

THE GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES AND MILITARY METHODS  
AGAINST THE PKK IN THE 1990S

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES AND MILITARY METHODS AGAINST THE WORKERS PARTY OF KURDISTAN (PKK) IN THE 1990S?**

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This study deals with the question of what governmental policies and military methods were adopted in the 1990s in order to overcome the PKK (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan, or Workers Party of Kurdistan) that was regarded mainly as a terrorist organization against national security for it challenged Turkish state establishment via its ethno-political discourse. Based on this question, this thesis analyses each government's approach and counterinsurgency policies as well as Turkish military's tactics and operations in order to curb the PKK threat that complicated the Turkey's Kurdish question, and challenged Turkish state from three directions; namely southeast Turkey, northern Iraq, and Western Europe. Therefore, the thesis evaluates the PKK's armed and political activities; anti-terror measures in the southeast region and throughout Turkey; the social, political, and economic impact of these measures over the southeastern population; human-rights violations; each government's southeastern policies; the impact of the counterinsurgency policies on Turkey's foreign relations, particularly with Iraq, Syria, and the European Union. Although the anti-PKK policies during each governmental period did not differentiate much from each other, the aim is to show that Turkish civilian authorities failed to take the initiative on, and the military-dominated approach aggravated the social and political circumstances in the region, hence, strengthened the PKK's anti-state discourse that led to the rise of Kurdish nationalism.

Keywords: PKK, counterinsurgency, governmental policies, military measures.

## ÖZ

### 1990'LARDA KÜRDİSTAN İŞÇİ PARTİSİNE (PKK) KARŞI BENİMSENEN HÜKÜMET POLİTİKALARI VE ASKERİ YÖNTEMLER

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Bu çalışma 1990'larda, ethnic-politik söylemiyle Türk devlet düzenine meydan okuyarak, milli güvenliđini tehdit eden ve terörist bir örgüt olarak kabul edilen PKK'nın (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) üstesinden gelebilmek için hangi hükümet politikalarının ve askeri metodların benimsendiđine cevap aramaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu tez, Kürt sorununu daha karmaşık hale getiren ve Türk devletini Güneydođu, kuzey Irak ve Batı Avrupa'daki faaliyetleriyle tehdit eden PKK'nın kontrol altına alınabilmesi açısından, her hükümetin soruna yaklaşımını ve söz konusu başkaldırıyla mücadele politikalarını, ve ayrıca Türk ordusunun taktik ve operasyonlarını incelemektedir. Bu yüzden bu çalışma, PKK'nın silahlı ve politik faaliyetlerini; Türk devletinin Güneydođu bölgesi ve ülke genelinde aldığı terörle mücadele önlemlerini; bu önlemlerin bölge halkı üzerindeki sosyal, politik ve ekonomi sonuçlarını; insan hakları ihlallerini; her hükümet döneminde izlenen güneydođu politikalarını; PKK'yla mücadele politikalarının Türkiye'nin özellikle Irak, Suriye ve Avrupa Birliđi ile ilişkilerine etkisini irdelemektedir. Her hükümet dönemindeki PKK'yla mücadele politikaları pek farklılık göstermese de; tezin amacı Türk sivil yetkililerinin bu konuda inisiyatifi elde edemediklerini, asker kontrolündeki yaklaşımın bölgedeki sosyal ve siyasi koşulları şiddetlendirerek PKK'nın, Kürt milliyetçiliđinin yükselişine yol açan devlet karşıtı söylemini güçlendirdiđini ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: PKK, isyanla mücadele, hükümet politikaları, askeri önlemler.

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## CHAPTER I

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of this study is founded on an analysis of the Turkish state's social and military policies to counter the PKK threat, within the scope of Kurdish problem in the 1990s. Before anything else, I ought to explain the reasons behind my interest in the 1990s in regards to this issue:

When the Cold War period ended by the beginning of the 1990s, Turkish state also had to confront with the rise of religious and ethnic identities that let ethnic and religious political movements confront the secular nation-state system on the global level. Although the Kurdish question in fact, has never ceased to be out of concern of the Turkish political agenda, the 1990s is the decade when the volcano burst out all its accumulation and solidified by the 2000s. The 1990s is the period when the Kurdish question trailed into violence which occupied most of the agenda of the Turkish state and challenged the successive Turkish governments in political, social and economic terms. The military sensation in this period was at its highest, and an extensive armed campaign was conducted in the southeast region where the socio-economic traces of the severe measures taken within counterinsurgency policies are still visible. Domestically, the Kurdish problem in the 1990s had influence on every sphere of Turkish social and political life. Michael Gunter indicates that Turkey's Kurdish problem impeded the implementation of democratic and human rights reforms; harmed the economy through the expenses it involved; limited Turkish foreign policy by giving foreign states an opportunity to pressure the country, while also undermining relations with the democratic West and European Union (EU). The Kurdish problem became the main source of political instability in Turkey and the biggest challenge to its very future (Gunter, 2000). As Henri Barkey and Graham Fuller remark in their comprehensive work over the 1990s, although Turkish political culture has been qualified with a democratic process and governance, a large and vibrant civil society, and an open press; none of these institutions functioned well in terms of handling the Kurdish problem (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 97). The political authority vacuum, dominance of military authority, and harsh security measures in the southeast region created a legal gap which cast doubt on the counterinsurgency policies against the PKK in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> It is a must to note here that, although Turkish General Staff rejected that the measures taken in the southeast were not military measures, and insisted that they were security measures; Jongerden

emergence of Hizbullah alongside the allegations about its links with an (obscure) intelligence organization of Turkish forces, and unidentified murder victims that were comprised of Kurdish politicians, journalists and notorious “businessmen” as well as significant military figures were the most conspicuous elements of this complicated period. One of Çiller’s statements which she made in 1994, after completing more than one year as premier, pointed at the clandestine nature of the fight against the PKK: “When the state archives are opened ten years later, it will be understood from what a danger we escaped. We would be a new Yugoslavia. We have broken the back of the PKK...” (BYEGM, October 26, 1994). However, the 1990s was a decade when concerns about the security and territorial integrity of the country encountered with concerns about the secular structure of the state, especially after the Islamist Welfare Party’s advance in the Turkish political scene. Therefore, the political bans against nationalist Kurdish parties and politicians were accompanied by the political bans against Islamist parties. Consequently, the 1990s could be characterized as a period when the national security institutions (primarily the Turkish Armed Forces and the National Security Council) were most interventionist (Duran, 1998).

I have concentrated on the political and military approaches that led Turkish state to a military victory against the PKK, but also into a failure regarding the solution of the Kurdish problem. Although it is accepted by a majority that Turkey gained considerable military achievements against the insurgent organization, it is certain that the military victory could not settle the conflict in mainly southeastern Turkey.

The mode of the analysis comprises mainly historical and political and to some extent international relations perspectives. I tried to analyze each government’s counterinsurgency policies within itself, in sections and with a chronological order, mostly by referring to the pieces of news by official and unofficial news agencies, significant statements of the authorities in office, decisions taken at the important meetings of the National Security Council (MGK: Milli Güvenlik Kurulu), reports prepared by either political parties or the military, human rights reports by parliamentarians or international organizations. The sources I have reviewed vary from books by the master names of the issue to the articles from periodicals. However I had to face a lack of credible sources viewing the counterinsurgency policies in the 1990s in a chronological order. Therefore I had to make a

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argues that “narrow political space prompted the use of military means” in the problematic region (Jongerden, 2007: 53). In this master thesis, the measures in question will be referred as “security measures” due to need of being cautious in the absence of theoretical discussion over a full strategic evaluation of the measures as well as the military methods.



comprehensive archive study over the pieces of news and reports published by the General Directorate of Press and Information (BYEGM: Başbakanlık Basın, Yayın, Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü) and the Turkish Daily News, which has been renamed as Hürriyet Daily News (HDN). It is not wrong to argue that the 1990s -as every decade in the past- could be analyzed best in the following decades. Files of allegations following the Susurluk accident in 1996 and the current Ergenekon case may enlighten several cases regarding the fight against the PKK in the 1990s; but they might dim the clarity of the period as well. Because of the clandestine nature of the military measures implemented in the 1990s, many claims have been raised about the measures and their outcomes in the region, and it does not look to be over soon. Hence, I tried at most to avoid referring such unconfirmed claims.

The conflict centered on one side on the PKK which challenged the Turkish state's "unquestionable" foundation principles by claiming independence and later autonomy<sup>2</sup>, and on the other side, on the state which insists firmly on foundation principles such as national unity, territorial integrity and has vowed never to sit on the table with "terrorists". Hence the armed conflict broke out catching the people between two fires and forced them to choose between them. Successive civilian governments each of which was worried more to stay in power while aiming at high achievements like EU membership, could never have the upper hand in the southeast in the 1990s.

When national unity and territorial integrity are in question, the national security concept is the case in point, too. Therefore, the counterinsurgency agenda of Turkey was closely related to the ideological and political inclinations of the political party or parties in power and its/their relationship with the military. The counter-insurgency policies bear the traces of the relationship between the political administration and the military. But whatever the political inclination or relationship with the military was, the civilians could not display a strong political will independent of the military when it came to the counter-insurgency

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<sup>2</sup> In the early 1990s PKK abandoned its initial aim of an independent Kurdistan and a revolution in the social structure of Kurdish society and instead, it adapted the aim of a federal solution. Following the capture and imprisonment of its leader Abdullah Ocalan, the party declared a unilateral ceasefire in 2000 and changed its name at its 8th Part Congress (2002) to Congress for freedom and democracy in Kurdistan, (KADEK). Besides it began to pursue the idea of "radical democracy" and establishment of a democratic republic in its political agenda while implying a federal or semi autonomous region within Turkey. The party name was changed to Kongra-Gel in 2003 and back again to the PKK in 2005 and Kongra-Gel was not abolished and accepted as the continuation of ERNK (the political body of the PKK). But internal struggle between Ocalan's federal line and Party of Democratic Patriots Kurdistan (PWD) in the period 2002-2005 caused division of the party (Jongerden, 2007: 54).

policies and the measures for the problematic region in the 1990s. As the traditional guardian of Turkish security in the broadest sense, the military played a dominant role both in the execution and shaping of policy in the Kurdish situation (Barkey and Fuller, 1996: 139). It was not hard for the powerful military to fulfill the mission it had already claimed for.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the Turkish state successfully followed up the military dimension of the insurgency, but unfortunately failed to cope with its political implications. The result displays itself mostly in human rights reports; but more significantly, with the fact that the problem has not been settled yet, even at the end of the 2000s.

At the end of the 1990s the Turkish state declared victory, but it has not proven that it is possible to overcome the ethnic insurgency movement with a military victory. It is why the 1990s could be characterized as harboring so many incidents in itself, but little development towards solution. As Ersel Aydınli indicates, the military-led decision-making of the Turkish political system and the overwhelmingly united national consensus behind the military struggle congested any political maneuver rooms regarding the issue laden with a rich line of political causes like nation, nationalism, nation state, ethnic rights and finally human rights (Aydınli, 2002). As a result, the conflict in essence turned out to be a vicious circle in which any remedies for Kurdish question were rejected on the grounds of the PKK insurgency, while the PKK prospered out of this solutionlessness over the Kurdish question. The vicious circle was exploited by the hardline figures that used the excuse of terrorism to block major democratization reforms throughout the 1990s.

Because of the demographic and geo-political characteristics of the southeast region, it turned out to be a cross-border problem which prompted Turkish state to adjust its relations with its neighbors in the east and southeastern of the country. Moreover, the conflict was transferred to Europe through the migrated Kurds and PKK's propoganda activities. The politicization of the conflict alongside allegations about human rights violations in the problematic region (as well as throughout the country) put Turkey in a difficult position

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<sup>3</sup> According to Güney and Karatekelioğlu, the reasons of this: (1)The Ottoman legacy, against which the military developed a mentality of modernization and Westernization, and a Young Turk tradition from which military activism in politics is inherited. (2) The legacy of the Turkish War of Independence, which legitimized the Turkish military's primacy in the eyes of the Turkish people. (3) The legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Kemalist ideology that furnished the military with principles of secularism, democratic order, and integrity of the republic. However, it is argued that these three factors are not sufficient to explain the present role of the military in Turkish politics. It is suggested that there are other factors which trigger the role of the military, such as the changing strategic, political, social, and economic dynamics within the domestic and external context (Güney and Karatekelioğlu, 2005).

when it was seeking for candidate status (lately membership status) to the European Union. Turkish state strived to justify its policies in the southeast region to be able to persuade the Western Europe to take measures against the PKK's activities and at the same time, it had to face European demands for cultural and political reforms for the settlement of the Kurdish problem.<sup>4</sup>

The study starts with a general outlook of the PKK and the fight between Turkish state and the Kurdish nationalist organization, and continues with analysis of each governmental term from 1989 to 2002, until a new period starts with the Justice and Development Party's (Ak Parti) election victory gaining an overwhelming majority. In the second chapter, I tried to answer why and how this conflict devolved from 1980s to the following decade. Therefore it was inevitable to touch upon to the origins of the PKK and the political circumstances before the 1990s. The early impression the PKK gave to the state authorities, early definitions about the organization, and early fighting methods of both the PKK and Turkish security forces are the main points I have focused on in this chapter. Following a period of underestimation of the PKK in the 1980s, Turkish military proceeded with a revision of its fighting methods as well as a reorganization-thrust over the armed forces. However, underlining the inefficiency of armed campaign in preventing PKK's growing popularity in the southeast region, I tried to make an assessment of the political and legal restrictions behind the deadlock on the settlement of the Kurdish problem in general. This chapter is concluded through implications that the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK largely rests on the deadlock on the Kurdish question.

Analysis of each government begins with the third chapter that covers the early 1990s, starting with Turgut Özal's presidency and the Motherland Party's (ANAP) administration, and continues with Süleyman Demirel-led coalition government of the True Path Party (DYP) and the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP). Although a short evaluation has been done about the Özal-led government that goes back into the 1980s, the first part mainly focuses on the period starting with Özal's ascend to presidency, and continues with the ANAP administration which ended in November 1991. I have tried to explain how the basic problems unfolded due to the early underestimation of the PKK's guerrilla power, and

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<sup>4</sup> PKK's influence in Europe raised a question whether Turkey could act in time in order to execute anti-propaganda against the PKK. PKK built its political power in Europe and mainly Germany. It was successful in exploiting the democratic channels in Europe in order to organize itself politically and shift its cause into human rights issue (Bölügiray, 1993: 32).

the government's failure of taking the necessary political and social measures in order to prevent PKK's gaining popularity among the Kurdish population in the southeast region. The second part of this chapter covers Demirel-led period, and is also the beginning of a decade marked with coalition governments, and hence, instability and intergovernmental disagreements. It was also the period when Turkish Armed Forces took over full responsibility of counterinsurgency in the region, and contemplations on a "military solution" began to develop. President Özal, who had already adopted a quite moderate approach for the settlement of the Kurdish ethnicity problem in Turkey and who also, was aware of that terrorism was the main hindrance in front of Turkey's international political and economic opportunities, initiated a peace offensive engaging the prominent Kurdish figures from Turkey and northern Iraq in order to put an end to PKK terrorism. However the peace process which was proceeded with the PKK's ceasefire declaration, ended with Özal's death and PKK's terminating its ceasefire.

The fourth chapter covers the period starting with Özal's unexpected death in 1993, Demirel's ascend to presidency, and DYP's new leader Tansu Çiller's coalition with SHP. It was the period when the government focused totally on elimination of the PKK. During the Çiller-led period, which was marked with a total political and economic instability, the TSK took the lead in the counterinsurgency against the PKK in the southeast, and an extensive coercion campaign was started against nationalist Kurds not only in the southeast but throughout Turkey. Therefore, it is the period which is still referred frequently within the allegations about summary executions, assassinations, and clandestine relations between the state security forces and illicit organizations. Although Turkey's EU aspirations elevated by its bid for a Custom Union agreement with the EU by 1995, the problems emerging from the strict security measures in the southeast and the political pressure over Kurdish nationalist parties and politicians substantially lowered Turkey's grade in terms of democratization.

The fifth chapter is significant in terms of Turkey's democratization and settlement of the Kurdish question. The Erbakan-led coalition government of Islamist Welfare Party (RP) and Çiller's DYP, had to face harsh opposition from the political, bureaucratic, and military sections of the state, as well as the Turkish media, due to the suspicions about RP's challenging tendencies against the secular and nationalist Kemalist order. Its criticism about Turkey's western type secular, nation-state system that excluded the Kurds from a genuine political representation was one of the main factors that drew military's frequent

intervention into the public policy during this term. Clash of preferences between Erbakan and the military-led establishment in internal and external issues, led to an “indirect military intervention” that is recalled as a post-modern military coup. The notorious Susurluk accident in this period was one of the most significant historic incidents in Turkish political history, for it revealed the illicit relations between Turkish state officials and underground organizations, as well as illegal activities within the campaign against the PKK.

The sixth chapter covers the late 1990s, starting with the fall of RP-DYP coalition as a result of the military’s intervention in the February 28 period. Firstly, ANAP leader Mesut Yılmaz formed a coalition with Democratic Left Party (DSP) and Democratic Turkey Party (DTP). The Yılmaz-led minority government was also worn out by the military’s pressure, and allegations of corruption. The coalition also ended without realizing its southeast program and Turkey’s relations with European and neighboring countries were quite tense due to their support to the PKK and its leader. In 1999, the military victory against the PKK was solidified with PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan’s capture, trial, being sentenced with capital punishment at first, and then being punished with life sentence. The period of DSP leader Bülent Ecevit-led coalition with Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and ANAP, was extremely dramatic due to growing economic problems which were aggravated with devastating earthquakes in Turkey, and the EU’s pressure to accelerate democratization reforms after recognizing Turkey’s candidate statue for EU membership. By time, it would get clear that Öcalan’s capture and a military victory would secure neither peace nor any solution of the conflict. Furthermore, the political platform of Kurdish problem would broaden even more, intensifying nationalist sentiments on Turkish and Kurdish sides, and widening the social gap between the two communities.

Consequently, the Turkish governments failed to change the course of the conflict mostly due to the restrictions of military-dominated Turkish political system, especially in respect to issues that are perceived as threatening to the basic principles of Turkish state. Secondly, the 1990s was also a decade dominated by mainstream political parties with nationalist instincts. After the reign of ANAP ended in early 1990s, the decade continued with coalition governments which failed to maintain stability and harmony within themselves, as well as failing also to produce “decisive and bold” policies in a way to gain confidence from all the sections of the country (including the Turkish military). Finally, the decade

ends with a military victory, and the new decade starts with the same conflict in a much more politicized form.

## CHAPTER II

### 2. A GENERAL OUTLOOK OF THE ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PKK AND THE TURKISH STATE

Since the mid-1970s, several political movements actively demanded cultural, linguistic, and political rights for Kurds. It is widely acknowledged that one of the most important reasons behind the military coup in 1980 was the existence of such opposition movements that criticized the center's policies about the Kurds. As Robins indicates, the Kurdish question was perceived by the military as serious enough to be a reason of their decision to launch a coup in September 1980 (Robins, 1993). The Turkish military was worried about the growing Kurdish nationalism that was seen as threatening against the indivisible integrity of the country. Therefore, the military paid a particular attention to the Kurdish populated regions in Turkey following the coup, and the authoritarian administration that was founded throughout the country remained in the Kurdish populated regions longer than other provinces in the other regions. Under the authoritarian administration, an atrocious campaign started to root out Kurdish nationalist activities, by jailing or killing many Kurdish nationalists (Robins, 1993).<sup>5</sup> Yüksel emphasizes that the aggressive administrative measures of the military regime were accompanied by assimilationist instruments such as the publications by Turkish Cultural Research Institute in Ankara which dedicated its works to proving that "Kurds are actually Turks" in terms of ethnicity and linguistic history. What is more, the military regime also introduced the Law 2932 which said "the mother tongue of all Turkish citizens is Turkish" (Yüksel, 2007: 223). However, suppression of Kurdish identity as well as social and political demands by Kurdish nationalists by use of coercion had counter-productive effects such as reinforcing the polarization of politics between the centre and the southeast region, and leading to an increase of participation to extremist and separatist Kurdish movements such as the PKK (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan or Workers Party of Kurdistan) (Gunter, 2000).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alize Marcus exemplifies the connection between use of coercion against the Kurdish nationalists and transformation of Kurdish nationalism into an extremist movement, by telling about the experiences of Kurdish people who were jailed in Diyarbakır prison following the coup in 1980. The Kurdish origin people who were massed in the same conditions in this prison contributed to the PKK's widening its support base organizing itself and (Marcus, 2009: 155-157).

<sup>6</sup> Ocalan and the other Kurdish nationalist people in his circle who had taken sides with the Turkish revolutionist movements came together in the 1970s for their initial meetings in Ankara, capital city of Turkey. They decided to sever ties with Turkish leftist groups whom they described as "social chauvinists" for binding Kurds' freedom to the revolution in Turkey (İmset, 1992: 16). They designated the action and target territory as "Kurdistan" which located largely in the southeastern

“Moderate, liberal Kurdish nationalism was unable to flourish. The choice for the Kurds of the southeast became ever more starkly one between the Turkish state, with its Kemalist ideology and hardline policies, and the strategy of violent opposition pursued by the PKK. The failure to establish a political middle ground for the Kurdish south-east was to be critical in the growth of support for the PKK from the late 1980s onwards” (Robins, 1993).

The PKK was founded as a separatist group in late 1970s during the political turmoil in throughout the country, upon differentiating from the Turkish leftists on the grounds that they paid secondary attention to the Kurdish question.<sup>7</sup> It based its cause on the argument that the Kurds also had the right to establish their own independent movements by way of violence; in other words through terrorist actions. Jongerden rejects to characterize the PKK as a primarily military organization: “Basically, the PKK is a political party that uses military means to achieve political ends” (Jongerden, 2007: 53). Lastly, according to Bozarslan who rejects that PKK’s violence was the consequence of ethnic differentiation or its nationalist claims, PKK’s violence was the consequence of the “impossibility of questioning and changing mechanisms of Turkish national and political domination and subordination by other means” (Bozarslan, 2000: 25) (see also: Jongerden, 2007: 53).

As a separatist organization, PKK’s initial goal was Kurdish independence, and eventually establishment of a Marxist Kurdish state. Therefore, the PKK not only proclaimed to create an independent Kurdistan, but also to transform the social and political organization of Kurdish society (Jongerden, 2007: 53-54). Its initial and eventual goals clearly evoked its insurgent nature against the Turkish state’s territorial and national integrity as well as the semi-feudal social structure in the southeast region of Turkey. When it established its simultaneous attacks against Turkish security forces on the southeast border in August 1984, Turkish authorities -who sincerely believed that the urban violent organizations era was over following the military coup in 1980- failed to guess that it was the start of a

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Turkey and extended into neighboring countries (Syria, Iran, Iraq). The group primarily aimed for an independent non-aligned Kurdistan state in the region and upon that, a state based on Marxist-Leninist principles. Ocalan and the first central committee founded the PKK in the village of Fis in Diyarbakır in 1978, when urban terrorism was spreading, and the country was on the brink of a military coup.

<sup>7</sup> İmset lists such separatist Kurdish nationalist groups set up in the pre-1980 period as the Tekosin, Rizgari, KUK, Özgürlük Yolu, DDKO, DDKD and the KAWA. Most of the groups were ineffective and crushed immediately in the military operations following the coup (İmset, 1992: 6). Although they disliked each other mostly because of Ocalan’s addiction of leadership, some of the groups would have links to the PKK. According to İmset, the KUK, KAWA and the Rizgari would join as observers to PKK’s meeting in Syria in 1988 for instance (İmset, 1992: 75).



violent uprising that would capture the Turkish state into a running battle. Therefore, the pre-1990s is characterized as a period of underestimation of the PKK. It is widely acknowledged that the failure of figuring out the organization's military, political and social base was the main reason of its survival and proceeding into the 1990s. The 1990s, on the other hand, is the period that can be defined as "the awakening period", because it started with military, social and political assessments over the Kurdish conflict in general, and inefficiency of early counter-insurgency methods.

### **2.1. The PKK in the Pre-1990s Period**

Although the PKK also got its share from the 1980 coup and the countrywide martial rule, it managed to transfer itself across the border, into Syria and Bekaa Valley that was under Syrian control where it established its first camps for training and safety.<sup>8</sup> It is suggested that the PKK which started its activities in rural area, had not drawn attention of the security forces who focused mainly on countering the urban activists responsible for the bloody clashes in the cities. The key concern was Marxism then, not separatism (İmset, 1992:5). The officials thought the PKK-like secessionist organizations could be handled in the same way as Turkey had handled the armed left in the cities. However following the coup, as İmset indicates, it was Turkey which let the organization engage the Iraqi Kurds and which triggered a period in which the PKK would grow, "professionalize in guerrilla warfare and use the territory of a neighboring country extensively for attacks" (İmset, 1992:181).

The PKK which was still an unprofessional organization without local support and depending much on the amount of foreign support, built its force in mainly Syria and northern Iraq, started with attacks against the rural areas of southeastern Turkey; then gradually expanded to the whole southeast region. In its second congress in 1982, the PKK formulated the stages of a long-term popular independence war that was developed by Chinese leader Mao Ze Tung: Strategic Defense, Strategic Balance and Strategic Offence. In the Strategic Defense phase which started with Eruh and Şemdinli attacks in 1984, the

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<sup>8</sup> Despite the Security Protocol between Ozal government and Damascus in 1987, the PKK-Syria relations continued. But because of Turkey's pressure (and due to interior minister İsmet Sezgin's visiting Damascus in 1992), it was assumed that Syria began to confine PKK's freedom in the region in early 1990s. Although the PKK began to transfer its training camps to the northern Iraqi region when Saddam Husein lost its authority there, it continued to use Syria and Bekaa as the main planning center of the organization until late 1990s. Syria did not ban PKK's activities completely until it had to deport Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader due to military threats from Turkey in 1998.

PKK led a terror campaign through propaganda (provocative activities) and political violence (offensive activities) in order to increase its regional influence, harass the state's security forces, and recruit from the local Kurds. Accordingly, it targeted the local Kurds collaborating the Turkish government forces in order to intimidate the other Kurds who would provide the organization with new recruits and logistics. According to White, it was this very "violent propaganda" that separated the PKK from the other Kurdish nationalists in Turkey (White,2000: 142). By means of such guerrilla tactics, the PKK forced local people into defensive position which would later push them to fight a guerrilla warfare against the state forces. The PKK's main goal in this first phase which would cover all the 1980s was not to beat the Turkish forces but to gain more and more popular support in order to make itself accepted in Turkey and the world (İmset, 1992: 78). Although the PKK's initial armed actions in the 1980s were directed to the villages and villagers collaborating the Turkish government forces, the PKK was gaining popular support and maintained its influence in the region. According to İmset, one of the major reasons for such an irony was that the absence of political authority in the region had left the people abandoned with their miseries under harsh security measures and nowhere else to turn. It worked for Öcalan's hand who was trying to create the conditions of a popular war through armed propaganda (İmset, 1992:100-103). Accordingly, its selective approach might have given the impression that "it was not harmful, and was even fair if not confronted." <sup>9</sup>

Turkish government was caught offguard, with no expectation of a cross-border attack in a rural region.<sup>10</sup> PKK's guerrilla style first attacks in 1984 started a new style of fight named as Low Intensive Conflict (LIC), which the Turkish security forces were not experienced in, but the PKK was ready for, because it had already adopted a guerrilla style warfare against the Turkish government and begun to propagate its influence and gain popularity via armed propaganda. Both Kışlalı and Özdağ underlines that LIC is a military-political conflict which primarily aims to gain popular support in the problematic region, and which can be won through propaganda and efficient political governance against the enemy, by also collaborating with neighboring countries where militants may find shelter (Kışlalı, 1996:

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<sup>9</sup> Secondly mass-killing was not extraordinary in this backward semi-feudal region<sup>9</sup> and therefore, the sentiments for PKK's mass-killings and its choice of terrorism in general, did not estrange the local population. Lastly, the PKK was keeping terrorist actions selective, only against the "traitors" or "state collaborators." (İmset, 1992:100-103).

<sup>10</sup> The attack and the following rural terrorism came as a shock to many security official, not because they believed that the post-coup measures fully crushed all pre-1980 organizations, but because they believed that it would take years for the terrorists to reestablish themselves (İmset, 1992: 1-2).

10, 26) (Özdağ, 2007: 18, 31). However, Turkish government and its military failed to understand this point at the beginning, which resulted in alienation of local population against Turkish state due to implementation of excessive measures in the region without considering on the policies to eliminate PKK's popularity.<sup>11</sup> The PKK successfully made use of geographical, geopolitical and demographic features of the southeast region, or in a reverse explanation, the features of the region were to the PKK's advantage. The region's border line along Iraq, Syria and Iran was functional for "hit and run" tactics of the guerrilla style fighting. It was able to deploy accross the border regions where it sheltered and built up itself after the attacks in the Turkish territory. The mostly Kurdish populized rural regions were its recruitment and logistics sources. Besides, as Latif underlines, the PKK was a unified insurgency with no significant insurgent opposition (Latif, 1999: 165).<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to the Republican era during which the Kurds could stage just badly organized uprisings against the new Turkish state; the PKK was characterized by a broad organizational structure and a force capable of extraordinary mobilization (Gürbey, 1996:24). It was widely accepted that the PKK eventually emerged as a modern revolutionary nationalist organization which even had a burgeoning diplomatic presence (White, 2000: ix). However until the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK was seen as an old style insurgent organization; for example Özal initially despised the PKK as "a bunch of bandits."

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<sup>11</sup> Özdağ insistently underlines that LIC is not a military conflict but a political and psychological one because, LIC requires dealing with the political source of the conflict and also true military assessments are necessary for justification of the methods used against the organization and to gain support from all sides possible; not only from the regional population, but also from regional and other foreign countries. Özdağ define the LIC in Turkey's southeastern region in the 1990s as the most bloody and longest one of the recent history. However this fight was not a reciprocal fight between the Turkish state and the PKK, but a LIC which involved Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq. According to Özdağ, Turkish government failed to pay attention to the following points: (1) LIC's primary goal is to gain the popular support in order to defeat the enemy. (2) In a conventional war the all elemets of the state should support the military. But in LIC, it is the military that should support the political, economic, social, cultural elements of the state. (3) It is why LIC is a political struggle and civil authorities should determine political goals which can be achieved by military's support (Özdağ, 2007: 18-31).

<sup>12</sup> For PKK's organizational structure, chain of command, its strategy, and the strategy of Turkish military response as well as the role of geographical and human environment which benefited the PKK , see: S. Amer Latif's An Analytical Study of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) As an Insurgent Movement: unpublished Doctoral Thesis, 1999, Department of Politics, Catholic University of America.

After receiving the first attacks from across the border, Turkish military established several cross-border operations until 1987, on the base of an agreement signed with Iraq<sup>13</sup>, which was at war with Iran then, and therefore, could not maintain security of the northern Iraq border. However, the government abolished martial law<sup>14</sup> in 1987 and declared emergency rule (OHAL) in the region, which required the military to draw back and leave counterinsurgency to the gendarmerie units in the region. It is argued that it was in this new period that the PKK designated some areas in the southeastern region to establish its bases.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, according to Özdağ, ending martial law and implementation of OHAL in ten provinces of the southeastern region was a strategic failure.<sup>16</sup> The military left the mission of fighting against the PKK to the gendarmerie and police forces that were inexperienced regarding a Low Intensive Conflict. Besides, the measures taken within the emergency rule system tired up the local population and got them recipient to the PKK propaganda; or in other words, “as the violence applied by the state increased, the ethnic feelings transformed into a solidarity need” (Tacar, 1999: 158). The emergency rule benefited the PKK which strengthened its anti-state propaganda in the region. It provoked Kurdish population against the state, and it also developed its country- based terrorism to an insurgency level and triggered the Turkish military to revise its counter insurgency methods and resort to harsher methods.

According to Özdağ, the PKK benefited not only from the inexperience of the Turkish side in guerrilla style warfare and the harsh measures within the emergency rule system, but also from the alliances with the regional actors.<sup>17</sup> Although the cross border operations and

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<sup>13</sup> The PKK was settled in northern Iraq in 1982 by the help of Syria and Iran. Turkey signed “the Border Security and Cooperation Agreement” with Iraq, which enabled Turkish military establish its first cross border operation into northern Iraq on May 25, 1983 (Özdağ, 2007: 47).

<sup>14</sup> The martial law that was expanded to the whole country following the 1980 coup, remained in force in the southeastern provinces longer than the rest of the country.

<sup>15</sup> Especially the region named by the PKK as Botan (the triangular area which included Siirt, Hakkari and Van) became its planing center.

<sup>16</sup> The emergency rule also is questionable in terms of its efficiency: While the anti-terrorism measures within the martial law seemed to have failed in preventing the emergence of the PKK, how Turkish authorities could expect the emergency rule would be able to prevent its expansion? The authorities probably still overlooked PKK’s political and social origins, as well as its logistical connections in the neighboring countries.

<sup>17</sup> Upon being captured in 1999, in his confessions Öcalan listed Syria, Greece, Greek Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Armenia, Britain, Greek Orthodox Church, clandestine extreme-left Turkish groups and the ASALA gang as some of the collaborators of the PKK. According to Öcalan’s confessions, Yugoslavia provided camps for training of his gang members, and the PKK had commercial relations with Greece. He said particularly after 1990, Greece started providing all kinds

armed pressure limited PKK's flexibility in the region, Iraq's leader Saddam Hüsein's Enfal operation to the northern Iraq in pursue of the Kurdish organizations created new opportunities for the PKK in 1988. While thousands of Iraqi Kurds took refuge in Turkey, Syria and Iran; Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) militants had to leave many bases which were later seized by the PKK. Özdağ argues that following Enfal Operation, Bağdat decided to help the PKK as a tactical choice in order to contain Masoud Barzani's KDP and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). From 1988 to 1991 however, Turkish state suspended its cross-border operations thinking that the Iraq government had got the region under control (Özdağ, 2007: 75).

As İmset indicates, the PKK's main goal in the 1980s was not to win a military victory in the first stage of combat, but to recruit as many people as possible via political and armed propaganda and having the existence of Kurdish problem accepted in domestic and international arena (İmset, 1992: 78). By the end of 1988, the PKK which had established bases and training centers in southeast Turkey and abroad (Syria, Iraq and Iran) was a separate and strong political entity which had an influence on regional affairs. Secondly, by the end of 1980s, it had also gained the respect and trust of local people through its propaganda about his being "fair to the local population as long as they did not reject it" (Marcus, 2009: 165-166). By the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK was freely moving within the Botan region (the triangular area including Siirt, Hakkari and Van) and its goal was to capture the region and to have other liberated areas in the southeast (Jongerden, 2007: 62). It had completed the armed propaganda phase, during which it avoided getting into clashes with security forces, and focused on gaining popular support. In 1990, PKK's priority was to attack on military targets in provincial centers rather than villages and tribes.

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of support for the PKK including an array of "guerilla training" in Greece. He said PKK members who received training in Greece were often airlifted to southeastern Turkey or northern Iraq through Syria, Lebanon or Iran. In Iran, he said, the gang did not have any training camp, but had a hospital. He said Iranian officials were informed of the hospital's operations. He said in addition to medical treatment, gang members were also provided with theoretical training at the hospital in Iran. The PKK chieftain said that Iraq in particular had provided intelligence to the gang about Turkish military operations in northern Iraq. Additionally, he claimed that northern Iraq had become a free-arms "bazaar" after the Gulf War, and the PKK had bought some of its weapons from there. Refuting charges that the PKK had training camps in Greek Cypriot-held southern Cyprus, the separatist chieftain said the Greek Orthodox Church was providing financial assistance to the gang, but at the official level contacts with the Greek Cypriot administration were "very weak" (HDN, June 2, 1999: Ocalan confesses, lists collaborators). The PKK chieftain also confessed that his gang began collaborating with the deadly ASALA terrorist gang in 1980, but cooperation ended because of internal strife within ASALA and differences of "activity" understanding between himself and the leadership of the Armenian terrorist gang. Ocalan claimed that Armenia never had official contact with the PKK but allowed the gang to collect money from Armenians. He said that there were many countries maintaining the same attitude (HDN, June 2, 1999: Ocalan confesses, lists collaborators).

It was a way to provoke the state forces to retaliate, and to provoke them against the local people.

The phase the PKK could reach at the beginning of the 1990s is a controversial issue: İmset quotes Öcalan saying in 1991 that they were still in the first phase, strategic defense (İmset, 1992: 98). On the other hand according to military analyses, by the beginning of 1990s PKK had already achieved to the first phase of the second stage (strategic balance) of its mobile war (Özdağ, 2007: 81). It is argued that Turkish security forces were still in defense, while the PKK was the attacking side and it is widely acknowledged that the PKK gained unexpected successes against Turkish security forces until 1992 and even 1993.<sup>18</sup> By 1990, the PKK had established its control in large parts of the southeast region. It was not able to keep the regions under permanent control but it was able, at least, to browbeat the security forces by preventing them from entering or remaining within the regions for long time (Jongerden, 2007:62).<sup>19</sup>

## **2.2. PKK's Organizational Structure**

**The ERNK (Kurdistan National Liberation Front, 1985):** It was known to run the political activities of the organization and to have its own exclusive propaganda camps as well as its own reserve guerrilla militia in Turkey, which could be mobilized when necessary (White, 2000: 143). By 1990, the ERNK had increasingly expanded its organizational structure in southeastern Turkey as well as in Western Europe. In Europe, it was in charge of liaison with the PKK leadership and between local groups. It got into contacts with the local terrorist groups in Turkey and PKK bases in Syria, Iraq and Iran. It ran the propaganda activities in order to get new recruits and collect money.<sup>20</sup> It organized

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<sup>18</sup> The security forces who had concentrated to the borders before 1989, got aware of the logistical support and PKK's mobilizing facilities in the region and started to concentrate on defense of towns and cities. But against the guerrilla style of the PKK, the Turkish security forces could only act after its attack. It was only in the mid-1992 that the Turkish military started to gain initiative against the PKK and began to exterminate its resources in the region.

<sup>19</sup> It also recoded the regions with Kurdish names in a military style. Serhat, Garzan, Botan and Amed were the regions covering the parts from Van to some territories in Iran and North Iraq. Serhat was the region including parts of Hakkari, Van, some territories of Iraq and Iran. Garzan comprised of some parts of Batman, Siirt, Van, Hizan and Gevaş. Botan was the region including Şırnak, Hakkari, Van, Siirt, Erüh and parts of Northern Iraq. Amed included parts of Diyarbakır, Bingöl, Genç and Muş (Jongerden, 2007:62).

<sup>20</sup> "While some weapons may have been transferred to the PKK by states such as Iran, Armenia and Syria, the bulk of the PKK's arsenal appears to have been purchased in arms bazaars scattered across

demonstrations and mass riots in Turkey, and worked as the intelligence and information agent of the PKK (İmset, 1992: 131-136).<sup>21</sup>

Because PKK's Marxist-Leninist ideology caused alienation of Islamic Kurds in the region, in late 1980s and in the early 1990s the ERNK began to use Islamic belief in its popular campaigns, and began to cling to Kurdish nationalism which sounded to hug all the Kurds in the region (İmset, 1992: 137). While some think that Öcalan got aware of Iran's geopolitical importance and Islam's role in regional politics, according to others it was due to the Islamic group Hizbullah's increasing power. The fact that Öcalan treated the regional political balances and cultural values in a pragmatic way reflects the changing political balances after the Iranian revolution. The eastern and southeastern regions were probably the most religiously influenced regions in Turkey following the revolution in Iran. While Marxist ideology had already lost its appeal, the successful Iranian revolution evoked the concept of "Islamic union." While it was claimed that Turkish forces let "a controlled Islamism" flourish in the southeast region by supporting Hizbullah against the separatist PKK, the PKK was trying to benefit from "the positive effects of Iranian Revolution" for his own cause (İmset, 1992: 139).<sup>22</sup>

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Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, including Antwerp, Hamburg, northern Iraq, and the former Soviet Union. The PKK reportedly raises money for weapons purchases through a variety of both peaceful and coercive methods, including voluntary contributions from sympathizers and violent extortion from unwilling Turkish and Kurdish businessmen. In addition, elements of the PKK reportedly raise funds by shipping drugs from Asia and the Middle East to western Europe through the Balkans and Italy" (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995)

<sup>21</sup> The ERNK conducted mainly the propaganda activities by arranging encouragement visits or warning visits into the villages. It kidnapped Kurdish youngsters to recruit for the armed ranks. It was supplying the needs of the ARGK, the armed unit of the PKK. The ERNK collected money by voluntary donations, taxation, protection money, small and medium business investments, robberies, and above all by narcotics. It founded a wide international network for its narcotics trade. The scope of its narcotics trade had not appeared clearly until the early years of 1990s. (İmset, 1992: 155-157).

<sup>22</sup> İmset mentions about one of Öcalan's message in 1990 in which he admitted that the PKK was trying to make use of the Iranian revolution, and charged Turkey for trying to exploit the concept of religious unity against the separatist struggle (İmset, 1992: 139). In another interview by Oral Çalışlar in 1993, Öcalan confirmed that he considered Hizbullah as a formation against the PKK, rather than as a result of growing religious inclination among the Kurds in this region. He also alleged that there were three kind of Hizbullah: 1) the one founded by religious sections who were supported by Iran for its traditional goals 2) the one founded through the support of Turkish state which tried to keep the region under control against the PKK, through religious formations 3) the one founded by the people supporting the tribal system in the region against the PKK which had vowed to demolish the semi-feudal system in the region (Çalışlar, 1993: 45).

It is argued that the PKK had to bow to the social realities in the Kurdish community and began to adjust its policy and ideology to such facts in order to reach larger masses, especially by the end of 1980s and early 1990s. One of such pragmatic practices of the PKK was to assist foundation of Islamic Movement of Kurdistan in 1993. It is stated that at the congress of the Kurdistan Islamic Movement in July 1993, a series of decisions were taken to expand ties with other religious groups, to induct women into the war, to unite so-called Kurdistan and to revive the old Kurdish madrassas (Islamic religious schools) and religious complexes (Marcus, 2009: 328). It is argued that PKK's such practises demonstrated its efforts to gain influence with the support of reactionary elements, and try to generate new options to form an alliance with them. However Barkey and Fuller do not confine PKK's pragmatic evolution to reach larger masses by actively fostering Islamic tendencies. Due to the fact that Kurdish Alevi community also needed to be addressed separately, it accommodated itself also to the Alevi community to attract this highly important segment, too. For instance, it fostered the creation of a confederation of thirty organizations called Kurdish Alevi Union (Kürt Alevi Birliđi). One more such a practical attempt by the PKK was its abandoning its anti-gha attitude and making alliances with "anti-state" ones, by mainly making use of the feuds between some tribes in the region (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:70, 72).

**The ARGK (Kurdistan National Liberation Army, 1986):** It was founded in 1986 after the decision to reorganize the HRK<sup>23</sup> as the main guerilla body of the PKK, and its main mission was to lead guerilla warfare in Turkey and from across the border. This unit would practice mobile warfare –hit and run attacks- especially in rural and mountainous areas. The goal was to harass and demoralize security forces, limiting their mobility and keeping them on the defensive (İmset, 1992: 142-148). Guerilla tactics would save the PKK fighters from confronting Turkish forces in the open field. Jongerden explains the success the ARGK achieved stating that PKK attempted to extend control from rural areas to towns, occupying district towns such as Lice, Cizre, Şırnak and Çukurca. In June 1993, PKK leader Murat Karayılan confidently announced that the Parliament of Kurdistan would be established in the liberated area of Botan (Jongerden, 2007:62). Although ARGK suffered serious losses, its mobile warfare tactics caught Turkish security forces off guard and provided the PKK a vast political impact over the region.

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<sup>23</sup> ARGK was founded after the abolishment of HRK (The Kurdistan Freedom Unit which was founded in 1984) in efforts to establish a popular army (İmset, 1992:142) (White, 2000: 143).



The PKK -by means of ERNK's propaganda, intelligence, fund-raising and recruitment activities- had increased its number in ARGK ranks and popular support in the region which appeared clearly in the Nevruz celebrations from 1990 on. One other significant point about the beginning of the 1990s was that the first legal Kurdish nationalist party – HEP- was founded and its members were in the parliament. It was an impasse from the point of Turkish government which was challenged by an illegal organization in the “mountain” and by a legal one in its “capital city”. While both of these organizations had some demands in common, the latter one was certainly the sign of Kurdish question's politicization. On one hand, HEP avoided adopting a political rhetoric completely independent of the PKK because of the fact that it was taking huge support from the nationalist Kurds including pro-PKK ones. On the other hand, the mainstream Turkish political circles generally disliked it on the grounds that it was the political extension of the PKK.

As it is clear, the PKK was not a single entity but was formed out of different units which ran political, financial, media and armed activities. Such divisions provided it “legitimacy” in several European countries where the ERNK was recognized as only a “propaganda bureau” until the early years of the 1990s. The ERNK continued its propaganda and financial activities and involved in terrorist activities such as attacks as Turkish embassies and representations in Europe; but it was not proven that the ERNK was directly involved in violence (İmset, 1992: 133).

### **2.3. The 1990s Period**

#### **2.3.1. Acknowledgement of the PKK as the Biggest Threat, and Reorganization of Turkish Armed Forces**

According to military perspective, when the Cold War period came to an end, the Turkish state still was not fully aware of the threat within its territory. Until then, Turkish defense strategy was designated against threats from Greece and Russia. In 1993, the military admitted that the PKK was the biggest threat for Turkey (Özdağ, 2007: 117) (Saybaşı, 1995: 75). When the armed forces found out that it was not possible to conduct the counterinsurgency war from a defensive and static position, they formulated an integrated doctrine of area control, named “field domination doctrine” that aimed at the production of a new (contracted rural and urban) war space for an “all-out war” against the PKK. The

doctrine was formulated in 1991, initiated in 1992 and fully implemented from 1993 onwards (Jongerden, 2007: 67) (Özdağ, 2007: 90). In mid-1992 the Turkish forces reorganized in the southeast and the region was flooded with troops, both from the gendarmerie and the military, in addition to the urban security forces. Barkey and Fuller indicate that the policy of deploying a huge number of regular troops meant that the war was the army's responsibility, and the civilian leaders abdicated their share of the responsibility for devising and implementing any policies toward the southeast (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 139-140).

Increasing the number of Turkish troops in the region, reorganizing the army by forming flexible corps, and upgrading of personnel infrastructure and hardware were some of the steps for the establishment of this doctrine in early years of the 1990s. Heavy weapon and artillery units were also transferred to the southeast alongside armored vehicles.<sup>24</sup> Night vision systems were also renewed with the latest technological means. Global Positioning System devices were introduced and armored helicopters (such as Cobra and Super Cobra ones, which Özdağ praises for their role in combat support) with more sophisticated technology were bought for use in the southeast region, and therefore, operations at night became more possible (Özdağ, 118-123). With the reorganization of the army specifically in order to fight the PKK, gendarmerie was drawn into a supportive position (Jongerden, 2007: 67-69). The number of Turkish troops was increased between 1993 and 1995 from 185,000 to 360,000. 140,000-150,000 of this number belonged to the Turkish Army; 10,000 to the Air Force; 40,000-50,000 to the Jandarma; 40,000 to the Turkish police; and some 67,000 to the village guards (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

According to a financial analysis by Servet Mutlu about the share of Turkish security spendings in national income, the security spendings, naturally, started to increase by the end of the 1980s upon comprehension of PKK threat. The reconstruction and

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<sup>24</sup> The Turkish armed forces benefited from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). It was signed on November 19, 1990 under which provisions NATO and former Warsaw Pact countries agreed to reduce the size of their conventional forces and conventional armaments. As a result of the treaty, Turkey was able to obtain more sophisticated weaponry from NATO states and Russia (Jongerden, 2007: 70). Several NATO members, primarily the USA and Germany both sold and donated a full range of weaponry to Turkey. Germany was Turkey's second largest supplier of arms. Other NATO suppliers have included Italy, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain and Canada. As criticism mounted in Europe over Turkey's treatment of the Kurds, Turkey increasingly turned elsewhere for arms, including the Russian Federation, Israel, Pakistan and other nations. Turkish government was frequently criticized for using the weapons obtained from NATO countries in the southeast, not only in its fight against the PKK but also against the civilians during village depopulations (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

reorganization of the security forces that began in 1991, was nearly completed around 1992-1993. However it is significant in the analysis that the separatist terrorism did not make a significant difference in the spendings of National Defense Ministry. Separatist terrorism caused increase rather in the spendings of internal security units, namely Security General Directorate and the Gendarmerie General Command. What is more, the cost of the counterinsurgency to Turkey until 2000, according to official data, was \$ 14.7 billion. With such a sum of money, the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) could be completed, or six huge dams could be built (Mutlu, 2002).

### **2.3.2. Turkish Security Forces, and the Basic Security Measures in the southeast in the 1990s**

**The Turkish Army:** Regular Army units were frequently used as supporting forces during raids on villages by special gendarmarie or police forces, and also work alongside regular gendarmarie forces during rural operations. It was supported by also the aviation unit which operated a fleet of helicopters with crews trained for attack, observation, support and transport roles. Mountain Commandos, contrary to the regular army forces, were the elite army forces who were more highly trained and expected to engage in closer contact with PKK fighters and with civilians suspected of supporting the guerrillas. It is alleged that by means of the confusion in the chain of command within the armed forces due to the integrated counterinsurgency program, Turkish army officers sought to shift blame for human rights abuses (allegedly indiscriminate fire, summary execution, disappearances, torture, air raids on civilians) away from the Army and the Air Force (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

**The Gendarmarie:** The regular gendarmarie is a rural police force that is formally under the control of the Turkish Minister of Interior. In the 1990s, they controlled rural areas, patrolled villages and gathered intelligence through a network of police stations and outposts in the region. In the southeast, gendarmarie regular forces were deployed in the remote outposts that were frequently the target of PKK attacks (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995). It is argued that the gendarmarie conscripts were not well trained as the regular army troops, and they were quite prone to committing human rights violations while conducting their operations (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 141).

**Regular Police:** Regular police, at the helm of the Interior Ministry through provincial security directors and civilian governors, were charged with controlling the urban centers and they were mostly responsible for internal security.

**Special Gendarmarie Forces (The Özel Tim):** The Özel Tim was designed within a new Turkish counterinsurgency package. It was noted by high officials that there was a need for the creation of new, highly-trained and mobile forces that would be organized to take the combat directly to the PKK (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 148). According to official data, the formation of Special Gendarmarie Forces as a regiment was accelerated in 1991, then it was reformed as a division by 1994 (Kışlalı, 1996: 223). Such special forces focused on “eliminating insurgents” rather than holding territory (Latif, 1999: 255).

**The Police Special Forces (The Özel Hareket Timi):** Special police forces were assigned to counterinsurgency tasks in rural and urban areas in the southeast. The Özel Hareket Tim operated in small groups and included intelligence operatives, snipers and regular infantry-style commandos (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

Both the special gendarmarie forces and the police special forces were nominally under the control of the Ministry of Interior, however the civilian representatives of the Interior Ministry (the provincial governors and the emergency rule governor) were subordinated by the complex military mechanism in practice. It is significant that the Turkish state initiated formation of such special operation teams within internal security units (gendarmarie and police forces), in order to give the impression that the fight with the PKK was a kind of “internal security operation” and it was not a “war”, therefore the PKK was not one of the warring parties (Kışlalı, 1996: 250-251). It is alleged that the special forces were heavily recruited from the members of the Nationalist Action Party; they were well-paid and were signed up contracts of at least six years. There were estimatey 22,000 to 23,000 of these team members. Along with the speacial teams, allegedly there was “Anti-terror and Intelligence Department of Gendarmarie” (JİTEM), which operated as death-squads, identifying and killing alleged PKK cadres (Jongerden, 2007:70). But the special teams gained reputation for violent mistreatment against the civillians in the southeast region (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 148) (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

**The Turkish Air Force:** They played a crucial role in counterinsurgency operations and in the cross border offensives into northern Iraq, and provided Turkish forces with high

mobility in the offensives especially after the strategy of fighting was redefined and the air force was upgraded with aircraft and helicopters of high technology in 1992 and 1993.

**The National Intelligence Organization (MIT):** The intelligence organization was deeply involved in security operations in the southeast by following the Kurdish nationalist activities. MIT was supposedly bound to premiership, but it was mostly under the influence of the General Staff. It is argued that since 1965, the main source for the staff of the MIT was the General Staff and naturally it was the military which was more influential over the intelligence organization (Saybaşıllı, 1995: 56).<sup>25</sup> Arguably, the General Staff's perception of itself as the guardian of the country meant that it tended to view intelligence gathering with other agencies as a one-way street, in which it was a recipient but under no obligation to be a provider (IISS, December 2003).<sup>26</sup>

**The Village Guard System<sup>27</sup>:** This system was one of the most important and region-wide practices designed in 1985 by Özal's leadership, in order to supplement gendarmarie operations (Robins, 1993). Although the civilian militias were initially designed to help combat the PKK by defending their own homes against and by providing security officials with intelligence, they were later used in front-line duties (in the military operations), too (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 148). According to Robins, the creation of these groups would also serve the purpose of showing outsiders that the southeastern Kurds were far from united in their opposition to the Turkish state. There were about 90,000 village guards in southeast according to a 2002 report by Human Rights Watch, and it turned to be an important income source due to collapse of nearly every economic activity in the region in the 1990s (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 2002). The government armed the village

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<sup>25</sup> Although the undersecretary of the MIT is civilian, his appointment is decided first at the NCS and then approved by the prime minister and president. But armed forces assign most of the senior officials of MIT from its own staff and take the decisions of promotion, assignment and retirement of MIT staff (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 146).

<sup>26</sup> However it is also alleged that The military actually worked closely with MIT which had traditionally been headed by a retired general, but when the position was taken over by a civilian in 1992, Turkish General Staff suspected that the organisation was vulnerable to political manipulation (IISS, December 2003). While such a suspicion led to the claims that over the 1990s the quality of intelligence the military had been receiving deteriorated, it might be also the reason behind formation of clandestine intelligence organizations within the armed forces.

<sup>27</sup> These irregular military units were first established in 1891 by Abdulhamid II, and hence were called as Hamidiye Cavalry. It is argued that the Hamidiye, which was a "divide and rule" practise to keep the Kurdish tribes under control, comprised of Sunni Kurdish tribes whom were used to secure authority against insurgencies in the region (Yüksel, 2007: 125) (İmset, 1992: 105-106).

guards and permitted them to acquire considerable de facto power in the region; however many problems emerged from the arbitrary implementations within the system.<sup>28</sup> In practice, the system led a significant amount of forced conscription, intimidation, bribery and incitement to commit human rights abuses by the village guards. Secondly, village guards system was a typical “divide and rule” practise which was designed to help Turkish forces in their campaign against the Kurdish nationalist PKK, but caused division among the Kurdish community. İmset defines the system as a “system of bloodshed”, because by having the villagers armed against the terrorists, local officials made them the target of the PKK which accused the ones joining the system with treason against Kurdish cause (İmset, 1992: 112). Because of the PKK’s violence against the militia, most of the people who accepted to join the village guard system have been the members of clans who were traditionally loyal to the state (Robins, 1993). Many of them, on the other hand, had to accept to be village guards because of the pressure of the security forces who threatened villages with evacuation if they did not collaborate with them. Therefore, as Kirişçi and Winrow indicate, Turkish officials used this system in order to check the loyalty of the villagers ( Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 133). Besides, the “divide- and-rule policy” of the Turkish state depended on mostly on the landlords who ruled over whole villages and hence, could recruit the men of their villages as village guards. While they favoured persistence of the conflict; their collaboration with the state contributed to the maintenance of the tribal system in the region (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 147).

**State of Emergency Area (OHAL):** It is the other important practice that was established after abolishment of martial rule in 1987 in order to secure “security and order” in the east and southeast regions. With a written decree by Özal administration in 1987, OHAL was introduced in ten southeastern provinces, to be extended every four months by a parliamentary vote. The emergency rule system was established to strengthen the fight against the PKK via coordination between the civilian governors and the Turkish Armed Forces.<sup>29</sup> However, as Robins indicates, it did not fall short of martial law due to the

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<sup>28</sup> İmset remarks that the village guard system was a controversy to the Turkish Constitution as well as it violated the article which established the system. According to the Village Law 422 article 71, “ the village guards should not be younger than 20 years or older than 60 years. They should not be people sentenced to prison terms. They should be selected out of people who are known by their behaviour. They must not be people who argue with everyone or get drunk or who are tempered.” (İmset, 1992: 116).

<sup>29</sup> OHAL was declared in Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt, Batman, Şırnak, Van, Hakkari, Bingöl, Muş, Tunceli, Bitlis and Elazığ. After 1997, seven of the eleven cities under OHAL coverage, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Mardin, Mus, Van and Siirt were taken under the coverage of neighboring cities in the OHAL region. It remained in some southeastern provinces -Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Şırnak and Tunceli-

extraordinary powers that were vested in the regional governors. These powers were radically extended by legal regulations which concentrated all civil power in their hands (Robins, 1993). During the counterinsurgency campaign in the 1990s, the emergency rule was implemented via flooding the region with troops that were always poised for an operation, village guard system, curfews, periodical searches on the roads and identity controls. All these measures prevented a normal social and economic life in the region. The emergency rule system was intended to increase the punitive effect of measures that could be applied to the region and also to restrict the flow of information by imposing increased restrictions on the media. However the constitutionality of measures established by ANAP government led to some concerns about the counter effects of the extensive use of state of emergency powers without respect for fundamental rights or without judicial review of any acts by the OHAL governor (Robins, 1993) ( Muller, 1996: 180). Turkish state presented the emergency rule as an administrative disaster management to deal with natural disasters and social unrest rather than as a counter-terrorism measure. But Jongerden remarks that the OHAL governorship that was claimed to be “a civil institution”, was militarized by the military functions of the institution (Jongerden, 2007: 85) . The OHAL governor had similar powers to those of the military in areas under martial law. The fact that five of the OHAL governors had a background in the security forces, as head of provincial police forces reflected the strong linkage between governorship and security forces (Jongerden, 2007: 146).<sup>30</sup> In April 1990, the OHAL governor was given extraordinary powers by Council of ministers. Accordingly, it allowed the governor to censor the press by banning, confiscating or fining publications that “wrongly” reported the incidents in OHAL region, causing anxiety among people in the region and effecting the performances of the security forces in negative way. The governor was authorized to control or prohibit all union activities, prevent boycotts. He was also able to require DGM public prosecutor to open cases against people who violated the laws. Most significantly, the governor was also authorized to evacuate villages for “security reasons” without even prior notice (Yüksel, 2007: 230-231).

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until 2002, even after the region had calmed down to a great extent, due to the fear that the PKK militants could return (TBMM, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> For example Hayri Kozakçıoğlu (OHAL governor between 1987-1991), Necati Çetinkaya (1991-1992), Ünal Erkan (1992-1995), Necati Bilican (1995-1997), and Aydın Arslan (1997-1999) had been head of police of different provinces before. Only the last one Gökhan Aydın (1999-2002) had career in bureaucracy as governor in various provinces (Jongerden, 2007: 146).

### 2.3.3. The PKK's Social and Political Influence Over the Kurdish Population<sup>31</sup>

**Nevruz Celebrations:** Before the 1990s, Nevruz did not use to create as much impact as it started to do at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>32</sup> Or in other words, Nevruz was not a “political day” before the 1990s. But particularly in 1991, Nevruz was adopted more by the Kurdish population in the southeast and it was pronounced by them as “Kurds’ national day,” which carried a strong “political tune” in those days. As Bayındır indicates “Even though it is commonly interpreted in association with the activities, propaganda and provocations of the PKK, Nevruz is a subliminal symbol related to the Kurds and their stance as a community” (Bayındır, 2007). However leaders completely ignored its ethno-political dimension, and interpreted the huge participation to Nevruz celebrations as a “collective rebellion” and the participators as “deceived by provocation” (Bayındır, 2007).

Secondly, PKK exploited the collective celebrations of Nevruz by making propaganda and pushing the public into excitement to rise up against Turkish security forces. Kurdish uprising (Serihildan) which illustrated the level of Kurdish nationalism began in March 1990. Nevruz celebrations in 1991 and 1992 ended in violent and bloody clashes between the security forces and PKK sympathizers. Particularly the events that broke out in 1991 Nevruz celebrations sowed the seeds of the traditional fear of the Turkish leaders in advance of each Nevruz. According to White, “Serihildan” which was evocative of the Palestinian intifada also illustrated also how the PKK and Kurdish nationalism had transformed into a revolutionary level. However Turkish authorities were not interested in a political solution to the Kurdish war. Therefore while the PKK seemed to have a significant popular support, the Turkish government intensified its military attacks in the region and into the northern Iraq (White, 2000: 168).

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<sup>31</sup> It would be a reductionist approach to attribute Kurdish nationalism that grew especially by the beginning of the 1990s to the PKK's successful propaganda campaign. Yet still, PKK played an important role in spread of nationalist sentiments among the Kurdish population and rise of nationalism. Yüksel analysis the rise of the nationalism based on linguistic and ethnic identity among Kurds within the relation between the centre (the Turkish state) and periphery (the southeast region) in a process of modernization. According to Yüksel there are several factors that triggered Kurdish nationalism from the 1960s so on. Change of economic conditions and weakening of semi-feudal system -although not totally disappeared-, and people's beginning to define their collective identity with a new political awareness based on linguistic and ethnic identity, rather than their tribal connections (Yüksel, 2007: 270-274).

<sup>32</sup> When it is studied through the Turkish formal news agency, it would be easily noticed that Nevruz used to be referred as “an Persian bairam” and very few events (a few people would be arrested in the western big cities of Turkey) would happen on that day before 1990s. (BYEGM, March 1988-1989).



When the PKK called for the Kurds of the region to gather under its banner then, it found a receptive audience and let wide demonstrations on Nevruz celebrations, because:

(1) The feeling of being “the unreliable of the country” that had been fed since 1930s was fostered by the harsh security measures taken in the region in the post-1980 period as well as in early 1990s. Especially the infamous tortures committed in Diyarbakır prison is accepted by some analysts as one of the “nests” where such feelings and antagonism grew up (İmset, 1992: 28). (2) Local population was weary of the massive Turkish military presence alongside a long time emergency rule in the region and had already begun to dislike the situation characterized as “long time detentions in an open air prison. (3) The state’s negligence of the region in every sector as well as its keeping the tribal system alive<sup>33</sup> (which had not led any individual social or economic initiative throughout the southeast region for long years since the foundation of the republic) generated the main reasons for the backwardness of the region such as low income per capita, a low level of education, poor health and infrastructure services. In early 1990s dislocation of the local economy as a result of the Gulf War shattered the hopes of economic improvements. Therefore, PKK’s propaganda against the Turkish state as well as the tribal system might have sounded “legitimate and promising” for the locals. (4) They were witnessing the establishment of a quasi-state of Kurds in Iraq, which awoke their pride and hopes (Nigogosian, 1996: 39). (5) The revolution in communication let the Kurdish community onto international scene where they got conscious of themselves and where they met alternative life styles, different from those in Turkey (Nigogosian, 1996: 39).

### **Activation of the Kurdish nationalist Politicians**

Throughout Turkish political history, there have always been Kurdish origin activists and politicians in Turkish political scene. Radical Kurds in the 1960s and 70s allied with leftist movements and pursued their regional grievances through such radical movements and parties. Some radical Kurds, however, were members of left of center or even conservative parties due to various reasons, such as absence of legal Kurdish parties or their concerns

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<sup>33</sup> The article titled “Kurdish Tribal Organization and Local Political Processes” by Lale Yalçın Heckmann presents a detailed background about tribal system in the southeast and the relation between the tribes and the state: Heckmann, Lale Yalçın (1990) “Kurdish Tribal Organization and Local Political Processes” in: Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sırman, *TURKISH STATE, TURKISH SOCIETY* (London and New York: Routledge), 289-312.

about election threshold.<sup>34</sup> There have always been some Kurds that voted and joined mainstream parties such as ANAP, DYP and CHP due to various tendencies such as their political orientation with no ethnic motivation, seeking to economically benefit their regions, or the deals done between party leaders and local tribal chiefs (ağa) (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 74-76).<sup>35</sup>

The Emergence of a legal and explicitly Kurdish party coincided the period when the PKK intensified its violent attacks and heating of the fight between the organization and Turkish security forces. Doing politics in the parliament was one of the main channels of the PKK to get itself through Turkish politics. Öcalan who had not welcomed any other Kurdish organization, began to emphasize HEP's possible function in suggesting a negotiable solution to the Turkish government.<sup>36</sup> Following Öcalan's verbal support, HEP which was the first legal and explicitly Kurdish party and had difficulty in gaining support in the southeastern region, was flooded with new members.<sup>37</sup> It is why HEP (and later DEP,

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<sup>34</sup> For example Ahmet Türk (a Kurdish parliamentarian) was member of SHP (the center of left party before it merged with CHP). Abdülmelik Fırat was member of True Path party (DYP) in 1991; but resigned due to the party's Kurdish politics and became an independent parliamentarian. His book titled "Fırat Runs Sad" was collected on the grounds that it fomented ethnic hatred. He continued his political activities in 2000s until his death in 2009. Concern of getting parliamentary immunity was also quite influential over such Kurdish nationalist figures in order to provide protection from security officials (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 75).

<sup>35</sup> Mainstream Turkish political parties ANAP (the Mainland party) and DYP (the True Path party) as well as moderate ones like CHP (the Republican People's party) always included Kurdish origin parliamentarians like Hikmet Çetin and Kamran İnan whose diplomatic careers were widely acclaimed. But these parliamentarians did not express their ideas about the conflict. However none of the political parties was monolithic and sometimes some radical proposals came from some of the Kurdish origin parliamentarians within the mainstream parties, such as Şerafettin Elçi (a CHP deputy at the end of 1970s) who explicitly expressed his ethnic origin and defended cultural rights for the Kurds and always rejected use of violence. He formed a Kurdish party as Democratic Mass party in 1997, but it was banned in 1999 by the Constitutional Court. There were tribal chiefs who were elected as the deputies of conservative parties (like ANAP, DYP or RP- Welfare Party-). Conservative parties generally allied with southeastern prominent Kurdish tribes whom they regarded as "ready vote sources" and they included tribal origin Kurdish parliamentarians, such as Sedat Bucak who was elected as a DYP deputy in the 1990s during Çiller's administration (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:14-17) (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997:146-152). According to Barkey and Fuller, one reason of conservative Kurds approaching to the rightist conservative parties was CHP's being the repository of the Alevi Kurds's votes (as Alevi Turks' votes) (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 77).

<sup>36</sup> The seven Kurdish parliamentarians of SHP joined a conference on the Kurdish issue in Paris in October 1989 and later they were ousted from their party because of their statements on the Kurdish issue in Turkey. These seven parliamentarians with some Turkish names founded the Kurdish nationalist People's Labor Party (HEP) in June 1990.

<sup>37</sup> PKK leader Öcalan also confirmed this in one interview by İsmet İmset in 1991, saying "the recent election of HEP is a development realized by PKK sympathizers." (İmset, 1992: 347). Öcalan, in his confessions upon being captured in 1999, Öcalan told that the PKK had influence over HADEP and links with HADEP through some members who were PKK sympathizers, and that there were people

HADEP, DEHAP and DTP) was not willing to declare the PKK as a terrorist organization, nor could do so because “the PKK, in their view, has provided the bulk of the sacrifices for the Kurdish cause, and it is part and parcel of a larger Kurdish cause” (Barkey and Fuller, 1996: 88). According to Latif, Kurdish oriented political parties are a vehicle the PKK uses to cultivate unity: “These parties are useful (for the PKK) since they portray the PKK as being pluralistic and flexible by allowing alternative political avenues. PKK actually backs these parties with its members and greatly influences the party’s activities” (Latif, 1999: 168).

HEP did a pact with SHP (Social Democratic People’s party) in order to avoid failure due to the election threshold and participated the elections in SHP lists in 1991. Hence SHP won twenty-two seats in the southeast. However when two SHP parliamentarians originally from HEP added some remarks in Kurdish when they were taking their oaths in the parliament, they drew a very strong reaction from the rest of Turkish parliament and they were accused of “separatist propaganda”. Some other events also undermined the SHP-HEP pact which was undone later. HEP always criticized the state policy practiced against the Kurds and argued that this issue was political rather than a terrorism problem, and insisted on a political solution. It suggested a list of steps for solution such as a halt to state of emergency and military measures, and granting of cultural rights to Kurds. HEP was banned by the Constitutional Court in July 1993 on the grounds that the party had violated the constitution and the Law on the Political Parties, since political parties were prohibited from claiming (ethnic) minorities on Turkish territories. As Muller indicates, it was the beginning of the policy of harassment that would continue with suppression of successive Kurdish nationalist parties.<sup>38</sup> The policy of harassment would be broadened to include “unidentified murders” against Kurdish nationalist journalists, broadcasters, lawyers, political representatives as well as suppression of such journal and newspapers (Muller, 1996: 186).

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in HADEP who were against him. (HDN, July 11, 1999: What Ocalan Told the Military After he was Caught).

<sup>38</sup> In May 1993 the former HEP parliamentarians founded the Democracy Party (DEP) and DEP was banned on 16 June 1994 by Constitutional Court. Democracy Party of the People (HADEP) was founded in May 1994 and banned on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2003. Dehap –The Democratic People’s Party- which was founded in 1997 before Hadep was banned, became prominent in 2002 after Hadep was banned. It dissolved itself in 2005 and its members continued their activities in DTP –Democratic Society Party- which was founded in 2005 and it is also facing now (in 2009) the possibility of being disbanded, despite its success in 2009 local elections which gained it municipality of 9 provincial capitals.

### **The Relief in the Articulation of “Once Banned Words”**

The pronunciation of words such as “Kurd” and “Kurdish” by the Turkish politicians was quite rare before the 1990s. These words, meaning an ethnic group and a language, were used only to refer to the population in the north Iraq and Iran.<sup>39</sup> It is believed mainly by Kurds (even the ones who dislike PKK’s methods) that it was the PKK that forced many Turks and the government to accept the Kurdish reality (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:46). In 1991, Özal as well as Demirel (in Diyarbakır) recognized the Kurdish reality when the fight in the region was quite heated. Moreover, in 1991, the government abolished Law No 2932, which was adapted in 1983 by the military establishment in power then, and banned all languages other than those which had been formally recognized by Turkish state. İmset draws attention to the change of balances in some of the areas in the southeast in favor of the PKK. He states that in some areas there was an open support for the separatists, and some of the people supported the PKK out of the reaction to Turkey’s excessive use of force. In Şırnak for example, local people used to call the PKK as terrorists, in 1988 as “students”, in 1990 they started to call them the “front” and in 1991 they were openly referring them as guerrillas or resistance, which showed the extension of PKK’s popularity as a result of its propaganda (İmset, 1992: 234).

#### **2.4. The Main Factors Complicating Alternative Policies toward a Solution**

It is not wrong to assert that the main factors complicating alternative policies for the solution of this issue are the same factors in front of democratization of Turkey. This connection could be understood best with respect to Turkish-European Union (EU) negotiations on Turkey’s full integration with the union.

A country that alleges to be democratic is supposed to solve its political problems via democratic ways based on the rule of law. However, the 1982 Constitution is dominated by Kemalist doctrine that is obsessed with the national security concept which has had a fundamentally negative effect on the establishment of the rule of Law by legitimizing the involvement of military into politics (Muller, 1996: 174-178) (Güney, 2002: 164). Although the legitimacy and supremacy of democratic ideals and civilian rule; and the

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<sup>39</sup> The course of the usage of these words can be viewed from the daily news by the formal news agencies, such as the BYEGM.

democratic and secular character and integrity of the Turkish Republic are all acknowledged by every institution of the state -from military to judiciary-, this acknowledgement is based on the strong Kemalist legacy inherited. Therefore, interference to the civilian regimes that are perceived as deviating from these values is legitimized on the basis of the national security concern imposed by the Kemalist legacy (Güney and Karatekelioğlu, 2005).

Security has been defined as “strict security” in Turkey, according to Professor Doğu Ergil. The definition has three main elements: Defense of territorial integrity, protection of the regime and maintenance of the sovereignty over the material and moral values of the country. Such a perception about national security limits the political will and judicial independence and consolidates military’s influence over the political decisions of the Turkish state. Nationwide fear about the fate of the country led to vindictive policies against any criticism about the system. This perception produced a restricted political sphere in the shadow of such fears of internal and external threats against the integrity of the country. The use of coercion has been the common channel for the dissidents of the system to revolt against it and for the state to suppress such revolts. The state usually prefers suppressing and delaying, rather than solving the problems emerging from the system. Consequently, the use of coercion is generally legitimated by the state for “its aim is to protect the integrity of the state and nation” (Ergil, 2009: 89-90). For example though any solution about (or against) the PKK can not be activated without dealing with the political implications of Kurdish question, the PKK was seen as only a terrorist organization and the reason of the miserable circumstances in the southeast in the 1980s and 1990s. The fact that the PKK was rather the consequence of the political circumstances in Turkey was largely ignored or denied. Thereby, policies to deal with the situation generally focused on the security issue (Ergil, 2009: 99). Consequently, as Cizre indicates:

“The national security concept is let influence “codification of laws pertaining to internal security, anti-terrorism, and maintenance of public order, criminalizing certain political activities, constraining public debate and expanding military jurisdiction over civilians. It is the translation of national security into laws, degrees, and regulations that, in fact gives the Turkish military a wide latitude in policy making and law enforcement” (Cizre, 2003).

Particularly in the 1990s, the Turkish state’s disability to produce alternative policies and lack of civilian control on Kurdish issue roughly emerged from a sequence of cause and effect that stemmed from mainly the structural impediments of Turkish political, judicial, and administrative system. The elements that maintain such a national security perception

and hence, hinder liberalization, democratization, compromising and cooperation on Kurdish question via production of alternative policies can be summed up as following:

**a) Turkish State's Foundational Ideology:** Ethnic policies and acceptance of an ethnic identity other than the Turkish one is conceived as a threat against national security of the Turkish Republic, and its national unity, therefore Kurds posed the major challenge to the principles of the Kemalist ideology which attempted nation building through denial of diversity of people's identities, loyalties and language. This "exclusive" ideology produced a "national security concept" which generated a defensive structure due to such challenges.

**b) Turkey's Defensive State Structure:** It is well known that with the goals of a secular nation-state, national unity and territorial integrity, Turkish Republic was founded as vulnerable to external, religious and ethnic challenges. Its vulnerability developed a "defensive state structure", most visibly represented by the security forces and judiciary that enjoys widespread support across the majority society and mainstream political actors. (Somer, 2008). The Legal code<sup>40</sup>, the National Security Council (MGK)<sup>41</sup>, and the State Security Courts (DGMs)<sup>42</sup> largely limited the political independence of Turkey's major

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<sup>40</sup> In the throughout of the Turkish Constitution, the ownership and addresse is Turkish nation. The language of the state is Turkish and Atatürk nationalism is taken as reference. It rejects any mention of ethnic identity or cultural, political rights of an ethnic group as a threat to the indivisible unity of the state's people and its territory and national culture. At the very beginning of the Turkish Constitution it is stated that no activity against Turkish national interests, Turkish existence, integrity of Turkish state and nation, Turkish moral and historical values, Atatürk nationalism and principles and revolutions can receive protection. It is strongly stated that no suggestion of change these main clauses can be done. In addition it is also strongly stated that no civil rights and freedoms can be used for any activities aiming at the integrity of the state and nation. Besides, the regulations about freedom of opinion and press can be restricted for the sake of this same principle. Although the expressions appear to be very shallow, they have strongly inspired the laws and judicial acts in the 1990s such as ban of political parties, prosecution of politicians, journalists and intellectuals as well as strict restriction over media, press and political organizations (<http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1982ay.htm>).

<sup>41</sup> The Article 118 of the Constitution pushes the MGK for submitting to the Council of Ministers its recommendations against the internal and external security of the country. Although it sounds to be not obligatory, the same article pushes the Council of Ministers for giving priority to the recommendations of the MGK (Heper and Güney, 2004: 184). Decisions taken at the MGK focus on National security concept. The 1990s were also the years when a highly important security issue was the main issue in the agenda of Turkey. Therefore, the military had to work through the MGK to fulfill its traditional role of guardian of the Turkish Republic against the major conflicts.

<sup>42</sup> DGMs were established under Article 143 of the constitution which was put into force under the military junta in 1982 to deal with security offenses against the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, the free democratic order, or against the constitutional principles and characteristics of Republic, and acted concerning the internal and external security of the State. The military which already had the channel through the National Security Council to influence the government, exercised its influence directly within the structure of the State Security Courts by

parties and governments and led to a dual system and let the military directly communicate with the civilian government and influence political decision making.

**c) Threatening Sense of Pluralization:** The liberalization failures at the beginning of the life Republic fostered a threatening sense of pluralization in Turkey. Because of security concerns, pluralization has been seen as divisive. Kurds, like other non-Turkish Muslim ethnic groups, are allowed to vote and to participate in the political process, but as ‘Turks’ not as ‘Kurds’ (Ataman, 2002) (Robins, 1993). Therefore, as Mesut Yeğen argues, citizenship in Turkish Constitution does not only determines “who is not from us”, but also envisages to make up “the content and nature of us” in this or that way. Turkish Constitution says “whoever is the citizen of Turkish state is Turkish”. While the intention is to unite its people under citizenship concept, it does so under a Turkish label (Yeğen, 2008).

**d) The Restrictions on Civilian Actors:** Such a political base has brought along lack of civilian control by lending justification to authoritarian values and hegemony of military-led institutions such as the MGK. The institutional mechanism that largely restricted Turkish civilian authorities particularly in the 1990s largely reduced the transparency of the public policy, too. MGK defined the priorities of national and international security by the National Security Document (Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi, MGSB) which was issued every four years and updated every two years. The existence of such a document -whose content was only known by the top military and civilian authorities, called as the “secret constitution of the state”- means that the cabinet was not the main responsible of governing the country. Besides MGK and MGSB as well as the regulations (issued by general secretary); National Intelligence Organisation (MIT), State Security Courts (DGM) and clandestine JITEM (the alleged Gendarme Intelligence and Counter-terrorism Unit) were the other official security agencies which contributed to the institutionalisation of “deep state” (Gunter, 2008: 33). The restrictions on civilian actors’ discursive autonomy by legal and extralegal powers developed policy barrenness and an uncompromising stand regarding the Kurdish issue (Somer, 2005a). The same hegemony was felt in the southeast during the intense struggle against the PKK in the 1990s. The struggle was carried (or seemed to be carried) out entirely under the command and management of the legal civilian authority.

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placing one military judge together with two civilian judges on each court panel. Moreover a serving army officer could be the prosecutor. The DGMs were abolished in the 2000s and the cases of the DGMs were transferred to heavy criminal courts.

But actually, the legal civilian authority was inevitably subordinated to the military's influence over internal security.

**e) Doubt on Western Objectives:** Interactions between the Kurdish population in Turkey and Kurdish migrants in Europe, as well as European states' pressure for Kurdish rights have been quite influential over internationalization of the issue. Europe's and EU's urging of democratic steps about Kurdish issue has stirred the national unity and security concerns even more, and has cast doubt on Western objectives against Turkish national security and integrity. Since the beginning of 1990s, the main fraction stems from conflicting approaches to the issue. Turkey's Kurdish problem is defined in Europe mainly, as the oppression and denial of the Kurds' rights, and the war in southeastern Turkey is interpreted as a Kurdish national liberation movement. However, particularly in the 1990s official Turkish discourse did not mention of a Kurdish problem or a civil war; the issue was defined as a socioeconomic problem in the southeast, which induced terrorism and violence dependent on external support from foreign states that aim to weaken Turkey (Göçek 2008).

**f) Restrictions over the Kurdish nationalist Activists:** As Bozarslan indicates, it is the paradox of the "Turkish democracy" that while it is able to integrate Kurdish political actors, it also functions as a system of exclusion that produces "much more political and civil violence than many other ME countries" (Bozarslan, 2000: 25). Lack of consolidation of democracy does not let most of the Turkish politicians see Kurdish political actors as parties they should listen to, even if these are legitimately elected; because Kurdish political actors are seen as the speakers of the PKK which is labeled as a terrorist organization. On the other hand as the legal Kurdish political movements failed to get rid of the PKK label, it became difficult for Turkish political actors to find a fully non-PKK partner for dialogue (Somer, 2008). The systematic suppression of moderate Kurdish activists and groups just benefited the PKK which had already started its armed campaign advocating it was the only way of asserting the Kurdish cause. Kurdish nationalist parties (HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP) that represented their Kurdish electorates in the east and southeastern regions were banned in sequence due to their radical demands<sup>43</sup> that contradicted Turkish

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<sup>43</sup> Their radical demands can be briefed as following: recognition of Kurdish identity, negotiations with elected members of the population for freedom to publish, educate, and broadcast in Kurdish. Their social demands were abolition of the emergency rule in the southeast, removal of the special security forces and village guards and introduction of economic measures and judicial reforms (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:85). Response to such social demands were delayed over years due to lack of security in the region.



state's ideological principles, and because they did not denounce the PKK; in other words because they accepted that the PKK was fighting for Kurdish cause. However, the state has been equally harsh with non-radical Kurdish nationalist politicians and parties, too (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:45).<sup>44</sup>

**g) Alienation of Kurdish population:** Because of the security practices against the PKK, the Kurdish population remained between the Turkish state and the PKK. This means that the state had become “the other threat” in their lives. The Turkish state urged them to join the village guard system (against other Kurds) or choose to migrate. The ones who resisted could be easily labeled as pro-PKK. Therefore, the approach against the Kurdish population in the region and the security practices increasingly alienated the Kurds against the state. Secondly, being pro-state or pro-PKK became a litmus test which functioned as a barrier against political parties and politicians who did not call the PKK as terrorist and as a visa for the ones who called it as terrorists.

**h) Central Administration:** The central administration system creates lack of sensitivity towards local realities as well as insufficient service and supervision (Ergil, 2009: 111-112). This case was experienced in the 1990s more than any other period. When Ankara resorted to violence to deal with the PKK, the security staff became the commanding power in the region. This is one of the most influential aspects which exacerbated the war between the PKK and Turkish state, led to lose of confidence to the Turkish state among the local population.

## **2.5. Internationalization of Kurdish Issue**

The Kurdish issue was initially transferred to the European agenda by the experiences of Iraqi Kurds in late 1980s and early 1990s, later through the interactions that occurred between the Kurdish population in Turkey and the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, and finally through the propaganda of the PKK organizations in Europe. Especially the Kurdish migrants who underwent a transformation from viewing themselves as apolitical Turkish to members of a

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<sup>44</sup> For instance, Şerafettin Elçi who was joined politics as a CHP deputy at the end of 1970s, served even as a minister at the of 1970s. However upon his publicly revealing his Kurdish identity and stating that “there are Kurds in Turkey”, he was prosecuted and sentenced to to over two years in prison in 1981 for making “Kurdish and secessionist propaganda”. The non-violent party he founded in 1997 (the Democratic Mass Party) could not escape harassments of the state security bodies and was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1999 (Robins, 1993) (Ataman, 2002).

transnational Kurdish nationalist movement in liberal environment of Europe were quite influential on carrying the issue of Kurdish rights to the agenda of Europe, and shaping European governments' perception about the issue in favor of the nationalist Kurds (Adamson and Demetriou, 2007).

“This pressure for increased pluralism within Turkey has combined with pressure for Kurdish rights from European states who have been influenced by Kurdish lobbying in Europe and are making this a condition of Turkish membership in the European Union. The combination of these practices has resulted in significant shifts in the articulation of national identity in Turkey, including a growing acceptance of cultural pluralism, as indicated by changes in practices and policies, such as the legalization of broadcasts in the Kurdish language in October 2001” (Adamson and Demetriou, 2007).

While the Turkish state was engaged with a military counterinsurgency against the separatist PKK, it was also trying to strengthen its bid for full integration with the European Union (EU) in the 1990s. However, as a result of Europe's different perception of Kurdish issue, Turkish state would hardly be able to persuade European states against the PKK. The organizational structure of the PKK which was a legal entity in Germany until being banned in 1993, had its own underground entities all of which were a transnational network throughout Europe making use of political means in order to challenge hegemonic constructions of Turkish nationalism during most of the 1980s and 1990s. Kurdish cause, being voiced throughout Europe, has had a great impact over the negotiations between the EU and Turkey. On the contrary to Ankara, many European countries and organizations initially associated the PKK's armed campaign with the Kurdish issue and regarded the problem as a minority issue of “self determination right” as a result of Kurdish nationalist lobbying and PKK's propaganda (Bölügiray, 1993: 27). The reports about the civil casualties and damages of the severe measures in the region cast doubt on the Turkey's security measures in the region and turned the issue into a human rights and cultural and political rights matter. Turkey strived between maintaining the legitimacy of its armed campaign and confronting the accusations about violation of human rights in the region as well as arguments about democracy vacuum and minority rights. The fact that Turkey has not signed the European Council's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, challenges it in the EU full membership process (<http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2347530>, “İlerleme Raporu Tam Metni”).<sup>45</sup> But even so, all the other signed conventions are binding, and the European Commission on Human

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<sup>45</sup> As a matter of fact, Turkish state recognizes only non-Muslim (religious) minorities on the basis of Lausanne Treaty; but any Muslim grup including the Kurds are not recognized as minority.

Rights and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) step in upon any complaint about violation of these conventions.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> It should not go unnoticed that Turkey that is an EU candidate, is a member of European Council since 1950; therefore has signed the European pacts such as European Convention on Human Rights and also it is a party to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). By a derogation notice of 1992, Turkey became subject to the substantive European Convention articles establishing the rights to freedom of expression, freedom from racial or ethnic discrimination, and the right to a fair trial (Muller, 1996: 181). Turkey is a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and it also signed in 1990 the OSCE Paris Charter that calls for observation of democracy, human rights and rule of law (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 47-53).

## CHAPTER III

### 3. PKK ISSUE IN EARLY 1990S (1989 – 1993)

In this chapter I intend to explain Turkish state's policies firstly during Motherland Party's (ANAP) administration and secondly during the coalition government of True Path Party (DYP) and Social Democratic People's Party (SHP). The first phase starts with ANAP's leader Turgut Özal's taking the presidency office in November 1989, and continues with ANAP led 47th and 48th government with the premierships of respectively Yıldırım Akbulut and Mesut Yılmaz. The second phase starts with ANAP's defeat in 1991 general elections, and continues with Süleyman Demirel-led DYP and SHP coalition government. It ends with Özal's death and Demirel's ascent to presidency. It is obligatory to state that Turgut Özal's political discourse and initiatives in terms of the PKK and the Kurdish issue are largely mentioned, due to his active policy regarding the solution of Kurdish question in the second phase of this period. Secondly, the early 1990s is significant mainly because it was the decade when Turkish officials got aware of the gravity of the PKK issue and the impossibility of continuing with the same official discourse that used to deny the existence of "Kurds" in the previous decade.

#### 3.1. The PKK Issue in Late 1980s

According to Ataman, several internal and external developments such as the change of leadership in 1980, the dramatic comeback of the Kurdish nationalist movement, the rising power of political Islam both in the domestic and in the regional context, and developments in the Middle East led to the emergence of a new sense of ethnicity among the Turks and other ethnic groups who began to claim their distinct identity. Such developments encouraged Özal to revise the official ethnic policy, and to restructure Turkish politics in many areas (Ataman, 2002).<sup>47</sup> One of the indications of his revision of official ethnic identity was his statement that "Kurds are, like us, Muslim and from Sunni sect", tending to point at the existence of different ethnicities in Turkey and highlighting the unifying

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<sup>47</sup> It is stated that Turkish leaders began to talk restructure the Turkish Republic's isolation from outside by expanding their connections throughout the Turkic world and controlling it. According to Ataman, as the Kemalist principle of Turkism was based narrowly on the Turks living within the boundaries of modern Turkey, the new Özal's leadership accepted close cultural, historical and ethnic ties with Turks who live in Iraq, Bulgaria, Caucasus, and Central Asia. (Ataman, 2002).

religious factor between different ethnic groups in Turkey (Bölügiray, 1993: 55).<sup>48</sup> Özal, who initially focused on economic liberalization in the first half of the 1980s, began to take significant steps toward democratization of the state in the second half. Among his important steps, there were demilitarization and civilianization of the state<sup>49</sup>, empowering local administrations<sup>50</sup>, and amendments in criminal law<sup>51</sup>, and lastly approval of international human rights agreements<sup>52</sup> (Ataman, 2002) (Yüksel, 2007: 225). One of the major steps was strengthening Turkish state's European Convention obligations in 1987, by recognizing the right of individual petition to the European Commission (Muller, 1996: 181).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Özal's ethnic policy explained by another statement by him which clarifies his following the Ottoman example: "...I don not recognize that there are only Turks in this country. Anybody who lives here is a citizen of the Turkish Republic...If those who live in this country –coming from any origin- live in unity and cooperation, belonging to the same religion is an advantage for us, then happiness will ensue." (Ataman, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> According to Ataman, throughout his leadership, Özal struggled against military's hegemony. For example, on the contrary to military's own choice for the chief of general staff post, he appointed his own choice (Necip Torumtay). It is stated that Özal also confronted the military about the defence budget and defense funds, which had been considered as taboo until that time (Ataman, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> The involvement of the central authority in local affairs was decreased through some reforms. Therefore, encouraged by such reforms, the voices who supported decentralization increased in the 1980s and early 1990s. (Ataman, 2002). (For example Kurdish nationalist parties in the 1990s, and Islamic Welfare Party (RP) would mention of the need of decentralization of local administrations in their statements or democratization programs).

<sup>51</sup> Although Anti-terror Act (no. 3713) which brought new constraints on political activities was introduced, it brought also some improvements concerning human rights. For example death sentences were commuted and tens of thousands of prisoners were released. Secondly, the articles of the Turkish Penal Code (Articles 141, 142 and 163) which were the basis of 'crimes of thought' were abolished. These were the articles which banned applied constraints on associations and all propaganda with the purposes that might weaken national sentiments.

<sup>52</sup> On 8 January 1990, the Özal leadership recognized the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, which put pressure on Turkey's legal system since decisions made by Turkish courts became the subject of international investigation. The Özal government also signed the Council of Europe Convention (CEC) and the United Nations Convention on Torture and Inhuman Treatment (UNCTIT) in 1987. On 26 February 1988 Turkey became the first member state to ratify the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 26 November 1987 (Ataman, 2002). In 1990, Özal's leadership signed the OSCE Paris Charter that calls for observation of democracy, human rights and rule of law (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 47-53). Özal's administration also made significant changes in criminal law.

<sup>53</sup> Turkish government recognized this right with some limiting reservations which declared as ineffective by the Commission (Muller, 1996: 181).

However, in spite of the military's handing the government to an elected administration in 1983, and the economic and social liberalization thrust of Özal's leadership, the Kurdish issue remained under the military domination. Even after a civilian president (Özal) started to serve in 1989, the MGK, which is chaired by the president and includes the military high command, continued to function as the centre of policy making on Kurdish question with its both military, cultural and political dimensions (Robins, 1993). In spite of his democratic approach in terms of political rights and introducing a new perception of ethnic identity, Özal's approach to Kurdish problem in the southeast inspired by a military approach. He ignored the ethnic implications of the PKK and political dimension of Kurdish problem, and did not intervene to the settlement of armed conflict until 1992, when he initiated a new phase for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish problem. Therefore, the political polarization between the Turkish state and the southeast region following the coup and martial law in the 1980s aggravated under new security practices, namely the village guard system and the emergency rule (OHAL).<sup>54</sup> The village guard system would be far from providing security, because the militias became the target of PKK's attacks, and the militias who were mostly members of the pro-state clans would involve into excessive acts against the civilians and into disputes between the clans. OHAL, on the other hand, prevented the application of Turkey's emerging political liberalization process in the southeast due to OHAL governor's extraordinary powers that were increased in April 1990, and the ANAP government left the conflict in the southeast region to the OHAL governor (Bölügiray, 1993: 53). Although the OHAL seemed to aim to establish a civilian administration, the extraordinary powers confiscated to the governor led to authoritarian implementations. Moreover, the decision-making was in the grip of gendarmerie (that was in charge of the counterinsurgency until 1992, when Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) took on full responsibility of the campaign against the PKK) and the hence, the OHAL governor was actually by-passed in decision making. The case of incoordination between the security forces and the civilian governors in the region let the officials acquit themselves by accusing the other about the problems that emerged out of legal gap. This resulted in Kurdish population alienation against the Turkish state, strengthening of the PKK, aggravation of the social and economic circumstances in the region, and plenty of allegations on human rights violation.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See the second chapter, the sections about village guard system and OHAL.

<sup>55</sup> The Özal-led leadership took several other security measures which were controversial as much as village guard system and OHAL. (1) In 1989 a decree called as "the registration and license of secret weapons" which let everyone over 21 to have at least one weapon was issued. The same decree opened the way to uncontrolled armament in the region where already lots of weapons had

The southeast region would devoid not only the political liberalization, but also the economic liberalization that was enjoyed in the west and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey. Agricultural activities were still in the grip of clan leaders and unemployment was estimated to be twice the national average at around 25 per cent (Robins, 1993). The Özal-led government, recognizing the role of the economic backwardness in the growing regional alienation of the southeast, moved on to regenerate the economy of the southeast, especially by the Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP) which was even perceived as a solution against the terrorism, although was anticipated to be completed in 2025 in those days<sup>56</sup> (Bölügiray, 1993: 59). However according to Bölügiray, GAP would benefit mostly the larger land owners (ağa) and tribal chiefs who owned a substantial share of the cultivable lands, while thousands of families did not even own a piece of land and had to work in the lands owned by land owners and tribal chiefs. Therefore, it is suggested that in the absence of a comprehensive land and agriculture reform<sup>57</sup>, the GAP project was not expected to create a fundamental socio-economic change in the region (Bölügiray, 1993: 60). Secondly, GAP project did not cover all the problematic areas where the PKK insurgency was getting huge support (Robins, 1993).

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been smuggled from the North Iraq. Bölügiray argues that the lack of inspection in the application of this decree led to serious problems. For example it turned the region into a “weapon store” which could be exploited by the PKK. Besides, each governor probably gave priority to their own fraction, either Islamists or extreme nationalist people (Ülkücü). (Bölügiray, 1993: 63). (2) At the end of 1990, the decree called as “censure and banishment decree” (Sansür ve Sürgün –SS- Kararnamesi) was issued against the publications which were or suspected to be Kurdish nationalist and anti-state was put in force. By this decree, especially the State Security Courts (DGMs) assiduously worked to follow, collect or ban any publications they disliked. It delivered a big blow on the free opinion and freedom of press both of which had already got hurt in the southeast region. (Bölügiray, 1993: 61-62). (3) The Turkish government began a campaign to evacuate settlements known to be providing logistics or intelligence support to the PKK along the border (İmset, 1992:86). The evacuation of the rural settlements would be intensified from 1992 onwards.

<sup>56</sup> It would not be only the Özal leadership that perceived the PKK problem as a consequence of socio-economic backwardness. The successive government leaders (Süleyman Demirel, Tansu Çiller, Necmettin Erbakan, Bülent Ecevit) of the 1990s would underline the socio-economic factor, and especially until early 2000s, suggestions for solution focused on “need of investment, create employment, concluding the GAP project, etc.”. Although the socio-economic backwardness of the region was certainly influential on the Kurdish population’s being seduced by PKK’s Marxist discourse, it can not override the ethno-nationalistic implications of the problem. (see: Yeğen, Mesut (1999). Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.)

<sup>57</sup> Bölügiray indicates that as a result of a land reform decree in 1973, an amount of around 16 million decare of land was dispersed to local people of Urfa, although the half of this land was ceded to a few larger land owners. Moreover Özal-led government issued two decrees in the midst of 1980s which abolished the previous Land Reform Law (Bölügiray, 1993: 60).

Actually, even by the end of 1989, Turkish officials had not comprehended the extension of PKK influence and could not foresee the extension of its social and political impact over Turkish state. Although it was declared by regional officials that the fight against the PKK had been successful in 1989 when compared to previous years, the PKK, actually, started to seek more recruits from sympathizers in Europe where it was quite active politically, from local youngsters in the southeast and ex-army mercenaries from Syria. Besides, it received collaboration from leftist organizations like Turkish Workers-Peasants Liberation Army (TİKKO) and People's Liberation Party of Turkey (THKP) (İmset, 1992: 90).<sup>58</sup>

The major change in terms of underestimating the PKK's power was observed in the military ranks. Chief of the General Staff General Necip Torumtay who had a meeting Prime Minister Özal in 1989 August<sup>59</sup>, issued a written statement which marked a fundamental change in military opinion towards the PKK and the popular support it received in the region by the end of the 1980s. Contrary to political figures' overlooking statements about the PKK's threat, Torumtay did define the PKK as enemy threatening Turkey's integrity with the help of foreign countries and PKK's ongoing fight against the Turkish forces in the region as a guerilla war and besides, he underlined the need to fight against the PKK with a similar style. Torumtay drew attention to the PKK's using psychological warfare techniques and armed propaganda in order to raise suspicion in the minds of people and fear in the region. Torumtay openly mentioned about the collaboration between the PKK and some of the Kurdish population, and defined those collaborating with the PKK were also the enemies of the country.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, he expressed the need for "a full-time counter terrorist force" in the region (İmset, 1992: 88-89).

İmset qualifies this statement as awareness on the part of military about the PKK's fighting method, psychological superiority against the state forces, and the need for a much

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<sup>58</sup> PKK had good relations with Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left), THKP-C and TİKKO until the beginning of 1990s. But later PKK would count any organization that contradicted its policies and activities in the region as "organizations of agents" or "organizations under state control" (İmset, 1992: 207-208). PKK's aim was apparently to be the only Kurdish nationalist leftist organization in the region.

<sup>59</sup> Torumtay had a meeting with Özal specially on the events in southeastern region and particularly emphaized the need to regard the ones supporting the PKK as the enemies of the state and need of measures to prevent this support (BYEGM, August 17, 1989).

<sup>60</sup> Torumtay's statement in Turkish: "Milli varlığımıza ve bütünlüğümüze silah çeken ve onun yanında bilerek ve isteyerek yer alan ve destekleyen kimseleri düşman kabul etmek ve ona göre gerekli tedbirler almak gerekir." (BYEGM, August 17, 1989).



professional counter-terrorist methods. Torumtay's detections would prompt Turkish state to revise its approach against the PKK, and would trigger official contemplations on how to counter the separatist threat. It would gradually become clear that conventional military measures were not efficient to cope with the PKK's guerrilla style rural insurgency, and a need of a total war against the PKK in order to curb its foreign links.<sup>61</sup> It benefited from the countries bordering Turkey in terms of logistics and trafficking drugs and weapons. The mountainous terrain on Turkey's eastern and southeastern borderline was to the advantage of the PKK in crossing from one country to the other. Syria, Iran and Iraq not only overlooked the PKK's activities but also helped it by letting it establish camps and bases for training and planning.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.2. The PKK Issue during ANAP Government, 09.11.1989 - 20.11.1991**

President Özal attained a politically insignificant name, Yıldırım Akbulut, as prime minister in order to continue his influence on government; and he kept Abdülkadir Aksu as interior minister though Aksu was widely known to be unsuccessful for that position and in spite of allegations about his acts of Islamic organization within the interior ministry. According to Bölügiray, keeping such "unsuccessful and inexperienced" names at the top of administration led to a vacuum of authority in the southeast region, which was one of the most important reasons of the mounting terrorism (Bölügiray, 1993:53). Özal, as Demirel

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<sup>61</sup> Bölügiray categorizes the foreign support to the PKK in two groups, direct and indirect. The neighboring countries such as Russia, Syria, Iraq and Iran as the ones helping the PKK for different intentions. According to him, the USA was the regional power that might help the organization when its own benefits were in question. The USA as well as the western European countries were the ones supporting the PKK indirectly, by directing regional insurgencies in order to create new weapon markets. The western European countries that perceived the PKK as a political matter did also let them run political activities within their own territories (Bölügiray, 1993: 24-25).

<sup>62</sup> Russia, Syria, Iraq and Iran could be categorized as the ones helping the PKK directly. According to İmset who bases the Soviet-PKK relation on the accounts of one PKK repentant (Abdülkadir Aygan), the Soviet regime promoted the PKK as well as other terrorist movements in the NATO member countries in the 1980s. The Soviet regime provided training masters and weapons for the organizations. Syria and Iraq had trouble with Turkey because of the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) which, they alleged, decreased the flow of the water into their territories. While Iraq also criticised Turkish government's pro-American policy during the Gulf War; Iran that had an Islamic regime was in an ideology rivalry with secular Turkey. Syria's long term animosity against Turkey was because of Hatay matter. Actually Syria began to grant political asylum to Turkish and Kurdish left-wing groups and anti-Turkish Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) militants. After the coup in 1980, Syria decided to provide logistical, military and financial support to the PKK. Syria increased its support to the PKK and became major patron of the Iraqi Kurdish groups during a period that Iraq had trouble with these Kurdish factions in its northeast (Olson, 2000: 122) (see also: Bölükbaşı, 1993).

argued, had gathered presidency, premiership as well as party leadership on himself (BYEGM, 9 April 1990).<sup>63</sup>

The PKK, on the other hand, began to establish attacks against the security forces, which would provoke the state forces against the local population. By 1990, Jongerden alleges, the PKK established itself strongly in some districts (for example large parts of the rural and mountainous areas of Kulp, Diyarbakır). Turkish military was able to cope with PKK's existence in these regions only by use of coercion, forcing the people to join militia forces, and evacuating villages in some of the districts in these areas (Jongerden, 2007: 260).

### **3.2.1. Turkish State Losing the Faith of Southeastern Population**

#### **Psychological Warfare Techniques and Harsh Measures**

Although the civilian government's rhetoric sounded quite calm and promising, the conflict in the southeast was going harsher alongside the security measures. None of the harsh security measures could foster state authority in the region and they did not halt the PKK's increasing social and political influence in the region despite the separatist organization's early violence and continued armed propaganda. In other words, Turkish state failed to take the advantage of the PKK's atrocities since it had also alienated many members of Kurdish population (Latif, 1999: 278). The PKK was deploying psychological warfare techniques through its propaganda and political violence activities, which antagonized the state and the local population against each other. By means of armed propaganda, the PKK was trying to show to the local people that "the state was not as strong as they thought", in order to encourage them to resist the Turkish state and support the separatist organization. The fear PKK spread throughout the region, helped it to increase its influence in the region. One of the most significant outcomes of this propaganda was the sudden increase in the distribution of PKK organizational magazines such as *Serxwebun* and *Berkwedan* (the PKK's two magazines that were issued in Europe) and people lost their interest in the state

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<sup>63</sup> However it should not be ignored that Özal's taking presidential office started civilian presidents' period in Turkey again after the coup in 1980. Hence, the executorial post which has been always influential over the bills of the government and the judiciary system now passed over the civilians. But although such a change proposes positive signs for changing the constitution and much more liberal policies, the military influence would continue steadily due to "the problems challenging the national security of the country" until the beginning of the 2000s.

controlled publications (İmset: 1992: 310-312). This means that the PKK had a control on what the local population was reading, learning and believing.

One of the PKK's aims of gaining a "psychological warfare" was to forge unity among the populace and within the movement by trying to draw a pessimist scenario that Kurdish community would be vulnerable to Turkish repression and get into terrible circumstances without the PKK (Latif, 1999: 168). The PKK's non-conventional warfare was keeping the Turkish state on a defensive position. In return, the Turkish state whose policies had already led to a "regional alienation" in the southeast highlighted that "the state is strong" rather than "the state is protective" in the face of the PKK's growing influence. Besides, it reduced the issue to just a terrorism problem, taking and considering for much harsher measures in the region which had already resulted in huge human rights violations. Finally, full equipped armored carriers with troops carrying heavy machine guns patrolling throughout the region during the day light created a "psychology of Turkish state's occupation" among the local people who had already began to believe in PKK's power against the state and had already been antagonized by the state forces (İmset, 1992: 268-269) (Marcus, 238-240).

### **The Hizbullah Crisis**

According to İmset, under the management of Abdülkadir Aksu, a practicing Moslem and reportedly a member of an Islamic sect, a large and influential group of Islamic fundamentalists were in efforts to take over the whole body of the interior ministry and the police force and police intelligence organization (İmset, 1992: 121). When Mustafa Kalemli took office, he took action in order to purge fundamentalists from the ministry, and police officers suspected of extreme Islamic tendencies were appointed in groups to the east and southeast of Turkey. Although major positions were cleaned off such figures, fundamentalist police officers appointed to the region would be umbrella to (or at least would not intervene) a radical Islamic group named Hizbullah that would later turn violent against the Kurds who sympathized the PKK.<sup>64</sup> The radical flank of Hizbullah (İlim group)

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<sup>64</sup> According to sources in the region the original Hezbollah in southeast Turkey came to being after the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Following 1979, many youngsters in Diyarbakır and provinces around sympathized with the revolution. At the beginning of 1980s, pro- Iranian youth in Diyarbakır started to organize using the Menzil Bookstore as their center. An argument of the methods of struggle produced among them in the 1980s, and splitted into two major flanks. One flank (the radikal one) argued that armed warfare was the only way to instigate an Islamic revolution in Turkey whereas the other preferred political and social activities. The radikal group called İlim

got stronger especially after many fundamentalist police officers were sent to the southeast region in 1991. It is accepted that the radicalization of the Kurdish Islamists under the banner of the Kurdish Hizbullah was the outcome the following factors: 1) Disorder in the southeast pushed the Kurdish Hizbullah into underground, and protected and legitimized it against the PKK. 2) The feudal structures in the region provided it with a network to promote its interests. 3) Traditional religious associations and establishments in the southeast helped it grow (Uslu, 2007).

Because the officials failed to illuminate any of such assassinations with religious origin, the Kurdish civilians began to call the Kurdish Hizbullah with its nickname of “Hezbollah” in reference to the allegations about its contra guerrilla background.<sup>65</sup> Probably due to PKK’s propaganda, local population believed that Hizbullah enjoyed immunity not only from the police but also from this country’s secular military forces (İmset, 1992:125) (Bloom, 2005: 113). However, Ruşen Çakır argues that Hizbullah went unnoticed because it did not publicize its violence, and it was thought that the religious organization was targeting only the PKK. Çakır quotes some Hizbullah members saying that, in particular, they dealt deadly blows to the PKK’s militia; and because of this conflict between the PKK and Hizbullah, the Turkish state managed to save itself from the crisis that was in this region (Çakır, 2007). The other reasons of its going unnoticed were Turkish security forces’ underestimation of Hizbullah’s resurgence, and their being preoccupied with countering the PKK. Therefore, they did not have a strategy aimed at destroying Hizbullah organizational apparatus and did not take sweeping action to detain the majority of these individuals<sup>66</sup> (Çakır, 2007).

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group started to organize at the İlim bookstore in Diyarbakır and lost all of what remained of interest in the so called Kurdish cause, believing religion is unity with all races. The other now called Menzir group adapted the goal of a Kurdish Islamic state in the southeast. (İmset, 1992: 123).

<sup>65</sup> There were rumors that the suspected ones that were turned over by the public were let free in a short time. (For more information see: İmset, 1992: 124-125).

<sup>66</sup> It is striking that Zeki Sanal, the Governor of Batman then, presented a report about the events in the region to Prime Minister Demirel during his southeast trip in April 1993, with Erdal Inonu and other governmental and military officials. In one of his statements about the report Sanal said that the most dangerous terrorist organization in Batman was the Hizbullah which seemingly advocated a religious ideology, but was actually a Kurdish nationalist organization aiming for founding an Islamic Kurdish state. He added that the regional people supported the Hizbullah as a reaction to the PKK (BYEGM, April 8, 1993). But neither the politicians nor the military pointed at the seriousness of Hizbullah’s regional threat.

However according to İmset, there were reports which claimed that this violent flank of Hizbullah was being trained at the Diyarbakır security center in secrecy and was at times hired on a contract basis to carry out murders of Kurdish nationalist individuals who could not be dealt with otherwise under the Turkish judiciary (İmset, 1992: 124). Hizbullah assailants killed Kurdish nationalist activists, journalists, intellectuals and politicians in almost the same style: A single bullet in the head. People were abducted from their homes, extensively tortured and executed. Investigating a connection between Hizbullah and Turkish security forces was dangerous in early 1990s. Several representatives of publications that attempted to probe these links were killed. Reporters for left-wing or Kurdish nationalist newspapers such as “2000'e Dogru”, “Gerçek”, “Özgür Gündem” were shot after examining and covering stories on Hizbullah and police (Human Rights Watch, February 2000).

However, Çakır quotes former Hizbullah members denying allegations that it was under direct (or indirect) control of the state; but they admit that JITEM (the alleged intelligence organization founded within Turkish gendarmerie) intended to have control on the organization, but allege that it failed.<sup>67</sup> Therefore according to R. Çakır:

“In the past, speculation regarding its relations with other security and intelligence services prompted Hizbulah to be viewed as a proxy. Indeed, a similar tendency exists today, given that, like many other illegal organizations, Hizbullah has been infiltrated by some intelligence agencies or is in contact with others. Despite these misconceptions, Hizbullah must be seen as an independent organization and assessed through its political, social and cultural behavior (Çakır, 2007).

### **3.2.2 PKK’s Increasing Impact over Turkish Government**

Özal, on a TV program (TRT’s Gün ve Ekonomi) in April 1990, highlighted three points that clearly displayed that the government had no policy other than implementing harsher security measures against the PKK (as already manifested by the new anti-terror degree) and local people who “were not loyal to the state and supported the PKK” : (1) Increase of the “severity of counter-terrorism measures (2) Supporting and adapting a better attitude towards the local population (3) The condition for a better attitude and support was based on loyalty to Turkish Republic (BYEGM, 6 April 1990).

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<sup>67</sup>It is alleged that the rivalry between the PKK and Hizbullah was short lived and from the mid-1990s on, both sides understood the danger of the internecine strife and arrived to an agreement of modus-vivendi and common struggle against the Kemalist regime (Bloom, 2005: 113).

As it is clear Özal, who could even challenge the military in his choice of general staff in late 1980 intending to demilitarize and civilianize the state, was actually bound by the military's concerns over the PKK issue, and he could not initiate an alternative policy other than consolidating the measures in the region as dictated at the MGK meetings. In other words, the armed conflict with the PKK withheld ANAP-led administration from a liberal approach to the Kurdish issue and circumstances in the region. Therefore, a contradictory manner would be witnessed between the measures taken against Kurdish nationalist activities and the liberalization discourse of Özal's leadership: (1) The decisions taken at the MGK meetings, such as anti-terror degree and other security measures would continue to be central in policies about the Kurdish conflict. (2) In spite of the government's move to grant linguistic cultural rights to Kurds, public prosecutors of DGM would continue to prosecute many publications and non-violent Kurdish activists in accordance to the military-inspired 1982 Constitution and the Criminal Law (and later Anti-Terror Law) which were based on security concerns about national and territorial integrity.

The PKK, on the other hand, admitted that some of its methods that aimed to increase its power were "self-destructive" activities, such as its massacres and extreme use of violence against the "traitors" such as the clans who collaborated with the state and the militia of village guard system. (Özcan, 2006: 198). Its attacks against many civilians including women and children had resulted in alienation of some Kurdish sections, and hence, it decided to stop the massacres in the region at its fourth congress in December 1990.<sup>68</sup> The PKK realized that without the massacres it stood in a stronger position with regard to public support, so it concentrated its attacks against "selected" military targets, upgrading its war on Turkish troops. By quitting massacres against civilian population, the PKK had actually caught Turkey off guard because, in the absence of terror directed at the people, the only repression spotted by the locals became those of the security forces (İmset, 1992: 224, 225).

According to a confidential report (about which İmset avoids to get into detail for security reasons) filed in Ankara by 1990, since 1987 the PKK had increased its popular links and enjoyed a major local support especially in the southeast region due to ANAP

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<sup>68</sup> At the same congress the PKK also adapted a decision to establish "visa system" in the region, demanding foreign visitors coming to the region to receive permission first from the Kurdistan Committee offices in Europe. While PKK wanted to show that it could be alternative to the Turkish state, it also started to pronounce the possibility of a federative solution following the 4. Congress (İmset, 1992:231).

government's recent measures as well as the PKK's own terrorist campaign.<sup>69</sup> According to the report, excessive measures that harmed the civilians in the southeast region had served to the interests of the PKK. While some of the local population openly supported the PKK, some of them supported just out of the fear, and the PKK had had an extensive web of possible recruits, donators and intelligence sources, according to the report.<sup>70</sup> The PKK claimed authority to an extension that it threatened to kill the Journalists who referred it as a terrorist organization (İmset, 2002: 234). Serxwebun in September 1991 and ARGK press statements in October 1991 announced that "the PKK was advancing towards a stage of preparing to proclaim a revolutionary government (Botan-Behdinan War Government) in those parts of Kurdistan where the enemy's political and military power was broken" (Özcan, 2006: 202).

In international arena, the awareness about the conflict in the southeast as well as Turkish state's orientation towards military measures began to have impact over Turkish state: For example, a Federal German delegation visited Turkey in order to make a research about the human rights violations in the southeast. The speaker of this delegation Alisa Fuss told that they would carry their impressions to the parliament and would ask for the cut of the military aid because they felt worried that it could be used for different aims in the southeast (BYEGM, 10 May 1990).

### **3.2.3 A Defensive Government against Opposition**

Because Özal had powers derived from his presidency, as well as his symbolic party leadership (of ANAP) and his influence over the administration, claims against the government such as anti secular acts within the administration or anti democratic acts in the southeast region could be easily fenced off.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Repressive measures in the East of Turkey were not as clear and intensive as they were in the southeast region. The PKK was not influential in armed attacks and got much lower popular support compared to the southeast. (İmset, 1992:233)

<sup>70</sup> The same report displayed the increasing popular support by an example from Şırnak: "While in 1987 the local people were referring to the PKK as terrorists, and in 1988 as students, in 1990 they started to call them the front and now in 1991 they are openly referring them as guerrilla or resistance which shows how effective pkk propaganda can be. Şırnak is now a potential pkk stronghold and may soon be subject to increased popular activities." (İmset, 1992: 234)

<sup>71</sup> For example the censure motion about terrorism and secularism presented by SHP deputy Erdal Kalkan and his colleagues was rejected to be discussed at parliament general assembly. (BYEGM, 23 October 1990)

HEP deputies presented a parliamentary question demanding a parliamentary inquiry about “the citizens forced to migrate, the forcibly evacuated villages and burned forests” (BYEGM, 26 October 1990). It was responded by the Regional Governor of Emergency Rule Hayri Kozakçioğlu who defended the evacuations of villages telling that they were encouraging formally migration from hamlets which were not secure to the settlement sites. He also claimed that the terrorists were losing their influence, the ideological link of terrorism ceased and that the terrorists had turned into an ordinary crime network (BYEGM, 13 November 1990). Kozakçioğlu also displayed the same tendency of redefining the PKK, denying its ethno-political cause by simply reducing it to a simple a criminal organization (see: Yeğen, 1999, and Bayındır, 2007). Paradoxically just a few weeks later, the emergency rule, which was already in force in ten southeastern provinces, was extended for four months in the first week of November, within the campaign against the PKK that was despised as “a criminal organization”.<sup>72</sup>

**SHP’s Kurdish Report:** During such a tense time, on in July 1990, a “Southeast Report” by the SHP was approved in SHP party council unanimously. This report had a significant importance for it was the first report which laid the conflict on the table since the Kurdish conflict turned to violence in 1984<sup>73</sup>. Party leader Erdal İnönü said that the report by which they recognized “Kurdish reality” and proposed “democratic cultural rights as well as regional development policies”, was a part of the program they were planning to put in force when they come to power (Nevertheless the report would be left on the paper when

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<sup>72</sup> Paradoxically the minister of interior Aksu alleged that Turkey was “a peaceful country where a few crimes were committed” in October 1990 (BYEGM, 26 October 1990). Turkish state officials were trying to avoid from demoralizing the community, and undermining the country’s prestige. For example the OHAL governor Hayri Kozakçioğlu always described military’s fight against the PKK as successful in his yearly evaluations. Ünal Erkan, the successor of Kozakçioğlu, during the most violent period in the region, would also generally deliver positive reports although the conflict continued even after his rule.

<sup>73</sup> It was prepared under presidency of Deniz Baykal, the General Secretary of SHP and other SHP members Hikmet Çetin, Fuat Atalay, Esref Erdem, Cumhur Keskin. (Kapmaz and Gökçe, 2008) SHP called for a set of amendments in the approach to this matter through a report which it issued in July 1990. The report called for a halt to the military measures carried out until then and a limited decentralization of state administration. SHP’s report was spurring on the strengthening of democracy by programs of economic and socio cultural rights (Gürbey,1996:19). The suggestions of the report were as following: (1) The identity crisis in the southeast region reached an alarming level (2) The local people feel alienated from the state. On the other hand, the local people are viewed as potential criminals by the state officials. (3) The ban on language is primitive; it should be abolished. But Turkish language would continue to be the formal language of the Turkish state. (4) The State should initiate research on different cultures and languages. \* Village guard system and emergency rule should be abolished. Such measures are the main reason of migration from the villages in the region.

\* A specific development program should be prepared for the region. The unfair land system in the region also should be revised (Kapmaz and Gökçe, 2008).



later SHP joined the coalition with DYP). The report drew harsh criticism from the governmental officials such as the Emergency Rule Governor Hayri Kozakçıoğlu and Prime Minister Akbulut, who said, “Everybody living on this land is Turkish, not Kurdish” (BYEGM, 30 July 1990). It was controversial that the prime minister, whose government initiated a democratization drive as well as reinterpretation of ethnic identity, denied the existence of Kurds in Turkey. However the President Özal, who was the leader of the democratization drive and would also initiate some cultural rights for Kurds in next term, criticized the report for being a biased and subjective compilation, and also expressed his objection against “a state’s assisting in teaching another language” as suggested by SHP’s report. Both Özal’s and Akbulut’s objection can be interpreted as a typical defensive response of “the one governing to the one in opposition”. However, the most astounding happened when DGM prosecution started an investigation about the report, although the prosecution would end soon (BYEGM, 16 July 1990).

#### **3.2.4. 1990 and 1991 Nevruz Celebrations and Suspension of Human Rights**

Reflection of the political shift on the authoritative state policies in Kurdish-populated areas began to appear only after 1990s, due to the oppressive measures under OHAL administration. By 1990, two important developments indicated to a political activation of Kurdish nationalism: The Nevruz celebrations and the mass riots in the southeast, and secondly the emergence of Kurdish nationalist politicians who formed the People’s Labor Party (HEP) and succeeded even to enter the parliament within the list of SHP. Özal-led ANAP administration’s democratic drive was certainly influential on the political shift in the southeast region. It signed international human rights conventions such as OSCE Paris Charter that envisaged equality and the right of free-expression for the ethnic or religious minorities; strengthened Turkish state’s European Convention obligations in 1987, and lastly did several amendments on some of the oppressive articles of the Constitution.

The fact that local people started to come together and demonstrate with no hesitate possibly provoked the security forces. It became clear that Kurdish population did not only get a political awareness of its own identity, but also began to display this openly by 1990. They began even to dare to claim the right of funeral for the killed militants from the PKK ranks in clashes with Turkish security forces. A few days before Nevruz, at the funeral of a PKK fighter in Nusaybin, clashes broke out between local people that joined to the funeral and security forces. During the protests of the events, four people died and many were

detained in Nusaybin. This created a chain of strong reaction in the region as well as big cities in the west of the country (Adana, Istanbul, İzmir) where large demonstrations were established and many people were detained. In the region, many people shut down their shops in protest of the state forces (BYEGM, March 19-20, 1990). On 20 and 21 March, during Nevruz celebrations, for the first time a massive demonstration in support of the PKK erupted in so-called Botan province in the large Kurdish towns like Cizre and Şırnak. Ordinary Kurds hurled stones at the army. The string of “Serihildans” (Kurdish uprising) spread over 1990, 1991 and 1992 that viewed the unimaginable growth of the PKK. It was clear that the PKK had become the “Kurdish Party of the conflict” (Özcan, 2006: 203-205). However, the Turkish state was not ready to admit the fact that “local people willingly participated in protest demonstrations”. In order to draw away the PKK militants from the border area, it intensified its cross-border raids in August 1991, which would continue until May 1992 (Marcus, 2009: 269). The PKK, on the other hand, exploited the vacuum emerged from 1990-1991 Gulf War that allowed the PKK to establish bases deeper inside Iraqi northern Iraq where it obtained the weapons left by Iraqi troops (White, 2000: 165) (Bölügiray, 1993: 88). Upon its enhancement of its weaponry, the PKK continued to establish operations inside Turkey, and stepped up its violent attacks throughout the region (White, 2000: 165). White argues that its region-wide activities as well as atrocities against civil servants and soldiers in the region, attracted more support to the PKK than ever before, and this would be witnessed in 1991 and especially 1992 Nevruz celebrations (White, 2000: 165).

President Özal, who made an explanation at the end of the MGK meeting following the incidents during Nevruz celebrations, said it was concluded that the southeastern events were a part of a plan aiming at the territorial integrity (BYEGM, March 28<sup>th</sup> 1990).<sup>74</sup> It is significant that in the next MGK meeting on April 11, an anti-terror decree with anti-separatist measures was accepted. According to this decree issued by the cabinet, the powers of the OHAL governor who was in charge of the 11 provinces then were increased<sup>75</sup> and the Turkish press’s new coverage about incidents in the region would be restricted.

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<sup>74</sup> At the same MGK meeting the significant issue was about Special Operations Teams in the Southeast region and their efficiency. It was agreed that they were successful in combating the terrorists but inefficient in dealing with the people. It was admitted that these special teams were to carry “spot operations”, but their failure in dealing with population (using violence against them), meant a failure in their specialty. (İmset, 1992:214,215)

<sup>75</sup> The state of emergency allows the civilian governor to exercise certain quasi-martial law powers, including restrictions on the press and removal from the area of persons whose activities are deemed hostile to public order.

Accordingly, no stories that could harm the security efforts would be published and the regional governor would be able to ban publications or close printing plants if they carried stories and news that contradicted the official reports. Moreover, the regional governor was empowered to stop strikes and lockouts at work places, and to expel from the region the residents deemed threats to public order (İmset, 1992:216) (BYEGM, 9 April 1990). Although the new degree seemed initially as a blow to the Kurdish nationalist propaganda means in the southeast region, it was actually a blow over the whole region, as it intended to suspend the basic human rights, such as freedom of thought and press. It also prevented reliable information channels and hence, left back only the “official reports” to learn about the happenings in the region.

The suspension of some human rights was confirmed when the Turkish government sent a letter to Secretariat General for Council of Europe, and reported that the anti-terror decree law issued for the southeast of Turkey may cause to suspend some of the articles of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (BYEGM, October 4, 1990). Firstly, such a move was the sign of a dense military build up in the southeast and that the local population was being carried towards an unfair war.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, it would only contribute to the alienation of Kurdish population by putting them in a “potential terrorist position” in an “open jail”. Representatives of some NGOs (including Human Rights Association and Association for Supporting Contemporary Life, ÇYDD) interviewed the people who had been banished from their villages to Şırnak, and declared in December 1990 that the government had brought terrorism to the region instead of peace and calm (BYEGM, 4 December 1990).

In 1991, as a measure against Kurds’ manifesting Nevruz as their national day, Turkish authorities began “to stake a claim” on Nevruz. Declaring Nevruz (that had been forgotten or had not been even mentioned on Turkish social and cultural agenda for years) was “Turks’ New Day”, Interior ministry authorized Emergency Rule Governor to order to the governors of the provinces in the east and southeast to adapt Nevruz as a national day and formally celebrate it at schools (BYEGM, 12 March 1991). Moreover, ministry of culture also accepted to celebrate March 21 as a festival of “love and fraternity” every year (BYEGM 20 March 1991). Nevertheless, as it is clear, such acts were carried due to

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<sup>76</sup> According to the news published by NOKTA in November 1991, in the first six months of 1991, 13 people were reportedly died in a doubtful way after they had been detained by police (BYEGM, November 1991).

Turkish officials' "anxiety", because the events that had broken out the year before appeared as a collective show of strength of the Kurdish population against Turkish state. What the Turkish officials intended to do can be defined as a policy of "trivialize" the Kurdish ethnic dimension of Nevruz via redefinition that it was, actually, a Turkish day to be celebrated throughout the country. Besides, the acts to declare it as a Turkish day resembled the 1930s-style and post-1980 coup measures which intended to suppress ethnic elements via "Turkification". At the events occurred during Nevruz celebrations that year, 233 people were detained. HEP organized meetings in some cities like Diyarbakır, Batman and Istanbul, but during celebrations, security forces and the attendants engaged in strife that caused some casualties and detains. While Nevruz had become "the national day for collective demonstration, appeals and show of strength" for HEP, the flag crisis at HEP's Nevruz celebration in İstanbul exacerbated the collisions around Turkey as well as the hatred against the party (BYEGM, 23 March 1991). The events happened in the spring 1991 fostered the traditional animosity of Turkish governments against the Kurdish nationalist party as well as Kurdish nationalism.<sup>77</sup>

### **3.2.5. Measures and Legal Amendments within the Counterinsurgency Policy**

By the beginning of 1991, while frequent military operations against the suspects in the region were going on, many villagers as well as students at universities were detained.<sup>78</sup> Özal and ANAP government promised major reforms, particularly reforms related to social rights for the Kurds and reforms about principle rights of opinion. However, the government's early democratic promises and acts were contradicted by the fact that the years 1989 and 1990 had a big record of pressure and censure against the press and publications about the Kurdish conflict.<sup>79</sup> For example, while the government decided on

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<sup>77</sup> Dr. İsmail Beşikçi was arrested by the DGM for giving a statement to a Kurdish journal. (BYEGM 20 March 1991). Adana'da gösteri yapan yaklaşık 2 bin kişi polisle çatışmaya girdi, 10 kişi yaralandı, 200 kişi gözaltına alındı, izmir'de çıkan olaylarda ise 25 kişi gözaltına atıldı. Batman'ın Kozluk ilçesinde polisler göstericiler arasında çatışma çıkması sonucu ilçede sokağa çıkma yasağı ilan edildi. Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da güvenlik güçlerinin izinleri kaldırıldı, teyakkuz durumuna getirildi (BYEGM, 20th-23rd March, 1991).

<sup>78</sup> In Silvan, Diyarbakır the public protested the events occurred in Cizre and Nusaybin and shot down their shops. The boycott which had started a few days ago was going on at Dicle University in order to protest the happenings. The number of the people taken under detention was around 400. Security measures were increased at high schools in the region (BYEGM, 28 Mart 1990).

<sup>79</sup> Many cases were presented to State Security Courts against the press and free opinion in this period: On 2 February 1989, the editor of the newspaper "Emek Dünyası" and the officials of a journal "Medya Güneşi" were sued for making Kurdish propaganda. Several cases were opened

the preparation of a resolution to abolish the ban over Kurdish, an İstanbul court ordered withdrawal of a book (The Method of Learning Kurdish) for it was written in Kurdish and aiming to teach Kurdish (BYEGM, 12 February 1991).

### **The Anti-Terror Law no 3713**

The new Anti-terror Law<sup>80</sup> no 3713 including conditional release was prepared according to the recommendations of MGK and accepted at the general assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1991 (BYEGM, 11 April 1991). It worked for release of journalists and let the labor unions activate again. It seemed to be a democratic step in terms of freedom of opinion and freedom of press<sup>81</sup> since it abolished the Articles 141, 142, and 163<sup>82</sup>. However, the Anti-Terror Law compensated the undemocratic articles of Criminal Law with “broader” ones. The first article of this law defined terrorism so broadly that any ordinary counter act could be attributed as terrorism:

“Terror is any kind of act attempted by a person or people who is/are a member/members of an organization; in order to change the permanent features of Republic, and its political, legal, social, secular, and economic order; to endanger the Turkish state and Republic, to debilitate or to demolish or to capture the state authority; to annihilate fundamental rights and freedom; and to damage the internal

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against the weekly journal “2000’e Doğru” and its editor as well as writers on the ground that they were making separatist propaganda and undermining national sentiments for specifically dealing human rights issue in the southeastern region and targeting Turkish security officials. On March 1990, the book of İsmail Beşikçi, “Science, Official Ideology, Democracy and Kurdish Issue” (Bilim, Resmi ideoloji, Devlet, Demokrasi ve Kürt Sorunu) was recalled from the market on the ground that it was making Kurdish propaganda.

<sup>80</sup> Anti-Terror Law decreed penalties for propaganda against the indivisible unity of the state’s people and its territory. The aim of establishing the Anti Terror Law was to relax its criminal code and catch European standards. According to Article 125 of Criminal Code, acts against the indivisibility of the state’s territory or draw away from the control of the central government were charged with capital punishment. But the new anti-terror law continued to secure the claim to power of a centralist state and its ideology. It prohibited any written and oral propaganda and meetings (whatever their goals and means) which aimed against the constitutional principles of the state (indivisible unity of the state’s people and territory). Its articles complicated any political activity, free discussion, and democratic approaches to the Kurdish issue (especially in the southeast region), since it let the detection of any act in its early stage, which was suspected to be separatist. (Muller, 1996: 179) (Gürbey, 1996:11) European pressure and negotiations of a Customs Union between Turkey and the EU obliged some changes (amendments) for Article 8 of ATL in October 1995. However it was not a fundamental change and it continued to prescribe similar penalties (but less prison sentences) for the acts suspected of being threatening.

<sup>81</sup> Nearly 30 journalist were released by the new arrangement in April, 1991. (BYEGM, 24 April).

<sup>82</sup> These articles of Penal Code, used to attribute propaganda and organization acts against the indivisibility of the state with its country and nation to criminal sanctions.

and external security of the state, public order or public health; with one of the methods of oppression, force and violence, frightening, intimidation and threatening” (<http://statik.iskur.gov.tr/tr/kurumumuz/mevzuat/kanun4.htm>).

Its second Article defines a terror criminal also quite broadly: Anybody who committed a crime on behalf of a terrorist organization, or aided and abetted to members of a terrorist organization would be punished as terrorist and member of a terrorist organization, even if he/she were not a member of a terrorist organization (<http://statik.iskur.gov.tr/tr/kurumumuz/mevzuat/kanun4.htm>).

The Article 8th of the Anti-terror Law no 3713, would regard any written and oral separatist propaganda and organizing a meeting and demonstration for the same objective with whatever method, aim and opinion as a crime, and such deeds would be attributed to criminal sanctions.<sup>83</sup> So the vacuum had come out by the abolishment of articles no 141, 142, and 163 of Criminal Law, was filled with the new Article no 8 of Anti-Terror Law. Although the Article no 8 focused on “utterance of opinion”, it was anticipated to apply criminal sanctions regarding the ones who made oral or written propaganda, organize a meeting and demonstration in order to spoil the indivisible integrity of the state with its country and nation<sup>84</sup>. Inevitably, the investigations and prosecutions against authors<sup>85</sup>, and

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<sup>83</sup> Although the 10th Article of the European Convention of Human Rights permits to establish some limitations and sanctions against the acts threatening national security, territorial integrity or public order ; the new anti-terror law excessively oppressed free opinion and individual rights.

<sup>84</sup> Article no 8 would be amended first on October 27, 1995 and again on February 2, 2002. With the last change in 2002, the intention was to explain the crime element more clearly: “...any written and oral separatist propaganda and organizing a meeting and demonstration aiming at the integrity...” was changed into “...any written, oral and visual separatist propaganda and organizing a meeting and demonstration with the intention to...” (“Sezer’den 6. Uyum’a Kısmi Veto” <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=79932>).

<sup>85</sup> One case about the official restriction over Kurdish is İsmail Beşikçi, a sociologist who has fought the Turkish government for many years in order to be able to write about the Kurds and Kurdish rights. He was brought to trial again in 1993 under the Article 8 of Anti-terror Law.

the press increased following the establishment of the law <sup>86</sup> and provoked the relatives of prisoners to begin to stage a hunger strike as well.<sup>87</sup>

Although the law was supposed to serve some democratic initiatives particularly regarding the Kurdish question, it was far from responding the needs to decrease the violence and it did not free the members of the PKK in the prison as well. It abolished the Law no 2932 that banned all languages other than those that had been formally recognized by Turkish state. However, it is argued that the Kurdish public was already speaking Kurdish among each other, and the abolishment of the law did not allow them use Kurdish in publication or public places. Therefore, this new resolution was no benefit for them, and it was just a political show of the government (İmset, 1992: 237). Yet still, the abolishment of this law was a milestone in terms of eradication of aggressive traces of the military-inspired Constitution as well as liberalization of official stance against Kurdish cultural rights.<sup>88</sup>

### **3.3 PKK Issue During Demirel-led DYP-SHP Coalition Government: (20.11.1991- 25.06.1993)**

The centre-right True Path Party (DYP) was the winner with 27.03 percent, ANAP was the second with 24.01 percent and the centre-left Social-Democratic People's Party (SHP) was the third with 20.75 percent vote rate. Although SHP seemed to have lost votes comparing to the local elections in 1989, it increased its votes in the southeast up to 34 percent allowing the nominees of HEP join the elections in its own list. The results of the election were remarkable:

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<sup>86</sup>DGM Prosecutor started investigation against the officials of newspaper Yeni Ülke for they had violated the 6. and 8. Articles of the Anti-terror Law. (BYEGM, 8 May 1991). Author İsmail Beşikçi was arrested by Ankara DGM for he had made propaganda against the indivisible integrity of the state in his book *State Terror in the Middle East (Ortadoğu'da Devlet Terörü)* and his book was withdrawn from the market (BYEGM, 1 August 1991).

<sup>87</sup> In order to protest the new law, 50 relatives in Batman and 45 in Bismil started to stage hunger strike. There were already 110 people in Diyarbakır and 70 people in Adana who had began their hunger strike. ( BYEGM, 26 May 1991).

<sup>88</sup> A Kurdish radio station (Voice of Dicle) was allowed to broadcast and also it was announced that the restoration of Kurdish names to thousands of renamed towns and villages would be allowed. Moreover, parents would reportedly be able to give Kurdish names to their children. But it was not allowed to use Kurdish for “political communication”, in court or official places.

(1) None of the political parties in 1991 early general elections could get a landslide victory. Hence, it was also the start of coalition governments' period. It also indicated the existing difficulty of creating a strong political will in order to solve Kurdish question.

(2) Collapse of ANAP government: ANAP failed both throughout the country and in the southeast where it used to get a significant amount of votes. ANAP lost its popularity in the region due to mainly the military measures taken in the southeast, the social and economic outcomes of these measures including the human rights violations, and the rise of Kurdish nationalist politicians alongside rising local sympathy to the PKK.

(3) Emergence of Kurdish nationalist politicians and their success to enter Turkish parliament was one of the most important outcomes of the relative democratization throughout the country and a relative relief of the political oppression over Kurdish population in the southeast. The 22 HEP (People's Labor Party)<sup>89</sup> parliamentarians who had run under SHP's ticket due to electoral barriers were among the 88 parliamentarians of the SHP, and for the first time, an explicitly Kurdish group entered the parliament.

(4) The increase in the votes of Islamic fundamentalists (Welfare Party), especially in the poorer areas of Turkey indicated to its growing influence over the groups suffering from the ongoing political, social and economic instability in the country.

As Robins states, the defeat of Yılmaz-led ANAP government in general election did not stop the process that prefaced a degree of public discussion of the Kurdish question; and in fact, the election offered an opportunity for consideration of the Kurdish question (Robins, 1993). Demirel, who was a staunch defender of Turkish state's fundamental principles and was known to always hold the interests of the state and laws above all, did not favor Özal-led redefinition of the official ethnic policy and foreign policy, particularly in respect to Kurdish issue. He mainly criticized the previous ANAP government for not filling the authority gap in the southeast region, and allowing the PKK's political activation particularly at Nevruz celebrations. In the wake of growing Kurdish nationalism, PKK's severe attacks, and the Turkish military's domination over the issue; the new Prime Minister Demirel, who had experienced two military interventions in civilian politics, would approach to the Kurdish issue cautiously. On the other hand, the junior partner of the coalition government, SHP, which had prepared the first Kurdish report since the PKK had initiated a bloody campaign in 1984, was urging that the cultural identity of Kurdish citizens must be recognized. SHP leader Erdal İnönü once even told that one suitable option

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<sup>89</sup> The HEP was founded in 1990 by a group of nationalist Kurdish deputies. Seven deputies of the group had been expelled from SHP for attending a conference on the "Kurdish national identity and human rights" in Paris in 1989.



for the Kurdish region was the French model that gives more authority to local governments (BYEGM, March 18, 1992).

Demirel and İnönü seemed at first compatible as both of them committed themselves to a flexible approach in respect to the Kurdish issue especially during their first southeast trip. However, the promising beginning of the coalition government would be soon challenged by several constraints, initially by disapproval within each party due to the different political and economic orientations of each party. Secondly, the coalition government did not have enough seats in the parliament to be able to issue and pass constitutional amendments. Consequently, only a few legal amendments could be done within the democratization program and furthermore, the MGK's proposals continued to be "authority decisions" rather than recommendations (Saybaşı, 1995: 54-55). Lastly, the Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians in SHP would challenge the potency of the SHP in the parliament as well as the coalition.

The first event displayed the fragility of the coalition government was the attempt of the Kurdish parliamentarians of SHP to take oath in Kurdish in the parliament. Kurdish deputies Leyla Zana and Hatip Dicle said in Kurdish that they were "practicing the formality under oppression" (Marcus, 2009: 222). According to Robins, it was the political immaturity of some of the leading Kurdish deputies that let them to attempt such a provocative action: "Rather than nurturing the transformation in the political atmosphere in Turkey in 1991, a handful of HEP members seemed determined to give offence to the symbols of the Turkish state at every opportunity" (Robins, 1993).

After the attempt of taking oath in Kurdish in the parliament and resisting against labeling the PKK as a terrorist organization, Kurdish parliamentarians would be qualified as "terrorist parliamentarians" and they would face the pressure from the hardline parties that hindered their political activities.<sup>90</sup> It is a must to note that because of the provocative actions of some HEP members, they did not only disappoint the İnönü-led SHP, but also

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<sup>90</sup> SHP followed the mainstream mood in terms of counterinsurgency policies against the PKK. It is why the Kurdish parliamentarians within the SHP later would resign and reform their own group in the parliament. Following the events broke out on Nevruz on 21 March 1992, the HEP parliamentarians within the SHP resigned. But the ill-fate of Kurdish nationalist parties would start when a legal case was filed against HEP demanding its closure. The members of HEP founded the Freedom and Democracy Party (ÖZDEP) which was closed a short time later. DEP (Democracy Party or Party of Democracy) was founded in May 1993 and the Kurdish parliamentarians joined it in June 1993. HEP was closed down in July 1993, but DEP also would be banned in 1994.

prevented such a collaboration with a Turkish party in the future, too.<sup>91</sup> Secondly, Vedat Aydın, the provincial chairman of Diyarbakır, was killed in July 1991 by unidentified murderers. According to Marcus, it would be the starting of “state-sponsored” unidentified murders against prominent Kurdish nationalist figures (Marcus, 2009: 278).

### **3.3.1. Quick End of the Promising Beginning**

The first promising step was taken in October 1991, when the new coalition government published its principles of democratization, in which it admitted that Turkey had failed to meet its human rights obligations under Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process and the Paris charter. It promised root and branch reform particularly in the Constitution and the legal system in accordance with contemporary democratic values (such as media freedom, recognition of the right of speaking in mother tongue, and development of his or her culture). It also promised improvements regarding human rights such as shortening permissible detention periods and permitting detainees to have immediate access to attorneys. In the Government Program, it was stated that a state of law based on human rights and freedoms would be established throughout the country. It also indicated that in a state of law, it is natural for citizens to benefit from and to develop their rights and freedoms. It specified that guaranteeing rights and freedoms is only possible by using instruments of law (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, December 1992).

Secondly, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and Deputy Prime Minister Erdal İnönü made a historic visit to the southeast at the end of 1991 and there, Demirel said “We recognize the Kurdish reality” (<http://www.BYEGM.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/CHR/ING2005/08/05x08x15.HTM>) (Akçura, 2008: 228).<sup>92</sup> It is argued that Demirel’s recognition of Kurdish issue pointed at the impossibility of continuing conventional strategies of the Turkish state to deal with the issue in the view of internal and external developments of 1980s and 1990s. The step taken by Demirel was a shift from the official thinking of “non-existence of Kurdish problem” to a “reformation of the problem” (Bayındır, 2007). The

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<sup>91</sup> In 2004, SHP that was led by Murat Karayalçın and other leftist parties including Kurdish nationalist DEHAP moved on to form “Unity on the left” for the local elections in the same year; however they failed to secure a substantial support.

<sup>92</sup> However, he rejected that he recognized the existence of a Kurdish problem, because he said, “articulation of such a problem divides the country.” Demirel reportedly explained what he meant with “recognizing Kurdish reality” saying: “There are some people who define themselves as Kurdish. These people are Kurdish origin. They are Turkish citizens, and owner of this country; but they are not minority.” (Akçura, 2008: 228).

couple whom were accompanied by a crowded notables including Doğan Güreş, the Chief the General Staff then, gave the message that the problem would be coped with justice through the rule of law, within the boundaries of democracy and their greatest goal was to maintain happiness of the community. While Demirel emphasized the need for the regional community's assistance to the Turkish state, İnönü emphasized the Turkish state's affection to its society and promised that they would clear away "all the improper practices" (BYEGM, December 7-8, 1991).<sup>93</sup>

However, the liberal wind would last just a few months and despite such pledges by the political leaders during the southeast trip and in their democratization package, none of these promises were met, and none of the cultural freedoms to Kurds were granted. In addition, the 1991 Anti terror Law that had been designed to deal with the PKK threat was used to silence nonviolent dissents, too (Muller, 1996: 181) (Zürcher, 2005: 293).<sup>94</sup>

The Demirel-led coalition government made such commitments although they certainly knew that the package would encounter the MGK obstacle, in a period when the military ranks were insisting for a "military solution". Although they failed to a large extent in putting the democratization package into operation, a bill named "judicial reform resolution" (Ceza Mahkemeleri Usul Kanunu, CMUK), that proposed amendments in the law of criminal procedure, police, MGK and anti-terrorism law was passed by the parliament. The decrees of the bill intended to secure the defense rights of citizens and prevent torture. However, Özal vetoed it following the previous MGK meeting on the grounds that it shortened the detention period and evaluated the terrorist crimes and general crimes under similar criteria. Özal's veto not only displayed the discordance between the president and the coalition government, but also displayed the influence of the MGK on legal regulations proposed by the civilian leaders (BYEGM, June 8th 1992) (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, December 1992). In November, the parliament passed and then Özal approved a revised version of the bill, which created great disappointment. Because, as

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<sup>93</sup> As accompanied by military high comand, the civilian leaders were not supposed to do an independent observation and to hear the complaints of civilian population there. Moreover the regional scene was not positive at all. During the leaders' visit, the shopkeepers in several districts of Mardin and Şırnak closed up their shops and many hundreds of people marched in protest to repressive practices of security forces (BYEGM, December 8-9, 1991). The confusion in the management of the region was briefed to the leaders by Bolat Bolatoğlu, the Mardin Governor then. He complained about the incoordination between the civilian and military authorities (BYEGM, December 8, 1991).

<sup>94</sup>When the leaders visited the southeast again in April 1993, they would just pledged for economic investments in the region, and the early democratization package seemed to have been forgotten. (BYEGM, April 8, 1993).

Saybaşı also remarks, CMUK was not allowed to be applied over the crimes that fell within the remit of the State Security Courts (DGMs), and hence, the permissible lengths of detention were different for people suspected of ordinary crimes and those suspected of political crimes by the DGM. Besides, most of the allegations about torture against political suspects were certainly raised for cases dealt by DGM. Therefore, the problem also was not expected to be solved as CMUK was not to be implemented on DGM cases (Saybaşı, 1995, 52, 53). Consequently, the cases of political crimes that were in the jurisdiction of the DGMs were not affected by the amendments of CMUK over defense rights and torture against these criminals.

### **3.3.2. Changing Regional Balances: The PKK Reinforcing its Influence in the Region**

It was clear also that there was a race between the PKK and the Turkish government for popular support and psychological superiority in the region. The PKK declared its own “general amnesty” for the village guards who accepted to drop their guns until January 1992 and announced that a general attack would be established on the ones who did not (İmset, 1992:247).

The PKK that built up its forces during the relatively calmer period was preparing for a revolt in the region at the end of 1991.<sup>95</sup> Actually it was clear also that the regional balances had already changed because the local people not only began to identify themselves as Kurds but also they could dare to claim for the bodies of the killed PKK militants whom they qualified as the martyrs of the Kurdish cause (İmset, 1992: 263-264). Moreover, with intent to display itself as an alternative to the Turkish state, the ERNK took on judiciary-police responsibilities and established popular tribunals in the areas it got under control and where the local people lost their trust to the Turkish state (Marcus, 2009: 239). İmset quotes an official in Şırnak telling (assumedly) in 1992 that the local people preferred to go to the ERNK popular tribunal instead of the courts (İmset, 1992:270).

The general picture of Turkey when the coalition government completed six months in power was quite bleak and the political administration probably realized the adversity of the situation. The political leaders would surrender very soon to military’s domination and cry

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<sup>95</sup> Öcalan ordered for setting up of a temporary wartime government in order to “fill the vacuum of authority in the region” and establishment of a serious popular army under ARGK command that would operate in rural and urban zones in Turkish territory (İmset, 1992: 244-249).

off the promises given at the beginning. Arguments against liberalization were not hard to find. The murders by urban guerrilla movement Devrimci Sol (Revolutionary Left, generally known as Dev-Sol), and the Kurdish insurrection in the southeast was escalating at frightening speed and the economy was increasingly fragile, with high inflation. The cabinet was further handicapped by President Özal's continual interference and obstruction. Apparently, President Özal was acting like the leader of the opposition party, and he not only blocked legislation and cabinet decisions by refusing to sign new laws or decrees, but also openly criticized the coalition's policies (Zürcher, 2005: 293).

### **3.3.3. Intensifying Violence in the Region**

#### **3.3.3.1. Startup of "Military Solution" Against the PKK**

As a result of the PKK's successful propaganda and psychological war against the Turkish state, the local community had believed that the PKK gained superiority over the Turkish forces whom they assumed to be in cooperation with Hizbullah, or as they used to call, "Hizbul-contra" (İmset, 1992: 270). Following the high participation to its armed ranks in the spring of 1991<sup>96</sup>, the PKK began to deploy most of its militants in the camps in the northern Iraq border and began to establish attacks against the Turkish security forces. The PKK that started with around one hundred militants reached 10.000 militants in 1991 (Bölügiray, 1993: 34).

İmset states that the Turkish falcons (generally from the ranks of Demirel's DYP) were pressing to and for a "final operation" to be launched against the PKK in the troubled region. According to the suggestion, the military would first deliver a major blow to the terrorists after which the government could go ahead with any democratization reforms it had on its mind for the region (İmset, 1992: 255). The Turkish government, which was not supposed to reject the military suggestion that would also lighten its load in terms of the counterinsurgency issue, ratified the suggestion of a "military solution" against the PKK (İmset, 1992:255). Özdağ bases the sudden decision for a "military solution" on the PKK's launching serious attacks against the gendarmerie stations in the mountaneous border

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<sup>96</sup> According to Özdağ the reason of increase on the PKK's ranks was not the Kurds in Turkey but the Syrian Kurds who had been encouraged by the Syrian authorities. Özdağ argues that the rate of Syrian Kurds in ARGK would reach 30 percent. PKK would have to deploy its militants in the camps on the northern Iraqi border (Özdağ, 2007: 89).

region. These attacks against Turkish security forces that resulted in high casualties marked the new target of the PKK, namely the Turkish security forces. First, some of the stations were emptied and some were reinforced with heavy guns. Furthermore, the Turkish General Staff announced that the army adopted “field domination” concept against the PKK<sup>97</sup>. According to this concept, they would not “defend” themselves against the PKK attacks but directly would enter into clashes in order to clean the areas off the PKK militants (Özdağ, 2007: 89-90). This concept would be activated in the mid-1992, but would be fully implemented in the spring of 1993.<sup>98</sup> The fact that the separatist forces gained public sympathy and high participation in several parts of the region prompted the Turkish government to mobilize in order to maintain control in such areas by organizing strikes against the separatist targets in some of the major settlements.<sup>99</sup>

The Chief of the General Staff Doğan Güreş reported in November 1992 that an internal operation might start “any moment” in the region, mainly in the districts of Diyarbakır - Lice, Kulp and Hani- (BYEGM, November 20, 1992). This statement was important in two terms. First, it pointed at the military’s “self determination” in the region. Second, it pointed that the military had got aware of the PKK’s strong existence in the region and its connections with the regional people, especially the ones in the rural area. Therefore, the counterinsurgency against the PKK would focus on the organization’s internal network, and the main goal would be to cut its connections with the local people.

The security forces began its own “psychological warfare” via a campaign of “show of force” in the region. The special anti-terrorist teams occupied boarding schools, student hostels and mosques. However, such a military tactic would only complicate the goal of the counterinsurgency in the region while both sides –the security forces and the local community- suspecting and disturbed from each other. The local people felt themselves harassed by the “crack teams” (whom İmset defines as the ones trained only to battle, destroy terrorist targets, and now forced to operate in major settlements) all around their settlements. Despite the loss of confidence for the Turkish government and governmental

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<sup>97</sup> Özdağ states that the General Staff preferred to make this announcement by informing academic circles and the media, rather than doing a formal

<sup>98</sup> According to Özdağ the actual results of the concept of “field domination” would not appear until the spring of 1993 due to the delays because of the Gulf War (Özdağ, 2007: 91).

<sup>99</sup> Aliza Marcus tells the PKK’s strikes and military achievements in city centers in detail. Marcus states that the Turkish military had to even draw back some of its troops in the remote places due to PKK’s armed pressure (Marcus,2009: 227).

forces, the dominant opinion in the most political and military circles was that a major blow against the PKK's "extensions" in the urban settlements was necessary in order to neutralize the local population against the organization and prepare the proper circumstances for democratization. Such a plan reflected the mainstream parties considering any democratic step favoring the local community was a concession to the PKK. However, what followed was only escalation of violence in the region alongside allegations about human rights violations. The observation of a delegate who visited Diyarbakır in February 1992 on behalf of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly was very significant for it stated, "There was a state power which the government could not control and which mistreated to the people" (BYEGM, February, 1992). The statement, anyway, pointed out the violence upcoming in Nevruz celebrations in March.

### **3.3.3.2. 1992 Nevruz Celebrations**

Though it was known quite well that Nevruz had already become a political day for Kurds, the government ordered intensive security measures be taken both in the southeast region and İstanbul and not to allow any illegal activities during celebrations (BYEGM, March 9,13,18, 1992). Therefore, it would play into the hands of the PKK that was seeking to bring the locals and the security forces against each other, and the expected clashes would be inevitable. The PKK, through "ERNK's Provincial Council of Botan" distributed a statement calling for armed insurgency against the Turkish Armed Forces and Turkish Republic on Nevruz (BYEGM, March 17, 1992). Özcan argues:

"The successes of the PKK in bringing about Kurdish opposition in Turkey are fundamentally related to its philosophy of recruitment and organizational diligence, rather than to its scrupulous use of arms on other contextual factors" (Özcan, 2006: 241).

The 1992 Nevruz (the most feared and speculated about) turned out to be "a serious crisis" due to fierce clashes between the security forces and thousands of demonstrators.<sup>100</sup> According to Turkish Human Rights Foundation's report, violence took place only where

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<sup>100</sup>Security forces declared curfew in Van, Cizre, Şırnak and severe measures were taken in Batman where attackers set the state buildings on fire. In Nusaybin (Mardin), it was reported that village guards opened fire against a group of people while celebrating Nevruz. HEP stated that they had stopped celebrations and announced mourning. HEP chairperson Feridun Yazar complained that although the Demirel's government had let people celebrate Nevruz, security forces did massacre in the region (BYEGM, March 21, 1992). The Turkish politicians including prime minister Demirel and minister of interior affairs Sezgin would interpret the events as the "play of the PKK to hinder the rapprochement of the locals and Turkish state.

the security forces intervened to stop the celebrations (Robins, 1993). The political leaders insisted on seeing the whole incidents as a problem of security and PKK's provocation, though the total dead at the Nevruz celebrations would be reported as over 90, and the wounded over 300. The clashes in 1992 Nevruz pointed out that there was a serious "split" between the local population and the Turkish state became apparent:

(1) The statement by the cabinet (which convened urgently at night) said, "Security forces had to interfere, as it was the responsibility of a state to provide security." Demirel with his typical pro-state mood said that nobody could be powerful enough to challenge the Turkish state and that the state had gained the control and would be able to get rid of the PKK (BYEGM, March 21, 1992).

(2) Although it was reported that PKK militants had stimulated the events, no PKK militants were reported as killed.

(3) It was apparent that most of the local population did obey to the PKK's call to establish demonstrations and to rebel against the security forces. In Şırnak, it was reported that security forces collected many weapons by investigating each house there (BYEGM, March 24, 1992). In Siirt, because of the armed strife between the security forces and the locals, several soldiers were wounded (BYEGM, March 25 1992).<sup>101</sup>

One of the surprising developments following the Nevruz events was Germany's suspending the military aid to Turkey due to the events at Nevruz celebrations and claiming that Turkish security forces were using the weapons against the population in the region.<sup>102</sup> The Turkish government took no serious initiative following the events but carried out an information policy in favor of the Turkish Armed Forces and national security, being careful not to create downheartedness among the nation and the security forces.<sup>103</sup> The

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<sup>101</sup> For example the PKK called on its supporters to perform "a kind of civil disobedience", not going to school, work and to lament for the ones lost on Nevruz (BYEGM, March 26, 1992).

<sup>102</sup> Turkey explained that it had used the German arms in the southeast for exploration and observation, but not against the locals. But German government got Turkey's explanation as admittance of the reports it had received (BYEGM, March 27, 1992). The Nevruz events drew reaction in throughout Europe. The issue was discussed at Sweden and Holland parliament too. At one meeting by the political directors of foreign affairs ministries of European Community, it was decided to notify Turkey that "the last events in the southeast exceeded the bounds of counterterrorism and turned into pressures against the civil population." European Parliament accepted a resolution condemning Turkey for "excessive reaction" of the Turkish Armed Forces, as well as condemning the violent acts of the PKK and other organizations (BYEGM, April 1-3-9, 1992).

<sup>103</sup> For example the official reports about the casualties of both sides in March, May and August 1992 display the state's information policy (BYEGM, March 21-22; May 28; 19 August 1992).



militarization of the entire southeast region by security forces was followed by allegations of systematic torture, extrajudicial killings and destruction of Kurdish villages. Pressing the local populace into submission, the Turkish authorities turned their attention to Kurdish and liberal press in an attempt to silence them. The restrictions that were underpinned by Anti Terror Law and Turkish Penal Code were placed on the press, foreign journalists, political speeches, assemblies, demonstrations, academic publications, television and radio, and the arts. The authorities used plenty of legal provisions in order to apply comprehensive censorship (Muller, 1996: 182). Furthermore, the Constitutional Court (in pursuant of Anti-terror Law) confirmed that PKK defendants would not benefit from the conditional release arrangements. In reaction to the actual course, SHP's 14 parliamentarians (who were originally from the HEP) resigned from SHP on the ground that no democratic improvement had been realized by the government and that lots of blood was shed in the last events (BYEGM, March 31,1992).

As it was reported at the beginning of the DYP-SHP coalition government, Turkish military proceeded with a "kind of military solution" which specifically aimed at the popular support to the PKK in the region. Nevruz celebrations in 1992 provided the security forces with "legitimate reason" to intervene in order to intimidate the local population against the PKK. However the interventions "terrorized" the region and led to a serious split between the Turkish state forces in other words, the Turkish state) and the local population which had been politically polarized and alienated since the last coup in 1980.

Violent events did not cease throughout the region after the Nevruz events, and clashes again broke out in May in Şırnak, and in August in Şırnak and Diyarbakır because of tension and frustration left from the Nevruz events.<sup>104</sup> According to awful allegations especially by Kurdish parliamentarians that security forces killed people with no

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<sup>104</sup> According to official reports, a big guerilla group had attacked Şırnak centre on August 18, 1992 and fired against military and public buildings, killing a few from the security staff. However the formal reports about these events would contradict the ones by the unofficial figures. For example a delegate of HEP parliamentarians would report that it was impossible for "a big group of PKK militants" passing the Turkish troops that were deployed all around the city. They, moreover, rejected that it was a clash between the Turkish troops and PKK militants by pointing to the absence of dead bodies from Turkish and PKK ranks following the events (Alınak, 1996: 30-32). The report by the delegate as well as reports by several newspaper concluded that it was "an arbitrary fire against the local people". The newspaper Cumhuriyet reported that a civil officer working and living in Şırnak, complained of the arbitrary fire saying: "As if we were from the PKK, the tanks bombed us" (Alınak, 1996: 32).

On the contrary to Ankara, OHAL Governor Ünal Erkan admitted that they had failed to remove the influence of the PKK over the locals (BYEGM, August 22, 1992).

differentiation whether civil or PKK guerilla, and it was followed by reckless investigations and detains.<sup>105</sup> The report by Human Rights Watch also matched the Kurdish delegate's report and depicted the contradictory formal information about happenings as follows:

“In the mid-1992 the Turkish military reorganized in the southeast and launched an urban offensive against the PKK. The region was flooded with troops from both the gendarmerie and the military, and the security forces adopted a policy of overwhelming and disproportionate response to PKK actions. Security force assaults on Şırnak, Lice and Cizre appear to have been harsh collective punishments aimed at the entire population of those towns. In these incidents in mid-1992, Turkish forces took advantage of PKK provocations to unleash indiscriminate barrages of heavy weapons fire against the urban population and buildings, killing at least sixty-five persons, according to estimates by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, and causing extensive damage. Urban areas were rendered uninhabitable, thousands of civilians fled their homes, and the security forces successfully demonstrated their determination to reassert control over the cities” (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

Although official reports put the death toll in Şırnak at 34, White alleges that at least 500 people were killed (White, 2000: 167). The results of the Turkish military offensives into Şırnak were terrifying, because the HRW reported that by October 1992 only between two and three thousand of the 35,000 residents remained in the city (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, December 1992).<sup>106</sup>

### **3.3.4. A Defensive Government against Plenty of Allegations and Accusations**

Though Demirel-led government appointed Turkey's first human rights minister, Mehmet Kahraman, alongside promises to abolish village guard system, this post was not able to operate efficiently because of being constrained by bureaucracy and security forces and measures, and remained just a showpiece.<sup>107</sup> At the end of 1992 and beginning of 1993, it was clear that the government had failed to keep its promises and ignored the reports or allegations about the results of its counterinsurgency policies in the region. Particularly Demirel would go on so hard a line that he would tell in April 1993 about demands for

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<sup>105</sup> Kurdish parliamentarian of SHP Mahmut Alınak telegraphed to the interior ministry that many civil people suspected being PKK member were killed at military garnizon following the events. Governor of Emergency Rule Region (OHAL) Ünal Erkan reported that the number of the detained within the investigation against ERNK members was 900 and 150 people were prisoned (BYEGM, May 19-22, 1992).

<sup>106</sup> The migration was the clear sign of the authority vacuum, insecurity and distrust in the region. Local people had no other way than to migrate.

<sup>107</sup> Kahraman resigned from his post in June 1994, stating that the ministry could not operate because of the negative attitude of the government (BYEGM, June 26, 1994).

increased freedom to use the Kurdish language: "What more do they want? Education, television (in Kurdish)... No! The Constitution states that the official language of the state is Turkish" (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, August 1993).

One of the most negative reports by Human Rights Watch was issued during the DYP-SHP coalition. The report claimed that Turkish security forces killed suspects in house raids, thus acted as investigator, judge, jury and executioner and attacked Kurdish villages that year with increased wildness. The report also underlined how villagers were forced to choose between to serve as armed guards (that was vulnerable to PKK's attack) or abandon their homes and lands. It drew attention to the increase of suspicious deaths most of whom were leaders or in positions of responsibility in the Kurdish community. Finally, the same report criticized the measures taken against journalists who were barred from most areas of the town and from interviews with the mayor or other officials or residents (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, December 1992).

The Chief of General Staff Doğan Güreş, who reiterated that the problem in the region was not a Kurdish problem -"although some were trying to dictate it so"- but a regional problem, emphasized that Turkey was a democratic country where ethnic matters were not seen. Secondly, he reflected the military decisiveness to exterminate the PKK's popular support in the region saying that they would go on security operations inside Turkey (BYEGM, November 18, 1992). The statement was quite important, because it also reflected the view of the NSC: (1) Security forces were trying to select and separate citizens from terrorists and terrorist were pushing the citizens against the state. (2) Citizens were on the side of the state and the PKK's intention was to punish them. (3) The source of the conflict was not nationalism but terrorist actions that aimed to bring the Turkish state down.

However, unofficial reports totally contradicted such official statements:

"In a horrifying new development, eleven journalists and one distributor of a Kurdish nationalist newspaper have been killed since February (1992) in southeast Turkey. All but one of the journalists wrote for left wing or Kurdish nationalist journals; several had written about purported connections between a "counter-guerrilla" force and Turkish security forces. These journalists were apparently targeted as part of an on-going vicious campaign to silence the dissident press. Many were shot in the back-sometimes with one bullet to the back of the head-by unknown assailants. To date, the government has made no serious effort to find the murderers of these reporters" (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, December 1992).

The observations of a group of parliamentarians from the main opposition party ANAP put down the figures that indicated the serious humanitarian outcomes of the DYP-SHP

coalition period. Accordingly, security in the region decreased a lot in the last 15 months, the number of unsolved murders in the region had reached 600 in the last one year and citizens remained between the fires of the PKK, Hizbullah and the Turkish security forces. Dozens of villages had been evacuated and some of them had been burned. Other parliamentarians from CHP<sup>108</sup> headed by Ertuğrul Günay warned that “the state had lost its initiative” and it was just fear that dominated the region (BYEGM, February 26, 1993).

Human Rights Watch’s report in March 1993 displays a disastrous picture of the region:

“... the Turkish government has utterly failed to investigate the assassinations in southeast Turkey in 1992 of more than 450 people who were killed by assailants using death squad tactics.<sup>109</sup> Among those killed were journalists, teachers, doctors, human rights activists and political leaders; many suspect government complicity in the killings. Some disappeared, only to turn up dead by a roadside some time later. Although some of the victims were last seen in the hands of police, the police usually deny having detained the victims or claim that they held them briefly and then released them (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, March 1993).

Consequently, it became clear that there was created a huge gap between the local population and the state. However, the contradictory statement came from Interior Minister İsmet Sezgin who reflected the official failure in understanding the problem in essence even at the end of bloody incidents: He emphasized that the locals were pro- state, and said that PKK guerrillas were Armenian, Christian or Syrian (BYEGM, August 22, 1992). The minister openly tried to distort of the definition of the PKK by associating it with Turkey’s traditional foe, Armenia, as well as Christianity, and lastly with the Arabic neighbor, Syria which had challenged Turkey since long time.

### **3.3.5. President Özal’s Initiatives towards a Solution**

The Özal leadership group was aware that achieving a democratic liberal state would be impossible without the incorporation of the Kurdish people into mainstream politics” (Ataman, 2002). Upon coming to presidency post, Özal displayed a self-centered ambition for being the leader of his own peace project. He reoriented Turkish state’s policy regarding

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<sup>108</sup> CHP was the most active party in 1990s in terms of observations, preparation of reports and entering motions about the circumstances in the southeast.

<sup>109</sup> Six journalists from Ozgur Gundem (Musa Anter, Huseyin Deniz, Hafiz Akdemir, Yahya Orhan, Kemal Kilic and Ferhat Tepe), three distributors (Kemal Ekinci, Lokman Gunuz, and Orhan Karaagar), a vendor (Hasim Yasa), and a taxi driver who was carrying Ozgur Gundem (Halil Adanir) have been killed since June 1992 (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, August 1993). The pressure on Ozgur Gundem was very strong and it was closed in 1994.

Kurds into a functional policy for his regional goals, but primarily to end the terror problem in cooperation with regional actors (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 135). It is worth noting that despite the insignificance of the president's function for originating policy, President Özal remained as an active political leader on particularly Kurdish issue. As the bureaucratic ranks such as the foreign ministry did not favor such a vision, he used "informal" channels to solve the Kurdish problem through individuals from 1991 onwards.

### **3.3.5.1 The Government versus the President**

Although Özal is defined to be a politician who single-handedly shaped a foreign policy regarding the Kurdish issue, he was not so immune to pro-military majority in the political circles as well as the MGK. Particularly following the defeat of ANAP, which had provided President Özal with the political and bureaucratic power in decision-making system, he began to face opposition that was much more effective.

The origin of the disagreement and incompatibility between the President Özal and Prime Minister Demirel's coalition government based on a longtime political rivalry between the two figures. However, the incompatibility that time probably derived from Özal's aspiration to lead a solution to the Kurdish issue himself. Özal who was the president of the Turkish state failed in acting politically objective due to his traditional connection with ANAP. Apparently Özal's and the coalition government's priorities were not in accord, as well. In the mid-1992, when the Demirel-led coalition government began to incline to military options, Özal was making liberal statements for a solution based on dialogue and reportedly, he even indicated at the possibility of federal solution to solve the Kurdish problem (İmset, 1992: 244).

Mainstream political leaders like Demirel appealed to the constitution, which seeks to unify all the subjects of the nation under "Turkishness". It is why they not only opposed autonomy, but also any constitutionally recognition of the Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey. Özal backed Kurdish broadcasting for it could show that "the Kurdish origin citizens are the inseparable part of the country" (BYEGM, April 21, 1992). By criticizing the government for not making efficient propaganda; he possibly assumed Kurdish broadcasting as a propaganda means which could work to win Kurdish population back

(BYEGM, August 27 1992).<sup>110</sup> Demirel on the other hand, criticized Özal saying that those pursuing a political solution are degenerating the issue. Pursuing a political solution in respect to the Kurdish issue was (and is) regarded as a “defeat against the PKK. Demirel was the most significant name leading such an opinion, and he pointed at the “futility” of pursuing a political solution when “the Turkish state gained the initiative in the campaign in the southeast” (BYEGM, April 21, 1992). It was a statement that also indicated how Demirel and the other mainstream Turkish officials anticipated a military victory over the PKK meant, at the same time, the solution of the Kurdish problem.

### **3.3.5.2. The Reports Presented to President Özal**

Özal was presented three reports while he was the president of Turkey: The first one was prepared by Presidential Speaker and Ambassador Kaya Toperi and his aide Staff Colonel Aslan Güner, and was presented in January 1992. Özal presented the report titled “Kurdish Question: The Situation in the Southeast Anatolia and the proposals for Solution” to the Chief of General Staff Doğan Güreş and Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel. This report was pointing to the fact that the conflict was beyond terrorism and the mistakes of the formal practices should be discussed openly in order to reach a compromise. It was also warning that the local population had been offended by the present counterinsurgency measures and that PKK should be devastated through restraint. While it suggested democratic means, it also specified the measures against the PKK (Mercan, 2006) (Akçura, 2008: 214-215).

After four months, in May 1992 Özal received the second report from one of his most close aide Adnan Kahveci, an ANAP parliamentarian. Adnan Kahveci with a delegation that consisted of parliamentarians, who had conducted a serious survey in the region talking local officials, proposed Özal a report titled “How the Kurdish Question (Can) Not Be Solved?” The report argued that the main reason of not being able to solve the conflict was that Turkey had not been democratic enough. It also accused the previous as well as the current political leaders with dragging their feet and leaving everything to time. It was also warning about a civil war between the Kurdish and Turkish because of the harsh reactions against the Kurds following any Turkish casualty in the war. It emphasized the urgency of

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<sup>110</sup> Although a Kurdish Institute to do studies on Kurdish language and culture was opened in Istanbul in April 1992, it would not able to carry out its mission in a healthy way because of the raids against it and harsh interventions of officials (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, March 1993) (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, August 1993).

the issue and suggesting very radical measures within democratization such as acceptance of Kurdish identity and language. Moreover, it suggested that the Anti-Terror Law should be implemented without damaging democratization process (Akçura, 2008: 217-218). Kahveci warned that the government should not be conditioned that terrorism would stop as soon as democratic steps were taken or Kurdish was let. Democratization steps, according to him, should be taken as it was required by the Kurdish reality in the country, not out of expectation to stop terrorism. However, Kahveci agreed over the full operation of anti-terror law (Mercan, 2006).

The third report was prepared by a retired military official General Kemal Yamak in January 1993, three months before Özal's death. The most significant point in Yamak's report was about its warning against use of force in the region. It was warning that use of only military and security forces in this fighting against terrorism was "inefficient, deficient and wrong". The report warned that military measures could be successful but would remain only at a regional level and temporary (Mercan, 2006) (Akçura, 2008:218-219).

These reports had significant role in directing Özal to give priority to a political solution of the conflict, and take some personal initiatives regarding Kurdish issue: Özal started to talk about broadcasting in Kurdish and the need for Kurdish education from 1992 onwards. He also said that any position that could contribute to a settlement including the idea of a federation was to be discussed (Gürbey, 2000: 66).<sup>111</sup>

### **3.3.5.3. A Controversial Letter from the President to the Prime Minister**

The last conspicuous document is a letter from Özal to Demirel, which is still controversial whether it was a secret letter or a document arranged at the end of one MGK meeting before Özal's sudden death. It is significant that the letter, which was written down probably two months before the president's death, seems to be coinciding with the MGK's meeting in February 1993 (BYEGM, February 22, 1993). It is certain that the document revealed some of the basic characteristics of the new counterinsurgency strategy that was fully implemented in the following years (Jongerden, 2007: 44).<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The Chief of General Staff Doğan Gures said that "Even to discuss about federation demoralizes the military and puts me into trouble" (Dündar, 1999). Nevertheless Özal would say later that autonomy was not possible for already most of the Kurdish people were living in the west of Turkey (Akçura, 2008:214).

<sup>112</sup> It seems that Özal, in his letter to Prime Minister Demirel, based his suggestions on the reports he had received.

According to Jongerden's analysis, the arguments in the letter focused on PKK's "spatial strategy" and need of a similar strategy that would let the Turkish armed forces dominate the southeastern area.<sup>113</sup> The emphasis on the type of the environment PKK chose for its actions is important in terms of changing the military strategy to combat the PKK. Accordingly, the military strategy against the PKK would base on "spatial contraction" by means of the penetration of PKK spaces, especially with the use of Special Forces, and resettlement of the rural civilian population. The idea was to deprive the PKK militants from their social environment, in other words to destruct the points PKK was providing its logistic needs; hence this strategy is referred by various names such as "Strategy of Environment Deprivation" or "Scorched Earth" Tactics. Such a strategy would result in Turkish forces' field domination in the areas that were once under PKK control (Jongerden, 2007: 44).<sup>114</sup> Besides such military proposals, Özal also suggested long-term economic measures for the region such as the improvement of border trade and founding economic attraction centers in the region. However, for the short term, he emphasized the need of evacuation of villages and transference of the local people in villages and hamlets to the western parts of Turkey and improvement their life standards in order to prevent their return back. There are two different arguments on what Özal suggested about evacuation of villages: Some argue that village evacuation was a method of combating PKK activities, with Jongerden's words, "a constituent part of the field domination counterinsurgency strategy" (Jongerden, 2007: 91). However, Kerim Yıldız goes further rejecting that evacuation was merely a combating method, and argues, "Evacuations provided a means of consolidating government control in the southeast, centralizing Kurdish communities in order that the state could more closely monitor their activities." Furthermore, according to Yıldız, dispersing the Kurdish population would also hinder calls for autonomy, and

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<sup>113</sup> It pointed at the fact that PKK separated from the urban student environments in western Turkey and developed an insurgent strategy based on building up of military forces in rural areas in the southeastern of Turkey.

<sup>114</sup> Özal not only redefined the threat and the military methods should be used, but also underlined a complete overhaul of the training system of security forces alongside modernization of their equipment and the methods they employ to fight. He suggested renewal of the technological infrastructure of the armed forces. He stated the need to purchase sophisticated helicopters and weapons and the need to restructure state intelligence organizations for sufficient information. As well as formation of a 40000 to 50000-strong special force that would be paid satisfactory salaries (Jongerden, 2007: 44-58).



advance assimilation of the Kurds. (Yıldız, 2005: 77).<sup>115</sup> In addition to the controversial aims of the evacuations, the basic problem was that the evacuation and displacement of local population were not expanded into “resettlement” due to absence of a social (housing, health, education, etc.) and economic program.

The proposals in the letter (such as gradual and planned transference of local people; use of more sophisticated techniques; establishment of a special force with professional training; and arrangement of coordination among the intelligence units, police and military) were the signs of the coming of “an all-out war” in the region.

#### **3.3.5.4. Özal’s Diplomatic Initiatives towards a Solution**

“Özal’s leadership, by following the Ottoman example, recognized the existence of other ethnic groups and the multiethnic structure of the country, and defined the Turkish ethnicity based on the cultural and ethnic dimensions. During the four years of Özal’s presidency (1989–93), his power and determination to reorient Turkish ethnic policy solidified. Transnational (Kurdish nationalism and political Islam) and regional developments (the Gulf War, the emergence of the independent Turkish states in Caucasus and in Central Asia) also helped the new leadership to achieve success in changing the discourse of Turkish ethnic policy” (Ataman, 2002).

Beginning of a comprehensive military and political campaign against the PKK coincided with the end of Cold War period, and changing of political dimensions in the region as well. Turgut Özal period was marked with his personal policy that was shaped by his belief that Turkey should play a bigger and active role in the region. Therefore, he developed his “active foreign policy” that Turkey needed to engage with the “brothers” of its own Kurdish (the Iraqi Kurdish) people in order to end the problem that hindered Turkey’s progression.<sup>116</sup> During the Gulf crisis in 1991 along with the pressure of Kurdish issue,

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<sup>115</sup> It is claimed in some reports that Özal suggested building of huge dams in the southeastern region in order to prevent them from returning (Hür, 2008). The link between mass displacement, those wanting to return home, and the proposed construction of the series of massive dams known as GAP (the Southeastern Anatolia Project) was also alleged in a report by Kurdish Human Rights Project titled “This is the Only Valley Where We Live: the Impact of the Munzur Dams”. According to the report over 3 million people were forced from their homes and over 3,500 settlements destroyed during a campaign by Turkish security forces that peaked in severity during the mid 1990s and it was proposed that a series of massive dams known as GAP to be constructed in the region in order to prevent those wanting to return home ([http://www.khrp.org/component/page,shop.product\\_details/flypage,shop.flypage/product\\_id,81/category\\_id,23/manufacturer\\_id,0/option,com\\_virtuemart/Itemid,36/](http://www.khrp.org/component/page,shop.product_details/flypage,shop.flypage/product_id,81/category_id,23/manufacturer_id,0/option,com_virtuemart/Itemid,36/)).

<sup>116</sup> A crisis broke out between the then Chief of General Staff Necip Toruntay and President Özal, due to Özal’s frequently leaving the military out of the decision-making process on issues they

Özal initiated a new policy towards the northern Iraq, and took an anti-Saddam stance anticipating the Gulf War would bring new developments in the region (Gürbey, 1996:14). Despite the risk of involvement into the Gulf War that broke out in January 1991, Özal supported the American led United Nations coalition, which first imposed sanctions and then waged war on Iraq in 1991. According to Özal, Gulf crisis was a new opportunity for Turkey to adapt a stronger political position with its NATO allies in the Middle East and he led a new policy toward the Kurds both in Turkey and in northern Iraq. In spite of huge opposition from several political segments in Turkey; Ankara stopped all traffic to Iraq, cut the flow of oil through pipelines on Turkish soil and gave the U.S. the right to use its major military base in Turkey, İncirlik airbase, to establish bombing attacks on Iraq. Although Iraq did not establish any attacks on Turkey, Ankara had to face the social, political and economic consequences of war<sup>117</sup> that ended by the U.S.'s leaving Saddam Hussein's regime in place and the northern Iraqi Kurds defenseless against Saddam. The northern Iraqi Kurds led by Talabani's and Barzani's parties had been encouraged by the U.S. government to revolt against Saddam Hussein government. When the war was over, Hussein acted to suppress the Kurdish rebellion and huge numbers of Kurds fled across the border, into Iran and Turkey. As having been experienced of the refugee crisis in 1988, and because the number of the refugees was much larger, Turkey did not want to accept the northern Iraqi Kurds into its territory. Secondly, in the view of growing Kurdish nationalism in the southeast, the Iraqi Kurdish refugees who in Iraq had enjoyed cultural rights denied to Turkey's Kurds, might be instigated by the PKK and led to a much stronger insurgency against Turkish forces.

Özal-led Turkish state that was also criticized by the western countries for not opening the border, agreed on establishment of a security zone in northern Iraq where Iraqi Kurds would be protected and Iraqi air force would not be allowed to fly over the zone. Following relief operations by the U.S. for the Kurdish refugees, in June 1991, an intervention force called Poised Hammer at first and then Provide Comfort 2 (OPC) was established under the

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assumed critical, especially in the context of the Gulf War. Özal's persistence in making military suggestions and demands such as an operation against Iraq led to Torumtay's resignation in December 1990. It was the first time in Turkish history that the chief of the general staff resigned because of disagreement with a civilian leader<sup>116</sup> (Güney, 2002: 166) (Ataman, 2002). It was also ironical that Torumtay was the choice of Özal for this post, and was attained by Özal who opposed the military's choice for another name.

<sup>117</sup> After the start of the Gulf War in 1990, Turkey's shutting down Turkish-Iraqi oil pipeline and the UN trade embargo against Iraq caused big economic losses, especially in the southeast of Turkey where the war with PKK had already ruined social and economic life.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 688. It consisted of American, British, French, and Turkish troops that were based within Turkish territory (Zürcher, 2005: 327-328). Therefore, it is argued that the Gulf War in 1991 truly internationalized the Kurdish question. As indicated by Ataman, Kurds were specifically mentioned in an international document for the first time in seven decades; and the popularity of the Kurds soared. Secondly, Barkey and Fuller interprets the move to help the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq as a symbolic way of making an impression on Turkish Kurds that Turkish state was not necessarily hostile to Kurds, but just to the violence perpetrated by the PKK (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 53).<sup>118</sup>

However, while the OPC seemed to have solved the long term implications of Kurdish refugee problem, Turkish government had to face with a contradiction, particularly in respect to its fight against the PKK and Kurdish nationalism alongside. Turkey, as well as the other states in the Middle East, defended Iraq's territorial integrity and the OPC seemed to grant autonomy to the northern Iraqi Kurds; because in order to prevent the flow of refugees, the international community had to limit the authority of the Iraqi state in northern Iraq. Turkey, as a member of this program, had helped to create a political vacuum in northern Iraq where an independent Kurdish entity might be established.<sup>119</sup> Secondly, in the absence of Iraqi government's authority in northern Iraq that was under the control of Talabani PUK and Barzani's KDP, the PKK had a mobility of attacking Turkish territory and then running back into northern Iraq. OPC, in other words, seemed to have provided a safe heaven to the PKK militants.<sup>120</sup> However, as Robins remarks, Turkey still enjoyed a double veto over the Kurdish semi-autonomous entity. First, the deterrent force, OPC (or as called in Turkish Poised Hammer) consisted of an air contingent based in southeast of Turkey. The mandate of the OPC was to be renewed every six months by Turkish

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<sup>118</sup> However Özal's policies that were well-matched with the USA's regional task, were not approved by mainstream circles that preferred to implement the tight restrictions in the southeastern region and get rid of OPC which they believed was favorable for the PKK and the Kurdish factions.

<sup>119</sup> Even if it was not an independent entity yet, Iraqi Kurds held elections in May 1992, established a Kurdish assembly and an executive authority (Robins, 1993).

<sup>120</sup> The PKK once did a provocative statement about the advantage it took from OPC as well as the regional conflicts. In an interview made with Öcalan in Bekaa Valley, the PKK leader claimed that it was them that benefited from OPC whose original purpose was to provide security for Iraqi Kurds. Moreover he claimed also the PKK had reached that level by exploiting international vacuum (throughout the region) and said that the Kurds of Syria and Lebanon were supporting them (BYEGM, December 9, 1991).

Parliament. Secondly, Turkey was primary lines of supply for the northern Iraq, because Iraq was subject to UN Security Council economic embargo and Iraq also began to apply embargo over the Kurdish region in 1992. (Robins, 1993). It is why the main Iraqi Kurdish leaders Barzani (leader of KDP) and Talabani (leader of PUK) wanted to have close relations with Turkey; but it was interesting that Turkey, too, needed a collaborative force in northern Iraq in order to prevent the PKK from deploying itself and establish attacks into Turkey. Therefore, in return of keeping the supply routes open, the Iraqi Kurdish authorities cooperated with Turkish state in the several military operations conducted in October and November 1992. This cooperation was secured by the ANAP-led government, in a period when serious objections arose against Özal's "unconventional" initiatives such as meeting Iraqi Kurdish leader Talabani in March 1991. As Robins indicates "Özal broke with the long-standing Turkish government policy of not dealing with any Kurdish group" by meeting Talabani, who visited Turkey again in June 1991 (Robins, 1993).

On the base of this context in the background, President Özal, by taking initiative as the president of the country, adapted a policy to solve the Kurdish conflict through dialogue, although the violent clashes at Nevruz celebrations in March 1992 made it impossible for Demirel-led government to shift from the hardline policies about the conflict. In addition to his reaching a mutual agreement with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders against the PKK, Özal also met the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democracy Party (HEP) and later the Democracy Party (DEP), which he saw as partners in dialogue as well as agents to convince the PKK to end the fight (Marcus, 2009: 284).

The most important outcome of the collaboration between the Iraqi Kurdish leaders and Turkish authorities in addition to Barzani's open alliance with the Turkish forces in the military operation in December 1992 was that the PKK was deprived of its main base in northern Iraq, and it withdrew from the border areas, into Syria and southeastern parts of Iraq (Robins, 1993). Following Turkish forces' operation in collaboration with the KDP, Talabani (who was pursuing of an independent Kurdish authority in North Iraq by exploiting USA's drawing Saddam away from them and Turkish government's backing) convinced Abdullah Öcalan to declare ceasefire. Talabani, who now clearly admits that he met Özal several times to solve the conflict, said in an interview that Özal had told him to meet Öcalan to stop the clashes. Talabani said that he visited Demirel who was in preparation of founding a new government and received an affirmative reply (Batur, 2009).

It is noted that Öcalan, while being questioned after being captured by Turkish state, about Özal's initiative for a solution said that Jelial Talabani visited him in 1993 and delivered him Özal's demand for a ceasefire. Öcalan said that he had before asked several Turkish journalists whether Özal was sincere or not and that they affirmed that Özal was seeking a solution for Kurdish issue and he had courage to do so. Öcalan said that after getting the same affirmative answer from Talabani, he declared ceasefire on March 15, 1993 (Pirim and Örtülü, 2000: 37-38).<sup>121</sup>

As it is clear, Özal successively exploited the position of Iraqi Kurdish leaders in order to maintain peace in the region and step into other issues. The Demirel-Inonu government's statements were not helpful in this period and undermining the process according to Özal. Özal apparently had taken the initiative by himself because of the "uncompromising" government that generally expressed its objection against dialogue with the armed men.

### **3.3.5.5. PKK's Declaration a Unilateral Ceasefire**

According to Özcan despite Turkey's polarizing policies, the PKK did not harden its attitude. On 17 March 1993 (on the eve of Nevruz 1993) Öcalan announced a unilateral ceasefire in the presence of PUK leader Talabani. Three elements of the ceasefire statements were highlighted publicly: (1) The ceasefire was unconditional (2) The PKK do not wish to separate from Turkey (3) The matter will be resolved within nationally agreed borders. (Özcan, 2006: 205).

Öcalan's unilateral ceasefire declaration after the several operations of Turkish security forces in open collaboration with Barzani's KDP and lost its operational ability in northern Iraq. The Turkish state, on the other hand, thought that the PKK was on the brink of collapse. Therefore, Öcalan's ceasefire declaration was interpreted as an indication of its weakness. Robins sums up that there was a total misperception on the side of Turkish state about the position of the PKK, which led to a sense of victory among the officials and

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<sup>121</sup>PKK for the first time offered a ceasefire to the government and besides, it started to shift from its early ultimate objective of an independent Kurdistan. It is argued that its contemplation to bring an end to its armed activities was not because it really was gaining diplomatic presence, but because "at one level, this was a reflection of realism", according to Barkey and Fuller. PKK might have guessed the difficulty of their claim for independence by the end of the Cold War and the loss of powerful potential patrons such as the Soviet Union. Moreover, it gradually realized the power of the Turkish state and most importantly, the lack of genuine support for outright separation among Turkey's Kurds (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 25-26).

continuation of Turkish forces' operations against the PKK militants, and hence, incite of the PKK against the Turkish forces:

“The PKK was regarded as being desperate to stave off hostilities in order to rebuild its communications and its morale. Underlying this view was a widely held assumption that the Kurdish problem for Turkey was in essence that of an estranged minority operating beyond the frontier under the patronage of Turkey's hostile Middle Eastern neighbors. There was, therefore, a consistent failure to recognize the extent of the strength of the PKK inside Turkey's borders” (Robins, 1993).

Two significant developments - relatively peaceful celebrations at the 1993 Nevruz and PKK's ceasefire declaration - were interpreted by each side as the weakness of the other. While the government as well as the opposition leaders defined PKK's ceasefire as a “propaganda trap”, the ERNK claimed that clashes with the PKK had demoralized Turkish community and threatened that if the ceasefire failed, the war would get even more violent (BYEGM, March 30, 1993). Özal, hoping this ceasefire would pave the way to the solution of the conflict, started to think about an “amnesty” which would ease the process. He was aware of military's objections to and government's skepticism about such a peace process. He hoped that the last peaceful Nevruz<sup>122</sup>, Öcalan's ceasefire and his cooperation with HEP could help him to expand his plans of “bringing the PKK down from the mountains” (Gürbey, 1996:15).

When the PKK declared a ceasefire for an indefinite time of period on 16 April 1993<sup>123</sup>, the Demirel-led government's reaction was not welcoming as usual: Prime Minister Demirel

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<sup>122</sup> The Nevruz celebrations on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March 1993, were comparatively much peaceful or in other words, less violent (BYEGM, March 20-24, 1993). The reasons might be as following:  
1. The government took very strict security measures that limited the local people who got many casualties the year before. In Cizre that was the center for PKK's provocative activities and responsive locals, it was not let to celebrate Nevruz in the streets (BYEGM, March 20 1993).  
2. The PKK reduced its attacks as well as provocative activities due to the peace process both sides were conducting through mediators. PKK adapted closer relations with moderate figures (PSK leader Kemal Burkay who was against using violence and Talabani, the mediator in the peace process) which might have contributed to peaceful celebrations. As a result, the security forces avoided from harsh interventions at Nevruz celebrations and less intervention might have alleviated the provocative actions or less provocation might have drawn less intervention. However, the battle of words between the Turkish government and the PKK continued as usual, each claiming the other's weakness and submissiveness.

<sup>123</sup> PKK leader Öcalan announced that they had extended the ceasefire for an indefinite period of time, but demanded from Turkey to respond accordingly. But he rejected to disarm the organization and to surrender. Several moderate Kurdish groups were present at this meeting: Celal Talbani, leader of PUK; Kemal Burkay, leader of Socialist Party of Kurdistan; Ham-reş Reşo, the representative of KDP in Turkey; Ahmet Türk, the chairperson of HEP and Kurdish parliamentarians Sedat Yurttaş, Hatip Dicle, Sırrı Sakık, Orhan Doğan and Ferudun Yazar (BYEGM, April 16, 1993).

told that Turkey would not regard the PKK as the addressee. İnönü's reaction was hardline, too: "The state shall not bargain with bandits" (BYEGM, April 16, 17, 1993). Moreover, the military operations in the region had never ceased, as well as official reports about PKK's "serious casualties". On the other hand, PKK's tone was not less provocative; it threatened that if Turkish officials failed in responding properly to the ceasefire, much more blood would be shed (BYEGM, April 19, 1993).

Özal, who was the most important key of this ceasefire' endurance, unexpectedly died on April 17, 1993 and because of lack of diligence on both sides, the peace process as well as democratization process gradually died away.<sup>124</sup>

### **3.3.5.6. The End of the Peace Process**

At the MGK meeting chaired by new President Demirel, it was decided to expand the scope of repentance law "within the peace process" following the ceasefire of the PKK. According to the new arrangement, the ones who had not joined any bloody action would be free of prosecution if they surrender and the ones who joined would get less prison sentence. Capital punishments would be turned into life sentence (BYEGM, May 24, 1993).

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<sup>124</sup> The period following Öcalan's unilateral ceasefire remained as the most questionable and uncertain period for long years; but it was certain that there were conflicts and disagreements about what response should be given to the ceasefire declaration and about the methods to be used against the PKK within the low intensive war in the southeast. It was reported that Öcalan had sent a secret letter to the USA and some European countries, in which he urged for a positive response to his ceasefire call; reportedly, the USA urged Turkish government to comply with the ceasefire declaration; but while Özal and the Chief of the General Staff Güreş were in favor of a ceasefire; the Commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie Forces Eşref Bitlis harshly opposed a ceasefire and was in favor of continuing the fight against the PKK. It is alleged that there was a connection between Eşref Bitlis' death on a plane crash on February 7, 1993 and his opposing a ceasefire (Güner, 1995). On the other hand, Radikal newspaper columnist İsmet Berkan's suggestions at the end of 1996 following the notorious Susurluk accident which disclosed illegal connections between officials from Turkish state institutions and underground world, raised more doubts about the timing of Özal's and Bitlis' death. According to Berkan, state officials decided toward the end of 1992 that a "more active" drive was needed to dry up other sources of terrorism too. This would be a two-pronged effort, terrorists would be caught or killed if necessary; and the persons who provided the terrorists with material or moral support, would be treated as the terrorists themselves. According to Berkan, a National Security Board document around the end of 1992 gave the chart of the organization which was to be created for the purpose, as well as the names of the persons who would take part in it. These names included a mafia leader, a top police officer and a parliamentary deputy. Some members of special teams also would take place in this organization, according to the task. Finally, Berkan concluded that both Özal and Bitlis opposed the state taking action in cooperation with people who had no official status, saying "I guess this is pure coincidence but first Gen. Bitlis and then Özal died, the first one in an accident and the second due to a heart attack" (HDN, December 6, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

It was interpreted as an expansion of the previous one in order to encourage especially the ones recruited by force by the PKK.

Robins remarks that, after the presidency and then premiership were filled following Özal's death, the existence of ceasefire was treated with complacency. However, PKK's attack against unarmed soldiers in Bingöl on 24 May 1993 killing 33 soldiers definitely ended the peace process started by Özal. Öcalan later would make it clear that he had not authorized such an attack. It was established by Şemdin Sakık, who was known to be one of the hawks of PKK ranks and probably did not favor the unilateral ceasefire, in order to undermine the ceasefire. This attack occurred at a very sensitive time that both sides had never taken such a long way towards solution. So instead of following the reform process, a decision was taken to pursue "an all out war" (Özdağ, 2007: 111). On the other hand, it raised some questions on both sides: Was not Öcalan able to control the PKK in the mountains? Secondly, was there an "official defect" about this violent attack? <sup>125</sup> Although Talabani demanded Öcalan that he should condemn this attack, Öcalan refused to do so (Batur, 2009). Öcalan probably did not want to create a split within the PKK by disowning Sakık (Robins, 1993). PKK considered the death of Özal as lose of an approachable partner, and not getting positive responses from the current authorities it broke the cease-fire in May 1993 and declared an all-out war against Turkish state. In October 1993, PKK threatened it would use violence if the Turkish parties and media did not close their offices in the southeast (Gürbey, 1996:23).

The end of the Özal leadership meant also the end of alternative strategies to the Kurdish problem, according to Ataman. Because Özal was seen as the only positive leading political leader in Turkey by Kurdish nationalist leaders; he was about to give a positive response to the cease-fire declared by the leader of the PKK, and lastly, the end of the Özal leadership brought dogmatic political leaders to power (Ataman, 2002).

PKK leader Öcalan made an explanation to "Özgür Gündem" newspaper and seemingly tried to explain the reasons of terminating the ceasefire. He said that since they had declared ceasefire, the attacks by the state continued, although they had not established any

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<sup>125</sup> Although we could argue about the first question, the second question is much controversial: It is argued that the regimental command in Bingöl had known about this attack, but had not acted possibly to block the peace process. Particularly the allegations by Ertuğrul Günay, General Secreteray of CHP and Erdal Inonu, Deputy Prime Minister were remarkable (BYEGM, June 4-12, 1993).



attack against the army. He said, “The attacks either against the guerrillas or our nation, generated the right of retaliation for us. Our army units exercised this right” (BYEGM, 25 May 1993).

### **3.3.6. Coalition Government’s PKK Policies in the Post-Özal Period**

The new leadership after Özal’s death followed a strict nationalist and hard-line policy toward the Kurdish question. As Ataman indicates, the military regained its strong position, and the democratization process was halted. The Kurdish problem was again reduced to the level of domestic security and the solution was exclusively left to the military (Ataman, 2002).

The Turkish government on the other hand, did some amendments to widen the scope of the repentance law (that was issued by the previous government) for the PKK members who had not committed any action against the security forces (BYEGM, June 8, 1993). However, although the partial amnesty had been planned quite before in order to contribute to the peace process, it would not be helpful as expected, due to escalating of violence in the region. In the same period the PKK gained massive participation in the region due to serious policy mistakes and human rights violations committed under the government management.

The Turkish government had already extended the Emergency Rule for a more four months in February<sup>126</sup> and signaled that it would not attempt to abolish the village guard system<sup>127</sup>, which was criticized for its corruption and resorting to force and violence in the southeast. Many village guards were known to abuse their mission in the region in order to resolve matters related to their tribes or financial interests. The security gap would work for them to lay the blame on PKK for their illegal deeds.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Official reasons for the extension of emergency rule in the region reported as follows:  
1. PKK planning a public insurgency and for this had provided a big amount of weapons.  
2. The emergency state stil continuing in the region and Hizbullah was getting stronger by its murders in Diyarbakır and Batman (BYEGM, February 26, 1993).

<sup>127</sup> Prime Minister Demirel wanted to maintain the statuquo: He gave no sign of change about emergency rule or village guard system. In a submissive mood, Demirel argued that there was no other alternative to village guard system and it was then an employment issue for thousands of people had been employed within that system (BYEGM, February 26, 1992).

<sup>128</sup> İmset tells about a case related to village guards’ laying the blame on PKK for their illegal deeds: “In 1992, an alleged ‘terrorist attack’ in the province of Mardin claimed the lives of eight civilians

Following Özal's death, the new leadership concentrated wholly on the PKK and destroying it, and connected any Kurdish aspiration with PKK activities (Ataman, 2002). With such a reductionist approach, the Kurdish nationalist political parties were outlawed and many journalists, politicians and intellectuals who offered alternative policies were imprisoned. In the post-Özal period, any Kurdish aspiration was connected with PKK activities. The aim was to delegitimize all Kurdish activities and aspirations in the eyes of domestic Turkish public and foreign audiences. Non-PKK moderate Kurdish political organizations, associations and intellectuals were harassed and persecuted, many civil people became the victims of unsolved murders or summary execution<sup>129</sup> and furthermore the issues of ethnicity, language and civil rights were put aside. For example, with the Censorship and Banishment Decree, the emergency rule in ten provinces in the southeast was intensified, granting further authority to the special governor of the Kurdish provinces. Supply and dissemination of information activities of the press were strictly limited in order to confine information about happenings in the region to the official explanations. The border regions where much severe fighting was going on were closed to journalists and civil servants (Gürbey, 1996:15). News about alleged illegal actions of the security forces and sufferings of the local people were not let on national newspapers.<sup>130</sup>

“The persecution against such Kurdish nationalist activities was implemented in two fold, use of oppressive legal measures including confiscations, raids and the institution of legal proceedings, and second, the use of extra legal measures from psychological harassment to arson and murder” (Muller, 1996: 183).

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who were gunned down after being hauled off a minibus. It was only after the bold investigation of a young prosecutor that it was proved that the attack was actually carried out by village guards in disguise.” (İmset, 1992: 117).

<sup>129</sup>In April, 1992 a statement by HEP origin parliamentarians Sedat Yurttaş, Mahmut Kılınç, Hatip Dicle ve Sırrı Sakık claimed that eight persons among the 33 PKK members killed in the southeast were armless civil people. They also claimed that many murders were left unsolved because of secret organizations existed in the region (BYEGM, April 22, 1992). They possibly referred to Hezbollah.

<sup>130</sup>Only Kurdish nationalist Özgür Politika could publish criticizing news about the alleged illegal deeds of Turkish security forces (Gürbey, 1996: 15-16). Kurdish nationalist newspapers such as Yeni Ülke (October 1990–April 1993), Özgür Gündem (31 May 1992–14 April 1994), Özgür Ülke (28 April 1994–2 February 1995), Yeni Politika (13 April 1995–16 August 1995), Demokrasi (12 December 1995–9 August 1996), Ülke’de Gündem (7 July 1997–23 October 1998) were closed down in the post-Özal period (Ataman, 2002).

Not surprisingly, such deeds polarized Kurdish population more and more, raised PKK's profile in the region and ruled out cooperation with the moderate Kurdish groups. Barkey explains the mood of the government quite clearly:

“Turkey has been caught in the horns of a dilemma as far as the PKK is concerned. On the one hand, it perceives the organization as a dangerous enemy that has managed to inflict significant damage. On the other hand, it has come to believe its own propaganda about PKK's lack of support and relatively small size. As a result, the state has overestimated the military dimensions of the conflict while underestimating its political potential” (Barkey, 1996: 69).

Post Özal period was occupied also with allegations about Hizbullah and its rivalry with the PKK. While the pro-PKK Kurds would claim that Hizbullah was backed by state authorities against the PKK, the state authorities would argue that Hizbullah was an armed front built up by the local people. The unsolved murders were attributed to Hizbullah that would be named as Hezbul-contra” in reference to public suspicion of its link to a counter guerrilla unit.<sup>131</sup> Although a group of parliamentarians from HEP and Welfare Party (RP) made a motion demanding a parliamentary research over the allegations about Special War Department and counter guerilla unit, the motion was rejected in the parliament (BYEGM, March 2, 1993). Even though such a counter guerrilla unit has remained shady until now; one statement by Lieutenant General Hasan Kundakçı -the commander in the southeast between 1993-1995- suggested a quite persuasive reason for military's “keeping off” from the Hizbullah especially until mid-1990s:

“As we went after PKK with full force, they saved their power. This is the main principle of the strategy. We were aware of Hizbullah. They first tried to seize the mosques that were in the hands of the PKK. After seizing them, they become active around the mosques. But they did not try to confront us” (Cemal, 2000).

### **3.3.7. PKK's Activities in the Post-Özal Period**

PKK also heated up its actions in the region and used all the methods that low intensive warfare provided in order to gain local people and to avoid continuous hot clashes with the security forces. It carried out a “psychological war” by making propaganda against the state and threatening the ones who cooperated with the “enemy”, threatening the journalists and agents who reported news against it and trying to convince people join on its ranks and turn the fight into a popular one. The PKK targeted the state officials such as teachers, engineers

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<sup>131</sup> According to a report issued by parliamentarians from HEP, 65 people were the victims of unsolved murders in the region between March 25 and June 15 1992 (BYEGM, July 2, 1992).

and imams; the state institutions such as banks and schools; and state assets such as electric centrals, pipelines and roads. It also attacked Turkish agencies abroad (especially in Europe) and committed crimes such as taking the staff of Turkish embassies hostage. It started to target touristic places in the south of Turkey in order to deal a big blow to one source of income of Turkey (BYEGM, June 27, 1993). It also began to kidnap young people in the region in order to supply new fighters for particularly ARGK. Its purpose was to demoralize Turkish state and security forces through harassment. Nevertheless, as much as the PKK increased its propaganda activities and its influence over the locals, the Turkish state performed harsher interventions upon the local people. Because of this strife between the state and the organization, it turned out to be a “sovereignty fight” for the region<sup>132</sup>, which let awful human rights abuses by both Turkish forces and the PKK.<sup>133</sup> The consequence of this harsh rivalry played into the PKK’s hands, as Aram Nigogosian explains:

“As is normal in counterinsurgency operations, the Turkish armed forces’ inability to sort out those directly responsible for attacks against its forces, the over-utilization of brute force and the neglect of positive sanctions played right into the PKK’s hands. For the lack of alternatives the PKK became defender o Turkey’s Kurds who were under massive assaults by Turkey’s security forces” (Nigogosian, 1996:39).

### **3.3.8. The Government’s Regional Policy in the Post-Özal Period**

On the contrary to Özal’s strategy, the coalition government in the post Özal period moved away from cooperation with Kurds of Iraq and just relied on Barzani’s KDP and also improved its relations with Iraq (Ataman, 2002). Because of its uneasiness with the de-facto autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq as well as OPC<sup>134</sup>, Ankara wanted to

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<sup>132</sup> As a matter of fact, the fight for sovereignty was even admitted by state authorities. In June 1992, the Interior Minister İsmet Sezgin said that the state started to dominate the regions which had been the PKK’s liberated territory (BYEGM, June 16, 1992).

<sup>133</sup> Amnesty International reported that the rivalry between Turkish forces and the PKK bore out violence: While many died as a result of torture in detention, PKK kidnapped and killed civil people (BYEGM, July 9, 1992).

<sup>134</sup> Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) was designed jointly with the USA, British, French aircrafts including Turkish troops was created to enable the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees that had sought shelter along the Turkish and Iranian borders after the collapse of their rebellion at the end of the Gulf war to return to their homes. Subject to six-month renewals by the Turkish parliament, the OPC has become one of the more contentious issues in the bilateral relations with the United States. Primarily because the entity in northern Iraq is perceived to have acquired attributes that can potentially influence Kurds living in Turkey, the continued presence of OPC gets grudging approval from the Turkish establishment.

return to the status-quo-ante that was ruling before the Gulf War<sup>135</sup>. Nevertheless, the OPC was not repealed in the face of a possible confrontation with the US on this issue. While the US tried to ease Turkey's concerns about the territorial integrity of Iraq in order to persuade Ankara to accept its Kurdish policy, a growing number of Turkish leaders began to suspect about the US's regional projects (Ataman, 2002). But Turkish military did not cease its operations into northern Iraq against PKK positions in the new period.

Turkish state initially used diplomacy towards Syria to convince it against the PKK. Although a security protocol was signed in 1987 between Ankara and Damascus in order to cooperate against the PKK, the organization continued its activities in this country and mainly in Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley where it had several camps.<sup>136</sup> The Bekaa Valley remained the main camp of the PKK until Turkish state threatened Syria in the midst of the 1990s. Although the Turkish Armed Forces knew this camp geographically very well, it could not strike it for several reasons, but mainly because of international context. The international community perceived the PKK matter as a human rights issue rather than a terrorism matter (Birand, 2007).

Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in March 1992 harshly criticized Syria for its support to the PKK and stated that the Syrian Ambassador in Ankara was formally warned about Damascus' support to the PKK (BYEGM, March 3-30, 1992). When visited by Turkish Interior Minister İsmet Sezgin that was accompanied by Gendarmerie Commander General Eşref Bitlis, Syria accepted that PKK had camps in the region under Syrian and Lebanon control (Bekaa Valley) and pledged to close down these camps in cooperation with Lebanon. Two separate protocols were signed, but according to İmset, they were just the revival of the one signed by Özal in 1987. The most important article of the agreement done

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<sup>135</sup> Post Özal governments' regional strategy was not that kind of general compromising, but an initiative playing one against the other. Barkey defines the case as "a new conflict of proxies in the region." While getting the KDP stand against the PKK, Turkish government aggravated the relation between the KDP and PUK. The PKK started also to make propaganda against Barzani that he betrayed the Kurdish people. Syria which was influential over the PKK, and Iran also did not fall behind and facilitated the PKK's mobilization by possibly playing between the forces in the region in order to contain Turkey's influence in the region. Consequently, instability in the region – especially in 1995 when KDP-PUK fighting broke out- benefited the PKK that was out of control of any side and Turkey that felt free to establish cross border operations against the PKK (Barkey, 1996:78).

<sup>136</sup> Syria-PKK relations which began before the military coup in 1980, developed mainly after the coup. Syria helped the PKK by giving shelter, providing money, weapons, ammunition and false identification and letting it hold party congresses and open representative offices in its territories, etc. (İmset, 1992:172).

between the two sides was about cooperation against terrorism and decision to take measures to prevent terrorist activities against each other or terrorist crossing from one country to the other (İmset, 1992:177) (BYEGM, April 16-17, 1992). Although the PKK began to abandon some of the camps in Syria and transfer its training camps to the northern Iraqi region when Saddam Husain lost its authority there, it continued to use Syria and Bekaa as the main planning center of the organization until late 1990s. In fact, following Sezgin's visit in 1992, the PKK remained in Syrian territory and only changed the location of its camps (İmset, 1992:177).<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> But it does not mean that Syria was not alarmed at all. The global changes which seemed to be in favor of the USA and its allies in the Middle East region as well as the division of Soviets prompted Syria to gradually decrease its support to the PKK. Syria would ban PKK's activities completely when it had to deport Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK leader, due to military threats from Turkey in 1998.

## CHAPTER IV

### 4. PKK ISSUE DURING ÇİLLER-LED DYP-SHP (CHP) COALITION GOVERNMENT (25.06.1993 - 06.03.1996)

#### 4.1. A Period of Political Instability<sup>138</sup>

Çiller period was quite far from assuring political stability in the country due to the instability within the coalition partner –SHP, then CHP- frequently changing deputy prime minister and short term of each new government formed under the leadership of Çiller. Moreover, it would later become quite clear that Çiller’s administration had inherited not only an ethnic insurgency in the southeastern region but also a rise of Islamist fundamentalism that was seen as threatening for the secular Turkish system. Massacres in Sivas in July 1993 and in Gaziosmanpaşa (İstanbul) in March 1995 were the main incidents showing the religious strife and growing religious fundamentalism in Turkey.<sup>139</sup> The bad-going economy with high inflation and unemployment were the additional problems

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<sup>138</sup> Following Özal’s death, the coalition government resigned due to Suleyman Demirel’s taking presidency office in May 16, 1993. President Demirel charged Tansu Çiller with forming the new government and she formed a coalition government with Erdal İnönü’s SHP. The coalition continued with Murat Karayalçın’s deputy prime ministry in september 1993, due to İnönü’s quitting SHP leadership. When SHP and CHP (Republican People’s Party) merged under the banner of CHP on February 18 1995, Çiller’s coalition government continued with the partnership of CHP and deputy prime ministry of Hikmet Çetin who was elected as the chairperson of CHP. CHP established its stated congress on September 9, 1995 and Deniz Baykal was elected as the new chairperson of CHP and therefore, he became the new deputy prime minister of the coalition government. However due to disagreement between prime minister and her deputy, the government resigned on September 20, 1995. Çiller was again charged with forming a new government. She could not take vote of confidence for the minority government she formed in October 1995. At the end of this month, she formed a coalition government with CHP that succeeded to take vote of confidence from the parliament. This was the last administration led by Çiller and remained in office till March 3, 1996.

<sup>139</sup> Both events as well as the sustained Kurdish problem in Turkey are significant incidents that have led to rise of nationalism and fundamentalism as well as possession of a more nationalist and a religious political line. The events in Sivas began with mass demonstrations around the Madımak Hotel against the guests who came for an Alavi festival (Pir Sultan Abdal Şenlikleri) and setting the hotel on fire that killed 37 people including famous authors and poets (BYEGM, July 1-30, 1993). The events in Gaziosmanpaşa where the majority of residents were Alavi citizens began with armed attacks against the cafes. The bloody events grew up because of the clashes between the police forces and the demonstrators and many people died in the demonstrations in İstanbul and Ankara (BYEGM, March 12-31, 1995). Both bloody incidents were interpreted by the Turkish leaders as the trap of internal inciters in order to create strife within the community. It is extremely clear particularly for the events in Sivas that most of the party leaders (from the Premier Çiller other ministers to ANAP, MHP or RP) as well as the president Demirel avoided to react with harsh statements (condemnation) against the assailants; the comments focused on provocation of the citizens. The Welfare Party (RP) which was in command of the Sivas municipality at that time, mostly avoided targeting the “Muslim citizens” and pointed to the “external powers” that wanted to create strife within the nation.

making things unbearable. Çiller's administration would face two important outcomes of the sustained Kurdish problem: The bad going economy (huge domestic debt and high inflation) due to costly counterinsurgency in the southeast; and fluctuating relations with the West that criticized Turkey for the undemocratic circumstances against Kurdish public, in the face of closure of HEP (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997). Furthermore, the allegations of corruption as well as rumors and questions about Çiller's personal assets (especially the ones in the USA) were the other unfortunate details that frequently diverted the attention from the main issues of the agenda and prevented the government from conducting any program in a healthy association with the other parties in the parliament.

#### **4.2. Hawks Dominate Turkish Administration**

“In order to turn from the threshold of the danger of being a new Yugoslavia and stop the ethnic fight”<sup>140</sup>, what view and strategies were adapted during Çiller period are more clear now, 15 years later. After the death of President Turgut Özal in April 1993 and Süleyman Demirel's inauguration as the new President of Turkey, the new Prime Minister of the DYP-SHP coalition Tansu Çiller gave the MGK and the Chief of the General Staff Doğan Güreş a free hand to pursue a military solution to the conflict in the southeast. It is argued that her inexperience in foreign policy and security issues, and focusing on economy strengthened the hard-line figures' position. Therefore, with Demirel as the president, Çiller as the prime minister and Doğan Güreş as the chief of the general staff, it was the start of a period of hawks in Turkish administration. Particularly Demirel and Güreş would often indicate that there was not a Kurdish problem in Turkey, there was a terror problem (BYEGM, May 11, 1994). In the face of the PKK's expanding throughout the southeastern region as well as into some eastern provinces to an extent that some regions were even under its secret control, the dominant view turned out to be that Turkey should deal with its terrorism problem with stricter military and security measures. While not rejecting the existence of a Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey anymore, they would mostly indicate that PKK did not represent the Kurds, because it was only an ordinary terrorist organization. Emphasis on terrorism was functional in keeping the PKK out of the political context and precluding it from having legitimacy. The definition of the PKK would later develop into

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<sup>140</sup> It is from one statement to the journalists by Premier Tansu Çiller when she was flying to Morocco to join to the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit. She at the same time indicated that they had broken the back of the PKK and the new danger then was “a religious split” in Turkey (BYEGM, October 26, 1994).



its being a drug-trafficking terrorist organization that contained mostly Armenian and Syrian militants. For example, the ex-interior ministers İsmet Sezgin, Mehmet Gazioğlu and Nahit Menteşe also would often emphasize that PKK was an Armenian organization and getting support from Armenia (BYEGM, August 5, 1993) (BYEGM, November 9, 1993).

<sup>141</sup> Barkey and Fuller remark that “such labels are misleading and tend to conceal the more fundamental national, political, and social basis of the PKK movement, of which the narcotics trade is neither “the *raison d’être* nor a permanent feature” (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 31). The way the PKK was recoded as “drug-trafficker” or as an “Armenian organization” were certainly the extension of the official discourse that emerged within the modernization process of Turkish state and tried to restructure the Kurdish question as “banditry”, “foreign provocation”, or an “anti-Muslim” organization. Via such definitions, PKK was something to be destroyed, rather than a problem to be solved (Yeğen, 1999).<sup>142</sup> There was not a distinctive difference about the opposition’s perception. For example the leader of DSP then, Bülent Ecevit, denying the existence of an ethnic matter, defined the issue as a terror problem that was boosted by underdevelopment and tribalism in the southeast region. Such an approach would often contribute to the maintenance of the intense fight in the region and would hinder any attempt to attribute a political meaning to the problem. On the contrary, PKK was regarded as a mere terrorist party and Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians as the agents of this terrorist organization. Such an approach left no chance for the creation of “a negotiated settlement” between Turkish side and pro-PKK representatives.

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<sup>141</sup> Apart from whether this link was true or not, the significant point is that it was easy to label Armenia which was a “potential enemy” due to bad memories in the history and the already bad-going relations because of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The denial or disapproval of the matter in essence urges the state officials to look for an outside enemy against national security and territorial unity. On the other hand, emphasis on an outsider that had relation with the PKK was a practical way of labelling the PKK as a product of outside, rather than an internal cause. Syria and Greece were actually two of the most suspected countries of having links with the PKK. Europe was criticised of letting PKK offices but in the second half of the 1990s, Germany, France and England had already started to close down these offices due to PKK’s armed activities against the Turkish or Turkish agencies.

<sup>142</sup> According to Yeğen, within the process of Turkish “centralization, modernization, secularization, and nationalization” started even before the foundation of Turkish Republic, the official perception towards Kurdish issue was comprised of “denial” policy which dismissed its “ethno-political character” by recoding the issue as a reactionary attempts, resistance of tribal connections, banditry, foreign provocation, acts of hostility, or as “an underdevelopment problem” (Yeğen, 1999).

### 4.3. Çiller's Short-Lived Mildness and Military's Taking the Lead

While Demirel seemed to lose all his flexibility, Çiller -at the beginning of premiership- actually seemed to be the “dove” of her administration and sought “a quick reconciliation”.<sup>143</sup> She made surprising statements varying from creation of a civilian and parliament-based National Security Council that could investigate the Kurdish issue, to a Bask model<sup>144</sup> that could be effective within counterinsurgency against the PKK as well as education and broadcast in Kurdish (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 137). She intended to put the National Assembly (TBMM) ahead of the MGK; in other words to civilianize the regime further and to reduce the influence to the military high command. However, Çiller's raising such points drew harsh criticism from both her party and opposition parties (except DEP). In respond to such suggestions, hardline politicians including the President Demirel<sup>145</sup> would argue that such moves would be concession to the PKK and there was not any second way for a solution other than the one already in use. Military ranks were even harsher than the Chief of the General Staff, Doğan Güreş, pointed out the MGK as the proper place to discuss these issues.<sup>146</sup> It is clear that according to the General Staff, the MGK was a veto or approval unit, rather than an advising one (Saybaşılı, 1995: 64-65). Following such failures, Çiller would shift into a “firm collaboration” with the military high

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<sup>143</sup> According to Barkey and Fuller, Çiller who was a novice in terms of politics, was determined not to be dominated by the president Demirel (who still had influence on her party, DYP) and intended actually to differentiate herself from the dominant names such as Demirel and Hüsametdin Cindoruk (a close figure to Demirel). It might have been out of her desire to come to the forefront that just her naivete, Çiller's initial reaction was to seek the means for quick reconciliation (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 137-138).

<sup>144</sup> The discussion about “Basque model” as a potential formula for resolving Turkey's ethnic problem started with Çiller's meeting Italian counterpart Felipe Gonzales in Vienna. But receiving the harsh criticism from Turkish politicians, she later said that it was just an informative meeting about the model and emphasized the impossibility of renunciation of even a pebble for Turkey (BYEGM, October 12, 1993).

<sup>145</sup> For example the statement by President Demirel when he was visited by some Kurdish parliamentarians display it very clearly the dominant view: “Kurdish people should express themselves, however there is terrorism. Any steps now mean a concession to the PKK. PKK is not the outcome of the implementations in the region; thinking o the contrary does gain legitimacy to the PKK” (BYEGM, July 8 1994).

<sup>146</sup> Saybaşılı quotes one statement by the General Staff from a piece of news published in April 1993. According to the news, the General Staff denotes the equality of civilian and military representatives at the MGK and looked down on the importance of number of each rank. Furthermore, it highlighted the function of the MGK in terms of the issues it dealt with a “wonderful evaluation team” (Saybaşılı, 1995: 65).

command<sup>147</sup> whose influence over the civilians and public policy increasingly grew up in this term. Prime Minister Çiller issued a “Circular for Urgent Aid” (Acil Yardım Genegesi), and an inter-ministries committee (Bakanlıklararası Uygulama ve Koordinasyon Kurulu) was founded in order to coordinate the aids coming for the region in need. However, the secretary of this committee was assigned to the MGK General Secretary (Saybaşı, 1995: 95). The last example of the military’s growing influence in this period was the foundation of a “security board” following the events in Lice in 1993. It included the same officials as the MGK except the president. The aim was to accelerate the implementation of the decisions taken between the military and civilian leaders in MGK, and therefore it was supposed to convene every ten days (Saybaşı, 1995: 74, 83). It seemed that high command of military would be able to practice their “executive power” effectively through the board. Furthermore, it was also clear that Çiller aimed to strengthen her leadership by shifting to military and even surpassing the president Demirel; and to maintain the efficiency and speed of the government’s counterinsurgency policies. Barkey and Fuller, underlying she had been elected as a surprise candidate over the better established and pro-Demirel figures in DYP, argue that Çiller’s quick change in policy was her need to consolidate her position within her party. Secondly, the opposition parties, which were dominated by rightist ones, would be also influential over the government’s adopting a completely uncompromising stance in this period (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 138).<sup>148</sup>

The PKK that might have disliked Çiller’s early reconciliatory approach that, it supposed, could threaten its “popularity” in the region intensified its terrorist activities, initiating a campaign of terrorism in Turkey and in Europe in this period. Due to the safe-havens it received in Iran, northern Iraq and Syria it continued to create widespread fear around the southeast and eastern regions. It conducted attacks against various targets, from Turkish diplomatic and commercial facilities in dozens of West European cities in 1993 to the

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<sup>147</sup> Consequently it was decided just to establish a “Propaganda Commission” in order to tell the citizens the activities of the government, especially the ones against the PKK. However Çiller’s call on the other political parties in the parliament to establish an “multi-party commission in order to operate the democratic institutions failed and the suggestion was degraded to establishment of a research commission (BYEGM, July 4-10, 1993) (Saybaşı, 1995: 62-63).

<sup>148</sup> Barkey and Fuller particularly emphasizes the influence of Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in this period: “During Çiller’s 1991-1995 tenure as prime minister, the MHP acted as her silent partner and in exchange was allowed unprecedented access to state institutions. With fervently nationalist rhetoric, it was a primary beneficiary of the violence instigated by the PKK.... Having managed to place its militants in the quasi-military “special Teams” which operate in the region with impunity, the MHP has also been, even if indirectly, one of the principal participants in the violence” (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:115).

tourist sites in Turkey's southern and western parts in an attempt to damage Turkey's tourist industry in the spring of 1995 (Bloom, 2005: 111). The bureaus of newsagents and newspapers were closed down, and it became nearly impossible to travel to the region by bus or by train because of the PKK's attacks.<sup>149</sup> The PKK wanted to bankrupt the region by creating huge unemployment and not letting any economic activity.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, it had been targeting the teachers since 1992, claiming that the Turkish national education system aimed to assimilate the Kurds in the region (İmset, 1992: 82).

Following PKK's severe attacks in the region after declaring an all-out war against Turkish state and escalating its violence with its mass-killings in Başbağlar (July 1993) and İstanbul Tuzla (February 1994), Çiller took a complete hardline position focusing on elimination of the PKK. The government's hardline policy diverted the attentions from any social or political measures that could moderate the security measures over the southeastern people and the violent regional circumstances, which were aggravating the conflict. While the priority was attached to providing security in the region, economic improvements in the region were seen as the key of maintenance of the security. Gürbey's description about the measures taken against the PKK offers an insight into Çiller period: "What the governments have issued in terms of measures in order to estrange the southeastern people against the PKK appear to be issued with the concern of "terrorism" or socio-economic problem, especially during Çiller period" (Gürbey, 1996: 19-23).

As for the junior coalition member SHP, which was represented in the MGK by the deputy prime minister and foreign affairs minister and was in direct opposition to the MGK's suggestions at that time, had little or no impact on the outcome. For example, Karayalçın criticized the mentality that "considered the southeastern people taking down the shutters of their shops the same as the terrorists." Karayalçın certainly pointed to the dominant view that associated all the Kurdish issue with the PKK at that time (BYEGM, November 2, 1993). Karayalçın and his party generally advocated that the terror issue and the Kurdish

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<sup>149</sup> The ERNK threatened the directors of the newspapers and news agents in Diyarbakır. Due to closures of press agents, unemployment among journalists in the region increased suddenly. For further information: BYEGM, October 1993).

<sup>150</sup> A Newsweek article was reporting that the PKK leader hardened his stance in June because Ankara ignored his reconciliatory calls for negotiation following his renunciation his goal of establishing a separate in previous March. As Ocalan had changed his course and declared an all-out war, the Turkish state that had hardly sounded reconciliatory, began to carry out a massive counteroffensive upon Çiller's taking the office (Watson, 1993).

issue should be firmly distinguished from each other and they often advocated a democratic approach and democratic solution for the issue (including the legal prosecution against DEP and DEP's parliamentarians).<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, SHP's proposals and parliamentary questions frequently failed to get affirmation.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, in the same days the proposal of an amendment to let Kurdish be used in broadcast was rejected at the parliament (BYEGM, November 16, 1993).

#### **4.3.1. Extensive Campaign against the Prominent pro-PKK Figures and Deep Relations within the Turkish State**

The struggle against the PKK was not only consisted of armed clashes and operations in the southeastern region and into the northern Iraq. Kurdish nationalist activities in political, media and financial world were also on the target of the Turkish security and judicial officials. An extensive campaign against the PKK included the operations against its financing sources, particularly the ones in Europe such as drug trafficking or armed robbery. While it is not certain whether its international drug trafficking network was fully discovered; Turkish authorities would often report that Turkish government's campaign to convince Europeans against the PKK was successful and the organization's financing activities were quite weakened through cooperation between European –particularly German- and Turkish security forces (BYEGM, November 28, 1993). However, the pursuit of financiers, as well as political supporters of the PKK would not be limited to legal prosecutions.

According to Bozarslan, the official doctrine and the ideological and educational campaigns linked to it failed to convince the Kurds to stand by the Turkish establishment, leaving no other choice to the state then to implement a repressive management of the ethnic conflict. One way is “resource allocation” that aimed to create “loyal Kurds” by village guard system, and by political and economic collaboration with autonomous tribal structures. During the intense counterinsurgency period, the government inevitably engaged the pro-

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<sup>151</sup> Çiller, who completely took a hardline position contrary to SHP's Karayalçın, did one of her unforgettable speeches at the parliament and stated that there was a harbor for the PKK in the Turkish parliament and it was necessary to be removed. She implied the DEP and approved that immunity should be lifted in order to enable the laws judge DEP parliamentarians (BYEGM, March 2, 1994). Before the elections in 1994, she ran an electoral campaign based on her engineering the closing down of the DEP and the imprisonment of the deputies (Barkey and Fuller, 1996: 138).

<sup>152</sup> For further details: <http://www.BYEGM.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/AyinTarihi/Ayintarihi.htm>

state tribes. It would possibly be a kind of deal that the government provided a type of autonomy to the tribal leader in return of cooperation against the PKK. Inevitably, such a deal with the pro-state leaders through generally underground links created a legal gap in the region.<sup>153</sup> The other was use of coercion such as the destruction of countryside or towns or the mass-assassination of Kurdish politicians and intellectuals (Bozarslan, 2000: 24). The illegal coercion practices such as “extra judicial executions” or numerous unidentified murders (that previously mentioned above) display some circles’ dissatisfaction of the speed and adequacy of “legal struggle” of the Turkish establishment against the Kurdish nationalist activities in several sectors, from politics and media to economy and underground world. While it is well-known that there have always been connections between the state authorities (political or military) and underground world; the 1990s period witnessed such connections between the rightist mafia and the state regarding an illegal struggle against the Kurdish nationalist figures and it was an issue that touched on both the Kurdish question and human rights (Zürcher, 2005: 322).

Çiller began to associate all the Kurdish issue with the PKK and taking into consideration that the PKK had its own financial sources, at the end of October 1993 she pledged to eliminate such sources inside and outside. It is claimed by independent journalists that at the meeting in Holiday Inn hotel, she declared that she had a list of 60 Kurdish businessmen and “the state would certainly deal with them in any way” (Akçura, 2008:235). The killings of Kurdish businessmen (notably the ones linked to mafia) one after another are generally related to Çiller’s such declaration. According to Zürcher, Çiller made use of the rivalry over drug and arms smuggling between Turkish and Kurdish mafia organizations.<sup>154</sup> He implies that Çiller used Turkish mafia organizations in her extensive campaign against the PKK sympathizers that included “businessmen” from such Kurdish

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<sup>153</sup> One example was Sedat Bucak, a DYP parliamentarian during Çiller period. He was a leader of a big clan in the southeast and possibly gained a lot through the village guard system he joined. But following the Susurluk case, it would be alleged that he engaged illegal activities in cooperation with the underground business world and Turkish security forces. The government of Çiller reportedly met the tribal leaders and promised to supply them heavy weapons against the PKK. On the contrary to the rightist parties, DSP was against the tribal system in principle and always called for abolishment of the system. For example Bülent Ecevit, the former leader of DSP, always argued that the basic problem in the southeast was the semi-feodal system and hence, a land reform was urgently needed (BYEGM, November 11, 1994).

<sup>154</sup> According to Zürcher, organized crime as drugs and arms smuggling in Turkey was in the hands of two distinct groups of mafia: 1) Kurdish some of whom supported the PKK 2) Turkish that consisted of former fierce Turkish nationalist gangs who had always had close links with security units (Zürcher, 2005: 322).

mafia (Zürcher, 2005: 322). A famous “businessman” from Lice (Diyarbakır) Behcet Cantürk, who was actually known for underground activities, was killed on January 31, 1994 by unidentified murderers. On June 4, 1994 another Kurdish “businessman” (again with underground links), Savaş Buldan was killed by unidentified murderers. A Kurdish lawyer from Lice, Yusuf Ziya Ekinci who conducted the lawsuits of Kurds was also found killed on January 24, 1994 (Akçura, 2008:235).

Zürcher mentions about the accusations against Çiller that she illegally used money from the budget for unspecified expenditure in the last weeks of 1995 within the relations between mafia and the state. He refers to one intelligence report that alleged the money was used in order to finance an unofficial state gang which was led by Çiller and Mehmet Ağar (the interior minister then and a former police chief) and engaged in secret operations against the PKK sympathizers (Zürcher, 2005: 322).<sup>155</sup>

An article published in Aksiyon in 1995 points at the unidentified murders that were intensified in the cities. The article quotes the press statement done in April 1994, by the murdered lawyer Ekinci’s brothers (Dr. Tarık Ziya Ekinci and Lawyer Tahsin Ekinci). In the press statement, it was said that the legitimacy of the state was in question due to the increasing unidentified murders in the cities. According to the press statement, it was suspected that such murders were organized by state sanctioned organizations in order to frighten or clear out the Kurdish nationalist circles, would continue as long as the murderers were not identified (Güner, 1995).<sup>156</sup>

Such unidentified murderers killed not only Kurdish nationalist or pro-PKK figures but also some prominent figures from Turkish Armed Forces. For example retired major, Cem

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<sup>155</sup> Zürcher also states that the intelligence report was leaked by MIT possibly to undermine formation of a coalition between Çiller and Erbakan. Susurluk accident which uncovered such illegal connections between state authorities and the mafia would confirm many allegations against Çiller and Ağar (Zürcher, 2005: 322).

<sup>156</sup> The Ekinci brothers’ expectation would be justified, because three months later, Savaş Buldan (a Kurdish businessman) and his partner would be killed in the same way Behcet Cantürk had been killed. Many cases of unidentified murders against Human Rights Association (IHD) members, Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians and Kurdish businessmen were counted in the press statement. Metin Can, IHD Chairman of Elazığ and lawyer and Dr. Hasan Kaya, a IHD member were killed in February 1993. Mehmet Sincar, a parliamentarian from Mardin and Nizamettin Toguç, a Parliamentarian from Batman were killed in september. Behcet Cantürk, a notorious Kurdish businessman was killed with his driver in January 1994. In February 1994, Murat Bozlak, the General Secretary of DEP was attacked in Ankara. Yusuf Ziya Ekinci, a lawyer, was killed in February 1994. Fevzi Arslan, a Kurdish businessman was killed in March 1994 (Güner, 1995).

Ersever, who was often claimed to be one of the ones founding JITEM (the intelligence organization allegedly founded within Turkish gendarmerie) was found dead on November 5, 1993.<sup>157</sup> It is claimed that Ersever was in conflict with his colleagues in JITEM whose existence has been denied by the authorities, and which is now (at the end of 2000s) subject to many allegations such as having connections to the southeastern Hizbullah organization as well as unidentified murders. According to Aksiyon's article, Uğur Mumcu was murdered in January 1993 due to his disclosure of the links between the Kurdish businessmen and the PKK as well as PKK's links with several units of the state. The article claims that while Mumcu was murdered due to his in-depth research that uncovered "deep relations within the Turkish state", the intelligence he had gathered would be used in order to identify Kurdish businessmen suspected of helping the PKK (Güner, 1995).

Sadık Avundukluoğlu, the Head of the Parliamentary Commission for Investigation of the unidentified murders once admitted that the PKK and Hizbullah<sup>158</sup> had infiltrated into every unit of the Turkish state and the drug trafficking between Turkey's southeastern border and European borders was operated through such channels. Mustafa Yılmaz, a SHP parliamentarian and member of the same commission, acknowledged that they had received reports about a Hizbullah camp in Batman and they would include such details into their report about unidentified murders (BYEGM, January 22, 1994). Excerpts from the parliamentary commission's report that appeared in the press stated, "illegal formations within the State bear some responsibility for mystery killings" (U.S. Department of State, March 1996). However, the commission report over mystery killings was not made public and the issue of unidentified murders was put aside for a long time, as none of such parliamentary commissions was able to investigate and question the regional governors, military officials, intelligence organizations and any other official unit related to the counterinsurgency in the region. Moreover, rumors about (unidentified) murders by village guards in the southeast were on the rise; however, none of the governments since 1980s proposed any fundamental solution over the corruption within the village guard system.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Although the existence of JITEM was denied by officials, it is interesting that BYEGM (which is the formal information unit of prime ministry) reported about Cem Ersever "as the founder of JITEM" (BYEGM November 5, 1993).

<sup>158</sup> In 1993, an accommodation was reached by the PKK with the Hizbullah to cease assassination operations and since 1995, due to the accommodation between these two organizations and the Turkish state's losing control over Hizbullah, security forces and the Hizbullah began to confront. (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 73).

<sup>159</sup> Avundukluoğlu reported that seven village guards that had involved unidentified murders were arrested in May 1994 (BYEGM, May 11, 1994).



Alinak claimed that there was a connection between an alleged counter-insurgency organization in the southeast and the Special Combat Office (Özel Harp Dairesi), which was the most rumored unit about counter guerrilla actions against the PKK. In December 1990, probably due to rumors and allegations about a counter guerrilla unit within the Turkish Armed Forces, the Turkish General Staff briefed parliamentarians and journalists about “Special Combat Office” (Özel Harp Dairesi) that was reportedly founded during Cold War period, and this time was under suspicion upon the allegations about Hizbullah’s links and unidentified murders. The Lieutenant General then, Doğan Beyazıt underlined that the Special Combat Office was not a counter guerrilla organization and its duties were rescue and abduction works in a region under enemy invasion (BYEGM, December 3, 1990). Although the military officials emphasized that it was not a counter guerrilla unit, rumors and allegations about the clandestine nature of the unit would not cease down due to the shady nature of counter insurgency in the southeast.<sup>160</sup> Alinak also quotes a PKK repentant who had claims about the activities of a Turkish secret organization named as “Kontra”. He claimed that PKK repentants, who were kept under violent torture in prisons, were used by the counter guerrilla organization in military operations to benefit from their knowledge about PKK’s hideouts. The repentants were also driven into mass protests in the region in order to provoke the people against the security forces and create the appropriate conditions for a military interference against the masses (Alinak, 1996: 48-55). The repentants Alinak mentions must be the ones Avundukluoğlu also raised his concerns about. Avundukluoğlu complained about lack of inspection in prisons and shared his suspicions about the prisoners and detainees that were released for a particular time. However, he admitted that they were not able to investigate this, because it was the judicial authorities that let them out for unknown reasons.

The author of “The Geopolitical Dictionary of Drugs”, Alain Labrousse had interesting arguments about the drug trafficking which set out from Middle Asia, passing through Iran and arriving to Turkey where raw morphine was turned into heroin that was to be marketed to Europe. Labrousse claimed that the income of this trafficking was got by the mafia

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<sup>160</sup> It is also alleged that the USA had formed secret resistance groups such as the “Special Combat Office” in Turkey, in several countries against Soviet during the Cold War years. In Turkey, according to this suggestion, the “Special Combat Office” was called later as counter-guerrilla forces or private team, whose new target at the beginning of mids of 1980s turned out to be the PKK (Gunter, 2008: 34-35).

organizations that Turks call as “baba” (father) and one part of the income was acquired by the PKK before the Iranian border area was demilitarized. He also added to his claims that a significant part of the goods (probably the heroin) was confiscated by the secret agency of Turkish Armed Forces and the Kurds that were used in counterinsurgency against the PKK were paid from the income of the goods confiscated by the Turkish Armed Forces. The most surprising point is that Labrousse linked Ersever murder to his conflict with the intelligence unit mentioned above. He alleged that Ersever was killed by his colleagues due to his disapproval the drug trafficking activities (Haquin, 2002).<sup>161</sup>

#### **4.3.2. Resolution on Military side and Reinforcement of the Strict Measures in the Southeast**

The parliamentary commission that was formed in 1993 and released its report in January 1994, proposed that the emergency rule as well as the village guard system should be abolished as they were the main elements of the violence going on in the region (BYEGM, January 14, 1994). However although the commission as well as parliamentarians and human rights organizations pointed at the emergency rule and village guard system, the government did not seem paying attention.<sup>162</sup>

Actually, during the last southeastern trip of Demirel and İnönü, the chief of the General Staff, Doğan Güreş sounded positive about the circumstances in the southeast and welcomed Demirel’s suggestion about the possibility of abolishment the emergency rule in the region. He even said that they could draw the troops in the region if it was abolished (BYEGM, April 8, 1993). However as soon as the new period started with Çiller’s premiership and Demirel’s presidency, the leaders just focused on eliminating the PKK,

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<sup>161</sup> However the news published by HDN following the Susurluk accident (1996) alleged that Ersever had participated in obscure operations such as drug- trafficking in which former Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, who were later recruited to JITEM, were widely used. He was also alleged to be in contact with the PKK through the Syrian Intelligence Service, El Muhaberat, on the one hand, and the Special Forces of the USA in the region on the other. Perhaps due to his awareness of these dealings, Bitlis did not get on with Major Ersever and tried at every opportunity to force his resignation. There are rumors that Ersever was the man who conducted the sabotage of Bitlis' plane in February 1993. Ersever's resignation came in June 1994 and in a few months he became the victim of an "unresolved murder." There is a serious suspicion that one of the reasons for Ersever's killing was to cover up the Bitlis assassination (HDN, February 2, 1997: Assassination or Accident?).

<sup>162</sup> After some observation in the region, the State Minister Salim Ensarioğlu concluded that the village guard system should be abolished. In a region where blood feuds were still a part of the life, weapons were given to the uneducated people who were generally engaged in such blood feud cases (BYEGM, December 12, 1995).

and turned away from any suggestion or possibility that could relieve the southeastern region (Barkey and Fuller, 1996: 138). The reason of Turkish officials' dismissing any suggestion that could relieve the southeastern region could be Turkish officials' comprehension of PKK's popularity in the region as well as its political and financial network as revealed by Turkish Intelligence. The leaders might have been convinced that it was not possible to overcome PKK's popularity via mild approaches in the region. Secondly, Turkish state's "military oriented strategy" had matured, and the Turkish military began to feel much more confident against the PKK.<sup>163</sup>

The extension of Doğan Güreş's term of office in 1994, although he was to be retired by then, solidified the military's stance against the conflict. According to Saybaşı, the president initially opposed to the extension of the office terms of the commanders in chief. Prime Minister Çiller and the chief of general staff (both of whom had already got into a firm collaboration) asked for support from the commanders at "Supreme Military Council", and the president "had to sign" what was brought in front of him (Saybaşı, 1995: 96). Saybaşı indicates that the case that was defined by some as a "mini coup" that time faded all hopes of democratization program of the government in office then. However, in attempt to suppress such arguments, both Çiller and Demirel alleged that the decision was taken "observing the experience of Güreş in counterinsurgency against the PKK and benefits of the country" (BYEGM, July 27, 1993). Nevertheless, the leaders' explanation confirmed the official determination to maintain and reinforce the already existing military strategy, while the military was also calling for national unity and support the security forces.<sup>164</sup>

Another indication of the tightened measures within the counterinsurgency was transformation of the "Special Operation Branch Office" (Özel Harekat Şube Müdürlüğü) into "Department of Special Operation" (Özel Harekat Daire Başkanlığı) within the Security General Directorate in the leadership of the newly appointed director general,

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<sup>163</sup> British newspaper the Independent reported that at last Turkey was probably winning its fight against the PKK on the military front as a result of massive operations in south-east Turkey and northern Iraq, tying down more than 300,000 Turkish troops and militiamen. The same article quoted Colonel Doğu Silahçıoğlu, spokesman for the Turkish army saying "We are determined to remove all threats from the region. We will continue for as long as it takes" (Pope, 1994). At the same time the AFP also announced that the PKK was caught between the Turkish and Iranian border due to Turkish military's operations (BYEGM, April 22, 1994).

<sup>164</sup> Saybaşı quotes from Cumhuriyet newspaper that the Armed Forces hardened more and and urged every segment of the society (from the parliament and media to the judiciary courts) "to mind their business" and called on them to support security forces and pursue unity of the state (Saybaşı, 1995: 74).

Mehmet Ađar (that stood in this post between October 1993 – December 1995).<sup>165</sup> The transformation in 1993, which was seen necessary due to the escalated separatist terrorist events in the southeast, would enable police forces join operations in rural areas alongside gendarmerie. In other words police forces were enabled to do operations and gather intelligence in the southeastern rural sections against the PKK militants and PKK suspects (Emniyet Genel M¼d¼rl¼đ¼: <http://www.egm.gov.tr/daire.ozelharekat.asp>). As soon as Ađar was appointed as the director general in July 1993, it was alleged that an army was being founded out of extreme nationalist individuals. Although Ađar rejected, the plan to found “army that would fight in equal conditions with the PKK” was confirmed in late July 1993, by the government speaker Y¼ldırım Aktuna and Prime Minister iller. The decision comprised also reconstruction of security agency and increase the number of police special operations teams (BYEGM, July 27 and August 5, 1993).

#### **4.3.3. Violent Events in Digor and Lice in 1993**

The events in Digor on August 14, 1993 indicated to several facts of the period in terms of the PKK, its influence in the region and bilateral displeasure between Turkish security forces and the regional people (particularly the pro-PKK ones). The formal news agency BYEGM reported that nearly four thousand people from Digor marched in the city centre with PKK flags in their hands, in memory of the PKK’s beginning its armed fight on August 15, 1984. Because of the fire opened in order to stop the demonstration nine people died, over 50 people were injured, and many were detained (BYEGM, August 14, 1993). Alınak claims that the fire was not opened in a mutual clash and gives double numbers for the casualties. He also states that they appealed to the ministry of justice for investigation of the Digor events, but no investigation was opened about that (Alınak, 1996: 74-81).

The Lice events in October 1993 broke out the silence that had prevailed since the last operations established in the southeastern cities before one year. However, this time what ignited the events was not a military operation into the town. In October 1993, Brigadier Diyarbakır Gendarmerie Regional Commander Bahtiyar Aydın was killed in Lice. The PKK did not take the blame on itself; nevertheless, a wide operation was launched in Lice, which stirred up violent clashes between security forces and the locals. No prominent

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<sup>165</sup> Mehmet Ađar who would later go into politics as a DYP parliamentarian, was known to have a hardline nationalist line and is remembered with his tough stance during his ministry of justice (06.03.1996-29.06.1996) He is now referred mostly within the Susurluk and the current Ergenekon cases and allegations about illicit acts and links within counterinsurgency against the PKK.

political leaders organized a trip to the region except the Minister of National Defense Mehmet Gölhan and the Chief of the General Staff Doğan Güreş, who told in his address to the “militia of the organization” that they would either surrender or die (BYEGM, October 26, 1993). The harshest statement came from the General Secretary of the General Staff Hurşit Tolon: “The bandits and their helpers will certainly be punished” (BYEGM, October 22, 1993). However, the ERNK’s European Office denied that the PKK killed Bahtiyar Aydın and alleged that he was killed by the Turkish state that was seeking for a pretext of an operation in Lice (BYEGM, October 26, 1993). In parallel to this allegation, a DEP committee that visited the region also alleged that they could not detect a trace of “clash” and suspected that chemical weapons might have been used, and 30 people had died in the operation (BYEGM, October 28, 1993). Eric Zürcher’s views about the Lice events contradict the formal reports, too:

“For a long time the Turkish authorities kept up the fiction that the PKK operated from over the border, but when the number of incidents kept growing despite all efforts to close the border, they had to recognize that the PKK could draw on local support and that the kidnappings were constantly reported in the press were really instances of people joining the guerrillas. This presented the Turkish army with the classic guerrilla situation. It was clear that most of the local population supported the PKK and that the guerrillas simply merged into village population. Like many armies in this position, it vented its anger and frustration on the local civilians. The most infamous incident of this type place in October 1993, when army units carried out an artillery bombardment on the town of Lice as revenge for the killing of the commander of the gendarme force of Diyarbakır, Bahtiyar Aydın” (Zürcher, 2005: 318).

Following the events in Lice, suggestions were raised for declaration of martial law in the region. However, at the MGK meeting following the events, it was decided to establish a “security board” which was expected to accelerate the practice of the decisions taken by the MGK, giving complete authority to the military in the campaign against the PKK (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 131) (Saybaşıllı, 1995:74). At the same MGK meeting, it was agreed to “extend again the emergency rule in the southeastern cities for four months; the military intensified its actions within “low intensive warfare” with a new defense strategy against the PKK. As Kirişçi and Winrow indicate, the respond of the Turkish state against the PKK was largely “military” (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997:132). Just a few months after Çiller came to office, it appeared that the political leaders had already lost the initiative in the region. Although the emergency rule governor as well as the other provincial governors was on duty, the military controlled the territory to an extent that top level politicians were refused

access to areas where resettlement operations had been carried out.<sup>166</sup> It was reported that the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces İsmail Karadayı had taken over completely the totality of the military operations in the southeast, eclipsing the “super governor” of the area (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 153). Besides, the military prevented Prime Minister Tansu Çiller from visiting Lice in October 1993, and Deputy Prime Minister Murat Karayalçın from visiting Hozat in October 1994 (Jongerden, 2007:93).

#### **4.3.4. Intensifying Military and Security Measures in the Southeast**

The military and security methods already in use varied from civilian displacement (relocating civilians to areas under state control) to suppression of Kurdish language, Kurdish media, and political activities in the region. With Çiller’s back up, Turkish military authorities intensified the military and security activities in the region adopting a “Scorched Earth” strategy.<sup>167</sup> The main goal of this strategy was to deny aid and shelter to the PKK forces by evacuation of villages and settlements near the border, displacement or forced migration from the region, destruction of villages, limitation of food supplies to the settlements suspected to harbor PKK forces, and some other indiscriminate measures. In absence of civilian authority as well as legal vacuum, such severe measures would inevitably exceed the controllability and promote many human rights violations.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> “The Turkish military is, in practice, the supreme authority in the southeast. The military’s pre-eminent role contradicts the theoretical chain of command, in which the civil authorities, headed by the Interior Ministry’s super-governor Ünal Erkan, are supposed to be in control. According to a U.S. Army expert, “The TGS chief [Turkish General Staff chief General İsmail Hakkı Karadayı] has assumed full responsibility for achieving success against the PKK. Consequently, the influence of the interior minister has waned, the position of the Southeast Emergency Region super-governor has become marginalized and the massive TGS military campaign to eradicate the PKK has subsumed the role of the Gendarmerie [Jandarma] in the Southeast Emergency Region”. (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

<sup>167</sup> Commenting on the state’s military strategy against the PKK, former Turkish Chief of Staff Doğan Gures said “We have changed the concept. We are now implementing area domination. There is no advancing on terrorists”. He defined “area domination” (or scorched strategy), as to let terrorists stay without logistic support, go hungry and finally surrender. (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 1994)

<sup>168</sup> The reports by Human Rights Watch as well as Turkish parliamentarians would often warn that torture and arbitrary detention often accompanied the evictions in the region. Azimet Köylüoğlu, the State Minister responsible of Human Rights, said in January 1995 that although the government was trying to deal up torture issue, torture could not be prevented in the administrative units (BYEGM, January 1, 1995). It was often alleged that security forces operating in the southeast often make little distinction between civilians and PKK members. It was widely known that security forces especially targeted those villagers who refused to enter the village guard system or those that gave food or shelter to PKK fighters, or were suspected of doing so (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 1994). The PKK on the other hand, attacked the villages that joined the village guard system and often

Therefore, as suggested by a prominent Kurdish politician Abdülmelik Fırat, such an oppressive policy in the southeast was probably more effective on development of Kurdish national consciousness than PKK's propaganda.

Since the PKK was gaining popularity, the new target was this very popular support in the region. The PKK's support among the Kurdish population in either Europe or Turkey was even admitted by Turkish General Chief of Staff then, Doğan Güreş in July 1993. He told that a roughly one-tenth of the Kurdish population in the Kurdish regions must be regarded as active sympathizers of the PKK (Gürbey, 2000: 79). It is possible to argue in such a context that the low intensive war between Turkish state and the PKK had already turned into a political one with a political target: To gain the regional people back, but by force.<sup>169</sup>

#### **4.3.4.1. Evacuation of Villages and Human Rights Violations in the Region**

The official argument was that evacuation was one of the security measures in order to "save local population from the attacks". However according to unofficial arguments, village evacuations were method of combating PKK activities, and even a means of consolidating government control in the southeast, centralizing Kurdish communities in a way they could be controlled (Jongerden, 2007: 91) (Yıldız, 2005: 77). Numbers provided by Turkish Human Rights Association (İHD) suggest that most evacuations occurred in the period 1991-95, peaking in 1993-94 (Jongerden, 2007: 82). Although it was reported that local people migrated from the rural regions due to the PKK's attacks, unofficial reports often pointed at the evacuated villages, damaged property, and lack of shelter.<sup>170</sup> The Turkish parliamentary committee that was formed in mid-1993 to investigate the conflict in

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killed whole families along with village guards, as well as punishing anyone who cooperates with the state. It is why the regional people that were the victims of PKK's guerrilla strategy and Turkish military's counter guerrilla strategy, had no other chose but migrating from the region.

<sup>169</sup> In response to Turkish side, the PKK also declared at its "Third National Conference" in March 1994, an "all-out war" that it would turn all the country into a battlefield with attacks against all economic, political, military, social and cultural organizations, institutions, formations and those who serve in them (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 1994). In June 1994, one of the most serious outcomes of the severe military fight in the region came out; the Kurdish migration into northern Iraq. Although officials from both sides contacted several times to prevent the migration from northward to southward, it continued to be a serious problem in long term (BYEGM, June 15, 1994).

<sup>170</sup> A Human Rights watch report in 1996 stated that most of this forced migration occurred since 1992, and estimates of the number of individuals displaced range from 275,000 to two million. (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, June 1996)

southeastern Turkey released its findings in January 1994. The Committee's report that was quite precautionary in its statements concluded that, "In many operations carried out by security forces – “even if this was not intended”- the personal security and property of citizens were damaged and protection measures were insufficient” (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, June 1996). Promises for housing programs for evacuated people were accompanied with intensive military operations and more evacuation in the region.<sup>171</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Murat Karayalçın (SHP) and Human Rights Minister Azimet Köylüoğlu visited Tunceli in September 1994, in a period when such displacement reached a high point in a three-week operation in Tunceli province. An operation was conducted with a 40,000 Turkish troops and these forces reportedly burned thirty villages and hamlets. Köylüoğlu probably used the best definition about the burnings and displacements in the region: "state terrorism" (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 1994). He criticized violations due to suspension of laws in the region, admitting that security forces evacuated and then burned the villages they suspected or for “security reasons” and the people in misery cannot even find a district governor, a prosecutor, or a judge to take their petitions.<sup>172</sup>

International Human Rights Watch stated that Turkey had reported that it did not apply the Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions (that requires that noncombatants, including combatants taken prisoner or rendered incapable of fighting, be treated humanely and bans humiliating or degrading treatment against civilians and prisoners and the summary execution of civilians and captured fighters). However, it is also stated that even if the Turkish government disputed the application of Common Article 3, other international human rights instruments apply, which the Turkish government did not dispute. After all,

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<sup>171</sup> In a May 26, 1996 briefing to the Turkish Council of Ministers, Emergency Rule Governor Necati Bilican announced that 706 villages (*köy*) had been completely depopulated, and another 212 partially depopulated. Furthermore, 1,592 hamlets (*mezra*) had been fully depopulated, with another 175 partially depopulated. He cited various reasons for the complete or partial depopulation of some 2,685 villages and hamlets. (Human Rights Watch, June 1996). But the organization also emphasizes the impossibility of knowing the exact number of displaced since no independent group had been able to freely conduct research in the region.

<sup>172</sup> It is significant that even the formal news agencies reported about the public complaints about security forces' burning their houses. For example it was reported by BYEGM that a parliamentary commission would assign one committee to research such burning cases in Tunceli upon the complaints of Tunceli people (BYEGM, October 20, 1994). One report in 1999 displayed to what point the military measures against the locals had extended, stating that people (mostly southeastern) who applied to the European Commission of Human Rights of the Council of Europe alleging violations of their rights reported that they had suffered intimidation and maltreatment because of the very exercise of the right to apply to the Commission. In Diyarbakir many lawyers were put on trial and tortured because of their human rights activity. (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, April 1996).



Turkey, which is a signatory to the Geneva Conventions and European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, was marked to have violated international as well as domestic law in its campaign against the PKK. Turkey's violations varied from forcible displacement to absence of measures to provide food, temporary housing and medical care (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, June 1996).

It is often noted that the gendarmerie that had always had a big role in security of the rural areas in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey were not trained well for counter insurgency against guerrilla methods of the PKK. Gendarmerie forces often committed human rights violations while trying to pursue the PKK militants and provide security in the rural areas. Since the gendarmerie is also connected to the TAF, it consolidated the military's political power on internal problems and internal security. Thus, Gendarmerie's position in the southeast had negative effects on both military's reputation and democratization in Turkey (Şatana, 2008).<sup>173</sup> Facing the fact that such abuses and allegations had alienated the local population, the military high command took some steps to reduce the abuses committed by its soldiers, and the Chief of the General Staff Directorate published a behavioral guide to win the public in internal security (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:153).<sup>174</sup>

It is necessary to note that the military and all security forces were certainly more aware of the abuses and miserable conditions of the local population. It might be wrong to think the army command -that has always had role in the management of the country and took over the main responsibility of the operations against the PKK- was completely indifferent to the impact of the conflict on political and economic circumstances as well as on Turkey's relations with the US and western European countries (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 140-142).<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> However as Barkey and Fuller evokes, it was not only the gendarmarie that was detested by the local community in the problematic regions. The army and the other security forces as well as the intelligence organizations within the military and police forces were also not immune from the allegations of the human rights violations in the region. Moreover the allegations about "gangs" within the armed forces that had connections with underground organizations that had role in drug trafficking between Turkey's southeastern border and the northwestern border had negative impact on military's reputation (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 141).

<sup>174</sup> İç Güvenlikte Halkla İlişkiler ve Halkın Kazanılması: Davranış İlkeleri Rehberi (Public Relations and Winning the Public in Internal Security: A Behavioral Guide).

<sup>175</sup> However, the ultimate solution that was recognition of Kurdish reality was totally against the existence of the military institution (as the other Kemalist institutions) and while it was actually quite influential on Turkish politics, the so-called democratic rhetoric of the Turkish state does not let it

#### **4.4. Çiller Administration's Regional Policy over the PKK Issue**

##### **4.4.1. Turkish Cross-border Operations into Northern Iraq**

Since PKK's bases as well as headquarters were out of Turkey, all issues related to the PKK inevitably got treated in the context of "regional political balances" and "strategic calculations." The regional dimension of the PKK issue was closely linked to the USA's Iraq policy, which isolated Saddam Husain while safeguarding the Iraqi Kurds by means of the OPC. Contrary to Özal period, the new period witnessed a complete instability in the northern Iraq. Considering Özal's Gulf War policy as a big mistake, the new government tried to improve relations with Iraqi government, and first alienated Talabani and then Barzani (the Iraqi Kurdish leaders that were accused for helping the PKK).<sup>176</sup> A HDN analysis criticized the Turkish governments after Özal for not having a policy regarding northern Iraq and the Kurds who live there. According to the article, with Çiller's coming to power, everything had been a down hill process for Turkey in northern Iraq and Turkey had lost the initiative in the area to Syria and especially to Iran (HDN, July 18, 2006: When Will Turkey Have a Policy on northern Iraq and Kurds). In one interview in 1996, Talabani's affirmative answer to a question whether Turkey had lost in northern Iraq, confirms the total reversal of northern Iraq policy during Çiller period:

“At the time of Özal, Turkey had very good relations with Iraqi Kurdistan. We were very close to Turkey. We were consulting, negotiating, and talking with the Turkish authorities even before going to Europe. When passing through Turkey on our way back, we would brief the Turkish authorities. Then Turkey was the main force in Iraqi Kurdistan. But especially after Ciller was elected, Turkish foreign policy totally changed. At the time of Özal they were against the Iraqi dictatorship. At the time of Çiller they decided to turn toward the Iraqi dictatorship, and turned against the Iraqi opposition. At the time of Özal they were not against our regional government, our elections, our freedom. Later they turned even against the words

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suggest political solutions openly. The major parties and politicians in Ankara, on the other hand, were acting with caution not to get out of “state policy” as well as holding on. The frequently falling governments, discordance between coalition partners and attacks of the opposition parties in the parliament paralyzed Ankara's any function towards any developmental action which could contribute more or less to the improvement of the conditions in the southeast.

<sup>176</sup> It is significant that the government hurried up to reverse Özal's Iraq policy that was favoring the Iraqi Kurdish leaders. İsmet Sezgin, the first interior minister of Çiller government visited Saddam to heal the relations and sided against Iraqi Kurdish leaders (BYEGM, October 13, 1993). On the other hand, the northern Iraqi Kurdish leader Talabani also took an anti-Turkey stance and in one interview in May 1995, he said that PUK would not prevent the PKK's using the region under their control and that they recognized the PKK as a political party, not as a terrorist organization (BYEGM, May 3, 1995).

"Kurd" and "Kurdistan" (HDN, June 10, 1996: Talabani: Turkey used Operation Provide Comfort for blackmail).

It is not surprising that on 28 October 1995, Turkish parliament voted to extend the mandate for OPC for another three months instead of the usual six months (BYEGM, October 28, 1995). OPC, which was also a heritage of Özal-USA collaboration, was resented for it was considered as a part of USA project to found a Kurdish autonomy in the region while providing a safe heaven to the PKK. One of the key demands of Ankara, therefore, was the removal of the Military Command Center (MCC) stationed in the northern Iraqi town of Zakho to a location in Turkey (Silopi) and increased control by Turkey of the operations of OPC troops. Although the Turkish military categorically denied the charges, there had been claims over the past years that some elements in the OPC were aiding the separatist PKK (HDN, July 5, 1996: OPC and Cyprus top foreign policy agenda of new government). Turkish government was also seeking for the reopening of the pipelines through Iraq that were under US sanctions following the Gulf War.<sup>177</sup> The main reason of Turkey's uneasy mood was its fear of a Kurdish autonomy in the northern Iraq. The infighting between the KDP and PUK from December 1994 throughout 1995 arranged the right circumstances for the PKK to strengthen its bases in the region. While Turkey was complaining of logistic collaboration between the PKK and Iraqi Kurdish leaders (Barzani and Talabani), it exploited the armed clash between these Kurdish leaders. Advocating its "legitimate self defense", it established one of the largest cross border operations in its history in March 1995.<sup>178</sup> It can be said that both Turkey and the PKK made use of the conflict between KDP and PUK.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>Turkey shut off the Turkish-Iraqi oil pipeline unilaterally in August 1990 after the start of the Gulf War, in support of the U.S.-led campaign against Saddam Hussein. Turkish government jumped over the negotiations with the USA to engagement with Iraq which hoped an exchange of goods with Turkey.

<sup>178</sup> According to the new strategy of counterinsurgency against the PKK, the Turkish security forces would not wait spring time to establish cross-border operations against the PKK. Despite the harsh conditions of the winter season as well as the harder physical conditions in the mountaneous region, Turkish security forces established several cross border operations in winter months in order to prevent the PKK from building up its power and preparing for spring time.

<sup>179</sup> Actually in August 1995, peace talks were held under US's sponsorship between the Iraqi Kurdish rivals in Drogheda, Ireland in order to resettle some disagreements on the modalities of demilitarizing Erbil, and sharing the tax revenues, mainly on diesel traffic to Turkey. However although the rivals agreed on the basics of a settlement, they failed to iron out the details. The peace process died down when the Kurds could not agree and armed conflict continued between them in 1996 and 1997, too.

The operation called Steel Operation was one of the largest cross border ground and air operations in its history and it was conducted in March 1995, with thirty-five thousand troops into northern Iraq. After these troops had been withdrawn, negotiations were opened with Barzani about the creation of a security zone due to the need for a “local and permanent solution” against the PKK in the northern Iraqi border region, as stated by Deputy Prime Minister Hikmet Çetin (BYEGM, April 4, 1995). However, under the pressure of his conflict with the PUK in the region as well as fear of losing his own influence in his domain, Barzani was not willing to accept Turkish military presence in the region.<sup>180</sup> In the meantime, the PKK fighters quietly returned to the border area and the war went on as before (Eric Zürcher, 2005: 319). The next operation was in July 1995, called as Operation Dragon. Lack of regional as well as national consensus in whole Iraq let Turkey provide support from one Iraqi Kurdish party, KDP.<sup>181</sup>

One article published by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy when the Steel Operation launched in March 1995 into northern Iraq, suggested several reasons for Turkey’s presence in the region: 1) Ankara genuinely sought to put a dent into the PKK's capabilities. 2) the operation was intended to send several messages: to the PKK, that the Turkish military was aggressive and had long reach; to Turkish domestic audiences, that the Ciller government was resolved to be proactive against the PKK; to Iraqi Kurdish leaders, that they should plug their border, as they had pledged to do in 1992; and perhaps most important, to allies in OPC -Britain, France, and particularly the United States<sup>182</sup>- and the

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<sup>180</sup> Barzani was quite reserved about a cooperation with Turkey over the border security due to his regional estimations (BYEGM, April 11, 1995).

<sup>181</sup> In fact, the KDP and PUK were engaged in bloody clashes that caused high casualties during the operations. Although both KDP and PUK officially opposed these Turkish actions, the KDP partially cooperated with the Turks since the PKK presence in Barzani’s portion of Iraqi Kurdistan was the main reason of Turkish incursions. However, Talabani criticized Turkish government’s policy of “playing one against the other”, and he indicated the unfavourable outcomes of this policy. Turkish leaders, he stated, encouraged the KDP by providing it with arms and money against the PUK; and later they discovered that as the KDP moved its forces from the Badinan and Duhok areas that were close to the Turkish border to other areas, in order to confront the PUK, a vacuum of authority emerged in the areas left behind. It was exploited by the PKK which became a big force in those areas. Talabani added that the KDP was not able to control it, so Turkish authorities realized that their policy was wrong, and hence they started joining the U.S. mediation efforts to reconcile the Iraqi Kurdish leaders (HDN, June 10, 1996: Talabani: Turkey used Operation Provide Comfort for blackmail).

<sup>182</sup> Different than Europe, the USA overlooked Turkey’s cross-border operations. Turkey might have felt it was its “right” in turn of the OPC as well as the embargo over Iraq.

rest of the international community that the status quo in northern Iraq, with freedom of movement for the PKK, was intolerable (Makovsky, 1995).<sup>183</sup>

While the Turkish civilian officials and the General Staff emphasized the success of these operations against the PKK holds; unofficial reports versus the formal ones. The European (a weekly newspaper) reported that the Turkish action in the northern Iraq in March 1995 was far from being successful, because the PKK militants had already escaped when the operations started (BYEGM, April 1, 1995). Turkey repeated its operations into northern Iraq several times, especially following the reports that PKK had transferred its camp from Bekaa to Zeli in the northern Iraq.<sup>184</sup>

#### **4.4.2. International Reactions against Turkish Cross-border Operations**

The international reactions and mainly European reactions against Turkey's cross border operation were quite influential on Turkey's withdrawal. The reactions of European countries against the cross-border operations grew up to a so serious extend that the Premier of Netherlands, Wim Kok, warned Turkey that the customs union prospects would be at risk if Turkey did not end these operations. Following Turkey's launching the cross border operations, The German secretary of labor Norbert Blum claimed in one German newspaper that the "Turks were treating to the Kurds worse than animals" (BYEGM, March 25, 1995). Germany decided to suspend military deliveries as well as military aid to Turkey (BYEGM, April 4, 1995).<sup>185</sup> In April 1995, the European Parliament (EP) called on Turkey to end the cross border operations, especially upon the reports that some Kurdish villages in Iran and northern Iraq were harmed in the operations. Turkey had to defend itself calling the operation as a "limited operation which was a legitimate self defense act

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<sup>183</sup> The same article also argued over the reasons of Turkey's likely withdrawing from northern Iraq, underlining that Ankara's statements over the past several days indicated it had scaled back the objectives of its operation. It argued that Turkey had given up seeking to rid northern Iraq entirely of the PKK and instead it sought to destroy PKK "camps and facilities" and other "infrastructure". Due to PKK militants' escape back into southern Iraq before a Turkish operation, it was quite hard for the Turkish military to deal a fatal blow on the PKK's armed ranks. Besides, due to PKK's guerrilla style fighting, it was hard also to deal a fatal blow on the organization's infrastructure.

<sup>184</sup> Barzani alleged in December 1993 that the PKK had transferred its base in Bekaa Valley to northern Iraq (BYEGM, December 19, 1993).

<sup>185</sup> Moreover the Independent published an article titled "Kurdish Civilians Flee Turks' Onslaught" that emphasized the international concerns about the rights of Kurds "in the areas occupied by Turkish troops". The article claimed that Turkish planes bombed some Kurdish villages 20 miles south of the Turkish border and hundreds of refugees who had escaped from the operations fled to camps farther south where 9,000 people were crowded (Cockburn, 1995).

focused on PKK bases”.<sup>186</sup> However according to a decision taken by the EP, the situation of Turkey in terms of human rights was not suitable to let Turkey join Customs Union and negotiations were delayed (BYEGM, April 6, 1995).

Due to such intricacies, Turkey appeared to be paving the way for withdrawal that began by the time President Clinton and Prime Minister Tansu Ciller met in April 19 and talked over the OPC, the cross border operation into northern Iraq, and democratization in Turkey.<sup>187</sup> The Turkey- USA relationship, which was based on mutual interest, would yield extension of the mandate for OPC for another three months<sup>188</sup> and the USA’s supportive stance for a customs union agreement between Turkey and EU.<sup>189</sup>

Patrick Cockburn in his article in Independent highlighted the popular support of Turkish media and national consensus to the cross-border operations in that period (Cockburn, 1995). Due to the official statements and acts, the whole campaign against the PKK was framed as an issue of patriotism. During the offensives into northern Iraq in March and April 1995, many newspapers undertook widespread campaigns under the slogan of “hand in hand with Turkish soldiers” (Mehmetçikle el ele) in order to collect donations for the Turkish troops fighting in the southeast and northern Iraq (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 116).

#### **4.4.3. Turkish Government’s Relations with Syria**

Relations between Syria (that was a long-time Soviet arms client and supporter until the end of cold war period) and Turkey (NATO member since 1952) had already been intense

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<sup>186</sup> Prime Minister Çiller told in her national speech that the operation in the northern Iraq was a self-defence one and Turkey respected to the Iraq’s territorial integrity more than any other states (BYEGM, March 25, 1995).

<sup>187</sup> It appears that Makovsky was justified due to Turkish troops’ starting to withdraw following the MGK meeting which was hold a few days after Çiller returned from the USA . By the end of april, most of the Turkish troops in Iraq had been withdrawn (BYEGM, April 20-29, 1995). While the USA seemed to support its ally’s cross border operation into the northern Iraq, it had to also watch out its own existence and prospects in the region. Turkey, on the other hand, had to pay regard to the USA as it was the most important supporter of its bid for full integration with European Union.

<sup>188</sup> Although the term of the extension was shorter than usual, the OPC would be periodically extended until the 2003.

<sup>189</sup> Despite US’s pro-Turkish position regarding Turkey’s integration with Europe, the Kurdish question interferes in US-Turkish dialogue in policy toward Iraq and northern Iraq; human rights violations in Turkey; and concern for Turkey’s long term stability in the face of potential civil war there (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:159).

due to the water issue and claims about Syria's territory being used by the PKK. In the mid-1990s, PKK's expanding its attacks into Hatay<sup>190</sup> prompted Turkey's concerns about Syria's irredentist intentions and its helping the PKK.<sup>191</sup> On January 23, 1996, the Turkish government gave Syria a note with documented proof showing that the PKK leader Öcalan and his collaborators were living in Syria and the Syrian-controlled part of Lebanon. In the note (which was not made public at that time), the Turkish government stressed that Syria was considered a country that supported Turkey, and asked the Damascus administration to suspend the PKK's activities and to bring the activists to justice (HDN, August 15, 1996: The fact the RP seems to forget).

Furthermore, Turkish-Israeli cooperation would emerge as another problematic element in Turkish-Syrian relations. Turkey acquired a military training as well as intelligence from Israel in 1996. From then on, Syria tried to instigate Arab league to denounce Turkish-Israeli relations, Turkish water policies, and Turkish incursions into northern Iraq; and demanded that Turkey consult with Arab league over water rights (Alan Makovsky, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, January-February 1999: *Defusing the Turkish-Syrian Crisis: Whose Triumph?*). In February 1996, President Demirel sent a message to the member states of the Arab League that Syria was trying to cover the heavy responsibility of supporting terrorism by applying to Arab League over water issue (BYEGM, February 24, 1996). In the same month, Turkey delivered a note against Syria in which it urged Damascus to cut off its support to the PKK and return Öcalan and other PKK officials. Syria, however, denied the claims about its support to the PKK and guarding Öcalan in its territories (BYEGM, February 28, 1996).<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> It is a Turkish province on the southeast coast that Syria had laid claim on until the beginning of 2000s. Özdağ states that the PKK began to infiltrate into the province in 1995, in order to instigate the Arabic minority there against the Turkish state (Özdağ, 2007:142).

<sup>191</sup> Following PKK's infiltrating into Hatay through Syrian border and getting into clashes with Turkish security forces in November 1995, Turkey protested Syrian government through the acting Syrian ambassador in Ankara (BYEGM, November 26, 1995). Turkish-Syrian relations strained further in this period due to emerging evidences about Syrian-PKK relations. When lorries full of weapon and ammunition were captured in Hatay and Şanlıurfa in January 1996, Turkish authorities voiced quite harshly against Syria's apparent logistical and ammunition help to the PKK (BYEGM, January 24, 1996).

<sup>192</sup> The USA, on the other hand, seemingly exploited the PKK issue for its alliance with Turkey and discourses against its foes in the region such as Iraq, Iran and Syria. The state department of the USA's reporting in march that Syria was still helping the PKK, reflected USA's providing Turkey with military intelligence against the anti-American states in the region (BYEGM, March 11, 1996).

## 4.5. Çiller Administration's European Policy

### 4.5.1. Efforts to Convince Western Europe against the PKK<sup>193</sup>

Germany was one of the first countries in Europe to get alarmed against the PKK's attacks which often targeted the Turks living there and it banned the PKK offices at the end of 1993 and closed down the PKK's information office in Koln in the spring of 1995; but the PKK continued its activities, despite being outlawed in that country.<sup>194</sup> Sweden expelled the high rank officials of the PKK in October 1993. Switzerland as well as England also started to take measures against the PKK at the end of 1993. The PKK's violent actions in Europe were very influential in such an outcome. For instance, the PKK established wide-Europe attacks against Turkish embassies and banks, which resulted in some casualties in November 1993 (BYEGM, November 4, 1993). Besides, the diplomatic efforts of Turkish government in getting some European countries turn against the PKK can not be underestimated; but Mehmet Gölhan, the national defense minister then, admitted that the USA's influence was quite important on German's decision to ban PKK offices. Gölhan's statement was pointing at the USA's influence over the European countries: "The USA pushes the button and you get a result. Germany got the signal from the USA, too" (BYEGM, November 27, 1993). However, the PKK's political branch, the ERNK continued its political activities mainly in Scandinavian countries, Austria, and Greece.<sup>195</sup> While Turkish authorities got into diplomatic contacts with most of the European countries, they failed in conducting a full diplomatic campaign that could prevent PKK's further activities such as the Kurdish Parliament in Exile that was founded in April 1995.

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<sup>193</sup> According to the annual report of US State Department, the western Europe became a region most exposed to terrorist attacks in the world and the reason for that was the PKK's attacks (BYEGM, May 19, 1994).

<sup>194</sup> At a conference on "Fighting Terror in Democracies" organized by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Klaus Grunewald -then the director of the counter-terrorism division of Germany's Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution- pointed at PKK as Germany's "number one terror problem." He told that the PKK threatened German sports celebrities, as well as German tourists intending to visit Turkey. He told that there were about 500 to 1000 PKK activists who are so fanatic that they could even burn themselves for the PKK (HDN, May 22, 1996: German intelligence names PKK 'no. 1 terror problem' in Germany).

<sup>195</sup> Greece was the only European country that was known helping the PKK, not only by letting it open propaganda offices but also providing finance, armed training, weapons and logistics. In one interview in February 1996, the Chief of Turkish General Staff, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, accused Greece for organizing a network in order to provide money, weapon and material to the PKK and supporting international terrorism against Turkey (BYEGM, February 17, 1996).



## **4.6. Çiller Administration's Extensive Campaign against Kurdish Nationalist Politicians**

### **4.6.1. Anti-Reconciliatory Attitudes on both Turkish and Kurdish Sides**

While the military operations established in southeastern region (Hakkari, Şırnak, Diyarbakır and Siirt) had never ceased<sup>196</sup>, the political pressure over DEP and HADEP –the successive Kurdish nationalist legal parties during Çiller period- had never diminished as well. DEP, as its predecessor HEP, was the only party calling for a political solution, and challenged the military activities in the region, alleging that state security forces established raids to the villages that rejected to join village guard system, tortured the villagers and destroyed their houses.

Although DEP parliamentarians were criticized for seeking European support, it cannot be said that any leader in Turkish administration at that time seemed willing to reach out them. The Kurdish nationalist politicians occasionally visited President Demirel that was expected to be objective towards the political parties in the parliament. However, Demirel who often conserved his pro-status-quo stance confirmed that no Kurdish nationalist party would be let conduct as long as the PKK was operating: “Kurdish public should express itself; however there is terror. Any steps taken now would mean concessions to the PKK” (BYEGM, July 8, 1994). Therefore, the Kurdish politicians appealed to Western Europe that Turkey always respected. DEP parliamentarians' keeping in touch with the French President then, François Mitterand and his wife about the political hardships of Kurdish nationalist politicians, attracted the attention of both Turkish and European media. However, Turkish press (primarily Hürriyet newspaper) criticized the Kurdish politicians for “betraying to Turkey” due to their engagement with the European figures, and Europe for its “hypocrisy” against the Turkish state (Bayındır, 2007).<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> In these operations, casualties from both sides were high. The reported number of the PKK militants killed in these operations were certainly always higher than the martyred Turkish soldiers. For further details: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/AyinTarihi/Ayintarihi.htm>.

<sup>197</sup> According to Turkish media and some Turkish officials, while the European states were against the nationalist Batasuna party in Spain, their support to the Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians was their hypocrisy, and intentions against Turkey's territorial and national unity (Bayındır, 2007).

Finding reason to sue DEP was not difficult at all, in a period when several legal trials ongoing within the DGMs against several Kurdish nationalist activities.<sup>198</sup> On December 2, 1993 Supreme Court of Appeals Prosecutor's office filed a lawsuit against DEP in the Constitutional Court. However, it should be stated that DEP also did not take a reconciliatory attitude towards the austere Turkish politicians and often delivered quite provocative statements.<sup>199</sup> For example Yaşar Kaya once said that the PKK and DEP were two separate parties struggling on separate basements. The final straw was when DEP's new chairperson Hatip Dicle, who often emphasized that no solution could be considered without including the PKK, commented on PKK's attack against the Tuzla station in İstanbul killing five cadets, saying, "such events are normal in a war" (BYEGM, February 18, 1994). Hatip Dicle also asked from the secretaries of European Council, European Parliament, and European Commission to send a delegate to observe the local elections due on March 27 in the east and southeastern regions. Although DEP parliamentarians could have been right in respect to the legal and political circumstances in the southeastern region, its over emphasis of its own distrust to Turkish officials gave the impression that they lacked self-confidence about the results of the oncoming elections.<sup>200</sup> After all, DEP was definitely squeezed by both the political atmosphere in Ankara and the military repression in the southeast. Especially following PKK's attack in Tuzla, the election campaigns were based on an anti-DEP discourse.<sup>201</sup>

#### **4.6.2. Abolishment of Immunities and Closure of DEP**

According to Bozarslan, the PKK was the reference of the radicalism emerged among the Kurdish nationalist politicians, and the PKK-focused opposition in respect to the Kurdish

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<sup>198</sup> For instance, the former chairperson of DEP, Yaşar Kaya, who was accused of seperatism had been in prison since the autumn 1993. Secondly, DGM's trial against the persons signing Nevruz petition one year ago started in Ankara in December, 1993. There were prominent names among the people such as Kurdish author and sociologist İsmail Beşikçi, DEP parliamentarians and chairpersons of unions.

<sup>199</sup> For example in DEP's letter sent to Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in November 1993, it was claimed that there were concerns about a genocide against Kurdish people.

<sup>200</sup> Alınak, one of DEP's former members in those days, boldly criticises his party's failing to prepare itself for the coming elections in March, 1994 and showing the Turkish state's pressures in the region as the excuse for not joining the elections (Alınak, 1996: 135).

<sup>201</sup> The forthcoming parliamentary election ignited Prime Minister Çiller to strengthen the nationalist hand and she even said once "The time has come to take care of the case of the PKK sheltering under the Parliament's roof" (Nigogosian, 1996: 40).

issue would never yield any common ground to settle the conflict between the sides. Therefore, Bozarslan sums up the handicaps the HEP and later the DEP suffered from as following: (1) They failed in their attempt to invent an identity of their own. They did not intend to have the position of credible interlocutors of the Kurdish issue in parliament, and instead they proposed only to become a mediator between Ankara and the guerrillas. This position did not offer them with recognition by the mainstream Turkish leaders and limited their mobilization in the political arena. On the other hand, the PKK was also the most active element in the southeast region until 1993; its military and political power was largely accepted in throughout the region. PKK's popularity forbade the HEP and DEP to develop their own policies. (2) Both parties suffered also from internal disagreements due to containing different generations and types of political actors. While some of them were already integrated in the system, some others were brought to the political arena by urban radicalism. (3) Both parties were the main target of the army, the establishment and the media that could not tolerate an independent Kurdish representation. It is why they could never get free of legal pressure and illegitimate harassment (Bozarslan, 1996: 147).

Severe operations in the region as well as allegations about human rights violations were accompanied by the successive unidentified murders of prominent Kurdish figures. The vice chairperson of HADEP (People's Democracy Party, the successor of DEP) Sahabettin Özarlaner told in September 1994 that due to the interior minister then Nahit Menteşe's defining their party as a pro-PKK party; they were put on the target of unidentified murders (BYEGM, September 24, 1994). He was right actually since DEP and HADEP had already been subject to unidentified murders.<sup>202</sup> Alınak argues that the political circumstances were castrated by the high military commands' interference to the political actors.<sup>203</sup> While the case for closure of DEP was going on, Ankara got busy with the process of lifting the

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<sup>202</sup> DEP's Şanlıurfa head and HADEP member Muhsin Melik was murdered in Şanlıurfa on June 2, 1994 and the Secretary General of DEP, Murat Bozlak was killed in February 1994. Later in September 1994, another HADEP local member Mehmet Salih Sabuktekin was killed in Adana. The unidentified murders were followed by a bombing attack against the provincial office of the same party, that badly damaged the building (BYEGM, February 14, 1994) Following the bombing attack, the Chairperson of DEP Hatip Dicle claimd that although they had asked for security guard for their office, they had not received any respond and alleged that the attack was established by Counterguerrilla (BYEGM, February 18, 1994). Hence, the Nahit Menteşe, the interior affairs minister and Mehmet Açar, the director general of security were in the target of criticism about the security of the DEP office and members.

<sup>203</sup> Alınak quotes an allegation that the Chief of the General Staf, Doğan Güreş, himself demanded from the President Demirel abolishment of the parliamentary immunity of DEP members. Güreş reportedly met the prime minister Çiller too, to speak about this issue (Alınak, 1996:151, 152).

parliamentary immunity of DEP members.<sup>204</sup> Çiller confirmed that the top of Turkish state had agreed upon the abolishment of immunities: “The public is thinking the PKK harbors in the parliament. Such thinking is disturbing for the public and for us. We will do what is necessary”<sup>205</sup> (BYEGM, February 22, 1994). The swiftness and skill of the government in pulling the immunity issue to the first rank of the parliamentary agenda and mobilizing the Turkish Parliament to convene in the general assembly hall for discussion and voting must be due to the pressure coming from out of the parliament, probably from the military high command (Alınak, 1996: 150-156). Finally, the parliamentary immunities of DEP’s chairman (Hatip Dicle) and members (Orhan Doğan, Sırrı Sakık, Leyla Zana, Ahmet Türk and Mahmut Alınak) were lifted on March 2, 1994.<sup>206</sup> Surprisingly, the same day, two of them -Hatip Dicle and Orhan Doğan- were detained by anti-terror team at the parliament exit. Detention of the parliamentarians at the parliament before the decision was published by the official gazette and before their using the right of objection to the Constitutional Court was criticized for being a legal mistake. But nearly all of the mainstream parties and even SHP justified this detention as the natural outcome of the parliamentary decision (BYEGM, March 2, 1994). It is necessary to note that the detained Kurdish parliamentarians were not able to benefit from the last legal amendments within the laws of criminal procedure (CMUK) which facilitated more immediate attorney access due to their being prosecuted under the Anti-Terror Law.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> It is also significant that there was a parliamentarian from the Welfare Party (RP) among the Kurdish nationalist ones under legal repression at that time. Hasan Mezarcı, a RP parliamentarian, whose statements against Atatürk were perceived as threatening for the secular structure of the country. Therefore, two types of threats were in question of the agenda during that time: Treason against the unified structure and reactionism against the secular structure. Both territorial and national unity as well as secular system were under the guard of the Turkish military and legal units of the country. The public support had been already gained by means of the propaganda of the media which published both types of threatening figures in the same frame and creating public fright about the fate of the country.

<sup>205</sup> As Bayındır indicates, identifying the DEP deputies with the PKK, was the indication of Turkish state’s perception of the Kurdish issue that was illegalized by mainly being identified with PKK terror (Bayındır, 2007).

<sup>206</sup> Çiller was quite firm about the abolishment of the immunities and in her speech before the general assembly she restated that both freedom and democracy can not be used to oppose unity of the country or to insult Atatürk. beside DYP, the other parties such as ANAP and RP were also fully present in the parliament, SHP did not join the general assembly. Karayalçın said they advocated fight against terror, not against ideas (BYEGM, Marh 2,1994).

<sup>207</sup> “The implementation of the 1992 Criminal Trials Procedure Law (CMUK) facilitated more immediate attorney access to those arrested for common crimes (although some detainees accused of common crimes are tortured); however, the CMUK’s provisions of immediate attorney access do not apply to those detained under the Anti-Terror Law or for other "security" crimes. The CMUK’s

Before long, the parliamentarians Sırrı Sakık, Leyla Zana, Ahmet Türk, and Mahmut Alınak submitted themselves to Ankara DGM (BYEGM, March 4, 1994). On March 17, these parliamentarians and the ones who had been detained before were all arrested and sent to the jail upon DGM's chief prosecutor's demand. The Constitutional Court finally banned DEP in June 1994. It is not wrong to argue that the party's being banned by the court meant that the accusations against it such as "making separatist propaganda" or "being members of the PKK" were confirmed by Turkish judicial system.<sup>208</sup>

#### **4.6.3. International Reactions about Abolishment of Immunities**

Strong reactions from Europe came one after another upon the abolishment of the immunities of the Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians and criminal prosecution against them during a period the Turkish leaders aspired full integration with EU and confirmation of the agreement for customs union with Europe. A former French minister, Roland Dumas, who undertook advocacy of the six DEP parliamentarians that were imprisoned, accused Turkey for violating the European Human Right Convention. He also announced that he would initiate for suspension of Turkey's European Council membership. The International Amnesty issued a report in which Turkey was criticized for the increase of violations of human rights and freedom of expression (BYEGM, June 22, 1994). In July 1994, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly decided to send a committee to Turkey for doing research about detention of DEP parliamentarians as soon as their party was banned. In the meeting by the Human Rights Commission of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, both Scandinavian and American

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allowable, maximum prearrestment detention periods exceed Council of Europe maximums" (U.S. Department of State, March 1996).

<sup>208</sup> Later in December 1994, DEP parliamentarians (Ahmet Türk, Leyla Zana, Orhan Doğan, Hatip Dicle, Selim Sadak, Sırrı Sakık) and Mahmut Alınak (an independent parliamentarian at that time) who were all under arrest and defined as "terrorists" by Nusret Demiral, the Chief Prosecutor of the DGM, were sentenced to prison for 15 years. Although two of these Kurdish parliamentarians -Sırrı Sakık and Mahmut Alınak- were released in deference to the period they had been under custody, the verdict of the court would be appealed by the chief prosecutor. In 1996, some of them (Sedat Yurttas, Sırrı Sakık, Ahmet Türk and Mahmut Alınak) would be sentenced to 14 months (BYEGM, April 16, 1996). The decision for Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Selim Sadak and Orhan Doğan that were all sentenced to prison for 15 years was taken to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and they would be retried in 2001 in the direction of ECHR's decision but would not be released until 2004.

parliamentarians proposed to send a committee to Turkey in order to do some research (BYEGM, Jul 6, 1994).

Turkish officials such as Prime Minister Çiller, the Chairman of the Turkish Parliament Hüsametdin Cindoruk and Foreign Affairs Minister Hikmet Çetin all responded with unfavorable statements against the reactions coming from Europe, generally pointing at Europe's failing to understand the terrorism matter. Particularly former DEP members' activities in Europe together with the PKK members within the Kurdish Parliament in Exile, and Norwegian deputies' suggestion to nominate Leyla Zana for Nobel Prize corroborated the Turkish public opinion against Western Europe.<sup>209</sup> In fact, the international context at that time also was influential in directing Turkish public opinion against Western Europe. The war in the Balkans between the Serbian and the Muslims, the Western Europe's hesitant stance about interference against the Serbian troops and lastly the conflict in the Caucasus between Azerbaijan and Armenia strengthened Turkish public opinion about Western European hypocrisy and hostility against Muslim Turks. While the mainstream politicians to justify their economic and political failures through nationalist discourses would exploit the European stance against Turkey; Western hostility would elevate Turkish nationalism as well as political Islam throughout the country.<sup>210</sup>

However, in spite of glorifying nationalism at times, the mainstream secular parties such as DYP, ANAP, and CHP had never taken an anti-western position due to their line matching the traditional western oriented Turkish politics. The European Customs Union was one of the first steps on the way to full integration with the European Union and Çiller administration's greatest target especially during a period Turkey was suffering severe economic problems.<sup>211</sup> It is why Prime Minister Çiller, who boasted for leading

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<sup>209</sup> Besides, EP's Presidency Council granted 1995 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Leyla Zana who was in jail in Turkey.

<sup>210</sup> However escalation of anti-western sentiments, alongside economic failures and ongoing violence in the southeast region would later radically change the political course in Turkey and turn a new leaf in Turkish politics. Western Europe's critical stance against Ankara, particularly in regards to lagging democracy and Kurdish question in Turkey would consolidate the anti-western discourse of RP that was an Islamic and anti-Western party.

<sup>211</sup> The upcoming elections also might have constrained the government to maintain their nationalist rhetoric while not to offend Kurdish voters. But human rights issues such as freedom of opinion gained much importance due to the Çiller government's aspirations for Customs Union with the EU. EU Customs Union overflowed its economic context and gained a political dimension not only due to western countries' critical stance, but also the Turkish political agenda that was introduced a new threat; anti-western and secular sentiments. A customs union agreement with the EU was

abolishment of DEP parliamentarians' immunities before the local elections in March 1994, was much more self-possessed and cautious in her statements about the verdict against the former DEP parliamentarians, and indicated the possibility of applying to the court of appeal and afterwards, to the European Commission of Human Rights (BYEGM, December 8-9, 1994). Barkey and Fuller interpret Çiller's shift on this issue, describing her as pragmatic enough to know when to make, or at least appear to make, concessions: "She had room to maneuver on the Kurdish issue precisely because the Republicans (CHP) in her coalition government were already committed to softer line on the southeast" (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:138).

#### **4.7. Pressure and Censure over Media**

Prime Minister Tansu Çiller's extensive fight against separatist terrorism included also some legal arrangements over private broadcasting. Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) initiated a legislation on private broadcasting motion to the constitution in 1993 and then, it proceeded with the bill that became the 1994 Act on Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and Their Broadcasts (Radyo ve Televizyonların Kuruluş ve Yayınları Hakkında Kanun). With this legislation that implied a subtle political agenda, it was intended to control Kurdish and fundamentalist broadcasts. Among the 20 broadcast content standards that were stipulated within the act, the most significant was about the broadcast contents to be prohibited, such as separatist and religious propaganda (Demir and Ben-Zadok, 2007). The Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) was founded by the Law no 3984, which was accepted on April 13, 1994 and enacted on April 20, 1994 regarding the foundation and broadcast of Radios and Televisions. One of the most important tasks of the council was to monitor the radio and television broadcasts after broadcasting, to decide the required sanctions for the institutions broadcasting against the broadcasting principles specified in the Law (<http://www.rtuk.org.tr>).

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symbolically significant for the secular and western oriented Turkish Republic. But it gained much importance for the coalition government that was challenged in the local elections in 1994 and general elections in 1995 by RP, an anti-secular and anti-western political party. The European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee voted in favour of Turkey on December 11 1995, ratified its membership to the customs union, and agreed on putting the agreement into force by the beginning of the new year. However it needed a long period to see the economic outcomes of the agreement and hence, none of the coalition partners could take its electoral advantage in the upcoming elections in December.

It is a must to note here that the Turkish mainstream media which was under firm inspection of the legal code, RTUK, as well as chief public prosecutor's office of court of state security, adulated the military and the pro-military policies when reporting about Kurdish issue and fight against the PKK. Hereby, the Kurdish nationalist politicians and parties were the antagonists of such news reports. The Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians frequently complained about the media's biasness against them.<sup>212</sup> The pressure over Kurdish nationalist media, on the other hand, could even exceed the legitimate limits, when the legal ways failed. One report by the Human Rights Watch pointed at the bipartite pressure on the Kurdish nationalist press. On one hand, many cases against the Kurdish Nationalist Press and journalists were opened under Article 312 of the penal code and Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law and the verdicts would often be more severe than the one for the mainstream journalists. These journalists were exposed to assassination by shadowy death squads, imprisonment, mistreatment in detention, confiscation, and unemployment due to closure of their newspapers.<sup>213</sup> On the other hand, the subjects of Kurdish nationalist newspapers used to apply self-censoring in favor of the PKK. Between 1992-95, nearly 30 reporters were murdered (either in suspicious circumstances or by the PKK) in Turkey, the overwhelming majority in the southeast or for reasons connected with the conflict there (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, April 1999). The PKK responded to the Turkish government's constrain over such publications and newspapers by claiming that it also banned Turkish newspapers' activities in the region extending from Kars to Kahramanmaraş. The Turkish newspapers had already diminished their activities in the region due to Turkish military's "security measures" or the constraints by the anti-terror law, and the PKK's attacks against their staff and offices. This two-way constraint on the press in the region prevented any independent search and report about the happenings in the

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<sup>212</sup> For example, a delegate of HEP parliamentarians visited Şırnak following the violent events August 1992 in order to observe the circumstances in the city. Their observations contradicted the formal news that had been reported before. Due to their notoriety in the mainstream eye, *Hürriyet* - one of the mainstream newspapers in Turkey- reported that the migration from Şırnak following the events had been planned by HEP which also had made meetings in during its trip in the region (Alınak, 1996: 32).

<sup>213</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State's human rights report that was published in 1996, throughout the year 1995, State Security Court prosecutors ordered the confiscation of numerous issues of leftist, Kurdish nationalist, and pro-PKK periodicals. Many editions of pro- Kurdish periodicals were seized before they could be distributed nationally to newsstands. Pro-PKK newspaper *Ozgur Ulke* was closed in February 1995 and its successor *Yeni Politika* was closed in August 1995. Although their successor, *Demokrasi*, began publishing in December 1995, it would not be let free of harassment and confiscation. The State Department Report states that over the past year 1,443 publications (56 books, 784 journals, 602 newspapers, and 1 bulletin) were confiscated on court order (U.S. Department of State, March 1996).



region. Constraints over the press might also have contributed to the human rights violations in the region, which were hard to observe and report.

The censure against Kurdish nationalist publications as well as books about Kurdish culture, language, Nevruz or human rights violations in the southeast, etc. was quite intensive under the domain of the DGMs.<sup>214</sup> Bans over such publications and legal prosecution in this period were the indications of the mentality that associated anything Kurdish with the PKK.

“Potential customers are afraid to purchase Kurdish-language materials because possession of such items may be interpreted as evidence of PKK sympathies. Kurdish-language broadcasts are still illegal. Pro-PKK "Med TV" (a London Based satellite channel that was established in 1995 and known with its pro-PKK broadcasts) now broadcasts from England daily and can be received by satellite dish in the southeast. Turkish press coverage of the situation in the southeast tended to be unreliable, underreporting in some instances and grossly sensationalizing in others” (U.S. Department of State, March 1996).

#### **4.8. A New Phase for Kurdish nationalist Politicians**

##### **4.8.1. Kurdish nationalist Politicians in Europe**

In 1995, DEP’s former parliamentarians in Europe (Yaşar Kaya, Zübeyir Aydar, Remzi Kartal, Mahmut Kılınç, Nizamettin Toğuç, Ali Yiğit and Naif Güneş) who joined to the ranks of the PKK’s European agents and played a central role in the formation of the “Kurdish Parliament in Exile” (KPE). According to Nigogosian PKK’s such initiatives proved that the prohibition of DEP brought the PKK and the DEP deputies closer together (Nigogosian, 1996: 41-42). Barkey and Fuller state that KPE claimed to represent Kurdish aspirations by being “elected” for some of its members were the Kurdish parliamentarians that had been elected to the Turkish Parliament and therefore, they offered credibility to the new parliament in exile. The PKK that escalated its violent attacks in the southeast of

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<sup>214</sup> Ismail Besikci had been in prison since November 1993, and there were numerous Article 8 cases outstanding against him which the courts were reviewing under the revised Article 8 language. In February 1995, the Istanbul State Security Court charged prominent Turkish novelist Yasar Kemal in connection with his article, published in the German news magazine Der Spiegel, which was later reprinted in Turkey in a book entitled "Freedom of Expression." Kemal was charged both under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law and with inciting to racial or ethnic enmity under Article 312 of the Criminal Code. The court acquitted Kemal in December 1995. In July the Istanbul State Security Court indicted Reuter reporter and U.S. citizen Aliza Marcus under Article 312 of the Criminal Code in connection with a Reuter article published in November 1994 about village evacuations in Tunceli province. The Court acquitted Marcus in November 1995 (U.S. Department of State, March 1996).

Turkey dedicated increasing attention to the role of Europe in order to gain an institutionalized political identity and legitimacy, and to get into political dialogue and negotiations, calling also a cease-fire in March 1994 through the Kurdish conference in Brussels (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 34).<sup>215</sup> Foundation of the KPE on 12 April 1995 in The Hague was a significant political initiative of its new tendency. However, its first meeting in The Hague caused a political crisis between Turkey and the Netherlands and Turkey withdrew its ambassador from The Netherlands in protest in April 1995. Netherlands authorities rejected Turkey's condemnation and stated that there was no constitutional obstacle against the foundation of such a parliament. The parliament claimed that it was the "authoritative representative of the Kurdish people and the eventual interlocutor with the Turkish state in reaching an eventual settlement of the Kurdish problem in Turkey". According to Barkey and Fuller, though the PKK spoke of a solution within the existing borders of Turkey, the KPE demonstrated ambiguity in its own program and reflected its own pan-Kurdish character. The KPE expressed its goals as establishing a national congress and national parliament of a free Kurdistan (Barkey and Fuller: 1998: 35). KPE's success in establishing close connections with international organizations and NGOs has contributed to keeping Turkey's Kurdish problem in the international limelight (Nigogosian, 1996:43). Later on, the KPE would hold a meeting in Moscow<sup>216</sup>, join ERNK's meeting in Barcelona in November 1995 and continue its activities in Brussels.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> According to Barkey and Fuller, two factors were effective in PKK's new tendency: 1) Its increasing concerns about its military setbacks in this period. In contrast to the early 1990s, it had lost control of many of the major cities in the southeast 2) Negotiations with the Turkish government they represented the ultimate political goal of the PKK at this stage. It could resist the government's military operations for a longer time, but in the end some kind of Kurdish-Turkish negotiation was the meaningful goal of the PKK (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 26-27). Rather than an independent Kurdish state, a ceasefire with the PKK and recognition of Kurdish rights were at the top of their demand list in the mid-1990s. The PKK's calls for a ceasefire in March 1994 and at the beginning of 1996 might be a tactic to give a reconciliatory impression in Europe. Officials from either the government or opposition also rejected the PKK as an addressee of Turkish state (BYEGM, March 13, 1994). Turkish state's only option to the PKK was surrender and utilisation from the repentance law.

<sup>216</sup> When it had its third meeting in Moscow in November 1995, it raised the concerns of Turkey and the USA. While Turkey was accusing Russia for helping the PKK, Russia was angry to Turkey for it was supporting actively the Chechens. Mehmet Eymur, director of counter-terrorism at the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) in mid-1990s, addressed participants of a Washington Institute's conference in 1996 about PKK's being financially self sufficient he said that Russia continued to support the PKK by allowing PKK conferences in Moscow. He read the message sent by PKK leader Ocalan to the Second International Congress of Kurdish Organizations held in Moscow, May 4-8, 1996: "Moscow has started to attach an importance to the PKK which it had never attributed to any other organization before. Start operations for reestablishing the Red Kurdistan that was founded in the territories of Azerbaijan between the years of 1923-1930. Russia is now going to help the establishment of the independent Kurdish state." (HDN, May 22, 1996: German intelligence names PKK 'no. 1 terror problem' in Germany). Russian officials however,

While Turkish authorities and Turkish public would generally regard KPE's activities in Europe as Europe's practicing double standard against Turkey and a collective campaign against Turkey's unity and integrity, European countries would allege that they let non-violent political activities within freedom of thought and expression. Secondly, the EP took a decision on January 18, 1996 that called for attention to the ceasefire declared by the PKK at the end of 1995. Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry strictly rejected the call, and criticized Europe for practicing double standard against Turkey by urging a political settlement with the PKK while denouncing separatist ETA's activities in Spain and rejected any dialogue with the organization's supporters and collaborators (BYEGM, December 27, 1995-January 22, 1996).

#### **4.8.2. A New Kurdish Nationalist Political Party: HADEP**

While DEP was in a judicial process, its 12 parliamentarians resigned in June 1994 and joined People's Democracy Party (HADEP) that had been founded beforehand, in May 1994. Although it was devoid of many well-known Kurdish politicians such as Leyla Zana and Ahmet Türk, it succeeded in gaining recognition and visibility due to the high rate of votes it got in the southeast in 1995 general elections.<sup>218</sup> According to Barkey, HADEP, like the other relatively moderate groups representing Kurdish interests, was an "unintended consequence of the breathing space created by the PKK's fight with the Turkish state" (HDN, February 28, 1997: Islamic and Kurdish Constraints on Turkish Policy Fuel

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responded to Turkey's criticism saying that "some of our deputies attended meetings of the Kurds living in Russia. However, we do not support the PKK." (HDN, July 16, 1996: Mustafa Kalemlî meets Russian Counterpart).

<sup>217</sup> Moreover, it carried out public relations such as engaging the International Red Cross and foreign ministry of Switzerland and in January 1995 it declared that Red Cross was granted entry into the war regions to be able to monitor the circumstances there. It also declared that it would abide by the Geneva Convention and demanded Turkey to do so. The PKK actually intended by such moves to demonstrate that it did not insist on a violent military resolution, it was in pursuit of a political cause and was willing to get into dialogue. According to Mia Bloom, the PKK was "playing a fine tuned game" through correlating in time with European intervention in Turkey concerning its human rights record. This harsher stance would likely prevent Turkey's admission into the EU as a result of its poor human rights record (Bloom, 2005: 106).

<sup>218</sup> As its predecessors, its fundamental concern is the Kurdish issue; but its leftist messages for economic issues attracted some leftist Turks as well as Arabs and Circassians in the southeast. HADEP claimed to be separate from the PKK although it had members who were sympathetic to the PKK. Doğu Ergil argued that "HADEP was intent to extend its appeal beyond Kurdishness and leftist rhetoric. In order to become the 'All Turkey Party' it wanted to incorporate Turkish intellectuals and democratic Islamists into its ranks. This would have allowed HADEP to extend its influence beyond "the East" and beyond PKK-dominated politics" (HDN, June 28, 1996: A Glance at Kurdish Politics).

Debate). It demanded peace and security, elimination of emergency rule in the southeast and protection of human rights. For longer term, it advocated more radical needs such as changing of internal political structure, cultural reform, end to the conflict with the PKK, decentralization, and a new constitution that reflected Kurdish reality (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 86-87). Although HADEP leaders were intent to extend their appeal beyond Kurdishness and leftist rhetoric in order to become a countrywide party, Turkish mainstream opinion would not be different about HADEP, because even peaceful expressions in favor of Kurdish rights would be traditionally perceived as threatening (or even, as pro-PKK). As Barkey and Fuller remark, HADEP was pushed into being a Kurdish nationalist party, not only by the state but also by the news media “by equating the search for identity with a Kurdish nationalist struggle, have succeeded in marrying HADEP to the Kurdish cause more than HADEP itself would dared attempt” (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 88).

Ironically, HADEP that was under an unceasing legal watch was subjected to many unidentified murders against its members.<sup>219</sup> Nusret Demiral, the chief DGM prosecutor did not lose time to chase HADEP after the closure of DEP and he launched investigation against the new party as soon as it hold its first congress (BYEGM, June 27, 1994). HADEP’s second congress in June 1996 would intensify the legal pressure against it due to replacement of the Turkish flag with Öcalan’s poster in the congress. Consequently, HADEP’s fate would not differ from its predecessors.

#### **4.9. The Municipal Elections in March 1994**

Dismissing the Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians was to be used as a campaign material by the government, primarily the Prime Minister Çiller. Unexpected statements came from Karayalçın, the leader of the leftist SHP. The mass-propaganda against the DEP parliamentarians was so influential among the Turkish public that even Karayalçın attempted to acquit his party from its past with the Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians saying that it was not SHP which introduced the DEP parliamentarians into the parliament; they were CHP parliamentarians before the coup in 1980 (BYEGM, March 23, 1994).

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<sup>219</sup> In June 1994, a HADEP local member Muhsin Melik and his driver were killed in Şanlıurfa. In September another HADEP member Mehmet Salih Sabuktekin was killed in Adana.

However, the fight against the PKK and the southeastern issue were not the only campaign materials in 1994. The secular circles from the government to opposition parties, from the military to the mainstream media were all concerned about Welfare Party's (RP) apparent rise by means of its anti-western stance, promises for "fair order" and calling for Muslim unity. Its Islamic stance ignited another issue in Turkish politics, which was secularism. However while the secular parties (including Çiller's DYP, ANAP as well as SHP) attacked the separatist and religious circles, RP actually seemed to embrace a wider electorate by focusing on Muslim unity and attacking an external actor, that was the western world.<sup>220</sup>

Not only the political circumstances in Ankara, but also the unreliability of the southeastern conditions for an election drew serious criticism from the western world. The European Parliament, for example, demanded Turkey to let a European observer delegation watch the municipal elections in the southeast of the country in March 1994. However, it was not only the Turkish military measures that discredited the southeastern electoral circumstances. PKK's propaganda over the public to boycott the elections as well as its armed attacks against the local offices of Turkish parties was the other factors that shook up the circumstances in the southeast. PKK only allowed the RP to open a branch and continue its activities in the region. Because it was the only party that did not call for a unity under "Turkish" umbrella (Ataman, 2000). HADEP announced that it boycotted the municipal elections, due to the political repression that ruled out any new alternatives for the solution of Kurdish question, and the undemocratic and unfair electoral conditions (BYEGM, March 27, 1994).

The only party appeared to increase its votes across the country was the RP which came third following DYP and ANAP and won six metropolitan municipalities including İstanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakır. In the southeast, the victorious was the RP due to other parties' giving in to the PKK's pressure and HADEP's withdrawing from the elections. It is commonly argued that in the 1994 municipal elections, Kurds voted for RP, which was not

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<sup>220</sup> The Islamic RP, by calling for "fair order" and "Muslim unity", appealed both the poor sections (the ones economically repressed by the western type economy and the migrated ones in the suburbs of the big cities in west of Turkey) as well as the Kurds (the ones repressed by the Kemalist order). The RP appears to bring together groups with different socio-economic bases and political claims (Duran, 1998).

liked by the establishment<sup>221</sup> in order to punish the mainstream secular and Kemalist parties that they saw responsible for their plight (Ataman, 2002).

The DYP-SHP coalition was undermined by the election results, terrible financial crisis, and SHP's moderate approach to the Kurdish issue. Particularly SHP's serious vote loss brought its coalition partnership into question. SHP (as well as CHP) did not glorify the pro-military solution in the southeast and was critical about the military's influence over the civil administration and the pro-military policies in the southeast. However, this period coincided with closure of HEP and DEP, terrible human rights violations in the east and southeast and security forces' escalating the campaign against the PKK. SHP was not capable enough to confront the military measures in the southeast and failed to moderate the hardline policies of the partner, DYP (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 111). Consequently, it failed to win favor of the Turks across the country as well as of the Kurds in the southeast.<sup>222</sup>

#### **4.10. The Government's Development Program for the Southeast Region**

##### **4.10.1. Democratization Package: An Outcome of Western Repression?**

The government's democratization and economic packages were criticized for being behind of requirements. The biggest obstacle for any democratization package was the Turkish Constitution, which was restraining any further democratic step, and the suggestions of Çiller's democratization package were far from initiating such a step.<sup>223</sup> The package included no suggestions to do improvements about freedom of thought in Turkey.

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<sup>221</sup>RP's success in the municipal elections was the sign of its greater success in the next general elections as well as the beginning of a new but controversial phase in Turkish politics.

<sup>222</sup> However, both SHP and CHP earned the wrath of the security services due to their research about the mistreatments in the east and southeast. For example later, The CHP member and the minister of state for human rights Algan Hacaloğlu was threatened by Special team of personnels during one of his visits to the southeast. The İstanbul security chief, Necdet Menzir, went publicly accused incumbent CHP ministers of aiding and abetting the violent groups battling the state (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 111).

<sup>223</sup> As it was dominated by social suggestions such as letting civil officers unionize, the democratization package was criticized for trying to compensate the newly announced economic austerity policy. The democratization package mainly focused on amendments of the clauses about right to elect and to be elected (the 67th, 68th, 69th, and the 76th clauses) and the qualifications to be a parliamentarian.

However, the main question was either the democratization package was the outcome of the government's own will or repressions of external powers; because the Çiller-led government was quite decisive to conclude Turkey's bid for a customs union agreement with the EU. Besides, foreign military aid and Turkey's arms trade with mainly western states were quite vital for the fate of the fight in the southeast.<sup>224</sup> In April 1994, German government suspended its arms aid to Turkey within the frame of NATO.<sup>225</sup> Secondly, in May 1994, the USA House of Representatives decided to cut one quarter of the low-interest military aid loan to Turkey on the grounds of human rights violations in Turkey (BYEGM, April 7 and May 19, 1994). The Human Rights Watch's report in 1995 indicated that other NATO nations, Germany in particular, had debated arms transfers to Turkey far more vigorously than the U.S., and have examined Turkey's human rights practices in greater depth. According to the report, Germany applied strict conditions on the weapons it supplied Turkey, requiring that they not be used against the Kurds. However, the same report concluded that although several NATO governments had occasionally protested Turkish policies, most had continued to supply Turkey with arms which were regularly used by Turkey to commit severe human rights abuses and violations of the laws of war in the southeast (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995). In response to the criticism mounted in Europe about its practices in the southeast, Turkey began to look for arms outside NATO, like Russian Federation, Israel, and Pakistan.<sup>226</sup>

Such prompting decisions by either the USA or the western European countries would be quite influential over the legal and economic arrangements in Turkey. The advisory decision that was approved by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and

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<sup>224</sup> The USA's military support to Turkey had certain political reasons. The USA stood by its closest ally due to its political goals in the Middle East and mainly Iraq. The OPC, for instance, was quite vital for the USA's military deployment in the region. Human Rights Watch's report November 1995 states that: "The U.S. has exported more than 40,000 antipersonnel and antitank landmines to Turkey since the early 1980s. There have been reports of use of antipersonnel landmines by both Turkish and PKK forces in the war in the southeast. (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

<sup>225</sup> But later, the German foreign minister would state that according to the research they had done, it was confirmed that German weapons were not being used in the southeast (BYEGM, May 1, 1994).

<sup>226</sup> According to Human Rights Watch Report Turkey created a system in 1993 whereby it assessed potential arms suppliers on their readiness to provide Turkey with arms without criticizing Turkey's human rights record or attaching conditions to arms transfers (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995). Turkey has also attempted, with success, to develop further its indigenous arms industry. In March 1995, the Turkish government approved a resolution that let the Turkish Armed Forces provide arms from official or private sector. The resolution which was approved by also the president, might have been issued due to the critical stance of the western states (BYEGM, March 7, 1995) (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, November 1995).

delivered to the council of ministers, proposed suspension of Turkey's right of representation in the European Council in case Ankara failed to take the necessary steps for democratization until June 1995.<sup>227</sup> However, Turkish authorities regarded the decision as an encouragement to the ones that wished to divide Turkey (BYEGM, April 26 and 27, 1995). But especially by the beginning of 1995 -when the customs union with the EU began to occupy the agenda more than before, the human rights and democratization issues also seemed to be more binding for the progression of negotiations between Turkey and Europe. In the midst of the summer of 1994, Ankara was quite sure that the terror in the southeastern region of Turkey had been downgraded, and it was time for economic investments and to propose a "Social Solution" which would include further democratization, ability of giving Kurdish names, establishment of Kurdish institute, education and broadcast in Kurdish (a statement by Karayalçın: BYEGM, August 20, 1994). Yet the opposition, whose support was quite important to accomplish any of the promises, commonly argued that while the new economic measures were the IMF's commands, the democratization package was the repression of the western countries and mainly the EP.

#### **4.10.2. The Government's Legal Steps Falling Behind Its Promises**

Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, the circumstances of the prisons (particularly the ones where PKK militants and thought criminals were jailed) and hunger strikes were the most challenging human rights issues in advance of a customs union agreement and general elections at the end of 1995.<sup>228</sup> According to İsmet Berkan, the Premier Çiller insisted on amending Article 8 although her government faced opposition from MGK Secretarial, the General Staff, most of the opposition parties and the president Demirel. Because Çiller was aware that the only way of keeping up the coalition (with the leftist CHP) and to proceed towards a customs union agreement was an amendment on this article (Berkan, 2003). An

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<sup>227</sup> Particularly the Scandinavian states had always been much more critical against Turkey in terms of human rights and democratization issues.

<sup>228</sup> IHD reported according to the formal data that by the November 1994, 8.600 people were prisoned due to the legal regulations challenging any thought or act criticising the Turkish political system. Articles 125th, 146th, 168th, 312th and the Article 8th of the Anti-terror law were like "the sword of Damocles" of the DGM prosecutors that based their references on these articles. It is shocking that between 1992 and 1994, the number of the ones prisoned due to the articles increased "955 percent", from 900 in 1992 to 8600 in 1994. IHD concludes that the justice ministry had envisaged that the number of the special type prisons (özel tip cezaevi) and E- type prisons that were 10 in 1991, would be increased up to 50 by the end of 1994 (Press Statement on 08 Kasım 1994: [www.ihd.org.tr](http://www.ihd.org.tr)).



agreement of customs union, which that would possibly earn the coalition government some public favor, was expected also to prevent the fundamentalist Islamists' political rise and their coming to power (Zürcher, 2005: 324). In October 1995, Article 8 was changed by removal of the expression that used to target any propaganda or activity "whatever its intention and method". It was also made possible to change the imprisonment of the ones jailed due to Article 8 into fine (BYEGM, October 27, 1995).<sup>229</sup>

Although it was intended to narrow the scope of the activities targeted by the article, it was still imposing sanctions against thought crimes that were not defined clearly enough. The ambiguity of the article had often been misused by the hardline prosecutors of the DGMs to detain both alleged terrorists and a broad range of people on the charge that their acts, words, or ideas constituted dissemination of separatist propaganda (U.S. Department of State, March 1996). Moreover, due to the same reason, the article was in complete contradiction with the European Human Rights Convention that called for legal protection of citizens' freedom of expression ([http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/ul\\_kom/akpm /AKPM\\_Tr\\_Den\\_Kom\\_Raporlari\\_Tr\\_R.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/ul_kom/akpm /AKPM_Tr_Den_Kom_Raporlari_Tr_R.htm)).

The other important issue in this context was the hunger strikes by the prisoners, generally consisted of members of illegal leftist organizations, the separatist PKK and criminals of thought. IHD claimed that many prisoners were injured seriously during the operations established against the Diyarbakır E-type Prison by the security forces in October 1994 (Press Statement, 8 November 1994: [www.ihd.org.tr](http://www.ihd.org.tr)). The hunger strikes that were staged in 1994 and 1995 during the hardline Mehmet Ağar's security general directorate and exacerbated turning into death fast in 1996, during Ağar's ministry of justice.<sup>230</sup>

Consequently, both the government and the Parliament remained incapable in terms of democratization and primarily the item 8th of Anti-Terror Law. Although "detention

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<sup>229</sup> As it was expected, 123 people were released in November 1995 following the amendment (BYEGM, November 23, 1995). In October 1995, Appeals Court affirmed the convictions of four of the Kurdish deputies for being members of an armed band but overturned the convictions of two (Ahmet Türk and Sedat Yurttaş) and ordered that they be retried under the revised Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law (BYEGM, October 26, 1995). However in April 1996, Sedat Yurttaş, Sırrı Sakık, Ahmet Türk and the independent former deputy Mahmut Alınak were sentenced to prison for 14 months and fine by DGM for making separatist propaganda (BYEGM, April 11, 1996).

<sup>230</sup> The Human Rights Association in Turkey (IHD) reported that hunger strikes were staged in 22 prisons in 1994 and in 20 prisons in 1995. In 1995 over 5.000 prisoners were on hunger strike and two of them lost their lives due to authorities' negligence to the calls of both the prisoners and their relatives outside (AÇLIK GREVLERİ/ÖLÜM ORUÇLARI, TTB VE SON TARTIŞMALAR: [http://www.ttb.org.tr/eweb/aclik\\_grevleri/a\\_soyer.html](http://www.ttb.org.tr/eweb/aclik_grevleri/a_soyer.html) ).

watching offices” were founded probably in order to prevent mistreatments against the detained people, it is clear that such offices were also nonfunctional and for show only (BYEGM, August 13, 1995). What is more, the watching offices probably were not authorized to watch the detentions within the cases of DGMs.<sup>231</sup> According to the IHD (The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey), in 1995, 321 civilians were assassinated by unknown attackers, mostly in the southeast of the country (Basın Açıklaması: Faili Meçhul Siyasal Cinayetler, January 24, 2000: <http://www.ihd.org.tr>). Many were leaders or prominent members of the Kurdish community, local politicians, or members of the Kurdish nationalist People's Democracy Party (HADEP).

In March 1996, the U.S. department of state issued a groundbreaking report admitting that throughout the year 1995, Turkey engaged in gross abuses such as torture<sup>232</sup>, political and extrajudicial executions, and forced village evacuations and burning of villages by state security forces and the PKK, disappearances, arbitrary arrest, detention<sup>233</sup> or exile. The situation in the southeast was of particular concern, the report pointed. According to the report, various sources estimated that as many as 2 million people have left their homes in the southeast until the end of 1995 and the government programs were inadequate to deal with and compensate the many internally displaced (U.S. Department of State, March 1996).

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<sup>231</sup>The death of Metin Göktepe, the journalist of Evrensel –a socialist newspaper- under detention in January 1996 was the clearest indication of the continuing police violence, especially against the suspects of thought and expression crimes.

<sup>232</sup>The HRF's torture rehabilitation centers reported that they received a total of 713 applications for treatment during the year. It was estimated that judicial authorities investigate only about one-half of the formal complaints involving torture and prosecute only a fraction of those. The Anti-Terror Law provided that officials accused of torture or other mistreatment may continue to work while under investigation and, if convicted, may only be suspended. Under the state of emergency, any lawsuit directed at government authorities must be approved by the regional governor; however approval was rare. These conditions contributed to the paucity of convictions for torture (U.S. Department of State, March 1996)

<sup>233</sup> There was no guaranteed access to an attorney under the law for persons whose cases fall under the jurisdiction of the State Security Courts. Due to such deficiencies, use of torture by police and security forces was quite widespread. Moreover, such deficiencies might have dissuaded many PKK militants from surrendering to the Turkish State.

### 4.10.3. The 7th Five-Year Development Plan

The coalition government raised its economic measures alongside the democratization package in pursuit for further integration with the EU. The new economic measures (with its notorious name “April 5th Measures”) were opposed for repressing labors, increasing taxes, increasing prices while accelerating privatization. Although the government’s five-year development plan which was officialized in July 1995 (to be carried out between 1996-2000) drew attention with the section titled “the Priority Regions for Development”, it did not suggest any research for the basic reasons of the economic underdevelopment in the east and southeast regions (<http://ekutup.dpt.gov.tr/plan/vii/>).<sup>234</sup> None of the social and cultural aspects such as the tribal system was mentioned in the development plan. However, the sovereignty of the tribes in the rural areas of the southeast had a big role over the regional people’s economic and social backwardness.<sup>235</sup>

One problem that complicated the implementation of promises and the following tasks as well as cooperation between Ankara and the local governors was the difference in “perception of urgents”. While Ankara was in pursuit of an urgent and certain military success against the PKK, the local governors who witnessed the social collapse asked for urgent economic investments in the region. They complained about huge migration from rural to urban area, which would have its side effects such as the inefficient urban infrastructure, employment and health facilities, as well as security.<sup>236</sup> The Development Plan mainly pointed at the terror matter (security problem) as the principal reason of the

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<sup>234</sup> The Seventh five year Development Plan did give larger place to the east and southeast regions when compared to the Sixth five year Development Plan that was issued in 1989 during Özal period (<http://ekutup.dpt.gov.tr/plan/plan6.pdf>). Although the sixth plan also underlined the need of diminishing the economic and social gap between the regions, it was clear in 1995 that no satisfactory result had been achieved more than a few accomplishments within the GAP (the Southeast Anatolian Project).

<sup>235</sup> The links between the rightist Turkish political parties such as ANAP, DYP and RP and southeastern tribes often appeared before a countrywide election and certainly, before the municipal elections in March 1994, too. By means of an informal agreement between them, each political party would gain the votes of a whole tribe and the head of that tribe, in return, would gain a political influence over his own tribe, in the region and in Ankara as well. Ecevit who had always been against the clan system in the east and southeast of Turkey, criticised parties ( especially DYP and RP) for standing by the clans in order to gain their votes. RP admitted that they had candidates among the tribe leaders from the southeast, but alleged that they were selected as candidates due to regional people’s respect and confidence to them (BYEGM, November 2, 1994).

<sup>236</sup> As Ecevit, leader of DSP would state later “ armed struggle could be won in the end, however the state is paying a heavy political price.” ( BYEGM, January 12, 1995).

lack of investment in these regions, especially in the southeast region. Therefore, once again the Turkish authorities focused on the “outcome” rather than the factors “behind it”.<sup>237</sup> Another point drawing attention is that the huge project called as GAP (Southeast Anatolian Project) was not underscored enough within this five-year development plan. It was acknowledged once again that agriculture and breeding were the main economic activities in these regions, however these fields would rarely draw the essential care from Ankara, and the agricultural producers would often be the victims of the planlessness and changing quality standards due to the new regulations within integration with the EU. It was promised also that small industrial areas would be established, but the problems emerging from limited markets, low quality standards, inadequate transportation facilities, etc.<sup>238</sup> were not assessed. Despite the several accomplishments within the GAP<sup>239</sup>, it was clear from the plan that it would still take a long time to achieve its original target. However, it should be emphasized that GAP has always been handled within countrywide development issue although it needed special financial and social care amid the huge regional problems of the southeast. It is why the economic measures regarding the GAP in the development plans (either the sixth or seventh development plans) intended to keep the project going, rather than to accomplish it. Secondly, the government’s economic measures were criticized for keeping security spendings out of the development spendings. General Secretary of the GAP Union of Municipalities stated that the security spendings should be included in the whole stability package in order to accelerate GAP and provide security and stability in the region (BYEGM, April 17, 1994).

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<sup>237</sup> The other reasons that repulsed investment in the backward east and southeast regions were noted as qualified labor force shortage and capital shortage, marketing difficulties and embargo over Iraq. Although the plan pointed to the needs of these regions such as projects to create employment, reclamation of the lands around, improvement of infrastructure and housing; it did not go beyond flashy promises as “Action Plan” or “Immediate Support Program”. Nevertheless there were a few points that seemed quite viable. For example, it was noted that the authorities of provincial special administrations would be increased in order to adjust coordination between administrative units and accelerate the management of the projects in the regions.

<sup>238</sup> Servet Mutlu’s “Doğu Sorununun Kökenleri, Ekonomik Açıdan” (The Origins of the Eastern Question, in terms of economy) can be quite helpful to understand the main reasons behind the backward economy in the east and southeastern regions: Mutlu, Servet (2002), “DOĞU SORUNUNUN KÖKENLERİ, EKONOMİK AÇIDAN” (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları).

<sup>239</sup> For example, by the beginning of 1995, it was possible to irrigate 87.000 hectare, but the target was a more 315.000 hectare. Secondly, the Atatürk Dam was completed and a water tunnel into Şanlıurfa for irrigation of Harran Plain came into operation.

#### **4.10.4. The Government' Resettlement Projects for the Displaced People**

##### **Central Villages Project**

In November 1994, Prime Minister Çiller announced "Central Villages Project" which was to create secure areas for the ones whose villages burned or evacuated in the southeast, initially in Batman and Diyarbakır (for the first stage). Actually, such a project was suggested during the former administrations too, due to difficulties in providing any services from transportation, electricity, water to education and health services in the dispersed and small settlements of the east and southeast regions. The government promised that after its initial stage the project would be extended to other parts of Turkey to aid those who had migrated or fled their homes because of security reasons. However, Turkish state's application for financing to Social Development Fund of the Council of Europe was rejected. According to Human Rights Watch, it was rejected on the grounds that such funds could be used for forced settlements in the region (Human Rights Watch, June 1996).

##### **Return to the Village Project of the Southeast Restoration Project**

In the mid-1995, the government announced the "Return to the Village Project of the Southeast Restoration Project" that was more comprehensive in scope compared to the first one. A four-man committee<sup>240</sup> was assigned as responsible for the plan of the secure return to villages program. In the first stage of the program, the people resettled would be encouraged to conduct economic activities such as cattle raising, bee-keeping, and weaving and they would be supported by the funding of roughly \$ 22 million. It was underlined that the project was one of the most important undertakings in supporting the fight against terrorism, noting that an increased migration from rural to urban areas was continuing, causing increased housing, infrastructure and employment needs in cities. However, the project also failed due to the incoordination between the committee and the government as well as between Ankara and the southeast region and discouraging stance and statements of the military and regional authorities in the region. In other words, regional authorities did not grant security for the people expected to return on the ground of impossibility of

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<sup>240</sup> (Deputy Prime Minister Hikmet Çetin; Interior Minister Nahit Mentese, the deputy prime minister; State Minister Necmettin Cevheri; and State Minister for Human Rights Algan Hacaloğlu)

providing security in all the dispersed settlements in the region.<sup>241</sup> As state minister Algan Hacaloğlu complained, the "Southeast Restoration Project" failed due to indifference of the government and the four-man committee that met only once between July-October 1995; not transferring the funding that had been allocated for the displaced; and little attention to the petitions about resettlement that were sent by village headmen (Human Rights Watch, June 1996) (BYEGM, August 9-10, 1995).

#### **4.11. General Elections on December 24, 1995**

The results of the general elections in December 1995 involved many implications in respect to the Kurdish question, counterinsurgency against the PKK, and Turkish politics in general. As it was expected on the ground of the results of the municipal elections in March 1994, the RP (Welfare Party) came first amid the concerns about its religious and anti-secular tendencies. Nevertheless, none of the secular mainstream parties' (ANAP, DYP) raising the Kurdish issue as their primary concern at that time was quite significant for the coming term.<sup>242</sup> Secondly, none of the parties' gaining votes enough to form a government also kept the ongoing instability throughout the 1990s. ANAP and DYP<sup>243</sup> followed RP with close rates of votes and the fourth was DSP. CHP could enter to the parliament with the least deputy number. It is not wrong to say that HADEP that benefited RP with its absence in the 1994 municipal elections competed only against the RP in the general elections in the southeast. Although it was quite highly successful in the southeast, it failed in the big cities and it could not elect any representatives to Parliament due to failing to make the national threshold receiving only 4.17 percent of the votes nationally.

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<sup>241</sup> The Emergency Rule Governor Ünal Erkan was critical about the project and voiced the difficulty of providing services and security in the dispersed settlements of the southeastern region (BYEGM, July 15, 1995).

<sup>242</sup> But it should be pointed that the New Democracy Movement (NDM) that was founded by Cem Boyner in January 1995, raised the Kurdish issue boldly and suggested a plan for the resolution of the issue was. Although it was supported by many Turkish intellectuals, scientists, journalists, businessmen and former generals, it took a rate of votes quite lower than it expected and failed to pass the election threshold. The steps it suggested were the pluralization and democratization of society, the granting of cultural rights and freedom for representing Kurdish interests without endangering the unitary structure of the state and the implementation of a dialogue-oriented policy toward the Kurds (Gürbey, 1996: 20).

<sup>243</sup> ANAP came second with 19.7 per cent, but this included the share of the Islamic ultra-nationalists of the Great Unity Party (BBP) with which it had a joint list. After the elections, the BBP split off and had seven seats in the new assembly. Çiller's DYP got a higher rate of vote than it expected and with 19.2 per cent, it came after ANAP, but had more seats than ANAP.

Consequently, RP's being the first and the others' loss of votes indicated Turkish constituents' tiredness of the standing political and economic course. RP's promises such as putting an end to interest rates and calling the other mainstream parties as the "imitators of the western world" must have allured a good rate of the community. Besides, Turkish politics was expecting a more controversial period due the victory of a political party that the top institutions of the state was uneasy about; in other words the top of the agenda of Turkish politics in the new term would be occupied with concerns over the secular system of the Turkish state.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Even before the elections, an operation was started in pursuit of the pro-sharia ones in the Turkish Armed Forces and the Supreme Military Council convened in December 1995, decided to dismiss 43 people detected to have involved in reactionary activities (BYEGM, December 11, 1995). And following the elections, the Chief of General Staff, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı restated that the Turkish Armed Forces was the guardian of principles of Atatürk and assurance of the democratic and secular system (BYEGM, December 28, 1995).

## CHAPTER V

### 5. PKK ISSUE DURING ERBAKAN-LED RP-DYP COALITION GOVERNMENT (28.06.1996 - 30.06.1997)

The gap that emerged as a result of weakening of leftist ideology worldwide, the destruction of leftist groups by the military regime in Turkey, and lastly the reigning economic and political establishment's failure to address big masses, was filled by political Islam that became the main popular opposition to the Turkish establishment in the 1980s. As Muhittin Ataman remarks, the historical democratization process initiated by Özal leadership in the early 1980s, that challenged the nationalist and staunch secular Kemalist order, and glorified the liberal Islamic and Ottoman legacies of multiethnicity and multi-law administrations, was significant in facilitating the process. It led to increasing power of non-Kemalist societal forces such as the Welfare Party (RP) that challenged and sought to abolish the "unfair" nationalist and secular order of the Turkish state (Ataman, 2002). The RP that was the most well organized of the Islamic movements became also the biggest opposition to the Kemalist principles in Turkey via a slogan of "fair order". Several reasons contributed to its success of emerging as a strong opposition in Turkey, such as the failure of the nationalist promises of Westernization to unify the whole community, and failure of western-type economic system to secure a fair income distribution. Hence, one of the most important outcomes of this process was the growing sense of "having been excluded from the political and economic system for years", and this led to a kind of "solidarity among such groups, for instance the political engagement between the Kurds and the Islamist RP in the midst of 1990s.<sup>245</sup> Consequently the 1990s witnessed on one hand the succession of both Kurdish nationalist parties and Islamist parties; and on the other hand increasing intervention of the Kemalist institutions (MGK, DGMs and Constitutional Court) into public policy due to their concerns about "growing threats" against the foundational principles of Turkish state.

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<sup>245</sup> For example in the early 1990s, the PKK opposed the mainstream Turkish parties' activities in Kurdish regions, but it allowed the RP to open a branch and continue its activities in the region.



## 5.1 Post-election Period: A Six-Month Political Chaos

Although the Welfare Party (RP) came first; the other parties –distinguishing themselves as the secular ones- got into search of forming a coalition government within “the secular circles”, amid rumors that the military command manipulated the secular parties to form a coalition government. An ANAP-DYP minority government by coalition was acknowledged the most proper way to get out of the political deadlock, and it granted support from both Deniz Baykal’s CHP and Bülent Ecevit’s DSP. However, it took quite a long time for ANAP leader Mesut Yılmaz and Tansu Çiller to reach an agreement, due to both figures’ ambitions for premiership.<sup>246</sup>

In such an execution vacuum, the newly formed Yılmaz-led government was caught unprepared and had no alternative but extending the emergency rule (which actually they had promised to abolish in their campaigns) on March 14, and the OPC on March 28 in the direction of National Security Council’s advice. However, the short-term of tenure was enough to promise, but not to go into action.<sup>247</sup>

RP, on the other hand, was decisive to drop the coalition, which had been founded on “injustice” against it. It frequently raised allegations and introduced investigation motions about grafts during Çiller period, starting also a term of multilateral accusations and

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<sup>246</sup> All the large parties had declared that they would never join forces with the Islamists; however RP and Yılmaz’s ANAP actually came very close to a deal on a coalition. But due to military’s pressure, ANAP turned back from a deal with RP and formed an uneasy coalition with Çiller’s DYP (Zürcher, 2005:298).

<sup>247</sup> The government program of the ANAP-DYP coalition that was announced on 6 May, mainly focused on energy and infrastructure projects and did not mention of the counterinsurgency in the southeast or democratization on Kurdish issue. Moreover, Yılmaz who had promised boldly to prevent torture in his campaigns, assigned Mehmet Ağar (the previous security director) to justice ministry post despite numerous allegations and doubts about him for having connections to underground gangs; unidentified murders; and similar human rights violations. Moreover seeking to differentiate itself from DYP by emphasizing the need to recognize the cultural distinctiveness of the southeast, Yılmaz himself declared that prohibitions on the Kurdish language would be removed. Prime Minister Yılmaz and the Kurdish deputies from his party such as Naim Geylani were voicing more liberal about cutting through a years-old taboo and introduce Kurdish broadcasting. At the beginning of his tenure, Yılmaz hinted he would change successive governments’ army-only policy in the southeast and pledged to lift emergency rule in the region. But this issue took a backseat to intercoalition squabbling between ANAP and Çiller. In the end, “his promises of more democracy and a peaceful solution came to naught.” (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 114) (HDN, June 2, 1996: Turkey Said to be Considering Kurdish Broadcasts).

motions among the primary parties in the parliament.<sup>248</sup> RP finally applied to the Constitutional Court demanding annulment of the vote of confidence for the coalition government as well as extension of emergency rule and OPC on the grounds that voting was not done in accord with the constitution (BYEGM, April 12, 1996). As a result of RP's application, the Constitutional Court decided in may to cancel the vote of confidence for the ANAP-DYP coalition and the parliamentary decisions for the extension of OPC and emergency rule in southeastern region (BYEGM, May 14, 1996).<sup>249</sup> On 6 June 1996, Mesut Yılmaz submitted his resignation and the President Demirel charged RP's leader Necmettin Erbakan to form the 54th government. It needed a more three weeks for the formation of a coalition between RP and DYP.

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<sup>248</sup> In April, just one month after the government was formed, the parliament –including Yılmaz and ANAP, too- agreed to form an investigation committee to search the issue. The government that had been hardly formed, now faced a new depression due to the investigation motions, the partners' ceaseless bickering against eachother and bilateral claims about eachother's properties. DYP, in response to ANAP's attitude, introduced an investigation motion alleging that Mesut Yılmaz did not take any action during his premiership about the alleged grafts by the former general director of Emlakbank, Engin Civan. Lastly, Ecevit's DSP also introduced an investigation motion about the allegations that discretionary fund was misused during Çiller's premiership<sup>248</sup>. Çiller rejected to do any explanation about that and said "I do not disclose any secret that might harm the country's supreme interests." (BYEGM, May 16, 1996). One newspaper (Akşam) added another material into the bilateral accusations between the leaders. It claimed that an assassination had been planned against Ocalan before the elections in December 1995 (within Çiller's knowledge), but Çiller claimed that it was prevented by Mesut Yılmaz's warning Ocalan against the attacks. Çiller used this claim as counter-accusation against Yılmaz (HDN, May 28, 1996: War of words escalates between Motherpath coalition partners). On the contrary to Çiller's assertion, Ocalan rejected in his confessions after being captured that Mesut Yılmaz informed him against being captured and arrested by Turkish State (Pirim and Örtülü, 2000: 120). The parties opposed to RP also voted in favor of an investigation motion alleging RP's having connection with misuse of the money raised for Bosna victims (BYEGM, May 15, 1996).

<sup>249</sup> Although Foreign Affairs Minister of the ANAP-DYP coalition Emre Gönensay visited Washington before renewal of OPC and drew attention to many policy areas in which "both the Turkish people as well as Parliament may reach the end of their critical tolerance unless the US administration removes the thorns that handicap progress in bilateral relations", the OPC (and emergency rule) was extended for one month as a result of a new voting in June (HDN, May 24, 1996: Gonensay Visits Washington for Bilateral Tune-up) (BYEGM, June 18, 1996). As it is clear, Turkey appealed for more control over OPC, but it had no alternative but to extend it one more time as it had failed to produce any alternatives in absentee of political stability. Turkish leaders were concerned about the prospect that OPC's absence could easily prompt the regime in Baghdad to attack the Kurds once more, driving them to Turkey's borders en masse once again. HDN reported that what was being voted on this time was a so-called "interim formula" worked out by the government of caretaker Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz as a face-saving arrangement -- as much as an arrangement to buy time so that Ankara and Washington could work out their differences. This formula proposed that the OPC mandate should be extended until the end of July only (HDN, June 21, 1996: OPC, and the 'Can't Live With It, Can't Live Without It' Syndrome).

## 5.2. HADEP Starting as Defeated

The provocative act in the congress of HADEP and the following legal process were the signs of a similar fate waiting for the Kurdish nationalist politicians in the new administrative period. Just a few days before formation of the RP-DYP coalition, a new crisis emerged due to replacement of Turkish flag with the poster of Öcalan at the HADEP congress in Ankara.<sup>250</sup> The DGM prosecution office and the Ministry of Interior opened investigation against the party and its members. Unfavorable events followed, such as assassination against HADEP members and attacks over HADEP's offices. The state security court jailed the party leaders, charging them with sedition. The security officials raided all HADEP headquarters and a countrywide investigation was ordered against all its members and relatives.<sup>251</sup> In his indictment, prosecutor Nuh Mete Yüksel underlined that HADEP was the political wing of the PKK and he asked sentences between 15 and 22.5 years for the defendants. The incidents sparked nationwide reactions against HADEP, and the party would have to continue its activities under continual pressure of security officials, accusations from mainstream media, mysterious killings, frequent investigations and prosecutions, etc.

HDN columnist İlnur Çevik criticized HADEP officials for failing to prevent the incident and letting the PKK hijack their convention:

“HADEP had a chance to prove its own muscle when it managed to win more than 4 percent of the overall votes in the Dec. 24, 1995 parliamentary elections and show it is a political force to be reckoned with in southeastern Turkey. However, the incidents at the HADEP convention in Ankara have shown once again that the party is under threat by the PKK... This was not only a provocation on the part of the PKK but it was also a death blow to HADEP” (HDN, June 25, 1996: And PKK Becomes Liability for PKK).

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<sup>250</sup> It was interpreted by the party members as a provocation by the state in order to close down the party. However, it could be also by the PKK that probably wanted to demonstrate the impossibility of political struggle to advocate armed struggle.

<sup>251</sup> In addition to HADEP members, Sırrı Sakık, a former deputy of defunct DEP, would be detained one week later due to his statements on a private tv channel. Sakık had said during a TV program that people who asked for respect for their flag should show respect for the flags of others. This statement was seen as promoting separatism And arrested by the DGM. He charged that his statements were distorted by some media sources in Turkey who use their pen as a gun, aiming to provoke people to shoot each other. (HDN, June 29, 1996: Sakık Blames Media After Being Arrested).

On the other hand, top HADEP officials, including Chairman Murat Bozlak, denied all charges against them and said that the flag tearing incident took place completely outside the control of party officials.<sup>252</sup> They claimed that the press reported the incident in a frenzy of "exaggeration, conceit, and chauvinism" (HDN, September 28, 1996: 11 HADEP defendants released). The State Security Court ruled in June 1997 that the Kurdish nationalist HADEP had links with the outlawed PKK and sentenced party officials and members to prison terms for their part in incidents that occurred at the HADEP congress in 1996. Nearly 30 members of HADEP including the chairperson of the party Murat Bozlak were sentenced to four to six years in prison for "assisting the terrorists" (BYEGM, June 4, 1997).

### **5.3. Erbakan's Administration: Fragile to the Core**

The new government led by Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and his deputy and Foreign Affairs Minister Tansu Çiller came into office through fierce opposition, harassments and doubts<sup>253</sup> against DYP's hypocrisy and Erbakan's "fake secularist stance". The main question was waiting an answer: Was it really the end of the chaotic political and democratic period or beginning of a new one?

As it was remarked by the other parties that had fallen into opposition then, the new RP-DYP coalition was seemingly formed through a horse-trading aimed to suppress the allegations against each of them: RP deputies voted against the motion that demanded investigation about Çiller's misuse of discretionary fund and Çiller in return, reached an agreement with RP which she had vigorously criticized for its reactionary approaches. In its early days, the new coalition between RP and DYP seemed to hold together well due to the

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<sup>252</sup> During HDN's interview with Ömer Doyuran (one ordinary Hadep member who was arrested following the flag incident) and the HADEP's chairman Atilla Şimşek; Şimşek asked about validity of police's announcing that they arrested the "real culprits" a few days after the incident: "We do not know who these people were either. We have heard that they were PKK members. As the police and Turkish officials claim we are another political wing of PKK, then why were they sent to another prison apart from the one in which HADEP members are? We expect an answer from Turkish justice," (HDN, October 4, 1996: Omer Doyuran - victim of injustice ).

<sup>253</sup> In order to appease the criticism against her negotiation with RP, Ciller argued that they once had a coalition partnership with the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) which included members of the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Democracy party within its ranks (HDN, June 21, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner)

leaders' avoiding any attempts of confrontation (Zürcher, 2005:299).<sup>254</sup> Besides, DYP took key interior, defense and education posts in order to soften fears of the secularist establishment. In their early days, in short, being cautious was preferred to sparking reaction.

Despite his electoral successes, Erbakan seemed too weak politically especially to accomplish his promises for the solution of Kurdish question; on the other hand the military, which had its own popular mandate, gained a substantial domestic leverage over the political leaders in this period, because: 1) Erbakan's and the Turkish military's preferences over security issues diverged. 2) Internal divisions in the coalition and the narrowness of his support base weakened Erbakan's position relative to the military chiefs<sup>255</sup> (Brooks, 2008: 213-214). Divergent preferences in this period manifested themselves in strategic security matters -specifically Kurdish issue and foreign policy- that had always been firmly controlled by military. Besides, the lack of a real coherence within his party is also another impediment in front of maintaining a consistent policy in terms of Kurdish conflict in the southeast. For example, while the Kurdish nationalist deputies in RP favored extension of OPC and elimination of Saddam Hussein from northern Iraq, the Islamists within RP advocated the abolishment of OPC and engaging the Iraqi leader (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 106).

This new period that was initially marked by the rise of two anti-establishment parties –RP and People's Democracy Party (HADEP)-, witnessed the “identity struggle” of the establishment against them. RP and HADEP, with Henri Barkey's words, had become each other's electoral alternative in the southeast. HADEP, which was the political mouth of Kurdish nationalism, sounded separatist; RP on the other hand, with its anti-secular and anti-western stance, sounded reactionary. The state's dilemma was that elimination any of them could have fanned the fire of either Kurdish nationalism or reactionism (HDN, February 28, 1997: Islamic and Kurdish Constraints on Turkish Policy Fuel Debate). As it has been stated before, HADEP did well in the southeast region, but failed in the general of

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<sup>254</sup> Çiller, for instance, tried to go on well with Erbakan, because it was this coalition deal that acquitted her from parliamentary investigation about her financial practices in the past. Erbakan, on the other hand, was aware that it was much profitable to hold on while his support in the country continued to increase (BYEGM, June 19, 1996) (Zürcher, 2005: 299).

<sup>255</sup>The opposition parties, a large segment of Turkish population, secular institutions were all worried of the Islamist party and its challenge to the country's secular traditions.

the country and could not elect any representatives to the parliament.<sup>256</sup> In other words, if HADEP had succeeded to make the national threshold and enter into parliament, Welfare's representation in the southeast would have been seriously reduced (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:106).

### **5.3.1. Erbakan's Welfare Party, the Kurds, and Kurdish issue**

The RP (earlier the NSP, National Salvation Party) actually, had always had a strong base of constituency in the east and Southeast of Turkey since the 1970s, despite the temporary electoral alliance it had formed in the 1991 general elections with the extreme nationalist MÇP (Nationalist Labor Party) which in 1992 turned into the MHP (Nationalist Action Party).<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, the pro-Islamic national vision theory (Milli Görüş) of the RP did not put special emphasis on the issue until the early 1990s, because the Islamic movement attempted to view every kind of problem within the issue of Islamization or de-secularization of the Turkish polity (Duran, 1998). In the 1990s, RP's success of navigating between different poles, combining locally both Turkish and Kurdish nationalism derived from its "unifying Islamism". Not glorifying Turkish nationalism, but not approving Kurdish nationalism; damning the West; and by trying also to reach out the financially poorer sections of the society that certainly included several Muslim ethnic groups, the RP was able to address to big masses in Turkey. As Duran indicates, "RP identified the Kemalist project of identity-formation at the root of the Kurdish problem and it translated

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<sup>256</sup> Many factors were effective in HADEP's failure in the big cities which had received large scale of immigration from the southeast. First of all, the fact that not all Kurds were radical nationalist was emphasized in the sections before. The Kurds in the big cities might have been much concerned about their economic problems. Secondly, the Welfare Party probably attracted such Kurdish populated zones in the big cities through political and economic organizational works, which HADEP failed to do. Thirdly, HADEP's leftist-sounding election campaign must have alienated many conservative Kurds (both in the western big cities and southeast). Besides, the concern of making the threshold and being able to represent Kurdish constituents in the parliament must have been influential on Kurdish candidates to ally with RP that had already proved itself in 1994 municipal elections. Finally, it is pointed that most of the ones who had migrated to cities like Adana and Mersin could not vote due to not being able to obtain proper documentation needed to vote (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 94). Most of the Kurds who did not vote for HADEP tended to view HADEP itself as being too close to the PKK and did not tolerate PKK's killing the Kurds that did not support it. The fact that RP received a good rate of votes from Kurds throughout the country indirectly displayed the fact that not all Kurds were pro-PKK or wanted to separate from Turkey. According to Barkey and Fuller, HADEP's poor showing in these elections was received with a collective sigh of relief by Turks (mostly in the big cities such as İstanbul, Adana and İzmir) who feared of the party's gaining a victory there and the results allowed Turks to talk about the Kurdish issue that is regional in nature rather than nationwide in character (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:87).

<sup>257</sup> This alliance created a strong reaction among the Kurdish members of the RP and resulted in the resignation of some of its influential Kurdish politicians in 1991.

the problem into Islamist terms”. In other words, their criticism of the transition from “ummah” based state (Ottoman Empire) to nation-state which laid the sole emphasis on the idea of Turkish nation, extended to criticism of denial of the existence of the Kurdish ethnic (Duran, 1998). The RP viewed Kurds as their Muslim brothers and called for Islamic solidarity in its electoral campaigns, rather than an ethnic-based (Turkish) unity.<sup>258</sup> However, as Bozarslan underlines, RP’s emerging as a strong anti-establishment party did not prevent its successful integration into the system due to its not using violence in this process (Bozarslan, 1996: 146).

Kurdish approach to RP was influenced by its Islamic tendencies and its being an anti-establishment party which could challenge the nationalist and secular limits of Turkish state in order to expand Turkish democracy in favor of Kurds (Bozarslan, 1996: 145). It should be initially noted that a good rate of votes in the southeastern region were intimately linked with Islam and Islamic practices and:

“Welfare’s message of Islamic solidarity which deliberately underplays ethnic differences has had much appeal to Kurds, though not to all. Clearly, from the Kurdish standpoint, it is the political party with the least hostile attitude toward them...” (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 78).

RP always criticized Turkish state’s pro-western political and economic orientation; and Erbakan often kept the pro-western system responsible for any political, social and economic deficits in the country. Duran indicates that according to RP, the mainstream Turkish political system that imitated the West, preferred “power” over “justice”, and hence aimed to abolish genuine personality in order to make them a satellite of the West (Duran, 1998). RP was also successful in articulation of the connection between the imitative policies of Turkish leaders and the sufferings of the Kurds in the southeast. According to RP such policies led to: (1) a materialist and racist Turkish nationalism (2) economic underdevelopment in the southeast (3) lack of democracy in the southeast (4) destruction of Islamic Brotherhood by Republican policies of modernization without providing a substitute in its place (5) External forces such as the activities of the OPC and Israel (6) the state of Emergency Rule (OHAL) in the region (Duran, 1998).

In addition, Islamist RP was critical of Kurdish nationalism, which they believed as the play of imperialist powers in order to sow dissension among Muslims; as well as the

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<sup>258</sup> Erbakan would mostly call on his addressee as “our dear people”, rather than referring an ethnic group. Moreover, the party filled highranking positions in southeast with ‘Kurdish’ personalities. The party did not import party officials from the west of Turkey as other political parties did (Ataman, 2002).

secular order that, they allege, dealt a strong blow over the unity of Turks and Kurds in the country by isolating Islam from the state order (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 101).

In the light of all these, RP certainly seemed to have targeted Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic based on Turkish nationalism and secular system,<sup>259</sup> and RP appealed to Kurds with its criticism of the system founded on Kemalist legacy. RP even overstepped to pledge to change the state apparatus such as the MGK, in accordance with their religious and anti-western policies (Cook, 2008: 273).

Nationalism, as noted above, was not a positive force to all Islamists, since in most cases it works to divide the Muslim community; but it does not mean that Islamist focus shifted from state power. On the contrary, it focused on a state that was empowered by an Islamist unity, rather than Turkish nationalism. Anti-western discourse plays a significant role in the articulation of such a state based on Islamist unity with an anti-western orientation in foreign policy. Therefore, Erbakan and Welfare sought to get closer to especially the Islamic countries that the West was hostile. But Barkey and Fuller warn that Erbakan and his RP was not totally free from nationalism since they also advocated that a strong Islamic Turkey should lead the other Islamic countries; in other words the creation of an Islamic union via the leadership of Turkey. The primary role desired for an Islamic Turkey reflects the party's Ottomanist inclination. Finally, with such a vision of "a strong Turkish state based on Islamist unity", Erbakan and his RP acknowledged a separate Kurdish identity, but were unlikely to extend beyond the cultural realm of Kurdish question (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 105).

Although RP poised as the representative of Kurdish region in the absence of a Kurdish nationalist party or group in the new administration period, several factors would tie Erbakan's hands against maintaining his moderate approach towards Kurds (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 106). Erbakan's RP used its Islamist discourse to appeal to the conservative Anatolian Turks, as well as conservative Kurds most of whom disliked the discriminative Turkish nationalism. The RP's supporters and activists in the southeast were Kurdish nationalists, who expected democratization steps from RP; but not all the Turkish Islamists within RP gave weight to the Kurdish concerns in the southeast. Hence in addition to having to cope with the conservative establishment in Ankara which sees every Kurd as a potential threat, Erbakan had to balance between his responses to Kurdish nationalism and

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<sup>259</sup>Criticism of Atatürk was the common point between Islamists and the nationalist Kurds.



the Turkish nationalist sentiments, which began to arise as a response to the rise of Kurdish nationalism and to the challenges imposed by globalization over state sovereignty. In other words, Turkish nationalist currents overweighed, despite the Islamist rhetoric among RP deputies (Barkey and Fuller, 1998:106). It is why Erbakan failed to maintain his zealous anti-state rhetoric about Kurdish issue upon coming to power, and stood in the backstage while launching a “private” mechanism in respect to Kurdish issue.

### **5.3.2. Erbakan’s Peace Offensive: a Total Mess**

As soon as coming to office, Erbakan as well as his RP got into action to launch a peace offensive that was similar to Özal’s initiative in order to end the bloodshed in the southeast. RP member Fethullah Erbaş and some other deputies that were working on this issue, asked the PKK to release the eight soldiers that had been held captive for 14 months as sign of good will. Many nongovernmental organizations were also called on to contribute to this action. Within the peace offensive, it was reported also that Erbakan had a secret meeting with Islamist author İsmail Nacar, the spokesman for the "Peace, Fraternity and Solidarity Committee, who had also connections with various Kurdish circles including the outlawed PKK . Nacar had met PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan at the end of 1995 and they exchanged promises of supporting the peace process. Later on the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire. Reportedly, Erbaş and Nacar had a talk with the imprisoned leader of the Kurdish nationalist HADEP Murat Bozlak and his friends (HDN, August 5, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).<sup>260</sup> Nacar emphasized that they definitely did not demand that the PKK should be the interlocutor. He stressed that the government took certain steps to ease the climate and the rest would be the responsibility of civilian organizations (HDN, August 6, 1996: Nacar Urges Free Debate on Kurds).<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Meanwhile, Health Minister Yildirim Aktuna called on the civic organizations to help create a "climate of dialogue." In an effort to bring bloodshed to an end, the country's three labor confederations -- Turk-Is, DISK and Hak-Is -- joined hands against both terrorism and the anti-democratic pressures (HDN, August 5, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). But a new terrorist attack that resulted with eleven casualties in Hakkari could overshadow such a peace offensive; and as Ferai Tinc from Hürriyet newspaper resented “whenever there is an attempt to establish a dialogue to end terrorism, whenever the green light is given for peace, traders of terrorism intensify their efforts, raising hell” (HDN, August 5, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

<sup>261</sup> According to Nacar who advocated education and broadcast in Kurdish, the demand of federation by Kurdish nationalist political parties (defunct DEP and HADEP) and the PKK was not realistic due to hundred thousands of Kurds living in the west of Turkey. He suggested that progress toward national reconciliation could be achieved by strengthening local government at the provincial level. He accepted that the issue was multidimensional, that the underground contracting barons, foreign intelligence services, drug smugglers were involved; but highlighted free public debate as the most

There were criticism from every segment of society about RP's peace offensive, its method and contend. For example according to Duran, if there was any real intention in RP's attempt to open a dialogue with Kurdish nationalists, the RP did not display the diplomatic skills needed in terms of timing the talks and choosing the right interlocutors. Neither Erbaş nor Nacar was a notable figure who could address to large masses in Turkey. As a result, "it did not score any success in taking the lead in influencing Turkish public opinion about the possible positive implications of such a dialogue on the solution of the Kurdish problem" (Duran, 1998). Another argument was that the lame democracy in the region was the primary problem that should be dealt before anything else, and relations that are an extension of feudalism should be concluded in the first phase of any "democratic opening". Besides, because of the rule that PKK never be considered as an interlocutor, RP and Erbakan did not seem to have any room for maneuvering on this particular aspect of the problem. However the main question was what RP and Erbakan were able to offer the PKK anything other than calling for laying down their arms? According to Barkey and Fuller, Erbakan, who did not intend to seek a dialogue with the PKK, just launched trial balloons to test the reaction of his own partisans and the other parties in parliament, and deliberately sought a public venue for a set of talks that, given their nature, ought to have been kept secret. Thus Erbakan, who was concerned to maintain the Kurdish support to RP, was able to demonstrate that "he had done his outmost on this issue" (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 107).

The reactions from the coalition partner, DYP, were confusing. Mehmet Gölhan -a DYP deputy and former defense minister who probably knew the conditions in the region better than most of the officials in Ankara- said that they were not against "indirect talks through intermediaries" if PKK laid down its weapons. However, Çiller said that it was out of the question for the state to bargain with bandits especially when blood was being shed. Gölhan resented that the previous government's \$426 million economic recovery package for the southeast was criticized by the political circles in Ankara on the grounds that there was no way investments could be made in the region without first wiping out the PKK. Gölhan, therefore, advocated that before anything else, there was the issue of putting an end to this loss of blood, the PKK's laying down its arms, and reconciliation (HDN, August 6, 1996: DYP not against 'indirect talks through intermediaries' if PKK lays down its weapons,

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practical means to proceed in the first phase (HDN, August 6, 1996: Nacar Urges Free Debate on Kurds).

former defense minister says).<sup>262</sup> One day later, however, Interior Minister Mehmet Ağar said the state would not sit down for talks with the PKK. Recalling that ten days ago 10 soldiers had been killed by the PKK in Hakkari, Ağar said, "Those who want to, may enter into bargaining with the PKK. But that cannot be state or government policy" (HDN, August 7, 1996: Kurdish Crack in DYP). Main opposition ANAP opposed any deal between the government and the separatists, echoing the stance of Ecevit's DSP<sup>263</sup> and the far-right MHP. The President Demirel also opposed, saying, "The highwaymen will be taught their place. There will be no compromise" (HDN, August 7, 1996: Coalition Split on PKK) (HDN, August 7, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

While disagreements within the coalition government as well as in the whole parliament cast doubt on the fate of the peace offensive, the PKK delivered a "fatal blow" by announcing that the indirect dialogue was a positive step but not enough, and its demands were exceeding the government's (actually Erbakan's) authorities and abilities. PKK stated that steps such as allowing Kurdish TV and radio broadcasts, lifting of emergency rule, dissolution of the village guard system, a general amnesty for political prisoners, and lifting of barriers to political organization by Kurds were also not enough. PKK demanded: (1) a response by the Turkish armed forces to the unilateral cease-fire it declared some time ago (2) immediately halting the operations that Turkish military was conducting in the region (3) the Turkish government's accepting it as the sole interlocutor in any search for a settlement to the Kurdish problem (4) preparation of a draft constitution for a Turkish-

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<sup>262</sup> The ones familiar with the miserable conditions of the southeastern people were relatively more tolerant to RP's peace initiative, although they criticize the party's choices for interlocutors. Sinan Yerlikaya, a former member of parliament and deputy secretary of CHP then, claimed that those who sought a solution to the southeast question were condemned as being members or supporters of the outlawed separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and silenced. He emphasized that the region had been turned into its state today by the using of the PKK as an excuse, and those who spoke out about it had been marked as PKK supporters. "The truth is obvious. The government itself pushes those who have had to migrate from the region to dishonesty. People are in the position where they have to sell their body, their life and their blood for a slice of bread. In Elazig especially it is noticeable. The people who have escaped there are the victims of prostitution. Today in Hozat in a wedding hall, 15 families are trying to survive. They are not even called human. They cannot have baths, they starve and have no jobs," Yerlikaya went on to point out (HDN, August 9, 1996: PKK stamp for those who seek solutions).

<sup>263</sup> Ecevit said that in the past agas and sheikhs had been accepted as speaking for the people of the region. And now PKK supporters, imprisoned People's Democracy Party (HADEP) figures, the so-called Kurdish Parliament and those foreigners aspiring to revive the Sevres Treaty had come to speak for the people of the Southeast. He said that it was wrong to turn the Kurdish language into a bargaining issue, because these are humanitarian issues and this should be pondered outside the dialogue process. He warned that the separatist organization is not going to discontinue its activities just because these freedoms have been granted (HDN, August 7, 1996: Coalition Split on PKK).

Kurdish federal state, and submission of this draft to the public in an referendum (HDN, August 7, 1996: PKK says Indirect Dialogue Positive Step, but not Enough).

PKK's response was a great embarrassment for the government, and the peace offensive ended with the interference of high military command, not surprisingly. Erbakan, who remained silent during the period, changed his views on the PKK (and Israeli issues as well)<sup>264</sup> after receiving a visit from General İlhan Kılıç, the secretary general of the National Security Council, Erbakan made a U-turn and said "Turkey will never give up the conceptions of a unique flag, a unique nation and a unitary state. We cannot make concessions in the struggle with terrorism. We cannot sit at the table with terror." In addition to rejecting the reports about a peace offensive, he also noted that it was the press to be blamed (HDN, August 9, 1996: Chaos of Dialogue with Öcalan's PKK).

Another embarrassing incident happened at the end of August, when RP deputy Fethullah Erbaş who was accompanied by Human Rights Association Chairman Akin Birdal and assistant head of the pro-Islamic human rights group (Mazlum Der) İhsan Arslan to rescue the soldiers, returned home empty handed after failing to secure the release of seven Turkish soldiers taken hostage and being kept in northern Iraq by the PKK.<sup>265</sup> Birdal was detained for visiting a PKK camp in northern Iraq and his interrogation was carried out on the base of helping and providing shelter for armed groups and organizations. An arrest warrant was issued for Erbaş, who underlined that the act was personal and humanitarian, as well as Mazlum-Der Vice President İhsan Arslan (HDN, September 4, 1996: IHD Chairman Birdal taken into custody, arrest warrant for RP deputy). While the mainstream media (Hürriyet, Milliyet and Sabah) was extremely critical of the failure, the news reports were both cynical and provoking.<sup>266</sup> PKK would hand over six soldiers (two of them had been released before) in December after "signing a document" with the same representative of Turkish side, RP deputy Fethullah Erbaş. Release of soldiers who were held prisoners by

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<sup>264</sup> Erbakan suspended the plan to sign a new defense industry accord with Israel, an accord for which preparations were already made (HDN, August 8, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). However, the government would not be able to maintain its anti-Israel line due to military's pressure and would sign the accord in October 1996.

<sup>265</sup> It was reported that the PKK refused to release the soldiers on the grounds that Erbaş "was not an official," and because, "public reaction in Turkey to the whole mission had not been sufficiently satisfactory" (HDN, September 6, 1996: Failed Attempt to Rescue Turkish Soldiers Breaks Established Molds).

<sup>266</sup> For example Sabah's headline on August 30 said, "PKK ceremony for RP's Erbaş".

the PKK that time is still acknowledged as the only tangible outcome of this episode, and which was achieved through the initiative of Fethullah Erbaş (Duran, 1998).

The military sounded highly concerned about the developments and for the first time the military commanders dwelt on the secularism theme on August 30, 1996, stressed with special emphasis that they would protect the principle of secularism (HDN, September 1, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). The commanders declared at the reception given on the same day by Chief of Staff Ismail Hakkı Karadayı that “The unfavorable developments must be brought to an end. The civilian powers must fulfill their duty” (HDN, September 1, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). The coalition government was on the brink of dissolution due to the tasks RP offered for the solution of Kurdish question, the failure of Erbaş, PKK’s excessive demands, and lastly, Erbakan’s new travel plan to northern African countries including Libya which was resented due to its support to terrorism for years and Gaddafi’s anti-Turkey stance.

### **5.3.3. RP’s Reports and Plans for the Solution of the Kurdish Issue**

#### **5.3.3.1. Before Coming to Power**

According to Duran, after long years of its negligence of the issue and following termination of its alliance with MHP, the Erbakan-led RP brought forward the Kurdish issue on three platforms in the 1990s (before coming to power): The first one was a “Kurdish report” prepared in 1991, the second one was the election manifesto booklet issued in 1995, and the last one was a document titled “Terror and the Unification of State and Nation” (Teror ve Devlet-Millet Kaynaşması).

**1) The 1991 Kurdish Report:** RP’s first Kurdish report, prepared in 1991 by the İstanbul provincial organization of the party, which was headed then by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (now the prime minister of Turkish Republic). This report would be the most radical one comparing the others prepared when the RP came to office in 1996. The report suggested that the RP should pronounce the word 'Kurd' publicly with confidence and should be able to raise its voice to question the assimilationist and repressive nature of the official ideology on the Kurdish issue and should denounce state terrorism in the Southeast of Turkey (Duran, 1998). It pointed at the bankruptcy of the official ideology in respect to the Kurdish question and the region’s remaining between “state terror” and PKK terror; and

criticized the wrong methods and mistreatments of the security forces and especially the special teams in the southeast; and need of recognizing Kurds' cultural rights. One significant point in this report is that it boldly noted at PKK's increasing support in both rural and urban regions at the beginning of the 1990s, and hence, the need of questioning the "force-based" state methods that had failed in dealing with the PKK. The report remarked the changes in the world, and the significance of Özal's reconciliatory approach to the Kurdish question in this context that time (Akçura, 2008: 243-245). Furthermore, it is argued that this new approach should bring the violations of human rights to the public agenda as well. Interestingly enough, the report advocated dropping the usage of such terms as "separatist" and "terrorist" for the PKK in order not to give the impression that the RP is on the side of the state (Duran, 1998).

**2) "The Southeast, Terror and Solution"; an Election Manifesto Booklet, 1995:** It was actually Erbakan's speech which he delivered in the 4th General Congress on 10 October 1993, and then was used as an election manifesto booklet in December 1995 elections. It reflected the party's fundamental policy outline toward the Kurdish issue. Two months after coming to office, in 1996, Erbakan said he would address the Kurdish problem in three sections, as articulated in the booklet in question: **a) The Problem of Terrorism:** Erbakan pointed at the need of restoring stability in northern Iraq, the area which would help the effectiveness of the fight against the PKK; therefore he underlined the need of convincing Iran<sup>267</sup> and Syria against sheltering the PKK, and urgency of reconciliation between rival Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq. He suggested measures such as repopulation of the evacuated regions, abolishment of emergence rule, ending the presence of OPC, and lifting the embargo imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. **b) The Kurdish Problem and cultural rights:** He admitted that the Kurds in Turkey did not feel they were being treated as first class citizens due to the official repression for a long time. He promised that all the citizens in Turkey would be treated equally and the state would let Kurds enjoy their cultural rights. He suggested that speaking, broadcasting, and education in Kurdish language were the natural rights of "Kurdish brothers" and that the materialistic and nationalist policies should be ended. **c) The Problem of the Southeast and economic backwardness in the region:** The government would deal up the poverty of southeastern Turkey, Erbakan said, by taking several measures in phases to allow local authorities to provide relief to the suffering masses of the area. Besides that, he estimated that the natural

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<sup>267</sup> By that time, actually, he had already won a promise from Iranian leaders that they would never back the PKK or give it shelter.

gas that would come from Iran would help to overcome the energy gap in the region and help regional development efforts (HDN, August 23, 1996: As Refah Starts Addressing the Kurdish Problem) (Duran, 1998).

**3) Terror and the Unification of State and Nation (Teror ve Devlet-Millet Kaynasmasi):** It was prepared by the terror commission of the RP deputies, and Duran underlines that it was the last document that the party publicized while in opposition, to offer a solution to the Kurdish question. The report pointed at “the lack of success of the Turkish Republic in eradicating the PKK which launched a guerrilla war against the state with the help of local peoples in the region”. The report argued that the Kurds’ national identities should be recognized, because it is a right of the people in the region. It also claimed that the only side who could find a real solution to the problem is the people of the region. It emphasized the need for proper political remedies in order to eradicate the causes of the problem. Furthermore, it proposed a reform of administrative structure, which would replace the existing one with “a system of provinces” (eyalet sistemi). Alongside the administration system, it proposed decentralization of Turkish armed forces by organizing “national guards” (Milli Muhafız Örgütü) for each province, as well as decentralization of judicial system.<sup>268</sup> It also suggested abolishment of DGMs in the Southeast and alleged that justice can only be delivered when judges and prosecutors are elected. According to Duran RP’s proposal of a system of provinces was largely based on the Basque model of Spain (Duran, 1998).

#### **5.3.3.2. After Coming to Power:**

In its early days after coming to office, RP began to prepare its southeast plan that reportedly focused mainly on two aspects in addressing to the region’s problems; the Kurdish identity dimension and the terrorism dimension. In search of an integrated approach to the problems, the plan reportedly would address to the issue on the base of all legal and administrative aspects with bold suggestions as stated above. However, the final draft presented to the parliament at the end of august did not involve any of the “bold” proposals of RP’s first plan that was disclosed just one week before. Apparently, Erdogan

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<sup>268</sup>The RP wing of the coalition wanted to authorize provincial governors while the True Path Party (DYP) wanted the military in charge. According to the new proposal of RP which sought to give governors control over military; when security operations were launched, the military units called into action by the provincial governor should be answerable to the provincial governor. RP had already proposed the Parliament a draft that expanded the powers of provincial governors, but it was not welcomed in the parliament. A new bill would be drafted and presented to Parliament soon.

failed to convince his coalition partner, and adverse public reaction must have been influential over his shift. The final draft, which passed from the parliament on August 29, involved only sections that tightened the security in the region. For instance, one section envisaged that military units taking part in security services -when invited by the provincial governor to do so- would continue to be commanded according to military rules. It was also proposed, on the contrary to the first draft, that provincial governors would issue permits for firearms in the hands of the village guards; any legal case against any village guards on charges of possessing unauthorized weapons would be dropped and those who had been convicted of this charge would be pardoned. Another section clearly reflected the nature of the new draft that was based on high security concerns: "Citizens will have an obligation to declare their identity not only to the aldermen of the districts where they live but also to the security forces. Those who do not comply will face higher fines" (HDN, August 29, 1996: Southeast plan cut, security tightened).

HDN columnist İlnur Çevik remarked that Erbakan later showed even less sign that he would deviate from the policy of past governments. Following the overreaction provoked by the incident at the HADEP congress as well as a weekend suicide bomber in very early days of the new coalition government, Erbakan would conclude, "We will not allow debates that weaken our security forces in the fight against terrorism" (HDN, July 5, 1996: Kurdish Problem Haunts Erbakan). It became clear that the suggestions and promises such as recognition of Kurdish identity or education and broadcasting in Kurdish language were just to court Kurdish votes in the times of election. Because Erbakan would later adopt a rhetoric similar to the one of DSP leader Ecevit, and rejected the existence of a Kurdish issue.

He claimed that it was something created by external powers, and put the emphasis on the other two dimensions of the problem, the underdeveloped Southeast, and terrorism.<sup>269</sup> Contrary to his promises before coming to power, he even argued that it was not reasonable to allow broadcasting and education in Kurdish while the fight against terrorism had not been concluded yet.

"...what appeared to be the intention in the RP's political discourse while in opposition to address the Kurdish question has not been translated into an established policy in government beyond vague references to justice. Taking into

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<sup>269</sup> After coming to power, in the 5th General Congress of RP in 1996, Erbakan did not mention of the promises they had given when the RP was in opposition (Duran, 1998).



consideration the inflexibility of the Turkish political system, the strength of Turkish nationalism and unwillingness of its coalition partner, the DYP, and the military to change the status-quo related to the Kurdish identity and cultural rights, the RP rearranged its priorities on the issue” (Duran, 1998)

Erbakan continued to have reports prepared upon coming to power. The reports that were prepared by RP deputies or ESAM (a pro-RP think-tank) pointed at the economic problems as the main source of the conflict, and focused mainly on need of financial investments in the region.<sup>270</sup> Because his party had already been under suspects of the establishment, Erbakan did not directly involve into the production of the reports. RP’s reports were prepared by delegations sent by Erbakan and he was not under obligation to accept the recommendations; but the reports were publicized well in order to show that the party was pursuing the issue (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 103).<sup>271</sup>

The incidents occurring after the new draft of the southeast plan was approved, put down the footprints of the sovereign mindset. Press reports pointing at the efforts of state authorities to convince the residents of some southeastern districts to permit the assignment of village guards to their districts increased at a significant rate in this period. For instance, it was claimed that the inhabitants of Hakkari’s Çukurca and Diyarbakir's Lice district were under intense pressure from authorities for a while to be persuaded to become village guards. According to the reports, Lice<sup>272</sup> was raided by the gendarmes and all the male

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<sup>270</sup> For example the one prepared by Ömer Vehbi Hatipoğlu suggested restriction of the excessive military expenditures in the southeast in order to make economic investments in the region. RP’s nearly all reports recommended abolishment of emergency rule and the OPC; and once a RP commission proposed coordination of the Kurdish Kur-an courses in the region under state control and converting them into Kurdish religious schools (Akçura, 2008: 249-257).

<sup>271</sup> Military statements about normalization of the security conditions were contradicted by a report of a RP commission visiting Hakkari in 1996. The report that was quite demoralizing, briefed about the miserable social and economic consequences of the wide scale village evacuation and displacement in Hakkari (as throughout the region); corruptions within the village guards system which had turned to be a feudal mechanism, and security forces’ autonomy from civilian governors in the region (Akçura, 2008: 257). The Hakkari report must have prompted Erbakan to promise to realize a major change in the troubled region, including abolishment of emergency rule<sup>271</sup> and opening of the evacuated region to settlement again (HDN, July 12, 1996: Erbakan: Evacuated Hamlets to Reopen in the Southeast). However human rights reports including the one by the Association for the Solidarity of Oppressed People (Mazlum-Der; Muslim fundamentalist human rights association) revealed the failure of the government's initiative for reverse migration. Mazlum-Der’s report underlined the overall failure of the policy and suggested some improvements in the conditions to make it workable such as rebuilding abandoned villages, providing secure living and collective return conditions, abolishing the village guard system, and ending the emergency rule (Duran, 1998).

<sup>272</sup> Lice is known to be a stronghold of the Kurdish nationalist HADEP and (as it is exemplified in the previous chapters) it had been subjected to similar pressure in the past.

population were seized and held at the gendarmerie station overnight, during which the detainees were allegedly subjected to beatings by the gendarmes. However, the authorities denied the claims and they even stated that 110 men had joined the village guards voluntarily in the Lice district. A delegation consisting of the representatives of various parties and trade unions which was formed to investigate the claims of forcible recruitment, visited Lice district; but the members of the delegation were manhandled by the police officers who also shouted slogans against the delegation claiming that they were "PKK agents" (HDN, January 1, 1997: Police demonstration against delegation in Lice).

#### **5.4. The Military's Ceaseless Campaign in the Southeast**

In early months of 1996 a decrease was noticed in especially the armed attacks of PKK due to the unilateral ceasefire it declared prior to the December 24, 1995 general election. The organization had decided to suspend its armed attacks; but it did not fully comply with that and continued to engage in some offensive actions throughout 1996. The Turkish military, on the other hand, continued fighting "a lone battle" in the southeast and across the border without any interference from the government (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 107). The armed campaign still was not accompanied by any fundamental social and economic measures that could have provided some relief to the suffering masses in the southeast, and did not seem it would be. Extensive anti-PKK operations were conducted throughout 1996 in southeastern provinces, into northern Iraq as well as near Iranian border; and when the coalition was formed, the military had already initiated a new hot pursuit into northern Iraq with a large number of special teams backed by Cobra helicopters (HDN, June 29, 1996: Turkish Armed Forces kills 45 PKK militants in hot pursuit operation). The military officials began to report in 1996 that life in the Southeast is getting back to normal despite some of the PKK militants were still active in the Southeast and the fight against them was not yet finished.<sup>273</sup> Even so, it was certain that the organization had lost its former

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<sup>273</sup> For instance, the Chief of the General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, after doing some observation in the region with a group of top level military officials, announced that the PKK had begun to fall into a decline due to intense operations in the region and severe security measures (within the strategy called as "area domination" or "scorched earth" strategy) and while many militants had surrendered to the Turkish security forces, many others escaped into the big cities (BYEGM, May 10, 1996). According to Özdağ the reasons of Turkish military's success were as following (Özdağ, 2007: 149) :

- 1) Turkish General Staff changed its perception of threat and accepted the PKK as the vital threat against the Turkish state at the beginning of the 1990s.
- 2) Although the legal framework of emergency rule government was not changed, the armed forces got on full responsibility in fighting with the PKK.

efficiency and most of the militants in the remote regions of southeast were in miserable conditions; because a great deal of the rural population in the southeast was forced by the Turkish state to migrate into the urban areas. PKK militants were “drifted away” from the people from whom they used to obtain food and medicine (Marcus, 2009: 345). Hence, it became impossible for the PKK to rekindle the insurgency warfare, which was a rural phenomenon, in the new urban areas (Göçek, 2008). Moreover, intense operations against the PKK in the southeast and northern Iraq had reportedly severed the dialogue between the organization’s leader and its high-ranking officials, leading to rifts and in-fighting among senior groups (HDN, July 22, 1996: PKK increasingly wracked by in-fighting among top groups).<sup>274</sup>

By the beginning of 1996, balances had already begun to change in the southeast. Cease of confrontation between the PKK and Hizbullah since 1993<sup>275</sup>, and Turkish security forces’ dealing a devastating blow over the PKK’s armed forces through the intense operations and severe measures decreased the importance of Hizbullah’s functional existence in the southeast. Hizbullah, on the other hand, extended its anti-state activities into the big cities in the west of Turkey in 1996. Moreover, due to military’s high alertness in the mid-1990s against activities confronting the secular system of Turkey in the post-election period, Hizbullah was not an incidental threat anymore. Security operations and legal prosecutions started against Hizbullah militants by the midst of 1990s. Moreover, especially in direction of the MGK decisions on 28 February 1997, the anti-regime activities of Islamist

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3)The field domination concept was implemented successfully and mobility of ARGK was largely broken.

4) Aviation ability of land forces was developed, which strengthened the mobility of land forces.

5) Helicopter Attack fleet was formed and this increased firepower of security forces and provided air assistance to the troops fighting with ARGK.

6) The villages who sympathised the PKK were blockaded and some of them even evacuated so these measures cut the logistic support to the PKK.

7) New roads and communication system increased the mobility of the security forces.

8) Quantity and quality of Special forces increased.

9) Police forces and intelligence organization broke down the ERNK’s network in the cities.

10) The continuous offences into North Iraq put an end to PKK’s free existence there. Due to the continuous attacks of Turkish military, the north Iraq region changed from a PKK base into a battle field.

<sup>274</sup> It was reported that Apo suspended activities of top PKK figures such as Ali Haydar Kaytan, Semdin Sakik, Halil Atac and Osman Ocalan and ordered an investigation against them.

<sup>275</sup> According to Ruşen Çakır, the clash between PKK and HiT was brought to an end through the meditation efforts of Sheikh Osman and Ethem Barzani, the leaders of the Kurdistan Islamic Movement in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdish Revolutionary Hizbullah party, respectively (Çakır, 2007).

movements<sup>276</sup> would be followed closely and the mosques in the southeast that had been used as terrorist strongholds by the PKK and Hizbullah for years would be taken under control.

Turkish military's fight against the PKK would intensify after the PKK announced on August 15, 1996 that it abandoned its decision to suspend armed attacks. It was significant that PKK's starting armed attacks again coincided with RP's planning a major change in the southeast, but abandoning them subsequently. The PKK, which started to infiltrate eastern, southern, and northern regions of Turkey, adopted a new method of attack, suicide bombings, for its offensives in the big cities. Particularly after the failure to secure the release of seven Turkish soldiers taken hostage by the PKK, the clashes increased to an extent that at least three Turkish soldiers died every day in the new period. The military began to launch large scale operations backed by fighter planes and sometimes Cobra helicopters in the eastern and southeastern provinces (Şemdinli in Hakkari, Sivas and Tunceli) mostly in September 1996. The military would report the casualties from PKK ranks as high as 1,000 in large-scale operations started from August on (HDN, September 25, 1996: Nearly 1,000 rebels killed since August 15).<sup>277</sup> One of such massive security operations took place in the eastern province of Tunceli where the militants of the PKK had been hold up for several years (HDN, September 25, 1996: What is this new offensive against PKK in Tunceli?). According to İlnur Çevik, military was putting on a grand show of force in Tunceli to prove its muscle and that it was not remaining idle at home (because a large number of Turkish troops were deployed near the Iraqi border awaiting a move by Barzani to act against the PKK in Iraq). In light of such military details, Çevik questioned the mainstream assumption that PKK was the product of foreign powers:

“In recent years such ‘massive’ operations failed to dislodge the PKK from Tunceli. Until now we have been accusing all our neighbors of allowing the PKK to find shelter in their territories and launch attacks inside Turkey. But in the case of Tunceli it is hard to explain the presence of the PKK with outside help. Tunceli is in the heart of eastern Turkey and thus all the surrounding areas are controlled by

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<sup>276</sup> The most prominent of the radical Islamist organizations in Turkey that time were Hizbullah, the Islamic Great Eastern Raiders' Front (IBDA/C) and Muslim Youth.

<sup>277</sup> It was reported by military that Turkish security forces have struck heavy blows against the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1996, killing 2,782 rebels, injuring 36 and capturing nearly 320. Official government figures said that security forces seized 2,000 rifles, 730 pistols, 130 rocket launcher, 1550 mortars, 2480 hand grenades and 250,000 bullets (HDN, December 27, 1996: Another bloody year in the Southeast). According to the official figures during this year's anti-terrorism operations, 531 security force soldiers lost their lives as the PKK separatists killed 143 civilians including four teachers.

Turkish forces” (HDN, September 25, 1996: What is this new offensive against PKK in Tunceli?).

#### **5.4.1. The 1997 anti-PKK measures**

HDN, in March 1997, published secret papers from the Interior Ministry that revealed the steps authorities planned against the military, political and the cultural presence of the PKK in 1997 (HDN, March 1, 1997: Secret papers reveal state's 1997 anti-PKK measures) . The papers in question demonstrated very clearly that Turkish state continued to suppress such cultural elements within the campaign against the PKK. However, by suppressing Kurdish cultural elements within the campaign, Turkish state intentionally seemed to have acknowledged that the PKK was fighting for Kurds’ cultural rights. The papers that were circulated in January 1997 to the State of Emergency Regional Directorate, to all provincial governors, the General Gendarme Command, the General Security Directorate, and the National Security Council General Secretariat; included suggestions in roughly four categories:

1. In response to the possibility that the organization would target people taking the side of the state and put psychological pressure on them with accusations of spying and banditry, or carry out massacres and various armed actions; practices should be applied which would secure the raising of the morale of citizens supporting the state; anti-terrorist protests be organized;
2. To prevent participation and cooperation with the PKK: High school and university students who were likely to join the organization be kept under surveillance; measures be taken in response to the PKK separatist terrorist organization's steering of men of thinking and art and other influential people who may impress the public at home and abroad to serve its aims; identification of the people who may be qualified as thinkers and are currently being used by the organization; in regards to the PKK cooperating with other legal organizations (mostly left-wing organizations) in Turkey, possible leaders in thought of the left-wing organizations would be enlightened and those who can not be directed will have their influence over the public rocked as professional degenerates. In order to prevent the PKK searching for new fields of activity, Street trading would be prevented in the provinces that have received migration from the east and southeast region. The village guard system would not be abandoned, at least not in the sort term.
3. Demonstration of PKK’s terrorist face to international human rights organizations and similar institutions: those who had suffered from terrorism should be "made" to apply for

recognition "to organizations like the Helsinki Watch Committee and the International Human Rights with documentation and information, and protests should be made at the biased attitudes of these institutions.

4. Preventing Propagation of Kurdish cultural practices: Administrative and local measures should be taken against those attempting to propagate the Kurdish language form institutions conducting research to make it a language of literacy and to start education; and Kurdish literacy courses directed at front activities; MED TV be prevented from making programs in Turkey. With the aim of preventing the organization from exploiting Nevruz, the functions required for the celebration of Nevruz, March 21 be carried out and Academic meetings should display the colors yellow, red, and green as if they were traditional Turkish colors.

In accordance with the official plan, another announcement came from a top military official in April that there would not be an amnesty for terror convicts (HDN, April 26, 1997: 'No amnesty for terror convicts' on the ....fading the promises of RP). Following the political chaos rotated around allegations in the post-Susurluk period and the military ultimatum on February 28; the Turkish state accelerated its anti-PKK campaign during the February 28 period with a new wide-scale plan dominated by security concerns. Accompanied by the military officials' stimulating messages, the new plan was, in a way, the demonstration of the government's fading promises and the political defeat Erbakan and his RP in face of the Turkish establishment. On the other hand, the PKK, aware of the political congestion during Erbakan's reign, was releasing threatening messages in April 1997 that they would target business, tourism and other nonmilitary targets in Turkey (HDN, April 3, 1997: Focus on Human Rights).<sup>278</sup>

The Democracy newspaper<sup>279</sup> that often issued reports vis-à-vis the official reports on Kurdish issue, quoted PKK leader Öcalan who pointed at the military's new tactic and defined the new period as the era of soldier-politicians. Claiming that the PKK would be taken up as an interlocutor in the coming days, Öcalan noted that it would be wrong not to take the PKK into consideration; otherwise, he threatened, the PKK's methods would be kept up without any change, even intensified (HDN, April 7, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner).

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<sup>278</sup> The Human Rights Watch (HRW) condemned ERNK's threatening call against Turkey.

<sup>279</sup> It is not surprising that daily Demokrasi would be closed for one month by a decision of the Istanbul State Security Court, one month after the interview with Ocalan (HDN, May 4, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner).

In light of the official anti-PKK plan publicized in March, it was definite more than ever that Öcalan's expectation to be taken as an interlocutor would come to naught. Anyway, just one month later, in May, Öcalan would renew a call to Turkish authorities for dialogue on bringing the conflict in the southeast to an end (HDN, May 6, 1997: PKK chieftain calls for dialogue). It actually raised question whether Öcalan and the PKK was in a serious impasse.

### **5.5. Human Rights Issue: Consequences of anti-PKK measures**

From the general elections in December 1995 to the formation of the new government in June 1996, no democratic legal step was taken against the unceasing human rights violations throughout the country, but especially in the southeast.<sup>280</sup> During the six-month of chaotic period, the political agenda was busy with anything<sup>281</sup> but the continuing intense military operations in the southeastern provinces; displacement of rural population in the southeast; harsh measures against publications as well as private broadcasting organizations; the insurgencies and hunger strikes in E-type prisons (where mostly terror criminals were jailed)<sup>282</sup>, the prisoners who died in the operations conducted by security forces<sup>283</sup>; disappearances and deaths in detention; use of excessive force by the police

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<sup>280</sup> The International Amnesty's annual report publicized in June 1996 defined Turkey as one of the primary regions of human rights violations. The report stated that although Turkey had signed the U.N. Torture Convention, the government had taken no legal measures regarding torture claims even when they were supported by medical evidence (HDN, June 29, 1996: Amnesty International Replies to the Turkish Foreign Ministry).

<sup>281</sup> Search of a coalition partner and rows among the political leaders were accompanied by Kardak crisis and water issue with Syria at the top of the political agenda in this period.

<sup>282</sup> For example HDN reported at the end of May that events taking place at Diyarbakir prison were horrific. Like the events that took place at Erzurum prison, 20 prisoners burned themselves at Diyarbakir prison to protest against the attacks and the pressures to which they had been submitted (HDN, May 31, 1996: Six Prisoners Burn Themselves at Diyarbakir Prison). Although the number of prisoners taking part in the hunger strikes spreaded around Turkey, many prisoners were near death, the Minister of Justice Mehmet Ağar declared that there were no problems in prisons (HDN, June 10, 1996: Prison Strikers are Near Death).

<sup>283</sup> A Parliamentary Human Rights Commission report stated in December 1996 that death of 10 inmates during incidents at the Diyarbakir maximum security prison on September 24, were the result of heavy-handed treatment by security forces. IHD officials remarked that the year 1996 saw the worst violence towards prisoners since the military rule of the early 1980s (HDN, January 10, 1997: Turkey's Human Rights Record: The Year's Twilight Zone ).

forces against the crowds protesting state policies and miserable health conditions in the southeast and among the migrants in the big cities.

The Southeast Domestic Migration Discussions and Health Level Report, prepared by the Diyarbakir, Mardin, Batman and Şırnak Physicians' Chamber in May 1996 gave a very pessimistic viewpoint of the conditions in Turkey's southeastern provinces as opposed to the official figures and data. According to the report, many health clinics and hospitals, officially open and active on paper, were in fact closed. The level of infant mortality and the incidence of endemic illnesses were much higher than the government statistics indicated. Report warned about migration from the southeast, which was very rapid, without any plan or control.

"People are forced to leave their land, their villages, against their will in the hope of surviving in an unknown future. For most of the time, they have no chance and no possibility to return, since their gardens and houses are demolished once they leave. People who are considered beggars now were hopeful about tomorrow by producing in their own lands. But they are forced from production to consumption" (HDN, May 27, 1996: Damning health report from the southeast).

The U.S. Helsinki Commission, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) representative on Capitol Hill sent a letter to the Turkish government in which it pointed at "those residing in the Southeast who have suffered the horrors of terrorism and the excesses of a government committed to eradicating terrorism at any cost" (HDN, May 27, 1996: US Helsinki Commission Renews Effort for Kurdish Resolution). In a report issued in Istanbul during the Habitat II conference June 1996, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said anywhere between 312,000 to 2 million people had been evicted from their homes and villages, the vast majority since 1992 (HDN, June 12, 1996: Report said Turkey failed to assist forcibly displaced in war with PKK). The same organization also criticized the Turkish government for not allowing international aid organizations, to offer their services to displaced Kurds. HRW also produced reports on the use of arms against civilians in the southeast Turkey (HDN, June 14, 1996: Human Rights Watch/ Helsinki charges Turkey with forcible evictions) (HDN, January 10, 1997: Turkey's Human Rights Record: The Year's Twilight Zone).

A report was prepared in October by a group of CHP deputies (Algan Hacaloğlu, Ercan Karakas, Orhan Veli Yıldırım, and Mustafa Yılmaz) on the current situation in the Tunceli province. The deputies urged the government to lift immediately the "embargo on food sales" in the province, and to enable farmers to return to the villages evacuated for security



reasons. According to the report there were some 400 terrorists in the region and the authorities imposed an "embargo on food sales" to dry out the terrorists' sources of food supply. As a result, the poorest segments of the local population especially, faced with malnutrition (HDN, October 26, 1996: CHP report on Tunceli calls for an end to village evacuations and the food embargo).<sup>284</sup> However, later it would be clear that the government would not deliver any response to the calls about the circumstances in Tunceli; because it would be reported in March 1997 that authorities were still trying to starve the outlawed PKK militants out of the rural areas of Tunceli province by imposing a food embargo on the local people (HDN, March 17, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner).

The report sponsored by Sakıp Sabancı<sup>285</sup> on social, cultural, and economic conditions in the Southeast region gave weight to the need of economic development in order to provide security in the region. The prototype of the Sabancı report, reportedly, was more challenging arguing that it was not possible to end bloody clashes just via military policies and calling settlement of peace in the first phase, and economic measures in the second phase. It allegedly called for more freedom for the people of the region, in terms of allowing them to keep alive their own cultural and traditional values, and to print publications and radio broadcasts in Kurdish in the name of human rights and domestic peace. Sakıp Sabancı mentioned even of Bask model as an alternative for the solution of the conflict in the southeast; but he had to moderate his report due to the eventual legal process against him.<sup>286</sup> The revised version of his report that was publicized in November 1995 mainly focused on suggestions concerning economic precautions that should be taken by the government, and called on the business world to make serious investments in the Southeast region of Turkey to end the troubles (Akçura, 2008: 267-268).

European parliamentarians, some of whom approved customs union accord with "a heavy heart" complained in September 1996 that the credit they had given to Turkey had run out. The Parliament demanded that Turkey "explain clearly" its position on four areas: human

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<sup>284</sup> They also stressed that the inhabitants of Tunceli no longer had an opportunity to exercise their rights, that these people were caught between the terrorist organization and the security forces of the state. The deputies noted that since October 1994, 287 of the 417 villages in Tunceli have been evacuated totally by the security forces. They also noted that the inhabitants were not able to practise any economic activity due to destruction of their houses, animals, pastures, crops, and so on.

<sup>285</sup> Sakıp Sabancı (1933-2004), a prominent Turkish business leader.

<sup>286</sup> DGM started an investigation about him due to Sabancı's quotations from the original report in Diyarbakır; but later decided that there was no need for investigation (Akçura, 2008: 267).

rights, democratization, the Cyprus question, and the Kurdish problem. In the course of the debate on the resolution, speakers from left and right stressed that Ankara's promises -made under the premiership of Tansu Ciller- had not been carried out. The campaign by international human rights organizations, HRW and Amnesty International, against the maltreatment of civilians by the authorities particularly in the southeast Turkey led the European Parliament on 18 September to suspend financial aids to Turkey in defiance of the Custom Union protocol (HDN, January 10, 1997: Turkey's Human Rights Record: The Year's Twilight Zone).

US state department's human rights report on Turkey that was revealed in January 1997 noted that the PKK continued to commit political and extrajudicial killings, and to use of violence against civilians primarily in rural southeast Anatolia; however the report was highly reactive against the Turkish government. It pointed at the resurrection of concerns about corruption and abuse of power among the security forces following the Susurluk accident that occurred in November 1996.<sup>287</sup> The report also pointed at the huge numbers of people forcibly displaced in the southeast and inefficiency of state in providing their vital needs. About political and other extrajudicial killings, it underlined the increase in the number of reports of deaths attributable to government authorities due to excessive use of force. It criticized Turkish government for the continuing limits on freedom of expression; disappearances and torture in detention; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention.<sup>288</sup> It pointed that there was still no guarantee of immediate access to an attorney under the law for persons whose cases fell under the jurisdiction of the State Security Courts. It also criticized Turkish newspaper business for publishing news in often sensationalist way and remarked that Turkish media coverage of the situation on the southeast tended to be unreliable, under-reporting some instances (U.S. Department of State, January 1997).

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<sup>287</sup> It noted that some members of the security forces, particularly police "special teams," Gendarmerie troops, and Turkish National Police personnel committed serious human rights abuses. Police and security forces often abused detainees and employed torture during periods of incommunicado detention and interrogation and there was an increase in the number of reports of deaths attributable to government authorities due to excessive use of force (HDN, February 1, 1997: Main findings on US rights report on Turkey)

<sup>288</sup> The US report appreciates Turkish government's establishing a missing persons bureau, which operated 24 hours a day. It investigated disappearances reported by the HRA for 1995 and the first 5 months of 1996 and found that of 187 reported disappearances, 39 persons had since been found, 3 were fugitives from justice, 2 were killed by illegal groups, 82 who were allegedly in police custody had never been detained and were not being sought, 58 had been jailed for crimes, and 3 were active in terrorist groups (U.S. Department of State, January 1997).

## **5.6. Susurluk Accident: Accidental Release of Deep Relations and Illegal Activities within the Extensive Fight against the PKK**

The killings of mafia leaders who were alleged to finance the PKK also continued with assassination against Ömer Lütfü Topal at the end of July 1996. According to a confidential report prepared by the Security Department's Smuggling and Information Section, Topal, whose nickname was "Omer the Kurd," was one of the persons who were financing the PKK (HDN, July 31, 1996: Topal was Financing the PKK). Although it was reported as a murder by business rivals; it is well known that deep relations between state officials and the underground world against Kurdish nationalist figures would certainly hold on until the notorious accident in Susurluk just after a few months (November 1996). Murder of Tevfik Ağansoy, a former Ülkücü (extreme nationalist activist) and lastly a mafia leader who was alleged to have connections with state officials (and primarily Çiller) released out many connections between the Ülkücü mafia and state officials, particularly the MIT and security forces, special team members, army officers.<sup>289</sup> An article published in HDN alleged that Çiller increased her wealth through such connections based on elimination of Kurdish nationalist figures. It is claimed also, "it was after the mysterious chain of assassinations and elimination of Kurdish mafia of the old godfathers that the star of the Ülkücü mafia began to shine in Turkey's underworld" (HDN, September 6, 1996: Ağansoy murder, before and after: Mafia or Banana -or a Republic at all?). Human Rights Association İstanbul Branch chairman called attention that the summary executions in the emergency rule region of Southeast Turkey increased in August 1996 (HDN, September 21, 1996: Nine 'mysterious' murders in Diyarbakir cause outrage).

The road accident in Susurluk (Balıkesir) shocked all Turkey due to the four figures in the car that was hit by a lorry on November 3, 1996. It turned out to be "a micro image of the macro picture" of the deep relations within the triangle of prominent security officials,

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<sup>289</sup> The allegations about Ozal family's involvement in the Civangate scandal ring is one striking demonstration of this dimension. It was a scandal that had broken out in the mids of 1990s, upon allegations that Ozal family paid \$1 million to a mafia leader Cakici for to collect via the mafia the debt a private TV company owed Ahmet Ozal, the son of the late President Turgut Ozal, (HDN, September 6, 1996: Ağansoy murder, before and after: Mafia or Banana -or a Republic at all?).

politicians and mafia. One of the four was Abdullah Çatlı<sup>290</sup>, a leading member of an ultra-rightist organization in the 1970s and later a "mafia" leader, who had been at large for the past 18 years while the local police and Interpol sought him for his alleged role in the assassination in Turkey of daily Milliyet publisher Abdi İpekci as well as his role in the attempt to kill John Paul II in the Vatican. Travelling in the same car was Hüseyin Kocadağ, director of a police college and a former deputy security chief of Istanbul. Also in the car was the DYP Şanlıurfa Deputy Sedat Bucak, the chief of the Bucak clan.

The series of complicated allegations in the following period can be summed up as the connections between the major Turkish security organizations and underground world, in which names of some prominent politicians were involved, too. Here, the relevant issue is the allegations on such connections aimed at drying up PKK's financial resources. As it has been already stated in the previous chapters, the state officials –leading politicians and security authorities- were not contented with the speed and efficiency of the legal process against PKK's financial as well as political supporters. Especially from 1992 on –with the announcement of a full-scale fight against the PKK-, the heads of the security organizations organized gangs and secret intelligence organizations with connections to the right wing Turkish mafia in order to deal up the well-known Kurdish businessmen with underground connections through narcotics trade and who were supplying money to the PKK. Some other illegal movements like Hizbullah were also among the formations connected in order to deal up the PKK sympathisers in the southeast.

Hanefi Avcı, deputy chief of the Security Department's Intelligence Section then, told the parliamentary Susurluk commission that the National Security Organization (MIT) and the JİTEM (the alleged intelligence center of Turkish gendarmerie) had been involved in unlawful activities as well as part of the police force. He alleged that the gang had committed some of the mystery murders plaguing the country, and that Mehmet Ağar (the interior minister then) was the political connection of the gangs. He said that gangs got out of control after Mehmet Ağar became a minister. According to Avcı, this "formation" began from 1991 towards 1992 and 1993. He said that the first group to adopt the "illegal" method of struggle came from the ranks of the JİTEM; Mehmet Ağar led the "second formation", and the third one was reportedly at the MIT led by Mehmet Eymur. He concluded that all three groups set out with the aim of fighting the PKK. In turn, Eymur accused Avcı of having released "repentant" PKK militants from prison and used them as

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<sup>290</sup> It was alleged that Çatlı was actually protected by some security officials who had issued him a police identification card.

hit men in police operations. What is more, Ünal Erkan, a former governor of the emergency rule region, was also implicated in these multilateral accusations. It was reported that some former PKK militants who had cooperated with the state against the PKK after being caught by the security forces<sup>291</sup>, claimed that they had committed "mystery murders" in the southeast in full knowledge of Erkan, at that time governor of the region. It was also claimed that such hit men get paid from the slush fund (HDN, July 7, 24, 1997: From the Papers). It was noted by Turkish press that while grave accusations were directed against Mehmet Ađar, he did not mobilize the ministry inspectors for an investigation into such claims. He resigned on November 8 1996; but his parliamentary immunity (as well as Sedat Bucak's immunity) would be abolished only in December 1997. Ađar would avoid releasing any fundamental information to the parliamentary commission on every detail.<sup>292</sup> The commission, on the other hand, would not be able to proceed with its investigation due to the hindrances they met within the state. Zürcher's remarks about the crippled legal process in the following period are quite stinging noting that the man the central figure in Çiller's "dirty war", former police chief and interior minister Mehmet Ađar happily continued his political career.<sup>293</sup>

The way of the extension of mafia into parliament was also one of the points manifested following the accident. Sedat Bucak, the head of Bucak clan and DYP's Şanlıurfa deputy, maintained a pro-state stance, but exploited his position through connections with mafia. Although he recruited as a guard Abdullah Çatlı (who was wanted by the police), Sedat Bucak was not intervened by state officials, and the same state officials did not touch Çatlı, because Bucak clan was pro-state, embodied many village guards in order to fight against the PKK (HDN, November 7, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Mahmut Alınak mentioned of the "death squads" (the PKK militants who, after being caught, agreed to inform on fellow militants and have allegedly been used by JİTEM as hitmen in the Southeast) in his book and he gives quite shocking details based on the "confessions" of such a former hitman, about security officials' treatment to these "death squads" who were kept in prison under "special circumstances" as well as the role of the prison administration in this mechanism. In his account, Alınak demonstrates how the "death squads" were released when they were needed in an operation against the PKK, or in any public demonstration to stir up trouble among people (Alınak, 1996: 48-53).

<sup>292</sup> Although legal process would follow until 2000s, he managed to be elected as an independent parliamentary in the general elections in April 1999.

<sup>293</sup> It is a must to note here that Ađar is among the names referred within the current legal case called as "Ergenekon"; but it is not clear whether the new case could reach any-level convictions at the end.

<sup>294</sup> The mafia-parliament link did also demonstrated how the clan leaders who had adopted pro-state position against the PKK, had gained rights and authority in the region ruling out state authority. In

It is worth to note here that Radikal columnist İsmet Berkan's findings about a secret task which was issued at a NCS meeting of at the end of 1992 in order to deal up the moral and financial supporters of the PKK, comply with the allegations about the clandestine nature of the counterinsurgency against the PKK, especially during Çiller's administration. Berkan, who also alleged that he saw the document, disclosed that the task envisaged foundation of a secret (or special) organization<sup>295</sup> that would include a mafia leader, a parliamentarian and a security official as well as some members from the Special Forces (HDN, December 6, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).<sup>296</sup>

All the allegations call to mind Çiller's declaring, few months after she came to office in 1993, that "she had a list of 60 Kurdish businessmen and the state would certainly deal with them in any way." Several mysterious murders followed her statement; Behcet Cantürk, Savaş Buldan, Yusuf Ekinçi and, in the latest instance, Ömer Lütfü Topal were a few of the victims. All these names were involved in drug trafficking in this or that manner.

The allegations against Foreign Affairs Minister Çiller would not calm down for a long time, at least until the end of her coalition with Erbakan who, on the other hand, was facing a legal process against his party, and fierce criticism on the grounds that his RP had become the focus of fundamental religious activities. The Susurluk incident broke out while the coalition government was in conflict and contributed greatly to its splitting up. In addition to the allegations of having a finger in such illegal relations and mysterious murders, Çiller was criticized also for seeking the support of and promising help to the "the most influential Kurdish tribal chiefs" some of whom were allegedly outlaws responsible for killing soldiers and police officers. Çiller allegedly had a meeting with the tribal chiefs and she was accompanied by President Süleyman Demirel, the then speaker of parliament, Hüsamettin Cindoruk, the then General Commander of the Gendarmerie, Aydın İltar, the Interior Minister of the time, Nahit Mentеше, and the then General Chief of Police, Mehmet Ađar. According to press reports, she then promised that all their needs, from heavy machine guns to rocket launchers would be supplied, and the wages of village guards

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other words, state authorities exploited the social order in the region in order to maintain "state policy" in the region.

<sup>295</sup> There were even some calling the secret formation as a "gladyo".

<sup>296</sup> Berkan also called attention that Turgut Ozal (the president in that period) and Eşref Bitlis (a top commander that time) both of whom died successively, opposed this task.

would be increased provided they maintained their collaboration with the Turkish state against the PKK<sup>297</sup> (HDN, December 12, 1996: Çiller accused of supplying tribal chief, the murderer of seven soldiers, with weapons).

Lastly, the pre-Susurluk allegations against Çiller about her using slush fund (discretionary fund) for paying a gang leader to have Abdullah Öcalan assassinated were also reiterated during the Susurluk process. The gang leader Çiller allegedly “hired” was Abdullah Çatlı, according to press reports. It was also claimed that Mehmet Ağar (director-general of security at that time) knew about the assassination operation; however, it failed at the last minute, allegedly with the chief of staff's office and the MIT's intervention.

Most of the RP deputies began to voice their displeasure of the ongoing coalition with Çiller. But Erbakan who preferred being silent about the allegations about the state institutions as well as his partner Çiller; was criticized for trying to share the power without fighting with the system. Çiller, who seemed much concerned about the stability of Turkish government then; in one of her statements about allegations said that “whoever was shot for this country is dignified as much as the one who shoots”, praising Çatlı who was actually an international fugitive found died in the Susurluk car (Gunter, 2008: 38). President Demirel who was generally concerned about protecting the state from falling into disrepute alleged that “he had no knowledge that some mobsters were used by state officials against so-called enemies of the state” (HDN, December 13, 1996, The president did not know...). Saying once “Go as far as you go... But do not judge all Turkey”, Demirel warned that the accident should be examined in its limits and expressed his wish to cover up the case (Gunter, 2008: 38). The opposition, who were already entertaining with the “fundamental religious activities of RP”, now were stunned by the plenty of allegations about Çiller's links to gangs and the methods chosen to deal the PKK extensively. Veteran journalist and columnist Mehmet Ali Birand, who remarked that Ankara had failed to follow many critical issues including the PKK's politicization activities in Europe and US in this period<sup>298</sup>, resented as following:

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<sup>297</sup> Joost Jongerden notes that following Susurluk revelations about the war in the southeast, activities surrounding the village guards forces were less than wholesome. It is probably because, “they were indirectly financed from state-administered drug trafficking is to be coupled with some of their own nefarious activities” according to Jongerden. It was reported that thousands of village guards had been sacked for a variety of major crimes by 1997 (Jongerden, 2007: 65).

<sup>298</sup>The Kurdish political activists in Europe continued their campaign under the umbrella of the “Parliament in Exile”. However, due to the political turmoil in Ankara that was paralyzed because of the serious allegations against the leaders and a total disagreement within the government; Ankara

“Keeping up the war in the Southeast serves the interests of so many. The war has to continue if one is to grab part of the billions of dollars of at stake. If the problem was limited to the Bucak clan a solution could have been found. But there are hundreds of clans, groups and individuals being used in the same manner. What will happen to them? The conclusion is, obviously, ‘let the war continue.’ By maintaining an exclusively armed struggle Turkey fails to obtain the necessary, the desired results against the PKK. We are hitting ourselves” (HDN, November 19, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

HDN published in February 1997, some excerpts from the reports of the Geopolitical Narcotics Monitor in France and stated that such reports had been influential on Holland's suspending the activities of the Turkish banks' branches there. According to the reports in question, 70-80 percent of the drugs on the European market was coming through Turkey; some top figures in the security forces and government authorities were involved in the drug-smuggling business; criminals wanted by Interpol were protected and provided with diplomatic passports and documents in Turkey; the information supplied by Turkish security units about the international drugs trade was not reliable; and drug trafficking information supplied by Western security forces to their Turkish counterparts was leaked to the smugglers and results in the failure of anti-drug operations. It was stated that the opinion of some observers in Europe that the ongoing war in Turkey against the PKK was partially financed by the money earned through the drugs trade, was gaining more advocates (HDN, February 4, 1997: Turkey-Europe relations overdose on heroin: Is the "fairy" Tansu the Godmother?)

### **5.7. Erbakan's Administration Foreign Policy: Clash of Preferences within the State**

The period witnessed the military's increased activism not only in domestic strategic issues, but also in foreign policy. Erbakan sought to promote Turkey's Muslim identity and advance its relations with its Arab neighbors, Iran and other Muslim States in a period when the military was taking the key security policy decisions in order to deepen its ties to the West and Israel. Military's refraining poise in the backstage fell through Erbakan's overtures to the Muslim world.

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failed to maintain a strong diplomatic campaign in Europe against the pro-PKK activities. For instance the Parliament in Exile met in Oslo in November, despite Ankara's all warnings and pressure on the Norwegian government. Secondly, in 15 German cities, meetings were held and decisions were taken to support the PKK in a more active manner. Besides, In Washington the Kurdish Institute was inaugurated with a ceremony attended by high-ranking officials of the U.S. Congress and the state department. (HDN, November 19, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).



In the mid-1990s, Turkey's foreign politics reflected a strong commitment to NATO and interest in EU membership, a burgeoning alliance with Israel, and sour relations with neighboring states that allowed separatist PKK forces to operate on their territory. But in his election campaign, Erbakan called for a Muslim solidarity and promised to sever relations with Israel. Instead, he sought to promote relations with the Muslim states and visited Muslim states like Iran, Libya, Malaysia, and Nigeria where he set forth establishment of a Development-Eight (D8) group of Islamic countries in imitations of the G8.

“Despite Erbakan's flirtation with a pro-Islam foreign policy, the authorization process remained clearly defined. The military retained a solid say over definitions of who and what constituted a threat to or an ally of the Turkish state. This in turn ensured that its security goals and military activities would remain consistent in their pro-west orientation” (Brooks, 2008: 219).

#### **5.7.1. The PKK Issue with the Muslim States**

**Iraq, the OPC, and Cross-border Operations:** The absence of authority in the northern Iraq, the recurrent armed conflict between KDP and PUK, and Iranian and Syrian interferences to the region made the extension of the OPC inevitable for Turkey for its own concerns around its border, and it was extended for five months on July 30. Renewal of the OPC was interpreted as a sharp “U-turn” of Erbakan and besides, it would complicate his and his party's domestic identity and anti-western international discourses. Actually Erbakan claimed that they seized major concessions from the United States" in the course of a recent bargaining process as a result of which he had agreed to have the Operation Provide Comfort force's mandate renewed (HDN, August 20, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). However, the press reports claimed the opposite. The US administration offered just a set of compensatory measures, including reduced patrols, an end to the low-altitude flights and an increased Turkish contingent in the northern Iraq communications center. However, the UN resolution about permission to Iraq for trade was still pending (HDN, July 27, 1996: Islamists Pay Price of OPC Renewal).<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Besides, a new demarche was made by Turkey at the United Nations to secure permission to trade with Iraq in early August. However in september, Foreign Affairs Minister Çiller would admit that the US had not really made concession in favor of Turkey by pointing that Turkey would lose from the non-implementation of United Nations Resolution 986 (which permits Iraq to sell \$2 billion in oil to buy medicine and food). But Çiller remarked that there were positive developments in accordance with Turkish priorities in the concept of OPC. For instance, non-governmental organizations moved out and the military coordination center of the OPC moved to Silopi, a district of Turkey on the border. (HDN, September 5, 1996: Ciller:Iraqi Kurds seek Turkish help against PKK ). The UN passed the pending resolution finally in December 1996 and provided Iraq with the

Secondly, Erbakan tried to ease the concerns about the extension of OPC and PKK activities in northern Iraq by disclosing that they would crush the PKK with the help of Barzani and Sheikh Osman who was the leader of the "Islamic Movement" in northern Iraq and from time to time attended the meetings of Erbakan's RP. As *Hürriyet* columnist Ertuğrul Özkök remarked, Erbakan aimed to mobilize an "Islamic umbrella" to solve the northern Iraq problem (HDN, August 1, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). However, the reports coming from the northern Iraq in August cast serious doubts over Erbakan's claims about the "remedies" he offered. On 19 August 1996, Barzani, on whom the Turkish government relied against the PKK, let PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's brother Osman Öcalan attend the ceremony in northern Iraq marking the 50th anniversary of his KDP. Right after that, regional balances were disrupted again in favor of the PKK when KDP leader Barzani invited Saddam Husain to northern Iraq to help against Talabani, and a fierce fighting broke out in northern Iraq on August 20, 1996. At the beginning of September, the Iraqi army that allied with Barzani's forces attacked Erbil, which had been under the control of Talabani, and the Iranian army has crossed into northern Iraq, too.<sup>300</sup> Duran indicates that Saddam's incursion via Barzani's invitation to the protected Kurdish enclave in the north eroded the rationale behind the creation of a safe haven in northern Iraq by support of an USA military presence in Turkey and northern Iraq to protect Kurds from Saddam. Under the light of these developments, the OPC abandoned its land forces but it continued to patrol the air exclusion zone north of the 36th parallel to deter Iraqi attacks through its air force based on Incirlik and its support elements in southeast Turkey with no NATO mission (Duran, 1998). Non-governmental organizations moved out and the military coordination center of the OPC moved to Silopi, a district of Turkey on the border. (HDN, September 5, 1996: Ciller: Iraqi Kurds seek Turkish help against PKK ).

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right of selling its petrol for six months through the Ceyhan-Yumurtalık pipeline (BYEGM, December 10, 1996). According to Duran, thee issues of the presence of Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) provide the best examples which demonstrate the RP's pragmatic and gradualist approach in government (Duran, 1998).

<sup>300</sup> Barkey's assumption that Turkey's moving away from a refusal to cooperate with the Kurds of Iraq to exclusive reliance on the Barzani's KDP (especially after Özal's death) might initiate a new conflict of proxies in the region seems to have come true. Although the Iranian operation in northern Iraq is weakening Barzani, whose stance was nearer to Turkey than that of Talabani, while bringing with it the risk of strengthening Talabani, who had been proven to have assisted the PKK; Turkey failed to react to the Iranian operation in an equally strong manner probably because now the RP was in power (HDN, August 1, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

Around the same days, Minister of Justice Şevket Kazan and Minister of Education Mehmet Sağlam met Saddam Husain; but the mystery behind the meeting would be disclosed later, with Çiller's explanations to a prominent American newspaper. Çiller claimed that it was the Turkish government that had "invited" Saddam Hussein into northern Iraq. Ciller told that Erbakan-led Turkish government sent a delegation to Baghdad tempting Saddam Husain into northern Iraq to establish his authority in the region and get rid of the PKK that infiltrated the border and killed about three Turkish soldiers each day (HDN, September 23, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). But Talabani's seeking help from the US against Iraqi and KDP forces; interference of Iranian forces; the Kurdish refugees who escaped from Iraqi forces and massed at Iranian border made it seem quite questionable whether things worked out as Turkey had calculated. In addition to all, both Syria and Iran did not seem to have taken any steps against the PKK.

"The clashes between Kurdish groups backed by Iran and Iraq have apparently left Mr. Erbakan's grand dream of an 'Islamic NATO' in shambles. His reaction to the first regional crisis of his tenure has been to disappear from public view. To the astonishment of Turks and the disappointment of many supporters, Mr. Erbakan, who as an opposition leader denounced the 1991 war against Iraq as Zionist aggression, has had nothing to say about the American missile attacks on Iraq this month. Nor has he made any effort to mediate between Iran and Iraq or to influence warring factions of the Kurds, who are also Muslims" (Kinzer, 1996).

Finally the US administration urged Ankara to put pressure on Baghdad to withdraw from Erbil. But the Turkish government was in dilemma between supporting Talabani (and hence, indirectly the PKK) and supporting the KDP (hence, troubling the U.S. administration) (HDN, September 2, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). Few days later KDP asked for the help of the Turkish government against the PKK, and Foreign Minister Tansu Çiller warned that Ankara would take the necessary measures to prevent terrorist actions of the PKK which, she said, was amassing forces on the Iraqi side of the Turkish border (HDN, September 5, 1996: Ciller:Iraqi Kurds seek Turkish help against PKK).

Amid reports that Ankara was seriously considering to create a "security belt" up to 10 kilometers deep in places, on the Iraqi side of the border to prevent PKK infiltrations into Turkey; Turkey massed its troops on Iraqi border. Nevertheless, they would not conduct a cross-border operation until the beginning of the new year, January 1997. The USA gave priority to reconciliation between the northern Iraqi rivals (Barzani and Talabani) and in October 1996, talks that were co-brokered by the US, Turkey and Britain would begin, generally focusing on consolidating the shaky truce between Barzani and Talabani.

Reaching no fundamental result at the peace talks between the Kurdish rivals also were probably, influential on Turkey's proceeding with new operations into northern Iraq; and not surprisingly, a new armed conflict broke out between the Kurdish Iraqi rivals in 1997. In the new term following Iraqi government's last interference in 1996, however, Talabani sounded less threatening. He assured when he was in Ankara in October that his group would not allow the PKK to launch attacks on Turkey and said that they would extradite any PKK members taking part in such attacks (HDN, October 28, 1996: Ankara set for central role in Iraqi Kurd peace process). Nevertheless, Ankara's concerns about PKK's connections to northern Iraq were still not relieved due to ongoing authority vacuum in the region <sup>301</sup>, as well as reaching no reconciliation between the Kurdish rivals. The Artush "refugee" camp in northern Iraq was also another concern of Turkey about PKK's connections. Turkish authorities believed that many of the camps inhabitants -Turkish Kurds who fled Turkish army's heavy-handed pacification campaign in the southeast- were being held at the camp against their will and that the camp itself was actually run by the PKK that was still using the region to conduct attacks against Turkey (HDN, October 28, 1996: Ankara set for central role in Iraqi Kurd peace process).<sup>302</sup> Besides, Ankara involved also the security of the Turkoman into its concerns about the region and it demanded allied protection for them. On the grounds of such concerns, Turkish Armed Forces established a major operation in January 1997.

It became clear that Erbakan's efforts to improve ties with Iraqi regime had already collapsed due to military's disregard of his initiatives and proceeding with the second major

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<sup>301</sup> The creation of a security belt in Iraq was proposed by DSP leader Ecevit, who was also against the US-led OPC. In spite of the disorder in the northern Iraq, Iraqi government did oppose harshly against Turkey's proposal of security belt in the region. Iraq foreign ministry warned that such a security belt would end in "bloodshed" and stated that it had been already conveyed to Turkish government. PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan threatened against security belt and claimed the 6-mile deep "security belt" proposed by Turkey inside the Iraqi border "not only threatens the Kurdistan people, but the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq as well." (HDN, October 8, 1996: PKK's Apo: Refah wants 'political solution'). The European Parliament denounced "in the strongest terms possible" what they called Turkey's intention to create a security zone in northern Iraq and called this a grave violation of international law and called on the Council to seek to persuade Turkey to abandon this plan. (HDN, September 27, 1996: Human Rights Cloud Turkey's Relations with Europe). Several Arab countries also expressed strong opposition to Turkey's plan for the security belt inside Iraq, saying it would be a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. But, Erbakan, on the contrary to Çiller's zealous advocacy of such a security belt, neither sought to block the plan nor to defend it to the Arab leaders he described until recently as his closest brothers (Kinzer, 1996).

<sup>302</sup> According to Ocalan's confessions after being captured in 1999, contrary to claims by Turkish officials, the United Nations Atrush refugee camp in northern Iraq was not a base of the PKK but most of the residents of the camp supported the PKK (HDN, June 2, 1999: Ocalan confesses, lists collaborators).

cross-border offensive into northern Iraq. It was a massive military drive into northern Iraq; nevertheless, Turkish government indicated that the operation that was “limited in scope” was started in order to support Barzani-led KDP that had launched its own operation against the PKK just hours before the Turkish incursion (HDN, May 15, 1997: Turkey launches massive military drive into northern Iraq against PKK camps). The military, which was in charge of strategic decisions making, initiated this second offensive hours after Erbakan had a meeting with the visiting Iraqi trade minister, without informing Erbakan ahead of time (Cook, 2008: 271). Moreover, Erbakan told journalists in June 1997 that the cross-border offensive had come to an end, but then the military contradicted him telling that it was not planning to draw back for that time (Brooks, 2008: 220).<sup>303</sup>

**Syria:** Before the RP-DYP coalition came into existence, Turkish Armed Forces had already reached an agreement with Israel over some common training tasks in a period when relations with Syria were quite tense due to the PKK and water issues. However, it was also beginning of a period led by RP whose Islamist ideology was favoring Syria while dissenting Israel. Turkish mainstream sections (most of the political parties, military, and bureaucracy) rejected the claims that Syria was receiving water from Euphrates and Tigris less than it needed, and they responded harshly to Damascus’s lobbying the Arab League against Turkey for its military agreements with Israel. General opinion in Ankara was Damascus’s intention was to cover its cooperation with the PKK; but Damascus rejected that PKK had a camp in Syrian territory and rejected having relation with the camp in Bekaa that was in Lebanon. However, RP leader Erbakan who met Syrian Ambassador Al Rifai in May 1996 (before coming to power) rejected that Syria was supporting the PKK, even though he knew that on January 23, 1996 the Turkish government gave Syria a note with documented proof showing that the PKK leader Öcalan and his collaborators were living in Syria and the Syrian-controlled part of Lebanon (BYEGM, May 6 and June 20, 1996) (HDN, August 16, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). After coming to power, the coalition started to crack from especially the end of July, due to the importance Erbakan

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<sup>303</sup> On the other hand, this operation was started in a period when the coalition was under pressure to quit; it is why the military could not provide a strong political basis in order to chase or confront the militants fleeing into Iran. Turkish military massed its forces in areas bordering Iraq and Iran where many PKK militants were trying to flee to escape from Turkish operations, but it raised tension with Baghdad as well as Tehran which warned Ankara against entering Iranian territory. Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry, on the other hand, tried through diplomatic channels to convince Iran against welcoming the fleeing militants. Prime Minister Erbakan however, failed to take any action in spite of the intelligence file which required Iran’s cooperation to be able to crush the PKK militants in northern Iraq (HDN, May 29, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner).

attached to relations with the Islamic world, and his using “private channels” in his message mechanism.<sup>304</sup> (HDN, August 7, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan sounded out Syria and Iran via "private channels" to see whether they were willing to drop the "PKK card". However, with journalist Cengiz Çandar's words:

“He (Öcalan) is being protected as strictly as the Syrian leaders themselves by the Syrian regime since he is an "important political card for the region”. So there is no way Hafez Assad, the most adept poker player in the Middle East, can drop the Apo card just because of his sympathy for Erbakan without getting any substantial gain” (HDN, August 7, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

In August 1996, Prime Minister Erbakan received a secret nighttime visit from the Syrian Ambassador again at his house in the Balgat district of Ankara. Reportedly, the ambassador relayed Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's reply to the Turkish demand to have the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan deported, preferably extradited to Turkey (HDN, August 10 1996: Message from Damascus). Nevertheless, it can be understood that Erbakan had failed in his secret bargain with Syria.

**Iran:** The opposite political orientations of coalition partners became quite evident, especially from the end of July due to the bad timing of his visit to Iran, which would upset Washington too (United States was planning to take military and economic measures against Iran). During his Asian trip (Iran, Malaysia, and Pakistan) Erbakan drew a lot of fierce criticism from the United States, especially for his declaration in Iran that Iran and Syria were not terrorist countries. It was very conspicuous that there was no harmony between PM Erbakan and Foreign Minister Tansu Çiller particularly in terms of approaches to the neighboring states. While Erbakan was using his Islamist image during his Iran and Asian trip (Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia) and voiced his anti-western sentiments on every occasion; Çiller maintained her pro-American stance and was in accordance with the Turkish intelligence organizations' reports demonstrating Iranian and Syrian help to the PKK. Despite signing of a new natural gas deal with Iranian government, Erbakan's visit to Iran turned into a scandal due to Erbakan's demonstrating his doubts about the information on Iran-PKK connection provided by Turkish intelligence organization, while trusting the Iranian side's sincerity. The Iranian administration reiterated that it would not

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<sup>304</sup> A veteran journalist Fikret Bila wrote that the Kurdish problem was created by external forces according to Prime Minister Erbakan, and the previous Turkish governments were to be blamed for the Iranian and Syrian support for terrorism. Erbakan admitted that terrorists were coming to Turkey's Southeastern region from neighboring countries, but based their help to the PKK on Turkish governments insincerity (HDN, August 23, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

extend support to the PKK and it even agreed to stage joint operations against the PKK. Although Erbakan was totally pleased about Iranian pledges, they were not actually different than the futile gestures it had offered before, and as journalist Sedat Ergin stated “When Turkish officials raise certain issues in the future, the Iranians will probably try to hide behind Erbakan's words which have justified their stance” (HDN, August 14, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). However, Erbakan would yield to MIT’s reports, once again: At the National Security Council meeting held on August 27, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan listened to a tape provided by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) of a conversation between a high-level Iranian official and Murat Karayilan, one of the PKK leaders. The Iranian official told Karayilan not to continue terrorist activities during Erbakan's visit to Tehran (HDN, September 6, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). Furthermore, Parliamentary Research Committee on Border Security reported at the beginning of November that PKK camps were spotted in Iran (and in the Greek Cypriot, Greece, and Armenia) and urged the government to exert international pressure over these states to close down the camps. The committee, which included RP deputies also, accused Iranian authorities of acting in a hypocritical manner by concluding with Turkey an accord to cooperate against terrorism, and at the same time not oppressing the PKK (HDN, November 3, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

In May 1997, The Turkish Foreign Ministry asked Iran two times to stop welcoming the militants fleeing from the Turkish operation, but Tehran denied that the PKK militants were taking refuge in Iran. When the diplomatic efforts by Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry failed to bring results, Prime Minister Erbakan was expected to intervene personally (HDN, May 29, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner). Although the intelligence report that stipulated the need for Iran’s help to stop the militants was presented to Erbakan, he failed to take any action on this file for a whole week (possibly not to offend Tehran while the government was already near the end).

**Erbakan’s Libya Visit:** Erbakan who had annoyed his coalition partner Çiller, the opposition parties as well as the military with his decision to visit Libya, said that he did not believe that Libya was supporting the PKK (HDN, October 7, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).<sup>305</sup> However, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi stunned and embarrassed

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<sup>305</sup> It is interesting that just those days, the confessions of a former PKK member were published, including his claims about PKK-Libya connections. According to the confessor, Libya had established an organization, Rizgariye Azadiye Kurdistan, among the Kurds in Lebanon. This organization was carrying out joint activities against Turkey with the PKK, he claimed. The PKK

Erbakan awfully with his speech in the presence of Turkish guests during this visit. He said that Turkey was then confronting the Kurds as it once confronted Arabs seeking independence. He claimed that the "Kurdistan nation should take its place as an independent state under the Middle Eastern sun" and that "nothing would remain of Turkish history if one removed Islamic history." He also said that under the republic, Turkey had lost its willpower, almost becoming a colony. He criticized Turkey for the ties it has formed with the Western world in general, and with Israel in particular (HDN, October 11, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner). Erbakan was harshly criticized in Ankara and by nearly all media for putting Turkish Republic into such a humiliating position; however, Erbakan defended Gaddafi's speech saying it was "philosophical" and that it "had nothing to do with national honor" (Güney, 2002:169) (HDN, October 11, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).

### **5.7.2. Relations with the Western World**

A New York Times article titled "New Turkish Chief's Muslim Tour Stirs US Worry", quoted a former American Ambassador to Turkey Morton Abramowitz asking "How do you deal with a NATO ally led by a man who is fundamentally anti-NATO, fundamentally anti-Semitic and fundamentally pro-Islamist, even when he's largely behaving himself?" (Enlarger, 1996).

But, the military set the agenda of Turkish diplomatic relations with other states by vetoing Erbakan's diplomatic initiatives with Iran and Iraq, and highlighting the need of strategic decisions in foreign policy, such as purchasing of helicopters and such ammunition from the USA<sup>306</sup>, agreements with Israel for joint training and upgrading Turkish military aircrafts. Actually, the security concerns due to continuing Kurdish conflict in the southeast continued to be one of the determinative factors in bilateral relations with the regional countries as well as with the West. While Erbakan's initiatives to approach the regional Muslim countries and receive their cooperation against the PKK collapsed, the military's

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had direct connections with the Netherlands, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria and Cuba, adding that sabotage attacks were developed in Iran. (HDN, October 8, 1996: Confessions of a former PKK member).

<sup>306</sup>It was to the interest of Erbakan to be on good terms with the USA and western world, because their military provision was important for the Turkish military with whom also being on good terms was vital for Erbakan. In the mid-1990s, only 21 percent of the main weapons, equipment and spare parts needs of the Turkish Armed Forces could be met by domestic production, with the remaining 79 percent supplied from abroad (HDN, August 23, 1996: A Look at Defense Industry's Self-Sufficiency Project for Next Century).



strategic preferences in direction of its armed campaign against the PKK prevailed. Erbakan, who tried to stall the agreements on military needs with Israel, had to sign them, and the military exercises with Israel, which Erbakan tried to postpone also proceeded as planned (Brooks, 2008: 219-220). As Duran indicates, having conceded “national sovereignty” to “national interest”, Erbakan tried to justify his failure to live up to his promises made in opposition saying “at this stage we can not hurt the US, our defense is dependent on them, our national interest requires not to fight with them” (Duran, 1998). According to The Guardian columnist Woollacott Turkish-Israeli defense co-operation arrangements that were encouraged by the United States were actually designed to frighten Syria by putting pressure on Hafez Assad to moderate his support for the PKK. Thus, the RP had to decide between its anti-Israeli line and its harsh approach to the PKK (HDN, July 29, 1996: Refah, Kurds, Çiller and weighlifters). However, State Minister then, Abdullah Gül, bitterly acknowledged that they had to sign due to the pressure exerted by the United States. Gül defended his government telling that they wanted to buy from the United States the needed equipment for the modernization of Turkey's military planes, but that the United States put pressure on Turkey to purchase the equipment from Israel instead (HDN, October 7, 1996: Turkish Press Scanner).<sup>307</sup> The human rights reports by several lobbies as well as US state department indicating incidents of misuse of U.S. military aircraft and helicopters in attacks against Kurdish villages probably were influential over the US administration's delaying the delivery of the helicopters. For example, Prime Minister Erbakan while meeting U.S. Undersecretary of State complained about the failure of the USA to deliver new Cobra helicopters to Turkey, although half of the money for the helicopters had been paid. It was reported by some American sources that the anti-Turkish lobby which was sympathetic to the Kurds had been blocking the delivery of the helicopters in Congress (HDN, July 5, 1996: Kurdish Problem Haunts Erbakan). It is obvious that US's military supply was important for the Turkish military, and Erbakan tried to gain some points from Turkish Armed Forces by pursuing the sale and delivery of the helicopters which were vital for anti-PKK offensives in that period. But Washington faced moral and practical dilemma due to reports about misuses in the sotheastern region; nevertheless Turkey was too valuable a strategic ally to pursue a policy that Ankara will interpret as being hostile (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 163).

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<sup>307</sup> During the course of February 28, the military high command had further talks with Israeli security officials to discuss joint naval exercises with the U.S. military.

Erbakan, who was an outspoken opponent of OPC while he was in the opposition, had to surrender to the reality and act with flexibility required by the conditions. What is more, he kept silent about American missile attacks on Iraq in September 1996, although he had denounced the 1991 war against Iraq as Zionist aggression. He disappointed his supporters also by failing to “truly eliminate” the OPC which was renamed as “Northern Watch”<sup>308</sup> following some modifications; failing to activate a long-time pending United Nations resolution about trade with Iraq (that would not pass until December 1996) and failing to mobilize neighboring powers to collaborate against the PKK forces in their territories and in the Iraqi Kurdish region. Moreover, the Turkish chief of Staff ‘s visit to Israel in February 1997, and making remarks that supported the characterization of Iran as a backer of terrorism, shattered Erbakan’s plans to get closer and cooperate with the regional states. The government seemed weak, and as if it has shifted responsibility of policy making to the military, especially from February 1997 onwards. The Chief of Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, for example, undertook a broad diplomatic campaign in the region and visited Cairo, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Russia where he discussed some issues including support to the PKK (Brooks, 2008: 221). The political shifts of Erbakan, in terms of internal and foreign affairs, projected an image of "insincerity", according to columnist Yasemin Çongar:

“RP officials did not seem to have any claim to be "representing the state", and it was as if takiyye (deception attempted for religious purposes) seemed to have become a way of life for RP” (HDN, February 25, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner).

In sum, Erbakan failed to grab the strategic decision making from the monopoly of the military, due to the military’s dominance over security issues. Besides, he failed to receive concrete steps from the regional states (especially Iran and Syria), probably because they anticipated RP’s “transience”. Turkey’s foreign policy maintained its secular and pro-western nature. Turkey also maintained its diplomatic agenda in relations with European Union which Erbakan opposed on cultural grounds. However, although the pro-western Turkish military advocated the negotiations with the EU, it also maintained its repressive approach toward the Kurds in violation of the Copenhagen Criteria on democracy, freedom, and protection of minorities. The contradiction between the “official pro-western policy” and the “acts in respect to Kurdish issue” again was the outcome of the prevailing security

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<sup>308</sup> In fact, most of the forces and aircrafts within OPC had been drawn into Turkish territory (İncirlik) and the overflight rules for OPC had been restricted in July 1996. The multinational power was renamed as Northern Watch. Northern Watch was more in line with the Turkish military’s preferences and hence, Erbakan alleged that he had succeeded to eliminate the OPC (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 160).

concerns of the military, which had the leverage over strategic decisions in Turkish politics (Brooks, 2008: 222-223).

### **5.8. A Post-Modern Coup: End Point to Unconventional Policies**

The military rarely kept silent during Erbakan's reign, and often released statements warning especially against the government's "unconventional" domestic and foreign policy. Erbakan's private message mechanism with either neighbor states or the PKK within the Kurdish peace offensive, and extremist religious acts and statements by RP itself and its mayors in the Anatolian districts had kept the military high command always on alert. Chief of General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı warned in October 1996:

"These are serious threats for our country. All constitutional and civil organizations must be prepared for such threats. Also, it is the duty of the Armed Forces to monitor such dangerous activities with adherence to Atatürk's principles" (HDN, October 2, 1996: Chief of general staff criticized government's policies).

A few days later in Ankara, a group which included people holding Welfare Party flags rallied in favor of the Shariah under the auspices of a protest against Israel (HDN, October 8, 1996: Shariah rally under scrutiny). Prime Minister Erbakan received religious leaders at his official residence, and it was perceived by the military as an assurance of his support for them (Güney and Karatekelioğlu, 2005). The final straw was the "Jerusalem Night" (an anti-Israel rally) organized in Ankara's Sincan district by Sincan's Islamist mayor on February 3, 1997. Iranian ambassador Muhammad Reza Bagheri had created a scandal by making a call for Shariah and condemning states that had friendly relations with Israel and the United States at the Jerusalem Night. The incident led to the imprisonment of the Sincan mayor and a show of force by the military rolling tanks through Sincan to show its displeasure with the event. Iranian ambassador quietly left Ankara without formally informing the Turkish Foreign Ministry of his departure. Erbakan got down on self-defense saying that he had very good relations with the high-ranking commanders in the army but that a group of lower-ranking officers had been causing tension. While Erbakan and his RP were exposed to flaks from media, opposition parties, business world and particularly RP's partner DYP. The military's reaction was harsher: Deputy Chief of General Staff Çevik Bir implied during his visit to Washington that the army had "adjusted democracy's balance when it sent tanks onto the streets of Sincan". He also reiterated that the Turkish army was the guarantee of Kemalism, secularism and democracy; and promised that the military would preserve Atatürk's heritage (HDN, February 24, 1997: Turkish Press Scanner). In

addition, the army announced that it had formed a “Task-Force West” (Batı Çalışma Grubu) to collect evidence about fundamentalists threats to the state (Zürcher, 2005: 300) (Heper and Güney, 2004: 189). According to Ümit Cizre, the creation of “Task Force Task” was a typical example of the TSK’s fusing of civilian and military functions. The “Task-Force West” that was founded to collect informations about the political orientations of institutions and public figures was later replaced by “Prime Ministerial Monitoring Council (Başbakanlık Takip Kurulu) (Cizre, 2003).

What was expected came true, and at the meeting of the National Security Council on 28 February 1997, a report was presented to Prime Minister Erbakan on anti-secular activities, pointing out radical Islamist organizations, fundamentalist movements, tarikat (Muslim sects) and tarikat-controlled financial establishments, speeches of mayors, etc. The report can be briefed as a list of “symptoms and remedies” in order to curb the influences of Islamists in economy, education, and inside the state apparatus (Zürcher, 2005: 300).<sup>309</sup> The list of recommendations concluded as “The recent increase in the incitement of anger against members of the Turkish Armed Forces, has caused a certain uneasiness in the Turkish Armed Forces, and activities of this kind must definitely be prevented” (HDN, March 1, 1997: MGK recommends anti-fundamentalist measures and continued emergency rule in Southeast). The cabinet officially accepted the 28 February recommendations on March 13, but did not go ahead, and by then an open warfare had already begun between the RP and the army.

### **5.8.1. The February 28 Period: Fixation of Military’s Leverage**

The military was perceived as intervening in politics not because of the decisions of February 28, 1997, but rather MGK members’ insistence on controlling whether these decisions were implemented by Erbakan-led government (Güney and Karatekelioğlu, 2005). The course following, referred as “February 28 period”, totally focused on the case of reactionism and separatism, without any mention about the controversial legal process following the accident in Susurluk in November 1996. Erbakan’s coalition partner Çiller based the maintenance of the coalition on RP’s complying with the MGK decisions; otherwise, she warned, they would withdraw from the government (HDN, March 5, 1997:

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<sup>309</sup> The most significant demand was about the introduction of compulsory eight-year primary education in state schools to put the schools for preachers and prayer leaders (İmam Hatip okulları) at middle school level out of business (Zürcher, 2005: 300).

Turkish Press Scanner). However, what was ironic that a few months ago it was the RP ranks that called for dissolution of the coalition due to numerous allegations about Çiller and the methods used to deal with the PKK during her prime ministry. Nevertheless, it seems that such allegations did not involve into the aspects perceived as threatening by MGK.

One of the most significant event in the following days was the announcement of the military high command that the Turkey's national defense concept had undergone a rearrangement and that priority was now given to national and territorial integrity and to the domestic threat to fundamentals of the republic. Secondly, it was emphasized that Turkish military considered tolerance to the rise of fundamentalism and separatist terrorism as tantamount to the state committing suicide and destroying fundamentalism and separatist terrorism were of "life or death" importance for the military. And lastly, it was also stated that the countries -headed by Iran and Greece<sup>310</sup>- supporting the terrorists, were lending support to Islamic radicals as well and although radical Islam in Turkey did not yet have a military capability equal to that of the PKK, this threat should be accorded the utmost attention (HDN, April 30, 1997: Tolerating fundamentalism, PKK amounts to republic's suicide, army says). These three points in question were highly:

1. Acute and finalizing in terms of Erbakan and his RP's tenure: The army mobilized different sections of society against the government, and on 21 May 1997, the Supreme Court of Appeals prosecutor's office filed a case with the Constitutional Court against RP asking for its closure on the grounds that it had begun to be the focus of "some illegal activities and initiatives", in other words, unconventional policies in respect to foreign affairs and terror matter. The Supreme Court of Appeals Prosecutor Vural Savaş said "RP was gradually leading the country into a civil war". As a result of the pressure, increasing numbers of Çiller's DYP started to quit the party (Zürcher, 2005: 301). Finally, in face of political, military and legal pressure, RP leader Erbakan resigned on June 17, 1997 (BYEGM, May 21, 1997). According to Ataman the 28 February process, which actually had begun in 1996 with the coming of the RP into power, reversed the liberal process

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<sup>310</sup> Deputy Chairman of Turkish general Staff said in February 1997 that Greece was then cooperating with Syria, supporting the terrorist organization PKK, forming an alliance against Turkey with Greek-Cypriots and also building a considerable arms arsenal in Cyprus (HDN, February 22, 1997: Gen. Bir: "It's Time Civilians Do Their Part in Southeast").

initiated by the Özal leadership whose efforts set an example of the possibility of restructuring in Turkish ethnic as well as economic and foreign policy (Ataman, 2002).

2. Explanatory for the target of the military's decisive and firm armed struggle in the next term: It was declared at the National Security Council on 28 February that in the new period, the armed threat against Turkish state was not only the separatist organizations like the PKK.<sup>311</sup> The anti-regime activities of Islamist movements like Hizbullah which had been active in the southeastern region in every respect since the early 1990s, became now one of the major targets of the state forces. One of the initial actions against the Hizbullah in the southeast was to bring the mosques that had been used for years mainly for propaganda activities against the PKK, under control.

3. Distinctive in terms of the course of Turkish democracy: As it is clear, the context of civil-military relations and the degree to which democratic control can be exerted over the military have been influenced to a great extent by the changes in threat perceptions. The military intervened again, due to the weaknesses of the Turkish political system, poor political leadership of the civilians who had failed to coordinate their activities and impose civilian supremacy over the military institution (Güney and Karatekelioğlu, 2005). Duran, on the other hand, concludes that the RP could not have engineered a democratic process, which would defuse the heightened tension over the secular nature of the Republic, and the party was stuck with the "obligation of reconciling the two irreconcilable roles: ruling the country and still remaining in opposition to the system". Its early promises on Kurdish issue and the "U-turns" after coming to power reflected the difficult situation it found itself in during its term in the government (Duran, 1998).

One incident in the February 28 period, reflected how the ongoing armed campaign in the southeast preserved the hegemony of Turkish military (which was the most trustable state institution with broadest base of public support in Turkey) over the Turkish civilian government (which had always been the most discredited due to the unceasing allegations about either leaders' corruptions or bleak activities). The shooting down of two Turkish

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<sup>311</sup> From the perspective of the military, the situation in the southeast at the end of Erbakan's administration can be summed up as following: (1) The PKK had been reduced to a controllable level by then, hence the military had accomplished its duty; but the fight against the terrorists in the region would continue. It should be noted that MGK's February 28 meeting, it was also recommended to extend the emergency rule in nine southeastern provinces, and a four-month extension was approved by the parliament on March 26. (2) The other offices and establishments of the state had not played a part in this struggle. (3) It was possible to make economic and social reforms as the climate that had been achieved in the region was proper for that. Economic and social development was the way to prevent terrorism and maintain stability in the region (HDN, May 2, 1997: Army: Fighting Fundamentalism, PKK a Matter of Life or Death).

helicopters by separatists in northern Iraq during the operation launched on May 14, turned into a fight over funds at home and a war of accusations on the international front against the countries providing the PKK with heavy artilleries. The military publicly accused the RP-DYP coalition of withholding funds for the operation. The government denied the allegation and promised to provide whatever resources were needed. Nevertheless, the timing of the accusation, and the fact that it was declared publicly rather than forwarded through more discrete governmental channels, was a clear indication of the military's determination to maintain pressure on the coalition (IISS, June 1997).

The clout and position of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) rose sharply in the aftermath of its last intervention on February 28, 1997; however, according to Cizre, it can not be explained solely by the historical-cultural role of the Turkish military as the ultimate guardian of the republic: "The acknowledged source of the TSK's custodial role is the culture of the army and the existence of a society which legitimizes a dominant political role for the TSK" (Cizre, 2003).

## CHAPTER VI

### 6. PKK ISSUE IN LATE 1990s

The late 1990s was a significant period for both the Turkish government and the Kurdish problem in respect to 15-year-old armed conflict mainly in the southeast region of Turkey. The new administration started with a military pressure for streamlining of the mess left from the previous term, and drew the course of the state politics in line with recommendations of the MGK. PKK's fate followed a gradual fall, starting with setbacks within Turkish territories as a result of the scorched earth strategy that plugged its supply channels as well as the relentless internal and cross-border operations against its holds. Its decline continued with the capture of the second man of the organization, Şemdin Sakık, in April 1998; and finally ended as a result of capture of Öcalan. Öcalan's capture was acknowledged as a victory and the "end of the problem". However, this perception, particularly by the beginning of 2000s, proved to be a big mistake, which promoted Kurdish nationalism while inflaming Turkish nationalism.

The conflict gained also a new dimension: PKK's efforts of politicization. It would offer a new conflict to the Turkish state, which fought the PKK with a motivation of "eliminating terrorism", rather than any contemplation on any other way to solve the Kurdish problem. PKK's politicization that received some international support was regarded as "legitimization of terrorism" by the Turkish state, and especially Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). It would be the new basic "threat" that dominated the agenda of TSK, and naturally, the National Security Council (alongside the familiar threat of reactionary activities). The new threat called as "PKK's politicization" would strongly maintain the official view, which perceives the non-violent political and cultural demands as threats to the territorial and national integrity of Turkish Republic. On the other hand, PKK's politicization or efforts to politicize cast even more doubts on Kurdish nationalist representatives who, in fact, failed to produce a discourse absent from the PKK (and Öcalan).

The late 1990s is also significant in itself as it was overloaded with several other serious problems such as continuing efforts to wipe out Hizbullah<sup>312</sup>, two disastrous earthquakes in

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<sup>312</sup> At the same time, the struggle against the "second biggest terrorist organization in Turkey" also continued in the southeast region. Several operations were conducted against the Hizbullah organization, by the regional headquarters of the security forces in Diyarbakir and it was reported that 400 members belonging to the "Ilinciler" wing of the illegal Hizbullah organization were



1999 (in economically vital point of the country, Adapazarı, and Düzce), a shrinking economy with high inflation, corruption allegations as well as inter-governmental strife. In addition, Turkish government tried hard to meet EU's reform demands in order to proceed with negotiations, while also its concerns about a new authority vacuum in northern Iraq mounted especially after the US-led attacks began to hit Saddam Husain's Iraq.

### **6.1. Yılmaz-led ANAP-DSP-DTP Coalition Government (30.06.1997-11.01.1999)<sup>313</sup>**

Although Özal legacy was a powerful instrument for ANAP in respect to the Kurdish issue, the party contained both liberals and extreme nationalists.<sup>314</sup> Yılmaz, who decided in 1996 to be more supportive of a peaceful solution and emphasized the need of non-military solution to the problem, was restricted by the nationalists in his party, as well as his coalition partners (IISS, April 1997). Towards 2000s, he seemed to have adopted semi-Özal rhetoric, and glorified economic and political liberalism. He began to criticize Turkey's excessive centrist structure by which "Turkey can not proceed" (Akçura, 2007: 221). It was Yılmaz, too, who led a controversy against the Turkish Armed Forces, criticizing its insist on interfering to the government particularly via the MGK and confronted the Turkish military in defense purchases (HDN, December 12, 1998: Military 'running out of patience' on defense purchases.<sup>315</sup> Moreover in 2001, when the military was preparing a new

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apprehended during the month of March 1999 (HDN, April 2, 1999:Crippling blow to illegal Hizbullah organization). In January 2000, a series of "Houses of Horror" were discovered in which the bodies of dozens of missing businessmen and intellectuals were dug up. Operations against the Hizbullah (which was started in the early 1980s by a man called Hüseyin Veliöğlü and operated in competition with the PKK in the southeast and which allegedly developed close ties with the security apparatus) in fact, began in 1993. However after a wave of arrests from the ranks of Hizbullah, the police commissioner responsible was immediately transferred. But after the war against the PKK was won, the Hizbullah had outlived its usefulness "for the security apparatus in question", and there followed a crackdown in early 2000 during which the killing fields were discovered and its leader Veliöğlü was killed. (Zürcher, 2005: 304).

<sup>313</sup> A reconciliation government was formed on July 1, 1997 by the Motherland Party (ANAP), the Democratic Left Party (DSP) and the Democratic Turkey Party (DTP), with the outside support of the Republican People's Party (CHP), with the initial aim of take the country out of the crisis it had been pushed into by the 54th government. The leading partners of the new coalition ANAP that was led by Mesut Yılmaz and DSP that was led by Bülent Ecevit would have major influence on the course of Kurdish issue in the new period.

<sup>314</sup> For example, Korkut Özal (the brother of the former president Turgut Ozal) even stated that he would be willing to talk to Öcalan himself if it would guarantee a peaceful resolution (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 114).

<sup>315</sup> While the government was criticized for being "a military dictated government"; the military continued to complain about Islamic fundamentalist activities, and criticized the government for its weak performance in struggling against them. The Prime Minister in the spring of 1998 challenged

National Security Policy document replacing the 1997 document; Mesut Yılmaz, deputy prime minister then, made a controversial statement that opened a debate over the national security syndrome of Turkey, entering a new dispute with the Turkish military. Yılmaz probably was aware of the new “National Security Document”<sup>316</sup> of the military that, once again, concentrated on internal threat perceptions, and indicated that separatist and reactionary activities were equally top priority issues. According to Cizre, this conflict between a civilian and the military displayed the problem Turkey faced in combining its security concerns with its political concerns by the end of Cold War period. In the view of challenges such as Kurdish nationalism and political Islam, domination of Turkish military over its relations with civilians certified the military’s “unquestionable” merit to spread its authority over major areas of national politics (Cizre, 2003). Yılmaz argued that democratization and human rights were being held up by the national security syndrome which were busying itself with internal threats rather than the preservation of the nation against outside threats (HDN, August 8, 2001: Military prepares a new National Security Policy document). While the General Staff, which released a four-page document lashing out at Yılmaz, stated that it considered the National Security Concept as the “guide that indicated its task”, Yılmaz considered it as too broad and inclusive, and as an “obstacle that prevented every step taken forward” (Cizre, 2003) (HDN, August 11, 2001: From the Papers). However, his “uprising” against the military’s influence over public issues such as Kurdish problem, failed to yield a significant change due to his politically weak position.

On the other hand, Ecevit who led the nationalist left, assumed a dogmatic and hardline stance on Kurdish issue. According to Ecevit, there was not Kurdish problem; it was simply a problem of terrorism caused by the backward social and economic conditions in the southeast. He mostly pointed out the semi-feudal system as the responsible of the backwardness, while accusing external powers for instigating terrorism (IISS, April 1997). Ecevit became the deputy prime minister of the coalition, and was the cabinet member with

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the military saying that there was no possibility that the military would dictate its will at the next National Security Council (MGK) meeting (HDN, March 18, 1998: Yılmaz challenges military). Nevertheless it became clear that the military was unlikely to withdraw from political arena and it was expected to retain its virtual autonomy in key strategic areas such as security and defense. (IISS, June 1997). The Turkish Armed Forces issued a strong response to Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz's anti-military remarks in March 1998, stating that they would not allow any person, no matter what position he represents, to weaken the military (HDN, March 21, 1998: Military: Won't tolerate moves aimed at eroding image).

<sup>316</sup> National Security Document (MGSB) was issued every four years and updated every two years by the MGK. This document, whose content was only known by by the top military and civilian authorities and so, called as the “secret constitution of the state” or “the red book”, would define the priorities of national and international security (Gunter, 2008:33).

overall responsibility for the southeast (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 129). For Ecevit, there was not a Kurdish problem; it was simply a problem of terrorism caused by economic backwardness and feudal structure in the southeast region. The PKK as well as the Iraqi Kurdish problem, according to Ecevit, were instigated by imperialist forces to divide Turkey and Iraq as well (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 112).<sup>317</sup> Ecevit-led DSP viewed both the Kurdish and Islamist movements as equal threats to the traditional vision of the Turkish state, thus took a strong nationalist position especially on Kurdish issue. It is why the coalition government's plans for the southeast focused on the economic side and greater state-involvement in the region. One of the basic incidents that revealed Ecevit's nationalist approach to the Kurdish issue was his "accusing" CHP with cooperation with the Kurdish nationalist HADEP, when CHP organized a congress on democratization of Kurdish issue in Diyarbakır in January 2000 (Akçura, 2007:145). This "accusation" was confirmed in a report signed by the General Staff Intelligence unit and sent to the MGK Secretarial, including a statement saying that Altan Öymen, the CHP Chairman then, did some speeches that offered parallelism with the PKK (Akçura, 2007: 146).

#### **6.1.1. The Government Program**

The government program of the new administration was "a quick drafted program" based on ordinary and round expressions about independence of the judiciary, battling corruption, eight years of compulsory education, privatization, reestablishing economic balances and solving the southeastern problem. The new government program was quite poor in offering any definite remedies, and was quite restrained on the definition of the conflict in the southeast. It pointed at four reasons for the terror problem in the region: "The problems that face Southeastern Anatolia are not ethnic but due to geographical and socioeconomic factors, the prevailing feudal structure and foreign interference" (Gürbey, 2000: 71). As it envisaged tackling security problems via socioeconomic solutions, it did not mention of liberalization in the cultural field. It pledged to promote economic investments in order to correct the unjust distribution of wealth; to develop agriculture; to lift the state of emergency rule;<sup>318</sup> to combine the scattered settlements into central villages; and to construct of modern industrial facilities. The most definite and feasible proposal of the new program was lifting of all restrictions limiting border trade (HDN, July 8, 1997: PM Yılmaz

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<sup>317</sup> As Erbakan, Ecevit also often demanded elimination of the OPC and lifting of sanctions on Saddam Hussein. In April 1996, he proposed creation of a security belt in Iraqi territory, to replace the US-led OPC.

reads government program in Parliament). It was quite evident that government partner Bülent Ecevit was quite influential on this socio-economy based approach to the PKK problem.

### **6.1.2. Susurluk Affair: Support Evidences of “Dirty Relations”**

The Susurluk affair still occupied the top of the political agenda with new revelations illuminating the illicit face of counterinsurgency against the PKK in the mid-1990s. Yılmaz promised boldly that he would pursue the Susurluk affair and “reveal the dirty relations wherever the traces might lead to” (HDN, November 29, 1997: What Happened to the Gang). However, the hopes collapsed due to Yılmaz’s inconstancy.<sup>319</sup>

The Susurluk report that was drafted by Kutlu Savaş, head of the Prime Ministry Board of Inspectors at the end of a five-month investigation clearly revealed the existence of gangs within the state, and was presented to Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz in January 1998. The report clearly drew the outline of the organization of Susurluk gang: One of the main controversial issues of Susurluk affair was about fate of a shadowy character known as Mahmut Yıldırım (code-named as “Yeşil” or “Sakallı”) who was alleged to be the main actor of the illicit activities within the counterinsurgency in the southeast.<sup>320</sup> The report came out with confirmation of previous allegations such as the close relation between the security (police) organization and narcotics traders and Behcet Cantürk’s (a narcotics smuggler of Kurdish origin who was alleged to have links with the PKK and Armenian Terrorist Organization) being killed by police. One of the most interesting points in the report was that Mahmut Yıldırım (Yeşil) who personally planned the assassination of both

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<sup>318</sup> Nevertheless, the Emergency Rule was extended for the 32nd time in July 1998. It is worth to note that the political parties like the Virtue Party (the successor of Welfare Part –RP-) and the Republican People’s Party (CHP) that had been in power and inevitably extended the emergency rule, now voted against the measure (HDN, July 24, 1998: Emergency Rule extended for the 32nd time).

<sup>319</sup> The Premier Yılmaz who had alleged that he would send to the Istanbul First Serious Crime Court where the special team members were being tried, the video band which he had and some documents; later stated that he didn’t have any document cassette nor information. Mostly due to Yılmaz’s sharp turn, the special team members who were once again brought before the court in November 1997; would be released according to the decision of the court (HDN, November 29, 1997: What Happened to the Gang?).

<sup>320</sup> Although Prime Minister Yılmaz stated that Mahmut Yıldırım (Yesil, who had been used by MIT, the Security Department and JİTEM, and who had been involved in murders, kidnappings and money extortion) was dead; according to the press reports he was at large.

journalist-author Musa Anter and the head of the Diyarbakir branch of the Democracy Party (DEP), Vedat Aydın, killed Retired Maj. Cem Ersever, too (HDN, January 29, 1998: Turkish Press Scanner).

"Certain businessmen, who had been providing the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) with financial support, have been eliminated by certain units at the Security Directorate with the participation of the mafia. The state officials who were part of these organizations started, after a certain time, to work for their own interests. Some of them started getting a share of the money generated by narcotics trade and money laundering. Some of the state units, including the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and Security Directorate, used fugitives from justice in various ways in the course of the operations they launched. In return for the services rendered, these units provided protection to these fugitives... In the fight waged against the PKK, the Prime Ministry slush fund was used frequently as of 1993. The sum spent was nearly \$50 million. But no records have been found attesting to the utilization of a great part of that sum"<sup>321</sup> (HDN, January 14, 1998: Turkish Press Scanner).<sup>322</sup>

In spite of such bold revelations, Kutlu Savaş's report as well as Parliament's Human Rights Commission's findings failed in bringing top-level responsible to the court.<sup>323</sup> Nevertheless, Turkish police and intelligence officials gained a big success in their anti-PKK operations in Europe in March 1998. They targeted the financial channels of the organization, by apprehending Hüseyin Baybaşın, a Kurdish mafia leader and a drug smuggler who was labeled as the financial power of the PKK (HDN, March 18, 1998: Baybaşın gang captured). Baybaşın, who was the organizer of many drug schemes that probably involved many Turkish officials, admits that he was dealing with drug smuggling as an underground organization, and in the book titled "Teyre Baz" published in 1999, Baybaşın suggests a shocking net of relations between mafia leaders and Turkish security and political officials (Baksi, 1999: 25-29).<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> The report reiterated the previous claims about Çiller's using slush fund to kill PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Syria in 1994. According to the allegations of Turkish press, Security director at that time, Mehmet Ağar was the planner of the plot. (HDN, January 24, 1998: Turkish Press Scanner).

<sup>322</sup> Another interesting point was about the emergence of ultranationalists (Ülkücü) such as Mahmut Yıldırım (code named Yeşil) who were used by officials in their fight against terrorism. According to the report during the period which began with the 1980 military coup, some 15 ultranationalists were taken out of the country with the help of state officials so that they could be used abroad in efforts aimed at rendering ineffective Armenian terrorist organization ASALA. (HDN, January 14, 1998: Turkish Press Scanner).

<sup>323</sup> For example the immunities of Ağar and Bucak were lifted in December 1997, but both Ağar and Bucak continued their political career in 2000s, too.

<sup>324</sup> For instance, he "justifies" the claims about a clandestine plan drafted to kill the pro-PKK figures. Baybaşın claims that Mehmet Eymür (a MIT official then) presented Prime Minister Çiller a list of

### 6.1.3. Southeast during Yılmaz Administration

The issue of evacuation and displacement of the people in the southeast region continued to be the main problems challenging the Turkish government within domestic and international affairs. A report prepared by the Council of Europe Assembly in April 1998 concerning displaced persons in southeastern Turkey, condemned Turkish government for "burning villages and for the displacement of the people". As usual, the report also drew protests from Turkish deputies, again on the grounds that Europe failed to perceive the terrorism dimension of the matter (HDN, April 25, 1998: Council of Europe report on displaced persons slams Turkey).<sup>325</sup>

The evacuation and migration issues were also raised by a parliamentary commission headed by FP Diyarbakir Deputy Haşim Haşimi through a report that was presented to the parliament in June 1998 after a six-month work.<sup>326</sup> The report was prominent on international level as well, because it constituted evidence for suits filed at the European Court of Human Rights concerning the migration and its outcome in the Emergency Rule Region (OHAL).<sup>327</sup> The migration report, coordinated by Haşim Haşimi mainly focused on

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the names of the prominent Kurdish figures who were to be killed, and that the an ultra-nationalist gang boss Alaaddin Çakıcı was present in this meeting, too. Baybaşın claims that he was also included in the list. He also claims that several well-known state officials tried to convince Behcet Cantürk (the murdered Kurdish mafia leader in 1994) as well as him to remain in the region, form a tribal group, help village guard system; and to announce that PKK was a terrorist group and Armenians had role in PKK organization. Baybaşın alleges that Cantürk, like many other Kurdish mafia leaders, was murdered because he rejected to bow down to Turkish officials' collaboration demands (Baksi, 1999: 290-291). And he left Turkey in a period when Kurdish journalists, politicians, and "businessmen" were being murdered successively (Baksi, 1999: 15-16).

<sup>325</sup> Although Prime Minister Yılmaz came out with an "Immediate Implementation Project" that aimed to provide for 2,850 families in Diyarbakır, Bingöl, Şırnak, Batman, Hakkari, Tunceli, Bitlis, Van, Muş, Siirt, and Kars; according to Human Rights Project's examinations, no such a step was taken. (Human Rights Watch, October 2002). Moreover, the "Village Return and Rehabilitation Project" that was announced in March 1999, also did not produce any concrete results (Yıldız, 2005:81).

<sup>326</sup> It was noted that the report was prepared by talking with the people of the region, with the victims of migration and with experts and state officials. The leading deputies who worked on it were FP Diyarbakir Deputy Hasim Hasimi (commission chairman), Motherland Party (ANAP) Diyarbakir Deputy Sebgetullah Seydaoglu (commission deputy chairman), and CHP Istanbul Deputy Algan Hacaloglu (speaker). There were two deputies from DYP, four from FP (Virtue Party), three from ANAP, two from DSP, one from CHP and one from Democratic Turkey Party (DTP).

<sup>327</sup> German Foreign Affairs Minister Klaus Kinkel wanted a copy of the commission report. U.S. Assistant Secretary of Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor John Shattuck got the report from Hasimi while he was in Turkey for an official visit. Meanwhile, it was translated into various languages, and European diplomats had been persistently asking Hasimi for a copy. The

the security forces as the main reason for the evacuation of the 3,478 villages in the region up to then, and concluded that a multitude of villages had been evacuated as a result of the arbitrary actions of the security forces. It also proposed some radical steps to be taken to end the conflict in the region, such as recognition of the Kurdish identity. However, Interior Minister Murat Başesgioğlu who, as the previous interior ministers, was against such a report, said that “pointing out the state as the origin of the region's problems would not be beneficial for any politician”, and asserted that it was the PKK which was responsible for the evacuation of villages (HDN, July 7, 1998: Identity Debate in Parliament).

Contrary to such reports that tried to draw attention to social and cultural points, the government gave priority to the economic regulations that could bring results in a shorter term. The region's economy was paralyzed due to PKK terror, and international sanctions against Iraq, and restrictions on the locals to conduct border trade with this country. However, the border trade that was activated with a decree by the former Erbakan government allowing trucks returning from Iraq to bring back four tons of fuel into Turkey, impeded by the new administration. The government, which promised to lift “all the restrictions on the border trade”, issued a decree that placed restrictions on trade along the Iraqi border, alongside a ban on the sale of fuel beyond the border towns. The main cause of this decree, the government officials alleged, was that the trade along the Iraqi border was “uncontrolled” (HDN, June 26, 1998: Government defends restrictions on border trade). Contrary to the official explanations, the initial complaints about border trade were raised as a security issue at a MGK meeting in 1997, and were about the concerns that the funds that were accumulating in the hands of the locals could go to the PKK (HDN, September 5, 1997: People in Southeast Unhappy With State Moves to Curb Border Trade).

As the issue of border trade, the GAP project was also among the issues handled by the MGK, and an action plan was approved at the meeting for finalizing the project by the end of the year 2010. While the finance sources were not explained, the action plan envisaged that new industrial areas would be established in several southeastern districts, creating employment opportunities for 10,000 workers (HDN, May 31, GAP discussed in MGK).<sup>328</sup>

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European Parliament, on the other hand, was making efforts to organize a "migration conference" upon this controversial report (HDN, June 7, 1998: Identity Debate in Parliament).

<sup>328</sup> According to the plan the electricity problem in the Southeast would end in two years' time, and only 10 percent of the agricultural projects were complete. The plan also indicated that there were 295 irrigation projects in the region worth 6.1 quadrillion Turkish Lira, with construction continuing in several districts. In addition to all, the network of motorways to connect the Southeast to

Apparently, the Turkish state regarded the project as a key project to the economically backward region<sup>329</sup>; but no question was raised about the semi-feudal system that deprived thousands of individuals from a real economic, social and even political freedom. Secondly, GAP was a long-term project, which was supposed to yield real economic gaining earliest in the 2000s. However, observations in the southeast addressed to the “urgent” need of public services to the people of the region. Very poor public services in respect to health, education, and urban infrastructure were producing new problems. Therefore, the absence of an urgent action plan for the provision of such services might undermine the military success that the army had begun to boast.

#### **6.1.4. Human Rights Issue**

One of the most significant official steps was taken by Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry; which was internationally disturbed due to the legal process against the Kurdish nationalist DEP deputies and Welfare Party<sup>330</sup>, the ongoing legal measures -particularly the anti-terror ones- the cases against Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights as well as the reports issued by the Council of Europe. The Foreign Ministry, therefore, prepared in August 1997 a human rights report that proposed a series of solutions for improving Turkey's human rights record in the fields specifically connected to the anti-terror policies: allegations of torture<sup>331</sup>, allegations of disappearances, institutional improvements, and

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Mediterranean ports would be completed by the end of 2000s. Six organized industrial areas and 45 small-sized industrial areas had been completed up to the end of the 1997, and the 453 factories in these industrial areas employed 45,000 workers (HDN, May 31, GAP discussed in MGK)The Turkish government had already initiated some social and economic projects within GAP, in financial cooperation with international institutes. One of such projects initiated in November 1998 was “New Horizons Project in the Southeast”, which aimed to help students in the region gain national and international experience and to educate entrepreneurial individuals. The "New Horizons Project in the Southeast" initiative was part of GAP administration and United Nations Development Project (UNDP) cooperation (HDN, October 20, 1998: Student's Southeast projects unveiled).

<sup>329</sup> According to State Planning Organization (DPT) figures, 137.7 trillion of investment would be made in the southeastern region. The amount of investment had increased by 47 percent since GAP began. Twelve percent of the incentives given in the whole country was going to the Southeast. To that date, \$12.8 billion had been spent on GAP, causing a growth rate of 7 percent. The contribution of the GAP region to Turkey's economy increased to 5.2 percent from 3.9 percent.

<sup>330</sup> Ironically, while the report in question was publicized, the Welfare party (RP, the predecessor of the Virtue Party) was caught in the legal process. On 16 January 1998, the Constitutional Court outlawed the pro-Islamic Welfare Party on the grounds that it had become the focus of anti-secular activities, and banned its leader, former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, along with five other deputies from political leadership for five years (Byegm, January 16, 1998).

<sup>331</sup> The murder of Metin Göktepe (a reporter of Evrensel newspaper) under detention in 1996 has been one of the most conspicuous incidents of such cases.



modernization of the police organization. It underlined the need of revision on Article 8 as well as Article 312 of the Anti-terror law that led to journalists and writers' imprisonment for doing "separatist propaganda" (HDN, August 4, 1997: Ministries argue over how to solve human rights).<sup>332</sup> However, the indifference (or rather disability) of the government to the continuing hunger strikes in eastern Turkey to draw attention to their demands for better jail conditions<sup>333</sup>, or no step for improvement in terms of use of Kurdish language and free expression brought up many prominent names in front of the court.<sup>334</sup>

The human rights problems suggested by the Turkish ministry were also revealed by US state department's human rights report for 1997, citing the continuing limits on Kurdish language<sup>335</sup>; widespread torture by police and gendarmerie anti-terror personnel, limits on freedom of speech and of the press, miseries of the forcibly evacuated villagers whose basic needs even were not addressed adequately. The US report remarked that one of the Yılmaz Government's first steps was the passage of a legislation that provided conditional amnesty for several imprisoned editors; but the basic laws (Article 8 and Article 312 of the Anti-terror law) were not revised.<sup>336</sup> Secondly, although in March 1997 the parliament passed

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<sup>332</sup> But the report that was presented to the Prime Ministry, reportedly included many reactions from the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior, as well as from the Office of the General Staff which, the report noted, was against even to discussion on revision or abolishment of Article 8 of the Turkish Penal Code (known as the Anti-terrorism law).

<sup>333</sup> The hunger strikes by the prisoners majority of whom were members of the PKK, continued in January 1998, but did not receive any concrete responds from the government.

<sup>334</sup> Five years after doing an interview with PKK leader Öcalan and Kurdistan Social Party leader Kemal Burkay in 1993, it was decided that Oral Calislar should be tried by DGM for violating the law (HDN, July 22, 1998: Calislar tried in State Security Court). Akin Birdal was accused officially of separatist propaganda and damaging Turkey's image abroad by criticizing Turkish government's attitude to the Kurdish issue and calling for a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Eşber Yagmurdereli, a lawyer-turned-activist, was charged with spreading Kurdish separatist propaganda due to his speeches advocating free expression. In a similar DGM trial, upon intellectuals' demanding freedom of any kind of thought without condition or discrimination; the State Security Court (DGM) chief prosecutor responded: "Writing is more dangerous than distributing food and clothes to PKK militants (HDN, June 5, 1998: Freedom of thought on trial).

<sup>335</sup> The report cited some cases regarding the remaining limits on Kurdish language. For example Sanliurfa branch of the Mesopotamian Cultural Center, a corporation established to promote the Kurdish language and culture, was banned in October by the Provincial Governor. In Istanbul the Governor's office refused the Kurdish Culture and Research Foundation permission to offer Kurdish language classes.

<sup>336</sup> According to the report, the Government continued to use the 1991 Anti-Terror Law, with its broad and ambiguous definition of terrorism, to detain both alleged terrorists and others on the charge that their acts, words, or ideas constituted dissemination of separatist propaganda. According

new legislation that reduced detention periods and provided immediate access to an attorney, such regulations were not applied for the cases fall under the jurisdiction of the State Security Courts (U.S. Department of State, January 1998).

#### **6.1.5. Turkish Military's Sustaining Fight Against the PKK**

Three significant points marked the term until Öcalan was captured in 1999: (1) weakening of PKK's armed force that was confirmed by the capture of PKK's second man, Şemdin Sakık, and its seeking for new ways out in Turkey (2) Turkish Armed Forces' sustaining intense campaign while being criticized about the weapons used in the southeast.

PKK leader Öcalan's right-hand man and a key figure of the PKK, Şemdin Sakık's breaking ties with Öcalan, and being brought to Turkey on 13 April 1998, after being captured by Turkish special teams in northern Iraq indicated a new turning point in the fight against the PKK. It did not only indicated to a serious military lose of the PKK, but also an organizational error due to the dissolution within the organization and Öcalan's insist to be the unique leader.<sup>337</sup> Following Sakık's interrogation, the biggest domestic operation was staged by the Armed Forces in Şırnak's Bestler-Dereleler region that was, reportedly, an important passageway the PKK had been using to infiltrate Turkey from northern Iraq.<sup>338</sup> It was reported that with this wide-scale operation named "Murad", which was conducted with around 10.000 troops (including village guards), the army not only encircled more than 100 PKK militants in the region, but also firmly secured the route used by the PKK militants after long years (HDN, April 22, 1998: Turkish Press Scanner).

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to the Human Rights Foundation, at year's end approximately 60 journalists were under arrest or had been convicted.

<sup>337</sup> It is a must to note here that in late 1990s, when the armed forces were boasting for their imminent final victory against the PKK, the timing of Sakık's confessions was functional to prosecute the figures such as moderate journalists (Cengiz Çandar and Mehmet Ali Birand) human rights activists (Akin Birdal), Islamists and Kurdish origin politicians who were not favored by the hard-line officials due to their criticism of the official Kurdish policy. As Abdulmelik Firat (a former non-violent Kurdish politician) stated, the confessions might be the conspiracy of a pro-war lobby which aimed to quell the Kurdish issue with blood (HDN, May 3, 1998: Confessions of a Terrorist). On the other hand, Sakık -who was in a way the victim of his disagreement with PKK leader Öcalan-seemed as if he confronted not only Öcalan but also the whole PKK organization by trying to undermine any moderate address in Turkish society that called for a peaceful settlement of the issue. Anyway, Sakık's confessions (or the confessions that were alleged to belong to Sakık) were absolutely what hard-line Turkish officials wished to hear.

<sup>338</sup> Military officials denied that the operation was done just after Sakık was interrogated, and said that the operation had been planned far before (HDN, April 30, 1998: Military further clamps down on PKK in Southeast).

As the intense operations and measures squeezed their mobility in the southeast region, PKK militants began to be active in the provinces of the Black Sea from 1995 onwards. As one Turkish official argued, the PKK 's aim was to create new fields of action for itself by getting into new areas by joining forces with the left-wing terrorist groups in Turkey to spread terror in the northern provinces (HDN, July 27, 1998: Turkey's top security staff discusses terrorism in Sivas). PKK's efforts to hold on in Black Sea area probably reflected its dead-cat bounces of its armed struggle against the Turkish state. However, PKK's ability of moving into and trying to establish bases in specifically Black Sea region raised question about the validity of official arguments that blamed "foreign powers" and "neighboring countries" for the PKK menace in Turkey in order to escape from admitting that the PKK matter was Turkey's intrinsic problem.<sup>339</sup>

Despite the frequent statements by military high command that the PKK terrorism had been finished off,<sup>340</sup> some incidents indicated to the sustaining of the security concerns, and hence intense military operations in the problematic region. In December 1997, Turkey refused to sign a treaty that intended to ban antipersonnel landmines across the world because of its security concerns, in spite of the remarks that "the humanitarian consequences of landmines far outweigh their military effectiveness" (HDN, December 5, 1997: Citing security concerns, Ankara opposes the ban). Secondly, the use of arms obtained from European NATO countries such as Germany and United Kingdom in the southeast continued to be Achilles' heel of Turkish government's fight in the southeast. While Turkish government insisted that it obtained the arms for its self-defense under a United Nations charter, a news report on BBC television highlighted claims that the Turkish army was harming Kurdish Turkish citizens in the southeast of Turkey using

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<sup>339</sup> HDN columnist İlnur Çevik specifically questioned the official tendency that escaped from admitting that the PKK matter was Turkey's intrinsic problem rather than a production of outside. Whenever there is an attack in the southeast, official reports pointed at the people infiltrating from Syria, Iran or Iraq. It is why Turkey launched costly military incursions into northern Iraq controlled by Kurdish groups, and even tried to create a safety zone along the southeastern borders. İlnur Çevik noted that although it was true true that the PKK was getting material and moral support from Syria, some elements in Iran and some Kurdish groups in northern Iraq; the PKK was Turkey's own problem and Turkish state should not expect to solve the matter outside the borders. Çevik openly expressed that the PKK matter was essentially linked to the whole Kurdish question, and can be resolved only if Turkish state faced the realities about the Kurdish issue at home and act accordingly. (HDN, October 21, 1997: PKK in the Black Sea, another foreign plot?). (See also Mesut Yeğen's "Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu").

<sup>340</sup> It was reported that Turkish security forces killed 6,000 PKK militants in 1997 (HDN, December 27, 1997: Security forces kill 6,000 PKK terrorists in 1997).

weapons bought from Western countries (HDN, September 24, 1998: BBC: 'European arms used against civilians in southeast Turkey').

#### **6.1.6. PKK's Last Ceasefire Announcements and the Early Signals of Politicization:**

It is wrong to assume that the PKK started its “politicization” efforts after Öcalan was captured, as it is wrong also to think that Öcalan began to reveal “reconciliatory” messages after being imprisoned. The PKK, anticipating no armed victory or feeling that time that armed campaign was over, started to focus on political activities in an attempt to create a "political grouping image" in the West. In an interview with the Kurdish Med-TV, the PKK chieftain Öcalan sounded quite moderate, saying, “Providing certain progress was achieved in terms of human rights, they were ready to end the war”. Öcalan even said that they recognized the sovereignty rights of the state, and he staunchly denied Kurds being separatists; he emphasized the issues of identity and cultural merits in reference to human rights. Most significantly, he vowed that the ceasefire would not be a repetition of 1993, referring to the massacre of 33 soldiers by Şemdin Sakık, during the peace process started by Turgut Özal (HDN, August 30, 1998: PKK chieftain declares unilateral truce).<sup>341</sup>

After a failure of receiving respond from Turkish officials to its peace messages in April 1998, PKK leader Öcalan offered Ankara the second unilateral "ceasefire" in the same year, which would start from September 1, 1998 (HDN, August 28, 1998: PKK announces cease-fire). The ceasefire announcement reportedly came following his “political initiatives” in the West, meeting several deputies and state officials from Germany and Sweden<sup>342</sup> in this period in an attempt to maintain warm relations with Europe and to demand that Europe squeeze Turkey. In august, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel made a statement concerning the PKK saying that they wanted the Kurdish problem to be solved peacefully,

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<sup>341</sup> While stating that Kurdish problem had originated from historical events, Öcalan even appreciated Kemal Atatürk by referring to articles of Amasya Circular which, according to him, identified the problem and approached the issue realistically. Seeking to alleviate the allegations that he had lost his control over the guerrillas, he said they maintained a complete control over the guerrilla. Lastly, he summed up the reasons of his ceasefire announcement that it was based on the requests from both the European Council and some responsible circles within Turkey (HDN, September 6, 1998: PKK Announces Unilateral, Open-Ended Cease-Fire).

<sup>342</sup> According to Öcalan's confessions after being captured, he was never officially contacted by the German government, but in 1996 he met with a German parliamentary delegation and the head of the German Protection of the Constitution Agency. He said the Germans asked him to order an end to PKK bombings in Germany; he agreed to that in return for a pledge that Germany would stop arresting and exiling PKK members. (HDN, August 28, 1998: PKK announces cease-fire).

however, the PKK should display good intentions in that direction. According to the comments, the PKK's announcement of a cease-fire was prompted by this statement. Besides, The PKK reportedly did a secret agreement with Germany not to carry out actions within German borders (HDN, August 28, 1998: PKK announces cease-fire). Turkish government, on the other hand, would never welcome politicization efforts of an organization that it had fought against for over 14 years then; and regarded the ceasefire announcements as a tactic to supply legitimate political channels in Europe in order to force Turkey to negotiate with it. Finally, the PKK withdrew its unilateral truce declaration after a couple of weeks and announced that it would resume its terrorist campaign and intensify attacks against Turkey, on the grounds that "Turkish soldiers did not abide by the truce declared" (HDN, September 13, 1998: PKK withdraws truce, renews terrorist fight).

#### **6.1.7. PKK Leader Öcalan Out of the Middle East**

By the midst of 1998, according to Turkish authorities, it was only Syria in the region that could help the PKK to a noteworthy extend.<sup>343</sup> They had cut down the PKK presence in northern Iraq to a minimum level thanks to the cooperation with Barzani-led KDP, and to a new agreement signed between Barzani and his rival Jalal Talabani. The Iraqi Kurdish leaders pledged to end PKK presence in their region. The Turkish military threatened that if Syrian President did not take action against the PKK and its leader, it would intervene with force in Syria to remove the PKK bases, and to capture Öcalan. According to Brooks, Prime Minister Yılmaz was doing "the bidding of the Turkish military establishment" , because although he was opposed to this initiative, he was powerless to stop it as he lacked support and popularity both in the parliament and in general (Brooks, 2008: 224).

On 16 September 1998, General Atilla Ateş, commander of the Turkish Land Forces then, issued a warning to Syria during a speech in Hatay, the Turkish border city at the end of its southeastern coast. Following that harsh message, President Süleyman Demirel conveyed another warning to Damascus at the highest level: "We are out of patience" (HDN, November 18, 1998: The PKK: a 20-year-long story). The Turkish-Syrian crisis calmed down at the end of October when Syrian president reportedly became highly concerned about the prospect of an armed intervention, and hence finally, a cooperative deal called as "Adana Protocol" against terrorism was signed between Syrian and Turkish officials in

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<sup>343</sup> It was reported by Interpol that Öcalan had Syrian identity documents and diplomatic passport (HDN, October 16, 1998).

Adana in October 1998.<sup>344</sup> Although Turkish intelligence reports asserted that the PKK continued to operate on Syrian soil, Syrian officials ousted Öcalan after years of providing heaven for him<sup>345</sup> (Brooks, 2008: 224). As a result of the conditions created by Turkish military to force Syria expel PKK leader, Öcalan moved out of the Middle East, starting after leaving Syria was quite tough for Öcalan. According to reports, Öcalan first took a plane from Damascus to Stockholm, but he landed in Athens where the PKK representative in Greece, Ayfer Kaya, had obtained consent from Greek officials for Öcalan's arrival. However, Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis ordered Öcalan's immediate departure, and Öcalan moved to Moscow where he was met by a PKK member, a Russian parliamentarian and two businessmen from İstanbul.

Öcalan's moving to Russia was interpreted as a new phase in the Kurdish problem, because Öcalan transformed the crisis to an international level by leaving the Middle East. Secondly, the PKK concentrated its efforts to get out of the Middle East in order to get rid of the image of a "terrorist organization" and be politicized by settling itself in a country in Europe (HDN, November 1, 1998: PKK Wants to be Politicized).

Although in Moscow, some parliamentarians wanted to secure Öcalan political asylum via a vote at Duma, Duma's decisions were not binding on the government, and Russian Prime Minister Primakov absolutely rejected this. According to Yetkin, in addition to Ankara's diplomatic engagement with Moscow, the influence of the US state department that clearly warned all countries against an asylum for Öcalan was invaluable on Moscow's submission to take Öcalan out of Russia (Yetkin, 2004: 108-113). Although Russian officials planned to send Öcalan to Belarus, Ankara had already realized a "preemptive" diplomacy by contacting Belarus. Therefore, it was only Italy that remained for Öcalan to try, because the

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<sup>344</sup> The agreement included Syria's affirmation that PKK was a terrorist organization. Syria also promised explicitly that it would not let PKK's any activities and would not also support it logistically or financially. Besides it promised not let PKK leader enter into Syrian territories. This agreement was interpreted by many as Syria's surrender to Turkey (Yetkin, 2004: 105-106).

<sup>345</sup> A prominent Turkish journalist states that the high level leaders like the President Demirel, Foreign Affairs Minister İsmail Cem, the Chief of Genral Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu all confirmed that the threat against Syria was not only a simple intimidation, and they would really realize a military operation agaist Syria if Syria had not taken a positive step (Yetkin, 2004: 107-108). Secondly, in the face of the result of the harsh pressure over Damascus; some observers argued that Turkey, from the very beginning, could have eliminated the potential danger of the PKK gaining an international dimension and being recognized internationally as a political organization waging a war of national liberation, if it had managed to make Syria toe the line at the start of the 1990s. (HDN, January 12, 1999: Syria, Greece and the PKK).

Italian Prime Minister Massimo d'Allema had given a green light for Öcalan via PKK representative in Italy (Yetkin, 2004: 113-114).<sup>346</sup> Although Ankara was relieved learning that Öcalan was detained by Italian police for carrying fake passport, Italian Prime Minister declared that Öcalan would not be returned to a country where still there was capital punishment and warned Turkey to comply with the rules of the European Union if it wanted to become a full member (HDN, November 18, 1998: Italy resists Turkey's pressure over Öcalan).

During such turmoil between Europe and Turkey, according to observers, Turkish politicians displayed an inclination to escalate the political tension through the actions demonstrated by the government who applied an embargo against Italy. The government authorities, who transformed the issue into a crisis with Italy, got involved in activities that promoted instability, rather than conducting sensible policies and trying to seek a solution. They made emotional announcements that led to physical aggression against the Kurdish institutions, primarily the HADEP throughout the country (HDN, November 29, 1998: The Rise of the Nationalistic Wave).<sup>347</sup>

Although at the beginning of December, Öcalan officially sought asylum in Italy, Italian court lifted restrictions on PKK leader and allowed him to leave the country; in other words "Italy got rid of Öcalan". Turkey's diplomacy or the national mobilization against purchasing and use of Italian brand goods might have been effective on Italy's final decision. However, as Yetkin states, the US state department's initiatives and statements that Öcalan should be returned to Turkey, as well as the European Parliament's rejection of the resolution about recognition of Öcalan's asylum demand were also quite influential on Italy's softening towards Turkey. In addition, Italian government could not also receive support from the other European countries (England, Germany, France) to solve this problem on an international platform (Yetkin, 2004: 134). One more point that needs to be indicated that Turkey successfully made use of the terrorism discourse which was actually led by the USA, and secondly its NATO membership by claiming that another NATO

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<sup>346</sup> ERNK issued a statement declaring that Öcalan had flown to Rome to seek peace, and had announced an immediate, unilateral ceasefire. In addition MED Tv quoted Öcalan saying that he arrived in Rome with full knowledge of the Italian Government. Meanwhile, PKK's representatives in Europe and North America issued appeals to receive support for Öcalan's asylum application to Italian government (White, 2000: 180-181).

<sup>347</sup> Turkish anti-terror squads established raids to HADEP offices throughout Turkey, reportedly in reaction to Europe (particularly Italy), and detained 3,064 party members including the party's chairman Murat Bozlak (White, 2000: 182).

member country was supporting terrorism. Therefore, via such a discourse, Turkey put the USA in a position that it needed to interfere, and Italy in a position violating NATO requirements against terrorism (Yetkin, 2004: 129-130). However, Turkey would pay for the American assistance, on December 16, when the US and England forces began attacks against Iraq, which was supported by the warplanes taking off from İncirlik.

Furthermore, in the midst of December Turkish politics got confused as a result of the opposition parties' toppling the Yılmaz-led coalition government with a censure motion against Prime Minister Yılmaz about corruption allegations on the tender of a bank on November 18, 1998 (HDN, November 18, 1998: Italy resists Turkey's pressure over Öcalan).

## **6.2. DSP Minority Government: 11.01.1999-28.05.1999<sup>348</sup>**

The interim government of Ecevit had inherited not only the ongoing diplomatic war with Europe over Öcalan and the Kurdish issue in general, but also the conflict with Iraq which threatened to attack the Turkish airbase used by U.S. and British warplanes to patrol northern Iraq (HDN, February 17, 1999: Aziz reiterates Iraqi threat to hit İncirlik). In the face of growing tension against European position in terms Öcalan at that time, in January HADEP was again sued to the Constitutional Court on the grounds that there was a natural connection between the party and the PKK, and it was operating as the branch of the PKK, inciting separatism based on ethnic differences (HDN, January 30, 1999: Prosecutor Savaş seeks closure of HADEP).

In the face of growing Turkish nationalism and animosity against Europe, a Council of Europe committee's report urged Turkey to reform its constitution and get into dialogue on the cultural rights of Kurds. The report pointed at the growing anti-Europe Turkish nationalism, highlighting that "Kemalism had started playing a mixed role in the Turkish society, and some of the acts committed in the name of Kemalism -- the ideology of founder Kemal Ataturk -- yielded results that separate Turkey from the European countries (HDN, January 23, 1999: Council of Europe report calls for constitutional reform).

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<sup>348</sup> After a couple of failure in formation of the 56th government, DSP leader Bülent Ecevit formed the DSP minority government which was supported from the outside by the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP), and won a vote of confidence on January 17, 1999. The Ecevit-led minority government that was hardly formed after 57 days without a government, remained in office until the general elections on April 18, 1999.



### 6.2.1. PKK Leader Abdullah Öcalan's Capture and the Early Public Reactions

After trying Russia one more time, Öcalan fled to Greece again on February 1, but he was not let out of the airport, and was transported to a Greek military base on the island of Corfu. Although Greek Foreign Affairs Minister Pangalos, as well as some prominent Greek officials gave open support to Öcalan, the Prime Minister Simitis was totally against to Öcalan's being brought to Athens. None of the other European countries' welcoming Öcalan due to US's pressure Greek officials sent Öcalan to Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, where he was sheltered in the Greek embassy (Yetkin, 2004: 142-147). Kenya was not a country within Turkey's target range, but the USA offered concrete help by suggesting a co-operation to capture Öcalan in Kenya (Yetkin, 2004: 155). Finally, On February 16, Öcalan had to leave the Greek Embassy in Nairobi as a result of interference of Kenyan intelligence officials, and was captured by Turkish forces that were assisted by CIA in this operation in Kenya (HDN, November 27, 1999: Öcalan: an odyssey from leftist student to Kurdish nationalist and leader of a terrorist gang to so-called 'apostle of peace').

Consequently, it had turned out to be an international issue that reflected itself best in the demonstrations and initial violence following Öcalan's capture. Especially the Kurds in Europe targeted Greek embassies because they accused Greece of "betrayal of Öcalan", and Israeli embassies because Israel was accused for helping Turkey in efforts to capture Öcalan.<sup>349</sup> In Turkey, too, violent incidents resulted in arrest of HADEP members. Besides, because of PKK representatives' threats against Turkish state as well as the violent demonstrations including suicide bombings and sympathizers' burning themselves; the number of tourists came to Turkey in summer 1999 decreased sharply due to cancellations of many international bookings.

The initial violent incidents following Öcalan's capture in Turkish territories reflected the sharp distinction of sentiments between two communities of Turkey, namely Turks and Kurds. While most of the Turks celebrated the abduction of the "number one enemy of the Turkish state" in a nationalist triumph, humiliating Öcalan by showing him "as arrested" in

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<sup>349</sup> In Berlin, Israeli guards killed three Kurds and wounded another when they tried to storm the Israeli consulate. Further protests occurred in London, Paris, Marseilles, Brussels, Copenhagen, The Hague, Strasbourg, Stockholm, Cologne, Bonn, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hanover, Dusseldorf, Bern, Geneva, Milan, Vienna, Leipzig, Moscow and Yerevan, among other locations (Gunter, 2000).

order to destroy his charisma, the Kurds at home and world wide reacted in a series violent protests. According to Gürbey, humiliating Öcalan was also to humiliate an entire people, the Kurds: “Almost every Kurd felt the personal humiliation and even identified with Öcalan’s fate to some degree” (Gürbey and İbrahim, 2000: 7). On the other hand the Kurds throughout the world were urged by Osman Öcalan, PKK leader’s brother and a senior PKK commander, to “extract a heavy price from “Turkish state” for the conspiracy it has engaged in against PKK’s leadership (Gunter, 2000).<sup>350</sup>

With the sense of being the leader of the victorious side, Prime Minister Ecevit called on PKK militants to lay down their arms and assured that they would benefit from an extension to the repentance law that was on Parliament's agenda. However, despite Ecevit’s promises of leniency to the militants who surrender, the Turkish Armed Forces sprang into action soon after Öcalan's capture to wipe out the armed existence of the PKK by launching a wide scale operation in the region.

While the Turkish military’s campaign in the Southeast was proving successful with the continuing internal operations as well as numerous operations into northern Iraq; the capture of Öcalan was widely acknowledged as a historic moment in the 15-year-old struggle against the PKK and the Turkish Republic’s military victory against the PKK. Secondly, it also indicated that the European discourse for Kurds’ minority rights did not

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<sup>350</sup> The initial call for violence was authorised by ARGK (PKK’s military arm) that decided to wage a fight by attacking all kinds of enemy elements and to proceed incessantly with the “serhildan”(Kurdish *intifadah*). In March 1999, a group calling itself the ‘Revenge Hawks of Apo’ killed 13 people when it set fire to a crowded department store (Mavi Çarşı) in Istanbul. The Nevruz celebrations in March 1999 passed with illegal demonstrations in cities like Istanbul, Icel and Adana, where Kurdish migrants had piled in. They resulted in hundreds of people’ detention (Gunter, 2000). The illegal demonstrations were actually planned in accordance to the London-based Med TV’s messages from various separatist Kurdish groups abroad, calling on Kurds in Turkey to celebrate Nevruz in a way “loyal to Öcalan and the resistance”. Anticipating such pro-PKK demonstrations, celebrations were banned in trouble spots in the Southeast, such as Diyarbakir and Batman; but clashes broke out between the local population and the hundreds of police forces deployed in each district (HDN, March 28, 1999: Violence and Police Crackdowns Mar Nevruz Festivities).

extend up to safeguarding PKK leader.<sup>351</sup> Greece, the only European country that turned out to be concerned to find a place to the PKK leader, stated in its official statement after Öcalan's capture, "The Greek government, in order to help seek and find a solution to the problem of Abdullah Öcalan on a European level, granted him a place to stay in Kenya" (HDN, February 17, 1999: and Apo to face Turkish justice).

"The Turkish government strategy which slowly proved successful resulted from various regional factors such as the intensified military and political ties between Turkey and Israel, encouraged by the US. This strategy, however, was also facilitated by the political and conceptual stagnation of the PKK and its inability to adapt to the new reality after the demise of the bipolar world system" (Gürbey and İbrahim, 2000: 11).

### **6.3. DSP-ANAP-MHP Coalition Government: (28.05.1999 - 18.11.2002)**

#### **6.3.1. The 1999 General and Municipal Elections**

The results of the election indicated to an inclination towards nationalist parties, following the turbulent period (Öcalan's capture, EU's attitude against Turkey, and the disastrous earthquake in August 1999) that ignited nationalist senses, as well as to the dissatisfaction of voters with the confrontation between the military and pro-Islamist party. It seemed that FP lost its hardcore supporters (religious nationalist electorate) due to its attempts to moderate its religious image as well as semi-diplomatic attempts for the settlement of Kurdish question when it was in power.<sup>352</sup> Hence, the votes switched from the moderate pro-Islamists to the conservative Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which argues that Kurds are from Turkish origin, not a separate ethnic group (Akçura, 2008: 243). According to political analysts, in April 1999 elections, the electorate punished the free market

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<sup>351</sup> Gürbey and İbrahim indicate that "by winning the support the support of individual members of prominent figures as well as establishing relations with parts of political scenes in some European countries, the PKK and its leadership in Europe believed they attained support from the respective governments for its cause. The fact that no European government leadership was willing to grant him asylum clearly indicates that the PKK's European leadership fundamentally misread the signs in Europe. In his decision to come to Europe in order to find asylum and undergo the metamorphosis from a terrorist to a statesman and for the PKK to turn into a political actor he certainly resorted to the information and assessments provided by the European wing of the PKK." (Gürbey and İbrahim, 2000: 12).

<sup>352</sup> Some of the supporters might have been reluctant to vote for FP not to experience a second "February 28" turmoil. The National Security Council was still evaluating fundamentalism and separatism as the greatest threats to the Turkish state. However, with a 18.40 percent rate, FP was the winner in the local elections and gained a big success by winning the mayoral positions in Istanbul, Ankara, Konya, Kayseri and Erzurum.

economy, limitless privatization policies and drive to terminate social-state concept of the two center-right parties (ANAP and DYP), and apparently preferred to support the "etatist" and "centrally-controlled economy" approaches of the DSP and the MHP. Secondly, both the MHP and the DSP were extremely sensitive to separatist terrorism and the "integrity of the nation" and they received the support of the electorate that was sensitive on PKK terrorism (HDN, April 20, 1999: Rebirth of the Gray Wolves).

HADEP, on the other hand, gained 4.7 percent of the overall electorate, failed to make the threshold but seemed to have slightly increased its overall vote. HADEP, actually, performed successfully in the local polls, winning seven mayoral seats in southeastern and eastern big cities (Diyarbakir, Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Hakkari, Siirt and Van) in its first-ever contest on the local level. Even the slight increase was significant for it indicated that although the PKK had been nearly eliminated, it was in a political failure (Özdağ, 2007: 159).

Ecevit formed a coalition government with MHP and ANAP, which was approved on 28 May 1999 by president Demirel. The government program presented in early June, reflected totally the concerns raised by MGK members. It underlined that the government would carry out a continuous and intensive struggle against terrorism and gangs, and was determined to prevent any abuse of religious sentiments for political purposes and to continuity the secular principle of the state. Secondly, the program envisaged to implement legal regulations to monitor and punish organized crimes, probably referring to the ones revealed in the legal process after Susurluk accident. Thirdly, it pledged to make efforts to restructure the DGMs –before Öcalan’s trial was concluded- and to pass a repentance law in an effort to put an end to terrorism as Ecevit had promised from before (HDN, June 5, 1999: Ecevit presents government program).

### **6.3.2. The Legal Process of Öcalan’s Trial**

The triumph of the Turkish state over the PKK was to be consolidated with a quick trial of Öcalan who was not called by his name or as PKK leader in the Turkish media but addressed as “baby killer”, “satan”, “blood sucker” or “terrorist skull (Gürbey and İbrahim, 2000:8). Öcalan was charged on February 23 with separatist treason against the Turkish state, and after one hearing in Ankara in which his various files were combined into one case, the trial of Abdullah Öcalan began on İmralı Island on May 31. It ended on June 29,

with Öcalan being convicted and sentenced to hang (HDN, November 27, 1999: Öcalan: an odyssey from leftist student to Kurdish nationalist and leader of a terrorist gang to so-called 'apostle of peace'). It was regarded as a historic trial and the trial of the century for both Kurds and Turks for contrary reasons. While for the Turks it was a victory against the enemy, the Kurds hoped it would become a turning point for mutual rapprochement (Gürbey and İbrahim, 2000:8). However, Turkish government was also concerned to present a legal, transparent, and fair trial to the outside world, namely, the EU and the US. Therefore, with Öcalan's capture and beginning of his trial, the restructure of DGMs became a matter discussion and controversy at the Turkish parliament, and the government embarked quickly to make an amendment that would civilianize the courts to avert any European suspicion on Turkish trial system in regards to PKK leader's trial.

### **6.3.2.1. The DGM Indictment and Öcalan's Defense**

The indictment prepared by Ankara DGM prosecutors against PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan reviewed the formation of the terrorist organization, its goal, program, activities, and operations. All separate violations were taken as a whole to be a violation of the former Article 125<sup>353</sup> of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK). In addition, acts perpetrated by the PKK in cooperation with other illegal crime syndicates and leftist organizations in the Black Sea region and the first raids conducted by the PKK in Eruh and Şemdinli were examined in this chapter (HDN, June 1, 1999: DGM indictment details Öcalan's crimes).<sup>354</sup> The indictment underlined that PKK militants that were given combat training in camps located in Syria and Iraq, were ordered by Öcalan to conduct raids in Turkey, and hence kept Öcalan responsible for all illegal actions carried out by this organization.

According to Gürbey, Turkish officials adopted a new treatment of the subject "to brush their own share of responsibility under the carpet". Turkish state attempted to acquit itself by blaming the PKK leader for all the killed during the 15-year war; not only Turkish

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<sup>353</sup> The Turkish Penal Code's former Article 125 (new Article 302 of penal code) was about the crimes against the existence of the state.

<sup>354</sup> The indictment stated that beginning with the Eruh and Semdinli raids, which took place on Aug. 15, 1984, through to Feb. 22, 1999, there were a total of 6,036 attacks staged by the PKK terrorist organization and 8,257 armed clashes between the PKK and the Turkish Security Forces. During this period, there were 3,071 bomb attacks by PKK militants, 388 people were robbed at gunpoint and 1,046 people were kidnapped. As a result of these attacks, 4,472 civilians, 3,874 soldiers, 247 policemen and 1,225 village guards were killed by the PKK, and a total of 16,362 people were injured (HDN, June 1, 1999: DGM indictment details Öcalan's crimes).

soldiers and civilians, but also the PKK fighters were also counted among the victims. Doing so, Turkish officials aimed to divert attention from the atrocities the Turkish military committed in its campaign against the PKK. One of the best indications of this strategy appeared when the mothers of the killed soldiers were allowed to accompany the trial in a well-orchestrated media show while the mothers of the other victims were hushed up (Gürbey and İbrahim, 2000: 8).

### **6.3.2.2. Restructuring of State Security Courts (DGMs)**

The conflict among the political leaders in the parliament over the restructuring of the DGM courts was about timing; because the opposition was against to any amendment on DGMs in the midst of the ongoing Abdullah Öcalan case. However, the amendment was envisaged in order to ensure that no doubt would be cast on the Turkish state and Turkish judicial system concerning Öcalan's trial. Therefore, the Turkish Parliament completed a fast-track reform of the civilianization of the DGMs in June 1999, and removed the military member of the three-judge panel of the court. Hence, the trial of Abdullah Öcalan would be resumed with the military judge on the panel being replaced with a civilian, who right from the May 31 start of the trial was sitting on the sidelines as an "alternate" judge (HDN, June 23, 1999: DGM reform over, trial underway).<sup>355</sup>

### **6.3.2.3. Öcalan's Defense**

Öcalan began his struggle as a Marxist committed to establishing an independent pan-Kurdish state for the some 20–25 million Kurds in the Middle East via terrorist methods. However, over years, he began to do self-criticism about some of the violent methods they had used, while also accusing Turkish state for its staunch attitude against Kurds. By the early 1990s, Öcalan was asking only for Kurdish political and cultural rights within the pre-existing Turkish borders, and began to reject separatism (Gunter, 2000). Finally after being captured, in his defense, Öcalan tried to be “political” by suggesting to contribute to Turkey in every possible way. For instance, upon his calling his followers to refrain from violence, the initial violence that had broken out in big cities, in the southeast and abroad upon his capture stopped almost overnight. However many thought, “Öcalan was merely trying to save his own neck and had shown himself a coward” (Gunter, 2000). He started to redefine

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<sup>355</sup> Besides Öcalan's trial, there were 7,021 cases pending at the DGMs, and by that amendment all these cases would continue in the reformed courts.

both the PKK's history and Turkish nationalism, as well as the relation between Turks and Kurds in a way much moderate and conciliatory; in addition by self-criticism that "they created an insurgency via utopian political goals and dogmatic ideological approaches without even taking into consideration the state, community and its history. However, Öcalan still maintained that there was a historical and legitimate social basement behind the PKK's rebellion using its own methods. He criticized the media and Turkish officials for their emphasizing the radicalism of the methods of the PKK without considering how the rulers behaved historically and politically: "The legitimacy of uprising against any system of repression as extensive as the "language ban" of the 1982 Constitution should be kept in mind when discussing this illegal movement" (Gunter, 2000). Nevertheless he expressed his regret that they did not focus on democratic means, and they also failed to abide with the ceasefire they had declared (Pekdemir, 1999: 19-20). Abdullah Öcalan went so far as to denounce some of his former associates, claimed that he had been duped by foreign powers and paid his respects to the Turkish people (Bloom, 2005: 103).

Öcalan tried to deliver his new ideas such as "a new synthesis" that would come out of a thesis and antithesis; in other words, the state-PKK opposition would lead to the synthesis of a Democratic Republic (Gunter, 2000). Öcalan praised the Turkish army's avoiding a direct intervention to the (Erbakan-led) government in the February 28 period, for that was the result of modernization process that the army tried to improve in favor of democracy. According to Öcalan, PKK got a message that they should leave pursuing secessionism, and end the armed conflict by revising their program through a democratic view, in pursuit of a "democratic unity" (Pekdemir, 1999: 31).<sup>356</sup> Öcalan asserted that removal of bans over Kurdish language and culture would enable Kurds integrate with the state, and negative perceptions and distrust of the state would change to positive perceptions and trust.

Indeed Öcalan's arguments were not wholly new, because he had already revealed most of his renewed ideas before he was captured, and accordingly Öcalan rejected that he was just trying to save his skin. Through his attorneys, he called for the PKK militants on August 3 to lay down their arms and withdraw from the country "for the sake of peace, from September 1, 1999". When the unfortunate earthquake happened on August 17 1999, Öcalan asked them to speed up this process in order to decrease the load on the Turkish

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<sup>356</sup> In his trial Öcalan cited long passages from Leslie Lipson's "The Democratic Civilisation" saying that it contributed to his understanding about the right of nations for self-determination and "how multi-ethnic states that are truly democratic such as Switzerland can successfully transcend narrow ethno-nationalism and achieve peace, justice and prosperity for all their citizens" (Gunter, 2000).

state. Gunter quotes from an analysis titled “PKK: Defeat, or Retreat, or Master Stroke” issued on 9 August 1999 by Briefing (a Turkish weekly inside perspective on Turkish political, economic and business) concluding that “whether the state likes it, admits it, or even realizes it, it is now, in an indirect fashion, sitting down to the negotiating table with Abdullah Öcalan” (Gunter, 2000).

Several PKK militants turned themselves in to Turkish authorities, in an attempt to prove the sincerity of Öcalan's peace calls, but Turkish authorities continued to call for unconditional surrender of all PKK forces. Turkish authorities saw the PKK calls for peace as an insincere tactical move, playing in part on Western ignorance on the nature of the PKK (HDN, November 27, 1999: Öcalan: an odyssey from leftist student to Kurdish nationalist and leader of a terrorist gang to so-called 'apostle of peace'). The Turkish Armed Forces, determined to finish the job it had begun, continued operations against the militants in southeastern Turkey and, reportedly, on September 29 it sent 5,000 troops backed by air power into northern Iraq to attack positions held by PKK forces.

However, at the end of June 1999, the court sentenced the PKK leader to capital punishment, on the basis of Turkish Penal Code's Article 125, which discussed the crimes against the existence of the state. Although his lawyers tried to draw attention that PKK leader Öcalan had abandoned the goal of founding a state and he had also called for unity and brotherhood since then; the justified decision of the court said that his orientation had been in a direction of dividing the country, even if he had not achieved his goal. Secondly, it said that PKK's actions that Öcalan had led since 1978, created threats, which endangered the Turkish state in that direction, too (Belge Net: Gerekçeli Karar: <http://www.belgenet.com/dava/gerekce18.html>).

While his lawyers for Öcalan said that Turkey should refrain from executing the PKK terrorist chief for the sake of domestic peace and its European aspirations; Öcalan issued a warning that if Turkey did not spare his life, his PKK militants could escalate attacks on civilian and military targets in the country, and he could lose control over the PKK terrorists if Turkey did not accept his peace offer (HDN, November 27, 1999: Lawyers call on Turkey to spare Öcalan for peace) (HDN, July 8, 1999: Öcalan threatens again). Upon the Supreme Court of Appeals' confirmation of the death penalty against Abdullah Öcalan,



his lawyers applied to the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>357</sup> According to Gunter, a process of implicit bargaining between the state and the PKK on Öcalan's death sentence began. While Öcalan told Turkish state that he wanted to be of service to the state, a few days later Prime Minister Ecevit declared that the state would consider changing its policies towards the Kurds if the PKK would lay down its arms" (Gunter, 2000).<sup>358</sup> Anyway, in January 2000, it would be decided by the government to delay the execution of death penalty until the European Court of Human Rights took a decision.

Several European officials indicated to the impossibility of any process at the Helsinki summit where approval to Turkey's candidacy status was at issue, in case of Öcalan's execution. None of the European Union members imposed the death penalty, and the Öcalan case was considered a key test for Turkey. Sweden -- then considered Turkey's biggest obstacle to a favorable result at Helsinki- had two very definite expectations of Turkey before the summit. She stated several times that Turkey must abolish the death penalty and grant Kurds full cultural and language rights (HDN, November 28, 1999: Confirmation of Öcalan Sentence Just the Beginning).<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Justice Minister then, Hikmet Sami Turk stated that the European Court of Human Rights was not authorized to overturn a decision of the Turkish court, and that it was authorized only to request Turkey to pay compensation for not fairly trying Öcalan or for another reason stipulated in the European Convention on Human Rights (HDN, December 3, 1999: Turk: European Court of Human Rights cannot overturn Öcalan verdict).

<sup>358</sup> Gunter highlights some important Turkish officials' statements on the need of revision of 1982 Constitution during the period when PKK leader Öcalan had begun calling for a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem. One of them was Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the president of the Turkish Constitutional Court then. He openly criticised the Turkish constitution for the restrictions on basic freedoms, and stated the necessity to defend freedom of speech and eliminate the use of what some have called "thought crimes" to imprison as terrorists those who called for Kurdish cultural rights. He even criticized the restrictions existing against the use of the Kurdish language. He stated the need to conform to the universal standards of human rights, and asked for the necessary revision of the Turkish constitution. The following year Sezer was elected the new president of Turkey.

<sup>359</sup> Istanbul hosted the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in November 1999. Although the agenda of the meeting was comprised of economic issues, rather than political issues; the Kurdish issue was in the minds of the European officials, as Gunter states. Thus the PKK presidential council sent a letter to the OSCE leaders gathering in Istanbul, stating the need of settling the Kurdish problem to secure democratisation in Turkey.

#### **6.3.2.4. Turkish Officials' Response to Öcalan's Calls**

After Öcalan's trial and his calling for peaceful settlement of the issue, some of the Turkish leaders seemed to have adopted a moderate approach: Foreign Affairs Minister İsmail Cem declared that Kurdish broadcasting should be allowed; president Demirel received HADEP mayors in the presidential palace in August 1999; and government partner Yılmaz said "the road to the EU passes through Diyarbakır" (HDN, December 17, 1999: Road to EU Passes through Diyarbakır) (also see: Akçura, 2008: 221). However, the absence of a concrete step forward, Gunter suggests, was an effective tactic of the Turkish state that it saw itself in a win-win situation. While Öcalan stepped forward to dismantle the armed struggle, Turkish state chose to wait and see (Gunter, 2000). Ecevit chose to be more cautious and accommodate himself according to the general mood among the Turkish leaders. The ongoing military operations showed that the state largely chose to ignore the surrenders. At the beginning of September 1999, General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, the chief of the Turkish general staff then, also sounded "welcoming" about PKK's contemplating a solution through political means: "As the leader of the terrorists admitted, the terrorists have realized they will get nowhere with the use of arms. Now they are contemplating a solution through political means. They do not want a federation either. What they want are cultural rights." However, a written statement from the chief of General Staff's office declared just a few days later that recent remarks made by Chief of General Staff General had been incorrectly evaluated and used in a manner that contradicted the realities. The statement also emphasized that there had been no change in Turkey's resolve to fight terrorism, and it was out of the question for the chief of general staff's office to accept the separatist terrorist gang as a counterpart, to discuss its proposals and accept to make concessions. The statement put an end also to the questions and expectations for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict by saying that some PKK elements' leaving Turkey would not mean much; it would be more appropriate for gang members to lay down their arms, surrender to the state and benefit from the Anti-terrorism Law (HDN, September 11, 1999: Military: No Change in Anti-terrorism Policies).

#### **6.3.3. The PKK after Öcalan's Capture**

As Özdağ indicates, the PKK went on political works when it suspended its terrorist actions (Özdağ, 2007: 161). The PKK withdrew its guerrilla forces from the Turkish territories in

August 1999 on particular instruction released from İmralı prison by Abdullah Öcalan. According to Özcan:

“This decision was taken because of fundamental strategic alterations to the aims and objectives of the party. Therefore, the decision of withdrawal was not a tactical step but a major strategic reverse in the history of the PKK, for they believed, the armed struggle had accomplished its mission (Özcan, 2006: 247).

It was argued by Turkish officials that the PKK not only had begun to lose its military power, but also political initiative over Kurds. According to the argument, the Nevruz celebrations were not the stage of “Serihildans” anymore, because Nevruz was celebrated officially since 1996 (Özdağ, 2007: 143). Turkish government’s tactic of reducing a national day into a specific official day changed the context of Kurdish nationalism of Nevruz.

At its seventh congress at the beginning of 2000, the PKK decided to drop the word Kurdistan from its names. It was trying to shed its image as a bloody-handed terror organization. After Öcalan’s capture, the pro-PKK Kurdish activists in Europe also went on renewing image, and decided to end Kurdish Parliament-in-Exile and join a larger political formation, called the Kurdish National Congress, which was founded in May 1999 (HDN, September 28, 1999: Kurdish parliament-in-exile dissolves itself to join National Congress). However, although the PKK reiterated that it was abandoning the armed struggle, and that they would struggle for 'Kurdish rights' within a peace and democratization framework; it was alleged that the organization actually decided to bolster its armed units, which it renamed as the “People's Legitimate Defense Force (HPG).”<sup>360</sup> (HDN, February 10, 2000: PKK renames its political and armed wings). This was confirmed with its breaking its promise and beginning fighting Turkish forces –with discontinuous attacks- after a long period of silence, in March 2000. Through Öcalan’s instructions in April 2002, the PKK changed its name to Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) that became an umbrella organization for four different new organizations established in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria in order to unify the Kurds in the region and to act more freely. Özcan argues that, by renaming the organization, Öcalan revealed it clearly that the PKK had accomplished its mission (Özcan, 2006: 251).

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<sup>360</sup> In fact the PKK had already announced that the unity of the PKK had been strained to breaking point by the order not to fight and the Turkish military's sustained offensives (HDN, December 7, 1999: PKK warns Turkey not to ignore peace bid). Reportedly, the PKK’s military affairs were led by Cemil Bayık, and the new armed units were headed by the other leading figures such as Osman Öcalan, Duran Kalkan, Nizamettin Taş and Mustafa Karasu (HDN, October 20, 2000: PKK still active, but in turmoil).

According to Özdağ, however, this change of name was in order to remove its “Stalinist bloody past” from memories (Özdağ, 2007: 160).<sup>361</sup> KADEK, at the congress between 26 October-6 November changed its name into Kongra-Gel, and declared war on February 2003 and decided to reenter its forces into Turkey in May 2004 (Özcan, 2006: 247) (Özdağ, 2007: 161) (HDN, September 3, 2002: New PKK organizations in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria to unify Kurds).<sup>362</sup>

The political influence of the PKK following the capture of its leader was put down by a Turkish intelligence report titled "The Institutions of the Terrorist Organizations Inside and Outside the Country" revealed in August 2001. According to the report the PKK which has lost its military power, wants to shift to the political field with a strong propaganda campaign by making use of the economic, political and social problems in the southeast (and throughout the country as well). It was claimed in the report that several institutions and organizations in the southeast including HADEP supported the PKK, and it was also supported by its branches in many European countries, most prominently in Belgium, Germany and France. According to the report, the PKK had a propaganda structure including 51 radio and television stations, eight daily newspapers and 15 weekly publications, six news centers and three publication houses (HDN, August 10, 2001: Intelligence report: PKK tries to shift on political ground).<sup>363</sup> Contrary to Öcalan’s messages throughout 2000 and 2001 that they did not have intention to challenge the Turkish state, Turkish security reports in 2002 alleged that the PKK and its new umbrella organization KADEK began to buy weapons from Armenia, Iran and Iraq, and hundreds of PKK militants had entered Turkish territory due to the possibility of a clash resulting from any U.S.-led military operation against Iraq, and were preparing for hit and run attacks in Turkish territory (HDN, October 9, 2002: Security report says PKK and KADEK arming). According to Marcus, the basic reason behind PKK’s ability to continue its political influence was the very Turkish state’s attitude. Ankara failed to exploit its political

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<sup>361</sup> It is quite interesting that the Turkish officials and Turkish media have called the organization with its original name, PKK. It might be functional to save the PKK’s “bloody past” in memories, which is on the contrary to what the PKK intended to do.

<sup>362</sup> The PKK’s armed strategy in the 2000s is not the same as the violence the PKK pursued in the 1990s in rural areas; it is rather based on mass-actions while also receiving support from northern Iraq (Özdağ, 2007: 163).

<sup>363</sup> The pro-PKK newspaper “Özgür Gündem” (“Özgür Politika” in Europe), as well as the pro-PKK “Roj Tv” have continued their activities despite the impediments of Turkish officials. Marcus states that Özgür Gündem newspaper was banned five times between 1999-2006 (Marcus, 2009: 389).

initiative in the process starting by Öcalan's capture, and instead declared victory. Therefore, the political influence the PKK continued to have was the result of Turkey's declaring victory when Öcalan was captured (Marcus, 2009: 390). Özcan concludes that the PKK's ethnic movement retains its major mass base, which was confirmed by the mass participation to the Kurdish nationalist parties such as, DEHAP (later DTP) in as follows:

“The difficulty with the unignorable mass support for the PKK experienced by Turkey and the West, which is coupled by indispensability of Öcalan stems from such a quantitative piece of evidence –a promptly mobilizable mass-base” (Özcan, 2006: 252).

Furthermore, it is a common point that Öcalan, who has delivered his instructions via his lawyers, is still keeping the control in his hands, and is still the “undisputable agent of resolutions relating to the organization and, in consequence the question of the Kurds in Turkey” (Özcan, 2006: 247) (Marcus, 2009: 393). However MGK's report that was revealed in December 2002, and examined the countries that supported terrorism against Turkey, accused seven countries (Syria, Iran, Armenia, Russia, Romania, and Southern Cyprus)<sup>364</sup> and indicated their performance against Turkey. According to the report, the PKK had lost power in the neighborhood since the Adana agreement signed in 1998, however some of its institutions which were the source of financial income still were active in Syria.<sup>365</sup> The report indicated that Turkey and Iran had agreed for a jointly coordinated operation, but Iran allowed PKK/KADEK to function in its territory (HDN, December 2, 2002: National Security Council).<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> The MGK report pointed out that the organization received arms from Armenia and terrorists coming from Europe and Russia used the Armenian route to enter Iran. The report also stated that many associations established by PKK-KADEK functioned easily in Romania and that PKK/KADEK used Romania as a bridge between Europe and Turkey. The report underlined that Greece was supporting PKK/KADEK very secretly and carefully, and moreover, the organization functioned in southern Cyprus as the "Cyprus-Kurdistan Solidarity." (HDN, December 2, 2002: National Security Council).

<sup>365</sup> On the contrary to such reports, after the death of former Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's in June 2000, Turkish-Syrian relations would enter a new phase in which both countries sought to develop the relations despite past disputes over Syria harboring PKK militants and conflicts over sharing the waters of the Firat (Euphrates) River.

<sup>366</sup> In 1999, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit also accused Iran for “taking over the role formerly played by Syria in supporting and harboring the terrorist PKK” (HDN, July 26, 1999: PM Ecevit: Iran takes over Syria's role on PKK).

#### **6.3.4. Kurdish Nationalist Politics after Öcalan's Capture**

Initially it should be noted that HADEP's successes in elections in 1995 and 1999 (as well as in 2002) indicated to the political success of the Kurdish nationalist campaign over the Kurds in the southeast. PKK's ceasefire announcement was very crucial for HADEP officials who had also developed a defensive argument that they could prevent the Virtue Party (FP) from getting a great number of votes in elections if those elections were held in a peaceful environment (HDN, September 20, 1998: PKK Reconsiders Cease-fire). However, Turkish state pursued an unrelenting policy against the pro-Kurdish politicians who, on the other hand, also failed to come out with more conciliatory and dignified steps.<sup>367</sup> Throughout the period until HADEP was banned in 2003, security officials would detain and arrest several Kurdish party officials, mostly after finding "illegal documents" or evidences of connections with the PKK. HADEP drew the most harsh reactions due to its calls for a general and non-discriminatory amnesty and demand that the political forces of the PKK should be given the chance to join and contribute to the democratic process (HDN, November 27, 2000: HADEP voices support for PKK political inclusion).<sup>368</sup>

#### **6.3.5. The Turkish Military after Öcalan's Capture**

On March 12, 1999, the General Staff issued an evaluative paper about PKK terrorism following PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture, underlining that terrorism was under control in Turkey as a result of the successful struggle both in Turkey and in northern Iraq,

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<sup>367</sup> Ahmet Turan Demir, the leader of the HADEP, defended the right of the separatist group to have a political platform in Turkey at the beginning of 2000, when 17 HADEP officials as well as Demir had been arrested for aiding and abetting the PKK in protests following PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture (HDN, February 26, 2000: HADEP chief defends political platform for separatist PKK). However both the United States and European countries were puzzled and disturbed by the Turkish crackdown on leading Kurds, including the mayors of three southeastern cities. Especially the way some HADEP mayors were detained prompted so angry reactions that even Justice Minister Turk had to admit there was "unacceptable excessiveness," and the mayors were released soon after their arrest (HDN, February 27, 2000: West raises questions about Ankara's sincerity on democratic reforms in view of HADEP's plight).

<sup>368</sup> When HADEP entered in the legal case that demanded its closure, it withdrew its candidates from the elections, and merged in September 2002 with two small left-wing parties to avoid a possible close down by the Constitutional Court. The new party was named Democratic People's Party, DEHAP. (BYEGM, September 5, 2002). However in October, prosecutor Sabih Kanadoglu petitioned the Supreme Election Board (YSK) to examine the legitimacy of the documents of DEHAP and ban it from the elections in November 2002. After a couple of weeks, YSK decided that there was no impediment in front of DEHAP that could ban it from elections (BYEGM, October 15, 2002).

and the fight against PKK terrorism and its external support would continue. The paper, in a way, implied that the military had been carrying out its duty, and would continue to do so.<sup>369</sup> But a few points in this paper were quite significant in terms of reflecting the military's self-confidence in terms of "legitimacy" as well as the "efficiency" of the fight against the PKK: (1) The fight has been carried out within the framework of "the principles of democratic law", and during the struggle, Turkey respected human rights in accordance with international standards, with the support of Turkish and Kurdish people;<sup>370</sup> (2) It will be impossible for the terrorist organization to continue its bloody actions since Turkey is determined to fight with terror; (3) Everybody is equal in Turkey, and everyone is a first-class citizen. Nobody is a minority unless recognized as such by international agreements; (4) Turkey has been protecting its land, people and borders against terrorism through Turkey's security forces (HDN, March 12, 1999: General Staff: Terrorism under control in Turkey).

Turkish military clearly stated that there was no change in its anti-terrorism policies. According to the statement entitled "Evaluation of the Struggle against Terrorism in August 1999" issued by the military in September, the withdrawal of the PKK from northern Iraq was just a part of the terrorist group's annual activities before winter, and the only acceptable condition for the end of terrorist activities was the laying down of arms by PKK terrorists and their acceptance of the Repentance Law (HDN, August 26, 1999: PKK announces pullout from Turkey) (HDN, September 11, 1999: Military: No change in anti-

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<sup>369</sup> According to data from the archives of the General Staff the PKK had organized a total of 19,470 bloody incidents including attacks on security forces, bomb attacks and armed clashes over the past 15 years. From 1984 onwards, security forces had seized 2,502 kilos of heroin, 13,363 kilos of hashish, 4,255 kilos of morphine and 621 grams of cocaine in operations carried out to block PKK drug smuggling factions. Between 1984 and 1999, a total of 5,606 soldiers, police and village guards were killed, and 11,269 were injured. During the same period, 5,316 civilians died while an additional 5,903 were injured (HDN, March 12, 1999: General Staff: Terrorism under control in Turkey).

<sup>370</sup> It is a must to note here that despite the Turkish military's assurances that the fight was carried out within the framework of "the principles of democratic law"; the new revelations in 2000, once again, cast doubts on that. It became clear that those who had established the Susurluk gang in cities in the fight against the separatist PKK also established a "Combined Force" in rural areas that were comprised of village guards. The heads of the "Combined Force" were involved into some serious irregularities and corruption in arming their staff. Reportedly, it was established in 1994 by then Batman Governor Salih Sarman with the approval of then Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, and it was made up of around 1,000 civilian village guards. The most unfortunate among the allegations was that although 90 percent of the arms imported to arm the group were with the Gendarmerie Command, the remaining arms were feared to have landed in the hands of the Hizbullah terror gang (HDN, February 12, 2000: Like Susurluk, Batman is smelling bad).

terrorism policies).<sup>371</sup> As for Öcalan's execution, the military officials voiced their reservations, probably due to their concerns that Öcalan's execution would cause turmoil in the region, and the PKK could exploit such a turmoil to become influential in the region once again.

In addition to taking terrorism under control, PKK's politicization efforts also occupied the military and MGK as the most significant issue of the security agenda. Turkish General Staff prepared a report titled "Evaluation of Internal Security Operation of 2000" in December 2000, on this issue. Indicating that the PKK still had a power of 4,500 militants, drew attention to its trying to "politicize itself through innocent demands such as Kurdish Tv, education in Kurdish, cultural rights, and strengthening of local administrations."<sup>372</sup> Accordingly, the report stated that the fight against terrorism had gained three dimensions: (1) Elimination of violent dimension of terrorism<sup>373</sup> (2) Prevention of its becoming a separatist-political movement based on ethnic nationalism (3) To realize a socio-economic development in the East and Southeast regions in order to eliminate the shortages that led to terror's exploitation. It also criticized some EU countries for supporting PKK's politicization efforts (probably by allowing KPE, Roj TV, some publications, and Kurdish Human Rights Project) and accused them for supporting terrorism. It concluded that Turkish Armed Forces vowed, "PKK's politicization can not be even a matter of discussion, and Turkish Armed Forces is decisive to continue its fight until this threat is removed completely, in other words, until the last terrorist is neutralized" ( Belge Net:

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<sup>371</sup>The military operations against PKK's political and armed extensions in Turkey and Europe were intensified in order to assure the armed victory acquired by Öcalan's capture, and to prevent the PKK from recuring its power Cevat Soysal (code-named Cemil-Mehmet Hoca), the second-highest ranking chieftain of the European wing of the PKK was captured by MIT, reportedly in a European country and taken into custody (HDN, July 22, 1999: Turkey nabs another ranking PKK member). PKK's Central Anatolian leader Baris Cengiz, nicknamed "Baran," was captured in December 2001 (HDN, December 14, 2001: A big blow to PKK: C. Anatolia leader seized).

<sup>372</sup> The report also gave a respond to the militants who surrendered after Öcalan's peace calls, stating that "the terrorist organization is trying to use its terrorists as a trump card against Turkish Republic in order to get answer to its alleged peace call, which it had developed as an umbrellaa for its politicization efforts". The report said that "the PKK is trying to do via peace calls, what it had failed to do via armed campaign", and that it had goals in its politicization process such as "constitutionally recognition of the Kurdish origin people as a separate people (nation?), establishment of autonomous administrations in some areas, amnesty to the PKK terrorists including the ones in prison and their leader Öcalan, and allowing their political activities." (It is interesting that Kurdish nationalist parties' demands do not differ also from the ones of the PKK) (Belge net: [http://www.belgenet.com/2000/genkur\\_0712.html](http://www.belgenet.com/2000/genkur_0712.html)).

<sup>373</sup>(Terörün şiddet boyutunun sona erdirilmesi). It is one of the most controversial statements in this report, because it implies (truly) that terrorism has both violent and political dimension. However, the issue here is that even if one organization quits terrorism, it will be still regarded as terrorist due to its goals and intentions that contradict the establishment.



2000 Yılı İç Güvenlik Harekatı Değerlendirmesi:  
[http://www.belgenet.com/2000/genkur\\_0712.html](http://www.belgenet.com/2000/genkur_0712.html)).

The report was quite controversial for it was excessively inspired by terrorism issue and was totally absent from any social (cultural) evaluation, from questioning the reasons of mass-support to the PKK even after Öcalan was captured as well as Öcalan's continuing influence over masses. The cultural demands, such as Kurdish Tv, or constituonal recognition of the ethnic identity, or even discussion of such issues were associated with PKK's politicization. Therefore, this approach automatically labeled any non-violent organization or person with similar demands as a terrorist organization or terrorist, which should be "eliminated." Consequently, it was a kind of evaluation that defined the problem in the southeast as a socio-economic problem that should be solved through socio-economic development programs. Secondly, basing the problem totally on terrorism, creates a vicious circle that creates "terrorists" out of any action contradicts the establishment.

Another significant development in the wake of the PKK's weakening militarily was the announcement in mid-2001 that the Turkish military was preparing to gradually hand law and order duties in the southeast back to the gendarmerie that had gained considerable expertise in the field defense strategy, and return its barracks during the fall of 2001 (HDN, July 9, 2001: Demirel, Sezer alarmed by 'social explosion').<sup>374</sup> In fact, the Turkish Armed Forces had never got into total confidence in terms of the fight against the PKK, and that announcement did not mean any relaxation of the armed campaign.

Although the military seemed to be sensible not to ignite any social disorder in the region, the military did not seem ready to make concessions in its expenses despite the devastating earthquake in August 1999 that put an additional burden on the Turkish economy. The budget for arming continued to grab one of the largest pieces of the fiscal pie, at a time when Turkish economy could not relieve of the severe macroeconomic crisis which was felt consistently especially in the 1990s, according to the report by The Turkish Economic *and*

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<sup>374</sup> It was expected that troop withdrawal from internal security duties and the possible downsizing of the number of troops deployed in the region would help to improve Turkey's human rights image, and would also reduce the cost of the Turkish Armed Forces as well (HDN, July 9, 2001: Troop withdrawal from internal security to improve Turkey's human rights image).

Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), titled “Economic Dimensions of Turkish Defense Expenditures, 1980-2001” (TESEV, 2002).<sup>375</sup>

### 6.3.6. Ecevit’s Administration’s Southeast Policy

In the midst of 2001, leading political figures as well as the military were deeply concerned by a threat of a social explosion, the preserved pro-Kurdish political support in the southeast region, and the PKK’s politicization in the region. The matter of PKK’s politicization by gaining political ground despite their losses on the battlefield began to worry all Turkish political leaders and military circles, and occupied the top of the MGK’s agenda by the end of 2000. Hence, the fact that the only legal pro-Kurdish party HADEP preserved its strength in southeastern Turkey while all the other parties failed in the region raised questions about mainstream political approaches to Kurds, and also drew attentions the need of breaking down the course of PKK’s politicization by means of social and economic improvements (HDN, December 1, 2001: Military concerns Kurdish terrorists gaining political clout ). However, the way of thinking which connected PKK’s popularity in the southeast to the socio-economic underdevelopment enabled Turkish officials as well as the General Staff to disconnect the Kurdish problem from Turkey’s democratic deficit (Cizre, 2003). Although an economic program was launched in January 2000 with IMF support as well as an “Action Plan” was approved by the MGK to take socio-economic measures for the east and southeast regions in May 2000, such tasks did not gain ground due to financial crisis that was instigated by a row between Ecevit and Sezer, and rapidly shook up the financial market and economic indications.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> The report indicated that Turkey was in the top ranks among other NATO members in terms of defense budget, because the transformation in the world political order in the 1990s made Turkey a major recipient of the redundant NATO arms in Europe under the Conventional Forces *Europe (CFE) arms* scheme. The "low intensity war" with the PKK in the Southeast during 1985-1999 aggravated purchasing from the international arms market.

<sup>376</sup> On the contrary to unofficial observations, official reports indicated that the government did realize a number of developmental and social work in the region within the Action Plan (Eylem Planı) that was put into action in May 2000: A total of 165 projects had been completed by 2001; the agricultural land had been expanded from 19,000 hectare to 22,000 hectare; the allocate fund for improvements in infrastructure and agriculture had been increased at a substantial level; the rate of private investment had been increased by ten percent due to the incentives by the state; in terms of health services also many improvements had been observed such as the increase of the number of doctors and nurses in the region; lastly the number of the students attending to secondary education and the number of female students had increased at a respectable level. (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu Genel Sekreterliği: <http://www.mgk.gov.tr/Turkce/basinbildiri2001/24nisan2001.htm>).

During his visits to the southeastern region in 2000 and 2001, Prime Minister Ecevit voiced messages that “they would cut off the sources of separatist terror by bringing development to the southeastern people”, projects for the return of villagers would be prepared, animal husbandry would be promoted, new business opportunities for village guards would be created, and border trade would be expanded.<sup>377</sup> The Ecevit-led government focused on mainly reviving the economy of the southeastern region that suffered from terrorism, anti-terrorism measures, the economic sanctions against Iraq from 1990 on, and the closure of the Turkish border gate of Habur. However, although the government program promised to abolish the restrictions over the border trade, a new decree on border trade put some restrictions on the oil trade in May 2000.<sup>378</sup> Moreover, the proposals for a second border crossing to expand trade with Iraq were shelved due to international pressure against expanding trade ties with Iraq. Besides, the border trade could not get back to its past circulation because of Turkey's economic crisis, complaints from oil companies about unfair competition, high rates of taxes over the diesel carried into, and Iraq's turning off the pumps; for instance once, from September 2001 to January 2002 (HDN, September 3, 2002: Amid talk of war with Iraq, Turkish still importing Iraqi oil in violation of U.N. sanctions).

According to unofficial observations, the government failed to respond to the miseries of the southeastern people, and its initiatives that were shadowed by the security concerns dictated at the MGK meetings did not yield much positive outcomes and migration rate remained high in the region (Bloom, 2005: 110) (HDN, September 18, 2000: Migration rate remains high in southeastern Anatolia). Although it was reported in 2001 by emergency rule governor that up to that date over 18,000 people had returned within the Return to Village Project, the incentives remained much weaker than necessary to attract more people to return (HDN, August 8, 2001: Return to Village Project on track).

According to the report by Human Rights Watch, the obstacles facing the displaced people who wanted to return to their villages again were as following: (1) Local governors and gendarmerie had forbidden some to return on the grounds that their villages were within

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<sup>377</sup> Trade between Iraq and Turkey increased under Iraq's oil-for-food deal in 2001. Besides, as part of these recent improvements, Turkey allowed medical-aid flights and agreed to resume rail links between Iraq and Turkey.

<sup>378</sup> While 1,500 trucks used to cross the border every day before the decree, the number has fallen to 100-150, and hence the region economy came to a standstill again (HDN, May 29, 2000: A new decree has paralyzed economy in border region).

restricted military zones. (2) Other villagers were reluctant to make a move because they believed that once they return, the cycle of detention and harassment by government security forces could start again. (3) Some villagers who made tentative expeditions home met soldiers who threatened them and turned them back. (4) Others found that neighboring village guards, in their absence, had taken over their lands, and sometimes their houses too. Villagers considering return were even more afraid of village guards than they were of the gendarmerie. (5) The risk from landmines: Southeast Turkey had been a battlefield for years then, during which both sides in the conflict used anti-vehicle and anti-personnel mines (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, October 2002).

Due to the huge problems emerging from the bad-going economy, the resettlement issue did not seem to occupy the agenda of the government, although Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit had pledged to handle this issue specifically. The village-town model entered the political agenda in 1999 when Ecevit came to office, and was dropped again after his fall in 2003. Village-town model was designed as the vertical (administrative) integration of rural settlements aimed to establish the state as a stable center. The government charged the General Directorate for Rural Services (Köy Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü, KHGM) with the task of establishing cooperation and coordination between institutions in the public sector for the enforcement of national security policies and development plans. However, although the village-town projects were assigned to the KHGM as a whole, it was the military in the resettlement zones in the southeast that was in control. Generally the military did not support the implementation of village-town projects in areas containing or near evacuated villages (Jongerden, 2007: 98-105).<sup>379</sup>

Human Right Watch also suggested a bleak picture of displacement over the fifteen-year old fight in the southeast:

“According to official figures, 380,000 people were displaced from southeast Turkey during the fifteen-year conflict between government forces and the illegal armed PKK. Nongovernmental organizations estimate the number of displaced,

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<sup>379</sup> Another sustaining impediment was financing. According to Human Rights Watch, when the government announced in May 2002, that it intended to found village-townships in three southeastern provinces in which most displacement had occurred (Muş, Siirt, and Van), World Bank officials working on Turkey's Village-Township application informed that the bank was avoiding involvement with village-township schemes in areas that had suffered internal displacement and on this basis had decided not to fund the Muş and Siirt projects. It reported that it would fund the project in Özalp, Van province, since there had been no displacement in this area. (Human Rights Watch, October 2002).

mainly Kurdish villagers, at least a million and a half. Most displaced persons were driven from their homes by government gendarmes and by “village guards”, that is, their own neighbors, whom the government armed and paid to fight the PKK but did little to train or control. This was not an orderly and lawful resettlement program but an arbitrary and violent campaign marked by hundreds of “disappearances” and summary executions” (Human Rights Watch, October 2002).

The 2005 report by TESEV on the social, economic, political, psychological outcomes of forced displacement in the southeast region between 1984 and 1999, stated “internal displacement is a violation of right that has been the longest standing and has influenced the largest group of citizens”. Indicating the sustaining impediments in front of return of the displaced people in the big cities where they also face poverty and “ethnic discrimination”, the report also remarked that the heaviest toll of the emergency rule system (OHAL) is the lack of confidence between the state and the regional people (TESEV, 2005).

The emergency rule (OHAL) was lifted in June 2002 in Hakkari and Tunceli; and in November 2002 in Diyarbakır and Şırnak, the last provinces of OHAL. It was a decision viewed as the end of terrorism in the Southeast, however reports released at the end of 2002 said that the “situation of emergency rules” were continuing in daily life (HDN, December 12, 2002: The Year 2002 a Bad Year for Human Rights). When more people began to return following the decision, village guards began to involve in murders in order not to return land and other property. It was estimated that there were 70,000 village guards in the region in 2002, and according to observers if the village guards system had been abolished, more people could freely return to their villages.<sup>380</sup> However the emergency rule governor then, Gökhan Aydın stated that the village guards were not on duty only in the OHAL but also in different parts of the region; and that they were not planning to lower the number of village guards (HDN, October 31, 2002: Aydın: We will not reduce the number of village guards). With the abolition of the emergency rule, the number of applications of people, who were taken into custody and kept under custody in vain, to the courts for compensation increased. It was the outcome of the judiciary mistakes during the emergency rule when people were taken into custody without evidence and they were kept in custody for days (HDN, September 13, 2002: OHAL gone, compensation cases increased).

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<sup>380</sup>However according to a report prepared by the Yuzuncu Yil University and Van Gendarmerie Command, the village guard system had nothing to do with providing security, and village guards were serving local landlords rather than the state. Still, the report said, through the village guards system, the state was providing additional financial support to the region (HDN, December 21, 2001: Report: Village guards serving local landlords rather than state). In November 2001, 30 village guards were accused by Diyarbakır DGM of selling drugs to fund PKK terrorism (HDN, November 8, 2001: Village guards helping PKK).

The government established a GAP Undersecretariat after lifting the emergency rule in the region. As the Emergency Rule Governorship did not contribute to the region's economy, the new secretariat was expected to fill this gap. However, it was too early to understand whether it would also focus on security needs as emergency rule governorship did. Unfortunately, the negative financial indications in the region (as in the whole country) at the end of 2002, would display a definite failure of the government in keeping its promises for an action plan in order to revive the region socially and economically.

### **6.3.7. EU Accession Partnership and Kurdish Issue**

The Ecevit-led government's deal with the Kurdish issue went on the axis of its EU bid which was accelerated after the EU officially recognized Turkey's candidacy status on 10 December 1999, under the conditions of improvements on human rights issue as well as settlement of problems with Greek Cyprus. It was expected from Turkey to comply with Accession Partnership Accord that the EU's Copenhagen criteria accounted for a significant part of, and then accession talks would begin. The problematic issues involving the Accession Partnership Accord were abolishment of the death penalty<sup>381</sup>, freedom of thought and expression, and torture (HDN, September 9, 2000: Behind the scenes of a bargaining process). The first indication that the Turkish government adjusted its approach to the Kurdish issue according to EU accession requirements was its delaying the execution of the PKK leader Öcalan throughout the period that the required amendments on capital punishment were completed in 2002. Secondly, the restructure of the DGMs during the trial of Öcalan was also an indication of Turkish government's EU concerns.

#### **6.3.7.1. The Constitutional Reforms within the EU Accession Partnership**

The government set about a constitutional reform after adapting a Turkish National Program for the adoption of the priorities set out within the EU Accession Partnership (HDN, November 25, 2001: EU report: Turkey must do more). The parliament began to review the most radical amendment package to the 1982 Constitution in September 2001.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> ANAP and DSP were in favor of the abolishment of the death penalty, but MHP, on the other hand, was definitely against the abolishment of the death penalty. It did not want Turkey to make any pledges on this issue before the death sentence of Abdullah Öcalan.

<sup>382</sup> Within the same amendments in October 2001, proposal to curb Erbakan's political ban was rejected and the amendment enabling Recep Tayyip Erdogan to stand as deputy failed to secure

In October 2001, the package of thirty-four amendments to the 1982 Constitution was adopted on, introducing new provisions on issues such as capital punishment, freedom of thought and expression, the prevention of torture, the strengthening of civilian authority, freedom of association, and gender equality.<sup>383</sup> The provisions banning broadcasting in Kurdish were lifted, and the period a suspect could be kept in detention was shortened. The amendments on especially Article 19 of the constitution introduced new assurances for personal liberty and security (HDN, September 27, 2001: Green light for Kurdish broadcasting). Article 14 that regulated individual rights and liberties was amended and the sentence considering “thought” as a crime was totally scrapped. The article with its amended form still said individual rights and liberties shall not be used for actions contrary to the territorial and national integrity of the country, democratic system and secular republic. By means of an amendment to Article 38, the article banned the death penalty in all cases except for war, immediate threat of war and terrorist crimes. However, later in 2002, death penalties were commuted to life imprisonment, while those who were convicted of crimes of terror, would not be able to benefit from any amnesties or conditional releases. Thus, Ankara DGM commuted PKK's chieftain Abdullah Öcalan's death sentence to life imprisonment in line with the law that lifted the death penalty “except for times of war” (October 4, 2002: DGM commutes Öcalan's sentence to life imprisonment).<sup>384</sup> Another significant amendment was done on Article 118 concerning the role and the composition of the MGK. The number of civilian members of the MGK was increased from five to nine while the number of the military representatives remained at five. Besides, the advisory nature of this body was underlined, and it was stressed that its role was limited to recommendations (HDN, November 25, 2001: EU report: Turkey must do more). Penal Code Articles 312<sup>385</sup> and 159<sup>386</sup> were amended within a mini reform

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enough votes and was ejected from amendments package (HDN, October 4, 2001: No green light for either Erbakan or Erdogan).

<sup>383</sup> The restrictions on the use of mass communications equipment held by public bodies, and on protest marches and meetings were rearranged, but these restrictions can be enforced for reasons of national security, general health and morality and public order as in the European Human Rights Convention.

<sup>384</sup> In October 2001, by means of an amendment to Article 87 of the Constitution, crimes committed against the state, as covered by Article 14, were covered by amnesties. A further amendment made it harder for Parliament to issue general and specific amnesties.

<sup>385</sup> The "in a manner raising the possibility of upsetting public order" expression in the article amending Penal Code Article 312 was replaced with the term "in a manner upsetting public order;" and thus the "possibility" term that was objected to by the opposition and Turkey's western allies was deleted from the text, and the "threat" was clarified (HDN, February 20, 2002: Mini-reform package goes into effect).

package in February 2002 despite a controversy between the partners MHP, that was against any amendment on the articles and ANAP that advocated the amendments. The Article 312 that regulated penalties for those accused of inciting unrest, rebellion, hatred, or secession on the basis of religion, race, or class; stipulated that if incitement to hatred was done in a manner that could upset public order, then the penalties given under the article could be doubled. The Anti-terrorism Law was also amended within the package, but by increasing the fines paid by those who assisted the members of terrorist organizations or make propaganda for these organizations. By amendments on DGM Law, the procedure of extension of detention periods were also improved, and the detention period was lowered to four days from seven days. In case of a need, the detention period could be prolonged upon the demand of a public prosecutor and the verdict of a judge (HDN, February 20, 2002: Mini-reform package goes into effect). In August 2002, further amendments were done, which took off the restrictions over Kurdish broadcasting and Kurdish language courses. The heavy penalties against media organs were modified (Radikal, August 2, 2002: TBMM'den tarihi karar: İdam kaldırıldı). The reforms also tightened regulations governing the police, who were frequently accused of human rights abuse.

The MHP, with 127 seats in the 550 seat parliament, was the only party to vote against some of the key reforms, fearing, for instance, that allowing freedoms for the Kurdish language might encourage armed separatism in Turkey's mainly-Kurdish southeast (HDN, August 4, 2002: New Era Opens with EU Reforms). At the end of 2002, regulations paving the way for Kurdish radio and television broadcasts were adopted. Under new regulations drafted by RTÜK, the state-run Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) was allowed to air limited news, music and cultural programs in Kurdish and other regional languages, but private broadcasts were still banned. The regulations stipulated that radio broadcasts in Kurdish and other regional languages not exceed 45 minutes per day or a total of four hours per week. Television broadcasts in Kurdish were limited to 30 minutes a day and a total of two hours per week. Television broadcast would be displayed with subtitles in

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<sup>386</sup> It was suggested by MHP that Penal Code Article 159 (that stipulated penalties from one-year to six-year imprisonment for open defamation against Turkishness, the Republic, the Turkish Parliament, the government's legal person, ministries, the Turkish military, security forces, and the legal person of judiciary) be amended with addition of wordings as Turkishness, Turkish nation, Turkish state, Turkish Parliament, council of ministers, ministers, the judiciary, military and security forces, and some sections of the state organizations (Radikal, January 21, 2002: Demokrasi Yalanı: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/index.php?tarih=21/01/2002>). But within the reform package in February 2002, it was amended without including wordings such as "the Turkish state, the Turkish nation" as well as the mention of the "council of ministers", and "some sections of the state organizations," which would have also expanded the scope of the article.



Turkish (HDN, December 19, 2002: Regulations legalizing Kurdish broadcasts on state TV adopted).

The government wanted to complete the reforms before campaigning starts for the general election on November 3, 2002, and expected that European Union set a date by the end of the year to start membership talks. However, the EU wanted to see reforms implemented as well as being passed before it set a date. Moreover, Cyprus issue also remained unsolved and as a main problem in this process. Hence the Ecevit-led coalition government would fail to acquire a date to begin negotiations for full membership, and it would be the new government of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that, in December 2002, would acquire a review date as December 2004 (HDN, December 15, 2002: A new era opens in Turkish-EU ties).

### **6.3.7.2. Defects and Deficiencies in Implementation of Reforms**

Within the efforts to address to the priorities set out in the Accession Partnership, Turkey established a number of bodies in 2000 such as the Human Rights Presidency, the High Human Rights Board, the Human Rights Consultation Boards and the Investigation Boards. The Human Rights Presidency was intended to monitor the implementation of legislation in the area of human rights (HDN, November 25, 2001: EU report: Turkey must do more). However, reports about human rights violations did not cease throughout the period. Detentions and Arrestments for using Kurdish language publicly increased in this term at a significant rate.<sup>387</sup> The statement released by İzmir Bar Association at the end of 2002 said that hundreds of students were taken into custody and were arrested for raising a petition on Kurdish education (HDN, December 12, 2002: The Year 2002 a Bad Year for Human Rights).<sup>388</sup> The Kurdish education demands were regarded as “separatist activities directed

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<sup>387</sup> For example 50 of the women who were members of a group called "Mothers for Peace Initiative," made up mostly of the mothers of PKK militants when they tried to make a press statement in Kurdish (HDN, August 28, 2001: Police arrest 50 Kurdish protesters). According to research from the Human Rights Association Diyarbakir Branch, within seven months between January and September of 2002, totally 39 families wanted to give Kurdish names to their children, however the Registry of Births Administration objected to the families' requests (HDN, October 24, 2002: Despite Turkey's EU reforms, Kurdish name problem remains).

<sup>388</sup> The Higher Education Board (YÖK) issued in November 2001 instructions to university rectors that they put into practice the provisions of the Higher Education Establishments Student Disciplinary Directive against students submitting petitions demanding that Kurdish education be introduced at universities. According to a decision taken by YÖK, such demands were the results of the PKK propaganda which incited its sympathizers to carry out such actions (HDN, November 29, 2001: YOK disciplines Kurdish education requests).

by a terrorist organization" by MGK, as well as Prime Minister Ecevit and his deputy Yılmaz, who led several amendments on the legal restrictions about the use of Kurdish language (HDN, January 31, 2002: PM Ecevit rules out education in Kurdish).<sup>389</sup> Towards the end of 2002, it became clear that the EU reforms concerning Kurdish language were not clear enough to solve the problems emerging from the use of Kurdish. Besides, the reforms did not affect the sentences of the Kurdish MPs jailed in 1994, too (HDN, August 9, 2002: HRW: Death penalty, language restrictions abolished; Kurdish parliamentarians still jailed).<sup>390</sup>

### **6.3.8. Iraq and Northern Iraq**

The Turkish government led by Prime Minister Ecevit who was known with his opposition to US's Baghdad policy, continued to feel uneasiness due to the authority vacuum in northern Iraq, while the second Gulf crisis was also escalating between US and Baghdad. However, in view of the huge economic losses Turkey suffered for years because of the embargo on Iraq, Turkish government mainly focused on compensating for its losses in the pre-war period. Although United States was pressing to crack down on that trade, which violated U.N. sanctions<sup>391</sup>, it could not hinder it due to the bargain price that Saddam was offering his buyers. Besides, any hindrance on border trade of Iraq would hurt its allies like Jordan and Turkey, and devastate the economy of the Kurds in northern Iraq, where the revenue was one of the only source of income. Even though; the changes in the regional balances following the attacks in New York on 11 September 2001, and subsequently the US-led coalition forces' plans to occupy Iraq would further deteriorate the economic setback in the region. Since September 11, the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of

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<sup>389</sup> ANAP leader Yılmaz said that Turkey's education and official language was Turkish, and education in Kurdish was used as a trap by some circles who were aiming at blocking Turkey's development. He stated that Turkey hadn't pledged Kurdish courses in schools to the European Union (HDN, January 31, 2002: ANAP leader Yılmaz: Education in Kurdish out of the question).

<sup>390</sup> An amnesty was endorsed for prison inmates in August 1999; but the legislation excluded around 10,000 PKK activists, terrorists (including the pro-Kurdish politicians, the PKK leader Öcalan and one of the commanders Şemdin Sakık) and people convicted on charges of radical Islamic or leftist activities. Although the government was under criticism from international rights groups for holding the largest number of journalists in prison, dozens of journalists imprisoned on charges of membership of outlawed groups would not be pardoned (HDN, August 29, 1999: Turkish Parliament endorses amnesty for prison inmates)

<sup>391</sup>The U.N. sanctions allowed Iraq to export oil only through the southern port of Mina al-Bakr and a pipeline running to the Mediterranean Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Turkey for the Western security system has increased sharply (HDN, January 16, 2002: Turkey's approach to Iraq).<sup>392</sup> But from 2002 onwards, Turkey's concerns about the regional balances would escalate due to the US's plans to invade Baghdad. For the success of any operation targeting Saddam's regime in Iraq, it was clear that Turkey's military, political, and logistical support was essential. Turkey, whose main concern was on establishment of an independent –or officially autonomous- Kurdish entity in northern Iraq as a result of an Iraq war and Saddam Husain's falling, was reluctant to support an operation against Iraq. Moreover, such a war could also drive further the instability in northern region, causing another Kurdish rush towards Turkey, a war between the Iraqi Kurdish leaders, and lastly providing the PKK (or KADEK) advantages to recure its power again. Turkey did not have the luxury of supporting one side and leaving the other in terms of its relations with the US and Iraq. Under these conditions, which were very different from those prevailing in the 1990s, Turkey needed to re-evaluate its stance regarding Iraq. Trade with Iraq gained even more importance for the Ecevit-led government when the economy of southeast had shrunk. On the other hand, the US was Turkey's primary supporter for its bid for EU membership. Ankara favored to solve the other problematic dimensions of the Iraqi question within the scheme of the UN, nevertheless at the of 2002 Britain and the US would come very close in bilateral relations over President George W. Bush's plans to act unilaterally against Saddam Hussein. Unfortunately, the outbreak of war in 2003 would terminate the vital cross-border trade in diesel and foodstuffs, leaving thousands of trucks idle along the road to Iraq (HDN, March 27, 2003: Turkish Kurds fear conflict if troops enter Iraq).<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> From the first day of the terrorist attacks, Turkey stated its solidarity with the United States. Turkey made available its military bases, its airspace and shared intelligence with NATO allies, and committed to provide Turkish military forces for the peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan.

<sup>393</sup> Although Turkey hosted U.S. warplanes monitoring Iraqi skies but it was reluctant to back the American call for an attack on Iraq to oust President Saddam Hussein and block Baghdad's development of weapons of mass destruction.

## CHAPTER VII

### 7. CONCLUSION

The discourse on “National Security” in Turkey generally evokes “state security”, rather than safety of the citizens in the country, and the establishment of the Turkish state is highly inspired from the defense need against the threats challenging the establishment. In the 1990s, the source of threat against the state was kept quite wide via the 1982 Constitution, which inspired the Anti-Terror Law (that included the well-known Article 8 and Article 312) and the Turkish Penal Code (That included the Article 125), and which also fundamentally supported the function of national security concept via the military-dominated National Security Council (MGK) and State Security Courts (DGMs). The Kurdish nationalist PKK organization that rebelled against the Turkish state establishment, challenging its territorial and national unity, was completely regarded as a threat that could be only eliminated through “military power”.

A whole decade, the 1990s, is still remembered notoriously with a severe battle in the southeast of the country, with daily announcement of death tolls of Turkish soldiers, and daily funerals alongside patriotic slogans such as “the martyrs are immortal our land is indivisible.” On one side a terrorist organization with a political cause, claiming to represent an ethnic group in the country; on the other side the Turkish state that moved on to defend the “territorial and national unity of the country” against the PKK, which was defined as a separatist terrorist organization.

The striking fact within the conflict with its military and political dimensions is that the problem has been between the “power” (Turkish state) and some of its subjects (Kurdish people), although it has been named totally as a war against terrorism. In other words, probably to cover this fact, the struggle has been coded as a fight against terrorism. Therefore, since the armed conflict started in 1984 by PKK’s first attacks in the southeast region, Turkish Republic has preferred to regard it as a security threat that should be eliminated via military force, and hence the conflict was first developed into a bloody battle in the southeast region, and later into a political deadlock which still occupies most of the political agenda of Turkish Republic. The security and military measures within the counterinsurgency against the PKK in the problematic region were reinforced with severe legal measures against Kurdish nationalists’ political activities throughout the country.

However, the whole military and legal measures of the Turkish state indicated to a clear “political war” within the territories of the country; to a war between the Turkish state and Kurdish nationalism.

The conflict in essence was in the way each side has defined the issue; for one side it is a terrorist attempt challenging the national unity, for the other it is a fight for their political and cultural rights. While the Turkish establishment (and the Constitution) advocates the fairness of the system that unites everybody under citizenship that is coded as Turkishness; the Kurdish nationalists claim that they have been suppressed under Turkish nationalism that does not let formal recognition of any ethnic group in the country. Secondly, while the first one claims that any articulation of ethnicity, as well as a language other than Turkish in the Constitution is a sign to the division among the nation; the other one claims that the ongoing system is completely unfair for it violates the human rights and rights of minorities, which are confirmed via international agreements. However, Turkish state bases its assertions on Lausanne agreement that superseded the prior Treaty of Sevres, which not only formally recognized existence of Kurds (and Armenians) in the country but also promised independence for both. Nevertheless, there is a controversy going on the Lausanne agreement that it did, allegedly, envisaged cultural rights for both religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey. Turkish state, however, asserts that the only groups it recognized as minorities are the non-Muslim ones, and all the Muslim groups in Turkey are referred “equally” as Turkish and they are all “united” under Turkish nationalism with no reference to any other ethnicity.

The official approach totally ignored the political dynamics within the Kurdish community in Turkey as well as the migrated Kurds in Europe. In fact, the approach ignored even the potency of a Kurdish existence that could challenge Turkish state from all directions; the southeast of the country, northern Iraq, and Europe. However ironically, while the Turkish state’s intention was “self-defense” against terrorism, it has found itself many times on the chair of felon’s dock for the human rights violations within the measures, and sometimes due to the cross-border operations into the northern Iraq. Especially, the human rights issue has been the Achilles heel of Turkish Republic in its fight, which it has tried until now to legitimize; and which accelerated internationalization of the issue.

As it is clear, the conflict between both sides has already exceeded a simple “terrorism” problem as it was interpreted in the 1980s and beginning of 1990s, and has transformed into

a political problem based on controversial definitions of the problem by both sides. In the wake of closure of the last Kurdish nationalist party, Democratic Society Party (DTP), it is not wrong to say that the superior definer of the problem is still the Turkish state, and the definition of the problem has not got free of security threat. In other words, the Kurdish question is still associated with the PKK organization, and the problem is defined within national security concept. Secondly, it is definite that the PKK is still the focus point of both sides, while Turkish state regards it as the source of the whole problem, the Kurdish nationalists still respects it as the reference of Kurdish nationalist struggle. Throughout the thesis, it is displayed that the governments and civilian politicians failed to assign the Kurdish issue out of the security agenda of the military dominated state institutions, primarily the National Security Council (MGK).

The Turkish political system which has restrained non-violent Kurdish political activities, and moderate Turkish politicians from seeking for alternative policies have undermined the search for a middle ground. The PKK-focused political fight in Ankara between Turkish and Kurdish nationalist politicians, and the absence of a strong political will on both sides consolidated the popularity of the warring parties in the region, namely the Turkish military in the eye of Turkish public, and the PKK in the eye of Kurdish nationalist public. In short, Ankara had turned to be the field of war, rather than the field for solution-seeking policy in the 1990s.

It is necessary at this point to state that the aim of studying the counterinsurgency policies of each government throughout the 1990s is not to display that each government had different policies and distinctive approach in terms of the fight against the PKK. As emphasized several times, the PKK threat was seen as a terrorism issue, hence the military-led fight was not influenced from each government and the political leaders' political orientation or policies about the circumstances in the southeast. However, as it is displayed throughout the thesis, the disconnection between the military fight and each government's measures for political, social, and economic circumstances in the region (as well as the whole country) let the Kurdish population remain between the PKK's anti-state propaganda and the Turkish state's threatening measures. Especially, the military's scorched-earth tactics, the economical backwardness and the deficiencies in social services in the problematic region strengthened the PKK's anti-state discourse in a way to politicize the Kurdish community under the name of Kurdish nationalism. It is wrong to argue that the whole Kurdish population supports the PKK. Nevertheless, it would not be wrong to argue

that the PKK highly contributed to the growth of an anti-Turkish state discourse and Kurdish nationalism in the region, particularly in the absence of substantial civilian approach and policies in order to win the Kurdish population by shifting the anti-state course in the region. In other words, a moderate and civilian approach and measures to save the Kurdish population against the PKK's propaganda and win the people round via improvements in terms of social, economic and cultural needs, could curb the growth of an anti-state Kurdish nationalism (as well as Turkish nationalism which developed in the course of counterinsurgency against the PKK, and growth of Kurdish nationalism).

The failure of the Turkish politicians in the 1990s can not be reduced only to the constraints of the national security concept and the military dominance over the Kurdish issue. As it has been displayed, by the end of ANAP administration in 1991, the period of coalition governments began with partnership of DYP and SHP. It was also the beginning of instability due to the inter-governmental disagreements and short-term governments. The relatively moderate and promising government programs were contradicted with use of coercion against the Kurdish nationalist parties and political activities; newspapers, journals and books that criticized the Turkish state or Armed Forces; and restrictions on the use of Kurdish language. In addition to the discord of coalition partners and contradiction between the promises and practices, corruption allegations against political leaders and economic troubles were also the additional factors that destabilized the political agenda of the Turkish state in the 1990s. As a result, it is not wrong to argue that Turkish politicians also failed to gain the trust of the Turkish public as well as the Turkish military, hence they also lost the political competence and command over Kurdish question. As known, lose of confidence to the politicians in the 1990s, resulted in increase of prestige and credibility of the Turkish Armed Forces.

Although Turkey's all-out war in the 1990s against the PKK was conducted from all these three directions (southeastern region to take the area under control; northern Iraq to abolish PKK's infrastructure there; and Western Europe to cut PKK's political and financial leg), the motivation for the all three fields was common: eradication of terrorism, rather than solution of the problem. The opinion which prevented the civilian politicians from even taking socio-economic measures in the region before the armed campaign ceased, only contributed to the deterioration of the circumstances of the Kurds who were left to the mercy of the Turkish security forces and the PKK militants. None of the security measures produced any outcome in a way to protect the Kurds or providing their security or

improving their socio-economic conditions. For example, the emergency rule system (OHAL) bankrupted the economic activities as well as education and health services. It created an open-air prison, particularly in the 1990s when the rest of the country was enjoying a new expansion into the globalizing world. It should not be forgotten also that lack of economic investment for employment or improvement of infrastructure, left the region at least 20 years behind the rest of the country. In terms of social consequences, the result can be summed up as “regional alienation” due to the long-standing emergency rule under mainly military command. Village guard system set the Kurds against each other as it created a distinctive faction among the Kurds, and put the ones joined the system on the target of PKK. It also reinforced the economic and political influence of tribal chiefs in the region as well. The severe measures within the strategy of “environment deprivation” (scorched earth), left the Kurdish population with one choice: to migrate to the urban areas either in the region or in the west of Turkey. In the 1990s, it was also the region of exile, where “normal rules” were suspended for over one decade.

The state has been fighting an asymmetric war that has victimized the whole community in the region, in a way that legitimized any method to annihilate the pro-PKK activists, or non-violent Kurdish nationalist activists that consisted of intellectuals, politicians and artists, notorious Kurdish businessmen who allegedly financed the PKK. Therefore, the counterinsurgency against the PKK was expanded to an extension that exceeded the legal boundaries and included illegal formations within Turkish security forces as well as illicit relations between the Turkish officials and underground world as well as an illegal Kurdish Islamist organization, Hizbullah. Thus, the 1990s was also marked with unidentified murders, disappearances under detention, and allegations about misuse of the discretionary fund.

Turkish state’s military victory was achieved upon a high toll of death at around 30.000 people including Turkish security officials and soldiers, civilians and PKK militants; and political, social and economic consequences due to high cost military efforts. Throughout its fight against the PKK in the 1990s, Turkish state had to also cope with international criticism and denunciations for the harsh security measures and human rights violations against civilian population in the southeast, as well as the cross-border operations into northern Iraq. The repression Turkey had to face on international platform, particularly with the EU, as well as the gradual improvements in terms of Kurdish cultural rights indicate to the PKK’s influence on the changes of traditional approach to the Kurdish problem.



The consequences and level of success of the campaign against Kurdish nationalism in the 1990s can be understood by a short evaluation of the developments after PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999. Although the PKK was militarily weakened to a large extent by then, it had already politicized a large population in the southeast under Kurdish nationalism particularly via the Kurdish nationalist political parties. Kurdish nationalist parties, which still face legal prosecutions and political bans, have adopted an ethno-political rhetoric that is perceived as separatist against the national unity in Turkey. Öcalan, who has been imprisoned since he was captured in 1999, continues to influence Kurdish nationalist activities either in political platform or in armed front. Consequently, the anti-PKK policies in the 1990s complicated the Kurdish issue by alienating the Kurdish population in the region and seeking for a national consensus that could prevent the growth of an anti-state discourse in the problematic region.

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