

Democratisation in Plural Society and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Turkey-Kurdistan

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Abstract

Will Kymlicka (1995), a philosopher, and Samuel Huntington (2002), a political theorist, state that the conflict between ethnic groups and national groups, which has intensified since the rise of nation states, has replaced the ideological war between communism and capitalism since the end of the cold war. The nation-state model holds back societies politically, economically and culturally, particularly in the Middle East, where they have been founded by Bonapartist actors. In Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, neither nation-building, state-building, or democratisation have been accomplished. In the last decade, the main political movement in Kurdistan has changed its paradigm, arguing that 'a political solution for the Kurdish issue in Turkey (and also Syria) is possible through democracy, without having an independent Kurdistan.' This article will debate the relationship between democracy and ethnic conflicts, focusing on the Turkish case.

Keywords

ethnic conflict in Turkey, conflict resolution, democracy, democratisation

Introduction

Minority issues are no longer considered internal matters of sovereign states but instead are regarded as a problem of human rights. Human rights today comprise not only individual rights but also collective rights and group rights, such as the protection of minorities.¹ Great importance is ascribed to human rights for the quality of a democracy² by both the normative and the empirical theories of democracy (Höffe 1981:241-267; Merkel et al. 2003; Blumenwitz and Gornig 1993). Culture, language, and religion are considered fundamental human rights, the violation of which may substantially impair individual liberties.

For many minorities, the 19th and 20th centuries were a nightmare, as evidenced by the Holocaust of the Jews, Romani, and others during World War II, the systematic genocides of Armenians and Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire in World War I, and of the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, and the Hutu in Rwanda in the 1990s. Is the nation state solely to blame or is our notion of democracy or 'non-democracy' at fault as well? Many sociopolitical conflicts relating to ethnic, religious, or cultural minorities

¹ See UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (A/Res/47/135. Dec. 1992). <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r135.htm>

² The term 'democracy' is equivalent to political democracy when no other definition is added.

have either led to horrific results such as pogroms, massacres, and forced migrations throughout the world, or caused ongoing social and economic damage. These conflicts, which offend our sense of morality, not only disrupt peace regionally in the short term but also threaten world peace in the long run (Blumenwitz and Gornig 1993).

Although we cannot be certain whether nation states will continue to exist in the future, for multicultural/multinational states, ethnic conflict will remain a problem that requires a solution (Karlsson 1993: V-XI; Eriksson 1993). In an increasingly globalised world, the impact of these conflicts will not remain limited to a particular region. The wars in Chechnya/Russia, Kurdistan/Turkey, Tamil/Sri Lanka, and now in Syria and elsewhere have repercussions for the political courses of these countries and their relations to one another as well as for their economic development. The fluctuation in commodity prices (crude oil, natural gas, etc.) caused by ethnic conflicts may have far-reaching consequences for the world economy.

Recent events in southeastern Europe (the Balkans), the Middle East and Africa illustrate how necessary and urgent it is to solve minority problems in order to establish a peaceful coexistence of all peoples, ethnic groups, and minorities (Blumenwitz and Gornig 1993).

The following questions must be raised: Is democracy able to find just solutions to minority-majority problems? Is heterogeneity or homogeneity of society a prerequisite for or a goal of democracy? For example, in the normative part of the study the question will be dealt with as to how far democracy can be regarded as a balancing model, i.e., creating a balance between consent and dissent. Even if democracy is capable of doing so, the question remains: how stable and dynamic would such a balance be? What role does the state play in conflict management? Should it remain neutral or not (Steffani 1980: 43; Fraenkel 1969: 9ff.)?

Ethnic Diversity and Theory of Democracy

In social and democratic theory the common good is often considered the most important goal (Arnim 1977: 14-51). But the issue then arises of whose common good are we talking about? If a dominant majority determines *a priori* what the common good means, the legitimacy of this group remains questionable, notwithstanding any given democratic procedure. Seen from the point of view of game theory, one party does not cooperate with its competitor if the losses it would incur are estimated to be bigger than its gains. In other words, every heavily underrepresented group usually tries either to undermine the legitimacy of the majority or secure legitimacy for itself by means of force or civil disobedience (Dahl 1976: 131).

The question is whether legitimacy can solely be gained by procedural methods such as a democratic election (Luhmann 1978; Zippelius 1981). The following study favours legitimation through the justice system (Höffe 1987: 46ff.). The questions to be examined are whether special regulations to achieve justice are unavoidable and whether the warnings sounded by many theorists of liberalism against potential counterproductive effects of special rights for certain groups are justified.

The question as to why ethnic conflicts are often unsolved and ignored is answered speculatively in that ignoring the problem correlates with three primary reasons: the dialectic tension between state or nation building and democracy, utilitarianism (economic interpretation of democracy), and the influence of the history of ideas (Rousseau, Hobbes, and Locke). In a world in which different aspects of ethnicity such as culture, language, and values are integral parts of someone's identity, another question must be raised: Which language or culture is to be promoted? Modern multicultural/multinational countries are faced with the difficult task of defining the meaning of collective identity (Taylor 2002: 271-274).

Integration plays in this sense a major role in the stability of any society (Forst 1994: 143; Schmidt 2000: 410ff.). Nonetheless, nation states are under the strong suspicion of pursuing a hidden policy of assimilation by promoting a policy of integration. Although modern democracy and nationalism developed parallel to each other, national unity should not be directly equated with democratic unity (Taylor 2002: 24; Dahl 1976: 50). But does democracy in a multicultural/multinational society have an integrating effect? Or is unification rather a passive form of unity in these societies? At whose expense does integration take place? Which power constellation is legitimate? With all these basic consensus problems, Rawls' hypothetical concept of 'original position,' developed in his *Theory of Justice*, is of major importance. Rawls's original theory is grounded in an ideal of autonomy, of choosing our ends in freedom (King 2005: 648). As I develop the following chart the stability of a system can be described as a function of legitimation and integration, the causal connection – as the starting point for the development of future theses – can be outlined as follows (Gehring 1977: 120).

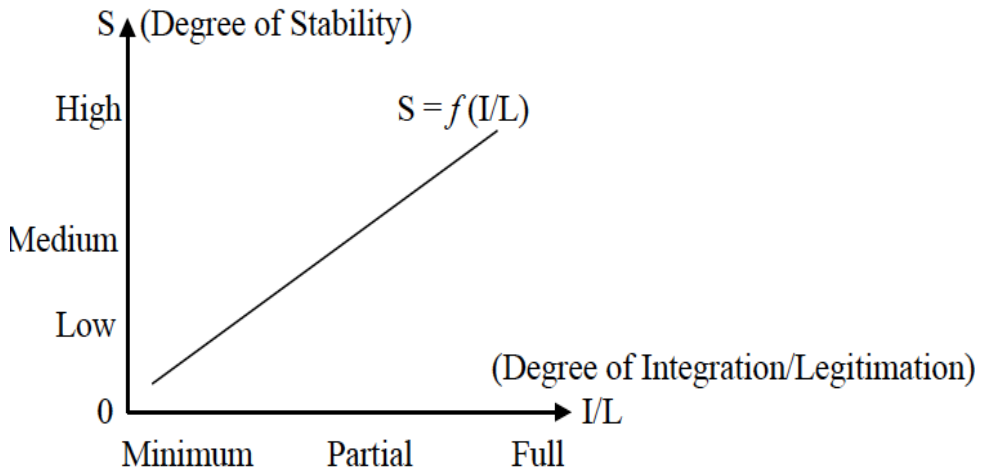


Illustration 1: Stability-Integration/Legitimation

In many classical-liberal normative theories of society and especially in theories of democracy, ethnic diversity is not dealt with explicitly. According to the theories of Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Rawls, the social contract and the classical model of democracy are based on a homogeneous society, carried out by free, individual, and responsible adults (Sartori 1987: 131/298ff.).

Pluralistic and classical liberal theories of democracy have been in competition since the early days of the modern theory of pluralism (Laski 1972; Barker 1972). Basically, the debate concerns system efficiency and democracy performance. As a result, two opposing models of society coexist in the research literature. In the classical liberal theory of democracy, both neoconservative thinkers and theorists of modernisation defend the homogeneity of society. The proponents of a homogeneous model of society assume that such a society is not only politically stable and easy to govern but also efficient and free of conflict (Gessenharter and Fröchling 1991: 15-51). Minorities are conceived of arsenic. Behind this point of view is the idea that system efficiency is preferable to the performance of democracy.³

On the other hand, supporters of pluralism such as Ernst Fraenkel (1972a and 1972b), Ralf Dahrendorf (1987), and Claus Offe (1996) defend heterogeneous society, arguing that in a democratic society minorities are

³ The efficiency of a democracy can be characterised by factors such as cost, duration of a decision making process, or the possibility of responding. The performance of a democracy is tied to the achievement of its political objectives or the establishment of equal human rights by means of the distribution of welfare (Lauth et al. 2000: 14-22).

'forces of the future.' Societies that are rife with conflict are preferred to those free of conflict (Geertz 2000; Offe 1996). In this model, the performance of democracy is antecedent to system efficiency. Tatu Vanhanen's political study indicates that there is no clear connection between democracy and homogeneity in a society (Vanhanen 1990/1999; Traine 2001: 300ff.). Undemocratic political systems usually strive for homogeneity.⁴ Following Rawls' theories of pluralism and justice, societal homogeneity as an objective of democracy is not defended; justice is more important than efficiency (Rawls 2005: 250ff.) For Fraenkel, however, the assumption that democracy needs total homogeneity to function properly is historically wrong and politically misleading (Fraenkel 1972a: 147).

In the research literature not only models explaining the rise of conflict but also numerous conflict-solving models can be found. This gives rise to the question, if confronted with a minority problem, which system (economic, political, social) is able to solve the problem best? In all these systems, democracy as the subsystem is understood as a form/method of justice. It is therefore legitimate to point out that democracy holds enormous potential for conflict resolution. But not every kind of democracy has this capacity.

Possible solutions to a conflict may vary between independence, federation and autonomy according to the realities of each country. But the solutions may also differ in empirical theories of democracy, especially in those European democracies that form the basis of the analysis.

Conflict strategies within the scope of democracy follow two different schools of thought. While classical liberal models of democracy demand individual rights on the basis of universal norms such as freedom and justice, modern/pluralistic models of democracy struggle for a form of equality that secures justice for groups. According to Etzioni, "Individuals and community are both completely essential, and hence have the same fundamental standing." (Etzioni 1988: 9).

Proponents of the 'difference blind principle'⁵, such as the philosopher Ronald Dworkin or the political theorist Bruce Ackerman, take the view that individual rights along with regulations about non-discrimination should always take precedence over collective goals (Dworkin 1977; Ackerman 1980). The inner right of self-determination (e.g. autonomy) is therefore often conceived of as a step toward secession that may cause political

⁴ A minority may perceive homogenisation as a reason for the emergence of conflict; the majority, however, may view it as a strategic means to resolve a conflict.

⁵ The 'difference blind principle' demands equal rights for all citizens regardless of their economic, ethnic, or social status.

instability and inefficiency (Oeter 1997). James Anaya thinks that minority problems cannot be solved by means of individual rights with non-discrimination clauses. Since decision-making processes are usually in the hands of national majorities, the cultural and social rights of minorities are often dismissed (Anaya 1995).

Others – Taylor (1994), Kymlicka (1989/97), Michael Walzer (1992) and also Giovanni Sartori (1987) – find a better solution in granting group rights. They argue for cultural pluralism and demand that cultural self-preservation has to be recognised as a legitimate goal (Taylor 1994; Habermas 1992a/92b). Taylor admonishes, “Multinational societies can break up, in large part because of lack of (perceived) recognition of the equal worth of one group by another” (Taylor 1994: 64). Therefore, Sartori and also Taylor favor an active encouragement of underprivileged cultures. Based on Taylor’s politics of ‘difference’ and ‘equal recognition,’ group rights and privileges are defended.

Authors such as Kymlicka (1997a and 1997b), Joachim Heintze (1994, 1997 and 1998), and Blumenwitz and Gornig (1993) defend the inner right of self-determination by applying the subsidiary principle, which argues that cultural pluralism may have a positive effect on social development, and political participation of all groups may strengthen democracy. According to the first argument, citizenship would be a possible solution. However, individuals have more than one social identity, and citizenship is only one of many (Forst 1994: 162ff.).

Democracy-democratisation and ethnic conflict

Conflict and democracy/democratisation interact with one another. In practice, however, there are political actors who assert that conflicts prevent democracy/democratisation. This assertion can be found in various theories as well. There are, however, sufficient examples to prove that democracies have obviated the need for ethnic conflict in general and armed struggle in particular.

First and foremost the question shall be raised as to whether democracy is capable of terminating armed ethnic conflict. But before this issue can be pursued the democratic developments of Turkey need to be examined carefully. Democracy is to be analysed according to what extent its rights and institutions function in reality as regards ethnic groups. In other words, which complications arose during the process of democratisation in Turkey? Did ethnic conflict complicate democratisation or did it help pave the way for democracy? The model of ‘defective democracy’ (Merkel et al. 2003) as well as other models and empirical findings will be of help in analysing this

question. It should be noted that democracy has enormous political potential for conflict resolution using models such as 'power sharing' (Lijphart 1995), 'consociational democracy' (Lijphart 1971) or the right of self-determination.

It is no easy task to build a democratic model that creates stability in ethnically divided societies. The question of whether democracies function better in homogeneous societies should be answered with caution. In his global study, Vanhanen could not find a contingent correlation between homogeneity and a given political regime/democracy (Vanhanen 1990 and 1991; Trainee 2001: 291). Although it seems hardly feasible to reach a broad consensus of interests between differing groups, it is not still desirable to build a homogeneous society. Historically based cultural differences should be regarded as a treasure of society. If in a society cultural diversity and variety of identities are annihilated, a loss of individual creativity and self-confidence will ensue. Pluralistic or heterogeneous societies are dynamic societies capable of creating the prerequisite for the experience of freedom (Gehring 1977: 70, 143).

The 'claims asserting' dynamic and the 'claims answering' pluralistic society would then together, complementing each other, form the structural basis of a free society - a society against the structural background of which the overwhelming majority of all members of society would experience reality as freedom (Gehring 1977: 70). Habermas states that a pluralistic society is a prerequisite not only for freedom but for democracy as well (Habermas 1962: 265).

It is obvious that a model of democracy that provides a stable and dynamic equilibrium is preferable. Furthermore, it should create an optimum balance between justice and efficiency (the golden rule⁶) as a second criterion. If this ideal is technically impossible, justice should be preferred to efficiency. Undemocratic regimes can also be efficient but they can never be just. The more just a democracy, the more stable and dynamic it proves to be. Justice in the form of equality/equal rights and freedom is capable of providing both integration for minorities and the legitimation of the governing power over minorities, through which the intensity of potential conflicts can be diminished.

Asymmetrical power relations between dominant national groups and minorities in multinational/multicultural societies usually do not allow for a fair competition for the position of power. Hence, the monopolistic regimen of the dominant group not only prevents a fair allocation of social

⁶ The golden rule can be described as the best path to achieve justice and efficiency simultaneously.

and economic resources, but also disregards the basic principles of democracy. Models such as competitive democracy are inadequate for these divided societies because of their zero-sum game.

The paradigm shift in political theory has resulted in the fact that democracy models are no longer based on premises such as a homogeneous people or free and equal individuals. New democracy models define 'people' as mass society composed of different groups, classes, and individuals. The assumption of the classic liberal model of democracy that people are free and equal may seem a necessary micro-foundation for the modern pluralistic democracy but is by no means a sufficient condition. This paradigm shift helped increase the capacity for problem solving enormously. Input/output-oriented theories of democracy not only incorporate rights to freedom and voting rights (or participation) on the input side, but also take into account the distribution of welfare and the realisation of all possible interests (Waschkuhn 1998; Lauth 2004). A precise definition of democracy will not be necessary here, but 'self-determination'⁷ as a central notion of democracy may function as a starting point for justice. The right of self-determination today is not only necessary for individual equality/freedom but also for groups, especially ethnic groups.

In this sense another interesting solution comes from Arendt, one of the most important political theorists of our time. Lijphart recommends for most deeply divided societies consociational democracy, which is based on power sharing and group autonomy (Lijphart 2008: 75). The consociational theory tries to manage inter-group conflicts with the democratic instruments in deeply divided societies. The theory has four fundamental consociational devices: grand coalition, mutual veto, proportional representation and segmental autonomy. The last three devices are applied in order to secure basic minority interests and real power sharing between the segments. According to Lijphart, institutionalised systems of proportional representation with an election threshold and compensatory election systems (instead of majority representation systems) are as suitable for pluralistic societies with ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities as federal structures, provided that national minorities are concentrated in certain regions (Lijphart 1977). Lijphart demands strong group representation (proportional to population size). He points out that 'self-government' is preferable to 'self-determination.' This may be a practical and effective alternative in many cases in order to dispel the conflicting parties' fears of assimilation or secession (see Lijphart 1995).

⁷ Habermas (1961: 15).

Western European democracy models or paths to democracy present a broad spectrum of possible solutions to ethnic conflicts. In Western democracies, where the issue of minorities is more or less settled, the efficiency of democracy is emphasised. But in transition countries democracies can only survive or consolidate if the performance of the system, i.e. the problem-solving capacities of democracy, is high (Fuchs 2000: 28). Transition is particularly difficult in countries confronted with ethnic conflicts. This begs the question as to whether an insufficient democratisation process gives rise to ethnic conflict or if ethnic conflict prevents democratisation, and to what extent democracy is capable of resolving ethnic conflict.

Based on theoretical frameworks on the one hand and Western European practices on the other, the thesis may be put forward that there is a U-shaped relation between democracy or democratisation and the degree of conflict (see Illustration II: *Impact of democratisation on the probability of extreme political violence in ethnically homogeneous nations and ethnically heterogeneous nations*). This correlation can be described in a more simple form as $C = f(T, D)$ with C being the degree of conflict, D the degree of modernisation, and T the degree of transition or democratisation. D can be replaced by indicators such as the right to freedom (F), degree of participation (P), transparency of elections (W), and protection of human rights and minority rights (control function) (R). The transparency/democratisation (T) can be described by reforms such as a new constitution or new electoral system.

$$D = f(F, P, W, R)$$

$$C = f(D)$$

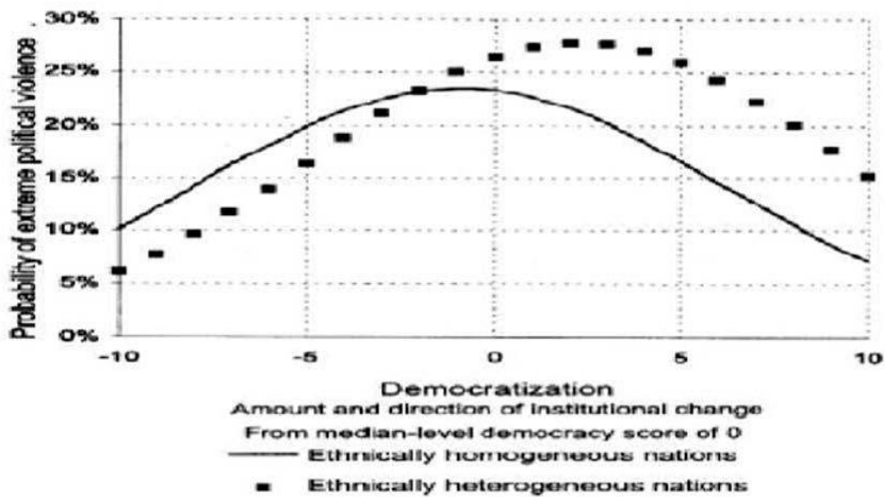
$-\partial C / \partial D$ has a negative value

$+\partial C / \partial T$ has a positive value

Based on a variety of empirical findings some scholars contend that the general probability of extreme political violence is low in countries with either a high degree of democracy or an authoritarian regime, whereas it is high in countries with badly established democracies or those in the process of democratisation (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Mousseau 2001). The rising part of the curve is more likely to represent an authoritarian regime, and there is a correlation between democratisation and the use of violence. When a country opens itself in the direction of democracy, some actors of ethnic groups condone the use of violence in order to assume the best position possible. While this tendency of democratisation endorses violent actors,

authoritarian regimes are thus coerced to move toward democracy (Saxton 2004). This spiral lasts until the threshold of democracy is reached. It goes without saying that at this point a certain democratic tradition and infrastructure must already exist. Once these prerequisites are fulfilled, people are able to believe in justice and the problem-solving power of democracy. In other words, if the level of democracy is rising, the level of political violence is falling.

Impact of Democratization on the Probability of Extreme Political Violence in Ethnically Homogeneous and Ethnically Heterogeneous Nations



Source: Mousseau (2001)

Illustration 2: Impact of democratisation on the probability of extreme political violence in ethnically homogeneous nations and ethnically heterogeneous nations

The second and third waves of democratisation (Huntington 1991) do not exhibit a linear development. Due to the breakdown of many attempts at democratisation, political discourse refrained from framing a general theory/concept of democratisation for the time being. Instead, transition research is being conducted with a descriptive-comparative method.

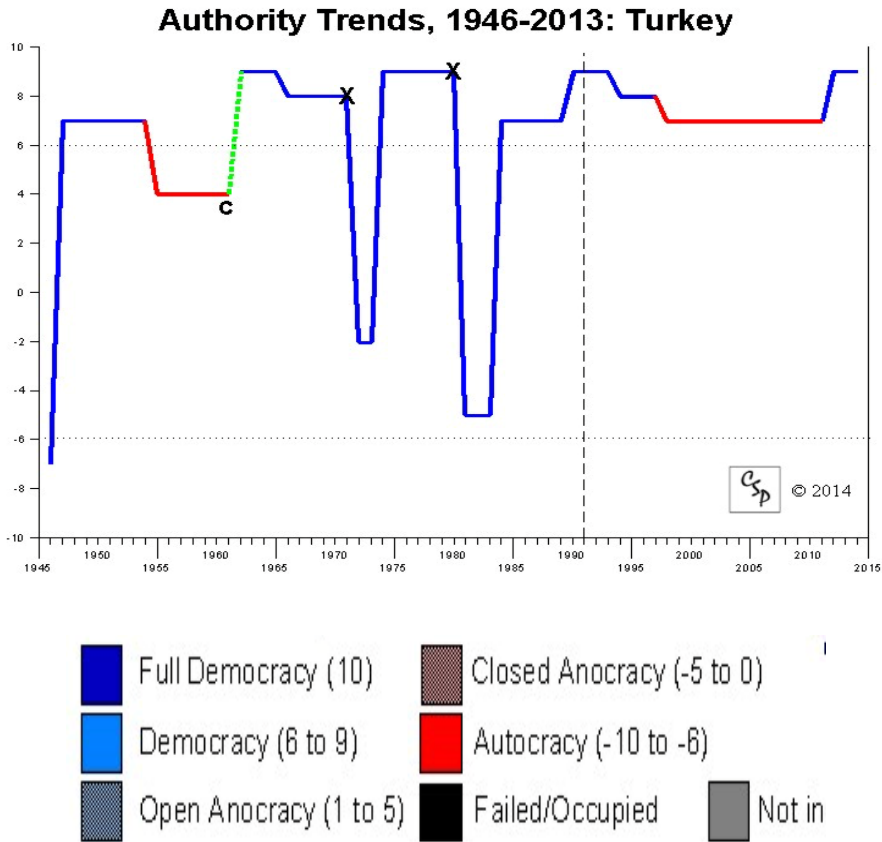
In scholarly discourse, transition and measurement of democracy have been analysed extensively in numerous models such as 'polyarchy' by Dahl (1971), Lauth et al. (2000) and Lauth (2004), but also through empirical research by scholars such as Schubert and Tetzlaff (1998) and Vanhanen

(1991). The notion of 'embedded democracy' (Merkel 2004: 36ff.), which is based on freedom, equality, and control, has served as a theoretical framework for an ideal model of democracy in a number of theories (Lauth 2004: 32). Merkel (2004: 36ff) verifies the dimensions of freedom, equality, and control based on five interdependent partial regimes, namely electoral regime (partial regime A), political rights (partial regime B), civil rights (partial regime C), horizontal accountability (partial regime D), and effective power to govern (partial regime E). Many researchers employ the same criteria to examine a functioning democracy. Freedom rights in particular take on central importance in measuring democracies. Individual rights as well as collective and group rights of minorities are counted among the freedom and participation rights today. The present paper employs Merkel et al. (2003: 232-233)'s concept to measure and typologise democracy. Individual factors can exert a certain effect on different partial regimes or institutional 'minimal requirements' of embedded democracy. For example, ethnic discrimination can violate the partial regime of universal voting rights as well as the political right to participate (Merkel et al. 2003: 153). Depending on which criteria are missing, democracies are typologised differently by different authors and institutions as 'defective' or 'blocked democracy' or 'hybrid regimes.' In the following section, this paper will analyse the process of democratisation in Turkey with regard to the issue of minorities, inquiring as to how democratisation has affected the intensity of conflict.

Democratisation in Turkey

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic was established in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Although the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal, who was later given the name 'Atatürk' (Father of the Turks), did create a territorial state, he was lacking a nation. It was a difficult and serious task for Kemal. He was deeply influenced by the French Revolution and totalitarianism, which shaped his ideological background. The so-called 'Kemalism' left a deep mark on the history of the republic, its institutions and society in general.

A serious attempt at democratising the new republic was never made. Two principal reasons should be mentioned here: the Kemalist elite was not willing to forgo hegemony and power, and could not allow the unfinished nation and its authoritarian regime to be endangered by opening up its authoritarian structures to democratic principles. The entire process of democratisation can be illustrated in a simple graph in order to better comprehend Turkish democracy today.



Source: Polity IV (2013)

Illustration 3: Process of democratisation in Turkey

Polity IV has rated democracy in Turkey as extremely high. It is described in general terms below.

The Period between 1923-1946

The period from the founding of the state in 1923 until 1946 can be termed totalitarian semi-fascist; the era from 1950 to 1980 may be called bureaucratic authoritarian, and the time from the end of the 1990s to the present should be regarded as a phase of liberalisation or second transition.

The criteria for totalitarianism mentioned by Linz (2009), such as a state ideology (Kemalism), single-party system, concentration of power, and lastly the lack of or severe curtailment of basic rights (right of assembly,

freedom of information, freedom of communication) constitute typical features of the period from 1923–1946. The masses were excluded from any political or economic activity by a coalition of a nationalist-minded military and new technocrats who gained positions of power by social discrimination (O'Donnell 1973). The Kemalist elite functioned as the state bureaucracy claiming, as a political and ideological formation, to have the sole right to exercise power. Parliament consisted solely of the Kemalist Party CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*/Republican People's Party), which was considered the executive and legislative body at the same time. By banning other parties, associations and unions, the CHP for years prevented other organisations from entering the political arena (Steinbach 1995: 13).

Kemal's state ideology is based on six pillars: populism, statism, secularism, nationalism, revolutionism, and republicanism. This absolutist sociopolitical concept, which is still praised as the highest commandment of the Turkish state to this day, is based on the assumption of a populist/artificial homogeneity of the Turkish nation. Of the six principles it is nationalism that has the highest rank, but it is also the stumbling block of the state. Kirişci and Winrow (1997: 103) correctly observe that the national concept of Kemalism is a racist ideology. During the founding of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal promised the Kurdish population autonomy, but once the Kemalist elite had solidified their positions of power in the state apparatus, the Kurds were not even acknowledged as an ethnic group (Ekinci 2004: 104–108). The official policy of disregard and denial set off major rebellions that lasted in Kurdistan until 1938. Following each bloody suppression, scores of people were deported and forcefully displaced. After the rebellion of 1925, an era of assimilation policy toward minorities, especially Kurds, began. Kurdistan remained a forbidden zone for foreigners until 1965, almost all Kurdish place names⁸ were changed, and it was forbidden to name a child with a Kurdish first name as well as to use the Kurdish language or celebrate Kurdish holidays. The assimilation policy was routinely enforced in schools.⁹

The Period between 1946–1980

The first transition phase began in 1946 when for the first time opposition parties were allowed to participate in elections. The CHP suffered a heavy defeat in the first parliamentary election. But notwithstanding the fact that

⁸ Hür (2009).

⁹ A number of boarding schools were established in Kurdistan aimed at spreading the Turkish language and culture. In 1972/73, 48 out of 55 of these schools nationwide were located in Kurdistan (Sönmez 1992: 174).

the populist Democratic Party (DP) – founded by former members of the CHP – assumed power with liberal slogans, the repressive character of the regime remained practically unchanged. The governance in this stage can be described as something between totalitarian and authoritarian bureaucratic. Apart from the creation of a multiparty system, the political and institutional situation did not change. Like the old potentates, the new actors enjoyed exclusive privileges. The Kemalist elite and the military, however, were not able to endure this tendency toward liberalisation for long. The military – the guardian of the state – intervened several times terminating all transition attempts in 1960, 1970, 1980, and finally 1998. This military intervention was repeatedly legitimised by contending that there was a threat to internal and/or external security. The Kurds and/or Islamic fundamentalists were soon labeled ‘internal enemies.’ Basically, the Kemalists were not opposed to religious fundamentalism provided that the fundamentalists remained under their control. The conflict between the Islamic groups was never really serious. The state used Islam in Kurdistan as a unifying tool for nation building, and in this sense it has helped foster Islamic culture and parties to this day.¹⁰ All parties, from the radical nationalists to the ‘liberals’ and even the Islamic and Marxists parties fully endorse the national principle and Kemalism (Karpas 2010: 329).

All military interventions took place in times of severe economic and political crises. The Kemalist elite repeatedly restored the Turkish state and resumed the process of homogenisation. Moreover, the state conducted a forced accumulation of capital with tough economic measures at a cost to the broad mass of the population, particularly in Kurdistan.¹¹ The later military coups were also staged during periods when the Kurdish national movement was on the rise. It should be noted that the putschists’ main goal was to advance the completion of their own nation rather than to allow the Kurds to build one of their own (Barkey and Fuller 1997). Evidence of this can be found in the statements and actions of the military: the military legitimised the coup in 1960 by putting forth the argument that the liberal policies pursued by the governing Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* [AP]) would pave the way for Kurdish nationalism. 54 of the 55 AP members arrested during the 1960 coup were of Kurdish descent (Kirişci and Winrow 1997: 113).

¹⁰ After the two coup d’états of 1960 and 1980, Islamic schools, theological faculties, and universities were founded. Önsoy (1991); Öztürk (2011).

¹¹ The tax rate on the assets of the Christian population was twice as high as on the assets of the Muslim population (Kirişci/Winrow 1997: 102).

Almost all political actors in Turkey are convinced that a strong state and army are essential to hold together both the artificially created state territory and the 'nation.'

This opinion is shared not only by the Turkish army but also by political actors, parties, the Council of High Judges, and state attorneys. They, too, are strongly oriented toward the official state doctrine and nationalism. Even constitutional judges express a strong preference for 'national interests.' They protect, first and foremost, the 'holy ideology of the state' against individuals and groups, and not the other way around. As Can points out, they are considered the second 'guardian of the state' (Can 2001: 50/181).

The second transition began during the presidency of Turgut Özal in the 1990s. Although Özal succeeded in liberalising the economy, the process of democratisation remained only half-finished in the shadow of the military. For the first time in the history of the republic, Turkey shifted from statism to economic liberalism. But without liberalisation/democratisation or stability of the political system, this economic system was neither due to survive for long, nor could the goal to become a 'regional power' be achieved. No other government since the founding of the republic has been confronted with the Kurdish conflict as continually and squarely as the government of Özal. For Özal's Turkey, this conflict was the most decisive factor in political instability. After years of fighting the PKK, Özal realised that political stability could not be achieved without solving the Kurdish issue (Aral 2001). After the first truce was prolonged at the request of Özal in 1993, he agreed to acknowledge the 'Kurdish reality.' For the first time he mentioned autonomy and federation as a discussable political solution (Watts 1999). But with his sudden and still unexplained death in 1993, the course toward liberalisation/democratisation and a solution to the Kurdish issue was suspended. Thus, the military reinstalled the old political system. The first and most difficult paradigm shift from a unitary state to an autonomous one had failed. But although he did not succeed in implementing political changes against the Kemalist opposition and the army, Özal made a contribution as a visionary to a new wave of liberalisation in Turkish politics.

The Özal era was followed by a bloody war in Kurdistan, which slowed down the process of democratisation almost to a standstill. After the European Council accepted Turkey's candidacy for EU membership in 1999, a new tendency toward democratisation could be detected. Eight legal and two constitutional reforms have been initiated since 1993. Although the reform packages of 2002 ended the state of emergency as well as the

existence of the state security courts, the representatives of the National Security Council in civil committees and the language ban imposed on the Kurdish public media in 2004, massive violations of human rights and restrictions on basic freedoms can still be found in Turkey and particularly in Kurdistan. Based on the EU progress report and the following indications, it appears that Turkey is still far from fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria and being a real democracy. Despite all reform packages, Turkey signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights only with reservations, and did not ratify the additional protocols on 'protection of national minorities' of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor the ECHR's 'ban on discrimination by public offices' (see E.U. Regular Reports 1999/2004/2009/). In all those years Turkey was unable to establish a well-functioning democracy. The following criteria can determine which of Merkel et al. (2003: 265)'s 'partial regimes' of democracy are defective:

- All legally established Kurdish parties¹² were banned by the Constitutional Court. Moreover, their right of continuity was repeatedly called into question and politicians and delegates of the Kurdish parties were taken to court for allegedly cooperating with terror organisations. Additionally, the high 10 percent election threshold blocked any participation of Kurdish parties.¹³
- Human rights organisations still report human rights violations and inappropriate use of violence during demonstrations. Their statements are corroborated by the fact that Turkey has been frequently accused of human rights violations and sentenced by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)¹⁴ (E.U. Regular Reports 2010).
- Discrimination against the Kurdish language still exists as a result of its ban in the public sphere. Furthermore, Turkish authorities still refuse to allow Kurds to choose names with Kurdish letters that do not exist in the Turkish alphabet, to teach in Kurdish and to grant Kurdish politicians permission to defend themselves in Kurdish in a court of law. There is a clear political bureaucratic barricade in Kurdistan.¹⁵
- Freedom of information and the press is only partially granted. Between 4

¹² The following Kurdish parties were banned by the Constitutional Court: Halkın Emek Partisi (HEP) (People's Labor Party) on 14 July 1993, *Demokrasi Partisi* (DEP) (Democracy Party) on 16 June 1994, *Demokrasi ve Değişim Partisi* (DDP) (Democracy and Change Party) on 19 March 1996, *Demokratik Halk Partisi* (DEHAP) (Democratic Peoples' Party) was indicted but the party leadership dissolved itself prior to being forbidden, and *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (DTP) (Democratic Society Party) on 10 June 2009. See Kurdistan-post(2008); Birand (2008)..

¹³ Partial regime A is defective.

¹⁴ Partial regime C is defective.

¹⁵ Partial regime C is defective.

August 2006 and 8 June 2009, 61 bans were imposed on 27 Kurdish newspapers. About 40 journalists have been murdered since 1990. Furthermore, there was a ban on YouTube between 2008 and 2010 as well as restrictions on access to approximately 7000 additional websites.¹⁶

Not one of Merkel's five partial regimes can be regarded as intact, but in particular the partial regimes A, B, and C are severely defective. According to the concept of 'defective democracy', Turkish democracy qualifies as 'illiberal' and 'exclusive.' Merkel defines illiberal and exclusive democracies as follows: The appearance of illiberal defects of democracy is more likely when the social and economic resources of a society are distributed so asymmetrically that one social group is able to both suppress another social group and maintain its own political hegemony. In strongly segmented, ethnically divided societies majoritarian democratic structures favour the defects of an exclusive democracy (Merkel et al. 2003: 247).

Conclusion

The thesis that the general probability of extreme political violence is low in countries with either a high degree of democracy or an authoritarian regime, whereas it is high in countries with badly established democracies or those in the process of democratisation (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Mousseau 2001) has been confirmed in the case of Kurdistan. After the start of armed conflict by PKK in 1984, Turkey was forced to open itself in the direction of democracy by the late 90s. The Kurdish ethnic group approved the use of violence in order to assume the best position possible. While this tendency of democratisation endorses violent actors, Turkish authoritarian regimes are thus coerced to move toward democracy. This spiral could last until the threshold of democracy is reached. Is this threshold of democracy reached with the success of HDP (People's Democratic Party)? Is it possible for the peace process in Kurdistan to be consolidated now? The relationship between conflict and democratisation in Turkey/Kurdistan can be summarised thus:

- Since Turkey was confronted with state and nation building at the same time during its process of modernisation, 'stateness'¹⁷ posed a problem for democratisation.
- The imperial roots proved to be a hindrance to Turkish actors acknowledging other nationalities on their path to democratisation. In many

¹⁶ Partial regime B is defective. For indicators of the partial regimes see Croissant and Thiery 2000: 99f, and Merkel 2003: 69.

¹⁷ Linz and Stepan (1996: XIV) defines 'stateness' as the relation between nation, state, and democratisation.

countries such as the UK and Spain, the 'politics of recognition' (Taylor 1994) was not just accepted by the actors of the transition process but found its expression in the institutions as well. In Turkey, by contrast, the state elite's failure to recognise other cultures and nationalities represents a major obstacle on its path to democratisation.

- The researched case showed that ethnic conflict is not necessarily a zero-sum game (Gurr and Marshall 2005; Lijphart 1977). On the contrary, the conflict in Kurdistan under authoritarian regimes has had a positive impact on democratisation. On one hand the Turkish authoritarian regimes have been weakened by resistance, while on the other hand the politicisation of the masses in Kurdistan has led to an awareness of political and civil rights.
- The hypothesis that democracy is able to resolve conflict can be confirmed with regard to many cases in Europe such as the UK, Spain, and Italy. For example, Spain has alleviated the conflict substantially in the past years because of the actors' willingness to accept compromises in terms of institutional instruments such as autonomy, proportional representation, and constitutional equality of minorities. Although Turkey also has formal institutional components such as a multiparty system and free elections at its disposal, it is still lacking not only the basic rights of democracy (freedom of speech, freedom of consciousness, and freedom of association), but also the instruments to resolve conflict. On the basis of many cases one can conclude that a consolidation of democracy is hardly imaginable without the ability to resolve conflict.

In Turkey a solution to issues such as nation-building, minorities and ethnic identities is hindered on the one hand by conservative Turkish political actors, and on the other hand by institutional structures which are inappropriate for a multinational/cultural society. Therefore Turkey has remained at a transitional stage for a long time and it has not been possible for democracy to be consolidated.

In order to achieve a solution to the ethnic conflict in Turkey the old paradigm of statehood (nation, state and democracy) must be radically altered. In regards to this the following aspects should be considered.

Firstly, in a multinational/multicultural society such as Turkey the cohabitation of different ethnic groups and the establishment of a democratic society requires a federal or at least a self-governing state. The necessary preconditions for plurality and self-government cannot be produced by a monopolistic and centralised state.

Secondly, the question of whether democracy has the necessary capacity and capability for conflict resolution in an ethnically-fragmented society must be considered.

Classic liberal democracies do not have sufficient capability and mechanisms for conflict resolution, because political power is not shared fairly between ethnic groups. In contrast, consociational democracy has more mechanisms for equal participation or fair power sharing, which could alleviate ethnic conflict.

Finally, the artificially-constructed concept of the 'Turkish nation' without regard for other nations and ethnic groups is one of the main reasons for the conflict. Instead of denying or assimilating other ethnic groups, Turkey must create a new social contract for all groups.

A well-functioning democracy depends on the type of governance and the concept of the nation alongside other factors. As long as the centralised state structures and concept of the nation as ethnically Turk are not changed, it will not be easy to establish a well-functioning democracy in Turkey.

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