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RESURGENCE AND REMAKING OF IDENTITY Civil Beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics, and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds

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This article analyzes the case of Turkey and theorizes about the causal mechanisms that can explain discursive transformations through which dominant perceptions of ethnic identities are suppressed, revived, and remade. Systematic content analysis of a major Turkish newspaper from 1984 through 1998, comparisons across subperiods, in-depth interviews with prominent journalists, and detailed examination of the historical events constitute the empirical analysis. Arguing that the state elites did not form a monolithic group, it is shown that the transformation of the mainstream discourse during the 1990s occurred after several reversals, relatively swiftly, and at least partly despite resistance from within the state. The Kurdistan Worker's Party conflict; shifting instrumental elite beliefs; breakdown of cooperation among moderates; external developments, including those in Iraq; and cascade mechanisms played causal roles. The explanation contributes to a multidisciplinary body of literatures on public-political discourse, cascade theories of social-political change, ethnic conflict, democratization, Turkey, and Kurds and derives policy implications.

Keywords: *public discourse; cascades; democratic transition; Turkey; Kurds; Iraq; ethnic conflict*

In 1984 and 1985, the mainstream Turkish daily *Hürriyet* published only 25 articles that were fully or partially related to the country's ethnic Kurds. Only 3 of these 25 articles used the word *Kurd* in reference to a person, group, concept, or place. In those days, the media rarely covered issues related to Kurds and, when they did, did not use the word *Kurd*. Things have changed drastically since then. In the first 5 months of 2003 alone, *Hürriyet* published a total of 114 articles related to Kurds within Turkey; 47 of those, or roughly 4

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in every 10, made a reference to Kurdishness as a group identity at least once by using terms such as *Kurds*, *ethnic Kurds*, or *Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin*. Until the 1990s, an uninformed observer monitoring the mainstream Turkish social-political discourse could hardly have become aware of an ethnic-linguistic group called Kurds, which makes up between 12% and 20% of the population according to different estimates (Bruinessen, 2000; Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits, 2002; McDowall, 1997; Mutlu, 1996; Robins, 2000).

Why and when did this transformation of the Turkish mainstream public-political discourse occur, and how did it occur within a relatively short period of time? Are we observing actual changes in beliefs and values or just changing expressions? How does the Turkish case contribute to our understanding of the ways in which the dominant perceptions of ethnic identities and the language describing them are made and remade?

Research on Turkey is largely silent on these questions. It refers to discursive changes but makes little systematic attempt to measure them, identify the triggering events and causal mechanisms, and derive theory and policy implications (Barkey & Fuller, 1998; Gunter, 1997; Kadioğlu, 1997; Kasaba, 2001; Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997; Yavuz, 2001). Alternatively, it is focused on the state's discourse and ideology rather than the society's (Sakallıoğlu, 1996; Yeğen, 1996). The reasons for this approach might be the repressive and apparently supreme status of the state discourse and ideology in the realms of the so-called sensitive issues in Turkey (i.e., Kurds and political Islam during the period in question) and because it is consistent with the strong image, as opposed to the practice, of the state in Turkey, in the sense that Migdal (2001) uses these concepts.

However, not distinguishing between the state and mainstream social-political discourses implies, first, that any change in the latter must have followed the changes in the former and, second, that military and bureaucratic elites must simply have dictated any discursive change. True, Turkey's powerful military-bureaucratic elites, who were engaged in an intense war against actual and perceived Kurdish separatists at that time, were endowed with legal and extralegal powers to restrict societal actors' discursive autonomy. Nevertheless, the elites had to operate in a context of formal democracy and technologically advanced media. Their powers fell short of totalitar-

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ian control over the public-political discourse. Thus, far from being self-explained, the reasons for the changes in the mainstream social-political discourse require critical exploration.

In response, this article analyzes how the discourse on Kurds changed in the country's largest daily newspaper from 1984 through 1998 and compares the different subperiods to each other. The analysis demonstrates that the discursive changes occurred at least partly despite resistance from the state and that the changes in laws and state practices often followed, rather than preceded, the shifts in the mainstream discourse.

This article then offers a causal narrative for the discursive transformation. It explores and theorizes the underlying social-political and cognitive mechanisms and derives policy implications. In part, the explanation draws on strategic elite beliefs. Arguing that the state elites in the period, which are loosely defined to include military, bureaucratic, and mainstream political elites, did not form a monolithic group, the article distinguishes analytically between hardliner- and moderate-nationalist elite beliefs. In general, elite beliefs in the period became more fragmented, first in response to changing domestic and external security environments and second as a result of acts and events that undermined the cooperation among moderates. These developments created both a need and an opportunity for moderate elites to form new beliefs regarding the expected consequences of the visibility of the Kurdish identity within the mainstream discourse, new beliefs which made them more likely to favor recognizing this identity. Some elites thus attempted to initiate a discursive liberalization despite resistance from hardliners and opportunistic political rivals. Once initiated, the discursive shift reinforced hardliner-nationalist elite beliefs that vocal subnational identity groups in general, and Kurds in particular, were the divisive other. Thus, the discursive acknowledgement of Kurds reflected various elite interests and beliefs: Some favored including and recognizing Kurds, and some favored excluding and dissociating from Kurds.

However, a purely elite-based explanation would be insufficient. Why did, as will be shown, some moderate elites' attempts to liberalize the discourse fail, whereas others appear to have had more success? Similarly, why did hardliner elite resistance, which was backed by legal restrictions and the state's coercive apparatus, fail to prevent the discursive shift even though it had succeeded in doing so earlier? In my opinion, the answers lie in the fact that neither the moderate nor hardliner elites had complete control over the discursive and informational spaces. These spaces had developed their own dynamics as a result of the country's increasing social-economic and political pluralization, which included competitive elections and predominantly private media ownership. Thus, moderate elites' attempts to recognize the

Kurdish identity within the mainstream discourse succeeded only when they were able to mobilize a critical mass of writers and opinion makers. At this point, social, political, and legal and extralegal pressures to use politically correct language became drastically less effective. Similarly, hardliner attempts to control the discourse lost muscle when a critical mass began to disregard the discursive taboos.

Accordingly, I complement an elite-based explanation with an argument that is built on cascade theories of social-political change; cascades explain how bandwagon effects and the strength of numbers can facilitate the occurrence of rapid changes in individual beliefs, expressions, and behavior during collective actions (Kuran, 1995; Laitin, 1998; Petersen, 2001; Somer, 2001; Wright, 1999). In the Turkish case, discursive cascades that reduced the effectiveness of legal and social-political pressures to use officially and politically correct language—and enhanced mainstream society's limited discursive autonomy—explain how the discursive transformation could occur relatively swiftly. They also explain why it surprised as well as disappointed many elites and why earlier elite attempts had failed to shift the discourse. Simultaneously, the Turkish case demonstrates the weaknesses of cascade theories and suggests that they can be improved by paying more attention to various causal mechanisms. Most important, in addition to strategic cognition, self-reflection and mutual persuasion deserve more attention as causal mechanisms explaining belief changes. The distinction between expressed and unexpressed beliefs needs further theorization, and advancing finer hypotheses regarding the conditions under which bandwagon effects become more likely would be beneficial. I develop new concepts and explanations accordingly.

The Turkish case is comparatively interesting for several reasons. First, it manifests a critical case in a formally democratic context in which an ethnic identity's expression was nearly absent in the mainstream discourse until this situation changed relatively swiftly and unexpectedly during the past decade. Second, comparing the same society's discourse in different periods instead of comparing the discourses in different countries has the advantage of controlling for many contextual variables, such as culture, ethnic composition, and history of political institutions. Third, focusing on one country enables one to offer a "thick" explanation and examine the influential historical events, acts of individuals, qualitative variables, and causal mechanisms that effect change (see, among others, Bates, Greif, Levi, Rosenthal, & Weingast, 1998; Bowen & Petersen, 1999).

Before moving on to the main discussion, a crucial note on the terminology is in order. The article's focus, what I call the civil discourse, denotes the mainstream or politically correct social-political discourse. It denotes the

way people openly write and talk—in this case, about ethnic identities—when they cannot control their audience, that is, in the presence of people they do not necessarily know and trust. Accordingly, civil beliefs are defined as those beliefs that people express as part of their civil discourse. I prefer the terms *civil discourse* and *civil beliefs* instead of *public discourse* and *public beliefs* for two reasons. First, public discourse may be understood to denote the state discourse; I do not claim that the state and civil discourses are entirely separable but that they are partially autonomous from each other. Second, I want to differentiate the civil-private distinction in this article, which is defined later, from the public-private distinction in other studies. A detailed discussion of this point is offered in the Theoretical Explanation section.

TURKEY'S KURDISH CONFLICT PRIOR TO 1984

Only a very brief review will be offered here. The ethnic-confessional rivalries that occurred during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire constituted a formative experience for Turkey's founding elites, and many Turkish elites remain wary of ethnic-linguistic particularism to this day. Turkey harbors numerous ethnic-linguistic minorities (Andrews, 1989). Most of these groups, such as the Chechen, Laz, Turkmens, and Albanians, appear to have assimilated into the composite Turkish identity without necessarily abandoning their ethnic consciousness. Overall, the identity politics that gained momentum among such groups during the 1990s do not appear to reject Turkishness as an overarching national identity and do not clash with the representatives of the state (Karpas, 2000).

By contrast, ethnic Kurds clashed with the secular, Turkish, and centralist characteristics of the state right from the beginning. In fact, for various identity-related, demographic, geographical, and historically contingent political and socioeconomic reasons, Kurds posed the major challenge to the state's attempts at nation building through the homogenization of people's identities, loyalties, and language (Bruinessen, 1992; Ergil, 2000; İçduygu, Romano, & Sirkeci, 1999; Mango, 1994, 1999; Özoğlu, 2004). Although Kurds and Turks generally fought together during World War I and the War of Independence that led to the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, a series of Kurdish rebellions occurred during the 1920s and 1930s, which the Kemalist regime forcefully suppressed (Mango, 1999; Olson, 1989). It is also true that numerous individual Kurds actively participated in the foundation of modern Turkey and became prominent advocates of Turkish nationalism.

Suffice it to say here that until the 1980s, the state adopted an assimilationist melting-pot ideology, which people internalized partially or fully through education and other means of state and nation building. The existence of Muslim minorities was officially denied, and the expression of the Kurdish identity was heavily suppressed, to differing degrees in different subperiods.¹ Education and broadcasting in Kurdish were prohibited, along with, in general, giving children Kurdish names. At the same time, Kurds were readily accepted as Turks and Turkish citizens if they embraced the Turkish language and composite identity and kept their ethnicity in the personal realm. Presumably, a great deal of assimilation into as well as expressed or unexpressed alienation from the Turkish identity occurred (Bruinessen, 2000; Somer, 2004). This era also featured transition to multiparty democracy in 1946, significant industrialization and urbanization, and increasing geographical mixing between ethnic Turks and Kurds in the western parts of the country. Traditional Kurdish elites joined mainstream political parties immersed in the politics of patronage. Domestic politics in the 1960s generated new nationalist ideas among Kurds, who were also inspired by Kurdish movements in Iran and Iraq. Educationally mobile young Kurds initially sought political expression mainly within leftist movements with mixed Turkish-Kurdish membership (Bruinessen, 2000; Yavuz, 2001). In the 1970s, many of them broke away partly in response to what they perceived as these movements' inattention to Kurdish concerns. They included Öcalan, the founder and leader of the Kurdish-separatist Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK).

The military regime of 1980-to-1983 produced a new peak in the state oppression of the Kurdish identity and, thus, of its politicization. The regime was especially harsh on leftists, political Islamists, and Kurdish nationalists. It went as far as decreeing a law banning the use of Kurdish in public, which was later lifted in 1991.

THE POST-1984 CIVIL DISCOURSE

The content analysis covers the 1984-to-1998 period. In 1984, the PKK launched an armed offensive against the Turkish state. In February 1999, Öcalan was captured, and armed clashes practically ceased, having cost an estimated 30,000 or more lives by then (Bellaigue, 1999). The post-1998 period, which combined a major fall in the PKK threat to state security, the pull of the European Union, and significant democratization, should be con-

1. Officially, minority status was conferred only on non-Muslim minorities recognized as such by the 1923 Lausanne treaty, which marked modern Turkey's international recognition.

sidered a different period (Somer, 2004). A detailed content analysis of the mainstream-nationalist daily *Hürriyet* during the period serves to track the changes in the civil discourse.² The choice of *Hürriyet* fits the purpose of the analysis particularly; it is a privately owned, center-right newspaper well-connected with the political establishment.

All news and commentaries published in the paper during the period were examined.³ Overall, 4,277 articles were identified as directly or indirectly related to Kurds, and their contents were analyzed; 3,027 of these articles were identified as being primarily on Kurds living in Turkey.⁴ The goal in collecting the data was to answer the following questions: (a) How did interest in Kurds evolve? How did the quantity and frequency of articles on Kurds change over time? (b) How did the linguistic categories describing people, places, and events change? How did the frequency with which code words such as *Kurd* were used change? (c) How fast did the discourse change: through gradual evolution or swift shifts? Were there any reversals? (d) When did the major shifts occur? (e) How did the articles' subject matter change over time, in particular, with respect to the identity-related and social-cultural dimensions of the Kurdish issue?

To answer these questions, detailed tables were generated classifying each article in terms of three qualitative and quantitative variables: (a) whether the article employed the ethnic (or national) term *Kurd* in reference to a group or place, such as Kurd, Turkish Kurd, ethnic Kurd, citizens of Kurdish origin, and Kurdish rebels, instead of using nonethnic terms such as "citizens from the East" or "rebels";⁵ (b) whether the article was about domestic Kurds, that is, Kurds living in Turkey (the discourses referring to Kurds living in and outside Turkey can be subject to different dynamics. Because my main interest was the changing use of "Kurd" as a domestic category, articles on Kurds living outside of Turkey were distinguished from those on domestic Kurds); and (c) the subject matter of the article and most important, whether it was security (e.g., clashes between the PKK and the

2. *Hürriyet* is one of Turkey's oldest national newspapers and leads others in daily circulation, which is currently about 500,000 during the week and 700,000 on weekends.

3. The issues prior to 1995 were from actual library copies in the Atatürk Library in Istanbul; some missing issues were analyzed in Beyazıt Library in Istanbul. Online copies were used from 1995 onward, which is the beginning year of *Hürriyet's* online archives. One graduate student assistant did most of the content analysis, and one graduate and three undergraduate students, all majoring in social sciences, assisted.

4. For consistency, articles on Kurdish organizations operating outside Turkey were excluded because they do not necessarily refer to an ethnic group within Turkey.

5. Any usage of *Kurdistan* as part of the name of the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan was excluded also because it does not necessarily indicate the writer's own employment of the term.

Table 1
Annual Changes in the Use of Kurd as a Domestic Category

| Year | Total Number of Articles on Domestic Kurds | Monthly Average of Articles | Number of Articles Using <i>Kurd</i> at Least Once | Share of Articles Using <i>Kurd</i> |
|------|--|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1984 | 18 | 1.5 | 2 | 0.11 |
| 1985 | 7 | 0.6 | 1 | 0.14 |
| 1986 | 40 | 3.3 | 8 | 0.20 |
| 1987 | 122 | 10.2 | 27 | 0.22 |
| 1988 | 65 | 5.4 | 19 | 0.29 |
| 1989 | 152 | 12.7 | 23 | 0.15 |
| 1990 | 129 | 10.8 | 18 | 0.14 |
| 1991 | 238 | 19.8 | 121 | 0.51 |
| 1992 | 423 | 35.3 | 186 | 0.44 |
| 1993 | 490 | 40.8 | 157 | 0.32 |
| 1994 | 300 | 25.0 | 90 | 0.30 |
| 1995 | 178 | 14.8 | 54 | 0.30 |
| 1996 | 253 | 21.1 | 64 | 0.25 |
| 1997 | 139 | 11.5 | 16 | 0.12 |
| 1998 | 473 | 39.3 | 95 | 0.20 |

Table 2
Comparing the 1984-1990 and 1992-1998 Periods

| Period | Monthly Average of Articles | Share of All Articles Using <i>Kurd</i> | Share of Security-Related Articles Using <i>Kurd</i> | Share of Nonsecurity Articles Using <i>Kurd</i> | Percentage of Nonsecurity Articles |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 1984-1990 | 6.34 | 0.18 | 0.12 | 0.49 | 19 |
| 1991-1992 | 27.54 | 0.47 | 0.25 | 0.71 | 48 |
| 1993-1998 | 25.46 | 0.26 | 0.19 | 0.44 | 29 |

security forces) or nonsecurity, the latter including political (e.g., news on Kurdish political parties), rights related (e.g., human rights violations), or social-cultural (e.g., identity issues and economic development).⁶ In addition, causes and potential triggering events of overall shifts in the articles were noted through historical event analysis and interviews with leading journalists.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the findings related to domestic Kurds. The major finding is that the 7-year period from 1984 to 1990 is fundamentally

6. Articles identified as having both security and nonsecurity content were classified as nonsecurity.

different from the 6-year period from 1993 to 1998 in terms of the visibility and recognition of the Kurdish category. This can be inferred from the frequency, content, and language of the articles. Comparing the periods of 1984 to 1990 and 1993 to 1998, the average monthly number of articles about Kurds underwent a fourfold rise. More important, the linguistic categories that the newspaper employed changed. It became considerably more likely that an article used the *Kurd* category in reference to a person, group, concept, or place in Turkey. In the period of 1984 to 1990, the average share of articles employing the *Kurd* category was 18%. Instead of *Kurd*, the articles used terms and pronouns such as *they*, *traitors*, or *separatists* without referring to ethnicity. By comparison, in the period from 1993 to 1998, more than one in every four articles used *Kurd*.⁷

Alongside the rising employment of the *Kurd* category, the articles' subjects shifted from security issues to nonsecurity issues. As the fourth and fifth columns of Table 2 demonstrate, articles with nonsecurity content were much more likely to use the term *Kurd*. However, the use of *Kurd* rose for both subjects, by 58% for security-related articles and by 32% for nonsecurity articles. Thus, two changes contributed to the rising currency of *Kurd*: first, the rising coverage of nonsecurity issues and, second, the rising usage of *Kurd* in all articles. One should note that the majority of the articles were security related in both periods but not in the period of 1991 to 1992 when the shares of security and nonsecurity articles were roughly equal.

How and when did the change occur? First, it did not occur through continuous, gradual change. There were several unsustained surges. The earliest occurred in 1987–1988, when there was a major rise in the use of *Kurd* and the first articles identified as having nonsecurity content were published, titled “Let Us Not Fear the Word *Kurd*” (later Premier Ecevit’s statement) and “Turks Who Don’t Speak Turkish.”⁸ This was followed in 1989 by a major fall in the use of *Kurd* despite the rising number of articles. As the third row of Table 2 and Figure 1 show, the major transformation occurred during 1991–1992. The total number of articles on Kurds, the usage of *Kurd*, and the frequency of nonsecurity articles all surged during these years. Notably, 307 of the 661 articles, or approximately one in every two articles, made a reference to the *Kurd* category during these 2 years.

Second, the transformation occurred quite rapidly. Within just a few years, both the coverage of issues related to Kurds and the use of the *Kurd* category surged. Third, the magnitude and pace of the shift surprised observers.

7. A *t* test for equality of means demonstrates that the mean frequencies of articles using *Kurd* are different in the 1984-1990 and 1993-1998 periods at a 4% interval of confidence, $df = 149.86$; $t = -2.12$; significance = .036, two-tailed (SPSS, 1996).

8. April 19 and May 10, 1987.

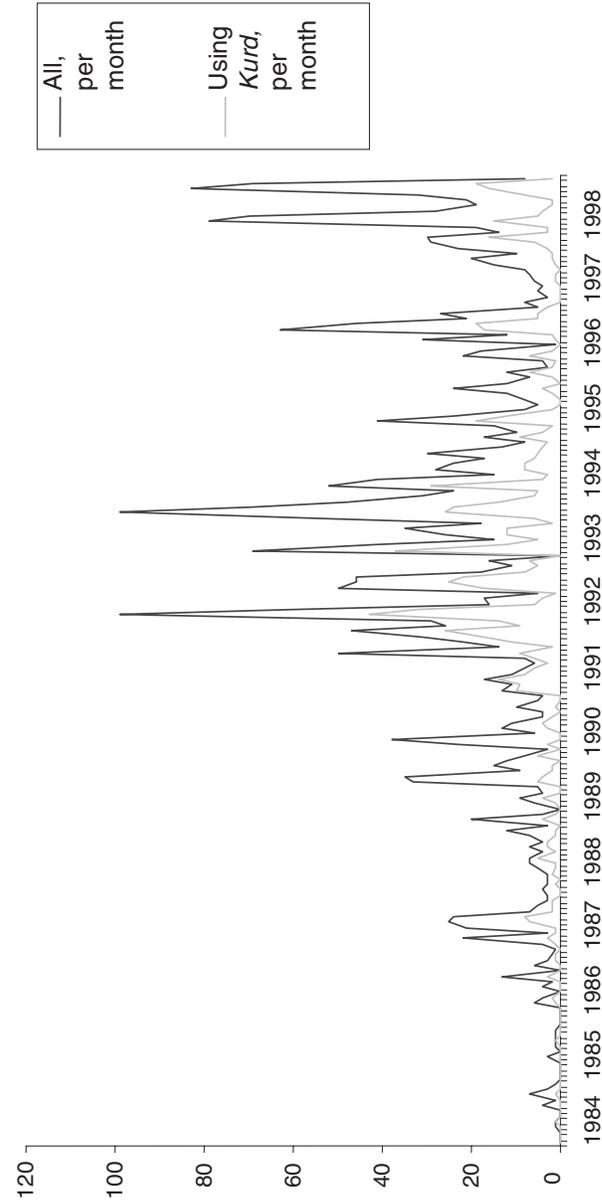


Figure 1. Total monthly number of articles and monthly number of articles using the term *Kurd*.

The tone of the news articles of the period and the memoirs of and interviews with prominent journalists all testify that few expected then that the currency of the term would surge soon, considering the state's dominant image and the taboo status of Kurd for the official ideology.⁹ For example, journalists such as Hasan Cemal, who closely watched the Kurdish conflict, recount being shocked when President Özal dared to announce in 1990 that the Kurds should not be anathema and that his own grandmother was Kurdish (Cemal, 2003, pp. 102-110).¹⁰

Fourth, Kurd was a marginal part of the mainstream discourse even before the transformation, when it was considered taboo: Kurd was a known category, although its civil expression was avoided whenever possible. A related observation is that the newspaper relatively freely employed Kurd in reference to "external" Kurds as in "Iraqi Kurds" or "Kurdish Leaders in Iraq," confirming that Kurd was a known category and deemed appropriate to use in reference to "foreign" people or places.

ELIMINATING ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

What can be called a culture-deterministic thesis, that the opposition against the Kurdish identity was deeply embedded in Turkish culture or identity, and therefore that the discourse could only change through their transformation, can be rejected outright—the civil discourse changed within a matter of years. A second and more plausible thesis, which can be called the democratization thesis (DT) and which is implicitly and in different versions upheld by the majority of scholarly and journalistic writings (see, among others, Barkey & Fuller, 1998; Ergil, 2000; Gunter, 1997; Kinzer, 2001), is more promising. According to the DT, the expression of the Kurdish identity was suppressed by nationalist elites and institutions, such as the Turkish military and bureaucratic establishment, who maintained the power to determine the evolution of the civil discourse. The DT could explain the discursive transformation via either DT1, the transformation of elite values in favor of liberal democracy; DT2, a substantive devolution of power from nationalist elites and institutions to those that were less Kurdo-phobic; or DT3, bottom-up democratization whereby civil actors with liberal-democratic values prevailed over nationalist elites.

9. The author's interviews with Hasan Cemal, at Koç University, Istanbul, June 15, 2004; with Cengiz Çandar, in Taksim, Istanbul, June 25, 2004; and M. Ali Birand, in Bağcılar, Istanbul, July 1, 2004.

10. Also see "ABD Heyeti: Özal Bize Kürt Kökenliyim Dedi," *Hürriyet*, October 10, 1989.

For sure, the recognition of the Kurdish identity would have been unimaginable under the military regime; relative democratization made it possible by enlarging the boundaries of legal politics and adding pluralism to it. A referendum in 1987 resulted in the return to politics of politicians banned by the military. However, discursive shifts did not follow these and other steps of democratization, and with respect to sensitive issues, democratization did not involve a fundamental devolution of power from the military. Through constitutional changes it introduced in 1982, the military-bureaucratic establishment retained ultimate control over such issues even after the transition to civilian government. This only began to change after 1999. Thus, DT2 can be rejected.

However, as will be clear later, there were signs that elite beliefs regarding the Kurdish issue were undergoing some change in the late 1980s. And although substantive, participatory democratization was limited, the social-political, and discursive-informational spaces became more plural and thus less controllable. To have explanatory power, DT1 and DT3 need two modifications: (a) a distinction between different types of elite beliefs so that one can explain what type of changes in elite beliefs occurred and (b) the identification of the social-cognitive mechanisms that affect individual and collective behavior during discursive shifts so that one can explain how people could change their discourse in a semi-democratic, yet legally and politically repressive, environment.

THE THEORETICAL EXPLANATION

ELITE DIVISIONS AND CHANGING INSTRUMENTAL BELIEFS

The Turkish social and political-military establishment harbors two broadly defined, rival belief sets regarding Turkey's ethnic-linguistic and religious diversity. I will call them the hard-line-nationalist and moderate-nationalist beliefs, for lack of better terms and in order to comply with an extensive literature on democratic transition (see, e.g., Linz & Stepan, 1996).¹¹ According to the hard-line-nationalist beliefs, the identity- and security-related aspects of the Kurdish conflict are inseparably linked. The following view of a parliamentarian in opposition to the public use of Kurdish is representative: "Tomorrow there will be cafes where Kurdish folk songs are sung, theaters where Kurdish films are shown, and coffee houses where Kurdish is spoken.

11. An alternative labeling is *defensive-nationalist* and *liberal-nationalist*, which I take up in another article.

If this is not separatism, what is?"¹² Because they expect identity politics to evolve into separatism, people holding hard-line–nationalist beliefs oppose the accentuation of ethnic categories within the civil discourse. They also oppose exclusively Kurdish political movements, even if these only express cultural-linguistic aspirations and denounce violence, because they consider such aspirations as stepping stones to political-territorial demands. According to the interpretations of history that support these convictions, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated in a way that hurt Turks because ethnic-religious movements were not stemmed before they evolved into competitive nationalisms.

The moderate-nationalist beliefs may also uphold national unity but delink the identity and security aspects of the conflict. Accordingly, ethnic Kurds can have interests that can be accommodated without undermining Turkey's social, political, and territorial integrity; in fact, the accommodation of Kurdish interests that pertain to culture and identity may diminish the support for political-territorial demands. The underlying strategic belief is that a wholesale approach to Kurdish demands leaves to moderate Kurdish actors no other choice than either to remain subordinate to radicals or to join them (Barkey & Fuller, 1998; Watts, 1999). Thus, the moderate beliefs encourage cooperation with moderate Kurdish actors, granting Kurds cultural-linguistic rights and acknowledging the Kurdish identity. The moderate beliefs do not necessarily disallow military measures against insurgents but renounce a strictly security-focused approach.

One can speculate that the rivalry between these belief sets is rooted in the rivalry between the etatist and liberal traditions of the late Ottoman times, which continued to manifest themselves within the hardliner and moderate wings of Kemalism.¹³ Compared to the etatist tradition, the liberal tradition was more tolerant of diversity, more willing to delegate to society, and less willing to embark on a radical and revolutionary-modernist mission. Among other historically contingent factors, a Kurdish rebellion in 1925, which had both antiseccular and ethnic-nationalist motives and which appeared to vindicate the hardliners' skepticism of ethnic-religious diversity, was instrumental in helping the hard-line–Kemalists to prevail over the liberal in the formative years of the Republic (Ahmad, 1993). However, at least since the 1960s and 1970s, Turkish politics has become too complex to be examined by using this dichotomy (Bozarslan, 1996).

12. Comments from the chairman of the Justice Committee, Alpaslan Pehlivanlı quoted in FBIS (1991, pp. 41-42).

13. A related distinction is that between the state-centered and society-centered models of Turkish modernization (see Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997).

Accordingly, the hardliner-moderate distinction here seems to crosscut most modern cleavages of Turkish politics, such as leftist-rightist, center-periphery, and (early) Kemalist and non-Kemalist. The possible exception to this rule is the far-right, which has been more or less consistently hard-line nationalist; meanwhile, Islamist parties of the Erbakan tradition have largely bypassed the question of ethnic diversity by arguing that the overarching Muslim identity should resolve any ethnic conflict (Yavuz, 2001).¹⁴

A similar hard-line-moderate distinction exists among different beliefs held by ethnically conscious Kurdish actors. The key difference between the two is beliefs regarding the legitimacy of the Turkish political system, and the effectiveness of cooperation with political actors unwilling to recognize Kurds as a separate nation. Öcalan's views, which he expressed in a 1991 interview, exemplify the hardliner beliefs: He categorized all Kurdish actors in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq who cooperated with these countries' regimes to differing degrees, even if they espoused Kurdish autonomy, as "collaborators." Furthermore, he denounced a 1990 report by the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP), which among other things advocated cultural-linguistic rights for Turkish Kurds, because the SHP considered Kurds an ethnic group rather than a separate nation (Balli, 1991; SHP, 1990). In 1991, several newly elected Kurdish parliamentarians refused to comply with the rules of the oath-taking ceremony in Parliament, which included a pledge of allegiance to the "indivisible integrity of the country and nation," in Turkish. This event had important consequences for the cooperation between moderate Turkish and Kurdish actors, as will be elaborated on later.

By contrast, according to the moderate beliefs, Kurdish interests can be advanced within the system. Actors holding moderate beliefs have existed within the Turkish political system for a long time. The system was in fact "competent and elastic enough to incorporate traditional Kurdish actors. In turn, those actors played a key role in the legitimization of the system" (Bozarslan, 1996, pp. 141-142). Actors holding moderate beliefs may include Kurdish nationalists whose ultimate goal is a separate nation-state, cultural nationalists who seek recognition for the Kurdish identity and culture, or ethnic Kurds who have fully embraced the Turkish composite identity. However, whatever their ultimate goals, moderate actors are willing to work within the system and cooperate with moderate Turkish nationalists for long-term goals. Accordingly, the aforementioned Kurdish parliamentarians

14. Both moderate- and hard-line-nationalist views have been voiced within center-left and center-right actors and within the military-bureaucratic establishment. See SHP (1990) for moderate-nationalist views within the center left. Retired General Bölügiray's (1993) memoirs reflect views within the military. In former Premier Yılmaz' view, there were three different approaches within the state (Cemal, 2003, p. 55).

who challenged the rules of the oath-taking ceremony have been criticized by some of their fellow party members for “undermining the democratic resolution of the Kurdish conflict.”¹⁵

This last observation underlines the important point that what separates the moderate and hardliner beliefs, both within Turkish and Kurdish nationalists, is not necessarily what they want, that is, beliefs regarding the desirability of outcomes, such as Turkey’s unity, but *instrumental beliefs* as to how to reach what they want. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Erdal İnönü opposed a major hardliner Turkish-nationalist act in 1994, the parliament’s decision to lift the immunity of seven Kurdish parliamentarians for their alleged separatist views and links with the PKK. He explained that the decision would simply cause more harm than benefit for the country’s unity, which was the end that both hardliners and İnönü were claiming to pursue.¹⁶

Following Przeworski (1998), instrumental beliefs can be divided into two types. “Equilibrium beliefs” are beliefs regarding the popularity of different outcomes, that is, what the majority of other people favor. The majority here is not necessarily a numerical majority but subsumes social-political power. Causal beliefs (technical beliefs) are those regarding the consequences of particular policies. An example is elite beliefs regarding how specific policies would affect the support for the PKK. Accordingly, many Turkish military officials have argued against hardliner policies by reasoning that these policies backfired by pushing the local population toward the PKK.¹⁷ Thus, causal beliefs include strategic beliefs regarding other actors’ expected responses to one’s own actions.

Hence, studies that are aimed at uncovering people’s beliefs regarding outcomes such as Kurdish independence may have little predictive value (see, among others, Ergil, 1995). Such beliefs may be irrelevant to actors’ political behavior or be endogenous to equilibrium and causal beliefs or both. Take a Kurdish nationalist who believes in the desirability of Kurdish independence. That person may nevertheless oppose separatism if he or she believes that too few Kurds would actively support a separatist movement (unfavorable equilibrium beliefs) or that such a movement would fail in the face of opposition from regional states (unfavorable causal beliefs). Similarly, consider a moderate Turkish nationalist who advocates the recognition of Kurdish identity in a context of liberal democracy because this would

15. Interview with Feridun Yazar, former head of the People’s Labor Party, by Ruşen Çakır, *Vatan*, May 3, 2004.

16. Earlier, Speaker of Parliament Cindoruk, a center-right politician, had upheld democratic procedures and the parliamentarians’ immunity by ignoring the Public Prosecutor’s demands (Watts, 1999, pp. 645-648).

17. For example, Bölügeray (1993).

weaken Kurdish hardliners and strengthen Turkey's unity (moderate causal beliefs). This individual may not express these views in his or her civil discourse if he or she believes that too few people are expressing them, and thus, by expressing them, the individual may be perceived to be pro-Kurdish (unfavorable equilibrium beliefs).

Shifts of beliefs regarding outcomes are more difficult and prolonged processes because they require fundamental shifts in perceived identities and interests; the Turkish discursive transformation might have been facilitated because it initially involved instrumental beliefs, which are more malleable but, once changed, can influence beliefs regarding outcomes over time.

CASCADES AND CHANGING EQUILIBRIUM BELIEFS

Suppose that some elites want to achieve discursive liberalization so that previously taboo terms and concepts are openly expressed. According to cascade theories, they can achieve this if they can successfully alter people's equilibrium beliefs regarding what the socially and politically dominant majority of the society believes.¹⁸ Thus, they can produce a discursive cascade by triggering bandwagon effects in people's civil discourse after the initial users of a new discourse reach a tipping point. Earlier influential studies suggested that the likelihood of an initial cascade reaching a tipping point is more or less unknowable (Kuran, 1995). Later work has focused on identifying the causal mechanisms that activate bandwagon effects and the facilitating conditions that increase the availability of these mechanisms and the likelihood of cascades. This increases the explanatory capacity of cascade theories (Petersen, 2001; Somer, 2002).¹⁹

In relation to discursive shifts, the causal mechanisms that produce cascades can be summarized under two headings: Interdependent Belief Change and the Voicing of Held-Back Beliefs: Resurgence. The first mechanism generates remaking, whereas the second generates resurgence. I have identified four facilitating conditions that increase the likelihood of discursive cascades. Table 3 lists these conditions. Before discussing these, however, a discussion of the civil-private distinction is in order.

18. What matters is not numerical majority or dominance, as some demonstrations of cascade models imply, but social-political dominance. The numerical majority of a society may embrace the equilibrium beliefs of a socially and politically dominant minority.

19. Petersen (2001) discusses eight mechanisms that explain why people in one village will rise up against an occupying force, whereas those in an adjacent, similar village will fail to reach a tipping point.

Table 3
Causal Mechanisms and Facilitating Conditions: Discursive Cascades

| Causal Mechanism | Interdependent Belief Change: Remaking | Voicing of Held-Back Beliefs: Resurgence |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Facilitating conditions | Shallow civil beliefs Dominant control mechanism vertical High network effects Low private belief resistance | Dominant control mechanism vertical Low private belief resistance |

CIVIL-PRIVATE DISTINCTION

In comparison to the civil beliefs I defined earlier, private beliefs can be defined as those beliefs that people express among others they know and trust, with minimum fear of social or political correctness, and of legal consequences. Earlier work suggests that one's private beliefs tend to be more real, stable, and consistent than one's public beliefs, that is, those revealed to strangers (Kuran, 1995). This is questionable. Take the assumption of private beliefs' being more real than public beliefs in the sense of being more indicative of one's actual self. In fact, the opposite may also be true: People may utter private beliefs that they later regret or feel embarrassed about. Consider a person who only voices political opinions among her friends who are poorly informed about politics. In the absence of potential criticism from others, she will have little outside pressure to form private beliefs that are critically evaluated. Now consider that this person has to give a public talk in front of strangers. Fearing being criticized and embarrassed, she forms civil beliefs through careful deliberation. Civil beliefs may also be more real in the sense that the person likes them and identifies with them more than she does with her private beliefs. In this case, the person may change her private beliefs in accordance with her "more civilized" civil beliefs through cognitive dissonance reduction, thus eliminating the divergence between her two types of beliefs (Elster, 1995). Private beliefs are not necessarily more stable and consistent than the civil beliefs either, as I will discuss further below.

Why then the private-civil distinction? There is no guarantee that cognitive dissonance reduction or other, "cold" mechanisms will always reduce the difference between the two types of beliefs. This is especially true if the civil discourse is maintained not by internalized norms but by an authoritarian government. Under these circumstances, it is generally known that people who express civil beliefs do not embrace them wholeheartedly. This

reduces the convergence of civil and private beliefs for three reasons. First, people feel that the civil beliefs they express just to comply with restrictions do not necessarily define who they are and do not necessarily violate their cognitive integrity (Elster, 1996). Second, when it is known that the civil expressions people express are mostly lies, a great number of people's expressing a civil belief will not increase that belief's plausibility in the eyes of others (Kuran, 1995). Third, in a highly insincere discursive environment where civil beliefs have become platitudes and government enforced clichés, civil beliefs may lose their relevance for people, who may find comfort in their private lives. They may form private zones of trust whereby they can voice their private beliefs for the purpose of self-expression and information exchange, thereby feeling little cognitive pressure to bring them in line with their civil beliefs.

Thus the private-civil beliefs distinction is a useful analytical tool whenever people have solid private beliefs on certain issues, but unwelcome outside restrictions limit the expression of these beliefs, especially in developing democracies, but also in others. The issue goes beyond emphasizing different aspects of one's personality depending on social context; it involves the concealment or misrepresentation of some private beliefs regarding one's self, under pressure to conform to the requirements of a given social-political context.

CAUSAL MECHANISM 1: CIVIL EXPRESSION OF PREVIOUSLY HELD BACK BELIEFS

If a civil discourse conceals a large amount of private beliefs that are held back in civil settings, a discursive cascade can reveal these beliefs (Somer, 2001). Imagine six speakers in a conference on an ongoing military campaign, all of whom privately oppose the campaign. However, only two of them are planning to make antiwar speeches. The other four are planning to make prowar speeches—or at least not condemn it—because the conference will be attended by a conservative audience that they expect to be prowar. They do not know that most people in the audience are also suspicious of the war. Prior to the speeches, people hold back their antiwar sentiments because they are afraid that their conservative credentials can be questioned. It so happens that the first two speakers are the ones who had planned to voice their true opinions. During their antiwar speeches, the other speakers notice that the audience does not react strongly against the speakers' stand. This encourages the third speaker to also express antiwar views. Her speech persuades some people in the audience to approve openly of the antiwar stand of the speakers. Further heartened by the weak opposition displayed to these peo-

ple, the remaining three speakers decide to speak against the war. Their speeches convince more and more people in the audience to reveal their initially unexpressed reservations about the war. Note that in this example, people's private beliefs do not necessarily change. What generates the discursive shift from the prowar to the antiwar discourse is the revelation of previously unexpressed private beliefs. Also note that these beliefs could have remained unexpressed if the speakers had been scheduled in a different order.

CAUSAL MECHANISM 2: INTERDEPENDENT CIVIL BELIEFS

When one lacks solid conviction on an issue, it makes sense to adjust one's beliefs to equilibrium beliefs by relying on others' knowledge or persuasiveness and thus subjecting one's beliefs to interdependent change. Consider a mayor scheduled to give a public speech in a conference on the legalization of a new and controversial medical technology. Without any deep knowledge of medicine, he decides to advocate it. Imagine that there are five other speakers scheduled to speak and that only two, who are scheduled to speak first, are planning to argue against legalization. During the first speech, the person in our example begins to question his own civil beliefs. At the end of the second speech, he determines that he was wrong and modifies his speech before he takes the podium as the third speaker. Unknowingly, his speech influences the speech of the next speaker also. Thus, all of the speakers may end up opposing the technology, although they would have done the opposite if the speakers had been scheduled in a different order. Note that unlike in the previous case, what causes the discursive shift here is interdependent belief change through mutual persuasion, not the expression of previously held back beliefs. Of course, both mechanisms can occur together as well.

FACILITATING CONDITION 1: SHALLOW BELIEFS

The degree to which one's beliefs can be influenced by those of others depends on how firm one's beliefs are, that is, to what extent they are strongly felt, deliberate, and embedded in self-interest. For example, many mainstream Turkish journalists possessed firm beliefs regarding the Kurdish issue as a result of the heated discussions within the radical-leftist movements they had been involved in during the 1960s. If they avoided the Kurdish issue within their civil discourse, the reason was either legal-political disincentives or their internalization of the Kemalist ideology of homogeneous nation.²⁰ In comparison, a person whose only knowledge of Turkey's ethnic diversity

20. The aforementioned interview with Çandar.

stemmed from the official education, which avoided both positive and negative references to Kurds, and from the civil discourse would lack firm beliefs regarding Kurds: His or her beliefs would be malleable. After reading a hard-line–nationalist column denouncing any Kurdish claims as falsities and pro-PKK, the person could genuinely believe the civil expression of the Kurdish identity to be divisive. After listening to his or her moderate–nationalist friends, his or her beliefs may shift in favor of acknowledging Kurds. When beliefs are shallow, they feel less credible to the holder of these beliefs as soon as other people begin to express opposing beliefs. Firm beliefs have the opposite effects. Overall, one can predict that the average person in Turkey lacked firm beliefs opposing the recognition of the Kurdish identity before the discursive transformation. One reason for this may be the rarity of historical group conflicts involving ordinary Turks and Kurds.

**FACILITATING CONDITION 2: VERTICAL RESTRICTIONS
AS THE DOMINANT CONTROL MECHANISM**

A civil discourse can be maintained by two major control mechanisms. Vertical restrictions are enforced by actors who have highly unequal power over those who are subject to the restrictions, for example, the judicial enforcement of antiseparatism laws and the use of coercion by state. Horizontal restrictions are enforced on and by actors who have similar power, for example, peer pressure and political name-calling. The discourse can shift more easily whenever the dominant mechanism is vertical. First, people feel less need to adjust their private beliefs to their civil discourse if the dominant control mechanism is vertical, as already discussed. Second, once the restrictions are fully or partially lifted, coordination for change is relatively easy; signals from a few actors with sufficient authority are often sufficient. By contrast, when horizontal restrictions are the dominant control mechanism, change requires coordination among numerous actors. Consider a town in the American South prior to the Civil Rights revolution. Many people feel that segregation is wrong, but individual Whites speaking up against it face horizontal pressures. Change is obstructed by several factors. First, although individual opponents sense that they are not the only opponents, they do not know the actual number and strength of the other opponents because the expression of antisegregation views is suppressed. Second, even if they knew about each other, opponents need focal places and events that enable them to act simultaneously. It is risky to criticize the equilibrium social-political norms individually. Third, when pro-segregation civil beliefs are maintained primarily through peer pressure, it is likely that many people will have inter-

nalized these beliefs in order to reduce cognitive dissonance. Consequently, change requires long-term changes in internalized social and political norms.

FACILITATING CONDITION 3: NETWORK EFFECTS

Network effects influence the social-political meanings of linguistic categories and the effectiveness of vertical restrictions. As more and more people employ a social category and it becomes part of the conventional way of framing an issue, the potentially provocative effects of using the category and the effectiveness of any vertical sanctions against using it are drastically reduced. Consider a labor movement in which the dominant discourse does not include gender as a social category that is ordinarily invoked in framing workers' rights: The only ones who invoke gender are those (a) who feel strongly about both gender-specific and general-labor issues and (b) those who aim at exclusively pursuing gender-specific issues. Because it is not easy to distinguish the two, the first people who try to shift the discourse by highlighting gender issues can divide the movement as they can be perceived as belonging to the second group. The group may thus use vertical and horizontal restrictions to regulate the discourse. However, once the network of the first group employing the gender category reaches a critical mass, the divisive effects and the restrictions' effectiveness are drastically reduced: those invoking gender can no longer be believed to belong to the second group, and the leadership would deplete its resources if it were to apply vertical restrictions.

The first people to use the Kurd category in Turkey could produce divisive effects. They could be perceived as extremists; their perceived support for Kurds could fuel anti-Kurdish feelings, Turkish-nationalist extremists, and social conflict among Turks and Kurds. They could also face legal and extra-legal prosecution. Knowing this, journalists watched the language of other journalists, especially that of influential journalists, and observed the reactions, before determining their own language.²¹ When journalists employing the Kurd category reached a critical mass, it became much easier for others to follow.

FACILITATING CONDITIONS 4: LOW PRIVATE BELIEF RESISTANCE

In a deeply racist society in which both civil and private beliefs strongly support segregation, it would be hard to begin a discursive cascade against

21. The aforementioned interviews with Cemal and Çandar (see Note 9).

segregation. There would be few held-back antisegregation beliefs waiting to be expressed; interdependent changes in civil beliefs would be difficult when civil beliefs are embedded in private beliefs. An integrationist government could succeed in suppressing the expression of prosegregation beliefs by using vertical restrictions. However, the discourse could easily revert to racism as soon as a prosegregation government came to power and lifted the restrictions. Weak private belief resistance has the opposite effects.

REEVALUATING TURKEY'S KURDISH CONFLICT

Vertical restrictions prevailed over the civil discourse from the beginning of the period of analysis. The military left power voluntarily and was able to do so under its own conditions and after instating a restrictive legal-institutional framework. The new constitution was specifically designed to restrict the legal space for ethnic and religious politics and institutionalized the military's involvement in governing by establishing the National Security Council. It legitimized a variety of laws restricting the freedom of expression. Although the ostensible target of these laws was separatists, because they were also enforced against people whose involvement in separatism was tangential at best, mainstream actors were compelled to self-censure their discourse also.

Shortly after the PKK's first raids on two army posts in 1984, wide-scale military operations began in the Southeast. The military became agitated over the media's coverage of the operations. It held a briefing at which it explained to members of the media what it thought the proper language and content of their reporting should be. In particular, the military criticized the media's use of the *Kurd* category. It argued that *Kurd* was "their term," that is, the rebels' term of choice, and that the media's usage of this term was giving the impression that the security forces were fighting Kurdish communities rather than "Marxist-Leninist rebels." In 1987, a state of emergency was declared in southeastern provinces, providing further legal backing for direct and indirect censoring of the press. In an off-the-record meeting in 1990, attended by President Özal and high-level military officials, media representatives were warned against "irresponsible coverage and language" (Cemal, 2003, pp. 74, 101-111). The pinnacle of formal restrictions was the 1991 antiterror law, which made any separatist propaganda a crime punishable by prison sentences.²² Thus the discursive transition clearly occurred when

22. These restrictions hampered the "discussion of the Kurdish issue, as any discussion per se [was] in danger of being persecuted as [separatist] propaganda" (Gürbey, 1996, p. 11).

hardliners were intensively trying to control the discourse. Short of actual enforcement of laws, for mainstream political actors, including journalists, the threat of being stigmatized as pro-PKK or a *bölücü*, which means “one who stirs up divisions,” was often sufficient to make them self-censor their discourse. It is revealing how prominent politician Ecevit retrospectively defended himself when he was asked why he did not do enough to change restrictive laws and practices. He explained that the image of a “Kurdish [Kurdish nationalist] or *bölücü* was very sticky.” This led mainstream actors to express their ideas in roundabout ways, by using code words. In 1988, İnönü argued for Kurdish linguistic rights without mentioning the Kurd category once; he argued that democracies should protect “whatever mother tongue people have” but never referred to Kurdish (Cemal, 2003, pp. 96, 276). Everybody understood that he was talking about Kurds, but the fact that he avoided certain terms and categories conveyed the message that he was willing to operate within the mainstream, challenging its boundaries from within.

How did the Turkish civil discourse shift despite these barriers? Three developments, taken up below, linked democratization to the discursive shift, changing influential social-political actors’ instrumental beliefs regarding what would serve the national interest. These actors then gestured to the public their intentions to shift the boundaries, which tipped a critical mass of the public to change their discourse.

INTRA-ELITE CONFLICT, 1987-1990

The state’s first response to the initial PKK raids was one of shock and a strictly military response with conventional military means. As it became apparent that the PKK threat was growing rather than subsiding, a moderate-hardliner division began to emerge. A main rift was between Premier Özal, who later rose to the presidency, and the dominant hardliners within the military. From the beginning, Özal opposed harsh military reactions and the exaggeration of the security threat posed by the PKK. He also questioned the wisdom of paramilitary measures such as the village guards system, according to which loyal villagers were armed and placed on the government payroll. In return, military hardliners criticized Özal for underestimating the PKK threat, for example, for his much quoted statement in 1987 that Turkey should not fear “a handful of bandits,” and opposed the talk of identity issues until the PKK insurgency ended. In line with the theoretical discussion above, Özal was not necessarily a dove in terms of his nationalist beliefs regarding outcomes. Apparently, he could approve very tough security measures against separatists but also “pried open debate” on the Kurdish issue as

means to engage and demystify the “enemy” (Randal, 1999, pp. 277-283). Part of his strategy was to subtly encourage establishment journalists to break taboos such as interviewing Öcalan. Such an interview by mainstream and well-known journalist M. Ali Birand was a strong signal to other journalists that the norms of the civil discourse were being challenged from within.²³ Leftist and Kemalist daily *Cumhuriyet* broke another taboo by covering the military’s excesses and abuses during struggle with the PKK.²⁴

Özal apparently became convinced by 1989 that Turkey would be better off recognizing the Kurdish identity and supporting the Kurds in the region. However, he was not the first actor to argue that Kurds’ identity ought to be respected. Ecevit tested the public reaction in 1987 by arguing that the word *Kurd* should not be feared. As mentioned, İnönü also defended Kurdish rights without referring to the Kurd category. Prominent center-right politician Demirel talked of the necessity of making “them” full citizens and criticized state oppression without mentioning the Kurd category. Such gestures were very important in that they displayed growing self-criticism and a search for change among mainstream politicians. However, they had limited success in shifting the civil beliefs of a critical mass. When SHP deputy Ali Eren drew parallels between the Turks in Bulgaria and Greece and Kurds in Turkey, other deputies charged him with violating the constitution and with being drunk (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997, p. 113).²⁵

By comparison, President Özal’s announcement in 1989 that he was partly Kurdish had much more impact. First, Özal’s gesture came from the very top of the state, from a politician who had credibility as a reformist and who had challenged the official policies consistently throughout the period. Second, by raising the issue of his own ethnic background, Özal killed several birds with one stone, intentionally or not. He made the Kurd category incontestable, sent a powerful message to ethnic Kurds that he shared their identity, and acclaimed the legitimacy of the state that allowed him to ascend to presidency regardless of his ethnic background. These mixed signals amounted to a successful contestation of the civil discourse from within, without necessarily lending credibility to hardliner Kurds. Özal also succeeded in forming a credible image in the eyes of Kurds as someone “thinking well about them” (Cemal, 2003, p. 157).

23. The aforementioned interviews with Cemal and Çandar (see Note 9). Issues of mainstream-leftist *Milliyet* were confiscated in 1988 for containing the original interview. It later appeared as a book (Birand, 1992).

24. A watershed event was the coverage of the abuses in Yeşilyurt (*Cumhuriyet*, January 23, 1989).

25. Eren was referring to Jivkov’s assimilationist policies toward its Muslim-Turkish citizens and the Greek government’s reference to the Western Thracian minority as Muslims, not Turks.

Özal's gestures had a strong psychological impact as observers have noted (Kinzer, 2001; Pope & Pope, 1997). However, the content analysis data reveals that the major discursive shift occurred later, from 1991 to 1992. In fact, the immediate impact of Özal's statements was to diminish the use of *Kurd* because they had raised fears of legitimizing the PKK. Özal's impact had to be combined with two other factors in order to cause a discursive transformation.

THE BREAKUP OF COOPERATION AMONG MODERATES, 1991-1992

Alongside the discursive shift, which included Premier Demirel's recognition of the Kurdish identity in 1991, we observe the breakup of the cooperation between the moderate Turkish and Kurdish actors. In 1989, seven SHP members were ousted from their party for participating in a Kurdish conference in Paris. This did not spell the end of cooperation. The expelled formed a new, explicitly Kurdish party, the People's Labor Party (HEP). Prior to the November 1991 general elections, the SHP and the HEP formed an electoral coalition. For the first time in Turkish democracy, the cooperation between moderates was extended to include a political actor with an explicitly Kurdish agenda. The SHP carried the day in the Southeast, and 22 Kurdish deputies entered Parliament under the SHP umbrella.

Subsequently, a series of decisions on both sides led to the breakdown of cooperation. Some newly elected HEP deputies made the aforementioned risky decision or, according to state prosecutors, were ordered by the PKK to send a provocative message to the public while taking their oath in Parliament. According to who is reporting, they either refused to recite the parts of the oath that committed the deputies to "preserve the indivisible integrity of the state and the nation" or "added a few remarks in Kurdish at the end of their oath" (Gürbey, 1996, p. 26; Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997). The event created a public uproar in which HEP members were accused of separatism, undermining the SHP's ability to accommodate the HEP without committing political suicide. HEP proposals such as the lifting of the state of emergency in the Southeast and discussing cultural rights bore little fruit, even if they were endorsed by the SHP (1990). The HEP was later shut down by the Constitutional Court. Were these actions and their consequences inevitable? Would it have made a difference if HEP members had been more patient or if the public reaction had been more level headed? Suffice it to say here that my answers to these questions are cautiously affirmative. Because these events could have transpired differently, I also argue that they are part of the explanation.

The consequences of the moderate-moderate breakup were significant, undermining the trust between moderates and exacerbating the tension between hardliners on both sides. Former HEP members founded a more hard-line party, the Democracy Party (DEP), in 1993. The DEP portrayed the PKK as a political organization and was seen by the government and the mainstream media as a PKK extension (Gürbey, 1996, p. 27). Moderate Turkish nationalists who had reservations about using the Kurd category because they saw ethnic Kurds as part of the Turkish nation began to distance themselves from Kurds, reducing their resistance to the use of *Kurd* as a marker of the ethnic other. Simultaneously, hard-line nationalists felt that their suspicions of Kurds as the untrustworthy other had been vindicated and felt more free to use the Kurd category.

Özal's death in April 1993 led to a general deterioration of the conflict. A unilateral ceasefire that the PKK declared in March had reinforced the mainstream debate and elite rethinking on the Kurdish issue (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, pp. 122, 199). The ceasefire collapsed when a PKK detachment massacred 33 unarmed soldiers in May. HEP deputies chose not to condemn the attack, interpreting it as part of "the war on Turkish colonialism" (Cemal, 2003, p. 69).²⁶ Öcalan threatened to escalate the violence. The new premier, Çiller, first promoted a moderate agenda. She traveled to the East and catered to Kurds' sense of identity in her speeches, discussing the possibility of education and broadcasting in Kurdish. However, she soon adopted a hard-line stand in the face of the escalating violence and strong opposition from the military. The military was then given *carte blanche* to combat the PKK. Demirel announced that "unless terrorism is solved, cultural issues cannot be debated" (Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997, p. 139).

The death knell of cooperation between moderates came in 1994 with the Turkish parliament's decision to repeal the parliamentary immunity of the DEP parliamentarians. They were subsequently arrested and tried and received lengthy prison sentences. The DEP was outlawed, but before its closure, the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) was established in its place. Between 1994 and 1998, the hard-line-nationalist agenda prevailed. The security forces militarily isolated the PKK in the Southeast, albeit at a high cost in terms of spending and human rights violations and at the expense of the increasing politicization and internationalization of the Kurdish issue. The hardliners' total war strategy included cracking down on all Kurdish nationalists, moderate or not, as potential PKK members. The civil discourse on the Kurdish question was suppressed by using legal and extralegal means; accordingly, Figure 1 displays new dips in the numbers of articles on Kurds.

26. The deputy is Hatip Dicle.

Table 4
External Developments and the Usage of Kurd as a Domestic Category

| Year | Articles on External Kurds/ Total Number of Articles | The Usage of <i>Kurd</i> Within Articles on Domestic Kurds |
|------|---|---|
| 1984 | 0.14 | 0.11 |
| 1985 | 0.00 | 0.14 |
| 1986 | 0.17 | 0.20 |
| 1987 | 0.16 | 0.22 |
| 1988 | 0.55 | 0.29 |
| 1989 | 0.17 | 0.15 |
| 1990 | 0.10 | 0.14 |
| 1991 | 0.38 | 0.51 |
| 1992 | 0.25 | 0.44 |
| 1993 | 0.19 | 0.32 |
| 1994 | 0.24 | 0.29 |
| 1995 | 0.34 | 0.30 |
| 1996 | 0.38 | 0.25 |
| 1997 | 0.40 | 0.12 |
| 1998 | 0.35 | 0.20 |

However, unlike the situation in the 1980s, the *Kurd* category was used whenever talk on the Kurdish issue gained momentum. The predominant object of the vertical restrictions was no longer the Kurdish category per se, but Kurdish rights.

EXTERNAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND THE GULF WAR

Table 4 demonstrates that the years when the usage of *Kurd* surged coincide with the years when the numbers of articles on Kurds outside of Turkey surged; 1988 was the first year in which the percentage of articles on external Kurds, and the usage of *Kurd* in articles on domestic Kurds, surged, followed by 2 years, when both figures diminished. The years 1991 to 1992 featured another increase in news on external Kurds.

External developments made it hard for Turkish elites to ignore the Kurdish element in the region and thus the Kurdish identity. In 1988, Saddam Hussein launched the infamous Al Anfal military campaign against the Iraqi Kurds, gassing thousands of them to death. Tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds escaped to the Turkish border. Their agony found widespread coverage in the Turkish media, which undertook what can be called discursive engineering by referring to the refugees as *peshmergas* without using the term *Kurd*.²⁷

27. For example, *Hürriyet*, August 31, 1988.

Özal's gestures to Kurds were linked to his foreign policy vision.²⁸ Foreseeing the potential disintegration of Iraq, he was, similar to the hard-line nationalists, concerned that Kurds would emerge from the crisis as major actors.²⁹ However, unlike the hardliners, Özal determined that the best Turkish response to the possibility of a U.S.-backed Kurdish entity in Iraq was to sponsor Iraqi Kurds. Thus he broke a long-time state policy by building formal relations with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders. Finally, the changing perceptions of Özal and other elites coincided with the end of the cold war. Turkish policy makers were involved in a process of deliberation as to how the country should adjust to the changing global environment, which was giving rise to new ethnic and nonethnic actors.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Pending research covering more newspapers and other media outlets, this article argued that during the 1990s, the Kurd category both resurfaced and was remade within the Turkish civil discourse. In terms of causal mechanisms, this meant both the revival of a known yet suppressed category and its mental and discursive reconstruction via intersubjective persuasion and belief change. Both internal and external dynamics played causal roles. One cannot understand this transformation from the perspective of a simple, state- or military-dominant understanding of the state-society relations in Turkey; a proper analysis should include intra-elite divisions and the complex dynamics of a restricted, yet competitive and partially autonomous, discursive and informational space.

What are the consequences of this transformation? The acceptance of an ethnic category within a civil discourse can be used for inclusion and equality as well as for exclusion and differentiation. The new visibility of the Kurdish category facilitates the expression of Kurdish interests and the bargaining, deliberation, and voting processes that are necessary for democratically determining Kurdish rights in a context of liberal democracy. But this visibility can also be used to promote exclusionary values. This could happen, for example, if Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurds were to take a downward turn or if Turkey's integration process with the European Union came to a halt (Somer, 2004). Finally, the new discursive environment removes a major

28. The aforementioned interview with Çandar, who closely worked with Özal during the period in question.

29. Articles regarding the American "intentions" in Iraq reflected these suspicions, with typical headlines such as "Americans Are Pleasing the Kurds" (see *Hürriyet*, June 12 and 16, 1988).

object of criticism of Western democracies and increases the country's potential to play a constructive regional role. For example, Turkey would have had a hard time reconciling a policy of contributing to the rebuilding of Iraq, where Kurds constitute a major component of the population, with her past policy of discounting its own ethnic diversity.

To what extent can one expect further transformations of the Turkish civil discourse so that it becomes fully "liberal," whereby not only the expression of the Kurdish category but also the promotion of Kurdish rights is considered normal? The improvements in the quality of democracy and in Kurdish rights via legal reforms since 1999 mean that the main restrictions limiting the civil discourse may now be horizontal. Insofar as this is true, and from the point of view of liberal democracy, a major weakness of the current discursive environment is its lack of genuine and all-inclusive civil discussion on minority issues. With vertical restrictions, elite deliberation and actions may be sufficient to initiate discursive change. But with horizontal restrictions, change requires more broad-based deliberation. The current debate on the Kurdish issue in the media reflects a wide range of questions and viewpoints. However, among wider portions of society and among the hard-line-nationalist political actors, explicit promotion of Kurdish political rights, and the discussion of which specific rights the Kurds should be accorded remain sensitive issues. Without the inclusion of these groups in the debate, the discussions that Turkey's European Union integration will require, such as further cultural rights or affirmative actions for Kurds, would be polarizing and ineffective. More inclusive civil deliberation is also necessary for the effective implementation of legal reforms.

Horizontal restrictions generate subtle boundaries of acceptable talk. The exact locations of these borders are only known to natives and researchers who have a good knowledge of the country-specific signals, such as code words and gestures. Yet country-specific signals play social-political roles that can be generalized to other countries: Whatever their local form, such signals mark the limits of the civil discourse beyond which actors can no longer enjoy the acceptance of being part of the mainstream. As the Turkish case shows, in a discursive environment dominated by horizontal and informal-vertical restrictions, the mainstream can allow a good deal of criticism of the government and of the society but nevertheless lack a sincere discussion of "sensitive" issues.³⁰

Unlike beliefs regarding the recognition of the Kurdish identity, there is some evidence of private beliefs opposing expanded Kurdish political-cul-

30. For insightful observations on the Turkish case, see Kinzer (2001, pp. 146-147).

tural rights.³¹ A reason for this might be that the textbooks and civil discourse are replete with references to the merits of political and linguistic unity. Insofar as this is true, democratic consolidation will require long-term efforts to induce interactive changes in private beliefs, through educational reforms and genuine civil discussion, in addition to domestic political will and the European Union anchor.

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31. In one nationally representative poll taken in April 2002, 72.7% and 66.3% of the polled strictly opposed the views that "Kurdish should be taught in schools as an elective" and "there must be Kurdish broadcasting on TV and in radio," in respective order (Erder, 2002, pp. 99-100).

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