

NATIONAL & KAPODISTRIAN UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS  
FACULTY OF LAW, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL SCIENCE  
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*MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN STUDIES*

MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS

PORTRAYAL OF THE KURDISH ISSUE IN TURKEY DURING THE 21st CENTURY-  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PARTY PROGRAMMATIC DOCUMENTS

Supervisor:

Dr. Dimitris Sotiropoulos

Student:

Deniz Dag

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leyla Zana was born in 1961 and married to her cousin Mehdi Zana at the age of 14, in a typical Kurdish family arrangement. After having seen her husband tortured to death following the military coup of 1980, she became a leading campaigner for Kurdish prisoners. In 1991, she was elected as the first Kurdish woman in MP. When she spoke a few words in Kurdish during her parliamentary pledge, she was banned from politics, prosecuted and jailed for 15 years. In prison she was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and awarded the Andrei Sakharov prize for human rights.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Leyla Zana is just one of the many dramatic Kurdish stories. Kurdish minority have been long fighting for their cultural and political rights in Turkey. Political representation is at the top of their agenda, since the threshold in parliamentary elections in Turkey is 10%, which makes it impossible for any Kurdish political party to enter the Parliament. Indeed, there is a general assumption that Turkey has been the most repressive country in minority rights perspectives, in particular toward the Kurds, denying their existence as a separate nationality within Turkey until very recently. This time around, Ms. Zana is free to campaign in Kurdish, a law explicitly permitting this having been passed by Parliament a year ago as part of the government's so-called Kurdish opening, a set of reforms that also includes a Kurdish channel on the state-run broadcaster TRT.<sup>2</sup>

Is it really possible to talk about an update on the definition and the context of discussions over the Kurdish question today? The ambition which leads me to conduct this research is to find an answer to this question. In the pursuit of an answer, I will portray the political agendas of the political parties on the Kurdish issue during the last ten years and analyze how they define and discuss the subject through a qualitative lens.

The purpose of this research is therefore to present and measure the variations in party positions on the Kurdish issue over a qualitative content analysis of electoral manifestos, belonging

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Head (2011) "Turkey Election: Leyla Zana eyes Kurdish comeback", *BBC News: Istanbul*, 11 June, can be viewed at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13698915> viewed on 28 September 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Güsten (2011) "Big Changes Open Politics to Turkish Minorities", *The New York Times*, 6 April, can be viewed at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/world/europe/07iht-m07-election.html?pagewanted=all> viewed on 28 September 2011.

to the 2002, 2007 and 2011 elections. Presentation of the Kurdish issue in these texts is also perceived as an indirect political representation of Kurds, since political representation in its simplest form, means the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives “present” in the public policy making processes.<sup>3</sup> Thereby, the research will provide us a self-evident demonstration of the Turkish political attitudes towards the rights of Kurdish minority in particular to political representation over the last ten years.

At the first step, the electoral manifestos published by the political parties which could enter the parliament are collected as the primary sources of data and analyzed thoroughly to detect minority/Kurdish issue related statements. The purpose of this exercise is to display the change in the manifestation of the Kurdish issue throughout the elections and thereby, capturing the political direction that the Kurdish issue follows. Therefore, the formulated research question is as the following: ***“What is the direction that the Turkish politics is heading on the Kurdish question?”***

The outline of the research is as the following. In the next chapter, I present the methodology that is found convenient for the case. Later on, the study is put into the framework of *Political Opportunity Structure* which is identified in Chapter 3. Then, I provide the reader with the basic information on the minority issues in global and Turkish perspectives during Chapter 4. After that, Chapter 5 discusses the function of political parties and the factors determining the minority representation. Subsequently, the qualitative content analysis of Turkish and Kurdish parties/independent candidates' electoral manifestos will be presented in Chapters 6-7. Finally, the conclusions drawn from this analysis will take place in Chapter 8 and the extent to which minority issues are discussed will be illustrated in a systematic way.

## **2. METHODOLOGY: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING AND QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL MANIFESTOS**

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<sup>3</sup> Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 1967, Los Angeles: University of Press, cited in Political Representation, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, can be accessed at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-representation/> viewed on 26 September 2011.

Primary sources of data for the planned research is the collection of 2002, 2007 and 2011 parliamentary electoral manifestos belonging to the victorious parties of the elections. The choice of victorious parties is made due to the relevant parties' active roles and participation in the decision and law making processes during the parliamentary periods. The study of electoral manifestos was preferred due to the advantages the exercise offers.

Merits of a manifesto study are various. First of all, the data obtained from party manifestos can be considered as 'objective' in the sense that they are based on written, publicly available documents and therefore, allow for competing and replicable measurement.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, most of the political parties publish manifestos in every general parliamentary election. This offers us the chance to track changes over time. Election programs are official documents agreed upon by the party as a whole and published at a precise point in time, so that problems with respect to the definition of the party, time scales, and cause and affect are of minor importance.<sup>5</sup> This makes a research on the dynamics of any salient issue perfectly possible, as they operate like a regularly updated forum on a specific agenda. And as last, each electoral manifesto produces a different scheme of data, as the political parties also differ with respect to the way they are represented.<sup>6</sup>

The portrayal of the Kurdish issue onto the party programmatic documents will be captured with the "qualitative content analysis of the purposively sampled document units". The analysis will therefore be conducted on two-stage analysis. At the first stage, electoral manifestos of the victorious parties in 2002, 2007 and 2011 elections will be collected. After that, the whole content of the electoral manifesto will be scanned and minority/Kurdish issue related parts will be split from the context. This will be done via the '*Purposive Sampling Method*' (relevance sampling) which aims at selecting all textual units that contribute to answering given research questions. The resulting units of text are not meant to be representative of a population of texts; rather they are the population of relevant texts, excluding the textual units that do not possess relevant information.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Marc Helbing & Anke Tresch (2011) "Measuring Party Positions and Issue Salience from Media Coverage: Discussing and Cross-Validating New Indicators", *Electoral Studies*, 30, p: 175.

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Volkens (2007) "Strengths and Weakness of Approaches to Measuring Policy Positions of Parties", *Electoral Studies*, 26, p: 117.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Helbing & Anke Tresch (2011), p: 176.

<sup>7</sup> Klaus Krippendorff (2004) "Chapter 6: Sampling", *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, p: 119.

At the second stage, qualitative research method will be applied on sampled units. Qualitative content analysis by Patton is defined as any qualitative data reduction and sense making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings.<sup>8</sup> I have applied the qualitative method for the flexibility that it gives to the researcher. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective, but scientific manner.<sup>9</sup> Especially for a researcher who is well affiliated with the Turkish political structure, only a qualitative approach would provide the chance to better interpret the findings. Quantitative findings alone could have been misleading, as the quantitative methods are often criticized for missing syntactical and semantic information embedded in the text.<sup>10</sup>

Since the goal of measurement is to monitor the dynamics of the political parties' electoral agendas on the Kurdish issue, measurements needs to be informed by the research question. Therefore, specific questions will be directed to the split units. The answers of these questions will provide us the qualitative frame for the understanding of the Kurdish issue for that particular political party. The questions are as follows:

- (1) Are there minority/Kurdish/social conflict issue related statements in the text?
- (2) If there are, what is the context of the discussion? Is it seen as a regional/security/economic/cultural/ethnic issue?

The basic benefit of this method is that the main research question, that is, “What is the direction that the Turkish politics is heading on the Kurdish question?” broken down into smaller questions that can readily be tested. The aim of the first question is to seize an awareness of the issue in that particular party. To reach for a clear answer to this question is challenging. The reason is that, the use of the terms ‘minority’, and especially the ‘Kurdish’ are problematic in political and constitutional aspects, pushing the political parties to label the issue with different names. Therefore, in order to detect the relevant remarks, all statements which mention social conflict, minority, and/or the Kurdish people (or the people of the region) are interpreted as relevant to the Kurdish

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<sup>8</sup> M.Q. Patton (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p: 453.

<sup>9</sup> Y. Zhang & BM Wildemuth (2009) ‘Qualitative analysis of content’, *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library*, p: 1 [http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~yanz/Content\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~yanz/Content_analysis.pdf) viewed on 21 September 2011.

<sup>10</sup> R.P. Weber (1990) *Basic Content Analysis*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, cited in Y. Zhang & BM Wildemuth (2009), p:1.

issue. There are two justifications for such interpretation. The first one is that, the Kurdish minority is the biggest minority in Turkey with around 10 millions of people (13, 5% of the total population).<sup>11</sup> It is not possible to think any mention of minorities in Turkey excluding the Kurdish minority in its content. Moreover, the only ongoing social conflict in Turkey is with the Kurdish minority. Secondly, it is observed that when parties want to refer to other minorities, they do not hesitate to name them, like it happens with the Alevis, Lasz, Cherkesz or Arabic minorities.

The aim of the second question is to demonstrate the perspective of the relevant political party on the issue, if it was defined. It is possible to find more than one approach to the definition of the Kurdish issue, or not finding any approach or mention of the Kurdish issue in any context. One parenthesis should be opened here for the discussions about terrorism. The political parties, who perceive minority/Kurdish issue as a terror problem, will be included in the analysis and will be interpreted as defining the issue as a security matter.

There are two exceptions to be made, whilst searching for an answer to the second question. The first one is that the manifestation of general respect to universal human rights and freedoms, respect to different cultures, race, ethnic origins, languages, and celebration of diversity is recorded, but not considered as a definition of the Kurdish issue in Turkish parties' texts. Such statements will find place in the party manifesto analysis though, to better demonstrate the party's general opinion on cultural tolerance. The second one is that the statements which put stress on the national unity and the integrity will be integrated into the manifesto analysis to detect the level of nationalism in that particular party and the year of election, but will again not be considered as a definition of the Kurdish question.

The Kurdish texts will however be asked two different questions for the same objective. The different scheme of questions is chosen due to the nature of ethnic minority parties, their targeted voters and ethnically concentrated policy headlines.

**(1)** Is the Kurdish question defined in the text?

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<sup>11</sup> KONDA Research and Consultancy (2010) *Research on the Perception and Expectations on the Kurdish Issue*, p:12, <http://www.konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar.php> viewed on 24 September 2011.

- (2) If it is, what is the content? Is it in the framework of human rights, cultural-linguistic rights, political representation, autonomy/self-governance, or independence?

Again the answer of the second question can fit into more than one category, as an ethnic minority party is expected to cover various issues related to minority context.

Needless to say, the last questions in both set of questions are especially important for their indication of where Turkish politics is heading on the Kurdish issue.

### **3. THEORETICAL APPROACH - SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES/ POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE**

Theories of social movements are proved to be useful tools in explaining why social movements happen and how they reach to success. The research goal of this study will not directly benefit from this theory, since the primary objective is the portrayal of the Kurdish issue and to draw the direction it goes. However, in order to interpret the findings, there will be a need for a theoretical framework so that we can make generalizing and predictions on the future of the Kurdish movement.

Theories for social movements gather different approaches within themselves, of each attempting to explain the social movements from a different perspective. In the US early theories focused on grievances and on the irrational reaction of actors as causes of the movement which was known as the *breakdown theory*.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by what became known as the *resource mobilization theory* which focused not on why the movements take place (this was seen as being self-evident), but on how the movement is organized, and why some of them were more successful than others.<sup>13</sup> “The last variant of the theories which focuses on the political rather than the civil society realm is the *political opportunity structure (or approach)* which sees social movements as a form of mass politics. The

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<sup>12</sup> Pasuk Phonopait (1999) “Theories of Social Movements and Their Relevance For Thailand”, *Position paper for project on Social Movements in Thailand*, a project supported under the Thailand Research Fund’s *methi wichai awuso* programme, p:1

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

social movement is theorized in relation to the state and the chances of the movement achieving success are discussed in terms of the ‘opportunities’ that are available.”<sup>14</sup>

The suitable framework of analysis for the Kurdish political movement in Turkey is the political opportunity structure (hereafter: POS). In this approach, it is generally assumed that social movements will enjoy better chances to develop and to gain entrance to the political decision-making process, if the political system provides a sufficient number of opportunities for oppositional activities.<sup>15</sup>

Not only political, but also cultural, structural, material and organizational elements are seen as belonging to the POS.<sup>16</sup> Despite its vast influence and popularity, POS remains conceptually muddled insofar as political process theorists have been unable to reach agreement about the definitions of its basic concepts.<sup>17</sup> It varies from case to case and author to author which aspects to include and which to leave out.

To some scholars of the field, the generosity that the structure offers in the integration of different aspects threatens the applicability of the approach. Gamson and Mayor note their concerns as the following:

*The concept of POS is in trouble, in danger of becoming the sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment. . . . Used to explain so much, it may explain nothing at all.*<sup>18</sup>

Hooghe supports the same argument, by stating that instead of lumping together all kinds of cultural and political elements in one POS concept, it makes more sense to distinguish a political and

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p:2.

<sup>15</sup> S. Tarrow (1996) ‘States and opportunities’, in D. McAdam, J. McCarthy and M. Zald (eds) (1996) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p: 54.

<sup>16</sup> D. McAdam, J. McCarthy and M. Zald (eds) (1996) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, see also Marc Hooghe (2005) ‘Ethnic Organisations and Social Movement Theory: The Political Opportunity Structure for Ethnic Mobilisation in Flanders’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 5, September, p: 978.

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion on the definition and the methodology of the political opportunity approach at: Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, Jaswinder Khattri, ‘Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory’, *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Mar., 1999), pp. 27-54.

<sup>18</sup> W. Gamson and D. Meyer (1996) ‘Framing political opportunity’, in D. McAdam, *et al.*, (1996), p: 275.

a discursive (or cultural) opportunity structure.<sup>19</sup> I have chosen to adopt the similar perspective of the approach, since my aim is to conduct a research on political parties and electoral agendas. Therefore, I will interpret my results based on the opportunities created only by the political system and analyze what political opportunities may arise from the direction that the electoral agendas follow.

#### 4. DEFINING THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF MINORITIES

The minority definition adopted for this research is borrowed from the **Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), (2006)**. The text defines minorities as the following:

*“An Autochthonous, national minority/ ethnic group should be understood as a community, that is resident in an area of a state territory or scattered around a state territory, that is of smaller number than the rest of the state population, the members of which are citizens of that state, the members of which have been resident in the area in question for generations, that is distinguishable from the state’s other citizens by reason of their ethnic, linguistic or cultural characteristics and who wish to preserve these characteristics”<sup>20</sup>*

Since the end of the Cold war, we see that minority issues constituting the primary sources of conflict throughout the world. States are increasingly coming under the international scrutiny in connection with how they treat those parts of their population that are ethnically, religiously, or linguistically different from the majority.<sup>21</sup>

Political representation is one such area of rights that contemporary democratic states cannot avoid to grant for their ethnic minority groups. Representation can take various and diverse forms: minorities can be given a right to self-government or they can participate in the government process by having representatives in the legislative institutions at both national and regional level or provide

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<sup>19</sup> Marc Hooghe (2005), p:978.

<sup>20</sup> *Charter for the Autochthonous National Minorities in Europe, Federal Union of European Nationalities/ Youth of European Nationalities* (2006), p: 6 [http://www.fuen.org/pdfs/20060525Charter\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fuen.org/pdfs/20060525Charter_EN.pdf), viewed on 10 June 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Stavros Stephanos (1995) “The Legal Status of Minorities in Greece Today: The Adequacy of their Protection in the Light of Current Human Rights Perceptions”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 13, (May), p: 1.

expertise in various consultative bodies to the government.<sup>22</sup> Marc Weller defines the effective participation of minorities in public decision-making consisting of four elements:<sup>23</sup> (1) *direct representation in decision making bodies*, which refers the right that every citizen is granted to take part in the conduct of public affairs, such as: to vote and to be elected in the periodic elections; (2) *consultation*, which ensures that the views and interests of minorities are taken into account in public decision making where minorities do not control the primary decision-making process; (3) *representation in public service*, which refers to states' obligation of achieving adequate representation in public service and the guarantee for access on general terms of equality to public service; and (4) *autonomous decision making*, which aims to ensure that minorities have control over decisions that particularly affect them. The fourth element does not refer to the territorial autonomy which somewhat goes beyond the decision-making, but rather refers to the effective and continuous political participation of minorities in national governance.

There are different opinions on the political representation of minorities. The first group of arguments are against the political representation of minorities, especially in deeply, ethnically divided societies, arguing that this would cause further divisions in society. Such concerns clearly appear in nation-states, where minority parties are treated as traitors and labeled as “enemies from within”. They are treated like “Trojan horses” which provoke extreme actions and conflict. Nationalities who are composed of different origins are disconfirmed every day for the sake of pure nation-states. The nation-state in this sense refers to one homogenous community within the defined borders of state, and any other national consciousness therefore should be exterminated.

The second group of arguments are formed by those who are for the political representation of minorities, not only as a natural means of assuring human rights, but also as to increase the democratic standards in a country. According to the political theory, the quality of democracy is to a large extent depends on the protection of minorities. “Tyranny of the majority” as some say cause sufferings on the minority side, not only for being undervalued, but also being oppressed. In states where decisions are taken not according to cross-cutting interests of diverse constituents, but

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<sup>22</sup> Maria Spirova and Bayka Stefanova (2009) “The European Dimension of the Political Representation of Minorities”, *Paper presented at the EUSA Conference*, April 24-26, Los Angeles, CA. p:1

<sup>23</sup> Marc Weller (2006) “Conclusion: The European Contribution of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities to the Development of Minority Rights”, *The Rights of Minorities. A Commentary on the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, pp.623-626.

according to ethnic, religious, linguistic or related criteria, the non-dominant group will always lose out.<sup>24</sup> Contrary to the first group, the second group argues that not granting certain rights to the communities with distinct characteristics would divide society even further, and in most cases faster. That's why; scholars argue that not granting minority communities the basic human rights would eventually lead to the radicalization of such communities.

The third group of scholars holds a middle position and argues that the national governments should well balance out the granting of minority rights, exclusively the political rights, so the society should be neither further divided, nor there would be a tyranny of any majority rule which causes violations of basic rights. Moreover, minority issues no longer fall exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of states- they are a matter of international concern.<sup>25</sup> States should opt for the 'balancing option' in the provision of political minority rights, not only for the welfare and the stability of their society, but also to prevent any external intervention which would mean a loss of sovereignty.

## **5. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF KURDISH MINORITY AND ITS RELATION TO POLITICAL PARTIES**

### **5.1) Functions of Political Parties**

Political parties are conceived as the legitimate techniques of influence according to the values of liberal democracy, replacing the revolutionary romanticism<sup>26</sup> to the existing power structures. They are central to democratic systems and have various tasks in the functioning of democratic governance.

Their first function is to formulate and to categorize the societal demands. It is practically impossible to reflect each differentiation within the society to political processes. Therefore, a political party is the composition of the groups who have similar interests and are organized under one political institution. Via political parties, different social groups are provided with the

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<sup>24</sup> Marc Weller (2006), p:611.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p:613.

<sup>26</sup> Peter M. Leslie (1969) "The role of Political Parties in Promoting the Interests of Ethnic Minorities", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, No.4 (December), p:419.

opportunity to gather on common grounds and to compete with each other for their political goals. Within this function, a political party is a mean of translating social demands to a political agenda.<sup>27</sup>

The second function of political parties is to provide society with precise and concrete political options.<sup>28</sup> Political issues can be too detailed and complicated for the society to understand. Voters may not necessarily be well acknowledged about the issues that concern to them. Political parties develop a framework understanding to such political issues, translate political goals in public forms of speech and thereby, political preferences become less complicated to adopt for the voters.<sup>29</sup>

The third function of political parties is to construct political culture within society. Political parties are required elements for the political culture to evolve and to raise awareness among the individuals over political issues. Parties try to reach to all clusters of society through their Youth and Women Clubs in order to increase the number of their partisans. Doing that, they indirectly contribute to the development of political culture. Political parties are the primary resources of the political identity development. Also, political parties provide the opportunity for those who want to take part in decision-making processes. Political parties, in this sense, are the schools for those who want to be educated on the governance and to get prepared to take decisions on behalf of the people.<sup>30</sup> They provide a distinctive political education for the association's active members whose concerns and interest in public issues are long-term and comprehensive.<sup>31</sup>

## **5.2) Main Factors Determining the Level of Political Representation of the Kurdish Minority**

Ethnic minorities are in most cases the disadvantaged groups of society. They form a substantive part of our western society and not incorporating them into society increases the

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<sup>27</sup> Ahmet Taner Kışlalı (1994) *Siyaset Bilimi (Political Science)*, İstanbul: Imge Kitabevi, p:239.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Janda, Jefferey M. Berry, Gerry Goldman (1997) *The Challenge of Democracy*, Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, p: 252.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp:252-3.

<sup>30</sup> Marcus E. Ethridge & Howard Handelman (1998) *Politics in a Changing World*, St. Martin's Press:New York, p:117.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy L. Rosenblum (2000) "Political Parties as Memembership groups", *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, Sympasium: Law and Political Parties (April), p:838.

chances for conflict and reduce the legitimacy and justice of a political system.<sup>32</sup> However, the level of minority representation changes from country to country, depending on its political and jurisdictional characteristics.

The main factors which determine the level for the political representation of minorities are discussed below.

### 5.2.1) Political Culture

Political culture is the first factor that affects the political representation of minorities in a state.

A political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system<sup>33</sup> which consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place. It provides the subjective orientation to politics.<sup>34</sup>

When one needs to look closer the political culture of Turkey from that perspective, it is easier to discover what the roots of the flawed democracy are. Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 with the official declaration of Republicanism as a new regime after the end of Ottoman Empire. Kemalism was the official ideology of the state which lacked democracy among its founding six principles. The period from 1923-1950 was a single party rule of CHP. The first multi-party elections were allowed in 1950. There had been four military coups in Turkey and a period long of militarist government following the two coups. The current constitution of Turkey was adopted in 1982 by the militarist parliament which was brought by the military coup in 1980. Turkey's top-down approach in political processes started to tense the relations between the state and society in mid-1980's. The main problematic areas of conflict can be listed as; secularism (and the

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<sup>32</sup> Floor Elbode, (2010) "Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities: A Framework for a Cooperative Analysis of Ethnic Minority Representation", *The European Consortium for Political Research: Conference Paper*, downloaded from: <http://www.ecprnet.eu/databases/conferences/papers/333.pdf> viewed on 22 September 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Lucian W. Pye (1968) "Political Culture", *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.12,(ed.) David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan and Free Press), p: 218.

<sup>34</sup> Sidney Verba (1965) "Comparative Political Culture," in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, (eds), *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p: 513.

questionability of secularism), cultural identities and political participation. The Kurdish issue was integrated in the last two areas. Kurdish people could never hold a legitimate place in political processes in Turkey. They were never recognized officially as a minority. The Kurdish question clearly appeared in the political agenda of Turkey in late 1980's, when PKK (The Kurdish Workers Party) was formed and organized its first armed attack. The armed struggle between Turkish military forces and the Kurdish guerillas is still going on even today.

Not only the guerilla groups were established in 1990's, but also an organized Kurdish political movement was initiated. Until today, seven Kurdish political parties were established as to run the parliamentary and the local elections of the Turkish Republic. They are chronologically; **HEP** (Pupil's Labor Party, 1990-1991), **DEP** (Democracy Party 1991-1991), **ÖZDEP** (Liberty and Democracy Party 1992-1993), **HADEP** (Pupil's Democracy Party, 1995-2003), **DEHAP** (Democratic Pupil's Party, 2003-2005), **DTP** (Democratic Society Party, 2005-2009), and **BDP** (Peace and Democracy Party, 2008-2011).

As it appears, Turkey is a deficient democracy with a political culture that is accustomed to semi-authoritarian regimes and a parliament in which representation of different ideas is limited. By the same token, the historical facts and figures harden the political representation of the Kurdish minority.

### 5.2.2) Constitutional Restrictions

It is essential to know the constitutional restrictions to the political parties in Turkey before conducting a study on the political party manifestos. Turkey has been subjected to many incidents of party closures. On the grounds of this matter, decisions of the Constitutional Court display two characteristics. First of them is the '*principle of secularism*' and the second is the '*territorial and national integrity of state*.'<sup>35</sup>

For the first characteristic of the closure decisions, the law and the Constitutional Court are very precise. The 3rd Article of the Constitution says '*Turkish Republic is ...a secular state*'; and the 4th Article states that '*the articles 1-3 cannot be changed and cannot even be suggested to make amendments*'. Thus,

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<sup>35</sup> Z. Arslan (2001) "Political Party Polity of the Constitutional", *Liberal Thought*, 22, p: 8.

interpretation is quite wide and inclusive. Any sympathy towards Islamic governance or rule can be punished.

The second principle which is on the territorial and national integrity of state implies the national unity of the state and the preservation of its integrity. Decisions taken for this clause prove that any party which proposes the abolition of sovereignty of the state, or defends the partition of a segment from the country will be permanently banned.<sup>36</sup> Principle of territorial and national integrity is also interpreted as preservation of the ‘unity’ of the state. As a matter of fact, Law on Political parties clearly states that political parties cannot aim to change the principle of the unitary structure of the state or to having practices with this tendency.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand national integrity includes also the prevention of creation of new minorities, regionalism, and prohibition of discrimination and preservation of equality.<sup>38</sup> For example, no party can propose a federative structure for Turkey.

Correcting the underrepresentation of minorities is crucial for a political party. But, they will not do it in the expense of losing their legitimacy. Therefore, constitutional restrictions function as an effective barometer in the determination of political representation of minorities in Turkey.

### 5.2.3) Electoral System

Electoral threshold is 10% in Turkey. Such a high threshold creates two impacts for the political system of a country: institutional and behavioral impacts. The main institutional impact in short term is the change in the distribution of the seats in the parliament.<sup>39</sup> For example, DEHAP could not enter the parliament in 2002, even though it collected 1, 96 millions of votes and 46,2 % of the total votes in its region. If the threshold was not 10%, it could hold 40 seats in the parliament.<sup>40</sup> Instead, these seats were shared by AKP and CHP. The CHP candidate, who was

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<sup>36</sup> E. Özbudun (2004) *Turkish Constitutional Law*, Ankara, p: 65.

<sup>37</sup> Mehmet Kahraman & Zekeriya Çalışkan (2007) “The Juridical Status of the Political Parties in Turkey and the Regime of Closure of the Political Parties”, *Studies of East Anatolia*, p: 127.

<sup>38</sup> *Law on Political Parties*, Art: 81-83, full text can be found at: <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/2820sk.htm> viewed on 24 September 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Yavuz Sabuncu (2006) “Seçim Barajları ve Siyasal Sonuçları” (Electoral Thresholds and Its Political Consequences, *Anayasal Yargılar (Constitutional Judgements) (23)*, p: 192, full text is available at: [http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/files/pdf/anayasa\\_yargisi/anyarg23/sabuncu.pdf](http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/files/pdf/anayasa_yargisi/anyarg23/sabuncu.pdf) viewed on 20 September 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Ingmar Karlsson (2008) *Bir Diplomatın Gözüyle Kürt Sorunu (Kurdish Question From the Eye of a Diplomat)*, Homer Publishing: Istanbul, p:167.

appointed for the same region with the DEHAP candidate, got only 7000 of the votes to be in the parliament, whereas the DEHAP candidate got 120.000 votes.<sup>41</sup> The second institutional impact that can rather be observed in medium or long term is the political party structures.<sup>42</sup> Even though there may be differentiations in opinions within a major party, differentiated group may not risk forming another party due to the high threshold.

As a behavioral impact, the high threshold directly influences the voting behavior in the long term.<sup>43</sup> Even though it requires a subjective study to define exactly how much it affects the voter's decision, it is probable that a voter may vote to a less desired party or not vote at all, thinking that its preferred party would not reach the threshold.

The threshold regulation in Turkey pushed the minority parties to search for alternatives. For the last two parliamentary elections, the Kurdish party tried a political maneuver to avoid the threshold. After having failed to reach the threshold three times, the Kurdish parties decided to run the general elections of 2007 and 2011 with independent candidates. There is no threshold regulation for the independent candidates; they just need to assure the majority of the votes of their district. The strategy was eventually successful: 21 independent candidates in 2007 elections and 35 candidates in 2011 elections could enter the parliament.

#### 5.2.4) Party Ideology

The ideologies adopted by the political parties subjected to this research are as the following: **AKP** defines its ideology as conservative-liberalist in its party program. **CHP** declares its ideology as social-democracy in its political program. **MHP** follows a right wing tradition and defines its ideology as conservative-nationalist in its party program. There are no party programs available for **DEHAP** and **DTP**; therefore, there is no clear identification of any political ideologies. However, it is possible to find socialist discourses in the electoral texts. And, **BDP** defines its ideology as socialism in its program.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Yavuz Sabuncu (2006), p: 192.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Ideologies are usually compared in terms of their position on the concepts of equality and liberty, which are treated as dichotomous and mutually exclusive.<sup>44</sup> However, issues like human and minority rights might be found under both of the concepts. Therefore, it is difficult to systematically argue which ideologies are the constant supporters of multiculturalism and the accommodation of minorities, and which are not. Still, the general understanding is that the nationalist or extreme right ideologies are less tolerant to cultural pluralism and favor restrictions on the political representation of minorities.

### **5.2.5) Party Organization and the Process on the Decision of the Candidates**

Another factor in the determination of the political representation is the party organization and their candidate selection processes. This is considered to be the least influential factor, as the previous factors already determine the scope of minority representation to a great extent. Party leaders and organizational structures are bounded with the political culture and constitutional restrictions which limit them in the selection of the candidates to run the general elections and in establishing the content of electoral manifestos.

Communication with the voters is also an important factor in the selection of candidates. In contrast to most interest and advocacy groups, parties must continuously seek to establish contact with the electorate in a fashion that elicits participation on a large scale.<sup>45</sup> However, when it comes to appeal Kurdish voters, indirect contacts had to be made. Members of the Kurdish minority are in most cases declared as candidates in major parties for their influence in the region, not for the ethnic appeal they will gain. In most cases, the parties had to come to an agreement with the heads of Kurdish clans inhabiting in Eastern Turkey. Getting into an agreement with the chief (Aga) of the clan would assure 800-1000 votes.<sup>46</sup> Such settlements also formed a subject for competition among the major parties. Settlements were the informal ways for collecting votes, which saved the political parties from integrating ethno-cultural emphasis into their political agenda.

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<sup>44</sup> Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat (2008) "Human Rights Ideology and Dimensions of Power: A Radical Approach to the State, Property, and Discrimination", *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.4, (November), p: 909.

<sup>45</sup> Nancy L. Rosenblum, 2000, p:823.

<sup>46</sup> Reşat Uzun (2011) "Seçimi Aşiretler Belrileyecek" (Election Results will be Determined by the Clans), *Güneydoğutv (Southeast TV)/yazılar (Articles)*, 23 April, [http://www.guneydogutv.com/yazi\\_detay.php?id=788](http://www.guneydogutv.com/yazi_detay.php?id=788) viewed on 20 September 2011.

And as last, concerns over electoral success naturally take precedence. Intra-party contests over electoral process are always tied to electoral goals as well as party self-government; therefore, reformers rarely concerned with democratization or doctrinaire stances *in contrast* to electoral success.<sup>47</sup> Most Turkish political parties avoid talking about ethnic minorities in their electoral manifestos, thinking that it might distort national sensitivities and push the voters away.

### **5.2.6) Attention Required by the Turkish Parties on the Kurdish Issue**

The last factor in the determination of the political representation is peculiar to the Kurdish issue in Turkey and its contemporary situation.

The bloody years of 1990 have resulted in more than 30.000 deaths from both communities.<sup>48</sup> It became clearer that the Kurdish question had to be addressed. At the beginning of 2000's, we see that major parties getting to integrate the Kurdish issue to their political agendas in different aspects and labels in their programmatic documents. Also, the politicians became aware of millions of Kurdish people's emerging political identities. As the Kurdish movements gained pace, the Kurdish people required more attention by the political authorities. It was then, each political party started to address the issue in order to attract the Kurdish vote.

Another reason is that the Turkish programs, at times unwillingly, had to host the Kurdish issue in their agenda, as a mean of preventing the Kurdish movement from radicalization. Instead of dealing with various Kurdish militant groups, keeping the Kurdish representatives on protest for the ignorance of the issue and having the international community's constant discontent, the Turkish governments opted for the inclusion of the problem within democratic processes. It was more preferable, that the Turkish parties would discuss the Kurdish issue than the Kurdish representatives of the region would try to bring radical solutions.

## **6. MINORITY APPROACHES OF TURKISH POLITICAL PARTIES THROUGHOUT THE 21st CENTURY**

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<sup>47</sup> Nancy L. Rosenblum, 2000, p: 840.

<sup>48</sup> International Crisis Group (2011) "Turkey Ending the PKK Insurgency", *Europe Report N°213*, 20 September, p:1.

## 6.1) 2002 Elections Overview

2002 elections was the first general election of AKP which resulted in its victory. AKP won the majority of the seats and was tasked to form the government by taking over 365 seats out of 550 in the parliament and 34, 2% of the total votes. CHP won 177 seats and 19.3% of the votes and became the first opposition party. All the other parties were left out of the parliament as they could not reach the threshold. DEHAP, the Kurdish Party was one of them with 6.1% of the total votes. The turnout was recorded as 78%.<sup>49</sup>

### 6.1.1) AKP Electoral Manifesto Analysis

The electoral manifesto of AKP is at total of 54 pages and joints the following chapters in its content: conscientious politics (introduction of AKP and its ideology), fundamental rights and freedoms, democracy and civil society, democracy and development, judiciary reform, restructuring the governance, centralization reform, empowerment of local governments, economy policies, fiscal policies, debt management, policies for financial sectors, public enterprises and privatization, fight against inflation, galvanization of the real sector, attraction of FDIs, new trade policy, social policies, secure energy, mining, transportation, tourism, agriculture and animal husbandry, fight against corruption, prevention of unemployment, qualified education, health services, social security, family–the women–the youth, the handicapped and foreign policy.

The party states that it opposes to the restrictions of democratic and political rights, and persistently emphasizes the necessity and the merits of democracy, but the context never comes to include the Kurdish issue. Instead, we often see a general understanding of human rights and celebration of diversity. *“We seek to protect diversity in unity” (p.3, line: 9) “Accepting different religious beliefs and cultures as the wealth of our country, our party assures equality before the law to those who possess different language, religious belief, ethnic origin and social class. Our party prioritizes the integration of diversity to politics” (p.3, lines:24-27)* Here, we see a very superficial understanding for pluralism, nothing peculiar to the Kurdish issue or to any other ethnically diverse entity. Furthermore, the party criticizes the extreme right and nationalist views on cultural diversity for blocking the EU process. They state;

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<sup>49</sup> All numbers are taken from the official reports of the Supreme Council of Elections, <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/index.html> viewed on 23 August 2011.

*“The parties who oppose our integration with Europe delay the implementation of the Copenhagen Criteria due to their concerns on national sovereignty, national security, national interest and their ideological approaches on national and local cultures.” (p. 5, lines:9-11)*

The text accepts that there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the universal human rights and freedoms; and this forms the real cause for the discriminative measures and policies. **(p.6, lines:9-11)** However, the analysis does not go any deeper than that. At the end of the page 13, we see an attempt to explain the Kurdish issue via economic approaches. It states that, *“increased poverty in urban areas and economic and social exclusion of large social structures lead to marginalization of certain social movements. This situation leads to [...] and to societal conflicts and social concerns”* **(lines:36-37 & p. 14 lines:1-3)** From this ‘disguised’ definition of the Kurdish issue, we can come to the conclusion that AKP defines the Kurdish question through economic and social inequality.

### **6.1.2) CHP Electoral Manifesto Analysis**

CHP 2002 Electoral Manifesto is 55 pages long and consists of the following chapters respectively: clean politics-honest politicians, e-state for the citizens, organized- disciplined-modern market economy, strategic plan for the attraction of FDIs, tourism, regional development, agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, energy politics, use of natural resources, transportation and communication strategies, empowerment of infrastructure, environment, social-state mechanisms, educational reforms, the youth, culture, art, secularism, jurisdiction, women policies, external relations, EU policy, and Turks living abroad.

Kurdish issue is not found in the content in any form. There are only some superficial, limited statements expressing respect to universal fundamental human rights and freedoms and a manifestation of general respect to pluralism and diversity in society. *“We will protect the cultural pluralism.[...] Differentiation in origin and belief is the source of wealth for our culture”* **(p:44, lines:14&16)** *“Turkey is not the republic of a particular race or religion, but the republic of the political conscious. The state of Turkish Republic embraces the principle of equality for all religions and ethnicities...”* **(p.47, lines:1-3)** *“As the nationals of the same nation and the citizens of the same state, we are respectful to everyone’s identity, ethnic origin, religious belief and mother tongue.”* **(p.47, lines:23-25)**

To conclude, a definition or a discussion of the Kurdish issue is not found in the text. Main observation to make for this text is that, the Kurdish issue is considered non-existent.

## 6.2) 2007 Elections Overview

AKP won the majority of the seats and was tasked to form the government by taking over 341 seats out of 550 in the parliament and 46.5% of the total votes. CHP won 112 seats and 20.8% of the votes and became the first opposition party. MHP won 71 seats and 14,2% of the total votes. The independent candidates who were appointed by the DTP got 21 seats in the parliament. All the other parties were left out. The turnout of the elections was recorded as 82%.<sup>50</sup>

### 6.2.1) AKP Electoral Manifesto Analysis

The 2007 electoral manifesto of AKP is at total of 170 pages and discusses the following themes in its content respectively: democratic state governed by the rule of law, civil society, judiciary reform, national security, economy, industry, foreign trade, tourism, empowerment of social structure, education, health, working environment, social security, social help and solidarity, family, the women, the children and the aged, the youth, the handicapped, peace and public order, religious services, employment, rural development, agriculture and animal husbandry, SMEs-shop owners-craftsmen, competition rules of the market, regional development and planning, local governance, efficient centralization, fight against corruption, lesser bureaucracy/e-state mechanisms, living standards-housing, culture and art, science and technology, innovations, communication technology, infrastructure, transportation, energy policies, improvement of the investment environment, foreign policy and defense, and foreign aids.

A strong emphasis, which did not exist in the former text of the party is, “*One nation, one flag, one land, one state approach is the basics of our politics. AKP is the name for the politics of unity in Turkey.*” (p.4, lines:26-27)

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<sup>50</sup> All numbers are taken from the official reports of the Supreme Council of Elections, <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/index.html> viewed on 23 August 2011.

Another content that is new to AKP documents is found in the chapter named as *'national security'* and starts with the following sentence; *"AKP prioritizes the integrity and the unity of our nation, the continuation of our state and the preservation of the unitary structure of the state"* (p.16, lines:12-14) It further states, *"Turkey has the right to establish a security zone for internal and external threats in respect to the principles of international law"* (p. 16, lines:16-18) The text contains many statements on how indispensable the unitary structure of the state is and also explains the defense mechanisms that the state will use in case of threats to the national sovereignty. The same chapter also includes statements regarding terrorism and the terrorist group in Turkey. It says; *"Our country has been struggling with the separatist terrorist activities for 30 years. During this period, our social economic problems and the cultural sensitivities were abused and our country paid a big cost."* (p.17, lines:1-3) The mention of terrorism and terrorist group is important here, as this is normally the statements that MHP or the parties with nationalist agendas would use. Even so, here we see that the AKP hesitates to openly address to PKK. Moreover, AKP defines its multilevel strategy against the terrorism like the following; *"Our government managed comprehensive policies in order to strengthen the sense of belonging for all citizens and to eradicate the sources of the terror. [...] We have strengthened the national unity and the integrity by fostering social and economic development in the area and meeting the demands and requests of the people in the region"* (p.17, lines:3-8) From the composition of the above mentioned statements, we understand that AKP interprets the Kurdish conflict as an issue of terrorism, but defines the origins in economy and development related areas.

It is also possible to see concerns related to terrorism in the foreign policy chapter of the AKP text. Regarding to the Iraq war and the happenings in the region, AKP states that *"To take an active part in the fate of Iraq is not a political choice, but a strategic obligation. The security and stability of Iraq concerns us greatly, not only because Iraq is a neighboring country, but also for Turkey's internal security and stability"* (p.161, lines:24-28) *"We will take every precaution to protect our country from the terrorist threats that may arise from the instability in Iraq. We will not let any neighbor country to be a shelter for the terrorist activities directed to our country."* (p.162, lines:28-30)

Apart from the clear security concerns and concerns on terrorism, the text does not include any social, cultural or ethnic explanation for the Kurdish issue. The bottom line for this text is therefore, that the AKP defines the Kurdish conflict as a security matter, originating from the economic situation and the development level in the region.

## 6.2.2) CHP Electoral Manifesto Analysis

The 2007 electoral manifesto of CHP is at total of 74 pages and gathers the following subjects in its content respectively: terror-security-internal peace, secularism, foreign policy, human rights, jurisdiction, clean politics– honest governance, economy, industry, science, agriculture, energy politics, employment policies, working conditions, social security mechanisms, health and the handicapped, education and culture, the youth and the women, regional development, public administration and urbanization, Istanbul, earthquake protection strategies, transportation, environment and tourism, world and the CHP, Turks abroad, and the social democrat parties.

Criticism to AKP government and their policies during their governing period is dominant throughout the text. We see an over-emphasis on Kemalism and its principles which also includes nationalism. The first sentence of the foreword is *“Nation State-Unitary State-Secular Republic, are the foundations of Atatürk’s Turkey”* (p.2, lines:1-2). *“The origin of our common culture is our history, geography, identity which is constructed on the nation-state, on the principles of our Republic and on the basic principles of our constitution”*. (p.53, lines:1-2)

There is a large content in which we see that the CHP refers to the terrorism as a threat to the unitary structure of Turkey. *“Our country is living one of the most difficult times of its history due to the terror that threatens our national integrity”* (p.2, lines:12-13) *“Terrorism will stop. The origins of terrorism will be exterminated, the blood of our martyrs will stop to be shed; we will sustain the peace and protect the integrity of our country.”* (p.7, lines:1-3) The very first chapter is named **“terror, security and peace”** repeating the similar statements. Even the chapter on ‘public administration and urbanization’ repeats the importance of national integrity and states that it is a prerequisite in the improvement of any local services and governance. (p. 59, line:5)

We also see an attempt to define the problem in imperialist terms. The chapter states, *“Terror has been used as an asymmetric tool for international relations. Struggles over water and energy resources in our region have been feeding the terrorist activities on our lands for 30 years and aiming to bring instability to the country.”* (p.8, lines:10-12)

Dense use of terrorism statements seems not to allow any hope for cultural tolerance. Therefore, it is not possible to find any statements on the ethnic or cultural aspects of the issue. Here, we can come to the conclusion that in this particular text, the Kurdish question is handled as a security matter.

### **6.2.3) MHP Electoral Manifesto Analysis**

The electoral manifesto of MHP is at total of 130 pages and consists of the following chapters: a Turkish view on changing world, Turkey and MHP, our mission, vision and basic views, long term development strategy, development and the institutionalization of democracy, justice, national security, public peace, fight against terrorism, fight against corruption, public administration, fight against poverty and social protection, fight against unemployment, craftsmen, agriculture, inter-regional development–elimination of interregional inequality, urbanization, housing and environment, science and technology, economic goals and policies, social and cultural policies and foreign policy.

First of all, we see a very dense use of the following words: Turkish nation, Turkish national values, Turkish national identity, national unity and the integrity of the lands, the lands, the flag, martyrs and war veterans. There is a comprehensive chapter on “Terrorism and National Defense” in which the Kurdish issue appears solely as a security matter. *“Political separatist movements and ethnic provocations which aim to create ethnic divisions are the biggest threats pointed to the Turkish nation” (p.28, lines:40-44)* *“The threat of terrorism and ethnic separatism will definitely be removed from Turkey’s political agenda” (p.28, lines:49-50)* *“MHP will fight non-stop with the security forces in all over the country in order to exterminate the sources of terrorism and political separatism” (p.28-29, lines:58-59 & lines:1-6)*

However, we also see a separation between the people of the region and terrorists. *“There will be a clear distinction between the people of the region and the terrorists” (p.29, lines:33-34)* *“All origins of terrorism will be eradicated and socio-economic problems which create the environment for such origins will be improved.”(p.29, lines:35-40)* Here, we also see a suggestion to the issue based on social policies, but the political aspects are still not tolerated in the MHP context. *“We will break the influence, the force and the danger posed by the ‘civilian tools’ of the terrorist groups onto the people in the region.” (p.29, lines:24-29)* *“Under MHP government, we will not let the terrorists walk neither in the mountains, nor in our parliament” (p.30,*

**lines:29-31)** *“There will never be a political clemency for those betrayers!”* **(p.30, lines:32-36)** *“We will stop hosting the bloody monster and the head of the separatist terrorist group like an honor guest in Imrali”*<sup>51</sup> **(p.30, lines:51-56)**

In education and cultural policies, there are statements that do not give any chance for Kurdish cultural and educational demands. *“We will raise children who possess the pride and the happiness for being the members of Turkish nation”* **(p.93, lines:44-47)** *“The development of national conscious is one of the primary principles of our education policy”* **(p.94, lines:30-31)** *“We will prevent the implementations which cause confusion in our cultural values and distort our national cultural morals”* **(p.106, lines:13-21)**

To sum up, MHP’s 2007 text defines the Kurdish question solely as a security matter and searches for a solution in defense policies. Socio-economic origins of the problem are not adequately underlined and have lost its emphasis under the dense expression of security concerns.

### **6.3) 2011 Elections Overview**

As a result of 2011 elections, AKP won the majority of the seats and was tasked to form the government by taking over 327 seats out of 550 in the parliament and 49.8% of the total votes. CHP won 135 seats and 25.9% of the votes and became the first opposition party. MHP won 53 seats and 13% of the votes. The independent candidates’ alliance consisting of mainly the Kurdish representatives, “The Labor, Democracy and the Freedom Bloc” got 35 seats and 6.5% of the total votes. The turnout was 83.16%.<sup>52</sup> This election was the only on-time election in 34 years in Turkey.

#### **6.3.1) AKP Electoral Manifesto Analysis**

The 2011 electoral manifesto of AKP is at total of 160 pages and lists the following chapters in its content respectively: democratization, political institutions, civil society, new constitution, jurisdiction, result and citizen based governance, economy, global change and Turkey, macro economy, fiscal policy, public expenditures and investments, financial services, balance of payments,

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<sup>51</sup> They imply Abdullah Ocalan, who is the leader of PKK and the Kurdish movement within the borders of Turkey. He was sentenced for life in 2002 and been kept in an isolated island on Marmara sea called Imrali.

<sup>52</sup> All numbers are taken from the official reports of the Supreme Council of Elections, <http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/index.html> viewed on 23 August 2011.

employment and working environment, R&D and innovation policies, micro economy-entrepreneurship-industrial policies, defense industry, export of goods and services, construction and technical services, customs services, tourism, agriculture, energy politics and natural resources, transportation, communication, information and communication technologies, education, health, culture, family, the women, the youth, sports, social security, fight against the poverty and social aids, policies for the disadvantaged, the handicapped, the aged, martyrs and war veterans, foundations, policies for the big cities, environment, water resources, forestry, management of the disposal, green transportation, infrastructure services, intra-city transportation, housing, management of natural disasters, city policies for global competition, Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, (three chapters where new projects are introduced for each city), regional and rural development, foreign policy, foreign aids and defense policy.

The main message that has been given via the 2011 electoral text of AKP is “we have done very well!” The text is a comprehensive report on what AKP governance (2002-2007 and 2007-2011) achieved since 2002. The AKP project of *‘Democratic Opening’* is also listed within the achievements as a proof of how far the AKP government brought the Kurdish issue. The Opening, or with another name, *‘National Unity and Brotherhood Project’* is claimed to be one of the bravest moves that has been done on the Kurdish issue so far. (p. 11, lines:26-39) There is also a criticism to the governments of 1990’s for the interpretation of the Kurdish issue solely as a ‘security concern’. Contrary to the previous approaches of the party, AKP claims that they have gone to deeper sources of the problem and that they handled the issue in multilevel perspectives by initiating a political and a cultural dialogue. Therefore, the goals of the Opening are defined two folds. The first one is to stop the terror and the violence in the region; the second is to broaden the freedoms, so as to improve the democratic standards of the country.

Within the context of the Opening, the following reforms were made under AKP government; broadcasting in Kurdish language in the state channel, teaching of Kurdish language in private courses, an establishment of Kurdish Language and Literature Board in a state university, the replacement of the contemporary names of the towns and villages in the region with the Kurdish names, allowing Kurdish names for children (if desired), and the allowance for political propaganda in Kurdish language during general and local elections. (p.10-11) Further democratization and inclusion of all entities is promised by a new constitution. *“The new constitution will not be exclusive but,*

*inclusive to all entities; not dividing but, connecting; not oppressing but, liberalizing; not assimilating but, integrating in diversity.” (p.15, lines:35-39)*

Due to the comprehensive introduction of the Democratic Opening and its promotion, the 2011 electoral text of the AKP is considered to hold the Kurdish issue on ethno/cultural terms.

### **6.3.2) CHP Electoral Manifesto Analysis**

The 2011 electoral manifesto of CHP is at total of 134 pages and discusses the following themes; liberal democracy, a new constitution, full protection to fundamental rights and freedoms, free press and media, judicial reform, democratic electoral system and political pluralism, organized society, respect to diversity and pluralism, equality for women in all spheres of life, full democracy in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, secularism and freedom to religion, clean and honorable politics, sustainable development, economy policies, employment strategies, research and development, information technology and science, telecom services, industrialization, support to SMEs and entrepreneurship, financial policies, public reforms, rural development, agriculture, animal husbandry, tourism, energy politics, environment, climate change, equality and social solidarity, social insurance and security, education policies, the women, the children, the youth, the pensioners, the handicapped, qualified public services, health services, transportation, use of natural resources, animal rights, sports, culture and art, terror-peace-security, modern public administrations, fight against corruption, regional development and urbanization, local governments, housing and foreign policy.

We see a slide shift in the CHP position on the Kurdish issue during the 2011 electoral manifesto. First of all, democracy is discussed in a broader and a more inclusive context. *“Strengthening democracy in our country where different social classes, religious beliefs, cultures and ethnic origins live is a prerequisite for internal peace” (p.4, lines:30-33)* Secondly, there is a persistent emphasis on pluralism, starting from the page one, and giving a more detailed explanation to term within the context of democracy. *“Pluralism in political terms implies the allowance for organization of any political group regardless of its size. Under CHP governance political pluralism will be materialized. Threshold will be reduced to maximum 5%” (p.8, lines:36-39)*. Pluralism is also discussed within the social context: *“social differentiations shall be officially recognized by the constitutional settings of the state. No individual in a democratic society shall be*

*discriminated for its sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion or religious sect.” (p.8/9, lines:24-29)* As the provision and assurance of the pluralist characteristics, an immediate action call for the change of the constitution is made. In this call, we see a more detailed understanding of human rights within the inclusion of cultural and political rights. There is a separate chapter dedicated to the diversity and pluralism in which the CHP remarks how respectful they are to ethnic diversity, and that the cultural and linguistic rights of the people who are different in origin will be preserved and supported. At the same chapter, an inclusive citizenship definition based on the constitution is suggested for all the people in the country as an assurance of peace. CHP even asks for a revision on the Law on Political Parties. *“We will modify the restrictive measures brought by the Law on Political Parties and make the regulations in accordance with the universal human rights law.” (p.9, point 3).* Another chapter is named as **“Full Democracy in the East and the Southeast”** and talks about sustaining social peace, supporting the sustainment of Kurdish identity, Kurdish language education, and the investigations of the past crimes in the region. **(p.17, lines:19-26)**

What we do not find in the text, are the repeated emphasis on the unitary structure of the state or the stress on the nation-state-identity of the Republic. The only chapter that follows the CHP tradition of the Kurdish issue, which is the part on “terror, security and peace”. There, it is possible to find remarks on securing the borders and fight against terrorism, but are supplemented with the following statement, *“Instead of using only armed struggle method, we will use different state mechanisms that seek to gain the trust and the support of the people in the region and will fight to stop the guns by all means available” (p.99, point 7)*

As a bottom line, it is found that CHP discusses the Kurdish issue to a great extent in ethno/cultural terms in its 2011 electoral manifesto.

### **6.3.3) MHP Electoral Manifesto Analysis**

The 2011 electoral manifesto of MHP is named “100 Promises” and designed as the list of 100 different promises and their explanations. The content consists of 16 slides and the themes of promises can be listed as the following: economic and social support, fight against poverty and unemployment, improvement of the working environment, the pensioners, the farmers and animal husbandry, shopkeepers, SMEs and the craftsmen, the handicapped, family-the women-the youth,

students and young entrepreneurs, security forces and village guarders, martyrs' families and war veterans, health services, and business life.

The 2011 text of MHP is quite populist. Unlike the previous long contexts of policy definitions and strong and persistent emphasis on nationalism, here we see a joint of 100 brief promises jointing economic and social benefits for society. The absence of terrorism, or security related statements is new for the MHP party programmatic documents.

As to conclude, the Kurdish question is not held in any aspect and considered non-existent in the 2011 MHP electoral manifesto.

## **7. MANIFESTATION OF THE KURDISH DEMANDS THROUGHOUT THE 21st CENTURY**

An important note is necessary to make here. No sampling method has been applied to the Kurdish party electoral manifestos for two reasons. First of all, the Kurdish electoral manifestos are much shorter in comparison to the Turkish party documents which render the initial reason for the adoption of the sampling method unnecessary. Secondly, the content of the documents are observed to be direct, brief and right to the point: the Kurdish community's situation. Many Turkish parties' manifestos are observed to be the policy guidelines in all fields for that particular party and tend to follow a sequential mode, which you can find in the brief content of tables before the analysis of each manifesto. Kurdish parties have neither the style nor the sequential mode that Turkish party documents have; therefore, the research questions are addressed directly to the texts as a whole.

### **7.1) 2002 Elections and DEHAP Electoral Manifesto Analysis**

The 2002 electoral manifesto by DEHAP is the first Kurdish document analyzed for this study and it has some very ironic and distinctive characteristics reflecting its time and conditions.

As regard to the first question, there is ironically no clear definition of the Kurdish question. In fact, the text hardly ever mentions the Kurds, their political rights, or anything else related to the conflict. Instead, there is a persistent emphasis on the brotherhood of the folks and social equality.

The absence of a discussion on the Kurdish question in the content is quite surprising for an electoral document of a new Kurdish political party. This can be explained by the anxiety that the new Kurdish party was carrying whilst preparing themselves for the elections. DEHAP was the successor party of HADEP which had been closed due to its engagement with terrorist activities and propaganda. The text avoids openly representing the Kurdish community and gives place to a clear emphasis to the integrity of Turkey. Some striking statements are given at below:

*“DEHAP represents the whole Turkey which is a country based on the integrity and the brotherhood of the Turkish, the Kurdish, the Laz, The Arabian, and the Cerkassy.” (p.1, lines:15-16)*

*“TURKEY WANTS CHANGE. What is expected as an outcome of the 2002 elections is the change. No one is consent to live the way they used to anymore. The laborer, the villager, the shopkeeper, the women, the youth, the pensioner, the Turkish and the Kurdish, the Sunnis and the Alevis, the whole country demands the change.” (p.1, lines:19-23)*

The above mentioned change is not the change demanded to the status of the Kurdish identity, but the change of the whole system overall. The six-pages-text is more like a “socialist manifesto” rather than a declaration for Kurdish demands. It includes a comprehensive critic for capitalism and system parties that benefit from it. Independency is desired not for the Kurdish, but for all the people in the country in order to be released from the political and economic pressures of the Western institutions and primarily the IMF. Promises regarding the elimination of social inequality and the improvement of the conditions for the laborer are often repeated. DEHAP’s main responsibility is defined as to prevent the war, not the Turkish-Kurdish war, but the war in Iraq with the USA. Previous governments are criticized for their capitalism oriented financial and economy policies.

The text talks about the maintenance of “internal peace”, but it avoids defining the conflict. DEHAP’s only Kurdish-issue related part is as the following:

*“Social conflicts will be solved in a peaceful and a democratic way.*

*Village guarding system will be demolished.*

*We will remove the ‘extraordinary conditions’ in east and south-east regions.*

*We will pay compensation for the immovable properties of the internally displaced people and will provide them with the chances to return.*

*The lands in the region will be cleaned from the mines.” (p:5, lines:6-12)*

The final statements of the text again make emphasis on the unity and the integrity of the country:

*“We unite Turkey which has lost its confidence due to the fears of ‘disintegration’ and ‘the external enemy’. We establish the brotherhood of the Kurdish and the Turkish. We light the torch of peace and feed the country with courage, power and self-confidence.” (p.5, lines:15-17)*

The main impression of the text, at this specific year, is that the Kurdish Party representatives had the anxiety to be the ethnic entrepreneurs of their region due to the history of party closures. That’s why; we see a rather sensitive approach to Turkish national aspirations, a persistent emphasis to the integrity and no claim for any cultural or political rights for the Kurdish community. They preferred to base their policy on socialism which promises equality for all the people in the country.

Due to the absence of a direct address to the issue, it is considered that the Kurdish question is not discussed in the 2002 text by DEHAP.

## **7.2) 2007 Elections and Independent Candidates’ Electoral Declaration**

2007 elections is the first election that the Kurdish representatives decided to test the ‘independent candidates’ strategy. The strategy was proved to be successful and resulted in the entrance of 21 Kurdish members to the parliament.

The declaration consists of 15 pages and presents the Kurdish independent candidates as the “One thousand Hopes Candidates”. Even though there is only five-years-term in between the declaration of the DTP and DEHAP, the change observed in the contents is drastic.

The text starts with the candidates’ claim for bringing a solution to the Kurdish question. As a basic difference from the previous text, here we see the question is recognized and ethnically

identified as ‘the Kurdish question’. The text states that *‘The Kurdish question can no longer be labeled as a security or a terrorism problem; it is rather a matter of political representation’* (p. 6, line:10) It further states, *‘Here we come to bring a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question. We possess the skills to provide the livelihood conditions to the Kurdish people, ability to school in Kurdish language, and ability to teach the Kurdish language. Those are our rights which fall under the category of the cultural rights of minorities. This part of the solution is crucial for the future of our country’* (p.14, lines:1-3). We also see that the candidates are defining themselves as the primary actors of the process. They say that, *‘Kurdish political representatives and parties shall be perceived as the primary and the only actors in the maintenance of peace and in the establishment of democracy.’* (p.7, lines:1-2) *‘We will no longer hush, watch or only criticize the governments, but will show the determinacy to get involved in decision-making mechanisms [...] we will continuously declare that we desire a country in which we are not scared or ashamed to live[...] we will be the persistent followers of our demands.’* (p.4, lines:21-24)

The Kurdish question is defined both in cultural and political aspects and plausible solutions are offered. There is a repeated emphasis on the terms ‘dialogue, rapprochement and empathy’, and are often used as the only means of solving the Kurdish dispute. The candidates also state that their entrance to the parliament is a national matter, as they promise: *‘to fight for the solution of the Kurdish question, the maintenance of sustainable peace, democracy and human rights’* (p.1, lines:6-8) Political representation of the Kurdish community appears as the primary concern of the text. The text says, *‘the Kurdish question or the Southeast question, does not matter how we define it, is related to the problem of political representation in Turkey. The current parliamentary system and the high threshold is therefore a threat to the national unity and the integrity of Turkey.’* (p.3, lines:18-23) The 10% threshold is often criticized and promised to be removed once entering to the parliament. The reason for the persistent emphasis on the Kurdish political representation can be explained by the need to react to the disadvantages created by the current system and to explain their voters why they cannot represent them as a party, but as independent candidates this time. The text states that *‘together with the independent candidates, we offer an alternative to the society; and thereby, we plan to skip the threshold regulation. We do that because; we believe the necessity to protect democracy and civilian political life.’* (p.4, lines:9-11) Besides the political representation, the declaration promises *‘to announce a general clemency, to establish and monitor a political participation system, to change the Law on Political Parties, to provide a peaceful and free political climate, to abrogate the village guard system, to improve the damages created by forced emigration from the East, to clean the lands from mines, and to fight against the restrictions to the women and to the Kurdish in society’,* (p.1, lines:14-21) and also the text declares that *‘the Kurdish parties and the representatives shall be accepted as the primary and the legitimate addressee in every*

*step to the maintenance of peace and the establishment of democracy.’ (p.1, lines:21-23)* Furthermore, Kurdish radicalism is said to emerge *‘due to the combination of the militarist-civilian oppression by the Turkish governments and the local totalitarian structures in addition to the two fascist military coups and their authoritarian governances.’ (p.3, lines:6-11)*. Another statement which falls under the context of minority rights in many countries, but less mentioned here are the cultural-linguistic rights of the Kurdish community. The text contains a brief criticism to the cultural suppression of the Kurds by the Turkish governments and promises the improvement of the Kurdish language, literature and art once entering to the parliament. **(p.11, last paragraph)**

There is also a passionate objection to the Turkish cross-border military operations to Northern Iraq. Those operations are claimed to target the Kurdish communities inhabiting outside the borders and therefore to damage the togetherness and the brotherhood of the Kurdish people living in the Middle East. The party takes it even a step further by stating that *‘in case Turkey insists on the cross-border operations, Turkish national unity and integrity will be deeply destroyed.’ (p.5, lines:27-33)* Nevermore, *‘an immediate cease-fire is requested in order to gain time to develop civilian solutions and to establish a sustainable peace.’ (p.6, lines:16-17)* To do so, Turkey is offered to go for a democratic option like it has happened in Northern Iraq and Northern Ireland. The solution is not named like an autonomous region or self-governance at this stage, but it is identified as to be democratic, fair and free, and also that *“the Kurds shall be the active designers in that solution of which they will no longer be seen as ‘the other’, ‘the foreigner’, or ‘the enemy’.” (p.6, lines:20-22)*

Regarding the social aspects of the issue, the following themes are discussed: the cleaning of mines from the eastern and southeastern territories, the declaration of political clemency for those who are jailed according to the Law on Anti-Terror, removal/revision of the Law on Anti-Terror, the abolition of village guard system, solution to the problem of evacuated villages, reversing the effects of forced immigration, bringing attention to the problems of internally displaced people as well as the social and the economic impacts of the phenomena in the region, positive discrimination to ethnically diverse communities of the region (here not only the Kurdish is referred, but also the Lasz, the Cherkassy, the Syrians, the Armenians, the Arabs and etc.)

Additionally, the proposals which are not peculiar to the Kurdish manifestos but also can be found in the Turkish ones are; the change of the constitution and the replacement of the new one which assures the fundamental human rights and freedoms (with a particular emphasis on the

freedom of expression) and equality before the law for all citizens in the country, a regional development plan for the eastern and southeastern regions, economic boost of the region and the elimination of inter-regional inequality.

In the light of the abovementioned statements, it is observed that DTP held the Kurdish question in the context of human rights, cultural and political rights.

### 7.3) 2011 Elections and Independent Candidates' Electoral Declaration

Before all else, the text of the 2011 elections is a dual one. The first one is called 'Electoral Manifesto of the Labor, Democracy and Freedom Bloc, 2011' and the second one is called 'The Women's Electoral Manifesto of the Labor, Freedom and the Democracy Bloc'. The basic difference of the second, that is, there is a distinctive and comprehensive content on the women's situation in Turkey and strive for the improvement of the situation, particular for those in eastern regions. This tells us that 'women rights' is a salient issue for the Kurdish agenda. However, for the benefit of this study the contents are merged and analyzed as one text, since both texts are produced for the same election year and by the same party organization.

It would not be completely wrong to say that the 2011 Kurdish texts are revolutionary. Here, we see no longer just a definition or an analysis of the Kurdish question, but we see a manifesto which brings up the solution and bases itself to introduce that solution to the party's voters. They say, *'Kurdish question will no doubt be solved in the upcoming government period [...] the blood that has been shed will stop; it is not a promise, but a mission now!'* The solution is called **'Democratic Autonomy of the Socio-culturally Diverse Regions'**. (s.5)<sup>53</sup> The text is a preparation for the declaration of autonomy for the Kurdish people. It does not claim as many seats possible in the parliament, but prepares its voters to a pre-self-declared autonomy. We do not see a request for vote, but the belief that they will solve the problem by their own ways, not by the governments' promises anymore. The text remarks, *'no one has the patience for the loss of wealth, one more life and another 30 years of war. [...] We will force the AKP government who has been resisting bringing a solution to the problem for years. We do not hope any longer, because we know that we will bring our own solution with our own power and our own determination.'* (s.6)

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<sup>53</sup> 2011 manifesto of the Labour, Democracy and Freedom Bloc is designed as a slide show and presented in pdf. Therefore, the statements taken are cited by their slide numbers, not the page numbers.

Without clearly calling it, the text proposes a federation model to the Turkish Republic which respects to the borders of Turkey, to the Turkish National Assembly and the Turkish language as the official language, but introducing a kind of self-governance with local parliaments and semi-governments for the autonomous districts created to be onto ethnically and socio-economically different regions. The project is described as the following:

*'Our proposed solution for the democratization of the administrative structures is the 'democratic autonomy' which we identify as the composition of sub-regional governances. [...] On the contrary to the claims, the project does not support a division or a disintegration of the country, but promises the democratic integrity [...] Turkey shall be divided to 20-25 autonomous regions according to their socio-economic qualifications [...] we will create city councils connected to the regional assemblies which will be selected through elections on regular basis. The regional assemblies will have the political and legal legitimacy and the administrative tools for the people of their geography. [...] Each region will have its own language of origin next to the official state language of Turkey' (s.9-10)*

Furthermore, "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions" are promised to establish in order to reveal the realities of the past 20 years including abuses of human rights, murders, forced departure of the people, military coups, torture stories, village evacuations, vandalisms and such social traumas that are required to be addressed to release the social pain and to maintain the social justice. The context pretty much suggests a set-up of a post-war order, the war here referring the military conflict between the Turkish Army and the Kurdish guerillas. Additionally, there is a request for the new constitution as to replace the 1982 constitution (the constitution brought after the military coup), removal of the village guard system, and complete abolition of the Anti-Terror Law.

As supplementary to the content analysis, the discourse of this text is noteworthy. The discourse is multidimensional. Their approach to the voters is descriptive, since they are bringing a brand new perspective to the Kurdish question and their community needs to be well informed at this stage. On the other hand, the language of the manifesto is critical to AKP governments. We clearly see the frustration of the Kurdish representatives against AKP governments for not having brought a solution to the Kurdish question and continuing with the military operations in the region. The text states: *'We have to show to AKP that democracy does not solely consist of regular elections, but the right to self-determination of the peoples, direct participation to governance, to question the government practices and living*

*together in peace!*’ (s.3) In this text, we see a more comprehensive framework for minority rights as to include Kurds, Arabs, Lasz, Cherkassy, Alevis, Syrians, Armenians, Greeks, and etc. Here, I would like to elaborate on one point, that the rights scheme introduced in the text is not relevant to socialism, as it used to be in the text of DEHAP. We see in the 2011 electoral manifesto that, the departure point of the Kurdish movement is much more flavored with Kurdish nationalism than socialism or other similar collectivist ideologies. Even at the Women’s declaration, the primary spirit is not Feminism alone, but Feminism for the Freedom of the Kurdish. Indeed, Kurdish feminism and Kurdish nationalism go clearly hand in hand in the Women’s Electoral manifesto. They state, *“thanks to the organization of women, we will reach to the freedom and to the democratic autonomy [...] democratic autonomy is the women’s project! [...] the organization and the level of social/political participation of the women are parallel goals with the freedom and democracy [...] we will be the solution bringers to the Kurdish question which triggers and depresses the women’s problem in Turkey”* (s.30-42)

Under the context of ‘Democratic Autonomy’, BDP creates a breakthrough, and their texts are interpreted for this study as putting the Kurdish question in the largest scope that has ever been put.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

### 8.1) Measurement of the Turkish Political Parties’ Positions on the Kurdish Issue

The variation in party positions on the Kurdish issue for each Turkish party is illustrated by charts in below:

**Variation in the MHP’s Positions on the Kurdish Issue**

	<b>Is there a mention of minority/Kurdish/social conflict issue?</b>	<b>As a an economic issue</b>	<b>As a regional development issue</b>	<b>As a security/terrorism issue</b>	<b>As an ethno-cultural issue</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>YES</b>	-	-	√	-
<b>2011</b>	<b>NO</b>	-	-	-	-

The fact that MHP hardly ever mentions the issues of ethnic pluralism, minorities, or Kurdish community tells us that recognition of any ethnic unit other than Turkish is an uncontested and unchangeable dimension in this particular political party. It is early to interpret what it exactly

means that the MHP did not discuss the Kurdish issue in its latest text, even in the security context. To better display the direction this party goes on the Kurdish issue, analysis of more party documents is needed.

#### Variation in the CHP's Positions on the Kurdish Issue

	Is there a mention of minority /Kurdish/ social conflict issue?	As a an economic issue	As a regional development issue	As a security/terrorism issue	As an ethno-cultural issue
2002	NO	-	-	-	-
2007	YES	-	-	√	-
2011	YES	-	-	-	√

The variation in the CHP position on the Kurdish issue appears to be puzzling. The party approached to the Kurdish issue as a security/terrorism matter in the text of 2007, even though it did not mention it at all in the 2002 text. And surprisingly, we see a rather ethno-culturally positive approach in the electoral manifesto of 2011. Due to the unsteady positions that CHP adopted, it is difficult to draw a clear direction for this particular party. It can be possible to obtain more steady results concerning CHP, if one investigates what kind of impacts did the change of presidency (before the 2011 elections) have in the party's policy guidelines.

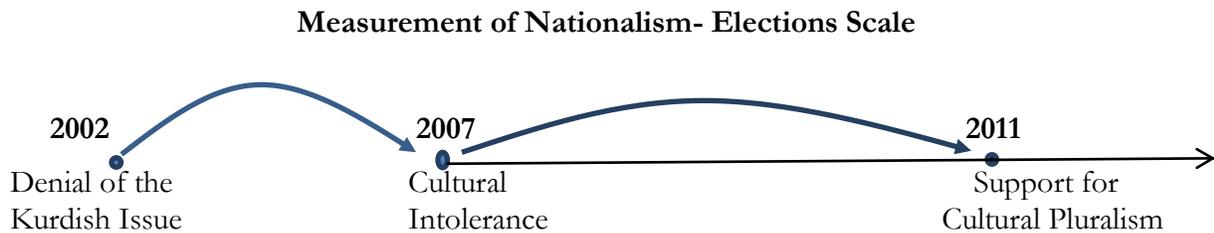
#### Variation in the AKP's Positions on the Kurdish Issue

	Is there a mention of minority/Kurdish/social conflict issue?	As a an economic issue	As a regional development issue	As a security/terrorism issue	As an ethno-cultural issue
2002	YES	√	-	-	-
2007	YES	√	√	√	-
2011	YES	-	-	-	√

Variation in the AKP positions on the Kurdish issue draws a progressive scheme. The economic approach is supported with the relation of the issue to the regional development in the 2007 text. The inclusion of the security context can be seen as a deviation at this point. 2007 seems a year that no political party could avoid approaching the Kurdish question as a security concern. An

agenda analysis or a newspaper content analysis can be done to investigate whether there was an intensification of armed conflicts between the Kurdish guerillas and the Turkish army before the 2007 elections. And as last, the ethno-cultural approach of the 2011 and the complete abandonment of the previous approaches are promising in terms of the political position that AKP will adopt in the following years.

The composition of the above illustrated charts also draw us the following scheme for the direction of the Turkish political parties which moved from the denial of the Kurdish issue in 2002 to the expression of cultural tolerance in 2011.



To conclude, we can say that, regarding the Kurdish issue, Turkish political parties are heading towards to follow a less nationalist and a more culturally pluralist attitude, with lesser stress on the terrorist activities. The founding also displays that Turkey shows early signs of being ready to discuss the Kurdish issue in more liberal perspectives.

## 8.2) Variation in the Kurdish Party/Candidates' Positions

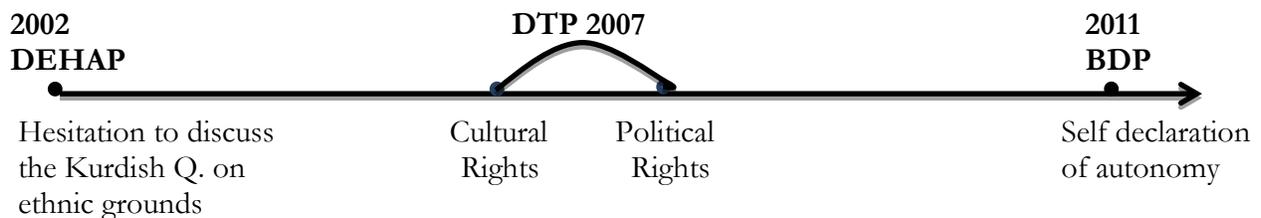
The Kurdish positions are viewed only in the elections scale, since there are no competing Kurdish parties. DEHAP-2002, DTP-2007, BDP-2011 are the parties who replaced one another and sourced by the same party organization, due to the closure of the previous party. Therefore, the party positions are assumed to be identical and only the variations throughout the years are illustrated for the measurement.

### Changes observed in 'Elections Scale'

	Mention of the Kurdish Identity, Nationality or the Kurdish Question	Mention of the Kurdish Question in Human Rights Context	Mention of the Kurdish Question in Cultural Aspects	Mention of the Kurdish Question in Political Aspects	Proposing a Solution	Demanding Self-Governance/ Autonomy	Demanding Independence
2002	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-
2007	YES	√	√	√	√	-	-
2011	YES	√	√	√	√	√	-

The change observed throughout the Kurdish texts is astounding. The analysis of the Kurdish documents displayed the evolution of the Kurdish political approach, rather than the differences in between the Kurdish texts. What was portrayed was not the change, but the transformation of the Kurdish movement. The very first electoral manifesto that was analyzed hardly ever mentioned the Kurdish nationality, whereas the latest document proposed and identified the autonomous, self-governed Kurdish entities within the borders of the Turkish state.

To better display the route that is covered by the Kurdish party/representatives, the following diagram is illustrated:



### 8.3) Interpretation of the Results under the Political Opportunity Structure

In this chapter, I briefly analyze the results under the framework of 'political opportunity structure' (POS) that is introduced at the beginning of the study. I will re-read the findings of my research as the materials of the POS and make assumptions on the future of the Kurdish political movement.

As it was defined before, political opportunity thesis claims that social movements emerge as a result of "expanding" political opportunities.<sup>54</sup> Under the view of the last 10 years, it seems unclear yet whether the Kurdish political party/representatives will be able to develop and finalize a self-standing social movement, as they claimed in their final text. The political environment that is reflected onto the Turkish electoral manifestos has not yet expanded that much to provide the necessary political opportunities for the Kurdish movement to flourish. The fast acceleration and the uncompromising attitude of the Kurdish movement that is reflected onto the Kurdish electoral manifestos lack some very severe organizational strategies and legitimacy from the current political system in Turkey. Therefore, it is difficult to say only by looking at the Kurdish texts, that the Kurdish political movement will lead to any social or political change in the conditions of the Kurdish community. On the contrary, it may lead to the fall of the movement directed by the Kurdish party/representatives, and leave the fate of the Kurdish community to the hands of the Turkish parties.

On the other hand, the direction of the Turkish party positions signifies that a more liberal attitude can be adopted towards the Kurdish political and cultural demands. The political environment has not fully matured, but it is possible to observe early signs of cultural pluralism and ethnic tolerance. It is early though, to give a time schedule for possible liberalizing policies that the upcoming Turkish governments would follow to solve the Kurdish question. A complementary research on the electoral manifestos of the upcoming elections can give birth to more extensive political opportunities than they give today.

## 9. CONCLUSION

By accepting the ethnic-based national identity in 1924, the Kurdish issue emerged. But, for a long time that issue was seen as the ethnic separatist movement by the state authorities. Not finding a final solution to the question until today has a direct link to that official approach.

However, this study showed that the Turkish political parties came a long way during the last 10 years. The Kurdish question, which was ignored in the first elections of the 2000's, was revisited within ten years in a completely different context. The political parties in Turkey came to the

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<sup>54</sup> Jeff Goodwin, *et al*, 1999, p: 30.

understanding that the problems of Eastern Turkey has to be addressed and cannot be managed with an approach solely based on security concerns, with the prohibition of Kurdish politicians, and with the fight against terrorism. More promising still is when the head of Turkey's traditionally anti-Kurdish military, General Ilker Basbug, speaks of a need to tackle the Kurdish problem from its social and economic roots or states that "even a terrorist is a human being".<sup>55</sup> Exactly at this point, the POS provides us the analytical tools to examine the Kurdish issue.

Although this has been a limited attempt to apply the approach, it was turned out to be efficient in the demonstration of what potential opportunities might arise within the Turkish political system. As the main ingredient of this approach, study of manifestos proved to be a useful scale to measure the variation in party positions and to monitor the general direction of the Turkish politics. Changes in the political attitudes of the parties cannot be well detected with another method. The most important change was recorded in the analysis of the Kurdish candidates' declarations and electoral manifestos. We see that the Kurdish party moved from the 0 level of mentioning of the Kurdish nationalism to the self-declaration of autonomy. As progressive as it looks from the perspective of the Kurdish national movement, it may fall to the trap of being radicalized. The democracy Kurds long aspired might be in danger of losing its legitimacy.

The expected progress in the solution of the Kurdish problem will be slow, cautious, and marked with interruptions. The Kurdish politicians therefore have two options: either to wait until the political environment gets matured and extensive democratization steps are taken by the parliament, or to follow the independent path they have initiated and be ready for an open-ended political deadlock.

Kurdish question is still without an answer today; but today, it is more possible to say that it will reach to an answer in the future.

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<sup>55</sup> Ranj Alaadin (2009) "Turkey Re-thinks the Kurdish Question", *The Guardian*, 28 June.

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