

Kurdish Politics in Turkey: Post 9/11 Era



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QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

2019

QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

August 01, 2019

FINAL APPROVAL LETTER

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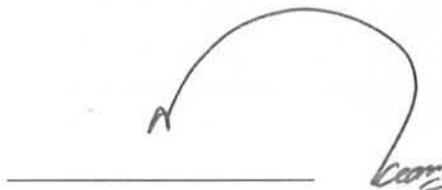
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Dedicated to

I dedicate this work to my dearly loved Grand Mother who passed away in last semester while I was attending my supervisor's class.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I am very much obliged mention Dr. Muhammad Mujeeb Afzal, Assistant Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, as my supervisor whose guidance and availability helped me to complete this work on time. His creative ideas and research experience was so useful to me during this research. Secondly, I would like to mention my friends and senior fellows who always motivated me in this task. I am very much thankful to Mr. Noor Saeed, a PhD scholar at School of Politics and International Relations who always show facilitated me with his knowledge wherever I needed any. Last but not the least, I express my love to my parents because their prayers and support make it possible for me to complete this study. Special thanks to my father Dr. Abdul Qayyum Khan who always motivated me and flourished my plans with his vast research knowledge.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
HEP	Halkın Emek Partisi (People Labor Party)
HDP	Halkların Demokratik <i>Partisi</i> (People Democratic Party)
DBP	Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi (Democratic Regions Party)
BDP	Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democratic Party)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers Party)
KADEK	Congress of Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan
SHP	Sosyaldemokra Halk Partisi (Social Democratic People's Party)
DEP	Demokrasi Partisi (Democracy Party)
OZDEP	Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi (Freedom and Democracy Party)
HAK-PAR	Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi (Rights and Freedom Party)
EU	European Union
HADEP	Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democratic Party)
MPs	Members of Parliament
DEHAP	Demokratik Halk Partisi (Democratic People's Party)
Hüda-Par	<i>Hür Dava</i> Partisi (Free Cause Party)
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
PSK	Partiya Şoreşa Kurdistan (Kurdistan Socialist Party)
PAK	Parti Azadi Kurdistan (Kurdistan Freedom Party)
OSP	Özgürlük ve Sosyalizm Partisi (Freedom and Socialism Party)
YSK	Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (Supreme Board of Elections of Turkey)
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Koma Ciwaken Kürdistan)
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights

ABSTRACT

Kurds are the largest ethnic community on land of the Middle East who are Stateless. Their long-lasting struggle has not given them what they have been striving for but has comparatively activated them politically to some extent. PKK is the armed organization that is fighting guerilla warfare on the land of Turkey since 1980. Since 1990, they have organized themselves in different political parties. Kurds in Turkey have many political parties but have continuously faced failures and were banned by the constitutional court of Turkey due to various accusations; mainly their links with PKK. Kurds in Turkey have faced ethnic suppression as their language, culture and also their tradition has faced hurdles since the Ottoman Empire was dismantled. This is an exploratory research which will address the actual problem going on in Turkey between the Kurds and Turkish government. Kurds are not politically stable albeit they have many political parties. Their political parties, workers and leaders have been jailed, banned or sent to exile many times. Additionally, their politics in Turkey in contemporary times will also be studied. The time period taken in the study will mainly focus on post 9/11 era. How their parties are formed and dismantled; and how they play their role in mainstreaming Kurdish politics during the mentioned time span?

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of Study

Kurds are the largest community in the world who are stateless. The Movement of independent Kurdistan has emerged after the World War I. Right after the end of First World War, Kurds were promised for an independent country according to the treaty of Sevres but situation changed after treaty of Lausanne. In 1923, according to the treaty of Lausanne; Kurds were divided among Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Since after that, movement for an independent State of Kurdistan has become prominent. About their population; there are different views, according to the Fondation Kurde Institute De Paris report, they are 35-45 million in population in the world.¹ In some place, it is mention that Kurds are total 30 million in population.² About 20% of the total population of Turkey is ethnically Kurds.³ Among all the four countries where Kurds are living, majority is settled in Turkey and they have different political parties and organizations in Turkey. Democratic Turkey Party (DTP) was a Kurdish party, People Labor Party or *Halken Emek Partisi* (HEP), was also a pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey founded in 1990.⁴ Kurdish Nationalist Democratic Society Party was formed in 2005. People's Democratic Party or *Halkarin Demokratik Partisi* (HDP), Democratic Regions Party or *Demokratik Bolgeler Partisi* (DBP), Peace and Democracy Party or *Barisve Demokrasi Partisi* (BDP) and Perceived Association with Kurdistan Workers Party or *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistanê*, (PKK) are there.⁵ Military wing of PKK, "National Liberation army of Kurdistan" and "National Liberation Front" was also there which later on disappear. They organized themselves under different leaderships but did not get a status worth mentioning.

The movements of Kurds in Turkey have always been suppressed since World War I under different regimes. There has been Kurdish rebellion movements in Turkey since

¹ "The Kurdish Population," InstitutKurde de Paris Institut, accessed March 21, 2019, <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004>

² Tugdar, EmelElif, and, Serhun Al. *Comparative Kurdish Politics in the Middle East*, Springer, 2018, xv.

³ Michael M. Gunter, "The continuing Kurdish problem in Turkey after O' calan's capture," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000): 849

⁴ NeophytosG.Loizides, "State ideology and the Kurds in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 4 (2010): 519

⁵ UK, Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note, *Turkey: Kurdish Political Parties*. Vol.3. Home Office, 2018, 17.

that time but the decades of 1970s and 1980s were the time when many Kurdish organizations came to screen. The term Kurd was replaced with "Mountainous Turk" during the late 1980s. Most important and leading Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) emerged after 1980 military coup.⁶ It was formed in 1978 with the aim of an independent and socialist Kurdistan. They launched guerilla warfare against the military government of Turkey. A lot of confrontation had taken place between the freedom fighters and security forces of Turkey. Almost 40,000 people died, thousands went missing and a large number became helpless and left their homeland and moved to other cities.⁷ Their leaders were imprisoned and sentenced to death. Even the Turkish journalist who interviewed Ocalan was sent to prison. Turkish President of Human Rights Association was killed for just intending a peaceful solution of Kurds issue in Turkey.⁸ This level of hate sentiment lies in Turkey for Kurds. Along with this, Kurds in Turkey are always suppressed by Turkey. In the last decade of 20th century, about 90 people were killed by Turkish Armed Forces in Southeastern Turkey on the day of Nevroz in 1992. About 50 Kurdish villages were destroyed in Kurdish populated area of Turkey. After the 1991 Turkish General Elections; in 1993, Kurdish Parliamentarians were killed, imprisoned and forced to exile and their parties were banned. In the same decade, almost 560,000 people were forced to migrate by the Turkish Government. According to the report of US State department, about 300,000 security forces of Turkey were present in Southeastern part of the country in a military operation. About 2000 villages has been destroyed in the confrontation between Turkish security forces and PKK from 1990-1997 which created 2 million refugees.⁹The PKK founder; Abdullah Ocalan was captured in Kenya in 1999 and is still in prison.¹⁰ There occurred a number of clashes between the Armed Forces of Turkey and PKK since 2005. The confrontations between Turkish armed forces and PKK were on peak during 2011 and 2012.

⁶ HisyarOzsoy, "Introduction: the Kurds' ordeal with Turkey in a transforming Middle East," *Dialectical Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (2013), 106.

⁷ Mustafa Gürbüz, "Rival Kurdish Movements in Turkey," (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 33.

⁸ Michael M. Gunter, "The continuing Kurdish problem in Turkey after O' calan's capture." *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000), 854.

⁹ Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's Kurdish question: Critical turning points and missed opportunities," *The Middle East Journal* (1997): 60.

¹⁰ Michael M. Gunter, "The continuing Kurdish problem in Turkey after Ocalan's capture," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000), 849.

Turkey and PKK since 2005. The confrontations between Turkish armed forces and PKK were on peak during 2011 and 2012.

Research Question

Despite of their own political parties, organization and other peace seeking movements, still there are facing a lot of problems particularly in Turkey. This research will primarily focus on the question that; what is the nature of actual problem between the Kurds and the Turkish government? Additionally this will also address that how Kurds are continuously suppressed by Turkish armed forces and government?

Hypothesis

Kurds are struggling for their independence but have failed politically to achieve an independent state. The term “Politically” refers to the ban of their political parties in Turkey. A political party should have an organized structure and a strong determination to their ideology. Whereas, their parties have weak organizational structure, internal divisions and lack of determination to the concerned issue. The other thing, “State” refers to an entity with defined territory, population and a sovereign government. Kurds don’t have a state for which they are struggling for decades.

1.2 Literature Review.

A lot of work has been done on Kurdish problem in Turkey. In an article, “Turkey’s Kurdish Question: Critical Turning Points and Missed Opportunities” by “Henry J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller”, the authors have discussed different time periods in which Kurds and their suppression has been explained. The author had point out the point that lack of unified leadership is the reason for their failure. To prove that argument, writers have explained Kurdish revolts in different era and reaction of different regimes or governments since First World War. The actual missed opportunities were after 1991 elections. That time incoming Prime Minister Demiril gave a peace promoting gesture by admitting, “The Kurdish Reality” but there had not been that coordination between military and political leadership. Civilian leadership was not fully aware of the military operations in Southeastern part of Turkey. When in 1993, PKK declare for ceasefire, Turkish Security forces continued the operation taking advantage of the PKK weakness.

Other conceptual missed opportunities of 1980 military coup and 1991 gulf war period are also discussed in this article.

The chapter, "Exogenous Shocks on the Eve of Millennium" from book, "The Rival Kurdish Movement in Turkey" written by Mustafa Gurbuz. In this chapter, the author had described the importance of Abdullah Ocalan among the Kurds. The writer supported his argument with the immense level of protests in the region after Ocalan's capture. Since after that, PKK strengthen its ties with the pro-Kurdish political parties in Turkey. The main point which worth to be mention is that politically the Kurdish Movement after Ocalan's capture became more prominent. The struggle for Kurdish cultural and democratic rights is also Mustafa's part of this study.

An article, "KURDS: A Marginalized and Criminalized People" is written by Alex Fitch. "The problem for the international community is realpolitik which does not allow for sentimentalism or idealistic notions about how humans should live in a perfect world".¹¹ The main point which the writer want to highlight is that peace process in Turkey between the Kurds and Turkish government can only be achieve if international community remove the ban on PKK and support Abdullah Ocalan good gestures for peace in the region.

This study has been done by Hizyar Ozsoy in 2013 named as, "Introduction: the Kurds ordeal with Turkey in a transforming Middle East". In this article, the two main demands of the Kurdish people have been highlighted as; end of cultural assimilation and forced oppression. Secondly, Kurdish political representation through their own institutions has been focused Turkey's stance towards Kurds in their Southeastern region has been softened due to the pressure created by Kurds in Iraq and Syria. The writer of this article argues that unless and until Turkey accepts the "Kurdish reality" in its areas, they cannot play a well dominant role in the Middle Eastern politics. For a "greater Turkey", the alliance between the two different ethnic groups of the region will be more significant.

Noam Lererin his article, "The Table of Peace: The Status of Kurds in Turkey" comes with an opinion that if Turkey had reconciliation with the Kurds of their country, it will

¹¹ Alex Fitch, "KURDS: A Marginalized and Criminalized People," Socialist Lawyer, No. 53 (October 2009), 24.

definitely create Turkey's better image in the outer world. The positive change in Government of Turkey towards the Kurdish language being taught as foreign language in their universities will strengthen the base of the negotiation table. Turkey's wish to get European Union membership has compelled it to take flexible steps to answer the Kurdish question in its borders. As the EU criteria is strict towards the human rights violation. European Union showed its concern in the military intervention in Turkey government policies as European countries have always promoted democracy and has set an example of flowing democracies.

Keeping in front all these studies, the failures of Kurds struggle specifically in Turkey will be the prior focus of this research. The formation of PKK at the end of 1970s has created a new chapter of Kurds struggle in Turkey. Since then, the guerilla struggle of PKK against oppressor has been significant. Kurds has been in continuous struggle for their independence in the region but are suppressed every time. After gulf war, there was blow to the emerging revolts in the region and a continuous containment by the Turkish government. Kurdish political leaderships and parliamentarians were sent to jail. A full extent of hate sentiment was shown by Turkish State towards the Kurds of their country. The capture of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 has increased politicization of Kurds on his call. In this work, the researcher will focus the on the Kurdish struggle in Post 9/11 time in Turkey. Kurds have continuously failed to achieve any remarkable success even after they politicize themselves in their struggle along with guerilla resistance.

1.3 Methodology of the Study

This research is an exploratory in which writer will explore the problem that lie in the Kurdish politics in Turkey due to which they are unable to meet any successful solution of the issue. Additionally, this is a qualitative research in which historical comparative analysis will be made to understand the main ongoing problem. Additionally, the tactics used by Turkish government to suppress them. The time period after 9/11 will be the main focus.

1.4 Theoretical Framework of Study

“Primordialism” is the theory of ethno-nationalism. Primordialism simply tries to answer the question that; where, when and how did the nation come into emergence. According to them, the answer is, “from antiquity” or nations are the natural entities that steeped in ancient times. It is the work of two famous anthropologists; Clifford Geertz and Edwards Shills however different authors had contributed to explain this theory. Clifford Geertz gives the concept of Primordialism in his book, “The Interpretation of Cultures” and applies it to nationalism. Whereas, Edward Shills is the first author to use the term “Primordialism” in order to describe “Family Relationships”.¹² According to Clifford Geertz, there are certain things that are very much associated with man and they are given. Geertz pointed out the sacredness of given: “contiguity and kin connection, religion, language, social practice, blood, customs, speech and so on.” Primordialists believe that nations are the product of “primordial ties of race, ancestry, religion, language and territory”.¹³ These all are given and natural founding entities. Clifford Geertz also argues that primordialist identities are not utterable. There are some attachments that are natural and linked us to the people that have same culture, language, religion, race and area of belonging. Primordialists simply believe that identities are given, firmly associated with the historical experiences one had within his/her family and other particular group. These are inexpressible and strong ties that are formed after a long process of crystallization.¹⁴ Clifford Geertz argue that primordial identities as given, ineffable, and deeply associated with sentiments.¹⁵

According to Edwards Shills, blood ties are an important factor in making attachments between the people of different kinship groups. Edwards Shills focuses on the point that primordialist entities that are limited to family. Family relationships play an important role in the emergence of an ethnic group in a particular society because conflicts between them would disperse them.

¹² C. E. Y. H. U. N Mahmudlu, "Theorizing nation building in Azerbaijan," Azerbaijani 'and Beyond: Perspectives on the Construction of National Identity. Berlin: Verlag Dr Köster(2017), 122.

¹³ Mahmudlu, 121.

¹⁴ Josep R.Llobera, "Recent theories of nationalism," (1999), 03.

¹⁵ Llobera, 09.

Another author Pierre van de Berghe argues that the continuation of kinship is called ethnicity and for the survival of group to achieve their common interests, this human organization plays an important role. According to the sociologists, religion, language, ethnicity and common land have been important factors of the afore-mentioned human organization throughout the history.¹⁶

Anthony D. Smith introduced the term, "Perennialism" that refers that nation is the historical antiquity and it is the type of political and social organization that is immemorial in character. An important argument is added by Adrian Hastings that modern nations have emerged because of the pressure of states. It is obvious that whenever an ethnic group is suppressed or put aside from the fundamental rights, there is an emergence of self-consciousness among them. It later become the factor of their unity and paves the way for their emergence as a nation. According to Steven Grosby, nation is a territorial community of nativity. He argues that nations differ from other social groups because of the difference of territorial centrality and relative uniformity of their culture.¹⁷ He also argues that all nations have some historical cause.

Another author Naomi Weir also focuses Primordialism in her study. According to her, ethnic ties are naturally inherent in us and we have deep natural connections with each other. These kin connections have led to the divisions based on language, race, religion and area.¹⁸ People are naturally bound to these attachments and cannot run away from them. Preferences are always given to relatives and close people.

Three main ideas in the work of mentioned Primordialists are:

- Primordial attachments are natural, more spiritual rather than sociological.
- Primordial sentiments are ineffable, overpowering and coercive: We do certain things under its restrictions. E.g. an individual is bound to Religion, Culture, and Language cannot escape it. Whenever we try to move out, we are attracted back because of the specific bond we have.

¹⁶ Mahmudlu, "Theorizing nation building in Azerbaijan," 123.

¹⁷ Mahmudlu, 124.

¹⁸ Naomi Weir, "Primordialism, constructivism, instrumentalism and Rwanda," Retrieved September 19th (2012), 02.

- Primordialism is about emotions and affection. (We are hurt when our language or religion is insulted by others)

We can see that few things are very common in holding a specific ethnic group together and these are religion, language, culture etc. These have made the bonds between the people of certain group and these bonds are very essential in human life. In essence, says that Ethnicities have existed since the dawn of history and the core of ethnic groups is socially perceived and is based on biological descent. There are many cultures today that consider primordial communities as universal and eternal.¹⁹ Ancestry and historical ties are very important factors in primordialism. This has become the reason for the destruction of many communities around the world as they do not agree to compromise on their kin attachments and belonging.

Kurds are the ancient people on the land of the Middle East. They speak same Kurdish language with different dialects as it changes as area changes. Majority of them speak Northern Kurdish dialect. As far as their religion is concerned, majority of them are Sunni Muslims. This might be the reason of the clashes between Hizbollah and PKK. Later reports confirmed that Turkish government was backing Hezbollah against PKK.²⁰ A worth-mentioning thing is that Kurds have territorial belonging, though they were divided across different borders after World War I. They want to preserve their identity, language, culture and want their own autonomous rule in their own areas. Kurdish language has faced serious hindrances in Turkey. Sometime even their schools were shut down but political reforms have paved the way to some extent. Language is the basic factor for the identity formation of any particular group.

In this study, the researcher will focus on the Kurdish politics under their own political parties. Their political parties are all ethnic based and they primarily focus on the going Kurdish question in Turkey. The theory of primordialism talks about the historic ties of a nation through common culture, language, religion, race etc. Kurds are struggling for their rights since long time ago. They think themselves a deserving people who should have given an independent land where they could establish their own government. Their

¹⁹ Weir, 06.

²⁰ "Kurds in Turkey," Harvard Divinity School, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/kurds-turkey>

ethnic ties are strong because their political parties have found continuous hindrance and pressure from the Turkish government. Whenever political party was banned, its substitute has come immediately which shows their determinacy to their ethnic identity. It should be like that and it's a good thing as they have a long history and a preserved culture and language. The basic points of primordialism fits on the study of Kurds that's why in this research, this theory has given importance.

1.5 Organization of the Study

This study has been completed in six chapters. Brief introduction is given in first chapter in which questions has been raised and hypothesis is also given. Review of literature has been discussed in this chapter and then methodology is also written on the basis of which study is done. Theoretical framework of study is also the part of this chapter.

Chapter two is about historical background of study. As this analysis is done on the basis on historical events that occurred between Kurds and Turkish government. Than chapter three is divided two sections; one is Kurdish political parties in Turkey. In this section, formation of Kurdish political parties by Kurds is explained in detail. Other section is about political struggle of Kurds in Turkey.

Next chapter four is again divided in two parts. In first part; Turkey's response towards Kurdish politics is given focus and second is action of Turkish government against militant wing of Kurds i-e PKK as Kurdish politics and PKK are very much link with each other.

Chapter five is about the problem that exists in Kurdish politics and struggle they are doing in Turkey for many decades. Future analysis is also given on the basis of historical events. The whole study is concluded in chapter six.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The largest ethnic community in Middle East after Persians, Arabs and Turks are Kurds. Nothing is certain about their origin on the land of Middle East however different people have expressed their views in books and articles. Their history traces back to 4000 years ago.²¹ Kurds have been identify as a separate distinct group two thousand years ago but they emerge as a community in the early twentieth century.²² Initially they were known as "Gurtie or Kur-ti" when Sir Henry Rawlinson interpreted this word for the people who covered this region of Middle East.²³ Later, when King of Kurds or "Shah-a-Kurdan" was mention among the enemies of the King of the Sassanid Dynasty, the word "Gurtie or Kur-ti" was replaced by present "Kurd".²⁴ Kurds were in their glorious period when they were ruling Babylonia but the Gutium (Kurdish) was overthrown by King of the fifth dynasty of Uruk in 2000 B.C.²⁵

In the seventh century, Kurds were force to leave the area of Lake Urmiya.²⁶ In that time, they accepted new religion after Arabs invasion and the empire doomed. Kurds has been frequently rebellious against other dissenting groups or different dynasties. They revolted in 645, 659 and 666 B.C against Ahwaz and Fars.²⁷ They rebelled against Umayyad's in 685, 702 and 708 B.C and revolted after every short interval in Abbasid Empire.²⁸ They apprehended Mosul in 840 and 866 B.C and some of the tribes supported the rebellions movements of Ba'qub al Saffar.²⁹ Their different tribes have been engaged in different war like places. They contributed a lot to the Islamic armies because of their soldier's services. One important point to mention here is that Kurds had never ruled by any Kurd ruler. Kurds have never been ruled by a single ruler or they never had their own Kurdish government.³⁰ Sultan Sandjar used the term "Kurdistan" for the first time in the twelfth

²¹ Edgar O' Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt 1961-1970*, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1973), 10.

²² David McDowall, "The Kurds in the age of Tribe and Empire," in *Modern History of the Kurds*, (London. New York I. B. Tauris, 1997), 22.

²³ A Waheed and AWaheid, *The Kurds and Their Country: A History of the Kurdish People, from Earliest Times to the Present*, (University Book Agency, 1958), 96.

²⁴ Waheed and Waheid, 108.

²⁵ Waheed and Waheid, 119.

²⁶ DerkKinnane, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (London; New York, Oxford University Press, 1964), 34.

²⁷ David McDowall, "The Kurds in the age of Tribe and Empire," 42.

²⁸ McDowall, 96.

²⁹ McDowall, 99.

century when first province was created of that name.³¹ The time changes for the Kurds in the same century and this century bought a good time for them. Twelfth century is also called golden age of the Kurds when Salah-ud- Ayubi became the governor of Egypt. A kind Kurdish ruler never distinguished between a Kurd and a non-Kurd to appoint ministers. During the thirteen century, Kurds were indulged in fighting the Khwarazmians and Mongol raiders.³² Some tribes remain loyal to Mongols and some showed rebellious resistance because of the economic devastation done by Mongols. The time got worsened when in 1393, Amir Taimoor seized Baghdad and went on to Mosul and his son Jalal ad Din Miranshah took control of Mardin, Tur Abdin, Diyarbakir and Husn Kayf.³³ At the start of the next century, Jazira bin Umar, Arbil and Mosul was sacked by Taimoor Lang and there was only one Christian village that was spared in that region.³⁴ In 1402, Turkey was conquered by Taimoor Lang but none of these routs remain permanent, only the Arabic language of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Turkish replaced the Greek in Asia Minor.³⁵

Most of the Kurdistan was in the hands of Ottomans after their invasion of that region. During the battle of 1514 between Persia and Ottomans, Kurds were on the Ottomans side in the fight and showed the active participation in the victory. ³⁶ Pacts were signed with Kurdish chiefs after the victory. They were given new lands and "Aghas" were appointed the chiefs of those lands. These Aghas were supposed to be the bridge between Ottoman government the Kurds. They were given independent status and a complete sovereignty to exercise their orders and were not required to pay any tribute to the Sultan. Kurds at that time were in a better condition, they were enjoying autonomy and had a chance to promote and preserve their culture. Ottomans were at war with Iran in the midst of 16th century and seized control of the Shahrizur and Bilkus areas with the assistance of

³⁰ Waheed, AShiekh, *The Kurds and Their Country: A History of the Kurdish People, from Earliest Times to the Present*, (University Book Agency, 1958), 56.

³¹ Kinnane, "The Kurds and Kurdistan" 49.

³² McDowall, "Incorporating the Kurds," in *Modern History of the Kurds*, (London. New York I. B. Tauris, 1997)149.

³³ McDowall, 150.

³⁴ McDowall, 152.

³⁵ Jan Knappert, "The Kurds: A Brief History," *International Journal on World Peace* 10, no. 2 (1993): 68.

³⁶ Gérard Chaliand, *A people without a country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (Olive Branch Press, 1993) 76.

Kurdish Amirs.³⁷ Kurds played a major role in helping Ottomans to siege back Baghdad. During that Ottoman Empire, they were having good ties with the Kurds. Kurdish Army was very important to Ottomans; they stood alongside with Turks when enrolled in the cavalry. The land of Kurds was divided into two parts after the Chaldiran battle; one, under loose control of Ottoman Empire and other was under the Persian Safavid Empire.³⁸ Kurds were never that loyal to the Persians as they were to the Ottomans. Religious sentiment can be stated as they were Sunni Muslims and the Persian Safavid was a Shia Empire. About 85% of Kurds were Sunni and 15% were Shia at that time and Shias were mostly settled in Safavid areas.³⁹

The bad time came when the Kurdish chiefs refused military service because of the interference of the Ottoman officials in the internal affairs like taxation and succession of the areas that came under those Kurdish chiefs. Ottoman Empire and Persia signed a treaty of Zohab in 1639 in which some areas came under the Persian Empire.⁴⁰ They were treated very badly and legally appointed Khans were subdued. During the next two centuries, the hostility inter-hostility in the Kurdish areas between the Persian and Ottoman Empire increased and both the Kings were happy with that. At that time, some heed was paid to listen to Kurd's woes but both the empires were not that interested for the settlement. During the late nineteenth century, Russians successfully created in creating some rebellious groups of Kurdish tribes against the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹

20th century started a new chapter in the discourse of Kurdish struggle in the region. Between 1915 and 1918, about 600,000 Kurds were killed.⁴² When World War 1 was ended and the Ottoman Empire was dismantled, it further marginalized the Kurds. The voices for independent Kurdistan were raised when Syria, Turkey and Iraq were declared independent states but the treaty of Lausanne ruined all of those efforts. However, in the previous Treaty of Sevres of 1920, Kurds were promised a separate State in the area

³⁷ McDowall, "Incorporating the Kurds," 160.

³⁸ O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt*, 130.

³⁹ O'Balance, 134.

⁴⁰ Nader Entessar, *Kurdish ethnonationalism*. Boulder, (Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1992), 45.

⁴¹ O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt*, 134.

⁴² O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt*, 139.

where they are majority in population.⁴³ This was strongly opposed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk that results in their division among four different countries. In 1923, a treaty of Lausanne was signed in which Kurds were divided among Iraq, Turkey and Syria.⁴⁴ Since that time, rebellious movement started for an autonomous or an independent Kurdistan and no decade has passed in which there was not any Kurdish struggle. This problem is always considered as Turkey's greatest problem. Kurds were not given any autonomy in Turkey and their efforts for their rights were brutally crushed every time. The rebellion movement started after the treaty of Sevres that put Ankara government in a very critical situation. Their culture was devastated and their language was banned to be taught at schools or even speak. A big revolt of Sheikh Said created much confidence in oppressed Kurdish people which lead them to revolt against the Turkish government once again. "Khoybun", the newly formed Kurdish liberation organization motivated Kurds to revolt again, this revolt was supported by neighbor Persia to weaken the Turkey government.⁴⁵ Another revolt was led by Aghas and Chiefs of the Kurds that emerged in Dersim area of Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey. The guerilla warfare toppled down three Turkish armies from 1930 to 1938 but was suppressed brutally very soon; this lead to the displacement of one million Kurdish people.⁴⁶ The term Kurd was replaced by "Mountainous Turk" who has forgotten their language in Turkey. A majority of the population was displaced from their native lands. Late 1940s is considered as the revival period for the Kurds.

Slight developments were seen in 1950s when Kurds took side of Adnan Menderes that later replaced the Kemalist regime.⁴⁷ They became parliamentarians and even ministers under Democratic Party. In the next decade, their conditions further improved but only under Turkish umbrella. Their own political parties were banned and they were allowed to do political activities only under Turkish political parties. The only way they had was to compromise on the current given status. They made deals with Turkish parties that Kurds will support them if they speak for the issues they are facing in East Anatolia.

⁴³ Eden Naby, "Rebellion In Kurdistan," *Harvard International Review* (1979): 02.

⁴⁴ Naby, 04.

⁴⁵ O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt*, 139.

⁴⁶ O' Balance, 141.

⁴⁷ Simon Haddad, "The Kurds in Turkey: context and current status," *Migracijske i etničke teme* 17, no. 1-2 (2001):92.

1970s was the time of revival of Kurdish nationalism. During this time, more than 15 Kurdish radical movements and parties emerged which were advocating political, social and cultural demands of Kurds.⁴⁸ The confrontation between Turkish armed forces and PKK started after 1980 military coup after it was created in 1978.

⁴⁸ Haddad, 92.

KURDISH POLITICS IN TURKEY

3.1 Kurdish Political Parties in Turkey

Kurds in Turkey are representing themselves through different organizations and political parties. Some of them are radical Kurdish groups fighting guerilla warfare for decades. While some share the ideology of peace and democracy to get the Kurds their fundamental rights. Among the entire Kurdish struggle in Turkey, the most prominent and threatening to Turkey is the Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK) or *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*. PKK was founded in November 27, 1978 and began its violent uprisings in 1984.⁴⁹ It is the armed group of the Kurds that had continuously fought with the Turkish armed forces through guerilla warfare but declared ceasefire in 2004. Abdullah Ocalan was captured in 1999 and after that, he opposed armed struggle and formally announced for a democratic republic.⁵⁰ Later on, the name of PKK was also changed in 2002 to The Congress of Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan (KADEK), than to Kongra-gel in 2003 and again to PKK in 2005.⁵¹ Since its formation, PKK has been actively directly or indirectly associated with the Kurds politics in Turkey. Though PKK and Kurdish political parties have different organizational structures but majority of the Kurdish leaders have somehow connected to PKK because of the pro-Kurdish sentiment that exist among them.⁵²

1990s was the decade of political struggle but many of the Kurdish parliamentarians were sent to prison by the Turkish government after general elections of 1991. People's Labor Party (HEP) was formed in 1990 and had won 22 seats in grand assembly of Turkey in general elections of 1991.⁵³ HEP emerged from within the Turkish Parliament and Democratic Populist Party or *Sosyal demokrat Halk Partisi* (SHP). SHP was an extension of Kemalist parliamentary tradition and second most popular party emerged after 1987

⁴⁹ Michael M Gunter, "The Turkish-Kurdish peace process stalled in neutral," *Insight Turkey* 16, no. 1 (2014): 21.

⁵⁰ Francis O'Connor, "The Kurdish Movement in Turkey: Between Political Differentiation and Violent Confrontation," Vol. 147. (DEU, 2017): 07.

⁵¹ O'Connor, 07.

⁵² Gürbüz, "Rival Kurdish Movements in Turkey," 34.

⁵³ "History of Kurdish political parties in Turkey," HDP Europ, accessed March 3, 2019, http://en.hdpeurope.com/?page_id=537

election.⁵⁴ Both HEP and SHP jointly participated in 1991 election.⁵⁵ This party was the mixture of both Turkish and Kurdish leaderships but all of the Turkish leaders left the party when they realized that it was accentuating Kurdish issues over their leftist ideology. Democratic Party (DEP) or *Demokrasi Partisi* was founded in May, 1993 and succeeded the outlawed Freedom and Democratic party (OZDEP) which was formed an year before.⁵⁶ Government of Turkey was busy in banning the Kurdish political parties but the enthusiastic Kurds were organizing themselves in new parties. Whenever, a party was banned, its substitute came immediately. DEP members made Democracy and Change party but it was banned early in 1996.⁵⁷ In 2002, this party was succeeded by Rights and Freedom Party or *HAK-PAR* which seeks the solution of Kurdish problem through European Union.⁵⁸ Turkey membership of EU was the main concern in the municipal elections of 2004. This party leadership was also in good ties with the Kurdish political parties in Iraq. Murat Buzlak was the leader of People Democratic Party (HADEP) that was formed in 1994 and took part in 1995 and 1999 elections.⁵⁹

Peace and Democracy party (BDP) was formed in 2008.⁶⁰ 20 parliamentarians and 98 mayors joined it when its predecessor was banned by the constitutional court.⁶¹ This party seeks a democratic solution of a Kurdish issue in Turkey. BDP was joined by MPs of Democratic Society Party (DTP) when the later was banned by the constitutional court due to the accusation that it had links with the PKK. In 2011 general elections, BDP leaderships contested elections as independent candidates and thirty six deputies got elected.⁶² Later, the political conditions of the Kurdish political parties got better when

⁵⁴ O'Connor, "The Kurdish Movement in Turkey,"09.

⁵⁵ O'Connor, 09

⁵⁶ O'Connor, 12.

⁵⁷ Liza Mügge, "Kurdish Diaspora Politics," in *In Beyond Dutch Borders: Transnational Politics among Colonial Migrants, Guest Workers and the Second Generation*, 181-192, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010): 185.

⁵⁸ Mügge, 185.

⁵⁹ "History of Kurdish political parties in Turkey,"HDP Europe, accessed March 3, 2019, http://en.hdpeurope.com/?page_id=537

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ FilizBaşkan and AylinGüney, "Turkey's June 2011 parliamentary elections," *Journal of Balkan and near eastern studies* 14, no. 1 (2012): 169.

⁶² Gerald Robin, "Understanding Turkey's 2011 General Elections Results," Foreign Policy Research Institute, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2011/06/understanding-turkeys-2011-general-election-results/>

People Democratic Party or HDP was formed. Democratic Society Party was also formed by the joined efforts of DEHAP Party. Democratic People's Party was formed early when the above mentioned HADEP Party was closed by the Turkish constitutional court. People Democratic Party or HDP is a pro-Kurdish political party founded in 2012 and is the merger of 20 socialist parties of Kurds.⁶³ Later on, its sister political party DBP or Democratic Regions Party (DBP) was formed that won 2014 elections in 68 districts and 23 towns in the South East Kurdish areas.⁶⁴

A charity organization, Mustazaf-Der (The Oppressed Association) began their political activism in 2013 but that was shut down by the government because of the accusation of its ties with the radical Sunni organization; Hezbollah. Free Cause Party or *Hür Dava Partisi* or *HÜDA-PAR* was created in 2013 and participated in 2014 elections.⁶⁵ Presently, the largest Kurdish party in Turkey is HDP. It is the only party that deters the AK-Party in Diyarbakir and government also consider it a threat as it has the capability to unite Kurds on one page. Addition to all these parties, there are also small Kurdish political parties for example Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK), Kurdistan Democratic Party, Freedom and Socialism Party (OSP), Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), and Azadi Movement Party are also working.⁶⁶ But these parties do not play that significant role that HDP has played and playing right now.

⁶³ UK, Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note, *Turkey: Kurdish Political Parties*. Vol. 3. Home Office. 2018, 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

⁶⁵ Gürbüz, "Rival Kurdish Movements in Turkey," 46.

⁶⁶ Ari Khalidi, "Turkey's Kurdish parties reiterate support for Kurdistan referendum," *Kurdistan24*, accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/ab0abee9-3e10-40bd-8526-24be513aeae7>

3.2 Political Struggle of Kurds

Kurds had been in continuous struggle to get their basic fundamental rights. Their politics have become significant in Turkey in early 1990s when they had their own political parties. Political struggle had gain momentum after the capture of their charismatic leader Abdullah Ocalan. Their political parties have gained support from their people but State politics had never allowed them to mainstream themselves easily. The participation of Kurds in Turkey politics had more or less created the sense of confidence in Kurdish politics which they badly need as they are struggling for their fundamental rights almost for a century. In 1991 general elections, pro-Kurdish political parties were successful in getting 22 seats. The parties which took part in general elections secured a good position in the voting. Kurdish people had shown interest in their representative parties but still were not able to get into the Turkish parliament. Every party faced the same suppression as their predecessors did. Most of the time, the accusation was their hard ties and links with PKK as it is an armed group which deter the Turkish government through its guerilla warfare. Two parties; People Democratic Party (HDP) and Democratic Regions Party (DBP) are the popular ones that are functional at the national level in Turkey while the later mentioned is limited to Kurdistan municipalities.⁶⁷ These two have contrasted ideologies; as one's election campaign was based on the Kurdish basic rights and in contrast, other talked about peace and stability at national level.

HADEP party participated in 1995 elections after DEP was closed and gained support in all of the Kurdish areas.⁶⁸ HADEP was not in a strong position to gain 10% elections threshold in order to get access to the parliament but unlike 1995 elections, HADEP performance in 1999 municipal election was worth praising. It secured 27 mayor offices and swept 13 provinces.⁶⁹ Kurds have remarkably won in municipal elections for the first time under the pro-Kurdish political party. Kurdish candidates again got 30 mayor seats in 2004 elections. They also secured good positions in Diyarbakir.⁷⁰ In Diyarbakir;

⁶⁷ Gürbüz, "Rival Kurdish Movements in Turkey," 45.

⁶⁸ Berk Emek, "The Kurdish Political Movement in Turkey: Transformation from an Ethnic into A Progressive Party," PhD diss, (Central European University, 2015): 25.

⁶⁹ Nicole F. Watts, "Activists in office: pro-Kurdish contentious politics in Turkey," *Ethnopolitics* 5, no. 2 (2006): 135.

⁷⁰ Watts, 135.

budgets, business and public property was the responsibility of Kurdish mayors. This positive impact on Kurds in Turkey can be gauged by the fact that a lot of people celebrated Nowroz in Diyarbakir beside the fact that unpleasant history is attached to the Nowroz. Half a million people attended Nowroz in 2002 and three quarters of million celebrated it with full zeal in 2004 and 2005.⁷¹ Kurdish politics had gained momentum in Turkey after the capture of Ocalan. He expressed opposite views against violent struggle after his capture. From 2000-2004, the collective public expression had increased and limitations over this were slacken off.⁷²

In ten provinces, DTP was victorious against AK-Party and secured a noteworthy number of municipalities.⁷³ The pro-Kurdish political party was successful in 2007 and 2009 municipal elections and secured seats in 99 districts and seven provinces.⁷⁴ Free Cause Party; far right Sunni conservative party got 92,000 votes in 2014 elections showed that it had the capability to attract the conservative Kurdish voters.⁷⁵ This shows how Kurdish vote were divided between HDP and Free Cause Party. AK-Party also attracts many Kurdish voters and gain significant popularity in the Kurdish areas.

For the first time in 2015 elections, HDP compete as political party that represented the Kurds of Turkey. When People Democratic Party (HDP) was formed in 2012, it started trying to incorporate all Kurdish problems under one flag and get it into mainstream politics.⁷⁶ Prior to 2015, Kurdish leaders have been into the Turkish parliament in 2007 and 2011 but as independent candidates.⁷⁷ The independent candidates from Peace and Democracy Party performed a very important role in 2011 parliamentary elections. They obtained 6.65% of the total votes and 36 out of 43 deputies were elected.⁷⁸ June 2015 was

⁷¹ Watts, 137.

⁷² Watts, 137.

⁷³ Güneş Murat Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (2010): 784

⁷⁴ CumaÇiçek, "Elimination or Integration of Pro-Kurdish Politics: Limits of the AKP's Democratic Initiative," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 1 (2011): 19.

⁷⁵ Çiçek, 21.

⁷⁶ Emek, "The Kurdish Political Movement in Turkey: Transformation from an Ethnic into A Progressive Party," 27.

⁷⁷ ÖzgeKemahlıoğlu, "Winds of change? The June 2015 parliamentary election in Turkey," *South European Society and Politics* 20, no. 4 (2015): 446.

⁷⁸ FilizBaşkan and AylinGüney, "Turkey's June 2011 parliamentary elections," *Journal of Balkan and near eastern studies* 14, no. 1 (2012): 165.

the time when many Kurdish voters voted for HDP. These were those who voted for Justice and Development Party (AKP) in previous elections. This showed the great transformation in the Kurdish politics. Again, a sense of nationalism was about to appear as the voters returned to their own Kurdish parties.

In June 2018 elections, Kurdish votes have been split between HDP and AK-Party in Eastern and Southeastern cities of Turkey. HDP performance was very bad in November 2015 parliamentary elections as it lost in all cities of the region.⁷⁹ In 2018, AK-Party got 18.18 % votes in Sirnak which was 11% in 2015 elections while HDP lost 15% which was 85% in 2015.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Alican Tekingunduz, "What was Kurds' Decision in Turkey's Election?" TRT World, accessed: March 4, 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/what-was-the-kurds-decision-in-turkey-s-elections--18450>

⁸⁰ Tekingunduz, accessed March 4, 2019.

TURISH GOVERNMENT AND KURDS

4.1 Turkey's Response to Kurdish Politics

Handling the Kurds issue is one of the most important concerns of the Turkish politicians while running campaign for the elections. Political parties of Kurds in Turkey have always been pressurized by police and government and were always in fear of being ban. The Kurdish political parties and leaderships have been in serious trouble and have found a lot of hindrance in mainstreaming themselves. Kurds have been participating in Turkey's politics since 1990 through different ethnic-based political parties. Government of Turkey had worked with strict policy to handle Kurdish nationalism. Different tactics were used by the Turkish officials to 'Turkify' the Kurds and became successful to very extent and those oppose faced serious consequences. Their parties have been closed down continuously by the government. Their leaders have been captured and the nationalist movements had been suppressed by the government. Turkey's government had responded to PKK guerilla warfare and a lot of confrontations are there between PKK and Turkish armed forces in which there are huge casualties and significant number of people had been displaced from their native lands. From year 1993-2003, Turkish constitutional court has banned four political parties of Kurds.⁸¹ Despite all these efforts to vanish the Kurdish question, Kurds have somehow managed to keep their identity alive through political parties or social organizations. Whenever, their political party was banned, its substitute came immediately and the MPs from the previous party got merged into the new platforms.

The first Kurdish political party HEP established in 1990 performed well in 1991 elections and was able to secure 22 deputies in the parliament. HEP played a major role in Kurdish political representation and for the first time mentioned 22 members got access to the parliament. This political party was banned by the Turkish government in 1993. HEP was accused of taking people to inferiority complex and creating sense of minority among the people.⁸² Their deputies Hatip Dicle and Leyla Zana were denounced

⁸¹ Watts, "Activists in office," 130.

⁸² O'Connor, "The Kurdish Movement in Turkey," 09.

for having relations with PKK and were punished to jail in 1994.⁸³ Right after that, OZDEP was created but soon outlawed by the government. Then the emergence of DEP (Democracy Party) was a chance for the Kurds to paved their way to parliament. Tansu Ciller; who was the Prime Minister of Turkey during that time started a campaign to clear the parliament from "terrorist's parliamentarians" and DEP members were arrested from parliament by the police while few of them managed to flee out of the country.⁸⁴ After the ban of DEP by constitutional court, HADEP party emerged as a key player in Kurdish representation in Turkey. This party had created its image very well among the Kurds of the country therefore Turkish government was using different tactics to lower its popularity. For five years, any political activity was banned for 46 HADEP members.⁸⁵ HADEP senior leaderships had denied the accusations over the party that it shares links to the PKK and even it had denied the Abdullah Ocalan invitation to join exile PKK parliament in Europe.⁸⁶ Later on in 2003, constitutional court banned this party.⁸⁷

There is a change one can observe that came in 2002 elections. The thing that was holding Kurds together was a string of their ethnicity. It became weaker when religious sentiment was added to their ideology. Some Kurds wished to maintain Kurdish identities along with Islamic identities while some were hardcore nationalists that were religiously flexible people. Justice and Development Party (AKP) compete in 2002 elections with their Islamic slogans and for the first time in Turkey, any political party was able to win majority seats in the parliament with 34% of the total vote for the first time in Turkey.⁸⁸ This party created difficulties for many opposition parties especially for those with leftist ideologies. This became the reason for the failure of Kurdish political party of that time. Religious sentiment prevailed over ethnic politics and Kurds were divided on that.

⁸³ O'Connor, 09.

⁸⁴ Henri J. Barkey, "The people's democracy party (hadep): the travails of a legal Kurdish party in Turkey," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 1 (1998): 187.

⁸⁵ "Turkey: Whether the People's Democracy Party (HalkinDemokrasiPartisi, HADEP) continued unofficially after its ban in March 2003; whether the Democratic People's Party (DemokratikHalkPartisi, DEHAP) or Democratic Society Party (DemokratikToplumPartisi, DTP) were informally referred to as HADEP," Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, accessed March 9, 2019 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e43ce7c2.html>

⁸⁶ Henri J. Barkey, "The people's democracy party (HADEP): the travails of a legal Kurdish party in Turkey," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 1 (1998): 136.

⁸⁷ Watts, "Activists in office," 134.

⁸⁸ M. HakanYavuz and Nihat Ali Özcan, "The Kurdish question and Turkey's justice and development party," *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 1 (2006):108.

According to the mayor of Diyarbakir who belonged to aforementioned party, 600 party workers were arrested in 2003 (from January to August).⁸⁹ Their offices were raided, their workers were arrested from different rallies; they were threatened and their supporters were continuously annoyed at the checkpoints. DEHAP was dissolved after it received serious shocks in 2004 municipal elections.⁹⁰ Many writers argue about the flexible policies of the newly formed government in 2002. According to Güneş Murat Tezcür, Prime Minister Recep Tayyeb Erdogan adopted an accommodative policy towards Kurds and also blamed the previous policies of the state. For the first time in the history, TV programs were broadcasted in Kurdish language.⁹¹ This was the time when Turkey was keeping her eyes on the membership of European Union and for this purpose; it had to come up with a democratic country. There was a positive change in the stance of the Turkish government towards Kurds as the ban on their publications was lifted. Despite all these appreciative steps, Turkish government and its officials was not interested in any recognition of the Kurdish identity in Turkey.⁹²

DEHAP was substituted by Democratic Society Party (DTP). This party gave tough time to AKP in southeast of Turkey in 2009 elections as AK-Party lost to DTP in local elections of March 2009 in the Southeast.⁹³ DTP emerged a popular Kurdish political party in Turkey but constitutional court banned it. It was accused that it had links with the militant group PKK.⁹⁴ Finally in December 2009, street violence increased tensions throughout the Turkey and for threatening the State's unity, the court banned DTP.⁹⁵ Than for the elections of 2011, Justice and Development Party manifesto was clear to promote democracy and viable economy but it lost Kurdish support. Kurdish issue was

⁸⁹ "Turkey: The situation and treatment of members, supporters and sympathizers of leftist parties, particularly the People's Democratic Party (HADEP) and Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) (January 2003 - September 2004), 21 September 2004," Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, accessed: March 9, 2019, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e43ce7c2.html>

⁹⁰ Nil S. Satana, "The Kurdish Issue in June 2011 Elections: Continuity or Change in Turkey's Democratization?" *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 2 (2012), 175.

⁹¹ Murat Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey," 784.

⁹² Murat Tezcür, 789.

⁹³ Somer, Murat, and Evangelos G. Liaras. "Turkey's new Kurdish opening: religious versus secular values," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010), 155.

⁹⁴ "Factbox: Turkey's history of banning parties," *Reuters*, accessed; March 9, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-constitution-banned-factbox/factbox-turkeys-history-of-banning-parties-idUSTRE6423UA20100503>

⁹⁵ Murat Somer and Evangelos G. Liaras, "Turkey's new Kurdish opening: religious versus secular values," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010), 155.

not given that importance in AKP election campaign. The presence of Kurdish issue was openly denied by the ruling party.⁹⁶

Peace and Democratic Party (BDP) faced serious troubles after 2011 parliamentary elections. Their deputies were in prison and that of Diyarbakir got away with his seat due to the accusation of his links with PKK.⁹⁷ BDP found other difficulties too during that time. Supreme Board of Election of Turkey (YSK) banned their 12 leaders to lead rallies and to compete in elections.⁹⁸ Their politicians were also accused of having membership of KCK (Kurdistan Communities Unit) which is also famous for its associations with PKK. Their elected member and mayors were called for a trial.⁹⁹

HDP tried to present itself a Turkish national party rather than limited to Kurdish ethnic political party. It challenges the AK party in June, 2015 elections and gained the support of Kurdish people. This was the time when Syrian crisis was going on and Kurdish fighters across the borders were playing an important role. HDP shared good links with PKK which was unbearable to Turkish government. This was also creating difficulties for HDP to strengthen its roots as a autonomous political party. Terror propaganda charges were applied on the Kurdish leaderships of HDP and they were jailed as they were accused of having connections with PKK. HDP former co-chairperson SelahattinDemirtas was sentenced to four years and eight months jail because of his speech he did back in September, 2013.¹⁰⁰ However, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has objected Turkey for this step and asked for legal proceedings for HDP co-chairperson.¹⁰¹ In a response, Turkish court rejected the release appeal of Demirtas saying that ECHR decision had been finalized yet. Turkish government cannot

⁹⁶ Satana, "The Kurdish Issue in June 2011 Elections: Continuity or Change in Turkey's Democratization?" 177.

⁹⁷ Satana, 184.

⁹⁸ Gunter Siefert, "parliamentary crisis follows Turkish elections constitutional and kurdish question demand resolution test opposition refused cooperation," German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 02.

⁹⁹ ÖzgeKemahlioğlu, "Winds of change? The June 2015 parliamentary election in Turkey," *South European Society and Politics* 20, no. 4 (2015), 449.

¹⁰⁰ "Turkey upholds sentencing of Kurdish politician Demirtas," Aljazeera, accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/turkey-upholds-sentencing-kurdish-politician-demirtas-181204161928852.html>

¹⁰¹ "Turkish Court Keeps the Kurdish Politician Demirtas in Jail despite ECHR," Reuters, accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-demirtas/turkish-court-keeps-kurdish-politician-demirtas-in-jail-despite-echr-idUSKCN1NZ1IR>

afford such popular opposition politicians on ground that's why is not taking this matter seriously. HDP denies its links with PKK but Turkey is continuously accusing HDP for that. Additionally, in last year; chief of EU foreign affairs Fedrica Mogherini called for the release of Selahattin Demirtas in conference which was offended by Turkish foreign Minister that they will consider it the defense of those people who are a threat to elected democratic government of Turkey.¹⁰²

Turkish government appointed more than 20 administrators in Kurdish municipalities and removed the elected mayors in 2016.¹⁰³ Turkey is still working against those Kurdish politicians who are struggling to reclaim the administration. President Tayyep Erdogan again seized those municipalities in which Kurdish mayors were elected in 2018.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² "Turkish Court Keeps the Kurdish Politician Demirtas in Jail despite ECHR," Reuters, accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-demirtas/turkish-court-keeps-kurdish-politician-demirtas-in-jail-despite-echr-idUSKCN1NZ11R>

¹⁰³ "Turkey removes two dozen elected mayors in Kurdish militant crackdown," Reuters, accessed May 14, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kurds/turkey-removes-two-dozen-elected-mayors-in-kurdish-militant-crackdown-idUSKCN11H065>

¹⁰⁴ Ari Khalidi, "Erdogan vows re-seizure of Kurdish municipalities should HDP wins local elections," Kurdistan24, accessed May 14, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/4dfe0b6b-5400-4fe1-981d-b0159cc67faf>

4.2 Turkish Government against PKK

PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) is militant group of Kurds founded in 1978 with a manifesto of separate socialist State for Kurds. It began its strikes against Turkey after 1980 military coup. There are a lot of confrontations between Turkish Armed Forces and PKK. A huge number of people had been died because of their conflicts. As majority of Kurdish parties are ethnic-based parties and PKK is also an ultra-nationalist movement that was founded for an independent Kurdistan. An important point to notice is that majority of the Kurdish leaderships is directly or indirectly linked to PKK.¹⁰⁵ Therefore it became vital for the Turkish government to initiate plans to handle PKK. This organization was not in mood to label itself as terrorist organization as it wants to indulge itself in socio-political activities. PKK has a well-built association with the Kurdish political struggle. The movement became active on political ground after Abdullah Ocalan was captured in 1999.¹⁰⁶ He declared to give up the armed struggle they started was ready to promote full democracy in Turkey. Despite of the fact that PKK had officially announce that independent Kurdistan is no longer in their agenda but they want equal fundamental rights and representation; Turkey still considered them a threat.¹⁰⁷ States never trust someone whenever there is a matter of national security.

Active military force has been used against PKK by Turkey since PKK started guerilla warfare in 1984. By the start of twenty first century, the situation was highly under control of the Turkish government. They had used various legal and illegal methods.¹⁰⁸ The state of emergency was left in 2002 which was imposed in 1987 as after 2002; for EU membership, a numbers of democratic reforms were tried by AK Party. About 378,335 Kurds left their villages and more than fifty thousands were arrested by Turkish government due to the charges of terrorism over them.¹⁰⁹ This was the level of pressure Turkey was building on PKK. PKK regain its dominance after the HADEP party

¹⁰⁵ Gürbüz, "Rival Kurdish Movements in Turkey," 35.

¹⁰⁶ Gurbuz, 38.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Hatem and Mark Dohrmann, "Turkey's Fix for the" Kurdish Problem," *Middle East Quarterly* (2013), 53.

¹⁰⁸ Marlies Casier, "Designated terrorists: The Kurdistan Workers' Party and its struggle to (re) gain political legitimacy," *Mediterranean Politics* 15, no. 3 (2010), 395.

¹⁰⁹ Hatem and Dohrmann, 54.

performed extra-ordinary in local elections. It got 60% of the total votes casted in Diyarbakir and its victory increase the level of confidence among PKK members.¹¹⁰ It not only polished PKK members but also overall Kurds settled in Diyarbakir and gave a serious blow was given by Turkish government to PKK when Democratic People's Party (HADEP) was banned in 2003 by the constitutional court of Turkey. The Turkish government shut down the Pro-Kurdish specifically pro-PKK newspaper five times during the time between 1999 and 2005.¹¹¹ This newspaper published clear things related to independent Kurdistan and Ocalan's imprisonment.

Turkey government took the matter of PKK on political negotiations table in 2009. A lot of steps were taken by AKP to address the Kurdish problem; like lessen the patrolling of Turkish army in Kurdish regions, allowing Jumma prayer sermons in Kurdish language, allowing of Kurdish language books in public libraries and those villages whose names were changed from Kurdish language were restored. This step of AKP was strongly criticized by the opposition parties that though Turkey knew how much PKK can be harmful to national unity and security, still government is giving them these leverages.¹¹² One of the important strategy Turkey government is trying to pursue is to lessened the political popularity of PKK among Kurds of their country. The negotiation process went better when the guerilla group of PKK entered Turkey through Iraq-Turkey border for peace negotiations which were not arrested by Turkish government; this was taken by PKK as a gesture of peace.¹¹³ Later, people rejoin the guerilla movement because Turkish media didn't play an effective role highlighting the celebrations of Kurds and PKK members on Iraq-Turkey borders. The Oslo negotiations didn't go successful because in 2011 and 2012, conflicts between PKK and security forces were increased.¹¹⁴

During the elections of 2015, the condition of violence between both rivals was on peak. The intensity of the clashes between the two mentioned forces became high when Kurdish Lawyer and activist Tahir Elçi was killed in Diyarbakir and two Kurdish mayors

¹¹⁰ AlizaMarcus, "Turkey's PKK: rise, fall, and rise again?" *World Policy Journal* 24, no. 1 (2007), 78.

¹¹¹ Marcus, 51.

¹¹² GokhanBaçık and BezenBalamirCoskun. "The PKK problem: Explaining Turkey's failure to develop a political solution," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 3 (2011),251.

¹¹³ HarunErcan, "Talking to the ontological other: armed struggle and the negotiations between the Turkish state and the PKK." *Dialectical anthropology* 37, no. 1 (2013), 117.

¹¹⁴ Ercan,121.

of Diyarbakir Gültan Kışanak and Fırat Anlı were arrested on October 25, 2016 because of their links with PKK.¹¹⁵ In the same year, more than 100 Kurdish fighters were killed by the Turkish forces. Most of them went back to their mountain camps in Northern Iraq, claimed by the Turkish forces.¹¹⁶ After 2015, the peace condition got worsened which can understand from the mentioned incidents. In 2017, seven Turkish soldiers were killed by the PKK guerillas and still in the present year, these activities are on their verge but the conflict now has been extended outside of the Turkish borders. Government of Turkey alleged that PKK's Kurdish militants were involved in the attack on the Turkey's Army base in northern Iraq which had destroyed their military equipment.¹¹⁷ This situation is directly or indirectly affecting Kurdish politics in Turkey. Presently Kurdish political Party (HDP) is working hard to gain maximum representation to completely mainstream themselves in Turkish politics but is facing many hurdles.

¹¹⁵ "Turkey-Kurdish Conflict: 2015- Present," *Institute of Security and Development Policy*, accessed April 12, 2019, <http://isdip.eu/content/uploads/2016/12/2016-Turkeys-Kurdish-Conflict-2015-Present.pdf>

¹¹⁶ "Turkey: Deadly clashes between military and Kurdish PKK," *Aljazeera*, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/turkey-deadly-clashes-military-kurdish-pkk-160903165435086.html>

¹¹⁷ "Conflict between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups," *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups>

PROBLEM AND FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The most marginalized people in Turkey have been in serious trouble since decades. They have faced continuous suppression through various ways but had not stopped their struggle. After 1980s, their political armed struggle has made them prominent in Turkish politics but still have not get that status they have been struggling for. Kurds; the people who are the ancient and victimized people on the land of the Middle East have faced problems because they are not like the Turks. They have been demanding for an autonomous region in which they can live under their own government. On the other side, the state of Turkey has always considered them a threat to their national security and has treated them accordingly.

All of their differences as a nation on which Kurds are proud off have faced aggressive response. As a separate ethnic community, they speak different language from Turks. Kurdish language has itself various dialects. Their language has faced a lot of problems from the Turkish government. The recent information includes that the number of books in Kurdish language decreased in 2017. A huge amount of books published in Kurdish language in the mentioned year decreased to 171 because of the crackdown by the Turkish government.¹¹⁸ A recent example of Kurdish political author Faut Onen can be taken as he has been sentenced to 37 months jail for his writings in support of Kurdistan.¹¹⁹

They have never been able to fully enjoy their cultural events as we have an example of 1992 Nowroz massacre that killed more than 90 Kurds. Turkish government forbidden the name Nowroz and replaced it with Nevruz as their national spring holiday. Its other spelling was banned completely as it was Kurdish spelling. Kurds are trying to mainstream their politics by preserving their identity whereas Turkey has replace the term “Kurd” with “Mountainous Turk” in late 1980s. Turkey has taken it as a challenge and a sense of insecurity to the state.

¹¹⁸ Ari Khalidi, “Fewer Kurdish books published last year amid Turkey crackdown,” Kurdistan 24, accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/bc7c1393-0437-4442-a2e0-366b9485d1c8>

¹¹⁹ RawaBarwari, “Turkish court sentences Kurdish author to 37 months over writings,” Kurdistan 24, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/a101e6dc-ba3b-446b-97cb-9f47320fb0f4>

A lot of political parties that were created after 1990 aimed to solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey. These parties were dismantled and outlawed by the government. Their leaderships and workers were imprisoned, banned and sent to exile in order to suppress the Kurdish struggle. An interesting thing to observe here is that their political struggle did not stop whenever any strict action was taken by the government. For example, Democratic Party (DEP) was formed in 1993 when Freedom and Democratic Party (OZDEP) was banned that was formed a year before. When the Democratic Society Party (DTP) was outlawed, Turkey, its MPs joined Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) which was formed in 2008. These are just two quoted; others are explained in the previous chapter. One can pin two points here; was this strong political struggle that was strengthening Kurds? Or can we call it their political weakness that was forcing them to go for new parties. Formation of new parties is the sign of their continuous political struggle but there are also other challenges to it. New party means new registration, new party constitution, manifesto, new election plans and campaign and many other hurdles. Additionally, it shows their internal differences and divisions. The People's Democratic Party (HDP) did not succeed the former banned party but it replaced the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) that disappeared in 2014.¹²⁰

HDP is the well-known party which represents Kurds of Turkey but in general elections of 2015, Free Cause Party *Hüda-Pargained* Kurdish votes.¹²¹ Beside the fact that this party had also said that it would support Tayyip Endogen in presidential elections of 2018. What else one can expect from Kurdish politics than if their voters are not only divided among their own representative parties but also are supporters of far-right conservative party. Kurdish political parties should develop sense of trust in their voters. They have to come on one platform in order to mainstream themselves.

According to the report of Kurdistan 24 news, eight Kurdish political parties and other movements have made an alliance named as; "Kurdistani Alliance" with an aim to

¹²⁰ UK, Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note, *Turkey: Kurdish Political Parties*. Vol.3, Home Office, 2018, 12.

¹²¹ "Turkey elections 2018: Understanding the political parties," TRT WORLD, accessed May 20th, 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-elections-2018-understanding-political-parties-18234>

reclaim the municipalities which were detained by the government Diyarbakir city.¹²² This is the report of first month of this year. Now alliance here means they were not on the same page that they should have been many years ago. They have their internal grievances against each other. Weak, dismantle and ideology less political structure can never give them that success they are struggling for decades.

In Turkey, after the creation of PKK, militant uprisings increased which has put the local Kurds of Turkey in more difficult situation because Turkish government now had a reason for their brutal action against Kurds as it became a threat to their national security. Important thing to mention here is that PKK was involved in violent activities but it was their political leaders who faced consequences. Whenever a party was banned, the accusation was its link with PKK. They were banned, imprisoned and sent to exile. This put very negative effects on Kurdish politics on Kurdish politics in Turkey. For example, few days' back 33 cases have been filed against 21 Kurdish opposition leaders and Members of Parliament to push them out of their elected positions and to pave the way for their imprisonment.¹²³ They are accused of their affiliations with terrorist organizations.

Their first political party was established in 1990 and till now many more has been established and banned by the Turkish constitutional court. They did not have mainstream themselves completely in Turkish politics. They need a strong political representation. Their continuous political struggle and firm will to give rights to Kurds can give them remarkable success. Turkey is a well develop country and plays a remarkable role in the Middle East at regional politics. Kurds should understand that politics is the way through which they can achieve what they have been striving for from decades.

¹²² RawaBarwari, "Kurdish parties in Turkey unite to reclaim gov-seized municipalities," Kurdistan24, accessed May 24th, 2019, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/58a68e12-360f-405a-9f0a-b77d62856c66>

¹²³ RawaBarwari, "Turkey's Erdogan seeks to strip 21 Kurdish, opposition MPs of immunity," Kurdistan24, accessed May 24th, 2019, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/1012e475-fc21-4da0-94bc-071746d2e179>

Futuristic Perspective

Keeping in front the political and armed struggle of Kurds in Turkey and response of the Turkish government, there is an uncertainty in their face in the upcoming years. However, it depends on few things if one kept this study in front of him. HDP successes depend upon its own loyalty to the Kurdish cause in Turkey because on the basis of historical analysis of Kurdish people regarding votes in elections, there is a fluctuation in it. That thing may lead Kurds to look for new representatives whom they would think would be better for them. Recent news mentioned in the above section that 33 cases has been filed against Kurdish politicians who are accused him of their relations with terrorist organizations. These types of government actions against those people's representatives who already feel discriminated will affect the peace process between Turkey and Kurds.

Coming on one page of various Kurdish political parties and other organizations over the municipalities issues in Diyarbakir that were seized by the government is a good sign of their unity but the point is; this type of unity can help them achieve their objectives but if sustained. AK-Party is showing strict response in Diyarbakir as it is the only major rival of HDP in Diyarbakir. AK-Party has edge because it is the ruling party and will use that position to lower the HDP in Diyarbakir. Presently HDP is facing problems and its workers are alleged to have links with PKK other terrorist organizations. Keeping this thing in front, the peace process in this regard seems difficult in near future. Poor Kurds will suffer discrimination if an organized, well established, ideologically strong structure is not formatted for the protection of their rights.

Regarding PKK; as long as Abdullah Ocalan is in prison, PKK may carry on its violent activities which will affect Kurdish politics in the region. Turkish government already seek opportunities to accuse Kurdish politicians of their links with PKK, this will provide them excellent chance to strengthen their hold on Kurds. These are all conditional predictions and might change if something other happens. As politics is always uncertain and this issue is a political that's why a sure prophecy is very difficult because one never knows when the alliance would change and new agenda might come forward. Additionally, State is an authority that never compromise on national security. It has the

authority to use violence against those who try to challenge the writ of the state as its first priority is national security.

CONCLUSION

Kurds are the largest ethnic community of the world who are stateless. Their struggle for an independence homeland started after treaty of Lausanne when they were divided among Syria, Turkey and Iraq. They are living across borders of four countries and every state is dealing them in its own way. This research dealt with the Kurds of Turkey; their political struggle under their own parties, Turkish government response towards their politics and banish of their political parties.

After the creation of PKK in 1978, it had revolts with the Turkish government and was dealt with force by the Turkish armed forces. It was declared terrorist organization later by Western countries. Many Kurdish politicians were banned and jailed and their political parties were outlawed by the constitutional court of Turkey due to the accusation of their links with PKK. This thing leads Kurds to create new political parties after regular intervals. After 1990, many parties were formed and outlawed by the Turkish state. Kurds have always been sidelined from mainstream politics. A suppressive tool had been used by the government. In Turkish politics, this issue is important but only to handle Kurds. Many parties use it in their political campaign that they solve the prevailing problem and give the longer last solution to it but these types of campaigns were not given importance in other elections for example in 2011 elections, AK-Party in her manifesto did not give any importance to the Kurdish issue which again paved the way for the Kurd's own representative parties.

The last decade of 20th century and first decade of 21st century was the time when a lot of political parties emerged to solve the Kurdish issue and gave Kurds autonomy in the region. Among all these parties, People Democratic Party or HDP is proved the most popular Democratic Party which performed well in 2015 elections. But prior to these elections; in 2014, the conservative Free Cause Party gained 92,000 votes that showed its capability to attract conservative Kurdish voters. This definitely affected the Kurdish political party and its political struggle. Turkish government used different tactics to handle Kurds of their country. Religious tool was used in 2002 elections when religious sentiment prevailed over ethnic sentiment. Leftist parties faced problems when AK-Party

came to rule in 2002. Any Kurdish political party that gained some popularity and deters the government was banned by the constitutional court by some way or other.

PKK; an established militant group of Kurds has been declared a terrorist organization. There have been a lot of confrontations between PKK and Turkish Armed forces leaving thousands of people dead. Point to mention is that PKK violent activities repercussions were faced by Kurdish political parties and leaders. Majority of time, they were accused of having links with PKK. After the capture of Abdullah Ocalan, he had declared to give up their armed struggle and wished a complete representation under Turkish constitution. But that was not followed up and there were internal divisions as its name was change few times and armed activities were not stopped. AK-Party went for negotiations with PKK but that was not successful as the conflicts between them increases in 2011 and 2012. Later on in 2015, a Kurdish lawyer was killed and also two Kurdish Mayors were arrested in 2016 who were accused to have links with PKK.

Their language has also faced problems in Turkey as language is main characteristic of a separate nation. Their villages whose names were in Kurdish language were changed to Turkish language. Their newspapers were banned and books in Kurdish language faced suppression. Recently a Kurdish political author was sent to 37months jail because of pro-Kurdish writings. Though they had preserved their culture but had faced a lot of problems in doing so as the Nowroz celebration incident that cannot be neglected.

Though there were many political parties of Kurds which were either outlawed or their leaders were imprisoned. They were made weak by Turkey. State never compromise on its national security and take legitimate actions against those who are threat to it. Turkey had handled Kurds by using different tactics. Through politics, they can achieve remarkable successes but they were not allowed to practice their complete politics. Imprisonment of their leaders and workers has been always a serious blow to the Kurds. Their links with PKK had so far damaged their struggle. Turkey is well developed country and plays important role in the regional politics of Middle East. Turkish State will never compromise on PKK matter as it is challenging the writ of State. Recent action of government against mayors shows that this issue is not an easy task which would find any praising solution. Separate State solution is not possible at present time. However, an

autonomous region in which they can enjoy their freedom, their language, their own culture and most importantly their own rulers would be beneficial for them. United Nations last year report about the investigations on the killings of civilians was a ray of hope for the Kurds. UN should play an important role to solve this issue as massive repeatedly human rights has been violated and it will increase for sure if any sort of attention is not given. A strong determination, organized and ideological political struggle can pave a way for Kurds to gain their rights. They need a high international attention if they are loyal to their cause.

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