

DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY: A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION FOR TURKEY?

by

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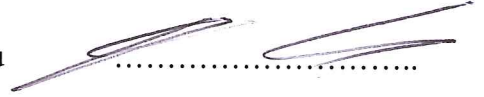
**DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY: A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION FOR
TURKEY?**

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ABSTRACT

DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY: A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION FOR TURKEY?

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Territorial self-governance is an effective conflict resolution tool commonly used in countries where ethnic groups make self-determination demands. The success of territorial self-governance in resolving conflicts, however, largely relies on the way its institutional design is arranged. Power sharing mechanisms, at this point, emerge as central for the success of the design. In the light of these theoretical considerations, this thesis examines in detail the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy -the self-governance model proposed by the Kurdish movement in Turkey for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict- and aims to evaluate the extent to which the model can contribute to the resolution at issue. In order to conduct the analysis, Democratic Autonomy model is situated in an analytical framework which can manifest an effective tailor-made institutional design for a territorial self-governance arrangement with essential power sharing mechanisms. In-depth interviews conducted with prominent Kurdish actors and first hand documents obtained from the mainstream Kurdish organizations make up the data utilized for the study. In accordance with the analysis carried out, the thesis argues that Democratic Autonomy is a valuable project for an alternative governance for Turkey. Yet, for the time being, it appears unable to offer a genuine contribution to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict, as its institutional design has serious inadequacies and ambiguities, thus making it unable to manifest an effective governance model. Failing to put forth a strong substantiated design, it appears to remain more rhetorical than concrete.

ÖZET

DEMOKRATİK ÖZERKLİK: TÜRKİYE İÇİN BARIŞÇIL BİR ÇÖZÜM?

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Kürt sorunu, kendi kaderini tayin, topraksal öz-yönetişim, güç paylaşımı, çatışma çözümü

Topraksal öz-yönetişim, etnik grupların kendi kaderini tayin talebinde bulunduğu ülkelerde yaygın bir şekilde kullanılan etkili bir çatışma çözümü aracıdır. Ancak, topraksal öz-yönetişimin çatışmaları çözmedeki başarısı büyük oranda kurumsal tasarımının nasıl yapıldığına bağlıdır. Bu noktada güç-paylaşımı mekanizmaları tasarımın başarısında temel faktör olarak ortaya çıkar. Bu teorik düşüncelerin ışığında, bu çalışma, Kürt sorununun çözümü için Türkiye’deki Kürt hareketi tarafından önerilen öz-yönetişim modeli olan Demokratik Özerklik’in kurumsal tasarımını detaylı biçimde incelemekte ve modelin söz konusu sorunun çözümüne ne oranda katkı sağlayabileceğini değerlendirmektedir. Analizi gerçekleştirmek için Demokratik Özerklik modeli, gerekli güç-paylaşımı mekanizmalarına sahip bir topraksal öz-yönetişim için gerekli olan etkili ve özgün bir kurumsal tasarım ortaya koyabilen bir analitik çerçeveye oturtulmaktadır. Önde gelen Kürt aktörlerle yapılan derinlemesine röportajlar ve ana akım Kürt kuruluşlarından elde edilen birinci el kaynaklar çalışma için yararlanılan veriyi oluşturmaktadır. Yürütülen analize uygun olarak, tez, Demokratik Özerklik’in Türkiye için değerli bir alternatif yönetim modeli olabileceğini savunmaktadır. Ancak, kurumsal tasarımının ciddi yetersizlikler ve belirsizlikler içermesi ve bu yüzden de etkili bir yönetim modeli oluşturamaması nedeniyle Kürt sorununun çözümüne şu an için gerçek bir katkı sağlayamayacağı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Model güçlü bir şekilde temellendirilmiş bir tasarım ortaya koyamadığı için somut olmaktan çok söylem düzeyinde kalmaktadır.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
BDP	Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
DBP	Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi (Democratic Regions Party)
DDKO	Devrimci Doęu Kültür Ocakları (Revolutionary Eastern Culture Associations)
DTK	Demokratik Toplum Kongresi (Democratic Society Congress)
DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
EU	European Union
HDK	Halkların Demokratik Kongresi (Peoples' Democratic Congress)
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party)
KCK	Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Group of Communities in Kurdistan)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Grand National Assembly of Turkey)
TDHS	Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (Türkiye Nüfus ve Sağlık Araştırması)
TİP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Workers Party of Turkey)
TKDP	Türkiye Kürdistanı Demokrat Partisi (Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan)
T-KDP	Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi (Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey)
TSG	Territorial Self-governance

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Aspirations and demands of the Kurdish movement in Turkey have undergone a major transformation over the years. The mainstream Kurdish parties currently express their demands along the lines of both obtaining a territorial self-rule in their historical homeland and building a common future within Turkey. The said demands are embodied in the form of Democratic Autonomy. This self-governance model gains increasing importance with the explicit strong demand towards its realization. However, it is important to note that the demand essentially comes from a good number of pro-Kurdish organizations,¹ and thus it should not be attributed to the whole Kurdish society. It is necessary to make a distinction between “ethnic groups” and “organizations,” as it would be a major mistake to accept these entities as one group. Their interests may not always be compatible and, at times, may even be the very opposite (Tezcür 2009, 4). Democratic Autonomy is also important in that it may offer a remarkable contribution to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict, particularly when Turkey is in search for a new solution about the issue. Indeed, in Turkey “finding proposals to solve the conflict started to preoccupy the public debate once more” (Güneş 2013, 71). Within this context, Democratic Autonomy prevails as a central force that deserves a close look.

In accordance with these developments, the thesis sets out acknowledging that Democratic Autonomy is a valuable model of resolution to be scrutinized and intends to evaluate its contribution to the resolution. The overall aim of the study is to look for an answer to the question of “To what extent Democratic Autonomy could contribute to

¹ The organizations of Halkların Demokratik Partisi or HDP (Peoples’ Democratic Party), Halkların Demokratik Kongresi or HDK (Peoples’ Democratic Congress) Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi or DBP (Democratic Regions Party)- (formerly Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi or BDP– Peace and Democracy Party), Demokratik Toplum Kongresi or DTK (Democratic Society Congress), Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê or PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), Koma Civakên Kurdistan or KCK (Group of Communities in Kurdistan) are within the scope of this study.

the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey.” In an attempt to find a convenient answer to the question, the thesis analyzes the main features and the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy within the framework of territorial self-governance literature. As an outcome of the analysis, the thesis puts forth the merits and limitations of its institutional design and evaluates the contribution it may offer to the resolution. The thesis argues that Democratic Autonomy is a valuable project for an alternative governance for Turkey. Yet, for the time being, it appears unable to offer a genuine contribution to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict, as its institutional design has serious inadequacies and ambiguities, thus making it unable to manifest an effective governance model. Failing to put forth a strong substantiated design, it appears to remain more rhetorical than concrete.

In order to analyze the institutional design of the model, an analytical framework, namely complex power sharing is to be employed (Wolff 2009). The rationale behind choosing this particular framework derives from its potential to manifest an effective institutional design for territorial self-governance arrangements. First, the analytical framework has a strong empirical support. Complex power sharing has proved to be a successful conflict settlement tool in many different conflict cases in which territorially compact groups made self-determination claims. Second, the framework goes beyond “mere self-governance” and strengthens its design with other conflict resolution tools. It puts self-governance at its center and complements it with power sharing mechanisms. This aspect of the framework is significant, as it is commonly agreed by the scholars in the field that self-governance arrangements need to be accompanied by other tools to enhance its utility to resolve conflicts. Third, complex power sharing adds a contextual dimension to the institutional designs. The framework manages to develop a design for each case according to its context. This is similarly significant since every design needs to be tailored according to its particular context to be able to function effectively. Owing to its features, complex power sharing provides the required basis first to put forth the context of the Kurdish conflict and then to analyze the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy. The analysis allows for evaluating the effectiveness of Democratic Autonomy to address its context, revealing its utilities and limitations. Moreover, the data to conduct this in-depth case study are provided through a mixed methodology approach. First hand documents obtained from Kurdish actors and organizations, and the personally conducted in-depth interviews with

prominent actors, active in the development of Democratic Autonomy, compose the data.

The significance of the thesis derives from the fact that it addresses the institutional design and the technical content of the self-governance model, as the already scarce work on Democratic Autonomy in the literature hardly touches upon this specific issue. The study intends to fill the apparent gap in the existing literature by examining a vital issue that deserves close consideration. As a matter of fact, the majority of works on the topic mainly attempt to explain the transformation of the demands put forth by the Kurdish movement and the emerging process of Democratic Autonomy, while some others mostly focus on a general debate about the necessity of either granting collective rights or equal citizenship to Kurds. There are also works constructed around the debate of decentralization and democratization of Turkey. None of these works, however, present a detailed picture of what the self-rule model actually proposes. Another handicap is that the area is vulnerable to political or even ideological debates. Actors of opposite ends are usually either too fast in acknowledging the model or rejecting it. This inevitably confines the debate to a political ground, and thus dismisses the option to discuss and evaluate the model in a factual manner with its possible contributions and limitations. This study, therefore, aims to provide an impartial view by presenting concrete facts about the model remaining committed to the academic self-governance literature on the topic.

The thesis is composed of seven chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter starts with a literature review. It provides the main literature written on territorial self-governance as a conflict resolution tool for ethnic conflicts. It conceptualizes the term “territorial self-governance” and explains it in detail. The literature review, moreover, provides the main conditions and criteria the scholars have come up with to increase the likelihood of self-governance arrangements to function as effective resolution tools. Chapter Three introduces the analytical framework utilized to conduct the analysis of Democratic Autonomy. It explains the framework and then elaborates its explanatory power. Chapter Four provides the methodology of the study. It traces the research design, and gives a full account of the data collection and analysis respectively. Chapter Five provides a historical perspective on the Kurdish conflict, mainly discussing the process in which Democratic Autonomy has evolved. Chapter Six

consists of the analyses of the context of the Kurdish conflict and of the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy. Subsequently, the chapter manifests the outcomes of the analyses which serve as an answer to the research question of the thesis. The last chapter offers a brief discussion about the theoretical aspect of Democratic Autonomy and presents the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present how “territorial self-governance” as a tool of curbing ethnic conflicts has been discussed in the Conflict Resolution literature. The aim of providing the existing literature is to present the main issues, concepts and debates scholars have touched upon while dealing with the topic in question. Territorial self-governance, here, is used as a generic term that includes a wide variety of arrangements from decentralization to autonomy and federation. All these different arrangements are related to each other and are often intermingled in theory and practice. Therefore, in this thesis, the literature review does not focus only on a single arrangement and limit the theoretical background to a narrow sphere. Here, all sorts of territorial arrangements are relevant to the topic and the thesis touches upon various arrangements related to internal self-governance.

The chapter will consist of three sections. The first section will briefly refer to the increasing ethnic conflicts in the world and to the growing tendency towards “territorial approaches” to deal with the concerning conflicts. It will mainly elaborate on the concept of territorial self-governance. The term will be conceptualized, its usage, logic and significance will be explored and world practices will be provided. The second section will be on the major debate taking place in the literature between “advocates” and “opponents” of territorial approaches. Even though this thesis approaches territorial governance as a conflict resolution tool, it is also necessary to display the contrary arguments of those who believe that territorial approaches may, on the contrary, promote conflicts. This debate is essential; first, not to skip a prominent discussion topic on the issue and second, to reveal the concerns about the harm territorial self-rule can bring about. Nevertheless, it is an inconclusive debate in that there is no right answer to the question of whether territorial approaches are conflict resolvers or stimulators, as there exist examples of both cases across the world. Therefore, the essential criteria and

designs which governance arrangements should have in order to function as conflict resolvers need to be analyzed. In accordance with this, the last section will present what has been written in the literature on the criteria of institutional designs of self-governance arrangements to diminish ethnic tensions. This last section will also provide the basis for the following chapter which constitutes the analytical framework of the thesis.

2.1 Territorial Self-Governance to Cure Ethnic Conflicts

While in the previous centuries the dominant struggles in the world were to build nation-states, from the twentieth century onwards, most of the struggles have appeared to be against nation-states; mostly between minorities who are “unsuccessful aspirants to statehood” and majorities who have “obtained international recognition as constituting a new state” (Hannum 1996, 464). These struggles, generally with ethnic characteristics, have increased even more sharply after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. While the Iron Curtain was not able to cover them anymore, “differences derived from ethnicity” have become especially explicit and thus lethal (Bermeo 2002, 96).

However, it is surely not the ethnic differences per se that cause conflicts between the groups, but it is instead how these differences are treated by the state and by minority groups. When states mistreat the differences and, more significantly, when they try to eliminate them in the name of integration and unity, it paves the way for an atmosphere where favorable conditions appear for an ethnic conflict to emerge and flourish. Today, it has become obvious that the more states attempt to eliminate the ethnic differences, the stronger minorities ask for recognition and for their rights to self-determination. This ongoing clash between states and ethnic groups has led to an increasing number of ethnic conflicts across the world, while it has also brought about a growing literature on how these conflicts could be resolved. As Cornell puts; “academic research on ethnic conflict and its resolution mushroomed” (2002, 245). In this “mushroomed” research there has been an increasing interest in finding a solution to how to balance conflicts between states and minorities or sovereignty and recognition.

As far as this is concerned, “territorial solutions” have increasingly become prevalent. Territorial solutions in Conflict Resolution literature suggest various models of territorial self-governance or self-rule² arrangements in which both minority groups can fulfill their aspirations and states can still remain unitary.

Arend Lijphart, a prominent scholar in the field, lists “segmental autonomy” among the four principles of power sharing that he claims to be the most effective tools while dealing with plural societies (1977, 25-44). Donald Horowitz similarly argues that territorial arrangements, such as regional autonomy and federalism, could be quite effective to resolve ethnic conflicts (2000, 596-613). Milton J. Esman (1973) considers territorial autonomy, federalism and legal-cultural autonomy as necessary tools for “balanced pluralism”. According to Saideman “segmental autonomy is an essential ingredient for consociationalism” (Saideman et al. 2002, 111), while Hartmann addresses “territorial approaches” as a “major institutional strategy of conflict regulation” in divided societies (2013, 123). McGarry and O’Leary use the term “territorial pluralism,” which is defined as a tool that “assists geographically concentrated national, ethnic, linguistic, or religious communities” (2010). For them, territorial plurality “has become particularly fashionable” for receiving significant “support from academics and political elite” (McGarry and O’Leary 2010). Hartman shares a similar view and states; “[territorial] power-sharing formulas seem to have become the dominant mode of ending violent conflict worldwide” (2013, 124).

While the arguments above make up only a few examples to show the centrality that territorial self-governance has gained, they also point out the link that some scholars establish between territorial arrangements and power sharing. Indeed, many scholars see autonomy, federalism and consociationalism as complementary elements of each other. They see autonomy and the others as arrangements which allow groups to share power within a state. That is why territorial solutions have become particularly salient within the consociational theory, but definitely not merely limited to it.

The thesis borrows the term “territorial self-governance” (TSG) from Stefan Wolff and Marc Weller and defines it “as the legally entrenched power of territorially

² Self-governance and self-rule will be used interchangeably in the study.

delimited entities within the internationally recognized boundaries of existing states to exercise public policy functions independently of other sources of authority in this state, but subject to its overall legal order” (2004, 13). The term is conceptualized as a conflict resolution tool, which is especially significant for resolving “self-determination conflicts”, which are conflicts “which territorially concentrated identity groups (whose identity is, in part, derived from association with this territory, or homeland, in which they reside) demand to exercise their right to self-determination” (Wolff n.d.). In this context, TSG arrangements are particularly concerned with internal self-determination,³ which allows a group to “choose its own system of government” within a state (Lapidoth 1997, 19).

“Territorial self- governance” is an umbrella term that contains a wide variety of design options, ranging from decentralization to confederation. Wolff (2011) lists five “governance arrangements”; confederation, federation, autonomy, devolution, and decentralization. Benedikter counts seven “power sharing government arrangements”; associated state, condominium, confederation, reservation, federation, dependent territory, and territorial autonomy (2009a, 5-15). Ruth Lapidoth, in addition to autonomy, mentions federalism, decentralization, self- government, associate statehood and self-administration as “arrangements for diffusion of power” (1997, 49-58).

As can be seen above, different scholars have different categorizations of TSG units. Moreover, they also have different definitions for each term. This creates a difficulty to study the subject. Referring to this problem, Lapidoth argues; “the differences and distinctions [of concepts] are not always sufficiently clear, and a certain term may have different meanings to different scholars and officials” (1997, 49). “Autonomy,” particularly is one of the most confusing terms since it is commonly used as a “generic” term by many scholars instead of being used for a particular arrangement. In many cases scholars prefer to use autonomy when they actually mean decentralization, devolution or other. Due to the broad meaning of autonomy and the

³ External self-determination, namely irredentism and secession, are also considered as viable self-governance tools by some scholars (Hannum 1996), and they can indeed bring about a resolution to an ethnic conflict. This thesis, however, will deal with internal options, and thus external options are left outside the scope of the study.

fact that it is, along with federalism, one of the most commonly practiced arrangements the term seems to be used quite generously.

In addition to the lack of agreement on terminology, there is also the problem of coherence between theory and practice. Theoretical categorizations of TSG arrangements are only “ideal types” and, in practice, they “shade off” into each other (Ghai 2000, 487). In reality, a so-called autonomy can actually be closer to a decentralization arrangement or vice versa, meaning that the choice of label can be deceptive about the actual internal design of the arrangement. The title of an arrangement only gives an idea about it, while what truly matters is the institutional design of it.

2.1.1 TSG “re-discovered”

The significance TSG has gained in conflict resolution is due to its potential to address the needs of both the state and the minority group with self-determination claims. For Lapidoth, when designed appropriately, it has become “beneficial for both the state and the population of the autonomous region,” and thus it is a valuable tool for easing ethnic tensions (1997, 199).

Initially, many states were against the idea of granting self-rule to certain groups with the fear of damaging their territorial integrity. However, this has changed to a large extent, especially with the end of the Cold War, when many states encountered strong challenges from minority groups and faced the risk of losing their territorial integrity (Weller and Wolff 2004). The states that experienced the fear of losing their territorial unity, adopted the idea of granting self-rule to minorities. In other words, TSG that has once been denied with the fear of separation is now seen as a valuable option to prevent separation. According to Weller and Wolff, because of the fact that the “doctrine of territorial integrity” has been undermined, autonomy has been re-discovered as a possible state tool for states “that might otherwise collapse under the pressure of self-determination conflicts” (2004, 3). Lapidoth holds a similar opinion and contends: “the preference of modalities of self-determination other than independence has grown in

reaction to the violence perpetrated in the name of self-determination in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia” (1997, 23).

Accordingly, many states today prefer TSG arrangements for the sake of protecting their integrity. Thus, autonomy and other options have undergone an entire shift from being a “threat” to actually being a “convenient option” for state sustainability. Nevertheless, not all states are convinced of this. There are many states which are still quite skeptical about such arrangements and reject applying them. Yet, this does not change the fact that there is an “expanding range of polities” and “increased interest” in such models in recent decades (Bermeo 2002, 96).

TSG is an appealing option for minority groups as well, since it is an option between full independence -an unlikely option to be realized by the state- and full compliance- a rejected option by the minority. TSG provides a room for groups to rule themselves, while also benefiting from the utilities of the state. It allows ethnic minorities to enjoy making their own decisions on the issues that are crucial for self-preserving and identity improvement, especially regarding the issues of education, language, culture and political representation. Moreover, not only does it pave the way for identity preservation but security as well. TSG is especially important for groups which have experienced state violence and have deep grievances of violence (Rotchild and Hartzell 1999).

Self-rule has also become crucial for being a new alternative to the old methods of dealing with ethnic conflicts. TSG is not a tool of assimilation or integration. It does not aim to eliminate ethnic differences, but instead accommodate them (Hannum 1996). It seeks to “redress the imbalance” between a state majority and ethnic minorities settling compactly on their traditional territory” (Benedikter 2009a, 5). Owing to all of its merits, territorial governance has been a prominent institutional mechanism both states and minorities make use of. For Yash Ghai the significance territorial governance has gained is due to the facts that: (1) disadvantaged groups commonly demand it, (2) it is at the core of conflict negotiations, and (3) “it may be emerging as an entitlement under international law to groups in certain circumstances” (2000, 483). However, as argued by Ghai, although being at the forefront of many conflict negotiations, TSG arrangements lack international legal entrenchment. They “may” be legally entrenched

in the future, but today, self-governance arrangements in general and autonomy in particular are not under a definite title of international law. This is mainly due to the lack of a precise definition of the right to self-determination. Even though in many international covenants and documents the right to self-determination is emphasized, it lacks a definite description that all states agree upon. The way it is defined is open to interpretation. Not only is it unclear who or which groups can use this right, but also it is uncertain when and how to use it. This ambiguity serves well to the states which are reluctant to recognize the rights of minorities to self-determination. According to Hurst Hannum (1996), regardless of being a “right” or not, a responsible government should give serious consideration to demands for autonomy. Nevertheless, in reality, many states still prefer to ignore such demands.

2.1.2 Legal Basis

Autonomy and settlements alike have been addressed in many documents in international law. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, Commission on Security and Cooperation Copenhagen Document are some of these documents which underline the protection of minorities and minority rights and imply autonomy as a powerful way of doing so. The Convention on Indigenous Peoples and Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are documents that recognize the aspirations of indigenous peoples to protect their identities and run their own systems within the states they live. The principle of self-determination in international law as well has been a very commonly referred source, especially by minority groups, to establish autonomy and other regimes.

Despite the fact that all these official documents have been in practice for many years, none of them have been successful enough to be applied widely. As mentioned above, the problems with a commonly accepted definition of “who, when and how” complicate the legal basis of self-determination and thus TSG. Let alone these problems, there is even no “generally accepted definition of the concept of either a minority or a member of a minority” (Lapidoth 1997, 10). Due to this inadequacy, states often do not even recognize the minority groups within their countries.

The inadequacy of international law to address the issues of minority and self-determination is mainly due to the fact that the major concern of the international community following World War II has been the protection of individuals. While individual rights have been the dominant matter, collective group rights have been pushed back to the background. Although this has been changing in recent decades and minority rights have largely gained salience, many states today are still reluctant to address collective rights of groups and rather prefer dealing with their minority questions through granting individual rights (Heintze 1998, 15-17). Moreover, individual rights and equality of all individuals have gained such a profound basis that some states, and also scholars, believe that granting collective rights would violate the norms of individual rights. Accordingly, some believe that giving autonomy or similar privileges to certain groups would be acting against the “norm of equal protection” (Cornell 2002, 250). “Equal citizenship” versus “granting privileges” is a valuable topic to discuss. Nevertheless, it is also a visible fact that individual rights fall short of addressing group protection, identity protection and other collective matters (Benedikter 2009a).

2.1.3 TSG in Practice

The ambiguity in international law about the definitions of minority, minority rights and self-determination and the lack of willingness of states to reach a consensus on such terms could make one think that there are not so many states granting self-rule to groups within their countries. On the contrary, there is an increasing interest in autonomy, federalism and other self-rule options all over the world. Philip G. Roeder counts Canada, Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Tanzania, Spain, Belgium, Russia and Bosnia among countries with ethnofederal structures, while he lists Finland, Denmark, Italy, China, Sudan, France, Philippines, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Papua New Guinea among those with ethnic autonomous regions (2009). Moreover, “Europe has been the cradle of territorial autonomy, since Finland created the first modern autonomy system in a democratic framework in 1921 on the Aland Islands. Asia has become the second hub of autonomy solutions” (Benedikter 2009a, 8).

TSG arrangements also manifest themselves in peace agreements, especially in countries that have experienced violent conflicts. Wolff gives the examples of Annan Plan for Cyprus and peace initiative for South Ossetia and Sri Lanka. He claims that self-rule appears to be an option waiting at the negotiation tables of many self-determination conflicts, while it has been put into practice in several (Wolff 2007). In their statistical work, Rotchild and Hartzell draw a similar result:

The fact that fully half of the cases of negotiated civil war settlements in our data set include provisions for territorial autonomy appears to indicate that contending parties to a conflict do put some stock in the utility of this institution for conflict management (1999, 268).

Hartzell and Hoddie reach the same outcome after conducting an empirical analysis that shows the increasing number of peace agreements involving some sort of territorial self-governance arrangement. In their study, they also present that “territorial power sharing[s] have a positive role to play in fostering a postwar peace” (2005, 103).

Nonetheless, all this support from scholars and international organizations should not make one attribute an excessive meaning to TSG. Territorial approaches are not panaceas. They surely have limits to their potential and may not be effective in all contexts. That is why many scholars who give strong credit to self-governance also draw attention to the possibility of its failure to bring about peace, especially if not arranged appropriately (Bermeo 2002). In other words, many think “it is the best inoculation against secession at present available as institutional medicine in plurinational places,” while they “do not suggest that territorial pluralism guarantees stability or unity” (McGarry and O’Leary 2010, 262).

Undoubtedly, not all scholars are of the same opinion about it. Furthermore, some scholars even believe that the limitations and demerits of self-governance outweigh its merits, and it may cause more conflicts instead (Stewart 2001). Those who hold this opinion underline the risks that self-rule can bring about. For them, granting territorial rule to certain groups can pave the way for new conflicts such as disunity and polarization within the country and most importantly separation.

2.2 Resolving or Stimulating Conflict?

The debate over whether granting self-rule to ethnic minorities is to resolve or escalate conflicts has been intense, yet useful. It has been intense because both sides, advocates and opponents of territorial solutions, have developed strong arguments and counter-arguments to reinforce their stance. It has been, at the same time, useful because it has provided a sphere where both the potential pros and cons of self-governance arrangements are discussed. This has allowed the advocates of self-governance to develop certain criteria to minimize the possible liabilities of territorial approaches and increase the likeliness of them to function as effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

The scholars who are critical and skeptical about TSG, especially about autonomy and federalism, give the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia as their point of reference. For them, one of the biggest reasons why these systems have come to an end is their ethno-federal structures (Hale 2000, Cornell 2002, Roeder 2009). These scholars, in fact, are not necessarily against mere TSG arrangements, but particularly critical about their being based on certain ethnic features.

Henry Hale, for instance, believes that federalism could actually be a “viable alternative” to avoid conflict as long as it lacks “core ethnic region”. For the author ethno-federalism, i.e., “a federal state in which at least one constituent territorial governance unit is intentionally associated with specific ethnic category”, is prone to bring separatism (Hale 2004, 167). According to Hale, the concentration of the ethnic group in a specific region can make the group members be involved in “collective action” against the state (2004). Thus, he contends that ethnically arranged governance units may cause threat to the state unity. Philip Roeder, like his colleague, believes that the concentration of ethnic groups in one region may lead to “alternative nation-state projects” (2009, 204).

To be able to tackle this problem, Hale suggests dividing the region where the ethnic group concentrates “into a number of distinct federal regions” and thus creating an “institutional disunity” of the group (2004, 167). However, the idea to divide the historical homeland or territorial demarcations of an ethnic group does not seem to fit into the primary intention of territorial solutions. The idea here is to recognize the collective rights of a group derived from being a “group.” Dividing a compact-settled group into distinct regions would harm the group identity, especially if the group identity is majorly shaped from sharing the same territory. This would only serve the very opposite of what territorial arrangements intend.

The fear of damaging territorial unity and sovereignty is a commonly projected argument of those who are quite skeptical about TSG. For Svante Cornell, for example, “the institution of an autonomous region nonetheless implies that the state itself is no longer completely sovereign” (2002, 252). Hurst Hannum, on the other hand, finds these arguments quite irrelevant. He questions the “rationale for equating territorial integrity with a centralized form government” (1996, 463). He argues; “However, it cannot seriously be doubted that federal or consociational states, or those in which substantial powers have been devolved to local governments, are any less sovereign or stable than unitary states; in fact the reverse may be true” (1990, 464).

Adding to the fear of losing sovereignty and integrity, objections to grant territorial tools derive from fears of “demands for greater autonomy” (Nordlinger 1972), ethnic group mobilization, gaining excessive political control (Hale 2004, Roeder 2009), isolation and alienation of different groups, “minimiz[ing] the common shared ground” (Heintze 1998), difficult dialogue between groups (Cornell 2002), segregation and strengthening ethnic differences (Mozaffar and Scarritt 1999). Given all these factors, TSG will not cure the existing conflict, but instead may even cause new conflicts in the society, as the scholars above claim.

Many state leaders in the current international climate have similar concerns about those of the scholars mentioned above. Hence, they are highly reluctant to pursue this method of conflict resolution. Ferrazzi (2000), in a humorous way, writes about how the President of Indonesia had difficulties even uttering the word “federalism” for his

country. For many state leaders even “using the ‘F’ word” arouses anxiety, let alone putting it into practice.

While this contention between opponents and supporters of territorial solutions in ethnic conflict resolution occupies a great place in the literature, there has been a new dimension added to it. Graham Brown explains the new dimension as follows:

Increasingly, however, there is a realization that the term ‘federalism’ covers a broad spectrum of institutional arrangements, and that the influence of federal structures is likely to interact with other sociological or economic influences so that it is implausible to assert that ‘federalism’ in general increases or decreases the risk of secessionism (2009, 2).

What Brown explains through federalism is surely valid for all TSG arrangements. Accordingly, there is no definite answer to whether territorial self-governance arrangements resolve or escalate conflicts. Seeking a precise answer to this would lead to an everlasting debate, since there are both success and failure examples of them in various cases. Every self-governance arrangement is a unique case with its distinct context and institutional design. Thus, the success or failure of each self-governance arrangement depends on its own context and design. This shows that the questions of “Do territorial self-governance arrangements solve ethnic conflicts or do they exacerbate them?” have become out-dated and there is a need for asking a more proper question: “In which conditions and institutional designs do these arrangements function as conflict resolution tools, not leading to further conflict?”

2.3 Asking the Proper Question:

Many scholars studying the conflict resolution theory have lately preferred to ask a more contextual question; “What kind of institutional design increases the likeliness of TSG arrangements to curb ethnic conflicts and does not lead to new conflicts?” or “in what conditions is TSG most likely to succeed?” In order to answer these questions, various scholars have come up with certain criteria. The idea behind listing such conditions is not to create an optimal standard for self-rule. The best institutional design is the one tailored for the specific ethnic conflict (Lapidoth 1997, 29-36). The objective is rather to draw a general framework that offers certain precautions that could prevent

the territorial entity from giving birth to new disputes both at the central and local levels.

Ruth Lapidoth lists sixteen “factors that may increase the prospects for success” (1997, 199-203). Yash Ghai, under the title of “propositions about actions that can increase the likelihood that an autonomy arrangement will succeed” mentions five criteria (2000, 504-512). John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (2010) suggest both demographic and historical conditions together with power sharing mechanisms for effective “pluri-national” entities. Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff contend that the TSG needs to be combined with other conflict resolution tools such as power sharing mechanisms (2004). Thomas Benedikter puts forward a comprehensive list of eighteen elements to be taken into account while structuring territorial autonomies (2009b, 246-247).

Among the wide variety of criteria and conditions, there are six which are considered to be vital by the majority of scholars:

Democracy: For Lapidoth, if both central and local governments are democratic regimes, “the prospects for success are greater” (1997, 200). Kjell-Ake Nordquist reaches the same conclusion after conducting a qualitative research into the relationship between democracy and durability of autonomy. According to his work, “autonomies within democratic states are more likely to be durable than other autonomies” (1998, 73). Yash Ghai gives credit to liberal societies for hosting the most successful autonomy examples thanks to their democratic traditions (2000). For Benedikter, pluralist democracy is a “conditio sine quo non for genuine ‘modern’ territorial autonomy” (2009b, 10). If it is not built upon a democratic environment, it is destined to cause new conflicts.

Nevertheless, territorial solutions can be applied to all countries regardless of their regimes. Indeed, there are examples of which territorial power sharing mechanisms are applied in non-democratic or authoritarian regimes. This was the case in the former Yugoslavian and Soviet Union states, both having ethno-federal structures. However, some scholars believe that the very reason why these states collapsed is their anti-democratic structures (Bermeo 2002, Heintze 1998). As a response to the scholars who

blame the ethno-federal structure for the collapse of the Soviets and the others, they claim that it was not the federal structure itself but the lack of democratic institutions what led to their dissolution. This argument seems to have some truth in it, given the strong link established between democracy and TSG by several scholars.

Division of power: Building an effective territorial self-rule entity requires a well-arranged and clear distribution of powers and competences between central and local units. Wolff argues;

One of the key questions to ask of any self-governance regime is where powers rest; i.e., how different competences are allocated to different layers of authority and whether they are their exclusive domain or have to be shared between different layers of authority (n.d., 3)

Dividing powers such as education, security, taxation, natural resources and foreign affairs between central and local entities varies from case to case depending on the nature of the conflict. Although there is no best way of separation of powers between entities, the criterion about the division of power emphasizes the need to constitute a clear list of competences. Misunderstandings and conflicts are likely to be avoided when there is no ambiguity about who holds the power on what. It is important to properly clarify each party's duties, responsibilities and authority. A clear division of competences would also decrease the risk of power exceeding.

Dispute resolution and coordination mechanisms: TSG settlements are inherently complex institutional arrangements since there are multiple governments and layers within one state. To structure and practice such a governance system is surely not an easy task at all. It is almost inevitable not to encounter difficulties emerging from different interpretations of policies of central and local units or one of them exceeding its power or acting against the settled rules. Thus, establishing a common organ for the units to meet and discuss vital issues, concerns and disputes is a substantial criterion for the success of territorial arrangements.

In order to address this criterion, territorial entities can establish a joint commission consisting of an equal number of representatives from each unit. This dispute resolution and policy coordination mechanism can serve useful. Ghai believes "systems that provide consultation and mechanisms for renegotiation are more likely to

succeed” and gives the Switzerland case as an ideal example, arguing “Switzerland’s success is often attributed to habits of consultations and negotiations” (2000, 513).

Entrenchment: The legal basis of a TSG agreement is a significant matter for its effectiveness and success. It is possible to grant status to a TSG arrangement through international treaty, constitution, statute, specific laws, and custom (Lapidoth 1997; Benedikter 2009b). The idea behind entrenchment is to make sure that none of the parties can make arbitrary changes in the settled arrangement. In some cases the stronger party, usually the central state, can resort to unilateral changes about the governance structure without obtaining the consent of local entity. To prevent such cases, stronger entrenchments, preferably constitutional, are required.

Local power sharing: The issue of local power sharing is one of the most crucial criteria for a territorial self-rule to function as a conflict resolution tool. It is about establishing necessary power sharing mechanisms within the distinct territorial unit. It is especially significant in cases where the territorial unit is demographically heterogeneous, meaning that it consists of different ethnic or religious groups.

Susan Stewart, in her work, accuses both power sharing and autonomy literatures of neglecting “the fact that when territorial autonomy is granted to an ethnic or linguistic group, problems can arise concerning the position of minorities (titular or otherwise) within the territory in question” (2001, 113). Her statement, however, is not entirely accurate since the majority of work on autonomy as a tool of conflict resolution in divided societies touches upon and, in fact, makes great emphasis on the importance of local power sharing arrangements to prevent new conflicts from emerging in the local entity.

Once the minorities with self-determination claims reach their aspirations and start ruling the lands where they are concentrated, they usually become the majority of the new territory. “The former minority gains power over other groups, which entails the danger that these ‘new’ minorities are suppressed” (Heintze 1998, 19). Disunity and discontent among the local groups could trigger a series of conflicts both within and with the center. To deal with this potential conflict, “new” minorities also need to be granted some rights and privileges. Depending on the context, cultural autonomy (non-

territorial autonomy), veto right, grand coalition, guarantees for minority protection, sanctions against discrimination, representation in legislation and executive could be among tools to prevent an inner dispute.

Central-level power sharing: “Historically, when central leaders grant increased autonomy to disaffected regions, they are usually rewarded with peace rather than instability” (Bermeo 2002, 105) and the risk of instability falls when the autonomous entity joins state institutions and central decision making. The idea behind establishing power sharing mechanisms between the central and local units is to create a “sense of partnership” (Elazar cited in Bermeo 2002, 107). This cooperation is crucial to get the local entity to have a stake in the whole territorial integrity and not desire secession. In order to meet this requirement, groups should join the institutions at the center and preferably be active in legislation and execution.

O’Leary, McGarry and Salih (2005), in their book, *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*, underline the need for constructing center-level power sharing mechanisms to make the local unit interested in sustaining shared governance with the center. For the authors, a “shared government” would “tie[s] self-governing entities to the center without encroaching on their powers” (Cited in Wolff 2007, 385). These arguments are surely not specific to Iraq, but valid for all self-rule arrangements. However, it is now more prominent for Iraq than ever. Kurdistan and the Iraqi state need to further develop their cooperation not to have a separate future. Kurdistan Regional Government, currently, is raising demands for independent statehood. Recent unpleasant developments taking place in Iraq with the attack of the brutal armed organization, the Islamic State, have showed that the central government is neither eager nor capable to protect the Kurdistan region from violent attacks. Situations of this kind may worsen the connection between the territorial and central governments, creating divergence and triggering ideas of separate futures.

2.4 Conclusion:

Territorial self-governance has become a convenient and feasible option in the resolution of conflicts where groups ask for identity recognition and self-determination and where states ask for the continuation of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The merit of territorial solutions come from its ability to meet the demands of both majority and minority groups.

Self-government has a great potential to accommodate ethnic differences and curb ethnic conflicts that would otherwise lead to state collapse. Yet, neither is it a prescription that can cure all conflicts, nor it is sufficient alone. Territorial self-governance arrangements need to be accompanied by other conflict resolution tools and power sharing mechanisms. In other words, there needs to be a “delicate balancing act to be performed when creating and implementing autonomy arrangements, in which the relationships among the center, the regional authorities and the ethnic groups involved must be carefully considered” (Stewart 2001, 138). In order to achieve a good balance, a TSG arrangement needs to have a well-arranged institutional design that can address the context it emerges within.

Stefan Wolff (2009), in his attempt to suggest a model for creating successful TSG structures, has developed an analytical framework of what he names as complex power sharing. In this model, he combines TSG with other criteria, local and central power sharing tools, which are among the most significant criteria that majority of scholars have pointed out as crucial for success. This is the way to create “not fake” but “true” self-rule designs (Heintze 1998, 30; Ghai 2000, 522).

CHAPTER 3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will introduce the analytical framework of the study which the analysis of the case will be conducted through. First, the analytical framework -complex power sharing- will be described and then, how it is utilized in the research design will be explained. Subsequently, its explanatory power will be discussed.

3.1 Describing Complex Power Sharing

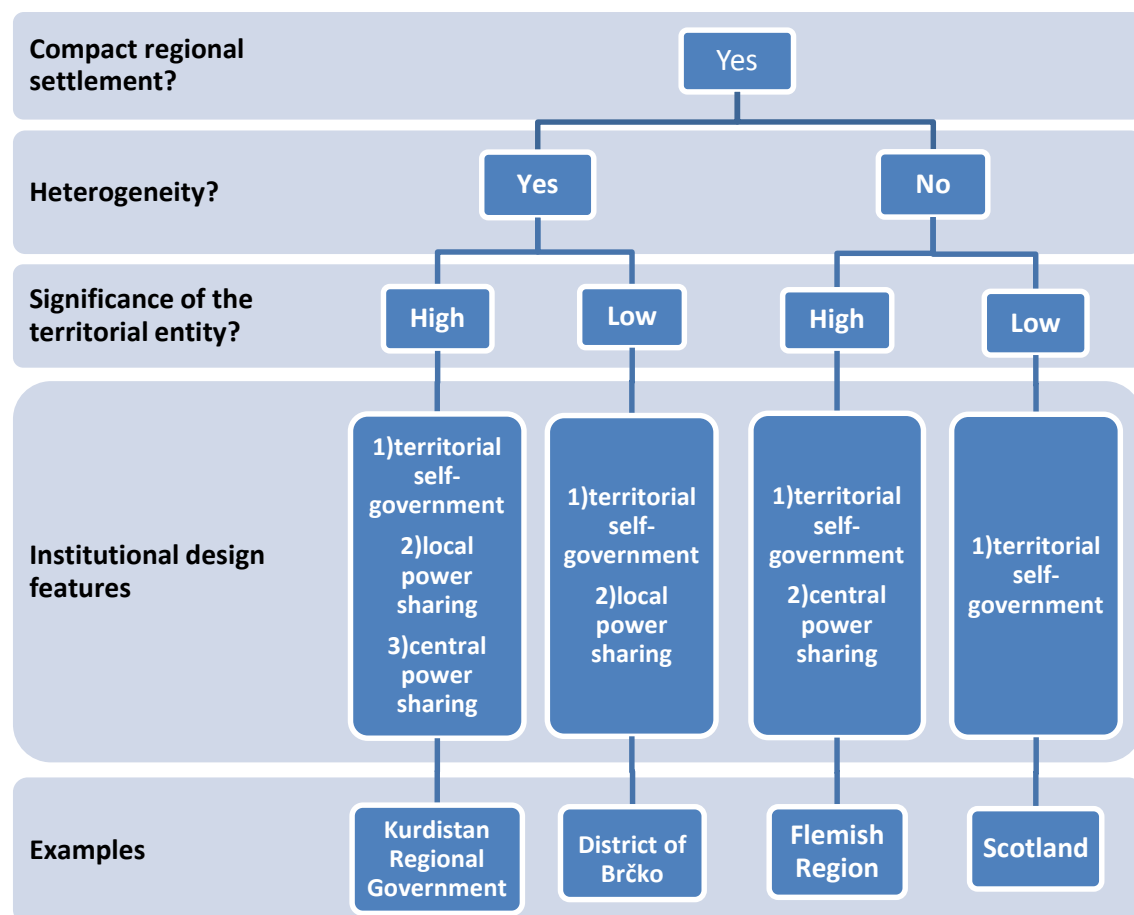
Stefan Wolff, like many other authors mentioned above, has asserted the inability of territorial self-governance to cure self-determination conflicts on its own. According to Wolff, an effective self-governance regime is only possible through combining it with other conflict resolution tools. In this respect, he has established an analytical framework, namely complex power sharing and conceptualized it in the following way;

Complex power sharing, in the way I define it, refers to a practice of conflict settlement that has a form of self-governance regime at its heart, but whose overall institutional design includes a range of further mechanisms for the accommodation of ethnic diversity in divided societies (Wolff 2007, 29).

In his analytical model, Wolff specifies three main features of complex power sharing arrangements. In other words, “Wolff’s concern is to identify the principal features of ‘complex power sharing’ arrangements that have proved relatively effective in resolving such [ethnic] conflict” (Brown 2009, 2). These features are; (1) the form of territorial self-government, (2) local power sharing tools within the self-governing unit, and (3) central power sharing tools within the overall state. These three main features are prominent for being common to many conflict settlements and for having proved to be successful in various cases.

However, Wolff contends that these features need to be applied in the cases where the context of the conflict necessitates them. In other words, he believes that it is important to analyze the context of each conflict to determine “which of these features are most apposite” to that conflict case (Brown 2009, 2). Wolff suggests that complex power sharing need to be tailored according to the context of the conflict. In order to find the convenient arrangement, he suggests asking for each case the following questions: (1) Is there a compact regional settlement of the group within the state, (2) Is the local territorial unit heterogeneous, and (3) Is the local unit significant to the overall state? The answers to these questions will be helpful to arrange the appropriate institutional design of the self-governance arrangement. The figure below tabulates the design of complex power sharing:

Table 1: Context⁴ and institutional design for conflict settlement



Source: Wolff 2009, 32.

⁴ Definitions of compact regional settlement, heterogeneity and significance of the territorial entity will be provided in the data analysis chapter.

As visible in the figure, the institutional design is set upon the context of the case. This contextual approach is vital because it allows for context-specific-solutions to conflicts. Accordingly, the compact settlement of the group with self-determination claims, the heterogeneity of the local territory and its overall significance are the main issues before settling an arrangement. If, for example, a territorial region were highly heterogeneous in itself, it would definitely need local power sharing tools. If, on the contrary, it were homogenous, then local power sharing tools might not be as vital. A territorial unit could be very significant for the overall state, or it could be territorially separated from the center such as Greenland, and thus may not need central level power sharing mechanisms.

Remaining committed to this analytical model, this thesis will ask; (1) Is there a compact regional settlement of Kurdish population in Turkey, (2) Is the Kurdish region heterogeneous, and (3) Is the region significant to the rest of the country? The answers to these contextual questions will be the guide to evaluate a suitable complex power sharing model for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict.

After finding answers to these questions and thus analyzing the context of the Kurdish case, it will be determined which of the three features would be most suitable for the case. Accordingly, the study will seek to analyze; (1) the form of arrangement Democratic Autonomy stands for and its main characteristics, (2) the nature of local power sharing arrangements of Democratic Autonomy, if necessary (3) the nature of central power sharing arrangements of Democratic Autonomy, if necessary.

The analyses all together will show whether Democratic Autonomy has a suitable institutional design that can address the requirements of its context. The outcome of the analyses will allow the writer of the thesis to put forward the merits and demerits of Democratic Autonomy. This way, it will be possible to evaluate whether or not Democratic Autonomy is a promising model for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey, and to what extent it can contribute to the resolution with its current design.

3.2 Explanatory Power of Complex Power Sharing:

Stefan Wolff's complex power sharing is a prominent analytical framework which offers a valuable design for self-governance. It has a great explanatory power for several reasons. First, this model is a synthesis of prominent conflict resolution theories. It is a combination of the conflict resolution tools suggested by power sharing, power dividing and integration. It has a TSG arrangement at its center, but not limited to it. It also involves various other tools to strengthen its institutional design. In the words of Stefan Wolff;

The essence of complex power sharing is that such institutional frameworks go significantly beyond one-dimensional arrangements offering “just” autonomy, or power sharing, or minority rights bills, or improved economic development, etc., but combine a range of different mechanisms to address the concerns of all relevant parties (2009, 41).

Combining various mechanisms makes complex power sharing a flexible design which does not dictate certain ways of dealing with ethnic conflicts, but instead does allow realizing diverse arrangements as long as they serve the cause, the resolution of ethnic tensions.

Second, the analytical framework involves the main criteria to increase the likeliness of territorial self-governance arrangements to resolve self-determination conflicts. The centrality of local and central power sharing tools in the success of TSG arrangements was emphasized in the previous section. While Wolff is well aware of the importance of other criteria, such as democracy, legal entrenchment, dispute solving mechanisms and others, he does not restrict the model to a strict format involving a set of multiple criteria. Limiting the model to extensive conditions could limit the chances of success as well. Instead of “develop[ing] full-fledged theory of complex power sharing” he attempts to develop a systematic framework which involves the main features of many conflict settlements (2009, 28).

Moreover, different from the other scholars in the area, Wolff adds a contextual approach to his model. Although many authors emphasize the uniqueness of every single case and underline the importance of a contextual understanding, it is this very

model which directly addresses “the need for a more contextual understanding” in the literature (Brown 2009, 3). Wolff argues that the context of the case-compact settlement, heterogeneity of the local unit and its significance to the state- is crucial to find the appropriate design for resolution.

Lastly and most significantly, Wolff provides empirical support for his analytical framework. He makes an empirical analysis of eighteen individual cases to illustrate the practice of complex power sharing. The author examines the cases of; Brussel Capital Region (Belgium), Flemish Region (Belgium), Walloon Region (Belgium), Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), District of Brčko (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Nanggröe Aceh Darussalam (Indonesia), Kurdistan Region (Iraq), Province of South Tyrol/Region of Trentino-Südtirol (Italy), Districts of the Mitrovica Region (Kosova), Local districts in western Macedonia (Macedonia), Territorial Autonomous Unit of Gagauzia (Moldova), Province of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea), Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (Philippines), South Sudan (Sudan), Crimea (Ukraine), Northern Ireland (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), and Scotland (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). The common characteristic of all these cases in thirteen different countries is the existence of territorially compact groups making self-determination claims. In all the cases, with the mere exception of Crimea, there are central power sharing mechanisms, if the region is significant to the rest of the country. In the majority of cases, where the region is highly heterogenous, there are local power sharing tools. Three cases, Nanggröe Aceh Darussalam, Gagauzia and Crimea, lack local power sharing tools despite having very high levels of local heterogeneity. All in all, despite there is a wide range of different contextual dynamics and institutional arrangements, the overall analysis of these cases shows that “there is a clear trend of conflict resolution practice that points in the direction of complex power sharing settlements” (Wolff 2009, 38). The assumption that conflict settlement in divided states requires a self-governance design with necessary local and central power sharing tools is confirmed to a large extent by the author.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to trace the methodology that is utilized in the thesis. In doing so, first, the thesis will be situated in an in-depth case study format and then the research design will be presented. Subsequently, the process of data collection and analysis will be explained. Lastly, there will be brief remarks on the terminology used in the study.

4.1 In-Depth Case Study and Research Design

Qualitative studies have been dominant in studying territorial approaches in conflict resolution. Quantitative studies, on the other hand, remain relatively few in number. Yet, their contributions to the field are well appreciated. Quantitative studies are mostly visible in the debate carried out between advocates and opponents of territorial solutions, since both groups attempt to support their own arguments with numerical data. Moreover, quantitative studies have served useful in, for instance, investigating the impact of democracy on the success of self-rule deals.

On the other hand, the majority of qualitative work is concerned with adding a theoretical perspective to the topic and analyzing in-depth case studies. Many of the case studies focus on federalism in post-communist regimes. There are also studies that concentrate on grasping the European models of regional and local governance. While these studies fall short of making larger generalizations about the topic, they still shed light on various cases. In-depth case studies reveal various different institutional designs, and thus are valuable to grasp different self-governance arrangements. The case study approach is a vital method, since only a meticulous study would allow making a real judgment on the merits and demerits of a particular self-government design.

Upon this understanding, the analysis of Democratic Autonomy will be performed through a single case study research design. The case study design will allow for drawing a comprehensive picture about the model in question and reach an outcome about its utility. Democratic Autonomy has been debated extensively in the media by experts, politicians and journalists. It has been subject to intense public discussions. Yet, there exists a major lack of scholarly research especially focusing on the internal arrangement of the model. An in-depth study of the case will kill two birds with one stone, both to fill the gap in the literature of scientific research, and explore and evaluate a case which is significant in itself as a valuable model that could bring about peace in Turkey.

The growing acknowledgement of merits of territorial solutions to resolve ethnic disputes also paves the way for Democratic Autonomy to be considered as a useful tool in the resolution of the Kurdish conflict. In the light of prominent scholarship on territorial self-governance, this thesis seeks to answer, “To what extent does Democratic Autonomy contribute to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey?” Answering this question requires a certain order to follow. First, territorial self-governance will be conceptualized and explained as a conflict resolution tool. Then, some necessary conditions and criteria will be added to it in order to increase its prospect of success. Subsequently, an analytical framework, which is complex power sharing, will be introduced and explained as a model containing both territorial self-governance and necessary principal criteria. This model has proved to be successful in the resolution of many conflicts, and hence will be treated as a measurement tool in this thesis to measure the potential success of Democratic Autonomy.

Data analysis will follow the structure of the analytical framework. First, the context of the Kurdish conflict will be revealed through contextual questions of complex power sharing. Then, the institutional design corresponding to that context will be traced. This will lead to answer the question; Does Democratic Autonomy have a qualified institutional design with effective local and central power sharing tools that would satisfy the conflict context it exists in? Provided that it fulfills the necessary institutional design that its context requires, it will be considered as a beneficial and even necessary tool Turkey needs to take into consideration. However, if it does not; that is, if the institutional design falls short of satisfying the needs of its contextual

setting, then Democratic Autonomy will be considered to be ineffective, and thus unable to bring peace to the country at this point. The overall research process will lead to evaluate the contribution of Democratic Autonomy to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey.

Given the fact that Democratic Autonomy has long been advocated by all the mainstream pro-Kurdish actors, given its importance in shaping politics in Turkey and its significance as a possible solution to the long-lasting Kurdish conflict, this thesis acknowledges Democratic Autonomy as a valuable project that necessitates an in-depth analysis. While acknowledging its great potential for the resolution, the thesis holds a questioning approach towards it, thus seeking a systematic evaluation of the model. In this respect, assuming that there is a compact settlement of Kurdish population in its historical homeland, which is both heterogeneous and significant to the rest of the country, the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy should require very effective local and central power sharing arrangements. Accordingly, the thesis hypothesizes that Democratic Autonomy could only serve its purpose if it is a well-defined territorial arrangement with remarkable power sharing tools both within and with the center, and if so, its contribution to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey would be valuable and worthwhile as a robust solution.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data to test the validity of the given hypothesis have been collected through a mixed methodology approach. One way of gathering the data has been through in-depth interviews. The writer of the thesis has conducted eight interviews with the members of the DBP, DTK and HDP. Meetings with the DBP members have taken place in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey, since the party currently holds mayorship of ten-plus-one cities in the region; Tunceli, Ağrı, Iğdır, Van, Hakkari, Şırnak, Bitlis, Siirt, Batman, Diyarbakır and plus Mardin.⁵ For the interviews, the writer has focused on the cities of Van, Diyarbakır and Mardin -all of which have metropolitan

⁵ The mayor of Mardin was an independent candidate in the local elections of 2014 due to his political ban. He is a prominent face of the Kurdish movement.

municipalities, and thus are presumably active agents in developing and constructing Democratic Autonomy at the local- and on the cities of Hakkari and Yüksekova, “where the secular Kurdish nationalist movement is the dominant actor” (Tezcür). In all the selected cities pro-Kurdish parties have a strong basis and gain considerable support from the constituency of the region. Among the cities mentioned, Diyarbakır is “long considered the unofficial capital of the Kurdish areas in Turkey” (Gunter 2011, 4).

Holding the power of municipalities is very important for Kurdish actors, since it stands as a powerful means to develop and implement policies of autonomy in the region. The local government, in Turkey, that is municipalities, are the closest level to the society. In this respect, the success of the DBP to get hold of several municipalities does not only grant the party important resources to develop certain self-rule practices but also ensures a close connection with the local people. This makes the DBP municipalities crucial agencies and the DBP mayors vital actors in the development and realization of Democratic Autonomy. Therefore, the in-depth interviews have mostly been focused on local government actors, who are also the members of the DTK.

All the interviews conducted with the co-mayors of the DBP and the two-weeklong visit to the region have made a great contribution to the preparation of the thesis. Nevertheless, given the importance of holding the power of municipalities, it was expected that the contacted mayors would be more enthusiastic about providing more information. Many times the interview questions were either answered inadequately or irrelevantly. Another major limitation to the interviews was to receive politically and ideologically oriented answers instead of more concrete and tangible facts on the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy. In some conversations political discourse overrode factual information.

However, even though not arranged in advance, the co-president of the DTK was quite enthusiastic to devote more than an hour to answer the interview questions on the topic. The information provided by the DTK co-president was definitely beneficial. The DTK, although not officially recognized as a civil society organization, is the main establishment to carry out the works concerning local governance and autonomy. The organization was founded in 2007, with the call of Abdullah Öcalan and with the purpose of working primarily on Democratic Autonomy. More significantly, the

organization is accepted as the “Parliament of Kurdistan” by the Kurdish movement. In addition to the interview, the Press Officer of the DTK provided many documents, including informative texts about Democratic Autonomy, workshop reports, annual reports, texts of speeches and most importantly the DTK Contract, which is said to act as the Constitution of the “DTK Parliament.”

Lastly, interviews with two HDP deputies have served very useful to receive substantive data. Both deputies are among those who are directly involved in the matters of local governance in their own party.

All the interviews were semi-structured ones consisting of open-ended questions. The majority of the questions focused on the institutional design of the proposed model. The same questions were asked in all the meetings; yet, more questions were raised during the conversations according to the given answers. Further details and elaborations were requested whenever the answers were found vague or off the topic. Besides the personally conducted interviews, the thesis has also used the interviews of Kurdish actors in the media, BDP’s proposal on draft Constitution, DTK documents and extensive writings of Abdullah Öcalan and of the Kurdish movement.

This study has made use of the data obtained from Kurdish political actors. Yet, the talks with the Presidents of Bar associations in Van and Diyarbakır, the long and very fruitful talk with the President of Human’s Rights Association in Diyarbakır and the talks with local youth, especially in Mardin Kızıltepe, have allowed the writer of the thesis to get more familiar of the local dynamics and hear several different opinions about the topic.

The analysis of the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy relies on a systematic reading of first-hand data. In this respect, documents released by the DTK are of considerable value. The DTK Contract, the draft of the Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan Model (Demokratik Özerk Kürdistan Modeli Taslağı) from the DTK Congress held on 18-19 December, 2010, and especially the book prepared following the Democratic Autonomy Workshop, (Demokratik Özerklik Çalıştayı) which took place on 12-13 May, 2012 serve as significant sources to grasp the legal design of Democratic Autonomy. Other useful first-hand sources for the analysis are the writings

of Abdullah Öcalan and the books published by the academy in his name. However, the most beneficial sources are surely the personally conducted interviews. These personal conversations are significant to focus on specific concerns, such as the local and central power sharing tools, which are the two main issues to shed light on this thesis. Conducted in-depth interviews allow for making comparisons among the answers given by different actors to the same questions. Through a systematic reading, the interviews reveal commonalities and contradictions in the answers, and thus lead to a comprehensive analysis to assess the contribution of Democratic Autonomy. A good number of interviews conducted with members of Kurdish politics by several journalists are also remarkably useful. Using multiple sources from different organizations and people for the analysis have constructed the validity of the study.

4.3 Terminology

The terminology used while studying the Kurdish conflict is a sensitive matter, as the words chosen may reflect the political and ideological position of the writer. In this work, no term is used with the purpose of reflecting a certain political stance. The usage of the term Kurdistan in the thesis merely refers to the geographical region in Turkey, where Kurds have been historically concentrated. It is interchangeably used with the terms of Kurdish region and the eastern and southeastern Turkey.

The words, Kurdish people and Kurds, on the other hand, are used in loose way disregarding the sub-divisions within the Kurdish identity. Throughout the thesis, the term “Kurdish people” is used very cautiously to avoid major generalizations, and rather the terms “Kurdish political movement” and “Kurdish political actors” are preferred. In fact, making a distinction between the Kurdish movement and Kurdish society is crucial, since Democratic Autonomy is considered to be a demand posed by the movement, and it would not be correct to present it as a demand referring to the whole Kurdish society.

CHAPTER 5 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE KURDISH CONFLICT

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical and conceptual background for the discussion of the Kurdish question, where the nature and ideological transformation of the mainstream Kurdish political movement are debated. In doing so, the chapter will touch upon several issues, events and concepts on the Kurdish question, which are considered to be significant. These will be situated in a historical context from 1923 to 1999 -from the establishment of the Turkish Republic until the capture of Öcalan- and from 1999 onwards, during which the Kurdish national movement has undergone a major shift in its ideology in which it has abandoned the goal of a separate statehood and embraced a “living together formula”. The period at issue is also significant for the “Resolution Process” that has started between the Justice and Development Party (AKP) governments and Kurdish political parties.

A historical perspective on the Kurdish conflict is essential in order to make a full sense of the process around which the Democratic Autonomy model has evolved on the political agenda and the current context in which it is being debated. In this chapter, it will be argued that the form of the Kurdish struggle has shifted drastically throughout the decades influenced by both state policies and the conjuncture it has found voice in. Moreover, Kurdish identity politics, mainly developed by ethnic entrepreneurs in the late 1970's, has also shifted in the way it exhibits its political project.

5.1 The “New” Middle East

“The Middle East is not likely to be the same again.” The quotation belongs to Graham E. Fuller, who more than a decade ago believed that Kurdish politics with its increasing momentum would have a major role in re-shaping the politics in the Middle

East, as Kurds had firmly been “banging on the door of national recognition and self-determination” (1993, 108). In fact, the Middle East, has never been the same again since the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, which led to the division of the Kurdish-populated Ottoman territory, and thus to ever growing Kurdish and Kurdistan problems. Nevertheless, what is “new” about the region Fuller refers to is that issues such as human and minority rights, democracy, autonomy, federation and even new states are at the forefront and are less likely to fade away without effective responses from Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.

The establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government within a federal Iraqi state, the most recent developments taking place in Northern Syria, or Rojava (Western Kurdistan) and serious attempts in Turkey towards a resolution all indicate that the Kurdish issue has increasingly been on the top agenda of regional and international politics. According to Gunter, “If the Arab-Israeli dispute slowly winds down, the Kurdish issue will bid to replace it as the leading factor of instability in the geostrategically important Middle East” (Gunter 2011,1). The Kurdish conflict, however, would not only be a source of instability in the region but a great source of stability as well, if handled appropriately. The Kurdish factor by its nature has the potential to push the governments forward for more democracy and human rights. This is now the case in the Turkish context in which the state has had to reconsider its repressive policies towards its Kurdish citizens and political actors. The Turkish state that once denied even the existence of Kurds and Kurdish language has now had to take accommodative steps towards their recognition. The state, moreover, has acknowledged the fact that security policies could never bring peace to Turkey, since terror is a “symptom rather than a cause of the conflict” (Özkırımlı 2014, 1067), which needs a profound social, sociological, political and economic treatment. Concisely, the Kurdish political movement has forced the reluctant state to question issues such as human rights, linguistic and cultural rights, identity, recognition and decentralization. Özkırımlı skillfully outlines the issue as such;

It is no longer possible to turn a blind eye to Kurdish demands for recognition at a time when millions of people, including the Kurds in neighbouring countries, are galvanized into action for more freedom and democracy across the broader Middle East. They compel us to rethink the question of how to accommodate difference, both at the level of state-community and inter-community relations, and to consider the different

ways of achieving peaceful coexistence in societies characterized by cultural diversity (2014, 1056).

Having said this, it is now up to the Turkish state and Kurdish political actors to whether converge and turn the conflict into an opportunity for further democratization and stability or diverge and cause instability and even bloodshed in the country.

5.2 Defining the “Kurdish” Conflict

Defining and naming the Kurdish question in Turkey has never been an easy task, in particular due to the difficulty to pinpoint its embedded underlying causes. Discriminatory state policies and strong centralization, denial of the Kurdish identity, culture and language, definition of Turkish citizenship, imposed supra-identity, political suppression, social and economic poverty can be listed among the several factors frequently expressed by the mainstream scholarship to refer to the roots of the conflict. However, there is no common agreement on which of these factors have contributed most to the emergence and rise of the dispute, thus turning it into a long-lasting brutal war. Even the few quantitative studies into the underlying causes fall short to present a complete picture of the case. While a recent study finds a strong link between socio-economic status -level of education and income- and Kurdish nationalism (Sarigil 2010), another study firmly dismisses these findings and claims that it is instead “the effect of political dissatisfaction” that has triggered nationalist sentiments among Kurds (Ekmekçi 2011, 1614).

Political actors as well as scholars encounter the same problem while seeking to define and explain the conflict. Various actors in Turkey tend to describe the issue in very different and even opposing manners. Actually, even today, in the process of an ongoing resolution between Turkish governments and Kurdish national actors, there still exists a lack of consensus about the definition of the conflict. In fact, there is still little attempt to arrive at such a definition, and the process has been underway for years without being able to reach a common understanding on the causes and dynamics of the dispute. It would not be surprising, if this, in the long run, would cause a serious setback for the peace process, since defining a conflict means determining the attitudes, goals,

intentions of its actors and, most importantly, the possible resolutions to it (Keyman 2008, 128-129). Without agreeing on a definition and using a language in common, it would hardly be possible to find a genuine solution to the issue, if not impossible.

Throughout history, the Turkish state and Kurdish political actors have used contradictory terminology to describe the issue. While Kurdish nationalists have preferred terms such as “internal exploitation”, “assimilation”, “forced Turkification”, “occupation” and even “genocide”, state actors have seen the issue mainly as “regional economic underdevelopment”, “regional backwardness”, “tribal tensions”, and “terror and security” (Keyman 2013, 130-133). What is significant is that, Kurdishness, meaning the ethnic identity aspect of the conflict, used to be absent from the definition for so many years. This substantial remark presents two major clues about both sides of the conflict. For the Turkish state, it was natural not to acknowledge or, at times, even conceal the “ethnic identity dimension” of the issue, as it was extremely reluctant to recognize the existence of a separate Kurdish nation. Accepting Kurdishness of the conflict,

would mean directly acknowledging the existence of a very big minority population, and coming to terms with the possibility that the unifying policies that were part of the Republic’s founding ideology—policies of a single nation, single language, and centralized power—were perhaps neither well-founded nor realistic (Aydınlı and Özcan 2011, 441).

While the approach of the state to the issue was less surprising, the picture was far more complex on the side of Kurdish actors, as they were not to put Kurdishness at the heart of the issue before the late 1970’s. In the first two decades of the Republic and in the 1960’s and partly 1970’s, Kurdish politics represented itself in various other forms. In fact, the Kurdish issue, as an ethnic identity and recognition struggle, came to emerge in the late 1970’s, speeded up in the 1980’s and reached its peak in the 1990’s. In other words, Kurdish ethnic identity politics is a relatively recent phenomenon. “That is not to say that, in the past, no Kurdish ‘national’ awareness existed” (Bruinessen 1992, 267). What is claimed is that this “awareness” was not used as a defining cause of Kurdish conflict and was hence not instrumentalized as a collective force for demanding recognition of the Kurdish identity.

5.3 Discontent Overlapping with Identity

In the late Ottoman period, particularly as of the 19th century, increasing centralization policies aroused discontent among Kurds, whose “local affairs had been largely beyond the reach of the state” (Belge 2011, 99). Kurdish discontent showed itself mainly in the form of tribal tensions caused by the fact that landlords had to hand over their privileges to the new centralized state. With the end of World War I and the heavy loss of the Ottomans, a territorial dimension to this discontent was added. The Kurdish-populated areas, which were previously separated between the Ottoman and Persian Empires, were divided into four newly-established countries, namely Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq. This Kurdistan conflict left Kurds with a divided homeland and as “the largest nation in the world without its own independent state”⁶ (Gunter 2011,1).

Kurds in Turkey, in fact, had an opportunity to have an independent state with the Treaty of Sevres signed in 1920 between the Sultan’s Istanbul government and allied forces. Not only did Article 62 of the Treaty designate a “local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates” but, more significantly, Article 64 paved the way for an independent Kurdistan if “majority of the population of these areas desires independence... and if... these peoples are capable of such independence” (WWI Document Archive). The leaders of Turkish national independence “turned that treaty into a dead letter” (Fuller 1993, 109) and the Treaty was never implemented. As a matter of fact, few Kurds at the time wanted a Kurdish state or an autonomous Kurdistan (Kirişçi and Winrow 2011, 93-99). There were Kurdish nationalists, but definitely lacked mass support, since the majority of Kurds fought together with the rest of the country for a united independence against the “infidel” (McDowall 2000, 184). Moreover, the already weak Kurdish national aspirations were totally dismissed with the Lausanne Treaty signed in 1923, which implicitly refused both a Kurdish state and a possible minority or otherwise status.

⁶ Mehrard R. Izady suggests that it is a frequently made mistake to claim that Kurds constitute the biggest nation or ethnic group without a state. Kurds, he contends, are the largest ethnic group in the world that has constantly fought against their particular states, but surely not the largest without a state, since India alone hosts couple of ethnic groups that outnumber Kurds (2004, 321).

According to Kirişçi and Winrow, Kurds, between 1920 and 1923, were recognized more by the “others” than recognized by the “self” (2011, 102). That is why it was relatively an easy task for the founders of the Republic to receive the support of Kurds during the struggle for nation-state building. However, great challenges to the Republic started when the Caliphate was abolished and the main common bond between Turks and Kurds was removed. Religion became a great source of discontent among Kurds. The new secularism that had dismissed the centuries-old Islamic common ground irritated many religious leaders in the Eastern and Southeastern regions, which also gave rise to mass revolts. The Sheikh Said rebellion broke out in 1925 as the biggest uprising to the newly founded Republic. Among many others it was followed by major 1930 Ağrı and 1937 Dersim uprisings, especially the latter of which has become notorious due to excessive brutality imposed by the state.

Many of the said uprisings involved both religious and tribal characteristics (Gürbey 2000, 59) and reflected the major difficulties Kurds had while welcoming the new state. However, despite a growing discontent among some Kurdish groups, Kurds were unable to present a common unified stance against the Turkish state. They were “divided by borders, dialects, tribal loyalties, and blood feuds”, and thus for the state “it was easy to dismiss their uprisings” (Marcus 2007, 77). When heavy state responses were added to this lack of Kurdish unity, it became impossible for Kurds to “mount a challenge against increasingly monodimensional Turkish nationalism” (Olson 1998, 19), and from 1938 to the 1960’s Kurds were “stopped manifesting in the public sphere” (Natali 2005, 84).

By the 1960’s a large portion of Kurds had actually been assimilated into the new Turkish identity (Cornell 2001; Keyman 2009). However, those opposed to integrating into the new Turkish state and identity were never to be assimilated. In the 1960’s, the Kurdish struggle, which had been silenced previously, gained voice in the relatively liberal atmosphere provided by the 1961 Constitution. Kurdish voice found basis in the rising socialist parties⁷, which also had the Kurdish question on their agendas. Workers

⁷ Interestingly, the Kurdish struggle which was embodied in Turkish socialism in the previous decades, today constitutes the biggest party in Turkey with socialist reference. The Peoples’ Democratic Congress or the HDK -the congress wing of the HDP- incorporates thirty-four different groups from different segments of society, while the HDP, as a party, aims to unite all peoples who are exploited, othered, discriminated and ignored, as stated at the party’s bylaw.

Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP) was, for instance, the first legal party to recognize the Kurdish reality (Kirişçi and Winrow 2011, 129), and named it as “the ‘eastern question,’ that is, inequality, exploitation, poverty, and feudal backwardness” (Natali 2005, 99). At the time, Kurdish and Turkish socialists were hand-in-hand in Marxist Leninist ideology groups, which were all against imperial powers rapidly leaking into Turkey.

Towards the end of the 1960’s and mainly after the 1971 Memorandum, there appeared a surge in the Kurdish national groups. In this period, organizations such as Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey (Türkiye’de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi, T-KDP), Revolutionary Eastern Culture Associations (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, DDKO), Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (Türkiye Kürdistanı Demokrat Partisi, TKDP) and Kurdistan Workers Party (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi, PKK) started operating.⁸ All of these formations, with the exception of TKDP, were against the traditional elements of the Kurdistan society -aghas, beys, tribal and religious leaders and their structures-accusing them of being the enemies of the revolution and the reason for regional backwardness (Gündoğan 2012). In the said period, the Kurdish movement defined itself mainly through the adoption of socialism and refusal of traditionalism.

Previously having more or less similar discourses and agendas to Turkish socialists, Kurdish groups by the mid 1970’s had undergone a “realization” of their distinct Kurdish identity (Natali 2005, 112) and slowly broke apart from Turkish socialist groups. Pro-Kurdish groups drew a separate path in which Kurdishness would be instrumentalized as the main source of ideology (Gündoğan 2012).

In the late 1970’s, the PKK particularly had a vital role in mobilizing Kurdish society around identity and recognition politics. Among many pro-Kurdish groups, the PKK was outstanding not only for being the only one to actualize armed struggle but also for its “distinctive theory” that strongly accused its own Kurdish people of

⁸ What is interesting is that the leaders of these groups, or those who spread the seeds of Kurdish nationalism, “emerged among those who were most integrated in Turkish culture” (Bruinessen 1998, 41). Many received modern Turkish education in Western Turkey. According to Gündoğan, the Western educated Kurdish students recognized the socio-economic backwardness of their regions compared to the cities in the West. This awareness contributed to their Kurdish ethnic consciousness to a great extent (2012). In other words, “the overlap between the regional economic disparity and particular ethnic (Kurdish) identity is translated into Kurdish nationalism” (Yavuz 2001, 2).

“imitating oppressors and being limitlessly brave and cruel in fighting against each other” (Özcan 2005, 404). According to the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, Kurds as “debased people” (düşürülmüş halk) were also short of “a base of ethnic nationalism” (Özcan 2005, 391). The PKK would gradually alter this through the use of violence and a strong rhetoric as well. Millions of Kurds would be attracted by the PKK’s call for “emancipation” and became greatly politicized. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, Öcalan’s PKK could have never been so persuasive if the violent atmosphere in Turkey of the 1980’s had not taken place. The 1980 military coup d’etat, its following order that removed almost all channels of legal politics and the Diyarbakır Prison in particular are major milestones towards the PKK’s violent armed activities, which thousands of people were voluntarily involved in.⁹

The PKK and the Turkish state started to fight a “low intensity war” as of August 1984. By the end of the 1990’s, over 30.000 people lost their lives in this war, while thousands got either lost or murdered through extrajudicial killings, which are still waiting to be enlightened by the state. Nonetheless, despite “the highly ethnicized and militarized political space” of the 1990’s, (Natali 2005, 109), the Kurdish movement was able to form political parties that carried the Kurdish agenda to the Parliament. Even though these parties had very limited means and were exposed to systematic party closures, they opened up a legal political space for the Kurdish struggle. At the same time, leading politicians of the time, Tansu Çiller and especially Turgut Özal, started speaking about a Kurdish reality and even coming up with some recommendations for the solution, mainly about the Kurdish language (Kirişçi and Winrow 2011, 160-166). Nevertheless, in an atmosphere where the Turkish Armed Forces had the upper-hand and concentrated on security policies mainly, it was hardly possible to speak about a major attempt towards any resolution.

The tense and dark atmosphere of the 1980’s and 1990’s diminished with the capture of the PKK leader in Kenya by an operation led by the American intelligence, which the Kurdish movement would later call “Great Gladio Conspiracy.” With

⁹Remnants of the 12 September 1980 Coup are still major obstacles in reaching peace, not only because it has formed traumatic collective memories in people’s minds but also because of the definition of citizenship of the 1982 Turkish Constitution that has openly stated that “Everyone bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk” (Article 66, Turkish Constitution). One of the principal demands of the Kurdish movement is a change of the definition of citizenship into one which makes no reference to being a Turk. b

Öcalan's capture many people assumed a victory of the Turkish Armed Forces over the PKK. They were surely unaware that the PKK would carry on functioning and thus violence from both sides would continue. As a matter of fact, in the 2000's Kurdish conflict would not disappear and, on the contrary, would even find a stronger basis both due to the PKK's reinterpretation of the struggle and a new era starting with the EU candidacy and AKP initiatives.

5.4 Shifting Ideologies and New Aspirations

Captured on 15 February 1999 and brought to court to present his defence, Öcalan surprised almost everyone with his statements regarding the Turkish state and the army, in which he presented his "appreciation" to the latter (Öcalan 1999, 59). He said; "I really love Turkey and the Turkish people. Sincerely, I will do all I can to be of service" (Cited in Gunter 2000, 852). What was even more striking and decisive for Turkish politics was Öcalan's defence statement, in response to the chief prosecutors of the State, which was published as the Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question (Kürt Sorununa Demokratik Çözüm Manifestosu Savunmalar I-II-III) in November 1999. In his defence, he rejected the main goal and ideology of the PKK, for which thousands of people had lost their lives. Öcalan claimed that the idea of separate statehood was totally unrealistic and unachievable since it lacked all the necessary basis to survive as a separate state. He argued (Öcalan 1999, 66);

The option of an independent Kurdistan state for the Kurds cannot go beyond merely a discourse in this sense. It is also mentioned in the PKK's program ideologically; however, it is the togetherness reality that is seen in practice and revealed in history so far.¹⁰

Öcalan was also quite against concepts such as federation and autonomy since, for him, they would only strengthen the "feudal-tribal remnants" in the region. He was of the opinion that (Öcalan 1999, 67);

¹⁰ All the translations of Abdullah Öcalan and actors of the Kurdish movement are done by the writer of the thesis.

Factors such as circumstances in regions where Kurds and Turks are embedded, differences in dialects and Kurdish population being at least the same number in the western part of the country already show the unavailability of the concrete basis of the autonomy thesis. Federation cannot be implemented on millions of Kurds in cities like İstanbul, İzmir and Adana. Besides, it would be possible to gain many more democratic benefits from the development of local governance structures than those expected from autonomy.

Totally abandoning the options of an independent state and autonomy for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict, Öcalan was confidently claiming a third option of what he called “Democratic Republic,” “in which Kurds and Turks would be unified in the way that Turkey’s founder, Atatürk, had imagined so” (Marcus 2007, 79). He thus, “referred to the transformation of the PKK... into a movement that aims at a democratic society as a rebirth” (Jongerden and Akkaya 2013, 178).

The PKK leader, furthermore, almost condemned the previous methods and tactics of the PKK. He stated; “It is so explicit that democracy cannot proceed with violence and that a peaceful solution to all the problems leading to violence can only be achieved through democracy” (Öcalan 1999, 58). Accordingly, soon after his capture, Abdullah Öcalan ordered ceasefire and the PKK forces to withdraw from Turkey and even some to surrender to the Turkish state. While Öcalan was trying to show the good intentions and “sincerity” of the PKK, the orders were shocking to the guerrilla forces. Following Öcalan’s statements, Rozerin, a PKK rebel, said; “There was almost nobody, from the highest level to the lowest, who thought this was the right thing to do... But it was impossible to go against the order without being accused of disloyalty... According to me the king was naked but we couldn’t say this” (Cited in Marcus 2007, 78). Nonetheless, despite Rozerin’s statements, the PKK promptly accepted Öcalan’s statements as its official position. It abandoned the goal of separate statehood and embraced the idea of radical democracy in the Seventh Extraordinary Congress, held in January 2000. The PKK Presidency Council Member, Cemil Bayık uttered the following words at the opening speech of the congress;

We are not giving up our philosophy, hopes, ideals and ideology... What we are giving up is outdated aspects that will not anymore serve the future, that will not develop and take us to victory. We only want to get rid of these. This has to be understood correctly (Serxwebûn 2000, 3).

Apart from some internal conflicts emerged within the PKK, the organization was able to sustain its united position and commitment to its leader. Nevertheless, it was indeed quite puzzling to see that the main goal of the Kurdish struggle was not a viable option anymore. In the PKK's Manifesto of Establishment in 1978, *The Path of Kurdistan Revolution (Manifesto) (Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu)*, "Independent, United and Democratic Kurdistan" was clearly stated as the main aim (1978, 127). An independent state was seen as the "only right interpretation" of the right of nations to self-determination (Öcalan 1978, 128). Moreover, options of "regional autonomy," "federal unity" and "language and cultural autonomy" were strictly refused, for they were seen as "reactionary" (Öcalan 1978, 128). In 1999, however, not only the demand of an independent state was abandoned but even autonomous and federal options were dismissed, this time not for being "reactionary" but instead for being unnecessary. In the mid 2000's this would also change and Öcalan would this time call for the recognition of "Democratic Autonomy" project, by which the Kurdish movement would again re-position itself.

At this point it is crucial to ask; How was it then possible for Öcalan to suddenly abandon the ideology of the PKK and develop a whole set of a new ideology? The answer to this lies within the writings of Öcalan. Towards the 1990's, he slowly "avoided employing the term 'independent-united Kurdistan' but was rather obsessed with the idea of 'Free Kurdistan' (Özcan 2006, 104). The idea of "Free Kurdistan" was mainly about "universal and philosophical concepts such as 'humanization', 'socialization', 'human emancipation', 'analyzing the Self', 'freed personality', 'pure human being'..." (Özcan 2006, 109). Öcalan gradually diverged from the concepts of Marxist Leninist thinking and focused on these abstract ideas. Öcalan would eventually believe that Kurds do not actually need a separate nation-state to be able to put all the ideas mentioned above into practice. In fact, statehood would even pose a limitation to internalize them. Later, in one of his numerous writings, Öcalan would explain his internal conflict and thoughts in the process of diverging from the idea of an independent state as such;

The fact that I thought I lost the concept of nation-state that actually never existed was the result of the blinding effect of nationalism on my mind and feelings. I would later realize that it was fortunate for me to get rid of it. What I experienced was the discharge of a mind and feelings stuck in statism in general and nation-statism in particular. It was a disease that

maddened Lenin and killed Stalin. It was a disease that could not find a cure even in Mao's Cultural Revolution (2013, 392).

The transformation that Öcalan and thus the PKK has undergone has been the subject of many works regarding the Kurdish issue. Öcalan's conversion from 'national liberation' in the form of statehood has been dealt with extensively in the literature. However, most works "do not provide a convincing account of the reasons behind such comprehensive changes" (Güneş 2009, 262). Was Öcalan's move a long-term plan or a strategic save-the-day attempt? Was he sincere about the new political project or was he hiding the real agenda? These questions are yet to be answered. According to Michael Gunter, Öcalan's statement was not that surprising since "as early as 1991 Öcalan was arguing that independence was an inappropriate solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey" (2000, 857). For Gunter, "in part he had mellowed in the face of the hard realities imposed by the Turkish military and the outside world, hostile to any independent Kurdish state which might destabilize the volatile but geostrategically important Middle East" (2000, 853).

It is quite hard to be sure of the real intentions of the PKK leader. Nevertheless, reading through his extensive writings, it appears that the dissolution of the Soviet Union has had a major impact on this transformation. Öcalan, who once aimed to set up a "new branch of a socialist tribe" started criticizing the socialist experiment severely after its collapse. He even claimed that what he once thought was socialism was in fact capitalism itself (Öcalan 2013, 320; Akademi 2009, 48)

The main criticism of Öcalan about the Soviet Union was its approach towards the state. For him, the Soviets captured the state with the intention of providing a better system, yet they only continued to serve it. This was mainly due to the absence of an alternative political tool that could replace the state. According to Öcalan, "The reason behind socialism adopting a statist approach is that it was unable to establish its own political tool" (Akademi 2009, 48). However, for him, it was not possible for socialism to survive hand-in-hand with the state. For that very reason, socialism had to create an antithesis for the thesis (the state) and use it as its new political tool. To fulfill that, Öcalan created a new antithesis of what he called "radical democracy." In the dialectical approach of Öcalan, unlike the Marxist dialectic understanding, the antithesis would not destroy the thesis, but rather go beyond it. In other words, radical democracy would not

destroy the state, and instead surpass it and make it eventually useless (Akademi 2009, 44-53).

In the light of these critical thoughts, influenced greatly by the American theorist Murray Bookchin in many respects, in the mid 2000's Öcalan's radical democracy "was developed in three intertwined projects: democratic republic, democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism. These three political projects function as a 'strategic dispositif': ideas and means through which Kurdish political demands are (re)defined and (re)organized" (Jongerden and Akkaya 2012, 6).

In brief, **Democratic Republic** is the project of a truly democratic Turkey, in which the state would hand over not only cultural and individual rights but also political rights of Kurds (and of all other peoples) and recognize the political organization of Kurdish people, which embodies itself in **Democratic Autonomy**, or more specifically, Democratic Autonomous Independent Kurdistan. **Democratic Confederalism**, on the other hand, means the union of all autonomous regions in Iran, Syria, Turkey and Iraq. It represents the organization of all Kurds; but not based on any certain ethnicity, religion or territory. It does not aim to challenge territorial integrities of the particular states. It actually goes beyond all of the concepts attributed to nation-states. Democratic Confederalism aims to carry out its relationship with the Turkish State through Democratic Autonomy. In other words, autonomy fundamentally acts as a legal bridge between the state and the democratic society. For Abdullah Öcalan, in the formula of "state+democracy"; state refers to Turkey, (+) refers to autonomy and democracy to confederalism (Akademi 2009, 87). In order to accomplish a union of which all Kurds could unite, it is first necessary to pursue the realization of Democratic Autonomy.

Even though all this conceptual terminology and package of political projects may sound extremely confusing, the PKK has accepted all of them as its official position, and particularly after 2005, Kurdish politics re-organized itself according to this new agenda. Many new organizations were established within the Kurdish movement in order to support the new aspirations. The KCK (Association of Communities in Kurdistan or Koma Civakên Kurdistan) was founded as an umbrella organization composed of several Kurdish groups across Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Democratic Society Congress (DTK), which emerged in 2007, gathered many civil society

associations, political parties, academics, journalists and members of municipalities for the main purpose of introducing, improving and exercising Democratic Autonomy. In July 2011, the co-presidents of the Congress, Aysel Tuğluk and Ahmet Türk, announced the establishment of Democratic Autonomy in a meeting hundreds had attended. The DTK, moreover, has been accepted by Kurdish actors as the de-facto parliament of the “future Kurdistan autonomous region”. Another major actor to set up and exercise Democratic Autonomy is the legal political party that holds the municipalities in eastern and southeastern Turkey, DBP, formerly named as Peace and Democracy Party or BDP. “The municipalities under the control of pro-Kurdish party since 1999 have formed a kind of selfruling regional body” and they have been crucial in “expanding the Kurdish identity politics based on the concept of democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy” (Jongerden and Akkaya 2012, 10). While all these organizations at issue mainly function at the local level, it is the Peoples’ Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) that has been more visible at the national level. As the co-president of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş puts it, “today, from its least significant organization to its most centralist one, in every arena it enters, the HDP will organize radical democracy” (2015, 33). In this sense, the party can be said to function as a strong legal force to pursue the political goals of the Kurdish movement throughout Turkey.

5.5 AKP’s Kurdish Opening

During the same years through which the PKK has undergone transformation, Turkey has similarly entered a new political phase, in which Kurdish reality and conflict can be openly debated. This has largely developed owing to the policies of the AKP governments that have opened the path towards the resolution of the conflict. Reactions to the Kurdish policy of the AKP can be evaluated as both supportive and critical. Support is due to the party’s “boldest effort ever made by a Turkish government to find a peaceful political resolution to the long-festering Kurdish question” (Sommer and Liaras 2010, 152). The AKP has been praised primarily for breaking the taboos and acknowledging the existence of a separate Kurdish identity (Aydınlı and Özcan 2011). Moreover, Aydın and Özcan believe that the AKP, with its Kurdish initiatives, has

displayed a desire to shift from a counter-terrorism approach towards a conflict resolution position. For Yıldız, the AKP has abandoned the Turkish state's "classic approach" in dealing with the Kurdish question, that is military intervention, killings and human right abuses (2012). Criticisms, on the other hand, have been due to the government's inconsistency in approaching the issue and reluctance about taking target steps to further progress. Those criticizing the government's approach question the real intentions and sincerity of the government, as they underline the still ongoing military and political attacks targeted at the Kurdish movement. In sum, the AKP has gained support for its Kurdish opening, but has been condemned for "openings that turned into closures" (Jongerden and Akkaya 2013, 164).

In 2002, when the AKP's first term started, there was a relatively positive atmosphere in Turkey due to the acquired EU candidacy status with the 1999 Helsinki Summit and the ongoing ceasefire of the PKK. With regard to the EU process, the AKP government passed eight harmonization packages, making both legislative and constitutional amendments. These included the lifting of the state of emergency, 'policy of zero tolerance to torture', abolishment of capital punishment, and limited education and free broadcast in languages and dialects other than Turkish. Even though all were significant steps towards democratization, they were not framed around the Kurdish conflict, and certainly inadequate towards its resolution (Çelik 2009). The AKP, however, was able to achieve salience among Kurdish constituency. Both in March 2004 local elections and 2007 general elections, the Party "captured the Kurdish vote" and "explicitly and repeatedly challenged the PKK's claim of being the real representative of the Kurds of Turkey" (Tezcür 2010, 783). In 2004, the PKK violated its decision of ceasefire, most likely because of the competition over the Kurdish support.

In 2009, the AKP addressed the Kurdish issue in a more direct manner when Beşir Atalay, the former Interior Minister of Turkey, announced the "National Unity Plan" or the "Kurdish Opening" as the public preferred to call. Quite vague in its content, the Unity Plan, on one hand, gave partial amnesties to the PKK members to return from the mountain and rhetorically called for peace, and, on the other hand, witnessed the closure of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP) and arrests of hundreds of Kurdish politicians under the name of KCK operations. These

waves of KCK arrests continued in the following years, which looked “less like a “war on terror” than a “war on dissent” (Gunter 2013, 444). What was most significant in this period was the Oslo Meetings of Turkish Intelligence Service members and representatives of the government with prominent Kurdish actors, in contact with Abdullah Öcalan. Despite the fact that the “Oslo Process” was short of producing some fruitful outcomes, it was yet significant for both parties to specify their positions and goals. Due to the deadlock in reaching an agreement and a few undesirable events, the Oslo Process had to be suspended and dialogues slowed down in 2011 as a consequence.

The stagnant peace process gained speed again with major developments as of the end of 2012, when a group of Kurdish parliamentarians were allowed to visit Öcalan on İmralı Island. This was followed by Öcalan’s 2013 Newroz letter, by means of which he announced; “A doorway opens from the process of armed struggle to a process of democratic policy” (Bianet 2013). This statement gave start to the Peace Process consisting of three major stages; “withdrawal of the PKK”, “directing the process” and “normalization”, respectively. The first phase aimed at PKK ceasefire and a secure withdrawal of the armed forces from Turkey to Northern Iraq. In return, the AKP was expected to make some legal amendments primarily regarding Kurdish prisoners and guerrillas, education in Kurdish language and election threshold (Aras and Duman 2014, 5-7). The process, however, reached a deadlock at its first stage due to mutual accusations; the government blaming the PKK for not completing its withdrawal and Kurdish actors believing that the government has not taken any of the essential steps it has committed.

In July 2014, however, the AKP government took a major step to secure the incomplete and vulnerable Peace Process. The Party passed a “Law on Ending Terror and Strengthening Social Integration,” which turned the Resolution Process into a state policy rather than a mere government initiative. With this initiative, all the matters regarding the conflict, including “political foundations, political actors, legal regulations, human rights, social, economic and cultural programs, security and disarmament, returning home and civil society” were entrenched under the Law No.6551 (Official Gazette 2014).

The entrenchment of the negotiations was meaningful, as the peace process had been extremely fragile and vulnerable to events happening inside and outside of Turkey since the very beginning. A very recent setback to the process was due to the widespread street protests against the President's and the AKP's attitude towards Kobane, a city of symbolic significance for Kurds in Rojava, occupied by a radical armed organization, the Islamic State. The overall tension was due to the Turkish government's strong restlessness about the de-facto Kurdish settlement in Syria, which had declared its own Democratic Autonomy. "The resulting Syrian Kurdish Autonomy caused great apprehension in Turkey because suddenly PKK flags were flying just across its southern border with Syria" and "Ankara feared that this newly won Kurdish Syrian position would serve as an unwanted model for Turkey's own disaffected Kurds" (Gunter 2013, 453). In the past, the Turkish state was similarly skeptical about the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, with which it has now strong economic cooperation and good relations. The same type of relations could be achieved with Rojava and "Ankara could use its strong economic potential to woo" the new settlement (Larrabee 2013, 140). This would be a very instrumental step since dynamics in Turkey and Rojava mutually affect each other and both are primary stake-holders in the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey.

5.6 Conclusion

The Kurdish discontent in Turkey has so far expressed itself in various forms. For more than three decades it has showed itself in the form of ethnic identity and struggle for recognition. The PKK, the outlawed interlocutor of the Kurdish conflict, has been the main actor of making ethnic boundaries, shaping and reshaping the Kurdish identity and politics according to its dialectical relationship with Turkish nationalism (Tezcür 2009). The position of the Kurdish movement has been vibrant and at times difficult to make a reading off. Sharp conversions and shifts on the Kurdish agenda have been puzzling. Autonomy which was dismissed as an option in Öcalan's 1999 Defences, is now on the main agenda. Today;

Kurds want to be included in the political body with their identity based on their inscribed 'political geography,' which requires a constitutional

recognition of the Kurdish identity in Turkey. This al recognition, including the notion of autonomy, would also mean a radical change in the existing political regime of Turkey (Jongerden and Akkaya 2012, 12).

“Is the Turkish state, which has been committed to its centralist tradition, ready to undergo such a radical state restructure” is a crucial question waiting to be answered. The course of the Resolution Process will most likely provide an answer to this in the future. It seems that discussions on decentralization and autonomy will hold great importance in Turkish politics in general and Kurdish politics in particular in the following years. Whether Democratic Autonomy is the formula of the resolution of the Kurdish conflict should yet be the main question to ask at this point. In order to be able to come up with a sound answer to this, it is first necessary to draw the institutional design of the model.

CHAPTER 6 DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter seeks to provide an analysis of the context of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and of the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy, respectively. The context of the conflict will be revealed through the complex power sharing framework. Accordingly, settlement patterns of the Kurdish population, the heterogeneity of the Kurdish region where self-determination claims are addressed and the significance of this region to the overall country will be explored.

Subsequently, the design of Democratic Autonomy will be sought. First, the most significant characteristics of Democratic Autonomy as a model of territorial self-governance arrangement will be analyzed. In doing so, the motivations of Kurdish political actors for proposing such a model will be discussed. Later, major topics that are crucial for all self-governance designs -scale of regions, entrenchment, distribution of duties and powers, principal values and principles, and issues such as transitional links, citizenship and language- will be analyzed in the context of Democratic Autonomy. Secondly, local power sharing arrangements and local institutions of the model will be presented. Lastly, the center-level power sharing tools of the design will be explored.

This analysis will put forward the merits of Democratic Autonomy as well as its limitations. Thereby, the effectiveness and possible contribution of Democratic Autonomy to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict will be evaluated.

6.1 Context Of The Kurdish Conflict

The context of a conflict is vital for determining the necessary design for its resolution. It is by no means possible to speak of a best-model or a perfect design of solution that can address all conflict cases. Every single territorial arrangement needs to be shaped in accordance with the context it is embodied in. A territorial structure which does not address the conditions of its conflict environment would fall short of presenting a real solution and would even create new conflicts. This would only worsen the conflict, make it longer and aggravate its resolution. As this is totally undesired, a strong consistency and harmony between the context and design is required to increase the possibility of territorial self-governance to be a genuine tool for conflict resolution.

The context of a conflict case, according to the framework of complex power sharing, refers to the geographical settlement of the group that makes self-determination claims, the heterogeneity of the territory that the claim is referred to, and the significance of the territory to the whole country. Accepting these as vital matters for forming a territorial structure, the context of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey will be analyzed accordingly. Thus, this will allow the writer to reach a judgement of whether the institutional arrangement of Democratic Autonomy can fully address the contextual conditions of Turkey or fall short of doing so. Before providing Turkey's Kurdish context, internal and external dynamics of the Kurdish self-determination claims will be briefly visited. This will lead to a better understanding of the conflict case to be discussed.

6.1.1 Self-Determination Claims

Kurds in Turkey constitute a good example of a national group striving for their right to self-determination for several decades. Although the form of their self-rule demands has displayed a drastic change throughout the years, Kurdish politics has long been mobilized around the demands of self-rule, carrying out its agenda with the aim of creating a self-rule in its historic homeland (Kara 2013, 152). Recently, Kurdish political parties have contended that the recognition of the Kurdish national identity

passes through the realization of Democratic Autonomy. In this respect, they believe that the recognition of their political project would directly mean granting “status” to the Kurdish nation, which has lacked it since the establishment of the Republic.

There have been different self-determination claims of the Kurdish parties in the past decades. Previously the Kurdish movement aimed at separation from Turkey for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. In the words of the Kurdish movement, “Virtually all the organizations forming the Kurdish movement, and mainly the PKK, have interpreted the right of nations to the self-determination principle as the right of building a state” (Akademi 2013, 97). Today, however, this goal is totally abandoned and replaced by the current autonomy project. Now the political movement interprets the right to self-determination as building a radical democracy in Turkey, where Kurds can rule themselves in their homeland. Thus, Kurdish politics has dismissed the option of external self-determination, which would inevitably challenge the territorial integrity of the Turkish State, and instead has embraced a solution of internal self-determination. It is believed that both internal and external factors have been effective in this drastic shift

One of the main reasons behind the PKK’s decision to give up “statehood” could be due to its inability to achieve any real progress towards a territorial gain. The organization has achieved no real advancement towards reaching this aim. Moreover, the PKK lost military power towards the end of the 1999’s, and it was hardly possible for it to gain momentum especially after Öcalan’s expel from Syria and, more significantly, capture in Kenya and imprisonment in Turkey. Due to the conditions regarding its militaristic capabilities and organizational limitations, the PKK was heavily losing blood. While these factors may have had a role in the PKK’s transformation, it is believed that the “leadership” factor or, more specifically, the Öcalan-factor has been the main determining factor. As explained in the previous chapter in detail, Öcalan has gradually moved away from the idea of state-building and established this new political project. It would not be inconvenient to claim that, if it were not for Öcalan, it would arguably be not likely for the PKK to abandon its statehood desire and agree on an internal arrangement.

Even though Öcalan appears to be the decisive factor, several external dynamics may also have been influential in today's self-rule claims. First, the Kurdish movement has greatly been influenced by the political atmosphere of the Cold War. The presence of the Soviet Union and its socialist bloc inspired the PKK to establish its own socialist state and embrace the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric to justify its cause. The collapse of the Soviet Union had a considerable effect on the PKK and pushed it to "realize" that state building was not the real solution for national independence. Secondly, in the 2000's the European Union might have been influential on the Kurdish movement to stick to a living together formula for the resolution of the conflict. Since 1999, especially between 2000 and 2006, the EU impact on Turkish politics has been quite visible. It has paved the way for further democratization in Turkey and decentralization as well. The Union has also had a great role in the decision to lift the death warrant on Öcalan. Since then, Kurdish actors have frequently referred to the EU, addressing both the way it approaches minority rights and promotes decentralization. The global trend towards decentralization in general and the EU's support to Turkey towards increasing local governance may have had a substantial impact on the Kurdish movement decision to go for a strong self-governance arrangement.

While the dissolution of the Soviet bloc stands as a historical factor and the EU impact as a long-term ongoing element, there are obviously other regional factors that directly influence the Kurdish movement in Turkey. These are the developments taking place in the neighboring Kurdish areas, Northern Iraq and Northern Syria respectively. Firstly, the establishment of an Iraqi Kurdish government in the 2000's with American support revealed that a Kurdish self-rule would not be impossible, and in fact quite achievable with international support. Secondly and, more recently, the developments taking place in Syria, and more specifically, the establishment of the de-facto Kurdish settlement in Northern Syria, referred to as Rojava, have strengthened self-determination claims of the Kurdish political movement in Turkey. Syrian Kurds were able to use the political opportunities caused by the authority gap due to the Syrian civil war and structured a canton system to rule themselves. Their canton system shows great similarities to the system Kurds in Turkey want to construct, and hence inspire Kurdish political parties to achieve a similar arrangement.

The Kurdish movement, today, wants to use its right to self-determination in an arrangement where it can rule itself within Turkey. This demand is principally aimed to be realized in the historical homeland of Kurds, the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey, or Kurdistan as Kurdish actors refer to. A deeper look into the region is required, evaluating its patterns of Kurdish settlement, heterogeneity and significance for the whole state.

6.1.2 Compact Regional Settlement

“Compact regional settlement” of an ethnic minority group is central to determining the institutional form of a territorial self-governance arrangement. While the existence of a compact regional settlement of an ethnic group can easily allow for forming a self-rule model based on a certain territory, the absence of it may lead to seek a more suitable alternative, such as cultural autonomy. The conceptualization of “compact regional settlement” within the complex power sharing framework is as follows (Wolff 2009, 33):

Communities of people who share a sense of identity that is distinct from other communities in the same state, who are neither dominant nor a numerical majority, and who live predominantly in their historic homeland or an otherwise delineated territory.

In accordance with the definition above, if a certain group with a sense of common identity shares a common settlement, it presents a suitable context for regional governance. Kurds in Turkey in fact meet this criteria as the second largest group in the country living predominantly in the Eastern and Southeastern regions. This statement, however, has its own problems, as it is not possible to know the precise number of Kurds living in the region. “Accurate information about the demography... of the Kurdish population in Turkey is scarce” (Sirkeci 2000, 149). The national censuses in Turkey have lifted the ethnicity question due to political and security concerns (Sirkeci 2000, 152) and thus there are no official numbers of Kurds living in Turkey since 1965. Manifesting accurate numbers of Kurdish population is also difficult due to the limitations of defining a Kurd. Lack of a final definition of the Kurdish ethnic identity limits one to giving accurate numbers of their population in the country and the region as well.

Nonetheless, many scholars agree that the most distinctive and strongest characteristic of Kurds, both in the etic and emic senses, is the Kurdish language (Bruinessen 2002; Yalçın-Heckmann 2002; Mutlu 1996). The Turkish state, accordingly, regards the Kurdish language as the defining characteristic of Kurdish people. According to Andrews, the strict prohibition of the state on the use of Kurdish language indicates that the state has perceived the Kurdish ethnic identity mainly on linguistic basis (Andrews 2002, 113). Moreover, for Kurds as well, language has been a principal indicator of difference. Servet Mutlu contends that, “the Kurdish language has almost always been a rallying point and an inseparable part of the emic definition of Kurdishness for the leaders of the Kurdish movements in the 20th century as well as for ordinary Kurds” (Mutlu 1996, 518). For Sirkeci, “mother tongue data is the only potential indicator for ethnicity in the absence of any other alternative information” (2000, 152). However, defining ethnic identity merely based upon language is also problematic, as the picture in terms of the language appears quite complex in the region. Not everybody speaking Kurdish is a Kurd, while not all Kurds can speak Kurdish. Yet, the criterion of language could still allow one to make estimates both about the number of Kurds living in Turkey and their distribution across the regions.

There are numerous different estimates about the Kurdish population residing in Turkey. Vast differences in their numbers are mainly due to political factors aiming either to reduce or increase the number of Kurds. “Obviously, the host state may attempt to deny the presence of Kurds or other ethnic or religious minorities within their borders” while “the Kurds themselves will of course try to expand the number of those regarded as Kurds, to increase their credibility” (O’Shea 2012, 42-43). For Gunter, a “reasonable estimate” would be that there are between 12 to 15 million Kurds in Turkey (2011, 3). According to a more recent study, in 1998 14.4% of people in Turkey had Kurdish as their mother tongue (Erkan 2005, 66). It is no doubt that these numbers would vary as much as the tellers. Although no accurate numbers are available, an estimated populace of Kurds, based on the language criterion, gives the picture of how Kurds have concentrated in the Eastern regions of Turkey. According to Ekmekçi (2012), if the Kurdish population in Turkey is considered to be 13.5 million, 7,2 million (53%) of this still reside in the nineteen eastern provinces. If the provinces of Ardahan, Erzincan, Iğdır and Kars are also to be included in the statistics, the Kurdish population

in eastern Turkey reaches 60%. İbrahim Sirkeci, in his study, where he utilizes the data of Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) contends that:

Kurdish people may still be identifiable with a region as they are amassed in the south-east part of the country as it was in the past. This is evident in the findings of this study and in the detailed estimations of Mutlu (1996). According to Mutlu's estimations, which are supported by the analysis of TDHS data, the majority of Kurds live in the Eastern and South-eastern parts of the country. Their proportion in provincial populations ranges from 25 per cent to 90 per cent in the region and according to TDHS, 70 per cent of Kurds living in the East (2000, 156).

Table 2: Estimated Kurdish population in Turkey by regions

Region	1965		1990	
	Number of Population (thousand)	% Total Population	Number of Population (thousand)	% Total Population
Southeastern ¹¹	1,192.73	64.24	2,365.04	64.98
Eastern ¹²	1,369.65	38.87	2,230.29	41.96
Mediterranean ¹³	190.22	4.98	726.55	8.95
Marmara ¹⁴	72.65	1.24	810.13	6.09
Central Anatolia ¹⁵	262.64	4.13	579.38	5.53
Aegean ¹⁶	15.77	0.36	296.99	3.93
Black Sea ¹⁷	28.72	0.51	37.88	0.50
Total	3,132.39	9.98	7,046.25	12.60

Source: Servet Mutlu 1996, 533.

¹¹Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt, Şanlıurfa.

¹² Ağrı, Bingöl, Bitlis, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Hakkari, Kars, Malatya, Muş, Tunceli, Van.

¹³ Adana, Antalya, Burdur, Gaziantep, Hatay, Isparta, İçel, Kahramanmaraş.

¹⁴Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bursa, Çanakkale, Edirne, İstanbul, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ.

¹⁵ Ankara, Çankırı, Çorum, Eskişehir, Kayseri, Kırşehir, Konya, Nevşehir, Niğde, Sivas, Yozgat.

¹⁶ Afyonkarahisar, Aydın, Denizli, İzmir, Kütahya, Manisa, Muğla, Uşak.

¹⁷Amasya, Artvin, Bolu, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Kastamonu, Ordu, Rize, Samsun, Sinop, Tokat, Trabzon, Zonguldak.

For Andrews, “both the etic and the majority emic view strongly identify the Kurds with eastern Anatolia, ignoring the dispersion in the west” (Andrews 2002, 114). Indeed, eastern Turkey has been associated with Kurds despite the fact that millions have moved to Western parts of Turkey. Mass immigrations of Kurds have taken place throughout the years mainly due to socio-economic conditions and unpleasant war conditions between the state and the PKK. Today, Istanbul is regarded as the largest Kurdish city in the country, accommodating more than 8% Kurdish population (Mutlu 1996, 526). Moreover, Kurds have also moved from villages to big cities within their own regions. The provinces of Diyarbakır and Van, for instance, have received big population surges due to the immigrations. In brief, “events of the last one hundred years have further driven many Kurds both forcibly and voluntarily to seek safety or employment in the larger cities of the region” (Dahlman 2002, 274).

Changing settlements of Kurds within their own region and, most significantly mass immigrations from the east to the west may have had a negative impact on their sense of territorial belonging. Although most Kurds still continue to live in their historical homelands, they have arguably “become less of a territorially defined social entity” (Bruinessen 1998, 48) or, in other words, have become “deterritorialized.” According to Bruinessen (1998, 48),

Kurdistan remains central to the Kurdish awareness as the historical territory of their people, but the percentage of the Kurds actually living there has significantly decreased over the past few decades. Because of the high birth rates, the population of the region has kept growing in absolute numbers, but it may now constitute only around two thirds of all Kurds, or even less.

Even though there may be some truth in Bruinessen’s argument that some degree of “deterritorialization” may be valid for the Kurdish society in general, it surely has not affected the Kurdish political movement. For the movement, Kurdistan is a major element of the Kurdish identity as well as of its collective history, values and culture. As stated by the Kurdish movement (Akademi 2009, 95):

The Kurdistan concept holds a significant place in the emergence of Democratic Autonomy. Kurdistan is the homeland of Kurdish people. They have dwelled on this land ever since they existed as a community. A people may not have a state. This does not mean that they do not exist, and that their homeland does not have a name. Kurds may not have state as a people, but they do have a homeland where they live. And this land used to be called Kurdistan until a century ago. From now on it is also going to be

called Kurdistan. Each of the four states having sovereignty over Kurdistan has to accept this fact.

Kurdish political actors have firmly and persistently emphasize the word “Kurdistan.” The deputies of the Kurdish parties are strongly against the denial of using the term “Kurdistan” and frequently utter it in the Parliament, trying to convince the other party’s deputies that no one can deny its existence. The other parties, on the other hand, are still far from even using the term. For Donald McDowall, until the early twentieth century, it was not important how “generously” the term Kurdistan was used and “no one cared very much about the boundaries of Kurdistan, or the numbers of people who lived there” (2000, 7). Needless to say, the situation has become the opposite with the establishment of the Turkish nation-state. Today, many believe that Kurdistan poses a challenge on the sovereignty of the state as it represents an authority separate from the Turkish authority. In other words, accepting the existence of Kurdistan in Turkey is associated with the notion of accepting dual authority within one state.

In conclusion, despite the dispersion of Kurds in western Turkey, Kurds still have a major concentration in the eastern part of the country. While this fact allows for a possible territorial institutional arrangement in the region, it raises the question about the status of Kurds living outside the region (Güneş 2013, 81) and their relationship with the local government in Kurdistan.

6.1.3 Heterogeneity of the Region

Heterogeneity of a certain region where self-determination claims are made is a crucial factor in the institutional design of the local government. Depending on the heterogenous character of the region, strong local power sharing mechanisms may be necessary. This is crucial to guarantee the representation and participation of all groups within the system. In the case where there are no sufficient power sharing tools in a heterogenous territory, the dominant group may hold the power, and this may lead to a new conflict in the local unit, which would not only serve the very opposite purpose of self-governance, but also worsen the conflict and complicate its resolution.

In the model of complex power sharing, the heterogeneity of a region is calculated by looking at “the ratio between the largest group and the total of all other groups” (Wolff 2009, 44). The theoretical framework suggests that the ratio between different groups needs to be at least 5% to be able to speak about the necessity of local power sharing tools. If it is less than minimum 5% of difference, then constructing power sharing mechanisms may not be necessary.

Within the Turkish context, it is neither possible nor necessary to provide the number of different ethnic groups and calculate the ratio between them. Instead, there are a few important points to make to be able to draw a clear picture about the demographic composition of southeastern and eastern Anatolia. First, Turkish and Kurdish people constitute the majority of the population in the region, that is, there are two dominant groups present there (Nestmann 2002; Aslan 2015, 176). This fact alone necessitates the construction of power sharing structures. Second, there are many ethnic and religious identity groups other than the two major ones, which certainly needs to be taken into account in the system. Last but not least, “Kurds themselves are notoriously divided geographically, politically, linguistically, and tribally” (Gunter 2011, 4), and thus this contributes greatly to the heterogeneity of the region. All in all, the Eastern region of Turkey has a very rich inter-ethnic, inter-religious and intra-ethnic composition.

The concentration of the Kurdish population in the East was given in the previous section through Servet Mutlu’s population estimates. Even though the numbers in Mutlu’s work may have changed due to the war conditions mainly in the 1990’s, it still indicates that, there is a large concentration of Kurds in the region, but this does not necessarily make them the majority there. They share the lands with other large groups, particularly with Turkish people. Due to the lack of recent data about the distribution of ethnic groups in the region, an old but credible source -the records of the Village Inventory- will serve useful to show that the region is majorly dominated by people who have Kurdish and Turkish as their mother-tongues (Nestmann 2002, 179-199). A recent report on the distribution of mother-tongues across Turkey, indicates the same results that two groups constitute the majority in the region (Aslan et al. 2015, 176). However, they undoubtedly share these lands with many other identity groups.

The comprehensive study of Peter Alford Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, provides a list of ethnic groups in Turkey in which ethnic and religious character of eastern Turkey becomes evident (1989, 239-429). According to this valuable data, apart from Turkish and Kurdish people, who belong to different religions, there are also approximately forty different identity groups, both ethnic and religious, in the region. Some of the major groups existing in the region are as follows: **Turkmens** (Sunni, Sunni:Avşar, Alevi, Alevi:Barak, Alevi:Çepni, Alevi:Tahtacı) mainly concentrated in Gaziantep and Kars; **Azerbaijani Turks** (Shii, Karabağ:Sunni, Karapapah) mainly in Kars,Erzurum and Ağrı and partly in Muş and Van; **Turkistanis** (Uygur, Kırgız, Kazak, Özbek, Özbek-Tatar) in Van; **Sunni Arabs** in Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Siirt, Mardin, Bitlis and Muş; **Chaldeans** in Diyarbakır, Siirt, Mardin, Hakkari; **Circassians** in Adıyaman, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Bitlis, Bingöl, Kars; **Chechen and Ingush** in Mardin, Kars, Muş; **Georgians** in Kars and Muş **Tatars** (Crimean, Noğay, Kazan) and **Bashkir** in Gaziantep; **Muslim immigrants from Balkan** countries in Diyarbakır and Elazığ; **Muslim immigrants from Daghistan** (Avar, Dargwa, Kumuk, Lak/Gazikumuk, Lezgi) in Kars and Muş; **Estonians** in Kars; **Ossetes** in Siirt, Bitlis, Erzurum, Kars, Muş; **Christian Armenians** in Diyarbakır, Siirt, Mardin, Bitlis, Bingöl, Elazığ; **Muslims of Armenian origin** in Siirt, Elazığ, Erzurum, Kars, Tunceli, Van; **Slavs** (Kuban-Cossack, Molokan, Polish) in Kars; **Romani** (Poşa) around Ağrı, Bitlis, Van, Erzurum and Kars.

The demographic variety of the region is even coupled by the heterogeneity of Kurds within themselves. Kurds have serious linguistic, religious, tribal, geographical and ideological differences among themselves. Hakan Yavuz approaches the matter as follows (2001, 3):

Although Kurdish 'ethnic entrepreneurs' tend to identify Turks as their 'other' in the construction of Kurdish nationalism, there are major tribal, linguistic, religious, alphabetical, and regional fissures within Kurdish identity itself. The sources of these divisions are socio-historical, and they prevent the emergence of a full-fledged Kurdish identity.

Adding to these varieties among Kurds, there also exist serious ideological and political rivalries among them, which largely contributes to the lack of Kurdish unity. This can be seen even by only looking at the results of the recent local elections held in 2009 and

2014. The constituent of the Eastern region is virtually divided into two voting groups, the pro-Kurdish HDP and DBP, and the incumbent AKP.

6.1.4 Significance of the Region

Territories have certain values in and by themselves both for the states and minority groups living there. The significance of Kurdistan for the Kurdish identity and thus the Kurdish political movement was presented in the previous sections. However, the significance of the region to the overall country and state also needs to be evaluated. What kind of value and importance does the state attribute to eastern Anatolia? To what extent is it significant to the whole country? Answers to these questions would have a great role in determining the central-level power sharing mechanisms between the central state and local governance. The higher the significance is, the more important it becomes to build up effective tools that could enable the participation and representation of the local unit in the center. It becomes crucial that the local be included in the national decision-making and implementation procedures.

In order to seek an answer to the question whether the Kurdish region is significant to Turkey or not, first it becomes necessary to define “significance.” The significance of a region derives from both tangible and intangible factors. While the former involves natural resources, goods and services, trade, industry, military capabilities and geographic advantage of the given territory, the latter is more about sentimental attachment, historical and cultural importance attributed to it. In accordance with the complex power sharing framework, size and population of the territory, existence and availability of natural resources, strategic location and cultural importance emerge as the main determinants to decide whether or not a certain land holds significance. The framework defines significance as “high” in the case where three or more of these factors are present. It is of “medium” significance if two, and “low” if one or none of these factors is present (Wolff 2009, 5).

The Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey constitute a large portion of Turkey’s lands. Eastern Anatolia is made up of fourteen provinces -Ağrı, Adıyaman, Bitlis, Bingöl, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Hakkari, Iğdır, Kars, Malatya, Muş, Tunceli

and Van. According to Turkey's 2013 Statistical Yearbook, these cities all together constitute approximately 150,210 square kilometers -about 19% of the country's total territory and host virtually 6 million people (the exact population in 2013 was 5,906,564). Southeastern Anatolia, on the other hand, consists of nine provinces - Gaziantep, Adiyaman, Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Batman, Şırnak and Siirt - resting on 76,938 square kilometers. It makes up around 10% of the total land of Turkey with the populace of over 8 million (8,096,352 in 2013), which is again nearly 10% of the overall country population (76,667,864 in 2013). These two regions, in total, constitute a vast portion of Turkey, both in terms of population and territory. The sum of the two regions where Kurdish national claims are addressed, makes up about 19% of the total land and over 14 million citizens (Turkish Statistical Institute 2013, 5, 46-48).

In terms of natural resources, the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey host several mineral resources including copper, asphaltite, phosphates and oil, the last two of which constitute a considerable percentage of the overall Turkish production (Mutlu 2001, 119) and lignite, iron and chrome (O'Shae 2012, 58). Apart from them, the most significant natural resource in the region is water. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers together make up 28% of Turkey's water potential (Mutlu 2001, 121). These two rivers rise in Turkey's Kurdish populated region and flow to the southern neighbors, Iraq and Syria. While the rivers are valuable by themselves as great natural resources, their value has increased considerably for the Turkish State since most of the Middle East countries, particularly the southern neighbors, experience serious difficulties to meet their water demands (Gruen 2000). Because Syria and Iraq heavily rely on the water coming from the Tigris and the Euphrates, they naturally become dependent on Turkey's water regulations.

Turkey, well aware of its water potential, has effectively used this potential and turned it into an advantage. First, it has realized the GAP Project (Southeastern Anatolia Project), "one of the largest construction project[s] in the world" (O'Shae 2012, 56), and secondly has used it as a political weapon to increase its strategic power in the region. In other words, the water in southern Turkey serves the country in several ways; as a natural resource, as a tool for energy production and as a political weapon.

The GAP project is a major project that comprises nine provinces in the region, aiming to construct 22 dams, 19 hydroelectric power plants for the “irrigation of 1.7 million hectares of land and the generation of 27 billion kilowatt-hours of electrical energy” (Mutlu 2001, 115). With these, the GAP project makes a great contribution to the overall energy production of Turkey and thus is vital for the country. For Gruen, the GAP is more than a project to produce energy and food; it is a plan of “sustainable economic development” that would increase Turkey’s power both inside and outside (2000, 565). For the latter, the author contends that Turkey has used water as a tool “to promote regional peace,” where the country has some sort of interest.

The Turkish state has indeed used its water potential also as a foreign policy weapon to advance its regional interests. The most striking example of this is probably the bilateral deal between Turkey and Syria in 1987 in which Turkey guaranteed to supply a certain amount of water from the Euphrates River to Syria in exchange for a guarantee from Syria to halt all the PKK activities in its territories (Jongerden 2010, 189). This deal led to the process in which the PKK leader had to leave Syria and eventually got caught. As mentioned above, the vulnerability of Syria and other neighbors to the water from the north has allowed Turkey to pursue effective water policies in the region. In this respect, not only the presence of water is significant for Turkey, but also its location is strategically meaningful.

For many scholars, water is becoming increasingly important in international affairs. According to Gunter, the increasing importance of water will make Kurdistan an important region both economically and politically (2011). For McDowall, due to the increasing population, energy demand and need for irrigation, “water is rapidly becoming more important than oil,” and he adds: “Neither government will willingly surrender control of this water to the Kurds” (2000, 7). The Turkish State would naturally want to maintain its control over the resources and would never be willing to surrender its interests gained by water, which is valuable both in terms of energy production and its strategic location that carries Turkey to a prominent position in the region.

In addition to water, other energy resources, most prominently gas, increases the geopolitical importance of the Eastern region. Although Turkey itself is insignificant in

terms of energy production, it is “encircled by the world's largest energy-wealthy regions,” most outstandingly Caspian Region, Central Asia and the Middle East (Öztürk, Yüksel, and Özek 2011). Proximity to these regions gives the advantage to Turkey to supply its own gas demand in relatively easy terms and to become “East-West gas transportation corridor” (Winrow 2004). Turkey’s importance to become a bridge between European energy market and Asia and Middle East would not only benefit Turkey in terms of its foreign policy but also for its domestic development.

As for cultural importance, Turks and Kurds share a long common history. The Kurdish movement, often makes reference to this historical togetherness. Abdullah Öcalan himself very frequently underlines the historical solidarity of Kurds and Turks starting with the 1071 Malazgirt War and reaching its most prominent achievement with the 1919 Independence War of Turkey. Öcalan contends that Turks and Kurds are “two essential elements” of “national revolution,” referring to the Independence War. He also adds that two peoples are “strong partners” who have nested histories and culture (Öcalan 2013, 380).

Undoubtedly, for the Turkish State, the Eastern and Southeastern regions, like all the other regions, have a cultural significance since they symbolize national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Turkey. McDowall however claims that Turkey attributes a special meaning to its eastern frontiers. This, he believes, is due to the emotional and ideological meaning given to the national borders of modern Turkey, which was to a great extent shaped by the National Pact of 1919. He argues that the territorial integrity of the country has a “mystical quality” for its people and “the loss of Kurdistan... would be perceived as a grievous blow to the spatial identity of Turkey” (2000, 7).

6.1.5 Conclusion

Despite the dispersion of Kurds to the western parts of Turkey, they still majorly concentrate in their historical homeland. For that, it is possible to speak of a compact regional settlement of Kurds and thus, of the possibility of granting them a form of TSG arrangement. Kurds, however, are not the only group living in the region. They share the region with various other groups including Turkish people and other minorities.

Moreover, Kurds themselves are divided within various identity lines including political rivalries. Taking all these factors into consideration, it would arguably be valid to claim that there might be a high risk of creating new disputes within local governance provided that local power sharing mechanisms do not function properly. It is certainly obvious that the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy necessitates powerful participatory tools to incorporate all groups into the local system in order to contribute to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict.

In his study regarding secessionist movements and their possible successes, Donald Horowitz contends that “the strength of a secessionist movement and the heterogeneity of its region are inversely related” (2000, 267). Horowitz suggests that it be a very difficult task to get the consent of all groups in the region to form a local governance and that major conflicts can erupt between the rival groups. In this respect, the Kurdish movement has a hard task ahead to deal with. Not to pave the way for heavy clashes between opposing groups, the Kurdish movement needs to convince all groups in the region that Democratic Autonomy would serve useful.

As for the significance of the region to the overall country and the State, it seems that the region is important for Turkey in all matters. In terms of size and population it constitutes a large portion of the country; in terms of natural resource and strategic location it serves the interests of Turkey, and as of culture it symbolizes sovereignty and unity of the country. This shows that it is important for the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy to include strong power sharing options that could allow the inhabitants of eastern Turkey to have a significant role in joining the power structures at the center. Democratic Autonomy necessitates having effective mechanisms to be included in the parliament of the center and preferably also in the government. The participation of the local government in both legislative and executive branches of the center would not only ensure strong policy coordination and joint decision-making devices, but also help to increase the feeling of togetherness. This arises as a crucial issue for the future since it could provide a common ground for all groups and decrease the possibility of separation.

6.2 Institutional Design of Democratic Autonomy

Having examined Abdullah Öcalan's and the DTK's writings, and interviews both conducted personally and gathered via media as reliable data, there emerge several themes that are quite significant to understand the notion Democratic Autonomy. These themes allow one to grasp the motives behind why such a political project is demanded by the Kurdish movement for the resolution of the Kurdish issue and why it is regarded necessary. More importantly, the data introduce themes and topics to explore the institutional design of the model in question. In this chapter, by using the data as the point of reference, the shared motivations of Kurdish actors and a detailed legal design of the model will be presented respectively.

6.2.1 Common Motives

One outstanding theme that arises in almost all the writings and interviews regarding Democratic Autonomy is the criticism posed for the "centralist nation-state". With this, all the states with centralist approaches are severely criticized, while Turkey is placed at the heart of the criticisms. The data show that there is a strong discontent about the nature of the Turkish State, which is based both upon the notion of nation-state and centralism. Regarding the former, most interviewees accuse the state of overlooking the differences derived from identity and of imposing policies of uniformity. As for centralism, the heavy tutelage of the center on municipalities is criticized. Moreover, a shared perception is that Ankara is largely unable to understand the local dynamics and demands, and thus is incapable of addressing the needs of the society. Within this context, one respondent, in a personal conversation, has also stated that the city governors, appointed by the center, are short of local knowledge and are only the representatives of the system regulated by the center. In brief, the inadequacy of centralism and nation-state to bring about effective governance emerges as a common perception among Kurdish actors. It is also argued that the global trend is evolving towards decentralization. One interviewee has stated that "[the nation-state] has already been outdated in the 21st century. The mindset, especially in the unitary

structure, is not able to meet social needs anymore” (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014).¹⁸ Another has claimed, “States have now reached a point where new governance relations based upon decentralization and upon the principles of subsidiarity and localization are preferred to rigid authoritarian central structures. This overlaps with what we defend” (Ankara, 13 June 2014)¹⁹. By many Kurdish actors, decentralization is seen as a sine qua non in the new globalized political system. In association with this view, the EU is given as a point of reference in several of the interviews. Many respondents believe that the EU presents a sound example of local governance and autonomy as well.

Another main theme in the data is the issue of “rights”. The word is indeed used most frequently both in the DTK documents and interviews. Equal rights to all national and religious components of Turkey are requested. More specifically, equality among Turks and Kurds seems to be the most emphasized demand for the realization of Democratic Autonomy. Equality, for Kurdish actors, however, cannot be achieved only through granting cultural rights to Kurds. Political rights are also required to be able to speak of true equality. As Demirtaş puts it, “Kurds, as a people, must be equal to Turks in their rights of language, culture, life, education, governance and expression. They must have the right to live as a Kurd in Turkey, not as a Turk” (BDP Blog, 2013). As his remarks indicate, cultural rights such as use of language and expression of culture are demanded together with political demands such as participation in governance. In brief, according to the Kurdish movement:

Acceptance of only cultural rights means ‘live your culture but do not be involved in politics, do not govern yourselves, we will govern you.’ Therefore, political rights are as indispensable as cultural rights. A nation establishing its own institutions and organizations, determining its own politics, implementing it –in other words- governing itself is a ‘must’ (Akademi 2009, 92).²⁰

¹⁸ “21. yüzyılda bu model zaten zamanını bitirdi. Özellikle üniter yapıdaki merkezi zihniyet artık toplumsal ihtiyaçları karşılamıyor.”

¹⁹ “Devletler artık katı otoriter merkezi yapılardan âdemi merkezîyetçiliğe dayanan, yerinden ve yerellik ilkesine dayanan yeni yönetim ilişkilerini önemseyen bir noktaya geldi. Bu bizim savunduğumuzla örtüşüyor.”

²⁰ “Sadece kültürel hakların kabulü, kültürünü yaşa ama siyaset yapma, kendi kendini yönetme, biz seni yönetelim demektir. Onun için kültürel haklar kadar siyasal haklar da vazgeçilmez-dir. Halkın kendi kurumlarını, kendi örgütlerini oluşturması, kendi siyasetini kendisinin belirlemesi, hayata geçirmesi, özce kendini yönetmesi olmazsa olmaz koşullardır.”

For Kurdish actors, Democratic Autonomy presents an ideal model in which Kurds could achieve their cultural and political rights alike. This way, they would be equal citizens in Turkey. Moreover, the acknowledgement of these rights would also mean that the state eventually agrees to hand over the collective rights of Kurds, which have been long denied. According to one interviewee, the state approach towards trying to solve the Kurdish problem only through individual rights has brought the opposite, “solutionlessness”. “Kurds do not accept individual rights but demand collective rights” (Van, 9 September 2014).²¹

“Identity politics” is another dominant motive for the Kurdish movement to demand Democratic Autonomy. In the data, there appears an explicit demand to conduct politics and participate in governance with Kurdish ethnic identity. An example of this is that:

Until recently a Kurd was able to have a say in Turkey provided he quit his identity. We do not accept this anymore. I want to go to the parliament on behalf of Kurds, I want to run for Presidency in the name of Kurds (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014).²²

While these remarks reflect the strong emphasis made on the Kurdish identity specifically, Kurdish actors are of the opinion that all the other groups in Kurdistan could and should participate in governance with their own identities. Thus, there is a strong focus on the “recognition of differences” and “conducting politics through differences”.

Furthermore, relatedly, Democratic Autonomy, is seen as the formal and legal recognition of the Kurdish identity, and thus is equated to the “status” of Kurds. While the issue of “status” will be elaborated more in the following sections, it is necessary to state here that it is one of the main issues related to the reasons why Democratic Autonomy is vital for the resolution.

²¹ “Kürtler bireysel haklara razı değil, kolektif haklarını istiyorlar.”

²²“Şimdiye kadar bir Kürt ancak kimliğini terk ettiği takdirde Türkiye’de söz sahibi olabiliyordu. Bundan sonra bunu kabul etmiyoruz. Kürtler adına ben meclise gitmek istiyorum, Kürtler adına cumhurbaşkanı adayı olmak istiyorum.”

Along with the prevalent themes of “limitations of the centralist nation-state”, “the issue of rights” and “politics through identity,” Democratic Autonomy is described as “the ultimate solution” to the Kurdish conflict. All the other options are described as inadequate and unsatisfactory. Moreover, in several interviews, it has been stated that the demand of self-rule posed by the Kurdish movement would be a great opportunity also for Turkey, since it does not aim to challenge the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state. However, it has also been claimed by some respondents that Kurds will not advocate this project forever. If the state insisted on disregarding it, new alternatives, possibly more radical ones, would be sought. Gültan Kışanak, in an interview available in the media, asserts that “Obviously, Kurds have chose to live together. This should be welcomed as quick as possible. Otherwise, nobody could ensure that this choice will always remain so” (Akşam, 2012). Selahattin Demirtaş, similarly claims that if the Resolution Process between the government and the Kurdish movement turned out to be inconclusive, partition would eventually come along (Taraf 2012b).

In addition to the said issues, the concepts of democratization, democratic representation, participation, direct democracy (as an alternative to representative democracy), territorial integrity, living together and common future within the borders of Turkey have been commonly expressed in the data by Kurdish actors. Further elaboration on these concepts will take place while analyzing the legal design of the model.

6.2.2 Fundamental Design

6.2.2.1 Scale of Self-Government

The data utilized suggest that Democratic Autonomy is a project not only designed for Kurdistan but for the whole country (Bianet 2011). Accordingly, the project proposes establishing 20-25 regional units throughout Turkey or across the “common-land,” as the Kurdish movement refers to. As Öcalan explains:

The democratic autonomy we mention is not merely related to Kurdistan, but also to the Aegean, Black Sea and Middle Anatolian regions. We do not restrict the democratic autonomy project to ourselves only. We do not base it upon solely Kurdish ethnicity. Kurds today may pioneer this; however, this understanding of democratic autonomy is a project covering all Turkey (Komünar 2010, 10).

Selahattin Demirtaş, in one of his interviews in the media, says:

We want autonomous regions for all Turkey. For instance, there may exist three or four autonomous regions in the location defined as Kurdistan. You can take a big city as center. You can put around it the other cities in cooperation with it in terms of transport, culture, economy and social matters and call that place as region (Taraf 2012b).

As revealed by the given quotations, a system of regions is proposed for Turkey. This, in fact, is surprising when looking at the name of the model, which seems like proposing a single unit of autonomous region instead of a model formed by regions across the country. Nevertheless, the project is intended to design a model where Turkey, as a whole, is divided into regional governments consisting of neighbouring provinces that are culturally, economically, historically and ecologically in close relation with one another. According to the report of the Democratic Society Party (DTP), a former pro-Kurdish party that was closed in 2009, each of these regions would be named with the unique name of that specific region or would take the name of the biggest city within that region (Akademi 2009, 112).

The formation of regional governments across Turkey stands as a controversial issue considering the fact that there is no expressed demand from the western regions towards a decentralized structure. When this argument was posed to the interviewees, several replied that, when the merits of strong decentralization were perceived, people would be convinced of its vitality. One contended that when people in the other regions saw the advantages which Kurds would be enjoying with Democratic Autonomy, they would eventually demand similar practices as well. Another stated that the project of Democratic Autonomy would most make sense if it encompassed whole Turkey, because this project was about the democratization of Turkey. However, he added, “In

terms of the intensity of the Kurdish conflict, our priority is Kurdistan and Kurdish people –the direct addressee of the issue” (Ankara, 13 June 2014).²³

Regarding the issue of the scale of governance, all the respondents have also claimed that Democratic Autonomy, by its very nature, is not based on and limited to any certain geographical demarcations. All the respondents are of the same opinion that the model goes beyond any territorial lines, limitations and ethnic bases as well. It has no claims to change either the unitary state structure or the territorial boundaries of Turkey. The same arguments are visible in almost all the documents and writings of the Kurdish movement regarding Democratic Autonomy.

Following these discussions, the more specific question of precise territorial boundaries of Kurdistan has been brought up in the interviews. How would the region of Kurdistan be determined? To this, one respondent has said, “Kurdistan’s borders are the provincial borders in the historical roots of Kurds” (Diyarbakır, 12 September 2014).²⁴ Another has replied: “Kurdistan is not a place to be determined again with upcoming negotiations. It is a location with a historical heritage of thousands of years. The discussion where Kurdistan’s borders start and end would overshadow a thesis from the onset” (Hakkari, 11 September 2014).²⁵ Instead of giving precise territorial demarcations, the respondents have tended to refer to the historical boundaries of Kurds.

Several respondents have claimed that the Kurdistan region alone would not make up one self-governance unit; instead, it would be divided into distinct regions. While this statement has been made by several of the respondents, only one of them has made the issue explicit. The respondent explained how Kurdistan would be divided within five specific regions consisting of five provinces: **Botan Region**: Hakkari, Van, Şırnak, Mardin ve Siirt; **Amed Region**, which is also the hub of the whole Kurdistan region:

²³ “Kürt sorunun yoğunluğu açısından birebir muhatapı olan Kürt halkı ve Kürdistan önceliğimiz.”

²⁴ “Kürdistan’ın sınırları Kürtlerin tarihsel köklerindeki eyalet sınırlarıdır.”

²⁵ “Kürdistan bölgesi yeniden bir tartışma yürütülerek belirlenecek bir bölge değildir. Binlerce yıllık tarihsel mirasa sahip bir coğrafyadır. Kürdistan’ın sınırlarının nereden başlayıp nerede bittiğini tartışma konusu yapmak, bir tez çalışmasına başından gölge düşürür.”

Batman, Diyarbakır, Muş, Bitlis ve Bingöl; **Serhat Region:** Erzurum, Kars, Ardahan, Iğdır, Ağrı; **Fırat Region:** Urfa, Antep, Adıyaman, Maraş ve Kilis and **Dersim Region:** Sivas, Malatya, Erzincan, Elazığ ve Tunceli (Diyarbakır, 14 September 2014).

In some of these provinces, the Kurdish political movement has a very strong basis and receives high numbers of votes. Provinces such as Hakkari, Şırnak and Diyarbakır accommodate large numbers of constituents supporting pro-Kurdish parties. In these places, the realization of Democratic Autonomy could be relatively easier. However, for example, in Sivas, Erzincan and Malatya, where the Kurdish parties are considerably weak, there could be a high risk of strong opposition towards autonomy. How would then, the autonomous regions be constructed in those provinces and how would Kurdistan incorporate them into its autonomous region? When such concerns were raised, the respondent above said that the effectiveness of Democratic Autonomy naturally would not be equal in all the places involved. In other words, while the model can be implemented more successfully in some provinces, it may work less effectively in some others. It should be the duty of the Kurdish political movement to spread it throughout the regions of Kurdistan and Turkey, as the respondent claimed (Diyarbakır, 14 September 2014).

6.2.2.2 Legal Entrenchment:

The Kurdish movement places great importance on the conception that the intended new Constitution of Turkey should structure the state according to decentralization. For that, the BDP submitted a draft text to the Parliamentary Constitution Committee in 2013 in which it suggested a decentralization design for Turkey. This submitted draft text states: “The administrative structure of the state is designed by the principle of decentralization. The state’s territorial integrity is immune” (TBMM Başkanlığı 2014). Referring to this particular text, one respondent, in the personal interviews, has stated that the Kurdish movement has already officially proposed Democratic Autonomy as a state structure. The respondent has also added that it is essential Democratic Autonomy find its representation in the Constitution (Diyarbakır, 12 September 2014).

Similarly, in all the interviews carried out personally, it has been stated that constitutional guarantee is the precondition of Democratic Autonomy. One of the interviewees has stated that the Kurdish parties would by no means be satisfied unless the project was guaranteed by the new Constitution. In addition, all the respondents have emphasized the essential bond between constitutional entrenchment of the model and constitutional “status” to Kurds. Granting status to Kurds is equated to granting self-rule to them.

However, would it not be possible to grant status to Kurds without necessarily structuring a full-fledged autonomy? Would it not be satisfactory for them if Turkey, for example, lifted the reservations it had made on many articles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and fully implemented the Charter? Would this not bring about a solution to the Kurdish conflict since it also allows for a strong decentralization without necessarily granting full autonomy to the regions? A shared answer to these questions by the interviewees was that the European Charter of Self-Government would be a good start, but definitely insufficient to fulfill the demands of the Kurdish movement and would not stand as a “status”. One said:

Turkey’s removing its reservations on the Charter is the basic demand of the BDP and the HDP. However, even if these reservations are cast aside, it does not allow for a sphere of facilities equivalent to the representation of Democratic Autonomy. It only paves the path for the municipalities or local structures to obtain administrative financial autonomy (Ankara, 13 June 2014)²⁶.

Another added:

You will be mistaken if you believe that you can solve the problems at a geography making up one third of Turkey’s territory by only omitting the articles of the European Charter without granting any status. Kurds, along Turks, are equal citizens of this country, but they have rights due to their identity. These rights are to be under constitutional warranty (Mardin, 15 September 2014).²⁷

²⁶ “Türkiye’nin Şart üzerindeki çekincelerini kaldırması BDP ve Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP)’nin temel arzusudur. Fakat bu çekinceler kaldırılrsa bile Demokratik Özerklik’in temsiliyetine denk düşen bir olanak alanı vermiyor. Sadece belediyelerin veya yerel yönetimlerin idari mali özerkliğe kavuşmasının yolunu açıyor.”

²⁷ “Türkiye’nin coğrafyasının 3’de 1’i olan bir yerde hiçbir statü elde etmeden Avrupa şartnamesinin maddelerinin kaldırılmasıyla sorunların çözüleceğini düşünüyorsanız yanılırsınız. Evet, Kürtler Türkiye

Yet, another claimed:

Only administrative autonomy would lead to drawbacks and problems in terms of Kurdish people using their rights resulting from being a ‘people.’ Thus, Democratic Autonomy is the most applicable resolution model harboring both political and administrative autonomy, not making the borders a problematic issue” (Hakkari, 11 September 2014).²⁸

One interviewee raised a new debate to the issue by saying that settling at a looser arrangement than Democratic Autonomy would definitely not be satisfactory for those fighting for this “ideal” for thirty five years, referring to the guerrillas of the PKK (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014). In fact, a similar comment was stated by another respondent when the success of the Resolution Process between the government and the Kurdish movement was asked. The respondent also said that first the actors who had been practically fighting for the resolution needed to be convinced for a true peace bid to take place (Mardin, 15 September 2014).

When in one of the interviews conducted with Gültan Kışanak in the media, she was similarly asked whether it would be possible to resolve the Kurdish issue without granting autonomy, she answered: “Ultimate resolution is not possible. We do not have a chance to resolve the issue without establishing a mechanism where Kurds will have the right to participate in governance. The real concern of Kurds is to join the governance” (Taraf 2012a).

All these answers clearly show that Democratic Autonomy goes far beyond a mere administrative and financial autonomy. It is designed as a full-fledged political autonomy reinforced by the powers of decision-making and execution. In the light of the data, it appears that it would not be easy at all for the Turkish State to convince the Kurdish movement to agree on a looser bid.

Cumhuriyeti ile birlikte bu ülkenin eşit yurttaşdır ama kimliğinden doğan hakları vardır. Bu hakların anayasal güvence altına alınması gerekir.”

²⁸ “Salt idari özerklik Kürt halkının halk olmaktan doğan haklarını kullanması açısından eksiklikler, sorunlar doğuracaktır. Dolayısıyla hem siyasal hem idari özerkliği içinde barındıran, sınırları sorun etmeyen çözüm modeli olan Demokratik Özerklik en uygulanabilir modeldir.”

6.2.2.3 Power and Competences:

The model of Democratic Autonomy claims to entail all the three branches of government; legislative, executive and judicial. The BDP, in the submitted draft text of the Constitution, has proposed that the power of legislation belong to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and Regional Parliaments. The executive power must be granted to the President, Council of Ministers and Regional Presidencies within the framework of the constitution and laws. Thirdly, the judiciary will be conducted through independent and impartial courts (TBMM Başkanlığı 2014).

As part of these powers, there would be a division of competences between the central and local units. While some responsibilities would exclusively be in the hands of the central government or local governments, some would be shared between. According to the document of the DTP, regional parliaments would be responsible for the areas such as education, health, social services, culture, agriculture, marine, industry, town planning, environment, tourism, telecommunication, social security, women, youth and sports. The center, on the other hand, would be responsible for the duties of external affairs, national finance and national defence. Security and law would share duties that the central and local governments would carry out in cooperation (Akademi 2009).

When the distribution of duties and powers between the central government and local governments was asked to the interviewees, all the answers were consistent with the description above. Concisely, the duties of the central government would mainly be limited to certain areas of foreign policy and diplomacy, national economic regulations, finance and national defence. Other services, especially those related to local education and health, local police force, public works and local planning would be exclusive to local governments. The regulation of national days and important local events as well as the use of national symbols and flags would also be in the hands of local authority.

6.2.2.4 Principal Values of Self-Governance:

The values and principles that Democratic Autonomy is designed upon naturally reflect the ideology and political approach of the Kurdish movement and, particularly of

Abdullah Öcalan. First of all, the project totally rejects all kinds of uniformism in identity and is based upon a pluralist principle seeking multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism and multi- religiosity (Orgun 2012, 157). Hence, all religious, ethnic and linguistic groups can freely express their own identities and pursue politics with their identities. Relatedly, the participation of the society in governance and decision-making processes are seen vital. The intended arrangement has the claim to be fully inclusive and supportive of a highly politicized society.

Democratic Autonomy also rejects representative democracy, which equals to going to the polls only at electoral times, as described by Kurdish actors. Alternatively, it embraces “radical democracy,” which is defined as direct democracy (Çelik 2012, 108, 111-113). Radical democracy structures itself via a strong parliamentary system in which peoples’ councils at villages, neighborhoods, districts, provinces and regions function effectively. Through these councils, people could participate in the decision-making processes and directly rule themselves.

The Kurdish movement, furthermore, places special importance on the role of women in the society. It promotes women to be active and visible in the public sphere, including politics. Accordingly, all of the Kurdish organizations today have accepted the principle of co-presidency. This is a practice in which a woman and a man jointly run the presidency at all levels of organizational units. Moreover, Kurdish actors frequently emphasize that they support positive discrimination towards women, when necessary. In an interview carried out with a DTK member, it was stated that the DTK wanted half of its delegates to be women in the recent elections conducted in September 2014; “We wanted to have half of the delegates, i.e. 250, as women within the DTK. Yet, the woman’s movement was able to form only 168 despite all efforts. The rest of the delegates were men” (Diyarbakır, 14 September 2014).²⁹ This approach towards women makes up a significant and distinctive characteristic of Democratic Autonomy.

Lastly, the Kurdish movement, in the light of Öcalan’s thoughts, has developed a strong criticism against the notion of nation-state and its embedded economic characteristics, which are claimed to aim at maximum profit and heavy industrialism.

²⁹ “DTK içinde istedik ki delege sayısının yarısı yani 250’si kadın olsun. Fakat bütün uğraşlara rağmen kadın hareketi ancak 168 delege oluşturabildi. Geriye kalan delegeler erkek oldu”.

For the movement, the nation-state and its economic perspective is defined as “capitalist modernity.” This term is frequently used by Kurdish political actors, especially by Öcalan, and thus has become an effective tool of criticizing both nation-states and their heavy capitalistic economic policies. The movement claims to construct a so-called “democratic modernity” in Kurdistan to replace capitalism. This means forming a democratic nation (equal citizens of Turkey), a non-profit social market economy (a system heavily based on communal market) and ecologic industry (environment friendly industry) (Öcalan 2013). The last element is especially important for Kurdish actors, since it seeks to develop an economic system harmless to nature and ecological balance. Agriculture appears to be a significant means of production in the design of Democratic Autonomy (Bilen 2012; Baluken 2012). Öcalan contends that returning to agriculture is the “most valuable revolutionary act” (2013, 436).

6.2.2.5 Transnational Links

Democratic Autonomy is not only seen as a political project that allows Kurds in Turkey to gain status and self-rule, but also as a way of establishing strong communication and relationship with the Kurds living in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, namely Iraq, Syria and Iran. Kurdish actors often refer to this as the “national unity” project or Democratic Confederalism (Bianet 2011).

In accordance with this, there is a strong emphasis to create “unity” among all Kurds, as the data suggest. Moreover, in the interviews conducted, several respondents emphasized that Democratic Autonomy would not take into account the boundaries dividing Kurds. Kurdish actors support a new system where Kurds could freely establish coordination among themselves regardless of the borders. Several respondents, in this respect, referred to the EU as a model where territorial borders of sovereign states are protected although the boundaries have lost their meaning. “Europe both has borders and not” contended one interviewee in a personal conversation (Van, 9 September 2014).³⁰ In one of his interviews in the media Ahmet Türk says, “A free Kurdish geography would be possible without changing the borders... Does a border

³⁰ “Avrupa’da hem sınırlar var hem de yok.”

dispute exist in Europe among Italy, Germany and France?” (Milliyet 2012). Similarly, one respondent in the personal interviews has claimed:

Today if you started off driving from Bulgaria to the Netherlands, you would have no trouble at all. Let the border between four parts stay but be more flexible. Let the political borders remain but become permeable. Let’s learn lessons from the EU regarding this issue, but let’s create even a more developed form in the Middle East (Diyarbakır, 14 September).³¹

Having said this, establishing transnational links stands as a crucial issue for Democratic Autonomy, since the Kurdish movement claims to create a unity among separate states while respecting the existing territorial boundaries.

In addition, Democratic Autonomy suggests developing a common ground where all Kurds could discuss issues and develop common policies. For that matter, Democratic Autonomy seeks to set up a national congress which would be responsible to carry out all the national and international diplomacy of Kurds. The targeted Democratic National Congress aims to create an institutionalized Kurdish diplomacy which is to develop unitary policies. Moreover, the Congress suggests that the self-defence forces of all Kurds in the region unite under the Peshmerga forces (Öcalan 2013, 384-386).

6.2.2.6 Citizenship

The legal design of Democratic Autonomy suggests that every individual be linked to the Turkish State by means of constitutional citizenship. To achieve this, the Constitution is not to refer to any ethnic identity regarding citizenship, and thus be impartial towards ethnicities. This requires an adjustment of Article 66 of the current Constitution of Turkey, replacing the term “Turk” (Türk) with “the one belonging to the Turkish Republic” (Türkiyeli). This way, the supra-identity would not take the name of only one single identity but the name of the country. This would mean a cut of the ties between the law and ethnicity (Kara 2013).

³¹ “Bugün Bulgaristan'dan başlayıp Hollanda'ya kadar arabayla gitseniz hiç bir sorun olmaz... Dört parça arasındaki sınırlar da dursun ama esnek hale getirilsin. Siyasi sınırlar kalsın ama geçirgen hale gelsin. Avrupa Birliği'nden bu konuda dersler çıkaralım ama Orta Doğu'da daha da gelişmişini yapalım”.

The Kurdish movement has long been seeking a redefinition of citizenship in Turkey. This is one of the most crucial debates evolving around the resolution of the conflict. The movement firmly insists on an inclusive and impartial citizenship description, which would also serve the design of Democratic Autonomy. In the document personally received by the DTK,³² it states that: “Every Kurdish individual will accept constitutional citizenship of Kurdish Republic on the condition that Democratic Autonomy status is recognized.”³³ Moreover, as Öcalan asserts, “ ‘Belonging to Turkey’ will be the supra-identity. For example, I am a Kurd and a citizen of the nation of Turkey at the same time. The identity of ‘belonging to Turkey’ is the supra-national identity” (Akademi 2009, 83).

6.2.2.7 Language

The issue of language occupies a significant place in Kurdish politics. Heavy restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language in the public and in education have been major concerns of the Kurdish movement. The use of mother tongue in all aspects of life is a priority for Kurdish politics, which cannot even be restricted any more, let alone be banned. Concerning that, the BDP, expresses its demand in the draft text of the new Constitution. Firstly, it suggests that the official language of the state be Turkish and all citizens have the right and duty to learn the said language. All the other languages used by the members of society could be the second languages with the decisions of the regional parliaments. Secondly, it suggests that all individuals have the right to use their own mother tongue both in personal and public spheres. Thirdly, the state would be obliged to respect and protect all the languages in the country and ensure that they are used and developed (TBMM Başkanlığı 2014).

The intended language policy of Democratic Autonomy is similar to the proposal of the BDP. According to the DTK document,³⁴ the official languages of the Kurdistan

³² This document was provided to the writer of the thesis by a DTK employee responsible for the media at the DTK office in Diyarbakır on 15 September 2015. The title of the document is “Demokratik Özerk Özgür Kürdistan Projesi” (The Project of Democratic Autonomous Independent Kurdistan).

³³ “Her Kürt bireyi, demokratik özerklik statüsünün tanınması halinde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti anayasal vatandaşlığını kabul eder.”

³⁴ See Note 33.

autonomous region would be Kurdish and Turkish. Both languages would be used in public spheres and in education. Kurdish would be used as a language of education starting from kindergarten through university. Moreover, all settlements and geographical places would regain their original Kurdish names. The document also states that all languages used in Kurdistan could be used freely in all aspects of life.

Despite the information in the DTK document that names two official languages in the region (Turkish/Kurdish), all the respondents in the personal interviews confirmed that all the languages used in Kurdistan would be regarded as official languages. In one of the interviews, the respondent said that refusal of any language was out of question in Democratic Autonomy. In other words, not a bilingual but a multilingual system is targeted. Another interviewee said:

There could be no hierarchy according to the populations among the nations. Even if their population is ten, each and every group is a ‘people,’ and should be able to take advantage of every single right. Then, there would be no clashes between peoples. If only Turkish and Kurdish were official languages, then Kurds would be doing the same things as Turkey has done to us for years (Diyarbakır, 14 September 2014).³⁵

The data apparently manifest a contradiction about the issue of official languages of the autonomous region. It does not clarify whether only Kurdish and Turkish, or all the languages spoken in the location would be granted official status. Yet, it appears that a multilingual policy is desired, which would also suit the principal values of Democratic Autonomy.

³⁵ “Halklar arası nüfuslara göre hiyerarşi olmaz. 10 kişi de olsa her grup bir halktır ve her haktan yararlanmalıdır. Zaten böyle bir şey olursa halklar arası çatışma olmaz. Eğer sadece Türkçe ve Kürtçe resmi dil olursa o zaman Türkiye'nin yıllarca bize yaptığını bu sefer Kürtler yapmış olur.”

6.3 Local Power Sharing Tools in Democratic Autonomy

Democratic Autonomy is supposed to be different from all other autonomy practices in the world, as Kurdish actors claim. Current autonomy models are mere representations of states with the exception that they function at the local level. They are highly bureaucratic and hierarchical. They are “small states at the local.” As Demir Çelik, a prominent member of the HDP interprets, today’s autonomy models are only examples of “the state changing hands,” and they still continue to serve the statist approach³⁶ (Radikal 2014). For Kurdish politics, autonomy practices in the world are merely “micro-states” (Akademi 2009, 88). A respondent, during one of the personal interviews, has claimed that Democratic Autonomy is a “synthesis” of many autonomy practices, while it “surpasses” them as a “full-fledged democracy project” (Van, 9 September 2014).

What makes Democratic Autonomy so different from other autonomous structures then? What does the model propose as an alternative to the state? When these questions were raised in the personal interviews, the respondents claimed that Democratic Autonomy’s uniqueness is due to its firm opposition to and even rejection of the state. Unlike the state, Democratic Autonomy claims to be fully egalitarian, totally inclusive and participatory, pluralist and transparent. It seeks ecological production, a communal and non-profit market, which are all absent in today’s economic systems. Some interviewees have stated that the rejection of the statist approach in self-governance and adoption of these values are totally new dimensions added to the existing autonomy theories by Abdullah Öcalan.

In the personally conducted interviews, it is often argued that Democratic Autonomy is not a mere autonomy, but instead a “democratic” autonomy which is based on and carried out through a system of peoples’ councils. These councils would provide direct democracy by functioning at all levels of local governments starting from village and street communes to the regional assembly (Çelik 2012). As stated:

³⁶ This criticism posed against today’s practices of autonomy is very similar to that of Abdullah Öcalan’s towards the Soviet experience, in which he blames the socialists for not being able to develop a new political tool and for ending up embracing the state again. As an alternative political tool, Öcalan is a strong advocate of the construction of Democratic Autonomy, as he regards it as the ideal way to surpass the statist approach.

Democratic Autonomy is opposed to the state in terms of its way of organization. It is organized from the bottom. Village and neighborhood councils are placed at the very bottom, then come city and province councils and at the top are peoples' councils. There is not only one parliament as in the states. It is a system of councils formed for people to be able to govern themselves more easily. Inter-council relations take place from the bottom to the top (Akademi 2009, 71).³⁷

The system mentioned would give the opportunity to all individuals to participate in the local councils present in their own local settlements. It promotes active citizens, who are both concerned about and aware of the environment they live in (Çelik 2012). This would lead to politicization of the society, and hence serve one of the principal values of Democratic Autonomy.

6.3.1 Peoples' Councils as Local Power Sharing Tools

Village-street communes and neighborhood councils: They are the smallest units of the council system. They are formed by the delegates residing in the concerning local unit. The members of the municipal council, provincial assembly or village council become natural members of these councils if they reside in the neighborhood, village or street. This way, coordination between different institutions of governance can be achieved. Institutions such as the provincial administration or village structures would be maintained while they are be freed from state intervention and become institutions of Democratic Autonomy (Çelik 2012, 108; Akademi 2009, 112). In addition, the principle of co-presidency is applied in all of the councils.

Communes and neighborhood councils are autonomous units that have both the right and responsibility to make decisions about any matter directly related to the people of that site, such as collecting wastes, opening a village school, or organizing a sports activity. Every commune and council has also an executive branch in which the members are chosen from within the council by means of secret ballot system. The members of the executive committee are responsible to make sure the decisions are

³⁷ “Örgütlenme biçimi itibariyle de devlete zıttır. Tabandan örgütlenir. En altta köy ve mahalle meclisleri, daha sonrasında il ve eyalet meclisleri ve en sonda da halk meclisi bulunmaktadır...Dev-letlerde olduğu gibi tek meclis değildir. Halkın kendini daha rahat yönetebil-mesi için oluşturulmuş bir meclisler sistemidir. Meclislerarası ilişki tabandan yukarı doğru olur.”

implemented. However, if the taken decision requires a larger budget or authorization, the council can ask the support of the higher council or more likely that of the municipality. The municipality, provided that it has adequate resources, is obliged to enact the decision taken by the council. One of the interviewees has described the process as:

Let's suppose there will be an arrangement in the neighborhood about sports. The neighborhood needs a commission to be in charge of only sports or cultural pursuits. The duty of the municipality is to help only if there occurs a problem about these activities. In the cases where they cannot do so, eg. in the case of an infrastructure problem, the council will detect it on the spot, and the municipality will implement it (Hakkari, 10 September 2014).³⁸

In this system, the peoples' councils are decision-makers and implementers, while the municipalities are supportive service providers, as another interviewee has explained.

District and City Councils: The structure of district and city councils is not much different from the ones in villages, streets and neighborhoods as far as the data suggest. They are similarly granted decision-making and implementation powers. They are autonomous and responsible for all the issues concerning the district and the city.

District and city councils are composed of delegates elected from sub-councils (neighborhood and district councils), co-mayors, members of municipal councils and representatives of civil society organizations. The co-mayors and members of other institutions are natural members of the councils. As the co-president of the executive committee of Yüksekova Council has put:

Delegation is distributed from all the civil society organizations, municipality and all the institutions regarding the civilian community. Delegates coming from the institutions make up 40% of the council. There is also a 60% delegation from the people. All these form a council (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014).³⁹

³⁸ "Diyelim mahallede spor ile ilgili bir düzenleme yapılacak. Bu mahallenin kendi içinde sadece spordan veya kültürden sorumlu komisyonu olması gerekiyor. Belediyeye düşen görev bu aktivitelerde sıkıntı yaşanırsa yardımcı olacak. Yapamadıkları durumlarda, örneğin alt yapı sorunu var, meclis orada onnu tespit edecek, belediye uygulayıcısı olacak".

³⁹ "Yüksekova'da bulunan tüm sivil toplum örgütleri, belediye, sivil toplumu ilgilendiren tüm kurumlardan delegasyon aktarılıyor. Kurumlardan gelen delegeler %40'ını oluşturuyor meclisin. Bir de halktan gelen %60'lık delege var. Bunlar bir meclis oluşturuyor."

60% of the delegates come from sub-councils through being elected within their own councils. In order to explain this system, the Yüksekova (Gewer) Council, a de facto district council established in July 2014, would serve useful. As the co-president of the Gewer Council has explained, each neighborhood connected to that district is asked to send delegates to join the district council and is given a different quota depending on its population. The co-president has stated that:

Every neighborhood council was granted a certain quota to be able to send delegates to the city council⁴⁰ depending on its population. For instance, the Güngör Neighborhood has a council of 80 persons and has sent 20 members to the city council. To give an example, Yenimahalle has sent 25 and Dize 16 delegates. All these delegates have formed the 301 person Yüksekova Council. Afterwards, a few did not show up and the total became 285 (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014).⁴¹

As the interviews show, the formation of district and city councils is both based on council elections and the participation of various actors who are either engaged in local governance or civil society activities. Moreover, each council also forms its own executive committee from within its own members through elections.

In addition, the Gewer Council also claims to have a judiciary branch responsible for mainly trade and civil law cases. For example, those wanting to divorce or solve their trade disputes consult the council and get support. This, however, surely has no official validity. Nevertheless, the members of the council seem to be very confident that the decisions made by local courts would gain official acknowledgement in the future. One interviewee has added: “This is not to be misunderstood. Throughout our history, the elderly (Aksakallılar) and those who have a say in issues have brought together, listened to and mediated fairly between two persons having a dispute” (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014).⁴² The region’s traditions and customs seem to play a role in its legal system.

⁴⁰ Here the respondent refers to Yüksekova as a city rather than a district.

⁴¹ “Her mahalle meclisine nüfusuna göre kent meclisine delege göndermesi için kota verildi. Mesela Güngör Mahallesi’nin mahalle meclisi 80 kişiliktir ve 20 kişiyi kent meclisini vermiş. Örnek olarak veriyorum, Yenimahalle 25, Dize 16 delege göndermiş olsun. Tüm bu delegeler 301 kişilik Yüksekova Kent Meclisi’ni oluşturdu. Sonra birkaç kişi gelmedi 285 kişi oldu.”

⁴² “Bunun yanlış anlaşılması gerekiyor. Bizim tarihimiz boyunca Aksakallılar, sözü geçerli olanlar iki kişi arasında bir anlaşmazlık olduğunda bu kişileri bir araya getirmişler, dinlemişlerve hakkaniyeti göz önünde bulundurarak aralarını bulmuşlardır.”

Regional Parliament - Democratic Society Congress (DTK): The DTK is considered to be the upper parliament of the Kurdistan autonomous region by Kurdish actors. It incorporates all city councils and other organizations, and thus is also called as the “umbrella organization of all Kurds.” İdris Baluken, a HDP member, after the seventeenth meeting with Öcalan on the island of Imrali, quoted the words of Öcalan as: “DTK is prototype-parliament, and in the upcoming term the resolution will be conducted through this local parliament” (Kurdistan 24). At this point, it would not be too strong to claim that the DTK is currently the most significant institution regarding Democratic Autonomy. This significance is not only due to its activities to develop the project, but also for the symbolic meaning attributed to it as the de facto regional parliament.

The Congress, with the call of Öcalan, was established in 2005 with the very purpose of serving autonomy by developing its internal design, spreading it across the region and making it functioning. Since its establishment it has been working through various commissions in different areas, prominently on politics, economics, ecology, law and diplomacy. Following its latest meeting in September 2014, it has increased its number of commissions up to fourteen to be able to conduct more comprehensive work and respond to the needs of the society, as a DTK employee has explained.⁴³

The DTK is composed of delegates coming from various local levels and institutions. Similar to the district and city councils, forty percent of the regional parliament is composed of representatives of civil society organizations, members of women and youth organizations, prominent politicians, scholars, journalists, members of municipal councils and mayors, while the remaining sixty percent is formed by public delegates. When the interviewees were asked how the public delegates were elected, it was stated that the DTK sets up a quota for each city and expects the delegates from city councils to join the DTK (Van, September 2014). For instances it asks for ten delegates from Van, five from Şırnak and six from Hakkari according to the population of the provinces. Hence, each city council holds elections and elects the members to join the upper parliament (Yüksekova, 10 September 2014). While the

⁴³ The commissions: Status and Law, Youth, Rights and Faith, Diplomacy, Language Education, Social Reconciliation and Dialogue, Culture Art, Ecology and Local Governance, Economy, Political, Social Policies, Human Rights, Science, and Woman.

answers received point out a system where 60% of the DTK is formed by the city councils, the DTK Contract, which is regarded as the regional Constitution, says that the parliament would be organized through five regions within Kurdistan, all of which have their separate regional councils (DTK n.d.).⁴⁴ According to the Contract, the public delegates would not be elected from within the city councils, but from the regional councils instead. In fact, this statement confirms the claim of the interviewee who has stated that the whole region would be divided into and governed through five separate regions; Botan, Amed, Serhat, Fırat and Dersim. Regarding the issue, two different statements of the data cause a confusion about a clear design of the organizational structure of the DTK.

6.3.2 Heterogeneity and Local Power Sharing

Local power sharing tools which are based on peoples' councils appear to be effective and powerful tools that provide the participation of society in decision-making processes at all levels. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the representation and participation of ethnic, religious or other minority groups in the system are guaranteed. There may occur a risk of Kurdish hegemony at the councils and in their executive branches. That is why the design also requires some sort of power sharing between different identity groups. As the context of the Kurdish case explicitly shows, the Kurdistan region is highly heterogeneous. Not only are there two large groups of Turkish and Kurdish people that need to share the power in governance, but also there are different ethnic and religious groups that need to be included. Besides, Kurds themselves are highly diverse in terms of mainly religion, language and political orientation. Given all these facts, the institutional design of the project necessitates building strong mechanisms.

All the data on Democratic Autonomy, including the writings of Öcalan and the DTK, and the interviews suggest that all peoples in Kurdistan -Kurdistani peoples- must

⁴⁴ It is precisely stated in the Contract: "The Congress works based on the council and is organized through five regions in North Kurdistan. In each region, regional councils are formed."

have the right to express themselves in politics and governance irrespective of their number of population in the region. According to Article No. 3 of the DTK Contract, the DTK provides the representation of all different groups in “Northern Kurdistan” and applies positive discrimination to the groups in need. It promotes the “free identity” of all Kurdistanis peoples (DTK n.d.).

While this approach constitutes the main understanding of the Kurdish movement, it is not visible in the same writings how these groups would represent themselves in the local institutions. What are the local power sharing mechanisms that would guarantee the representation of these various groups in the local governance system? What guarantees that the minorities would be delegates in the councils and in the DTK parliament? And how would these groups take place in the decision making processes?

The answers to the raised questions are neither available in Öcalan’s writings nor in the DTK documents. As a result of this absence of information, in all of the interviews conducted personally, the respondents were strongly encouraged to provide concrete answers to them. A shared thought was that it was the natural principle of Democratic Autonomy and also an automatic necessity of being a “democratic nation” to make sure that all peoples equally express themselves and participate in the system. All the respondents stated that it was impossible to think otherwise. “Kurdistan is not only the homeland of Kurds, but of all Kurdistanis peoples” was a common statement made by many of the interviewees. The answers included severe criticism of the Turkish State, accusing it of being extremely exclusive and hegemonic. Several have also stated that the ten percent threshold in Turkey to enter the parliament is a major constraint to democracy, since it prevents many groups, especially Kurds with a large population, from representation. For them, this leads to the domination of the titular nation over the other groups, which is totally against the principles presented by Democratic Autonomy. One respondent has argued that one of the worst practices of the parliamentary system is experienced in Turkey claiming that no other country in the world has a ten percent threshold. It was also stated by the same respondent that there would be no election threshold in the Kurdistanis parliament (Diyarbakır, 12 September 2014).

One interviewee, however, has boldly acknowledged that there could be a risk to create a Kurdish hegemony in the region. When asked how to guarantee the protection of all minorities, the same respondent answered: “This would be ensured by taking it from the individuals’ intentions and handing it over to the organized society” (Ankara, 14 June 2014).⁴⁵

Several respondents contended that all groups would participate in the system easily, since they would have their own councils in their own neighborhoods. For example, the Turkish district would form its own district council, while an Assyrian neighborhood or an Arabic village would form their own communes. This way, all groups could be represented in their own local councils and make free decisions while they could also have the chance to reach the upper level council. One interviewee has explained this as follows: “The Assyrians will be autonomous anyway, as they will establish their own council in their own neighborhood” (Diyarbakır, 14 September 2014).⁴⁶ However, this approach is built upon the assumption that all identity groups are homogeneously separated in different villages, neighborhoods, districts and cities. However, not all settlements could be divided accordingly. Moreover, even if the local councils are constructed by certain local minority groups, this does not make them immune from the laws across the region. For this, the groups need to join the DTK, where decisions regarding the whole region will be taken. Representation in village communes or district councils would not guarantee representation at the regional level. These concerns, however, were not addressed by any of the interviewees.

Another major issue regarding local power sharing is the role and rights of minority groups in decision making processes. In highly heterogeneous societies, it is crucial to set up a system in which minorities are not vulnerable to the decisions of the majority. It is also important for the groups to be able to pass decisions regarding their own concerns. According to the interviews, the “principle” of Democratic Autonomy is to make sure all the needs and demands of the minorities are fulfilled. One of the interviewees has said “There are many different identities here. All are Kurdistani peoples. Their needs and demands are to be met, and this is a principle,” (Mardin, 15

⁴⁵ “Bunun garantisi kişilerin niyetinden alıp örgütlü topluma devretmekle olur.”

⁴⁶ “Zaten Süryaniler kendi mahallelerinde kendi meclislerini kuracakları için orada özerk olacaklar.”

September 2014)⁴⁷ while another has put: “For instance, Assyrian people’s religious practices, language and culture cannot be left to the approval and voting of another group. This is out of question” (Hakkari, 11 September 2014).⁴⁸

As claimed, basic rights such as language, culture, and religion should not be a concern since Democratic Autonomy would automatically hand them over to the groups. One has also added that positive discrimination is a main principle and said:

For example, our Armenian fellows are being represented by 10 delegates and have demanded something from us. We, 500 delegates [of the DTK], are not going to vote this in the parliament. Their reasonable demands will be sought to be met. Basic rights cannot be voted. They are simply recognized (Diyarbakır, 14 September 2014).⁴⁹

Similarly, in several other interviews, the principle of positive discrimination has been brought up as a mechanism to entrench the rights of minority groups. The most dominant argument is that the basic rights of peoples will automatically be given without even discussing them; yet, how this would be arranged remains unclear.

6.4 Central Level Power Sharing

Regarding the significance of the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey for the whole country, the relationship between the regional and central governments stands out as a crucial matter. Nonetheless, neither the writings of Öcalan nor the DTK documents provide adequate information about how the regional governments would be involved in national legislative and executive powers. For that reason, personally conducted interviews have been used as point of reference to manifest the design of Democratic Autonomy as far as the given issue is concerned.

⁴⁷ “Burada çok farklı kimlikler var. Hepsi Kürdistanlı halklardır. İhtiyaç ve talepleri karşılanır ve bu bir ilkedir.”

⁴⁸ “Örneğin süryani halkımızın ibadet imkanı, dili, kültürü başka bir farklılığın onayına, oylamasına sunulmaz. Bu söz konusu bile olamaz.”

⁴⁹ “Pozitif ayrımcılık ilkesini benimsiyoruz. Mesela Ermeni arkadaşlar 10 delegeyle temsil ediliyorlar ve bir talepte bulundular. Biz 500 delege mecliste bunu oya sürmeyeceğiz. Onların her makul isteği karşılanmaya çalışılacak. Temel haklar oylamaya sunulmaz. Bunlar tanınır.”

The interviewees were asked about how the regional assembly would be represented at the central level national parliament. To this, various answers were received. One respondent said that every single region would contribute to the national parliament to the extent of its population (Hakkari, 11 September 2014). Another respondent mentioned a similar system carried out in the organization of the peoples' councils. To fulfill that, it was claimed that each regional assembly would send delegates to the national parliament depending on the size and population of the region and that all the regions would have a certain quota and be accordingly represented at the center (Ankara, 13 June 2014). The same interviewee also stated that all the regional parliaments across Turkey would be connected to each other. However, the question of how and through which means the regional parliaments would be linked to one another was left unanswered.

Contrary to these received answers, two other respondents firmly put forward another form of design. One interviewee asserted that the Kurdish parties would join the national elections to participate in the national parliament, while they would also participate in the local elections to be part of the local assembly. However, the election threshold at the national level needed to be decreased, while there would be no threshold in the autonomous entity, the respondent claimed (Diyarbakır, 12 September 2014).

Another interviewee manifested the same model as the one stated above. It was claimed that the system could be similar to the one currently applied in Iraq. The explanation was that there would be two elections in Turkey, general and local. The general elections would naturally determine the central parliament and the local parties would be allowed to participate in the general elections as well. The local elections, on the other hand, would only determine the local assemblies in the autonomous regions. As the interviewee explained:

Even if an autonomous region is established, the AKP will still be there. We will compete with it. The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) will also be there. We demand that the Constitution allow for regional parties to be formed as well. Democratic Regions Party was established with this intention. Turkey's Kurdistan Democratic Party was also founded. These

will be regional parties. But the HDP is the party of the whole country (Diyarbakır, 12 September 2014).⁵⁰

It can be inferred from this that there would be political parties functioning only at the local level, while some others would be functioning all over the country. The same respondent has added: “Some parties will remain local only, while some across the nation. We want to be able to set up regional parties within the Democratic Autonomy model. For example, a Laz party could be established in the Northern Black Sea Region” (Diyarbakır, 12 September 2014).⁵¹

All in all, two different answers have been received about center-level power sharing arrangements of Democratic Autonomy: sending delegates from regional assemblies to the national parliaments, and implementing local and general elections. All the other respondents left the question unanswered by giving irrelevant answers about the issue. Moreover, the question of whether there would be any guarantee mechanisms to make sure that regions would join the executive power at the center was left totally unanswered.

Even though the data is somehow inadequate to manifest the legal design of Democratic Autonomy on center-level power sharing arrangements, it still shows that the Kurdish movement aims to develop two types of political parties, one functioning at the national level and one at the local. Accordingly, the DBP is to function as a local pro-Kurdish party in the region. This, in fact, is already the case since the party holds the power of the municipalities and develops local politics and governance at the ground. The HDP, on the other hand, acts as a party across Turkey seeking to get into the national parliament. For this reason, the HDP, since its establishment, has introduced itself with the identity of belonging to the Republic of Turkey instead of being a mere pro-Kurdish party.

⁵⁰ “Özerk bölge kurulursa da AKP olacak. Biz onunla yarışa gireceğiz. MHP de olacak. Bizim modelimizde tek parti anlayışı yok. Biz istiyoruz ki anayasada bölge partileri de kurulabilsin. Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi bu amaçla kuruldu. Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi kuruldu. Devlet gelip tabelayı indirmede. Bunlar bölge partisi olacak. Ama HDP ülke partisi.”

⁵¹ “Bazı partiler sadece yerelde örgütlü kalır, bazıları da ulusal çapta. Demokratik Özerklik modelinde bölgesel partiler kurabilmek istiyoruz. Mesela Doğu Karadeniz’de bir Laz partisi kurulabilir.”

The roles both the DBP and the HDP undertake are totally coherent with the ideas and recommendations of Abdullah Öcalan to the Kurdish movement. As İdris Baluken conveys, Öcalan is in favor of the concept that the DBP is a party functioning merely at the local level to build local democracy (Kurdistan 24). He recommends that the DBP seek to develop practices of autonomy, educate society and train new staff to spread the principles of autonomy. Öcalan, at the same time, believes that it is significant the HDP work very hard to embrace all the peoples in Turkey, who are somehow marginalized within the system. He underlines the absence of and the urgent need for a political party in Turkey that can embrace all kinds of groups and emphasizes that the HDP should have the duty of bridging this gap. In brief, Öcalan supports division of duty between the political parties that function merely at the local level and throughout the country.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to analyze the context of the Kurdish conflict and the legal design of Democratic Autonomy respectively. The analyses have manifested several significant outcomes that would allow the writer to evaluate the model as a resolution tool to bring peace to Turkey. In the light of these outcomes, Democratic Autonomy stands as a new alternative governance model hosting valuable arrangements such as the peoples' councils system. Nevertheless, it also becomes evident that the model has some serious drawbacks to present a well-arranged institutional design which could yield a real solution to the conflict in question.

To begin with, the vital issue of how the regional units would be arranged remains as an obscure matter. The main argument posed by Kurdish actors is that Democratic Autonomy is not based on and limited to any territorial boundaries. This argument, however, stands more of a strong discourse than a substantive legal arrangement. Moreover, the claim to establish over twenty regional units across Turkey lacks strong justification. It is much less likely that all parts of Turkey will call for full-fledged autonomous arrangements with strong legislative, executive and also judiciary powers. Today, at least, there appears no explicit demand for regional governments from other parts of Turkey. Thus, it would be unnecessary for the whole country to undergo such a

radical structural change. The literature on territorial self-governance similarly suggests that a federal arrangement not be necessary in countries where only particular groups concentrated in specific regions demand self-rule. The reconstruction of the whole country, thus would be redundant in such cases (Ghai 2000, Benedikter 2009a). The legal design of Democratic Autonomy suggests a federal structure for Turkey but cannot put forward a solid argument why such a federal arrangement is necessary and how could it be actualized. The only assertion put forth by the Kurdish movement is the “democratization of Turkey” argument, meaning that regional autonomies are necessary for Turkey to overthrow the heavy tutelage of the center over locals, and thus become more democratic. About how to construct it, Kurdish actors vaguely state that all parts of Turkey would demand such a system when its advantages are to become visible in Kurdistan.

In addition, Kurdish actors on one hand emphasize the vitality to construct federal structure across Turkey, while on the other, they underline that the priority to establish self-governance is to be given to the Kurdistan region. This inevitably creates some confusion whether Democratic Autonomy is mainly designed as a federal arrangement or as an autonomous one solely for the Eastern and Southeastern regions. Moreover, even though Democratic Autonomy makes a claim over the Kurdistan region, there is no guarantee that the cities in question are prepared to be involved in such an arrangement. Although the Kurdish political movement has a strong basis in many of the cities in the region and Kurds have mainly been concentrated there, nearly half of the population are made up of non-Kurds. There is no clear evidence that these people would also acknowledge an autonomous arrangement, by means of which there might be a risk of a Kurdish hegemony afterwards. Moreover, Kurds within themselves are also highly diverse. Especially political and ideological rivalries within Kurdish society could even lead to a severe conflict over the issue.

As a matter of fact, the territorial demarcations of Democratic Autonomy in the Kurdistan region are not clear either. It is currently not precise which cities the project will be constructed upon. There is no actual consensus among Kurdish actors about this vital issue. In the personally conducted interviews, much emphasis has been put on the historical boundaries of Kurdistan, while no clarifications have been made about its precise boundaries. At the same time, it has been strongly claimed that the so-called

Kurdistan region within itself would be divided into smaller autonomous regions for better governance. However, only one of the interviewees has specified how this division would be arranged. The same respondent gave specific names of five sub-regions the region would be divided into; Amed, Botan, Serhat, Firat and Dersim. However, these names have not been confirmed by any other source, neither by the interviewees nor by the other available data. All these different and even contradictory arguments obtained by the interviewees not only convey the limitations of Democratic Autonomy as an effective territorial solution, but also the deficiency of informational coordination among Kurdish actors themselves.

Indeed, lack of informational coordination is a visible outcome of the analyses. In the personally conducted interviews, many incoherent answers to the same questions have been received. The most striking example of this is when a former BDP -current HDP deputy- claimed that the BDP had officially proposed Democratic Autonomy in the draft of the Constitution already delivered to the Parliament, while a former deputy said the model had never been proposed officially except for being “expressed politically.”

In addition to these inadequacies, the organizational structure of the DTK appears as another issue left with an unclear design. Regarding this issue, the data suggest two different organization models. In the personally conducted interviews, the respondents have firmly stated that the DTK would receive public delegates from the city councils. In the DTK Contract, which is regarded as its Constitution, it is stated that the DTK would be organized upon five regional councils of five separate regions. This uncertainty about whether city or regional councils would send delegates to the upper-parliament is directly related to the uncertainty about whether or not the Kurdistan region would be divided into five sub-regions.

Even though the organizational design of the DTK is unclear, what is clear is that the institution is in charge of the duty of being the upper-parliament of the whole region. Naturally, the position and role that the DTK undertake also raises an important question: if there were separate autonomous regions within Kurdistan, why would there be one upper-parliament that claims legislative and executive powers over all the autonomous regions? Why would five regions unite under one parliament? Is the goal to

establish separate governance units or construct a whole Kurdish unit? Although the matter is crucial, it is not possible to answer these questions with the current data at hand. Undoubtedly, these ambiguities limit the merits of Democratic Autonomy to manifest a clear institutional design. Moreover, they also arouse suspicion about the project's sincerity. The Kurdish movement strongly claims that the project is beyond any ethnic affiliation and Kurdishness. It also claims that it is not merely restricted to the Kurdish region but covers the whole country. Nonetheless, at the same time, it attempts to create a region based on Kurdishness. In this sense, it seems that the "beyond ethnic identity" argument is not well supported by a concrete legal design.

Another outcome that the analyses has put forward is about the system of peoples' councils. This bottom to top council system appears to be the most advanced and beneficial arrangement of Democratic Autonomy. It offers major advantages to the local people as strong local power sharing tools. Firstly, it provides a strong participatory system where people can easily have access to decision making mechanisms. It presents a pluralist and comprehensive ground for discussion, decision-making and implementation. Secondly, thanks to its delegate system, it provides a significant sphere where members of civil society organizations, political parties, youth and women organizations as well as grassroots can meet. High communication and interaction between different institutions could be very effective to reduce the risk of new conflicts emerging. Moreover, at times of disputes, people can carry their thoughts and concerns to the councils for discussion. By means of this, councils would also function as dispute resolution units. Lastly, again thanks to its delegate system, peoples' councils could provide participation of delegates from the sub-councils in the upper ones. This would lead to communication between, for example, a member of a village commune and a delegate from a city council. A strong coordination among different local levels would be effective to reduce the risk of conflict or at least provide a common basis for its resolution.

When taking all these outcomes into consideration, people's councils provide a strong basis for society to get involved in governance and politics. However, despite all of its benefits, the council system does not suggest any effective mechanisms to guarantee the participation of diverse identity groups in the legislative and executive power structures. It is a highly participatory arrangement but lacks efficient tools to

ensure the incorporation of different ethnic and religious groups. This emerges as a serious inadequacy when the region is highly heterogeneous and it may be a risk to create new minority grievances. It is not quite possible to speak of effective local power sharing mechanisms when there is no arrangement to ensure the participation of, for example, an Armenian family in the district council, where the majority consist of Kurds.

All the data, including the writings of Öcalan and the DTK, clearly emphasize that all groups living in the region would freely be joining in governance mechanisms. Similarly, all the respondents in the interviews have stated that all groups would be incorporated into the system, and their basic rights would naturally be granted. However, words and statements, in this case, are not sufficient means to entrench the role of the identity groups in governance. In brief, local power sharing tools of the project fall short to fully address the heterogeneous characteristic of the local region. The Kurdish movement carries out a very strong discourse about respecting all minority groups; however, the legal design of Democratic Autonomy does not fulfill this discourse.

The analyses of the central-level power sharing tools of Democratic Autonomy similarly show that the model is insufficient to address the needs of its conflict context. The Kurdish populated region is significant to the overall country, and thus needs powerful tools to be effectively involved at the national level. It needs to ensure its role in the national parliament and even in the government to be able to have a say in matters affecting the whole country. Nevertheless, the design cannot put forward a coherent model regarding the issue. Incoherent and insufficient answers about the matter indicate that the institutional design of the project is not well-arranged.

Another outcome of the analyses is that the EU stands as an important factor of reference for the Kurdish movement regarding local governance. The decentralized structure of most of the EU countries and the EU's support for decentralization policies are regarded as significant matters that could affect Turkey positively. Moreover, the EU is often given as an inspiring model for its free movement policy among its member countries. The Kurdish movement, which aims to establish strong links between Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria through Democratic Autonomy and Democratic

Confederalism, suggests a similar model where the borders of the particular sovereign countries are protected while they become flexible and permeable. However, the fact that the Kurdish movement refers to the EU models as effective local governance models does not necessarily indicate that the EU should be seen as an instrument of conflict resolution or an agent in achieving a convenient conflict settlement. Although the EU is a significant reference point for Kurdish actors, it is not attributed an excessive meaning. In fact, in many interviews and writings of Abdullah Öcalan, the necessity to go beyond European models has been mentioned. The movement is inspired by the European modeling in some aspects and aims to realize a more advanced model in the Middle East. In addition, there is also a consensus among Kurdish actors that the European Charter of Local Self-Government is a necessary but inadequate step towards the realization of Democratic Autonomy.

Overall, in the light of the analyses at hand, Democratic Autonomy appears to be based more on a strong discourse than on a concrete institutional design. Despite the fact that it has been more than ten years that the Kurdish movement has been working on the project and demanding its realization, no conclusive work has been carried out yet. Moreover, there is lack of coordination among Kurdish actors regarding the content and design of the model. Accepting these as the outcome of the analyses, this study shows that Democratic Autonomy, with its current design, is not able to offer a strong contribution to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. It requires serious adjustments and technical improvements to make sure that all the vague matters are replaced by concrete designs that would fully address the context of the conflict.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter, firstly, will engage in a brief discussion on Democratic Autonomy by raising a couple of thought provoking remarks on its theoretical and philosophical basis. These remarks will not profoundly be dealt with here since each issue is a distinct debate topic on its own and is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the major points touched upon here are considered to be important to fully grasp and evaluate Democratic Autonomy and crucial to elaborate upon in a future study. Secondly, the chapter will give the conclusion of the thesis by giving the outcome of the analysis on the institutional design of Democratic Autonomy.

7.1 Discussion

Democratic Autonomy is the expression of a “living together demand” set forth by the Kurdish movement. It is the substantive expression of a political agenda that constructs the future of Kurds in Turkey. In this sense, it is a valuable project and deserves considerable thought. However, this does not mean that there should be no room for criticism. In fact, it is just the opposite. By means of evaluating humble and constructive criticisms, the Kurdish movement can develop the project and carry it to the negotiation table as a strong issue. In the previous chapter, the institutional limitations and inadequacies of the project were given due to the outcomes of the analyses. Now, a few thought provoking points will be made on its theoretical basis.

Democratic Autonomy may raise several questions in the minds of the people involved in the subject. For example, the question of whether Democratic Autonomy is a project of “equal citizenship” or a project that grants “privileges” to a certain group is one of them. The Kurdish movement, on one hand, manifests the project as one seeking

equality for all peoples. On the other hand, it strongly emphasizes that this project is needed to hand over the rights of Kurds derived from being a nation. This dualness naturally leads to the question of whether Democratic Autonomy is based upon “politics of universalism” seeking equality among all citizens, or “politics of difference” that promotes the expression of uniqueness of identity groups (Özkırımlı 2014).

Another question which is even harder to answer is, how Democratic Autonomy could claim to be “beyond any ethnicity” when it instrumentalizes Kurdishness as the strongest motive for its realization. The Kurdish movement pursues identity politics to advocate, develop and implement the project. It introduces it as a project that would free Kurds, recognize their identities and grant status to them. In brief, Democratic Autonomy is constructed upon the elements of Kurdishness. How would then this strong Kurdish identity be abandoned if Democratic Autonomy is to be implemented in the region? As Casier and Jongerden ask: “Can identity truly be used thus, appropriated as a strong mobilizing force that functions politically as a weapon, while at the same time pursuing its abolishment? How is this to be done, being done?” (2012, 6).

Last but not least, is Democratic Autonomy, a project seeking a strong interpretation of democracy, truly democratic itself? To what extent has Abdullah Öcalan, the founder of the project, consulted the Kurdish society before proposing such a project for them? To what extent has the society been integrated in the process in which the PKK and the political wings have accepted the project as their political agendas? As already known, the PKK itself is a highly hierarchical organization mainly bound to its “leadership”. The leadership frequently speaks on behalf of the whole Kurdish society, creates strong typologies of Kurdishness and claims demands on their behalf. Accordingly, whether Democratic Autonomy is a product of a top-down decision of the leadership or that of a democratic process, emerges as a question worth being considered. Yet, it is important to note that political movements essentially need a strong leader to take the initiative. In other words, collective aspirations and demands can hardly be substantiated without leadership. The support of Kurdish people, in the long-run, is to determine the success of the political project.

7.2 Conclusion

Ethnic, religious, lingual and other differences within a country are perceived by many states as a problem that needs to be handled. These states have mostly resorted to policies of uniformity and centralization with the conviction that they could eliminate the differences, and thus guarantee the state unity. Nevertheless, what has been overlooked is that attempts of uniformity and centralization do not necessarily bring about unity and, on the contrary, may even challenge it majorly (Oran 2003; Hannum 1996). This makes up the case where identity groups have opposed to integrate into these policies and asked for their collective rights and rights to self-determination.

The Kurdish conflict in Turkey serves as a good example in this context. As the Turkish State was determined to pursue policies of unification and centralization, the Kurdish movement was equally firm to challenge them. Today, the movement has reached a point of challenging the state's centralist tradition with its current self-determination demand. The Turkish State, since its establishment, has been a strongly centralized state in which the center not only collects most of the power in its hands, but also imposes its authority on the local governments. This strong centralized governance, with strict control over the country, has been considered to be mandatory during the creation of the Republic in order to establish order and unity (TESEV 2012). Today, it has become obvious that this heavy tutelage of the center stands as a barrier to Turkey's democratization, and hence to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict.

As a matter of fact, the resolution of one of the biggest problems the country is faced with, the Kurdish conflict, sits on a territorial solution, referred to as Democratic Autonomy by the mainstream Kurdish organizations in Turkey. This radical project appears to be valuable by itself as there is an explicit and strong demand towards its realization. It is also significant in that it involves a great potential to cure the long-existing conflict. However, it is important to note that this solution necessitates restructuring the ongoing centralist tradition of the state. It suggests a totally new governance system for Turkey, which would require a drastic shift from its centralization.

As the Kurdish movement firmly demands the actualization of the model, it is necessary to examine what it indeed proposes for Turkey. This study, hence acknowledges Democratic Autonomy as a valuable proposal for the resolution of the Kurdish conflict and intends to manifest its content and evaluate to what extent it could contribute to the resolution of the conflict at issue. This way the study not only provides a factual ground for discussing the model technically but also bridges the gap existing in the literature. Although the Kurdish conflict and its resolution are issues extensively dealt with in the literature, a relatively small number of studies directly address the issue of Democratic Autonomy. Even the studies doing so try to make sense of the model rather briefly, not examining its internal design in a technical manner. This study, aiming to fill the gap in the literature, and more importantly to shed light on a topic which is crucial both for the present and the future of Turkey, manifests the design and technical content of Democratic Autonomy, reveals its merits and limitations, and thus evaluates its possible contributions to the resolution.

The thesis argues that the design of Democratic Autonomy hosts serious inadequacies and ambiguities. First, it is not clear whether Democratic Autonomy is a design for Turkey as a whole or for its eastern regions only. Although Kurdish actors emphasize that the model aims to construct regional governments across Turkey, they strongly underline their desire that Kurdistan region is to be given priority. This, from the start, creates confusion about the scope of the model and terminology to use. The model seems to be suggesting both a federal and autonomous structure at the same time, thus creating a complexity about of its content and categorization.

Second, the issue of the scale of regional governments remains obscure. The formation of regional units is one of the principal matters regarding a self-governance arrangement. Nevertheless, Democratic Autonomy is unable to manifest a clear design about how the regional government units would be arranged both throughout Turkey and in the Kurdistan region. Why, how and on what basis would Turkey be divided into more than twenty regional units? And how would it be possible to realize this project since there are no explicit demands for full fledge autonomous arrangements from the rest of the country? The data in hand are not able to provide strong statements to answer these questions. The arrangement of the Kurdistan region appears similarly vague. The data underline that the territorial demarcations of the region would be based on its

historical boundaries, also claiming that there would be distinct regions within Kurdistan. What are the concrete historical demarcations and how the region within itself could be divided, yet are not effectively substantiated. Third, the organizational structure of the DTK yet is another issue that is indefinite. If Kurdistan were divided into distinct regions, why would there be a single upper-parliament claiming power on all the regions?

As for the power sharing arrangements, there are serious inadequacies as well. In fact, the local power sharing tools, which are the people's councils, are substantial mechanisms aiming to incorporate the grassroots into the decision making and implementation processes. From street and village communes to the regional assembly they propose a wide chain of people's councils. This system aims to free people from the heavy tutelage of the central decision making structures and have them be part of autonomous councils that take autonomous decisions. Moreover, the councils involve delegates from different levels of governance and civil society organizations. This is important to create an effective communication and interaction among different levels of structures. The people's councils system proposed by Democratic Autonomy thus seems to be a promising new way of governance for Turkey and it is valuable for granting major power to people. Nonetheless, the council system does not put forward any suggestions about how to incorporate all the diverse groups within the system. As the region is highly heterogeneous, there should be guarantee mechanisms to make sure that all groups find representation in the decision making and implementation processes. The data, about this matter, suggest that it be a principle of Democratic Autonomy to guarantee the inclusion of all diverse groups within the system. Nevertheless, this principal needs to be accompanied by concrete mechanisms to create an effective internal design.

Another drawback is that the participation of the Kurdistan region in the national decision making and implementation processes are also vital as the region is significant for the country. Yet, there is definitely no clear design about how the local would be incorporated in to the national level. In fact, regarding this issue, the data put forth contradictory statements. This not only indicates the ambiguity about the design of central power sharing mechanisms but also the lack of informational coordination among Kurdish actors and organizations. Indeed, in many issues regarding the design of

Democratic Autonomy, the data manifest incoherent points. This creates a major difficulty to introduce a well-arranged internal design.

All in all, the thesis argues that Democratic Autonomy has serious inadequacies to make a genuine contribution to the resolution of the Kurdish conflict. Nevertheless, provided that essential adjustments and technical improvements are made, it can surely be applicable in the future. Accordingly, future work on the topic can focus on discussing and developing a strong institutional design for a self-governance model for Turkey framed around the resolution of the Kurdish conflict. Making use of the decentralization and self-governance models of the European Union countries may serve useful to develop an alternative local governance structure, other than the model of Democratic Autonomy. Examining the institutional designs of effective self-governance models, especially those which are embodied in an ethnic conflict context, may also help to develop a decentralization model for the country. These works, however, need to go beyond studies merely framed around decentralization and democratization of Turkey and seek a design which should be able directly target the Kurdish conflict.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

İsmim Melisa Mendoza Vasquez. İstanbul Sabancı Üniversitesi'nde Uyuşmazlık Analizi ve Çözümü yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim. Tez çalışmamı Demokratik Özerklik üzerinde yapacağım. Uzun zamandır Demokraik Özerklik ile ilgili yazılanları, Abdullah Öcalan'ın kaleme aldıklarını ve sizlerin görüşlerini okuyorum, takip ediyorum. Özerklik'in temelindeki fikre ve felsefeye aşınayım. Tezimde ise Demokratik Özerklik'in somut ve kurumsal tasarımı üzerinde duracağım. Yönelteceğim sorular da bu doğrultuda olacak. Görüşmeye vakit ayırdığınız için teşekkür ederim. Ses kaydı yapabilir miyim?⁵²

Defining Democratic Autonomy

Türkiye çapında 20-25 bölgeden bahsediliyor. "Kimlik-üstü" bir proje olma iddiasında olduğunu biliyorum, fakat yine de somut bir sınırlar ve belirlemeler olması kaçınılmaz bir gereklilik. Bahsettiğiniz bölgelerin sınırları neye göre tespit edilecek?⁵³

Kürt hareketinin özellikle vurguladığı Demokratik Özerk Özgür Kürdistan'ın alanı ve sınırları neye göre tespit edilecek? Her şehir referandum ile kendi mi karar verecek

⁵² My name is Melisa Mendoza Vasquez. I am a post-graduate student in İstanbul at Sabancı University in Conflict Analysis and Resolution Program. I am going to study Democratic Autonomy in my master's thesis. I have been following the writings about Democratic Autonomy, Abdullah Öcalan's writing and your comments for a long time. I am familiar with the idea and philosophy underlying Democratic Autonomy. In my thesis, I will focus on the concrete institutional design of Democratic Autonomy. The questions I will raise will be in accordance with this. Thank you for devoting your time to the interview. Can I record?

⁵³ 20 to 25 regions across Turkey are being mentioned. I am aware that this claims to be a "beyond identity" project, however, concrete borders and demarcations are an inevitable fact. How are the borders of these regions to be arranged?

Kürdistan bölgesine katılmaya? Veya başka ne tür bir uygulama olacak bu bölgenin belirlenmesinde?⁵⁴

Kürtlerin uzun yıllardır talep ettikleri “statü” Demokratik Özerklik midir? Başka bir statü çözüm için yeterli olamaz mı?⁵⁵

Avrupa Yerel Yönetimler Özerklik Şartnamesi yerel büyük oradan güç devrediyor. Şartname üzerinde çekinceler kaldırılrsa ve tam anlamıyla uygulamaya konulsa bu çözüm için yeterli olmaz mı?⁵⁶

Merkez hükümet ile özerk bölge arasındaki yetki dağılımı önemli konular arasında. Kürdistan özerk bölgesi yasama, yürütme ve yargı erklerinin üçünde de yetki sahibi olmak istiyor mu? Hangi konularda ve alanlarda yetki sahibi olmak istiyor? Hangi konular yalnızca merkez hükümetin sorumluluğunda olacak?⁵⁷

Kürdistan bölgesinin resmi dilleri hangileri olacak? Bölgede kullanılan diğer dillerin status ne olacak?⁵⁸

Kürdistan’ın sınır ötesi ilişkileri nasıl olacak? Özellikle diğer komşu bölgedeki Kürt nüfuslu bölgelerle iş birliği ve koordinasyon olacak mı, nasıl olacak?⁵⁹

⁵⁴ How are the territory and boundaries of Democratic Autonomous Free Kurdistan, particularly emphasized by the Kurdish movement, to be arranged? Is each city going to decide whether or not to join the Kurdistan region by referendum? What other arrangements would play a role in determining the region?

⁵⁵ Is the “satus” which Kurds have long demanded Democratic Autonomy? Would another status not be adequate for a solution?

⁵⁶ European Charter of Local Self-governance gives great power to the local. If the reservations about the Charter were lifted and if it were totally put into practice, would this not be sufficient for the solution?

⁵⁷ The distribution of powers between central and autonomous region is among significant issues. Does Kurdistan Autonomous Region want to hold power over the legislation, execution and judiciary? On which matter and areas does it want to have authority? Which issues will be under the responsibility of only central government?

⁵⁸ Which languages will be the official languages of the Kurdistan region? What will the status of the other languages used in the region be?

⁵⁹ How will the cross border relationships of Kurdistan be? Will there be cooperation and coordination between Kurdish populated regions in the neighboring area?

Demokratik Özerklik Anayasal güvence altına alınmazsa bu Kürt siyasi hareketini tatmin eder mi?⁶⁰

Power Sharing Mechanisms

Kürdistan çok heterojen bir bölge. Bölgede yaşayan azınlıkların hem yasama hem de yürütme organlarına katılımı nasıl sağlanacak? Farklı grupların karar alma ve yürütme süreçlerine katılımını garanti altına alacak mekanizmalar mevcut mu?⁶¹

Kürdistan bölge meclisinde karar alma süreçlerinde azınlıkların veto hakkı olabilecek mi? Nasıl bir oylama sistemi tasarlanıyor?⁶²

Kürdistan yönetimi Ankara merkez meclisinde ve yürütmesinde yer alacak mı, ne oranda yer alacak ve nasıl bir sistemle yer alacak?⁶³

⁶⁰If Democratic Autonomy is not entrenched by the Constitution, would this satisfy the Kurdish political movement?

⁶¹Kürdistan is a heterogenous region. How will the participation of the minorities living in the region in legislation and execution be fulfilled? Are there any mechanisms that would guarantee the participation of different groups in the decision making and execution processes?

⁶²Will the minorities have the right to veto in the process of decision making? What kind of voting system is being designed?

⁶³ Will the Kurdistan administration take place in the central parliament of Ankara, and if so to what extend and through what kind of system?