be explained, this togetherness would be broken away after the 1974 general amnesty into two major parts: Turkish leftist and Kurdish leftist movements and later would further fragment into nationalist, Leninist, Trockist, socialist and so on.

10. Rizgazi, Kawa, Tekoşin, UKO (National Independence Army), PKK (Patiya Karkerên Kurdistan), TKSP (Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party) as leftist Kurdish nationalist groups and T-KDP (Kurdistan Democrat Party of Turkey) and KUK as conservative Kurdish nationalist groups can be given as examples of the fragmented structure of Kurdish nationalist movements in the 1970s.
11. Despite the reasons Kurds migrated from rural areas to major cities, their settlement adjacent to each other made the Kurdish Question more prominent in the eyes of wider society, whose members were mostly Turks (McDowall, 2010: 404). Given the increased number of migrants in major cities, the fact that large Kurdish communities would be formed in major cities is obvious. For instance, the current political party representing the pro-Kurdish nationalist stream, the HDP (the People's Democracy Party / Halkların Demokrasi Partisi) today has members of parliament hailing from major cities in Turkey.
12. By 'rightist' groups, I mean Turkish nationalist groups, namely 'ülküçüler'. This group was nationalist but at the same time, also conservative Muslims. That is why I refer to them as rightist. In Turkish 'Sağcı' evokes a more religious identity than nationalism. This might seem contradictory but, generally speaking 'sağcı' also evokes an Islamist identity too (Poulton, 1997: 130)
13. For instance, the 1977 local elections indicated just what fragmented Kurdish nationalist groups could achieve if they acted together and pursued a common target. Mehdi Zana ran in the election as an independent candidate for the mayor of Diyarbakir. Despite the fact that none of the established political parties (that is, the Republican

People's Party and Justice Party by then) did not consider him a threat, he ended up winning the election and becoming mayor (Dorrnsoro and Watts, 2009). The same happened in Ağrı and Batman districts in which Orhan Alpaslan and Edip Solmaz became majors, respectively (Natali, 2005: 106). In this success, the main actors were the social movement organizations which mobilized people towards one aim by organizing active events such as meetings, brochures, propagating the major parties injusticeness. What is more to the point, based on local election results, neither established central right and left parties such as the RPP and JP nor TWP which was re-established after the general amnesty got what they expected since the region had already become ethnically politicized. Fragmented illegal Marxist or socialist Kurdish groups such as TKSP, KUK, Rizgari and DDKO agreed on supporting Mehdi Zana. This also showed the capability of unification of these groups or one dominant nationalist group and can be considered a social ground on which the PKK would thrive upon (Dorrnsoro and Watts, 2009).

References

- Aberle D (1966) *The Peyote Religion Among the Navajo*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Ahmad F (2008) *Politics and Political Parties in Republican Turkey*. The Cambridge History of Turkey 4: 226-265.
- Alış A (2012) Kürt Etnobölgesel Hareketinin Doğuşu, Kitleleşme Süreci ve Türkiye İşçi Partisi: 1959-1974. In: Ersanlı B, Özdoğan GG and Uçarlar N (eds) *Türkiye Siyasetinde Kürtler: Direniş, Hak Arayışı, Katılım*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, pp.57-9.
- Anderson B (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
- Aslan S (2011) Everyday Forms of State Power and the Kurds in the Early Turkish Republic. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43: 75-93.
- Berkowitz, L (1965) The Concept of Aggressive Drive: Some Additional Considerations. In: Berkowitz L (ed) *Advances in Experimental Psychology*. New York: Academic Press, pp.307-322.
- Blumer H (1957) Collective Behaviour. In: Gittler JB (ed) *Review of Sociology: Analysis of a Decade*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, pp.166-222.
- Burkay K (2002) *Anılar Belgeler*. Stokholm: Deng Yayınları.
- Cooper M (2002) The Legacy of Atatürk: Turkish Political Structures and Policy-Making. *International Affairs* 78(1): 115-128.
- Çamlıbel Y (2007) *49'lar Davası: Bir Garip Ülkenin İdamlık Kürtleri*. Ankara: Algiyayın.

- Davies JC (1969) The J-curve of Rising and Declining Satisfaction as a Cause of Some Great Revolutions and a Contained Rebellion. In: Graham HD and Gur T (ed) *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*. Washington: Government Printing Office,.
- Dodd CH (1990) *The Crisis of Turkish Democracy*. Huntingdon: Eothen Press.
- Dorransoro G and Nicole FW (2009) Towards Kurdish Distinctiveness in Electoral Politics: The 1977 Local Elections in Diyarbakir. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41: 457-478.
- Dumont P (1984) *The Origins of Kemalist Ideology*. In: Jacob ML (ed) *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*. Colorado: Westview Press, pp.25-44.
- Çetin ZM (2004) Tales of Past, Present, and Future: Mythmaking and Nationalist Discourse in Turkish Politics. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24(2): 347-365.
- Eisenstadt SN (1964) Social Change, Differentiation and Evolution. *American Sociological Review* 29: 375-386.
- Eisinger PK (1973) The Conditions of Protest Behaviour in American Cities. *American Political Science Review* 67: 11-28.
- Ekinci TZ (2004) *Sol Siyaset Sorunları: Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Kürtler Aydınlanması*. Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi.
- Gamson WA (1968) Stable Unrepresentation in American Society. *American Behavioural Scientist* 12: 15-21.
- Geschwender JA (1978) *Racial Stratification in America*. Iova: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers.
- Gundogan AZ (2011) Space, State-making and Contentious Kurdish Politics in the East of Turkey: The case of Eastern Meetings, 1967. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13(4): 389-416.
- Gurr TR (1970) *Why Men Rebel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Haig G (2003) The Invisibilisation of Kurdish: the Other Side of Language Planning in Turkey. In: Connermann S and Geoffrey H (eds) *Die Kurden: Studien zu ihrer Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur*. Schenefeld: EB-Verlag, pp.121-150.
- Hatipoğlu ÖV (1992) *Bir Başka Açıdan Kürt Sorunu*. Ankara: Mesaj Yayın-Dağıtım.
- Hensmans M (2003) Social Movement Organizations: A Metaphor for Strategic Actors in Institutional Fields. *Organization Studies* 24: 355-381.
- Imset I (1992) *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey (1973-*

- 1992). Ankara: Turkish Daily News Publications.
- Jenkins C and Perrow C (1977) Insurgency of Powerless Farm Workers Movements (1946-1972). *American Sociological Review* 42(2): 249-268.
- Jenkins JC (1983) Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements. *Annual Review of Sociology* 9: 527-553.
- Kadiođlu A (1996) The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity. *Middle Eastern Studies* 32(2): 177-193.
- Kazancigil A and Ozbudun E (1981) *Atatürk: Founder of A Modern State*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Kirişçi K and Winrow GM (1997) *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of Trans-state Ethnic Conflict*. London, Oregon: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
- Klandermans B and Oegema D (1987) Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Steps Toward Participation in Social Movements. *American Sociological Review* 52(4): 519-531.
- Koca A (1999) *Kürt Solu*. İstanbul: Gün Yayıncılık.
- Kutlay N (1998) *Anılarım*. İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları.
- Marcus A (2007) *Blood and Belief: the PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*. New York: New York University Press.
- Mayer ZN and McCarthy JD (1980) Social Movement Industries: Competition and Cooperation among Movement Organizations. In: Kriesberg L (ed), *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 3: pp. 1-32. Greenwich: AI Press, Inc.
- McAdam D (1982) *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- McCarthy JD and Zald MN (1973) *The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization*. New Jersey: General Learning Press.
- McCarthy JD and Zald MN (1977) Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 82: 1212-1241.
- McDowall D (2010) *A Modern History of The Kurds*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Macfie, AL (1994) *Atatürk*. London, New York: Longman.
- Natali D (2005) *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Nezan K (1980) Kurdistan in Turkey. In: Chaliand G (ed) *People without a*

Country: *The Kurds and Kurdistan*. London: Zed Books.

- Oberschall A (1973) *Social Conflict and Social Movements*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Oliver PE and Marwell G (1992) Mobilizing Technologies for Collective Action. In: Morris A and Mueller C (eds) *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Oran B (2008) Kemalism, Islamism and Globalization: A Study on the Focus of Supreme Loyalty in Globalizing Turkey. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 1(3): 20-50.
- Passy F and Giugni M (2001) Social networks and individual perceptions: Explaining differential participation in social movements. *Sociological Forum* 16(1): 123-153.
- Poulton H (1997) *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and Turkish Republic*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Powell WW and DiMaggio PJ (1991) *The Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Romano D (2006) *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rule, J and Tilly C (1975) Political Process in Revolutionary France, 1830-1832. In: Merriman JM (ed) *1830 in France*. New York: New Viewpoints, pp.41-85.
- Runciman WG (1966) *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice: A Study of Attitudes to Social Inequality in Twentieth-century England*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Saatci M (2004) Nation-states and Ethnic Boundaries: Modern Turkish Identity and Turkish -Kurdish Conflict. *Nations and Nationalism* 8 (4): 549-564.
- Shorter E and Tilly C (1974) *Strikes in France, 1830-1968*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Snow DA, Zurcher LA and Eklund-Olson S (1980) Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment. *American Sociological Review* 45(5): 787-801.
- Tanil B (2003) Nationalist Discourses in Turkey. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102(2/3): 433-451.
- Taspinar O (2005) *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Tilly, C (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

- Toprak B (1990) Religion as State Ideology in a Secular Setting: The Turkish Islamic Synthesis. In: Wagstaff M (ed) *Aspects of Religion in Secular Turkey*. Durham: University of Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, pp. 10-15.
- Turner R and Killian L (1972) *Collective Behaviour*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Watts, FN (2007) Silence and Voice: Turkish Policies and Kurdish Resistance in the Mid-20th Century. In: Gunter M and Ahmed MM (eds) *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*. Coste Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, pp.52-77.
- Yavuz, HM (2001) Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey. *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 7(3): 1-24.
- Yeğen M (2007) Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(1): 119-151.
- Zawadzki B and Lazarsfeld P (1935) The Psychological Consequences of Unemployment. *Journal of Social Psychology* 6(2): 224-251.
- Zeitlin M (1966) Economic Insecurity and the Political Attitudes of Cuban Workers. *American Sociological Review* 31(1): 35-51.
- Zurcher EJ (2009) *Turkey: Modern History*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.