

Future Uncertain: Using Scenarios to Understand Turkey's Geopolitical Environment and its Impact on the Kurdish Question

Abstract:

In October 2005, the authors organized a workshop in Sofia Bulgaria for prominent members of the Turkish academy and NGO community. At the workshop, several scenarios detailing how the Kurdish question in Turkey might evolve over the next 10-15 years were discussed. The article draws on those discussions to present and analyze a series of scenarios on the Kurdish question in Turkey. A scenario analysis is used because the basic premise of this article is that the outcome of the four-way interaction between Turkey, the Kurds in Turkey, the EU, and Northern Iraq remains fundamentally uncertain, and therefore that describing a single future that *will* emerge is not possible. Instead, given this uncertainty, the key question to ask is what potential scenarios are awaiting Turkey and how and why these scenarios might emerge in response to moves by the state, and developments within the EU, Northern Iraq, and the Kurdish community. Exploring such options can provide a more thorough and nuanced understanding of Turkey's place in the region and opportunities for the transformation of the Kurdish conflict.

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Introduction

“In a democratic Turkey in the process of becoming a European Union member, Kurds see a way out. At the same time, the formation of a federal Kurdish region there [in Iraq] is making them proud.”

- Ahmet Türk, co-president of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) (Milliyet 2005).

The above quotation from the co-president of the newly founded pro-Kurdish party, which replaced DEHAP,¹ and is known to be close to PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* - Kurdistan Workers' Party), not only represents how many Kurds see the current political situation, but perhaps also illustrates why many fear the future of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. The quotation indicates that the future of one of Turkey's most intractable conflicts is still uncertain and evolving. At the same time, it emphasizes that in the years to come, these two external developments - Turkey's European Union (EU) membership process and developments in Northern Iraq - will be among the primary drivers that shape the relationship between Turks and Kurds in Turkey.

In an attempt to better understand this complex set of relationships, the authors organized a workshop in October 2005, in Sofia Bulgaria, for prominent members of the Turkish academy and NGO community. At the workshop, several scenarios detailing how the Kurdish question in Turkey might evolve over the next 10-15 years were discussed.² This article draws on those discussions to present and analyze a series of scenarios on the Kurdish question in Turkey. These scenarios emerge out of the interaction of the two key driving factors that the participants argued would determine the future of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Interestingly, these are the same as those identified by Türk: 1) Turkey's accession process with the EU, and, 2) developments within Kurdish-controlled Northern Iraq.

Thus, it is clear that the Kurdish question in Turkey sits at the nexus of the key international issues facing Turkey. It will therefore both affect and be affected by Turkey's geopolitical environment and will contribute to shaping both its foreign and domestic policies.

As such, it is a useful window through which to evaluate Turkey's place in the world in the near to medium term. The emergence of this new geopolitical dynamic – one that promises potential stability through EU membership and deep uncertainty on Turkey's southeastern border not only offers challenges and opportunities for the transformation of the Kurdish conflict, but will also have an important impact on the Middle East, and on the EU - through Turkey's membership, in a good scenario, and as its troubled southeastern neighbor, in a bad scenario.

Scenario Analysis

Before moving on to the substantive issues, it is important to understand why a scenario analysis methodology is being employed. Pierre Wack, who pioneered the use of scenarios as a strategic planning tool at Royal Dutch Shell, describes its purpose in this way: “Scenario planning is a discipline for rediscovering the original entrepreneurial power of creative foresight in contexts of accelerated change, greater complexity, and genuine uncertainty” (Global Business Network 2004).³ In a scenario planning exercise, senior managers of a corporation are asked to develop 3-5 scenarios, each of which represents a possible future. The scenarios are designed to provide a, “learning environment in which managers can explore these forces, better understand the dynamics shaping the future and thus, assess strategic options and prepare to take strategic decisions” (IDEA 2004).

In academia, the methodology of assessing multiple, possible futures or scenarios has gone by different names. In an important recent article, Gideon Sjoberg, Elizabeth Gill, and Leonard Cain (Sjoberg et al., hereafter), use the term “countersystem analysis” to describe social research that relies on the analysis of multiple, potential futures (2003). Each of these futures represents an alternative, social arrangement that may emerge. The basic premise of countersystem analysis, and the reason for such an analysis, according to the authors, is that

there is a greater contingency between present and future than positivist social science assumes.⁴

Such contingency, from the perspective of countersystem analysis, renders a linear methodology, in which data on the past are used to predict the future, suspect. Instead, countersystem analysis employs a circular movement from the present to the future and back. It uses the “empirical present,” what is, as the basis for the description of several possible futures. These futures are then analyzed to critically assess presently existing institutions, social practices, and so on.

Proponents of countersystem analysis use the contingency argument to defend the methodology on empirical grounds. Specifically, they claim that countersystem analysis provides a method, which remains empirical, but allows the analyst to cope with the contingent relationship between the present and the future. Sjoberg et al., for instance, argue that countersystem analysis is necessary to understand the emergence of new, large-scale institutions, such as the EU or the World Trade Organization, neither of which is, “the mere extension of what was” (Sjoberg, Gill, and Cain 2003).

We employ a scenario analysis in this article because our fundamental premise is that the outcome of the four-way interaction between Turkey, the Kurds in Turkey, the EU, and Northern Iraq remains fundamentally uncertain, and therefore that describing a single future that *will* emerge is not possible. Instead, we argue that given this uncertainty, the key question to ask is what potential scenarios are awaiting Turkey and how and why these scenarios might emerge in response to moves by the state, and developments within the EU, Northern Iraq and the Kurdish community in Turkey. Exploring such options, we believe, can provide a more thorough and nuanced understanding of Turkey’s place in the region, as well as prepare policymakers to, “assess strategic options and prepare to take strategic decisions” (IDEA 2004).

The Scenario Matrix

As noted above, this article seeks to explore Turkey's geopolitical environment by concentrating on the impact of interaction between Turkey, the Kurds in Turkey, the EU and Northern Iraq. What is interesting is that the influence of the EU accession process and the influence of Northern Iraq are relatively independent of each other. In other words, these two developments are simultaneously, but independently affecting the future of Turkey. Therefore, we can envision four scenarios as summarized in the table below:

EU ACCESSION PROCESS			
		<i>EU Accession Goes Smoothly</i>	<i>EU Accession Goes Poorly</i>
INFLUENCE OF NORTHERN IRAQ	<i>Weak</i>	Scenario 1: “Stable Pluralism”	Scenario 3: “The Internal Struggle”
	<i>Strong</i>	Scenario 2: “Peaceful Polarization”	Scenario 4: “Competing Nationalisms”

When using a scenario methodology, a key question to ask is “what are the key certainties?” In other words, “what do we know that we know?” This allows one to identify scenarios that are not feasible, and therefore do not need to be analyzed. One certainty identified by the participants at the workshop was that there will not be another period of silence on the part of the Kurds as there was from the 1940s through the 1960s. The Kurds will not acquiesce to the policies of the Turkish state that they deem to be repressive any longer. Therefore, scenarios that rely on assimilation or acquiescence of the Kurds, were deemed by the participants to be sufficiently unlikely as to not require further analysis. Therefore, in each of the scenarios the Kurds are an important actor⁵. How they react to these two developments and to the actions of the Turkish state are crucial to how each scenario will unfold. It is for this reason that we describe these scenarios emerging out of a *four-way* interaction (i.e., Turkey, Kurds, EU, Northern Iraq).

The Impact of the EU Accession Process

There was strong consensus among the workshop participants that the EU accession process was the single most important factor in determining how the Kurdish question in Turkey would evolve over the next 10-15 years. As a result, the workshop participants spent most of one day developing two scenarios describing what Turkey would look like in 2020, particularly in regard to the Kurdish question, if the EU process goes well and if the EU process does not go well. The insights from this discussion will be integrated into the analysis of the scenarios below. However, before turning to these future scenarios, it is important to provide a brief historical overview of the EU-Turkey relationship.

In several ways, 1999 marks a turning point in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy. Not only was the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, captured, but the EU accepted the candidacy of Turkey.⁶ Both the capture of Öcalan and the new policies the Turkish state began to implement in response to the EU demands appear to have lowered the intensity of the Kurdish conflict and created new opportunities and efforts to deal with various aspects of the issue. Perhaps most significantly, the EU's approach of resolving conflict through "Europeanization" (Çelik and Rumelili 2006) seems to have finally placed the Kurdish question on the agenda and ended the widespread denial within Turkey of the existence of the conflict.

More tangibly, after the declaration of its candidacy, Turkey had to undertake certain political and economic reforms to begin accession negotiations with the EU.⁷ In the Turkish context, the impact of the EU on the Kurdish question solidified after Turkey's status was elevated from applicant to candidate. Following the Helsinki Summit of December 1999, which granted Turkey candidate status as of November 2000, the EU issued an Accession Partnership Document (ADP) with a list of issues that Turkey was required to address. Turkey adopted its National Programme for Adoption of the *Acquis* in March 2001, which resulted in

the enactment of several new laws and amendments to some others in order to, *inter alia*, “improve Turkey’s human rights and bring the country’s inflation-prone economy up to European standards” (Martin, Midgley, and Teitelbaum 2002).

As part of harmonizing its laws with European norms, Turkey signed several documents against all forms of discrimination, respect for human rights and rule of law⁸ and passed nine separate reform packages.⁹ During this process, Turkey also gradually removed the almost 20-year old emergency rule in thirteen Kurdish-populated provinces in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia.

The most general conclusion that can be drawn from Turkey’s involvement into European integration process within this context is that the Turkish state had begun treating the Kurdish question as a “democratization” issue, and even at times as a minority representation issue, although the latter term has not been used in official discourse. That is to say, in contrast with the treatment of the conflict during earlier periods as merely a development problem or a terrorism problem, since 1999, the Turkish political public started to talk about linguistic rights, removal of the state of emergency, return to and reconstruction of the post-conflict zones, and release of the Kurdish MPs.¹⁰ There is widespread agreement within the Turkish NGO and academic community that the EU has been the most important actor in creating this shift in the way the Turkish state is addressing the conflict.

It is with this as a backdrop that Turkey officially began accession negotiations with the EU on October 3, 2005. This process, which plays a large role in informing the scenarios discussed below, will be a long one with a possibility of delays if Turkey falls short of taking the required steps or if political dynamics within the EU change.¹¹ For the purposes of the analysis below, fewer delays means a “smooth” accession process, more significant delays means the accession process is going “poorly”.

The Impact of Developments in Northern Iraq

There was also consensus at the workshop that the events in Northern Iraq are having an increasingly important impact on the Kurdish question within Turkey. Again, it is important to provide a brief historical overview.

Turkey has always perceived armed Kurdish groups such as Massoud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Northern Iraq as a threat to its territorial integrity because of the potential spillover effect of the formation of a Kurdish political entity in Iraq. Although recognition of the Kurdish region in Northern Iraq as an autonomous region goes back to 1974, when the Iraqi government established autonomy in the region to pacify a KDP uprising, the region enjoyed virtually none of the privileges of autonomy under Saddam Hussein's regime (Al Marashi 2005a). The fears of Turkey grew stronger as the result of the Kurds' gaining de-facto autonomy under the U.S. military's protection after the 1991 Gulf War. But until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, which led to the formation of an autonomous Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq, the fear, often described as Sevres Paranoia, was not a very dominant force in the Turkish political discourse.¹²

The American invasion, however, provided legal recognition to both the KDP and PUK and provided the PKK with more territory within which to operate.¹³ Even more troubling, from the perspective of the Turkish state, was the approval of the new constitution in the October 15, 2005 elections, which established Northern Iraq as a federal "Autonomous Kurdish Region" with substantive powers of self-rule and a weak central government, (Articles 114 (1) (Al Marashi 2005b). This represented a significant foreign policy failure for Turkey whose goal was to prevent any type of federated Kurdish region (Yavuz and Özcan 2006). Although the Iraqi constitution has been approved, it remains unclear whether the

Kurds in Northern Iraq will be satisfied with autonomy or will seek an independent state, which has been the long-stated goal of some Kurdish politicians in the region.

The Turkish fear, of course, is that federalism in Iraq *will* result in an independent Iraqi Kurdish state which would then destabilize the Kurdish population within its own borders. In fact, the recent declarations by Barzani and Talabani about their intentions of forming a single administration solidify these fears.¹⁴ In an interview with *al-Jazeera* television, as a reply to a question about the establishment of a Kurdish state, Barzani states that this is a legitimate right but should take place through understanding and dialogue.¹⁵

After the December 15 elections, Turkey began to change its stance towards the Kurdish political organizations in Northern Iraq. In particular, with Talabani becoming the Iraqi President, Turkish state officers began to recognize their legitimate political status. The words of the General Hilmı Özkök, the former head of the Turkish military,¹⁶ are telling in this regard: “Barzani used to be a tribal leader. Now, that’s changed” (Yetkin 2006). As the two political figures have gained legitimacy in the eye of the international community – Talabani becoming the President of the new Iraqi Republic and Barzani becoming the Prime Minister of the Iraqi Kurdistan region – Turkish policy has been changing to accept this new reality.

The change of discourse in even the military’s stance towards the issue and the willingness to reconsider policies towards Iraq underline the fact that the Turkish state’s possible moves in the region, especially those that concern the Kurds in Northern Iraq, will affect the outcome of the Kurdish question in Turkey as well.

Finally, in analyzing the possible effects of developments in Northern Iraq, it is important to note that in addition to ethnic ties, Kurds in Turkey may be drawn to Northern Iraq as the result of better economic opportunities. With Northern Iraq becoming an autonomous region with the possibility of controlling oil-rich Kirkuk, it may become an

attractive place for Kurds from the economically underdeveloped regions in Turkey.¹⁷

Already Kurds from southeast Turkey can get into universities in Northern Iraq free of charge and without taking entrance exams. Kurdish businessmen of Turkey have been given incentives to establish businesses in Northern Iraq. Finally, through the firms operating in Mersin Free Trade Zone, a financial bridge is being established between the Kurds from both sides of the border (Bila 2005). The recent initiation of direct flights from Turkey to Northern Iraq may further facilitate the establishment of these relationships.

Thus, for the purposes of the scenario analysis below, Northern Iraq having a strong influence will be defined as the emergence of a common identity, a sense of “we”, between the Kurds in Northern Iraq and the Kurds in Turkey. While this sense of “we” will rely in part on strong political and economic ties, it will also entail the explicit development of Kurdish nationalism within Northern Iraq that is inclusive of Kurds in Turkey and that has as its goal the establishment of some form of greater Kurdistan.

Conversely, a sense of “we” among Iraqi Kurds and Turkish Kurds may be weakened by the sharply different social and political contexts that they will be contending with over the next 10-15 years. The relationship between Azerbaijanis in Iran and Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan provide an interesting illustration of how political borders can create sharply distinct communities despite a common ethnic identity. Brenda Shaffer writes,

Many from the Republic of Azerbaijan commented that the Azerbaijanis in Iran were too religious and conservative, while many Iranian Azerbaijanis viewed those in republic as very “Russified” and as having lost Azerbaijani or Muslim culture (2000).

Similarly, the Basque in Spain and the Basque in France maintain quite separate existences. These differences can emerge and be sustained by citizenship policies in the hosting states, by differences in economic status that create resistance to secession, and by traditional differences in the ethno-cultural identity of the two groups.

The Scenarios

In this section, four scenarios are presented based on the matrix above. The presentation draws on the insights from the workshop, as well as our own analysis regarding the impact of the EU accession process and events in Northern Iraq.

Scenario 1: Stable Pluralism

The EU process goes well and Northern Iraq has a weak influence on the Kurds in Turkey.

It was interesting that the workshop participants came to the conclusion that if the EU process goes well, the key change in Turkish politics will be a largely intangible shift in what they described as the “self-confidence” of both the Turkish state and the Kurdish community. This is both a cause and an effect of the belief that an EU process which goes well will create a stable and safe political environment within Turkey. In other words, there will be faith in the political system. The increased self-confidence and faith in political institutions will create an environment in which moderation and mutual accommodation are possible.

The case of Quebec was often discussed at the workshop as an illustration of this virtuous circle of moderation and mutual accommodation. Despite the fully-fledged nationalist ambitions of some Quebecois, the conflict in Quebec has been successfully managed, at least in part due to the legitimacy of Canadian political institutions and the sense that the secessionist Quebecois do not represent an existential threat to the Anglo-Canadian identity.

It should be emphasized that the management of these issues in Turkey will not exactly follow the Quebec model. The participants in the workshop, for instance, could not come to a consensus on the issue of linguistic rights. Although for some participants, such a scenario would bring opportunities for multiculturalism that would allow for bilingualism and education in one’s mother tongue, for others, a Quebec-style bilingualism was neither desirable nor practical in Turkey.

In regard to specifics, the workshop participants agreed that among the first policy moves would be a review of election procedures, with the possibility that the parliamentary threshold be removed, thereby giving the Kurdish-populated regions more representation in the parliament. In addition, there would be certain constitutional changes in order to allow some form of self-rule in the southeast. For example, participants argued that political changes would grant more powers to cities in the southeast. Such changes would obviously mean more Kurdish political power especially in the cities where DEHAP, now DTP, normally gains more than 50 percent of the vote.

While at times, the EU has criticized the slow and uneven implementation of the reforms that Turkey is undertaking,¹⁸ participants argued that as Turkey comes closer to joining the EU, the EU will become more deeply involved in ensuring implementation of reforms because the Kurdish region in Turkey will represent the southeast border of the EU. As a result, the EU will have a strong incentive to create stability in the region.

Finally, the virtuous circle of moderation would weaken the power of the PKK, although it could remain as a less powerful, largely marginalized insurgent group, or as a recreated Kurdish-oriented political party seeking to create change through more legitimate means.

As in other conflicts, there would be spoiler elements in the PKK which would resist a shift toward more moderate policies, both by Kurdish groups and by the Turkish government, the latter of which because they remove the groups' *raison d'être*. However, these groups would not be strong enough to derail the shift toward moderation. In this scenario, the Kurds in Turkey are relatively isolated from the Kurds in Northern Iraq. As a result, there would be a smaller flow of resources from outside Turkey to sustain an insurgent group. This isolation would also weaken the ideological resources of the more extreme Kurdish groups by undercutting their ability to tap into dreams of a pan-Kurdish movement. In sum, Kurds in this

scenario turn west instead of east and become an integrated minority in the new European-Turkish political environment.

Scenario 2: Peaceful Polarization

The EU process goes well and Northern Iraq has a strong influence on the Kurds in Turkey.

As in Scenario 1, the success of the EU process has created a sense of mutual self-confidence among Turks and Kurds, as well as faith in the stability of the political system. And as in Scenario 1, a virtuous circle of moderation emerges as a result.

However, in this scenario, Kurds use this opening of political space to turn east instead of west and establish closer relations with the Kurds in Northern Iraq. As summarized in the statement of Türk quoted above, Northern Iraq is a sense of pride for many Kurds in Turkey. As an illustration, workshop participants from Southeast Anatolia informed us that Kurds in the region were very excited about developments in Northern Iraq and literally cried when they saw Barzani in Kurdish costume on television with President Bush in October 2005.

However, the Kurds, although they will look east, will not demand secession. The faith in the political stability of the Turkish state and the recognition of the Kurdish identity within the larger-EU structure will undermine movements for a separate state.

The key to this scenario is that because of the self-confidence of the Turkish state created by the EU process, this turn to the east by the Kurds will happen without sparking a repressive reaction by the Turkish state. As the Turkish state looks west toward Europe, it will become less concerned that the Kurds in the southeast continue to look east. As with the Quebecois, the actions of the Kurds will no longer be seen as posing an existential threat to the Turkish state.

Interestingly, one of the workshop participants, representing an NGO from Southeast Anatolia, argued that in many cities in western Turkey, this process of polarization has

already started, although it has not been entirely peaceful. Because of rising security fears, some Kurds are leaving smaller towns or the mixed areas of cities and moving to the Kurdish quarters of cities or returning to the southeast. The increase in Turkish ultranationalist uprisings following the flag burning event in March 2005 has contributed to this trend. Thus, in this scenario, polarization will occur both at a macro-scale as Kurds return to the southeast, but also on a smaller scale within cities and towns as Kurds and Turks increasingly turn inward toward their own communities.

The Russians in Estonia provide an interesting comparison case to understand this type of process. As Estonia solidifies relations with Europe, the Russians in Estonia, who are concentrated in the east as with the Kurds in Turkey, continue to be largely isolated from the rest of the Estonian population, and continue to identify with Russia in the east. In this situation, there is little or no violence or threat of violence between the populations. They simply lead different lives. As in Estonia, the dynamics created by existing polarization, the influence of neighboring regions and the larger EU context, could, in this scenario, combine to reduce the interdependence between Turks and Kurds in Turkey. Although intuitively we normally associate increasing polarization with increased marginalization and therefore an increase in the possibility of violence toward the state, it is this decreased interdependence which creates the possibility of a stable, peaceful, yet highly-polarized Turkey.

Scenario 3: The Internal Struggle

The EU process goes badly and Northern Iraq has a weak influence on the Kurds in Turkey.

The interaction between the EU process and Turkish nationalism is complex. The process is already creating somewhat of a nationalist backlash, which may intensify as the process goes forward. However, there was consensus at the workshop that the failure of the EU process would lead to a reemergence of a more aggressive Turkish nationalism. In particular, anger toward the EU would combine with underlying currents of anti-western and

anti-imperialist sentiments within Turkey, including the Sevres Paranoia, and would likely fuel the emergence of a triumphalist nationalism. This nationalism would exploit the failure of a process involving trans-state institutions and universalist values, in order to reestablish the state as the centerpoint of Turkish nationalism.

The failure of the EU process will also remove the hopes of the Kurds for a stable Kurdish identity within the larger EU. As is the case in many conflicts, the danger of violence will be heightened when there is a disappointment after a period of rising expectations. Thus, the PKK, in response to this disappointment as well as the perceived threat from the rise of Turkish nationalist, will become more willing to call for violence and civil war.

The workshop participants described this negative action-reaction sequence in stark terms. It was argued that without the EU there would be no national project that both Turks and Kurds could support. This will lead to an increasing lack of confidence in the ability of the two communities to coexist within Turkey. Finally, it was argued that the situation will follow a familiar pattern in which the Turkish state is *centripetal* - a tendency which will increase if Turkish nationalism is ascendant - and in which the Kurds in response are *centrifugal*.

The key to this scenario, and what distinguishes it from Scenario 4, is the shape that this Kurdish centrifugal resistance takes. In this scenario, the Kurds within Turkey have not formed a strong national identity with the Kurds outside Turkey. Such a result could emerge, for instance, if in response to escalatory moves by the PKK, Iraqi Kurds choose to cooperate with Turkey against the PKK, thereby creating a wedge between the two Kurdish nationalisms. This is more likely given recent US pressure on the Iraqi Kurds to cooperate with Turkey (Turkish Daily News 2006).

Regardless of exact causes, if Kurds in Turkey do not form a strong national identity with Kurds outside of Turkey, their grievances would become less focused on secession or irredentism and more focused on issues within Turkey such as language rights, political representation, economic status, social justice and so on. In contrast to Scenario 1, in this scenario, the Turkish state is less willing to accommodate these demands, thereby escalating the conflict.

The revolt by Mayan groups in the Chiapas region of Mexico provides a good illustration of the pattern of demands we would expect from the Kurds in this scenario. While the demands of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in Chiapas do call for certain forms of autonomy, this autonomy is normally at the level of the village or a small number of villages. The bulk of their demands center on issues such as education, health, economic policies, and electoral reform.

Moreover, as with the situation in Chiapas, we expect this scenario to result in an ongoing, low-intensity conflict. Such a result emerges out of the interaction between a diffuse resistance movement with a wide range of demands and a state that is ideologically opposed to accommodation.

Scenario 4: Competing Nationalisms

The EU process goes badly and Northern Iraq has a strong influence on Kurds in Turkey.

As in Scenario 3, the problems with the EU process create an action-reaction sequence in which the centripetal tendencies of the Turkish state clash with the centrifugal tendencies of the Kurds. And again, there is an increasing lack of confidence in the ability of Kurds and Turks to co-exist within Turkey.

In this scenario, unlike in Scenario 3, the Kurds have established close political ties with Northern Iraq leading to a strong, common Kurdish identity. As a result, the Kurdish demands become increasingly irredentist as opposed to focusing on reforms within Turkey. A

truly nationalist Kurdish movement emerges with a clear demand for a greater Kurdistan. Moreover, the relationship with a relatively prosperous Northern Iraq allows resources to flow from there to the Kurds in Turkey to support the insurgency.

In this bleakest of scenarios, an intractable conflict emerges between two nationalist groups that have framed the conflict in largely irreconcilable terms, on one side the demand for a unitary Turkey, on the other the demand for a greater Kurdistan which includes Turkish territory. At the workshop, the Palestinian case, as well as the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, were discussed as analogues for this scenario.

As in these cases, the risk of violence is high. And once violence emerges in the context of irreconcilable demands, it creates more violence in a vicious circle. First, the intractable nature of the competing demands makes negotiation appear fruitless. Second, the past violence makes negotiation seem a betrayal. As a result, arguments for a military solution gain primacy on each side of the conflict. In this particular conflict, however, neither side could implement a military solution. Kurdish militants would not be powerful enough to defeat the Turkish military. The Turkish military would not be able to defeat a determined Kurdish resistance that is receiving support and sanctuary from Northern Iraq.

As with the Palestinian case and the Yugoslav case, the conflict would likely spread throughout Turkish society. One dynamic of intractable conflicts is that they destroy any middle or neutral ground. Thus, Turks and Kurds throughout Turkey would be forced to choose sides in the conflict. This would likely create a much more violent process of polarization as the members of each ethnic group, even those who rarely thought of their ethnicity prior to the conflict, are forced to retreat within the borders of their ethnic communities. Again, this would happen on a micro-scale within towns and cities and on a macro-scale as Kurds return to the Southeast.

These dynamics create a scenario in which the resolution of the conflict requires determined external intervention (Yugoslavia) or mutual exhaustion sufficient to make formerly unpalatable options appear palatable (Palestine?). As these processes of resolution are largely determined by the dynamics of the conflict, little can be said at the current time regarding how and in what form they might emerge.

Analysis of the Scenarios

Given that the scenario approach relies on the assumption that the future is in many ways unknowable, what insights can an analysis of the four scenarios provide regarding the Kurdish question and Turkey's interaction with its neighbors?

While these scenarios cannot necessarily tell policymakers what should be done, they can tell policymakers where they should be paying attention in order to gain insight regarding how to develop strategies that would create more peaceful and prosperous scenarios for Turkey. In this section, we provide several insights that emerge out of the presentation of the scenarios above. Each of the insights is linked to one or more of the scenarios.

From Scenario 1:

Policymakers in Turkey and politicians and intellectuals within the Kurdish community should be attuned to the beginning of the virtuous circle of moderation given the conditions that give rise to Scenario 1. They should be prepared to recognize and respond in kind to conciliatory moves.

From Scenario 1:

If the conditions that given rise to Scenario 1 are present, policymakers in Turkey should not overreact to potential spoilers within the Kurdish community. Although those spoilers will be highly visible, they are not likely to be powerful, and can be easily marginalized.

From Scenario 2:

Policymakers in Turkey should be sensitive to the fact that the EU changes and complicates the nature of identity politics by providing a locus of identity “above” the state. Thus, resistance on the part of the Kurds to fully integrate within Turkey in this “peaceful polarization” scenario is not necessarily a negative development. Kurds in Turkey may evolve toward a complex, multi-layered identity, to which their Kurdish, Turkish, and European identities all contribute.

From Scenario 2 and Scenario 4:

Policymakers in Turkey should be aware of the different kinds of interaction between Kurds in Turkey and Kurds in Northern Iraq. Economic interaction, and even various forms of cultural interaction, do not equate to the emergence of a threatening pan-Kurdism. Overreacting to the more benign forms of interaction through strict border policies or heavy-handed security measures risk creating a backlash on both sides of the border. This could create the very pan-Kurdism that the policies are intended to prevent.

From Scenario 3:

Turkish policymakers should pay close attention to the nature of the demands arising from the Kurdish community, and should resist prejudging Kurdish resistance to policies as inherently nationalist. A broad menu of Chiapas-style demands are not as irreconcilable as nationalist demands for secession or full regional autonomy if the state is not ideologically opposed to accommodation.

From Scenarios 3 and 4:

Moderate Turkish policymakers should be prepared for the potential Turkish nationalist backlash if the EU process goes poorly. An aggressive Turkish nationalism plus the “certainty” of Kurdish non-acquiescence to repressive policies is the dynamic that creates the dangers in Scenarios 3 and 4.

From Scenario 4:

Turkish policymakers and moderates within the Kurdish community should be sensitive to the early dynamics that create Scenario 4. In particular, the framing of the conflict as one of competing nationalisms creates the possibility for violence, which then hardens the conflict into one of irreconcilable demands. Conflicts involving competing nationalisms, such as those in Palestine and Yugoslavia are invariably the most dangerous. And once the frames are set and violence has occurred, these conflicts are all but intractable.

Finally, if we look at the four scenarios collectively, two key insights emerge. First, the scenarios provide a framework for future research designed to evaluate what is important to the Kurds, the policy choices they might make, and the implications of those choices. Will they choose prosperity by creating economic ties with an economically dynamic Northern Iraq? Will they choose stability by supporting the EU accession process? Will they choose ethnic pride by allying with secessionist or pan-Kurdish elements within Iraq? Will they choose citizenship rights by integrating into a democratizing Turkey? Since, as was noted above, Kurdish acquiescence will not return, it is crucial to analyze, as opposed to prejudging, what is driving the decision-making of the Kurds.

Second, by looking at all four scenarios, it once again becomes clear that the EU accession process is the single most important factor determining how the Kurdish question will evolve in Turkey. This point was emphasized time and again by the participants in the workshop and can be easily seen by comparing Scenarios 1 and 2, both of which are relatively positive outcomes, versus Scenarios 3 and 4, both of which are relatively negative outcomes.

Moreover, it becomes clear that Turkey, the Kurds of Turkey, and the EU *all* have an incentive for the EU process to proceed smoothly. The following statement from Türk, illustrates the positive dynamics that such a process can create, “In a democratic Turkey, *Kurds* would not tolerate armed resistance . . . the key to the Kandil Mountains [the area

known to be harboring PKK militants in Iraq] is in our hands. It is in Turkey. We have to stop this bloodshed” (Milliyet 2005, emphasis added). So in the picture Türk paints, Turkey is democratic and stable, the Kurds are committed to ending bloodshed, and the EU has a stable southeastern neighbor.

Conversely, neither Turkey, nor the EU, can afford the Palestinianization of the Kurdish question in Turkey. This means that policymakers in Turkey, the EU as well as moderates within the Kurdish community should not only do everything in their power to keep the EU process going smoothly, but also that they should be prepared to take actions to counter the deleterious effect of delays and problems in the EU accession process if and when they arise. Scenarios are possible futures, but they are not destiny, if the EU process runs into obstacles, actions can be taken to avoid the negative outcomes in Scenarios 3 and 4.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, when developing scenarios it is important to ask what the key certainties are in a given situation. However, when we asked the workshop participants to identify certainties regarding Turkish politics over the next 10-15 years, they could come up with very few. It appears that uncertainty is a fundamental ingredient in the Turkish policy environment, both domestic and international. Given this sort of complexity, namely the interaction between three regions (Europe, Turkey, and Iraq), two seminal political developments (the EU accession process and Iraqi regime change), and two large, complex ethnonational groups (Turks and Kurds), it is impossible to provide hard-and-fast policy prescriptions. Instead, this article developed several scenarios in order to illuminate the types of dynamics to which policymakers must become attuned. These include positive dynamics, such as the virtuous circle of moderation and negative dynamics such as the development of a pan-Kurdish nationalism. Our goal was to develop scenarios that shed light on Turkey’s emerging geopolitical environment so that policymakers in Turkey, the

EU, and within the Kurdish community can better prepare for, accurately identify, and respond appropriately to both the positive and negative dynamics in this environment as they arise.

¹ DEHAP (Demokratik Halk Partisi/ Democratic People's Party) is the successor of HADEF (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi/ People's Democracy Party), which was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1998. HADEF's closure is the fourth in line, which includes HEP (Halkın Emek Partisi/People's Labor Party), DEP (Demokrasi Partisi-Democracy Party) and ÖZDEP (Özgürlik ve Demokrasi Partisi-Freedom and Democracy Party). After DEHAP closed, most of its members joined the DTP.

² The workshop was entitled *Trajectories of Ethnopolitical Conflict in Turkey*. Nine participants from Turkey, including Turks (4), Kurds (3), Arabs (1), and Armenians (1) participated in the two-and-a-half day workshop, which was organized by the Center for International Development for Conflict Management at the University of Maryland, Sabancı University, and the IRIS Institute, Bulgaria, with support from the Hewlett Foundation. Among nine participants, six were academics and three were from NGOs, one of whom was a member of a bar association in the Kurdish-majority region of Turkey. Two were members of a think tank working on policy-related-issues including the Kurdish Question. Six participants were male and three were female. The authors would like to thank participants for their invaluable contributions. Although the arguments presented are based in part on discussions at the workshop, the authors are solely responsible for the contents of the article.

³ This quotation is taken from the website of the Global Business Network, which is largely responsible for the popularization of the scenario planning approach.

⁴ Niklas Luhmann, for instance, argues that contingency is the “defining attribute of modernity.” See (Luhman 1998). See also, Patomaki (2001), who defends this premise by drawing on the works of methodological realists, such as Roy Bhaskar.

⁵ We need to emphasize that Kurds are not a homogenous group. Although a majority of Kurds in the Kurdish-populated cities of the eastern and southeastern Anatolia support the pro-Kurdish parties (e.g. Batman's mayor won the office by getting the 73.6% of the votes, and Diyarbakır's DEHAP mayor won 58.4% of the votes in the last local elections in March 2004. See <http://www.hurriyetim.com.tr/secim2004/default.aspx>), not all Kurds, and particularly not those in the west, have similar political affinities. However, it is a fact that the dominant political discourse of the Kurds are largely affected and shaped by these parties.

⁶ Officially, Turkey's efforts to join the European Community (EC) go back to July 31, 1959 when it applied for EEC associate membership immediately after Greece. On September 12, 1963, it signed an Association Agreement with the EC, the Ankara Treaty, to become an associate member. Its association was expanded in 1970, and it applied for full membership on April 14, 1987. Turkey's application for full membership in the EC was turned down in 1989 with the claim that the country was not ready to become a member. Instead the Commission suggested the initiation of a customs union, which came to reality on March 6, 1995. Finally, on December 11, 1999, the European Council of the EU, in its Helsinki Summit of December 1999, decided to include Turkey in its enlargement list by elevating its status from applicant to candidate. On December 13, 2002, the Copenhagen European Council Summit left Turkey as the only applicant country with no specific date to start the accession negotiations. After a two year delay, during the EU summit held in December 2004, the European Council has called on the Commission to present a proposal for a framework for accession negotiations.

⁷ EU conditions for the accession negotiation process (*acquis communautaire*) to start with candidate states are established in the Copenhagen Criteria, adopted in the Copenhagen European Council Meeting of June 1993. According to the Copenhagen Criteria, candidate states must fulfill several standards and criteria. These standards include: 1) political standards: stable institutions governing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights; 2) economic standards: the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure; 3) compatibility standards: the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the principles of political, economic and monetary union. See Müftüler-Baç (1998).

⁸ Among many we can list are the 1969 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, albeit with a reservation to Article 22, the European Agreement Relating to Persons Participating in Proceedings of the European Court of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and so on.

⁹ See “Turkey Set for 9th EU Reform Package” (The New Anatolian 2006).

¹⁰ On June 16, 1994, the Constitutional court banned the pro-Kurdish DEP. After a long series of court proceedings and the eventual abolishment of the State Security Courts, which tried the Kurdish MPs, in June 2004, the MPs were released. Interestingly, the release came the same day of the first Kurdish-language broadcast on a Turkish television channel. European institutions welcomed both of these developments.

¹¹ There have been such delays recently. On November 29, 2006, the Commission recommended suspending membership negotiations with Turkey on eight of 35 chapters due to the lack of progress on the Cyprus issue. Other possible “stumbling blocks” are “freedom of expression, especially court cases against writers and journalists, as well as Kurdish minority rights.” (EurActive.com 2006).

¹² Sevres Paranoia refers to fears that there are external powers who are trying to challenge the territorial integrity of the Turkish state and implement the provisions of the Sevres Treaty of 1920 signed between the Allied and the Associated Powers. Article 62 of the Treaty, in particular, calls for local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia. Even though this treaty was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, signed between Turkey and the Allied Powers on July 24, 1923, the fear that Turkey’s borders are under the threat of such reconfigurations still exists among many Turkish citizens and officials. Although Sevres Paranoia has always been present in Turkey, it waxes and wanes over time. As it has recently, it normally becomes stronger in the presence of “external threats”, such as the formation of political entities outside of Turkey that might have impact on the minorities within Turkey.

¹³ According to Yavuz and Özcan the worsening of Turkish-American relations has helped the PKK enhance its bases in Iraq [and] attack targets inside Turkey. They also claim that the US has allowed Iraqi Kurds access to Iraqi armaments, some of which ended up in PKK hands (Yavuz and Özcan 2006).

¹⁴ See articles dated January 7, 2006 at the website of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, www.krg.org.

¹⁵ “Kurdish President Barzani interviewed on Kurdish Iraqi issues,” January 9, 2006, www.krg.org.

¹⁶ General Özkök was replaced by General Yaşar Büyükanıt on August 28, 2006.

¹⁷ According to Murat Yetkin of *Radikal*, income level in Northern Iraq is US\$4000 whereas it is US\$400 in Southeast Anatolia (Yetkin 2005).

¹⁷ See, for instance, Commission of the European Communities (2004).

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