INSTRUMENTAL AND SYMBOLIC SOURCES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT: APPLICATION TO THE KURDISH CONFLICT IN TURKEY

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Introduction

Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, and the largest one without their own state (Izady 1992, 118; MacDonald 1993, 124). They live in the territories of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia and Azerbaijan (Leonard 2006, 934). Kurds attracted the international community's attention in 1988 with the Halabja massacre in which thousands of Iraqi Kurds were killed with chemical weapons by the Iraqi and Iranian powers (Palletiere 2001, 206). The popularity of the Kurds further increased with the direct US involvement in the Middle East during the Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraqi War in 2003. The Kurds living in those countries have had several ethnic based disputes with the ruling states; they either fight for autonomy or for independence.

Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey existed since the very early years of the Turkish Republic and continues to this day. Starting from the local uprisings between 1925 and 1938, to the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers Party, PKK) incident, the Kurdish question has been one of the most problematic issues for Turkey as the Turkish state and millions of her citizens have suffered from the PKK terrorism. Researchers' estimates about the financial cost of the PKK terrorism to the Turkish state from 1984 to 1998 vary between $80 billion and $225 billion. At $80 billion, meaning $7 billion spending yearly, the cost would contribute to the 99% inflation rate, national debt and half of the government's revenue in 1998 (Nachmani 2003, 49; Ron 1995, 64; Orttung 2006, 5; Salih 2004, 175; Akcapar 2006, 19). During this period, approximately 30,000 – 35,000 Turkish citizens were killed (Kramer 2000, 39) including Turkish soldiers and police, Village Guards, PKK militants, civil servants, Turkish and Kurdish civilians. Moreover, according to the Global IDP Project, in 2002, the total number of people who were displaced, either voluntary or compulsory, due to this conflict was one million although other sources estimate this number at three million. Some villagers in the southeast migrated to cities, while other city and village residents migrated to the western part of Turkey (Kabasakal Arat 2007, 163; Orttung 2006, 5).

In order to understand the sufferings arising from the ethnic diversity, the root causes of the emergence of different ethnic groups and the reason for the severe ethnic conflict and mass supports should be examined. The ethnic conflict research necessitates a theoretical base in order to better understand the conflicts. For that reason, I examined two different ethnic conflict theories, the instrumental

and the symbolic theories, and explain the sources of the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey using the arguments of those theories.

The instrumental and the symbolic theories bring structural explanations for the sources of the ethnic conflict. While the instrumental theory argues that the nation and nationalism, thus the ethnic conflict, were artificial modern phenomena, and invented by the elite, the symbolic theory rejects the artificiality argument of the instrumentalists, and brings historical explanations based on the ethnic symbols, shared cultural values and myths. The instrumentalist theory conceives the ethnic identity as created and constructed by the ethnic elite (Gellner 1964-1983; Young 1993; Berger 1963; Tilley 1997). The instrumental theory also argues that the modernization and the economic factors were the fundamental sources of the ethnic conflict. On the other hand, the symbolic theory does not associate the ethnic conflict with the modern era. According to the symbolists, there is continuity between the past and present time, and the ethnicity concept is not invented (Smith 1986-1991-1993-1998-1999; Hastings 1997; Kaufman 2001). Symbols, myths and cultural values are the major constructors of the ethnicity. In order to understand how instrumentalist approaches explain the conflict, I analyzed the impact of modernization, economic factors, and the activities of the Kurdish elite on the Kurdish people. To explore the significance of the symbolic approach in the ethnic conflict in Turkey, I also investigated the existence of the cultural values, the historical myths and the ethnic symbols as well as the ethnic fears resulting from the threats on ethnic symbols, myths and values.

In this paper, I compare the instrumental and symbolic theories while explaining the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. As a result of this comparison, I found that integrating the two theories contributes to the explanation of the conflict. According to the literature, throughout Turkish history, both the instrumental and the symbolic conflict sources explain the existence of the Kurdish ethnic conflict. Ergil (1995), Oztalas (2004), Yegen (1999), Kirisci and Winrow (1997) and Olson (1996) claim that the aspects of modernization such as the improvements in the literacy rates, media, transportation, communication and mass urbanization increased social awareness of the differences among the Kurds and the Turks. Hence, modernization contributed to the ethnic conflict by making the disadvantages of the Kurds obvious. Allahar (2005) underlines the impact of the economic development as a conflict source in the western regions of Turkey with Kurdish migrants. According to Anter (1991), Celik (1999) and Nachmani (2003), the Kurds experienced relatively high unemployment and poverty levels for decades. Kirisci and Winrow (1997), Besikci (1969), and Barkey and Fuller (1998) emphasize either the exclusivist or inadequate government policies aiming at economic development in the southeast, and interpret it as a conflict source. Oztalas (2004) agrees with the instrumental theories and argues that the conflict was elite led. For the elite motivation, both the instrumental and the symbolic theories have been significant. Kirisci and Winrow (1997) indicate that the early demands of the Kurdish elite were mostly related to the economic underdevelopment, and took a Kurdish nationalist shape during the later years of the conflict.

The symbolic sources, on the other hand, are based on the historical and cultural values, myths and symbols. It is found that the Kurds in Turkey shared such historical and cultural values, myths and symbols which can be associated with

their ethnicity. Those values have had a noticeable influence on the emotional side of the group reaction based on the historical and symbolic values. The PKK leadership and the Kurdish mythology claim an ownership of the land which has been ruled by the Turkish state (Oztalas 2004). Boulding (1994), Cemal (2003), Bayrak (1993), Zürcher (1994), Yegen (1996), Gurbey (2000), Barkey and Fuller (1998) and Van Bruinessen (1997) argue that the threatened symbolic values such as the land, language, religion and culture have created common emotional ethnic grievances among the Kurdish people. As a result, when they found an opportunity, the Kurdish people mobilized for the ethnic conflict against the Turkish state.

I argue that both of the ethnic conflict theories have been significant in interpreting the sources of the ethnic grievances among the Kurdish people. However, when we analyze the sources of violence in the Kurdish conflict, we find that the PKK elite effectively utilized the symbolic sources of the conflict. By doing this, the PKK elite influenced the ethnic emotions of the Kurdish people and created a common and strong hostility against the Turkish state (Oztalas 2004; Gurbey 1996; Van Bruinessen 1988). To persuade the people to support a violent conflict, the PKK elite extensively utilized the symbolic theory's arguments related to the conflict sources. It created a shared group fear for the survival of ethnic values, myths and symbols by using past hardships and stressing the present sufferings of the Kurds arising from the exclusion of their historical and cultural values.

Although the symbolic PKK provocation was successful, it only convinced a small group of Kurds to engage in violence, thus to attract the Kurdish masses, the PKK followed a different strategy. Since the late 1980s, besides the symbolic propaganda, the PKK tried to take advantage of the economic sufferings and the security problems of the Kurdish people to gain mass support for the violent conflict. In line with this goal, the PKK promised Kurdish people economic improvements gaining many members although few of the PKK promises were kept, and it used coercion against its own people to convince them to take their side in a violent conflict (Mutlu 1994; Gunter 1989; Latif 1999).

This paper is composed of theory and application parts. In the theory part, it introduces two approaches, the instrumental theory and the symbolic theory. The instrumentalist claims related to the sources of the ethnic conflict are examined under modernization, economic factors and the elite role. The existence and the impact of the symbolic theory are analyzed under myths-symbols-fears and opportunities for the mobilization. In the application part, the paper identifies the instrumental and the symbolic sources of the ethnic conflict in the Kurdish case in Turkey as well as further emphasizes the explanations for the severe ethnic conflict and the mass support.

Sources of Ethnic Conflict: Instrumental and Symbolic Theories

Instrumental Theory

According to the instrumentalists, ethnicity and nationhood are made-up ideological modern era phenomenon. Gellner (1964) expresses the instrumentalist view of artificiality of the nationalism with his famous quotations,

"nationalism…invents nations", and "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (168). Gellner also claimed nationalists as the constructers, importers or the rebuilders of nationalism aiming to improve their own position while they argue they are working for their groups' interests. Like nationalism, ethnicity is propagated and manipulated by elites, or proto-elites, aiming at either material advantages or power, or both.

Instrumental theory explains the main sources of the ethnic conflict through modernization, economic factors and elite ambitions. Modernization increases social integration and awareness which make the differences between the members of ethnic groups obvious. Those differences may include disadvantages for an ethnic group or may create discriminatory and exclusivist policies against the members of one ethnic group. Being disadvantaged or discriminated against create ethnic grievances among the group members, and increases the possibility of the ethnic conflict. Economic development, on the other hand, causes competition among the ethnic groups in the society, especially in the labor market, and contributes to the economic grievances. Relative deprivation theory also states that the economic welfare and the relative decline in the standards of living are the main determinants of the ethnic movements. Finally, the instrumental theory emphasizes the role of the elite in that ethnic elite is the constructer and manipulator of the ethnic identity for their own benefits.

Modernization: Mobilization and Industrialization

According to the instrumental theory, ethnic conflict makes sense only in modern societies. Mobilization and industrialization are the two very important outcomes of the modernization. They both generate a change in the society and a social inter-ethnic integration. Mobilization triggers a transition in a society, from tradition to modernity, through the improvements in the literacy levels, introduction of mass media, advancements in transportation and communication, and urbanization. By this transition, social awareness and ethnic learning among the members of the ethnic groups increase; they may face inequalities and discriminatory actions towards their ethnic group, and realize their differences from the rest of the society. The awareness of the existing differences may cause resentments if they become disadvantaged in the new society. For industrialization to be achieved efficiently, on the other hand, governments should bring some standards for the entire society and should apply more centralized policies which may be problematic for different ethnic traditions, and may create ethnic resentments among the subordinated groups. Hence, modernization, for the instrumentalists, is a source of ethnic conflict.

Social mobilization indicates a general process of change from traditional to modern life styles for important segments of society (Deutsch 1961: Haas 1997, 3). During this process, the ethnic groups integrate and become socially aware of each others' ethnic characteristics. Those outcomes of the mobilization start a process of ethnic learning (Newbury 1988, 15). Ethnic learning makes the differences among the ethnic groups obvious and contributes to ethnic conflict by creating resentments among the disadvantaged group (Oztalas 2004). If, during modernization, one of the ethnic groups appears as disadvantaged in the society,

then the unassimilated and mobilized group members may believe the change creates an insecure environment for them (Horowitz 1985, 99-100). In addition, if the members of the subordinate groups are discriminated against and their mobility blocked, this may create resentment which may be a source of ethnic violence among the group members if they feel denied as an ethnic group (Gurr 1970-1991). Thus, as the society is mobilized, we may expect that the mobilized and unassimilated ethnicities to appear as a conflict reason (Deutsch 1966, Chap. 6). Horowitz (1985) concluded that as cross-cutting socio-economic linkages decreased because of mobilization, the confrontation among the ethnic groups becomes obvious as a result of inequality (101). Accordingly, this transformation increases the probability of secessionist and other ethnic or nationalist movements.

The main elements of this transformation are the increases in the literacy levels, introduction of mass media, improvements in transportation and communication, and urbanization. Literacy is known as a necessity of enlightenment for any people. For the ethnic groups, literacy introduces people with world, science, news and media. The information provided by media is a crucial factor in the size of the group movements (Tilly 1978; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1988). Anderson (1983) sees the nation as an imagined community, which has been built by the newspapers as well as television, radio, magazines and Internet. The media helps people become aware of their own ethnic identity and that of others. Media may publicize the disadvantages and discrimination of an ethnic group which may cause ethnic resentments. Moreover, extremist elite may also use media to reach and mobilize the masses (Oztalas 2004, 81). Improvements in transportation and communication are also the major sources of social awareness. According to Connor (1972), improvements in transportation make the ethnic minorities more aware of the distinctions between themselves and the others increasing the cultural awareness of the minorities. Those improvements also increase the inter-ethnic relations which are the fundamental sources in the creation of ethnic consciousness, thus, contributing to the ethnic conflict if the members of an ethnic group awaken about their disadvantages. Connor also states that the intra- and inter-ethnic contacts increased by the improved communication generate solidarity within communal groups and competition among different ones.

Migration is another source of the social mobilization and modernization as it may contribute to ethnic conflict since it increases social contact among different ethnic groups (Premdas 1990). Rural to urban migration or migration from lower economic opportunity regions to higher regions affects the labor market dynamics. If the migrated ethnic population accepts low wages, this may decrease the wage rate initially (Ozlak 1992, 32). The increase in the labor supply and the decrease in the wage rate cause fear among the native workers for the immigrants. They fear the loss of jobs or decreasing salaries. Therefore, there may be discrimination, violence and exclusion against the newcomers by the native workers (Ozlak 1992, 32). The members of the migrated ethnic group dealing with the discriminatory attitudes of the native workers may create an impetus for the ethnic gathering and the ethnic collective actions (Ozlak 1992, 37). The ethnic collective actions, in turn, may be counted as a source of the ethnic conflict.

Industrialization appears as another source of ethnic conflict since it brings radical and persistent transformations in the traditional balances of society. It brings social integration through either contributing to the mobilization process or spreading the

central control into the social and cultural groups in the society with more political centralization (Foster and Rubinstain 1986, 253; Gellner 1983; Williams 2001). While industrialization contributes to social mobilization and thus the ethnic conflict on one hand, it also creates ethnic group resentments through centralization and standardization applied through policies of the government to create a more efficient environment for industrialization. The political centralization and the emergence of the powerful political systems generate political and cultural integration in the society (Foster and Rubinstain 1986, 253; Gellner 1983; Williams 2001, 6). This centrally managed social integration makes social change inevitable in spite of the fact that it is not voluntarily accepted by every member of the society. It also makes social differences among groups obvious, and may further increase the inequity, suffering, exploitation and anger of the poor. This continuum, in turn, creates group anger among different ethnic minorities in the society and contributes to ethnic conflict.

Economic Development and Relative Deprivation

The instrumental theory intensely deals with the economic issues in the society and their effects to the inter-ethnic relations and the ethnic conflict. It hence assumes the major sources of ethnic conflict are economic. According to the instrumental approach, ethnic conflict in a society can be explained by various economic indicators such as economic development and rivalry, economic welfare of the ethnic group, benefit distribution and relative deprivation, meaning a decline in the standards of living of a group relative to another one. Bates (1983) states that ethnic groups are rational coalitions formed to compete for scarce goods within the context of social changes brought about by modernization (152). The most important effect of modernization is to increase the awareness of economic differences and resentment of differences between advantaged and the disadvantaged groups (Connor 1973, 21). Instrumental theory states that the economic conditions are the major sources of ethnic conflict and they examine it under economic development and rivalry as well as relative deprivation.

According to the instrumentalists, economic development is one of the fundamental causes and motives of group grievances (Boswell and Dixon 1990). The instrumentalists see the forces of the political and socio-economic development as a source of change and competition among ethnic groups for resources. Economic development brings contextual change into the society, decreases the socio-economic linkages, and increases competition over resources hence contributing to ethnic rivalry. They found this competition as a motivating condition for aggressive ethnic mobilization by testing this hypothesis through maximum likelihood estimation techniques on a pooled time-series sample for 126 nations for each year during the period 1948-82, and concluded that the economic development in the early stages contributes to ethnic conflict in multiethnic societies (Mousseasu 2001, 548-549; McKay 1982, 407). As an example, the labor market in heterogeneous nations usually fragments along ethnic lines (Bonacich 1972; Brown and Boswell 1995) and economic development processes strengthen the labor-market competition along these ethnic lines (Olzak and Nagel 1986, 37-47), thus, increasing the likelihood of competition between the different ethnic groups for the same occupations (Nielsen 1985, 142).

The instrumentalist view emphasizes relative deprivation as another major source of ethnic conflict. Relative deprivation indicates an inequality between the standards of living of the two ethnic groups or a decline in the standards of living of one group. When a group begins to compare itself with another group which is economically, culturally and politically more successful, the less successful group feels discriminated against (Soeters 2005, 100). According to Bates (1983), wealthier, better educated and urbanized ethnic groups tend to be envied, resented or feared by the less wealthy and less educated ethnic groups (162; Horowitz 1985, 102). Relative deprivation theory argues that poorer areas want to secede because they consider that the central government to be discriminating against them while richer areas might want to secede because they do not want to be burdened by the poorer ones (Kaufman 2001, 18; Brown 2001, 321). Decline in the living standards is also a major cause of ethnic conflict according to the relative deprivation theory (Kaufman 2001, 18).

The uneven distribution of the benefits of modernity among the groups also indicates a relative deprivation and increases the group tension (Brass 1976, 231-32; Melson and Wolpe 1970, 1115-17; Bates 1974, 462-64; Horowitz 1985, 101). According to Chua (1998), by modernization, some specific ethnic groups benefited from the conditions created by the market economy and the democratization (37). These processes increased the economic dominance and prosperity of a particular ethnic group since the market-oriented economic reforms initially increased the unemployment among the subordinated ethnic group and increased prices as well. Thus, those increase the intense ethnic resentment among the disadvantaged ethic group members. As those specific groups benefit from the situation, the economic development, in turn, produces a highly volatile and potentially destructive dynamic for the society. Gurr (1994) states that in the presence of some groups gaining more advantages at the expense of others, the frustration and the ethnic identity increases, leading to ethnic mobilization and conflict (348-49). Chua (1998) also indicates that economic dominance of one group provokes, maintains or worsens the intense ethno-economic resentment among the unprivileged ethnic group. She claims that under those conditions the subordinate group will mobilize and the resentment will transform into a potential ethno-nationalist movement in order to remove the dominant groups' advantage (37-38). Ellingsen (2000) also argues that if the distribution of the benefits follows ethnic lines, meaning that one of the ethnic groups is satisfied with the situation and the other is not, the likelihood increases that the discriminated part will rebel (234).

Role of the Ethnic Elite as the Leaders of Conflict

The instrumental approach strongly stresses the calculated role played by ethnic activists, the elites, on ethnic conflict. Modernization increases the possibility of elite activities in creating or stimulating an ethnic identity. In modern society, the members of an ethnic group may face the inequalities and discriminations set by the dominant groups. In order to survive, members of the ethnic group compete as a group for the scarce resources with other ethnic groups with the ethnic elite as the leaders of the group. Ethnic elite create or manipulate the ethnic and nationalist sentiments of the group and provoke group awareness to mobilize ethnic followers

through mostly economic and political interests. Social mobilization in the society provides a more convenient environment for the elite to organize and mobilize a group. Thus, while the modernization and economic factors provide the necessary conditions for an ethnic conflict by creating ethnic resentment among the disadvantaged ethnic group, it is the ethnic elite who are mobilizing the group to start a collective action.

The instrumental theory claims that the ethnic elite use the group differences which became apparent in the society by modernization to manipulate the nationalist ideologies and create conflicts out of those differences for their own interests (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Gellner 1983; Hechter 1999, 26; Drobizheva 1996, 4). This theory argues that ethnic ties are not strong and steady but rather frequently flexible and hybrid. Therefore, it is rational to analyze the ethnicity as an instrument to promote wealth, status and power (Leoussi 2001, 84). Chua (1998) states that when there is an ownership claim for a nation, an ethnic group may argue that they are the indigenous people of that land. However, even this indigenousness argument of claiming the nation is frequently artificial and manipulated by the elites (36). According to Kuran (1998), the elite are the activators and the stimulators of the ethnic tensions (653-657). In addition Brass (1991) argued,

> "Ethnicity and nationalism are the political constructions. They are creations of elites who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate material from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves" (111).

Connor (1972), on the other hand, argued that those ethnic elites take advantage of the differences created by modernization in order to institute ethnically based political movements with the aim of improving the economic and political well being of their group or region. Consequently, we can state that according to the instrumental theory, ethnic elite use the benefits of the modernization to mobilize the masses to compete with the other groups for instrumental personal concerns or group benefits (Newbury 1988, 15).

Symbolic Theory

Ethno-symbolists accept the constructed nature of ethnicity, but they refuse to associate it with the modern period as instrumentalists do. According to Smith (1991),

> "A nation is a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (14).

Ethno-symbolists argue that once formed, ethnic identity is strongly path-dependent, indicating a continuity between pre-modern and modern forms of social cohesion (Kaufmann and Conversi 2007). The symbolic theory also

mentions the structure of the social cohesion that the group members share in pre-modern and the modern periods (Kaufman 2001). Those suggestions of ethno-symbolists limit the arguments over the new inventions made by ethnic activists who may be counted as ethnic elites in the instrumental approach (Hastings 1997; Kaufmann and Conversi 2007).

Criticisms of the Instrumental Theory

Symbolic politics theory challenges the two fundamental assumptions of the instrumental theory. First, instrumentalists presume that people have stable preferences in choosing. Second, people try to rationally maximize their utility as defined by the stable preferences (Kaufman 2001, 27). Also, according to the symbolic theorists, the sources instrumental theory offered for ethnic conflict are either inadequate or incorrect.

According to the symbolic theorists, people's preferences are not always stable nor rational. According to psychologists Irving Janis and Leon Mann (1977), decision making is a stressful process which people are not enthusiastic about (7-17).The process is complex and hard to handle making people nervous about wrong decisions. Given the complexity of the process, people may have different and unstable opinions. The way people frame the issue in their minds determines the preferences (Kaufman 2001, 27;). Moreover, psychologists argue that while making a decision, people are affected by their emotions, leading to the conclusion that the decisions made are not rational (Fiske and Taylor 1991, 456). We can better explain the importance of the emotions on people with an example related to ethnic conflict. Horowitz argues that emotions such as fear of group extinction, demographic fears and a history of domination by the rival group lead to feelings of hostility among the members of an ethnic group (Horowitz 1985, Chap. 4). The group decides whether to mobilize for an ethnic action or not by the hostility and fear it feels towards the other ethnic group. Accordingly, Horowitz, Fiske and Taylor agree that we should deal with emotions as the most influential factors on preferences.

According to symbolic theorists, while the outcomes of modernization, such as social mobilization and industrialization may be the effective elements in ethnic conflict, they cannot be the major sources of the conflict as stated in the instrumentalist models for several reasons. First, symbolic theory assumes that emotional grievances, such as hostile feelings toward other ethnic groups or an existential fear that group members feel, are the major sources of an ethnic conflict. However, the grievances that result from the outcomes of modernization, such as mobilization and industrialization, are not based on the emotional hostile feelings. Accordingly, while the social mobilization and industrialization may be the effective elements in ethnic conflict, they cannot be the main sources as stated in the instrumentalist models. Secondly, according to Anthony D. Smith (1998), industrialization is not a prerequisite for either nationalism or ethnic conflict because there are instances of nationalist movements emerging well before its advent such as the cases of Finland, Serbia, Ireland, Mexico, Japan and many others, including post-revolutionary France and pre-Bismarckian Germany (36). On the other hand, freedom for mobilization is a requirement for the ethnic conflict since ethnic groups must have enough freedom to mobilize politically without

being stopped by state coercion (Tilly 1978; Esman 1994, 31). Consequently, symbolic theory states that the major outcomes of modernization cannot be the fundamental sources of ethnic conflict because they do not constitute the ethnic emotional grievances among the ethnic groups and there are examples of the ethnic conflict prior to the modernization period.

Symbolic theory states that economic development and rivalry as well as relative deprivation arguments of the instrumental theory are inadequate in explaining ethnic conflict. First of all, economic development may create economic rivalry and discrimination among the ethnic groups; however, economic discrimination itself does not explain why people resort to war and why most people mobilize for the political action in the first place (Kaufman 2001, 8). Ted Gurr (1991) concluded from his statistical studies that the economic discrimination, as an outcome of economic development and rivalry, does not have a significant effect on the ethnic mobilization (81, 124). Furthermore, in the economically competitive society, symbolic theory states that people may act for their group's relative advantage rather than their own individual benefits and through non-rational motives refuting the instrumental theory's claims in relation to individual concerns about the benefit distribution. Henri Tajfel's (1970) and Michael Bilig's (1973) findings suggests that when offered the choice between maximizing benefits for their own group or maximizing the difference between their group and another, people tend to choose to maximize the difference. Horowitz (1985) adds that when ethnic conflict turns into such a fight for group advantage, the result is frequently a contest for dominance for the groups trying to show their superior group worth rather than gaining individual benefits (144-146). Another challenge is related to the gains of the group members resulting from the ethnic movements. According to the instrumentalist view, as an interest group, ethnic groups expect to gain more than the effort they put in the conflict. For most people, involvement in the ethnic movement is not instrumentally rational, because the benefit they gain is not worth the effort (Kaufman 2001, 18).

On the relative deprivation issue, the instrumentalists' findings are challenged since the relative wealth and ethnic conflict relationship is not correlated empirically in the way that instrumentalists assume. The secession and economic welfare relationship of the instrumental theory which brings economical justifications to the secession claims of the poor and wealthy regions is incorrect. Kaufman (2001) indicates that although multiethnicTajikistan fits relative deprivation criteria because of its second-lowest scores in economic performance and national growth rates among the former Soviet Republics and it experienced a severe decline in the standards of living, it did not experience an ethnic war or a severe ethnic conflict. Kaufman further points out ethnic wars did occur in Georgia and Armenia whose national income rates were third and fourth, respectively, among the former Soviet Republics and both experienced high economic growth before the ethnic wars indicating that relatively low standards of living cannot be the major source of ethnic conflict (18).

Symbolic theory also argues that instrumentalist assumptions about the elite role in the ethnic conflict are irrelevant. According to the symbolic theorists, instrumentalists failed to recognize that the main activists in the mobilized groups may merely be interested in the maintenance of their cultural heritage, rather than gaining material goals. There may not be distrustful ambition but an honest desire

to protect the communal values coming from the past. On the other hand, ethno-national mobilizations may not result from the conscious efforts by elites to obtain access to specific social, political and material resources. Such goals are more easily pursued in the name of 'alleged' common interests. Socio-political elites are particularly efficient in deploying the ethno-symbolic complex to its best performance (Kaufmann and Conversi 2007). Horowitz (1985) also indicates that the instrumental theory is further weakened since they cannot clarify why followers follow the elite (130). Instrumentalist approaches explain the mass support by manipulative elites who are motivated for their own economic or political benefits. Accordingly, when there is a deprivation in the elite's status resulting from an economic or political loss, the provocative and manipulative elite associates this with a group loss. They convince masses that a deprivation in the status of their ruler would be a substantial threat to their own separate identity. For that reason, masses believe and follow the elite when there is a decline or threat of decline in their status. However, Horowitz finds this view not very realistic since it links mass reaction with narrow elite interest. Another explanation for the elite potential in influencing the masses is that the non-elites cannot understand the personal motivation of the elite and they suffer from a "false-consciousness" for they are serving interests other than their own (Sklar 1967, 7-8; Kasfir 1979, 368; Horowitz 1985, 104-105). Horowitz (1985) further critiques this argument stating that the false consciousness claim assumes all people were misled and do not have a sound conception (105). The severe ethnic conflicts and ethnic wars further weaken the elite ambitions assumption of the instrumental theory, since its explanations on the motivation of either the elites or the masses are refutable.

Necessary Conditions and Major Sources of Conflict

According to the symbolic theory, the major sources of ethnic conflict are the myths and symbols, ethnic fears, and opportunities for ethnic mobilization. The existence of the myths and ethnic symbols provides shared past and common sentiments among the members of an ethnic group. Accordingly, the group members feel and behave in the same way for the status or the existence of one of those ethnic symbols that represents a shared history. Whenever the status or the existence of those ethnic symbols is threatened by another group, this threat is associated by the existence of the ethnic group. The threatened ethnic symbols create great emotional resentments among the members of an ethnic group. If the ethnic group finds any opportunity to fight the dominance of the other ethnic group, such as lack of authority, power and willingness of the ethnic elite and support from international powers, the conflict may take a severe form as an ethnic war.

Myths and Symbols

Symbolic theory explores the existence, continuity and the importance of the historical memories, myths and the symbols, and their usefulness for the elite provocation. According to the symbolic theory, the existence of those common past values is a requirement for being an ethnic group. Those memories, myths and symbols have such a powerful impact on the group members that they may evoke

the emotions related to the ethnic past. People, having common feelings, beliefs and opinions about the same values of the past, may be mobilized, manipulated and ruled by the ethnic elite.

Ethno-symbolists emphasize the Durkheimian 'social facts' like, territorial memories, genealogical myths and symbolic markers that continued for generations (Romani 2002, 297). According to Smith (1993), the existence of the historical memories, the myths and the symbols is a fundamental requirement for a group to be counted as a separate ethnic identity (28-29). Symbols of territory and community may take variety of forms; flags, totems, coins, ritual objects, hymns and anthems, special foods and costumes, as well as representations of ethnic deities, monarchs and heroes (Smith 1999, 16). Almost every ethnic group in the world justifies its existence through the evidence related to their antique history, myths and old symbolic values. For example Turks believe that their ancestors migrated to the different parts of the world from Central Asia before the first century. This indicates that the Turks, as an old and rooted ethnic group, have existed for more than two millennia. Memories are the keys in understanding the ethnies'[1] lives and their collective behaviors (Smith 1991; Smith 1999; Smith 2000). Memory is an essential part of the ethnic identity; thus, the central claim of the ethno-symbolism is the relationship of the shared memories to collective identities (Llobera 1994; Smith 1986; Smith 1999). The myths help us to understand the dynamic and the expressive nature of ethnic identity (Smith 1986, 211-212). Those memories, myths and symbols connect the past and present symbolically (Ross 2007, 2) and stand as proof for the existence and continuity of an ethnic identity.
Symbols are so effective, because they have strong emotional and unifying impact on people (Elder and Cobb 1983, 37-46, 58-62). Ethnic groups have myths of shared history as well as symbols that evoke those myths (Kaufman 2001, 29). The major emotional meanings of those symbols represent the loyalty to the group, and hostility and fear to the other groups. Each of those emotions explains the common activities and objectives of group sharing. For that reason, those myths and symbols may become the central points of an inter-group conflict since they appear as the main motives of many ethnic movements (Ross 2007, 205). Those memories, on the other hand, are the traditional wisdoms for the ethnies, and the enduring characteristics in the creation and the continuity of national identities (Smith 1998-1999-2001-2004). Therefore, they contribute to the ethnic unification. They have been shared, respected, and transferred from generation to generation by the members of the ethnic groups. Smith (1993) assumes that national symbols

[1] According to Smith, the first nations were formed around ethnic cores. Smith uses the term ethnie for the earlier ethnic communities which were the foundations of modern nations. Ethnie means a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland, and some degree of solidarity, at least among the elites (Smith 1986, Chap. 2; Horowitz 1985, Chap. 1-2). Ethnies are formed by coalescence and division, but are durable. Smith's choice of the term ethnie (or ethnic community) indicates emphasis on a sense of collective identity predating the rise of the modern nation-state. Thus the latter is dissociated from nationalism per se (Kaufmann and Conversi 2007).

derived from the mythical ethno-history are the unifying factors not only in established nation-states, but also in the new and delicate multicultural states. In order to survive and flourish as a nation, all nations should create a cultural unity and a mythical and symbolic identity. By doing this, they can build a continuity through the pre-existing ethnic ties (13).

The memories, myths and symbols are the crucial factors for the existence and survival of the ethnic group. At that point the ethnic elite comes onto the scene and works for the construction of a common history with the group's own historical memories, myths and symbols (Coversi 2004, 54). The nationalist elite play an important role in rediscovering and constructing the ethnic existence. Nationalists are the ones who reconstruct a common ideological ground for the masses' emotional support from the pre-existing ethnic myths and legends (Smith 1995). They use the myths and history for the nationalist propaganda (Coversi 2004, 48). For instance, the strongest unifying elements are the myth of a 'golden age' of a glorious past and for ethnic elite these myths are the most convenient tool of propaganda (Smith, 1996-1998-1999-2001-2004). Gurr (1993) also states that memories of exploitation, discrimination, and violence affect the emotions of the group members, hence, these memories can be further used by the elite in any secessionist or nationalist propaganda (5-6). In this sense, the ethnic movements construct and use a special motivational language, utilize symbolism for activists and sympathizers with a purpose of collective action (Benford 1993; Latif 1999, 263).

Fears

Contrary to the instrumental theory, symbolic theory indicates that without emotional dedication based on the hostile feelings and fear, ethnic groups lack sufficient impetus to mobilize for an ethnic conflict (Kaufman 2001, 12). People respond to ethnic symbols and mobilize for war only if a widely known and accepted ethnic myth symbol complex justifies hostility to the other group (Kaufman 2001, 30). When such an ethnic symbol is threatened, the threat may be associated by ethnic emotions; people share the feelings of the threat coming from the other group, and this makes the group members stick together. The existence, security and status of the group depends on the status of group symbols, which is why people are willing to fight and die for them – and why they are willing to follow leaders who manipulate those symbols.

The fundamental source of extreme ethnic nationalism is fear which may be the result of any threat towards the existence, security or the status of the group. It is fear for one's property and family, for one's ancestral graves and one's history that leads people to cleanse or to be cleansed (Bookman 1994, 33). Ethno-symbolists argue that any threat directed to the cultural values of a group which is expressed in a variety of symbolic forms, such as religious and national rituals, language, clothing, food, murals, banners or sacred sites is the major source of any ethnic conflict (Kaufmann and Conversi 2007; Marshall and Gurr 2003). The threatened symbolic and cultural values may mean an overall threat for the survival of the ethnicity (Lake and Rothchild 2002, 28). Status of the group, on the other hand, is directly related to the status of the symbols that the group's members share. Thus, any exclusivist and discriminatory politics against any symbolic values

of one group may threaten the existence and the status of that group. When we dig into the history we find that the battles over cultural and symbolic expressions stand at the core of the group recognition and identity. Symbolic hurts from past humiliations and denials of group status contribute to highly destructive outcomes (Lake and Rothchild 2002, 21). Therefore, it should not be surprising that conflicts around cultural questions are intense when they raise basic issues concerning a group's legitimacy and deep fears about the threats to its existence (Ross 2007, 2).
However, without leadership, they typically lack the organization to act (Kaufman 2001, 12). Whenever there is some real or perceived conflict of interest and mythically based feelings of hostility or threats that cause fear through the ethnic symbols, the ethnic elite may use those symbols in order to manipulate the masses for an ethnic conflict. Ethnic activist and political entrepreneurs can polarize societies through their nationalist interests and by doing this they use the power of threatened political memories, myths and emotions (Lake and Rothchild 2002, 4). While doing this, ethnic elite use the hostility and fear to justify radical policies, as well as their own power, as a 'defense' of the status and security of their people. Therefore, in order to understand whether people will engage in ethnic violence we should examine the myths and prejudices that determine which symbols are likely to move them and what evokes their greatest collective fears (Kaufman 2001, 30).

Opportunities

While myths and fears are the necessary sources for an ethnic movement, there should be opportunities for the ethnic groups in order to organize and mobilize for an ethnic movement (Kaufman 2001, 32; Wimmer 2002, 112). The role of the state, elite and the effectiveness of the international powers are the main determinants of the ethnic mobilization.

According to Kaufman, for an ethnic mobilization to be formulated there should be at most a moderate amount of state control with interested and powerful ethnic elite (Esman 1984, 31). Under coercive state control it is hard to find an opportunity to mobilize an ethnic movement. On the other hand, when there is less coercion and opposition coming from the state, an ethnic movement can easily be organized (Stack and Hebron 1999, 23). It also becomes more convenient to arrange the internal and international connections which aim to help the ethnic group in an ethnic war. Moreover, it helps the ethnic elite to manage the ethnic campaigns to convince the masses to mobilize for an ethnic action. It also makes it more convenient for the elite to arm and formulate the movement. However, if the elite do not have enough power to be armed, then the moderate state control may not be enough for an ethnic mobilization. At that point, international aid from foreign powers are an important source of elite control and hence the ethnic mobilization. Those sources may finance the mobilization as well as provide advice and propaganda.

Kurdish Ethnic Conflict in Turkey

Kurds in Turkey: An Overview

There are 47 different ethnic groups in Turkey including Kurds, Laz, Caucasians, Georgians and Albanians as well as 29 languages and three main religious groups with different sects and practices (Andrews 1989). The ethnic and religious policies of the Turkish Republic are based on a homogeneous identity of being Turkish thus decreasing the heterogeneity of society (Oztalas 2004, 60). In Turkey, Kurds live as majorities in the eastern and southeastern regions and constitute nearly 21% of the Turkish population with around 12 million Kurds (Gunter 2000, 31). Kurds are quite heterogeneous themselves with hundreds of different clans (Latif 1999, 3) such as Zaza and Kirmanci Kurds (Van Bruinessen 1997, 2). While most of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims from the Shafi'i school of Islamic Law, there are also the adherents of the Alevi religion, Yezidi religious minorities, Jewish and Christian Kurds (Gunter 2000, 31). The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language group, and includes two main dialects and many sub-dialects (Menn 1995, 165) with Zazaki and Kirmanci the most prevalent dialects of Kurds in Turkey (Poulton 1997, 207).

Heterogeneity in ethnicity, religion and language among the Kurds can be clearly traced back in history. Kurdish scholars argue that the first Kurdish political organization was the Confederation of Median Principles in 612 BC (Oztalas 2004, 63). After the Kurds accepted Islam, they divided into different tribal groups in different landscapes. Muslim Kurds played a role in the emergence of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Dynasties. However, dominating tribal elites had conflicts that partitioned the Kurdish society further. After the Chaldiran War in 1517, the Ottoman Empire conquered Kurdish lands in southeastern Turkey and signed an autonomy treaty with them in exchange for the military support (Hassanpour 1993, 40). The Kurdish principalities survived until the end of the eighteenth century with the centralization of the Ottoman elite (Baskaya 1991).

Brief History of the Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey

Kurdish nationalism was introduced at the end of World War I through British influence. The local autonomy of the Kurdish region in Eastern Anatolia was declared by the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 which also provided independence if Kurdish people wanted. Thus, the two articles of the Treaty of Sevres formed the basis of Kurdish nationalists' claims to an independent state of Kurdistan based on the recognition Kurds existed as a national group (Oztalas 2004, 63-64).

Between 1925 and 1938, there were over twenty Kurdish uprisings suppressed by the Turkish military, including the Sheikh Said, Mount Ararat and the Dersim uprisings (Özoğlu 2004, 127). There are debates about whether the uprisings were religious or ethnic (Gurbey 1996; Olson 1989; Olson 2000; Gunter 1997; Gunter 1990; Mumcu 1992) as they include both religious and ethnic characteristics. They were also local but did not have mass participation (Van Bruinessen 1992, 281; Gurbey 1996, 13). After the end of the autocratic rule of the one party era in Turkey, Kurdish ethnic identity reemerged. Some of the educated and urbanized elite politicized as Kurdish nationalists. However, the urbanized Kurdish elite were in conflict with the tribal leaders who had a strong influence on the tribal Kurdish people (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 106). In the 1960s and 1970s, Kurds demanded economic aid and cultural rights either through pro-Kurdish parties or by pro-Kurdish media (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 108). Those Kurdish demands were

radicalized by the PKK in the early 1980s (Gulalp 1996, 96). The PKK is the first Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkish history that is not based only on the Kurdish elite, but also on Kurdish masses (Dalby and O Tuathail 1998, 115-118). Starting in the 1990s there was an enormous support among the Kurdish population both in eastern and western parts of Turkey for the PKK (Gurbey 1996, 24). According to Dogu Ergil who conducted public opinion polls among the western and eastern Kurds in Turkey in 1995, 42 % of the Kurds claimed to have a family member in a Kurdish organization, although few admitted belonging to the PKK (Ozdag 1996). Kurdish masses became very aware of their ethnic identity and had strong connections with the PKK.

Integration of Instrumental and Symbolic Explanations of the Turkish-Kurdish Ethnic Conflict

While the Kurdish conflict in the Anatolian lands has been continuing since the mid-nineteenth century, the struggle has taken on both violent and democratic shapes. In this section, I examine the sources of the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey to try to understand how the instrumental theory and the symbolic theory explain the conflict by testing the existence of the ethnic grievances among the Kurdish people in Turkey under the different foundations of the two theories. I argue that the sources of both of the ethnic conflict theories have been significant and caused ethnic grievances among the Kurdish people. However, when the sources of violence in the Kurdish conflict are analyzed, I argue that the PKK elite created a Kurdish ethnic identity based on hostility against the Turkish state by extensively utilizing the symbolic theory related to creating a group fear for the survival and the defense of ethnic values, myths and symbols. In addition, as the instrumental grievances continued to exist, the PKK elite used both the instrumental and the symbolic theories' arguments related to ethnic conflict in order to gain mass support.

Kurdish Modernization: Social Mobilization and Industrialization

Oztalas (2004) states that

> "If modernization happens in an environment of ethnic inequalities and hardship by making the disadvantages of one ethnic group clear, and by providing the tools for the extremist elite to mobilize the masses, it increases the probability of severe ethnic violence" (75).

The modernization process played a significant role in the formation of ethnic conflict between the Turks and the Kurds. Modernization, the social mobilization through the improvements in literacy, mass media, transportation, communication, increased migration, and industrialization, caused and intensified the ethnic conflict by increasing the level of ethnic consciousness of the Kurds by making their disadvantages as an ethnic group obvious.

Turkish Kurds did not experience mass mobilization in terms of literacy, mass media, transportation and communication until the late 1970s for several reasons. First, the natural peculiarities of the region, such as huge mountains and long, harsh

winters prevented the Kurds from mobilizing (Kislali 1996). Secondly, the region did not receive enough investment from the state or from private sources until the late 1960s when the Turkish government declared the eastern part of Turkey underdeveloped (Yegen 1999, 162). It was during this crisis of modernization that the PKK was born and was able to reach, manipulate and mobilize the Kurdish masses (Oztalas 2004, 5).

Turkish modernization became evident among the Kurdish elite in the 1970s and the Kurdish masses in the 1980s and 1990s (Oztalas 2004, 77). In the 1960s, the mechanization of agriculture boosted the migration from rural to the western industrial regions. Expansion of education and improvements in media, transportation and communication helped to increase people's knowledge of socio-economic and political issues. The 1961 Constitution established after the 1960 coup brought pluralism in Turkish politics and inspired the Kurdish intelligentsia to ask for an even distribution of the existing resources and a better political representation for the Kurds of Turkey. During the 1970s, Turkish administrators began to invest in eastern and southeastern Turkey in order to integrate east and west. In 1983, GAP (Guneydogu Anadolu Projesi—Southeast Anatolian Project) started with the aim of eliminating regional development disparities by raising people's income level and living standards. The ultimate target was to decrease the possibility of political reactions coming from the region against the existing inequality and poverty, hence to achieve social integration throughout Turkey. The project intensified the modernization in the southeast, and started to change the profile of the region in the 1980s. These developments provided an impulse for removing the isolation of the Kurdish region with improvements in literacy, access to media, transportation, communication, and urbanization as well as increased the Kurds ethnic learning and social awareness.

Table 1: Literacy in Turkey and GAP (1950-1990)

	Turkey		GAP	
Year	Population	Literacy (%)	Population	Literacy (%)
1950	17,586,865	32	1,107,946	13
1960	22,542,012	39	1,618,553	19
1970	29,273,361	56	2,150,482	32
1980	37,523,623	67	2,785,952	43
1990	49,306,582	80	4,160,732	60

Sources: GAP 1997, 9-10; Oztalas 2004, 78

The literacy rate increased gradually from 13% in 1950 to 60% in 1990 in the GAP region of Turkey as shown in Table 1 (GAP Idaresi [GAP Administration], GAP Istatistikleri [GAP Statistics] 1997) [2]. Although the improvement in literacy was significant, there continues to be a large gap between the literacy rates in the

[2] The GAP region includes the Kurdish cities of Adiyaman, Batman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Kilis, Mardin, Siirt, Sanliurfa and Sirnak.

Kurdish region and the rest of Turkey (GAP 1997, 9-10). This increase intensified in the 1980s during the rise of PKK. While the increase in literacy made the Kurds aware of the other ways of living, they continued to suffer from their relatively lower education level since they could not integrate with the Turkish system making it hard for them to find better jobs or receive good wages (Ergil 1995). The increasing resentment among the Kurds resulting from the awareness of isolation would be used by the PKK effectively in organizing the Kurdish masses (Oztalas 2004, 80).

The introduction of the mass media was also a turning point for Kurdish modernization as the Kurdish problem was taboo in the Turkish media. Between 1923 and 1960, the official radio station did not even use the word "Kurd" (Duran 2000, 39-40). It was argued that the Kurds were a Turkish tribe and that Kurdish was an invented language. Until the end of the 1980s, there was no serious debate about the Kurds in the state-controlled media, Parliament or elsewhere with the exception of some columnists (Oztalas 2004, 82). Moreover, Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law distinguished between acts and views about separatism, and abridged the use of the right to freedom of expression making any writer vulnerable to action (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 125).

After the 1960s, there was a gradual freedom in the media for the Kurds. The fundamental source of this freedom was the pluralist 1961 Constitution which provided a base for the ethnic activities. While there were 26 Kurdish journals and magazines during the 1908-1960 period, this number increased to 74 in 1980 and to 118 in 1992. Those journals and magazines were mostly Turkish while some of them were Kurdish (Kurdish Magazines 1991). The increase of journals and magazines that were pro-Kurdish included Dicle Kaynagi, Sark Mecmuasi, Ileri Yurd, Yeni Akis, Dogu and Rizgari. The Kurdish media offered an alternative to the one which had been ruled by the state (Oztalas 2004, 85). The Kurdish media also played a role in the mobilization of the Kurdish people. As people became literate, they started to read the newspapers and magazines of the pro-Kurdish sources (Ergil 1995). According to a PIAR survey in 1992, 67% of the people were reading newspapers regularly (PIAR, 1992). This made them aware of the issues related to the Kurdish problem. Hence, they began to publicly express their opinions and resentments about it.

In Turkey, improvements in transportation and communication in the southeast began during the 1970s. Before that time, transportation vehicles in the Kurdish region were horses and donkeys. In the 1980s, they had been replaced by cars, buses and trucks, and the transportation network increased rapidly reducing the isolation from the cities (Oztalas 2004, 86). As Kurds traveled more, they saw the differences between themselves and the "others" (Oztalas 2004, 86). While the communication networks were primitive and dominated by the landlords during the 1960s, by the 1980s various advances in broadcasting, electrification, and telephone services occurred (Yegen 1999). For instance, the number of telephone subscribers increased 10 times between 1980 and 1998 (DIE 1998, 368). The advances in communication and transportation decreased the isolation of the region and increased the social and ethnic awareness between the Turkish and Kurdish areas allowing the PKK the opportunity to exploit the disparity through the new communication and transportation facilities (Oztalas 2004, 88-90).

One of the most important factors contributing to the Kurdish radicalization was urbanization through either voluntary or forced migrations of the southeastern Kurds to the western cities (Oztalas 2004, 91). However, the Turkish economy was not strong enough to integrate the mass migrations. According to the DIE (1998), the total population in the cities increased from 25% of the total population in 1950 to 59% in 1990 (20-21). Between 1980 and 1990, approximately 360,000 people migrated from the eastern region (GAP 1997, 318). The sharp increase in the urban population increased the urban poverty and created social destabilization (Oztalas 2004, 91).

Migration and urbanization caused deep economic and emotional grievances among the Kurds. The Turkish policy makers believed that migration would bring ethnic assimilation to the Kurds, so they encouraged and sometimes forced the migration. However, Kaplan (1994) states that most of the urbanized Kurds became nationalists and supported Kurdish nationalist activities since they were frustrated with the conditions of the urban area (45-50). After the PKK insurgency, when their villages were destroyed by the security forces, many moved to the western cities, but they were poor without access to the basic needs for their life and health. Because of the economic and emotional grievances caused by migration, the Kurdish people defined themselves more and more as Kurds rather than a member of a local tribe improving the ability of the PKK elite to gain more support from the Kurdish masses through ethnic propaganda (Oztalas 2004, 95; Kirisci and Winrow 1997).

Finally, industrialization contributed to the ethnic conflict since it was the source of social mobilization and centralist policies. The development of social mobilization can be interpreted as a source of the ethnic conflict in Turkey. The early years of the Turkish Republic witnessed harsh centralist policies with the aim of forming the unity of the state (Zürcher 1991, 41). The dominant classes which constitute the "elite state" were the major landlords, merchants, bureaucrats, industrial bourgeoisie, military elites and war heroes. The priority was nation-building, and for that reason, some authoritarian policies were implemented such as the 1924 Law for the Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisad Kanunu) which limited the education opportunities among the Muslim Kurds because the traditional Islamic schools (medrese) were closed, and the only accepted language for education was Turkish (Van Bruinessen 1994, 148). As another example, although the state encouraged the establishment of civil organizations, it never allowed the labor organizations to have the freedom to pursue the interests of the labor class independently, and particularly after the military interventions, the religious and ethnic based civil organizations were banned by the state (Adaman and Arsel 2005, 56-57). All those centralist developments in social, economic and political fields resulted in resentments among the Kurdish people whose separate identity was denied.

Kurdish Economic Development and Relative Deprivation

The instrumental theory accepts economic factors as the major sources of ethnic conflict. According to the instrumentalists, economic development is a source of ethnic conflict since it increases the economic competition among the ethnic groups. In addition, relative deprivation – the differences between the standards of

living of the ethnic groups and the inequalities in the benefit distribution – is another economic source of ethnic conflict because poorer areas may want to secede if they consider the central government to be discriminating against them.

The intensively developing western regions of Turkey with Kurdish minorities witnessed economic rivalry causing ethnic resentments among the Kurds. By the rapid urbanization and industrial development, there were increases in Kurdish migration from the rural southeastern areas to the big cities with a Turkish majority. As Kurdish migrants started to compete with the Turkish workers for jobs and for economic opportunities, the Turkish urban-poor openly blamed the Kurdish migrants for the depression of wages which increased the Kurdish workers solidarity (Allahar 2005, 223). Rather than a class-based reaction to depressed wages, the worker class became ethnically divided and politicized. The expression of Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s can be seen as a means of the class struggle in Turkey since it posed a challenge against the dominant Turkish nationalist ideology of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

According to the instrumental theory, differences in the economic welfare through ethnic lines are also a source of ethnic conflict. The Kurdish southeastern region has been the least developed part of Turkey although it experienced mechanization of agriculture and improvements in transportation, communication and literacy. Although the economic development in the southeastern region of Turkey did not contribute to the economic competition for the scarce resources between the Kurds and the Turks, the differences between the west and the east became more apparent as the Kurdish people in the southeast realized the living standards and the development level of the western part of Turkey was higher because of modernization. The relative backwardness and underdevelopment justify the arguments of the instrumental theory, and have been an important source of the ethnic resentments among the Kurds. Musa Anter (1991) expressed the economic underdevelopment of the southeast in his book, *Hatiralarim*:

> "Kurdistan is the most backward region of Turkey; Mardin is the most backward province in Kurdistan; Nusaybin is the most distressed district in Mardin; Stelile is the commune of Nusaybin; Zivinge is most backward village in Stelile; it was in "Cave" No. 2 of the village that I was born" (11).

The per capita income in the southeast was less than the half of the national average (Celik 1999, 2; McDowall 2004, 447). More strikingly, the per capita income in the southeast is one tenth of the Istanbul levels (Nachmani 2003, 41). The region received less benefits and opportunities than the western parts of the country. The literacy rate is 48% in one of the southeast provinces, Mardin, while the national literacy rate is 77%. Furthermore, 9% of children have high school degrees while only 18% can start high school (Celik 1999, 3). In Ankara, there are 17 students in a class while there are 86 in Sirnak, a southeastern city (Celik 1999, 3). Hence, we can conclude that conditions of relative poorness, an instrumental reason for ethnic conflict, were apparent in the Kurdish areas in Turkey. As the economic differences became obvious between the eastern and the western regions of Turkey, ethnic resentment built in the Kurdish people.

There were several attempts to improve the economic conditions in southeast Turkey which increased ethnic awareness and contributed to ethnic conflict. In the 1960s, the underdevelopment of the region was publicly stressed through the name of "Eastism" (Doguculuk), and those problems of the Kurdish areas were mentioned as the outcomes of exploitation and lack of development (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 109). In east Anatolia, there were a series of meetings named "eastern meetings" (dogu mitingleri) which were not nationalist or separatist but rather organized for the development of the eastern region (Besikci 1969, 251-2) and to raise public consciousness about the eastern Anatolia including the establishment of cultural and student organizations which started to promote the Kurdish ethnicity. While the Turkish governments encouraged investments to the eastern part of Turkey, and extra incentives were provided since the 1960s, those incentives never became real investments (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 187-191). The most important and expensive investment was the GAP. Its goal was to close the disparity between the Southeastern region and the other regions of Turkey (DIE 1997). However, the GAP was not successful in increasing the living standards of the region. Many Kurds considered the GAP as a way of exploiting Kurdish natural resources rather than encourage private investments (Anter 1992). In 1984, the region received only 5% of total investments, and the major ones were the oil pipeline, GAP and some security related investments (SHP 1990, 24).

The economic resentments arising from the economic underdevelopment and the relative deprivation of the region were the sources of the economic ethnic grievances among the Kurds. According to Ozdag's (1996) survey, the Kurds defined themselves as Turks as their income increased. Moreover, especially in the 1980s, unemployment in the southeast region grew sharply (Ergil 1995, 80). This increase caused many of the young unemployed Kurds to support the PKK (SHP 1990, 27). In his book, *Kurtler*, Hasan Cemal (2003) strongly emphasized the catastrophic effect of the economic underdevelopment and unemployment in the region. He observed the unemployed men who spent their time in the cafes during the mid and late 1980s. He indicated the impact of the worsening economic situation by mentioning how these men hesitated to go to a café because of the increased price of a glass of tea relative to their income in the early 1990s. According to the surveys of Kayhan Mutlu in 1994, 82% of the Kurds in the southeastern region conceived the problem of the region as unemployment, poor development, terror and poverty while 73% offered that sustained investments made by the state and industrialists could solve the problem.

Kurdish Elite as the Leaders of the Conflict

According to the instrumental theory, ethnic conflict is elite led as the elite decide how to manage the conflict according to their own interests, and they benefit from the opportunities of modernization. Furthermore, groups follow the elite in accordance with their instrumental interests. The symbolic theory conflicts with this claim, arguing that the conflict may be either mass or elite led, and it further argues that elites may merely be interested in maintaining their cultural heritage and the wellbeing of the people of their ethnic group. The symbolic theory also criticizes the instrumental view of mass support and claims that masses are not only the economic interest groups seeking instrumental benefits out of the ethnic

conflict. It states that they have symbolic motivations which make them follow the elite throughout the ethnic wars.

I argue that the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey has been elite-led and based on both the instrumental and the symbolic motivations. The conflict has been formulated and propagated by the Kurdish elite for decades. When one analyzes the mass support and the tools of the elite propaganda in this conflict, the elite used both the economic and emotional grievances in order to ethnically mobilize the groups. While the political backgrounds, activities and main motivating factors of the Kurdish elite could be the subject of a future study, personal interviews with two Kurdish elite provide some limited conclusions related to elite motivation. According to that, I claim that the Kurdish elite had both instrumental and symbolic motivations.

The role of the Kurdish elite in the ethnic conflict is especially critical because Kurdish nationalism is constituted by the Kurdish intellectuals. The ethnic conflict in Turkey has been elite led based on both the economic and cultural grievances of the Kurdish people. From the early years of the Turkish Republic, there were local Kurdish ethnic and religious uprisings and movements with limited mass support which were harshly suppressed by the Turkish state between 1925 and 1938 – four of which were severe (Olson 2000; Gurbey 1996; Van Bruinessen 1993, 167). Until the first democratic elections in 1950 in which Kurdish elite entered into the Parliament, the military rule kept the Kurdish areas quiet and the Kurdish ethnicity was immobile (Ozcan 2006, 84-86).

The early demands of the Kurdish elite were mostly related to the economic backwardness of the southeast. In the latter years, the elite took a Kurdish nationalist shape and demanded rights for the Kurdish identity. The Kurdish elite in the 1960s and 1970s advocated "Eastism" and demanded new development policies for the eastern part of the country (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 109). In the 1960s, the urbanized Kurdish elite became socialist and moved together with the Turkish left. They mentioned not only the economic backwardness but also the lack of cultural rights of the Kurdish people living in the eastern part of Turkey. For instance, in 1969, the Turkish Workers Party (Turkiye Isci Partisi) publicly stated that

> "There are Kurdish people in the East of Turkey….The fascist authorities representing the ruling class have subjected the Kurdish people to a policy of assimilations and intimidation which has often become a bloody repression---To consider "Eastern question" as merely a matter of economic development is, therefore, nothing but an extension of the nationalistic and chauvinistic approach adopted by the ruling classes" (Kendal 1980, 29).

During the 1970s, the number of cultural and student organizations seeking rights for the Kurdish people increased. The Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East (Devrimci Dogu Kultur Ocaklari—DDKOs) was the largest and most effective one with a Marxist-Leninist agenda and its major goal was to persuade the government to recognize the Kurdish language and grant cultural rights to the Kurds (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 15, 45). The largest branches of DDKOs were in Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakir. Although the DDKOs were the major

organizations claiming rights for the Kurds in the 1970s, the support for those organizations was limited to the students and groups of educated youth but was not supported by the Kurdish masses (Yavuz 2001, 10). The PKK, established in 1978, was also elite led. However, it acquired a significant amount of mass support through provocation of instrumental and symbolic sentiments along with violence as a main strategy of the extremist PKK leadership that turned the conflict into an ethnic war (Oztalas 2004, 105). Thus, we can conclude that neither of the Kurdish organizations or movements was mass led, but rather established by the Kurdish parliamentarians or by the students or other Kurdish intellectuals from the early years of the Turkish Republic to the 1980s.

The PKK elite played a crucial role in the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey since its founding as a socialist independence movement and then as a Kurdish nationalist movement. The PKK elite claimed that the ruling classes (bourgeois) of the Turkish Republic, if not the Turkish people, were imperialist and repressive against the Kurdish people. The PKK elite also stated that the feudal leaders living in those Kurdish areas were cooperating with the ruling Turkish elite to exploit their own people economically and socially. Hence the PKK called the Kurdish people to take action against the Turkish state and against the feudal leaders for their own independence and freedom.

The nature of the PKK campaign has been based on both the economic and the emotional grievances of the Kurdish people. In the early years, starting from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, it followed a more symbolic path based on the creation of the Kurdish ethnic identity. It gained the early support mostly from the revolutionary Kurdish youth who were against the capitalist state and local feudal leaders. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, in order to gain mass support, the PKK took a more instrumental form by shaping the propaganda to attract the people based on their economic needs. The PKK transformed itself into a more reformist Kurdish nationalist movement instead of advocating socialism. It promised economic improvements and removed the early strategy of degradation of religion which had been an important symbol for the indigenous Kurdish people. Lastly, it used coercion in order to gain more support (Latif 1999).

The PKK created an ethnic identity based on the hostility against the Turkish state (Oztalas 2004; Gurbey 1996; Van Bruinessen 1988). In the early years of the movement, the PKK formulated a myth-symbol complex based on the socialist ideology. This myth-symbol complex made the Kurdish people aware of their history and centuries-long existence as an ethnicity. The PKK focused on how this identity was suppressed by the Turkish governments to influence the ethnic sentiments of the Kurdish people (Gurbey 1996, 25). Furthermore, the PKK used the mass trials and brutal treatments in the prisons after the 1980 coup to feed the argument (Van Bruinessen 1988, 42). According to the author's interview with Kurdish intellectual and political activist Serafettin Elci, the trials, murders and tortures after the 1980 coup were the major sources of the early support for the PKK. He claimed that those trials and persecutions intensively disturbed the Kurdish society which has been based on strong and large family relationships. Elci added that persecution of a Kurd caused a huge sorrow and frustration in someone's mind even in the extended family.

As a second symbolic provocation, the PKK offered a socialist state and provoked the non-class society based on equality of all people. This policy helped

the PKK to mobilize the Kurdish women who had been degraded in the feudal society for centuries. According to some surveys, one third of the active PKK militants are women (Maubec 1993, 11). The socialist ideology provided support for the PKK from the urban areas with Kurdish settlements. Those Kurds working in the urban areas were economically and socially marginalized and supported the non-class equal society idea. Thanks to its socialist ideology, the PKK gained further support from the intelligentsia, especially from the university students, who were attracted to the leftist and socialist stance of the movement (Latif 1999, 93-94). After the construction of the Kurdish identity, the denial of cultural rights and the exclusivist policies against the language, religion and the history of the Kurds pushed many of those to take action for Kurdish recognition (Gunter 1990, 58-60; Latif 1999, 93-94).

However, in the latter years, the PKK applied several instrumental methods, including coercion, in order to persuade the ordinary Kurdish people who did not have a political ideology or strong demands for ethnic and cultural rights to fight in an armed conflict. According to Van Bruinessen (1988),

> "…this party (PKK) represents the most marginal sections of Kurdish society, the ones who feel excluded from the country's social and economic development, victims of rural transformation with frustrated expectations" (42).

Economic underdevelopment, inflation and unemployment were the major problems of the Kurdish people. According to the surveys that were conducted by Mutlu (1994) in the southeastern region in 1992, 34.8% of Kurds in the villages found unemployment as the most striking problems in their lives while this percentage rose to 82 % in the southeastern cities. In average, more than 50% of the Kurdish people agreed that economic development could overcome the problems in the southeast. Moreover, 12.5% believed that ideological and cultural problems were important (Turkish Democracy Foundation 1996, 20). In order to benefit from those problems, the PKK provided medical care and some economic aid to the Kurdish people in order to persuade them to support the violent action against Turkey (Gunter 1989, 49).

Although it acquired supporters after the early campaigns in the early 1980s, the PKK could not satisfy most of the needs of the people for a long time (Latif 1999, 106). In the late 1980s, the PKK took a more nationalist shape rather than socialist. Kurdish nationalism was a more instrumental tool to attract the people. Because of Kurdish nationalism, the PKK could formulate an ethnic campaign aiming at the satisfaction of the basic needs of the Kurdish people. In the 1990s, the PKK realized the power of Islam for the Kurds and stopped degrading the religion in contrast to the Marxist roots of the organization (Kirisci and Winrow 1998, 149). Although the religion is a symbolic phenomenon, the shift to Islam can be considered an instrumental behavior for the PKK. Accordingly, the PKK fighters were named fedayeen or holy fighters, and portrayed as believers against the godless Turks (Kinzer 1997, 1). In accordance with the holy status of martyr in Islam, the PKK called those fighters who died in a clash martyrs (PKK website 2006). Terrorism was another method used by the PKK. In the mid-1980s, the PKK used terrorism to show the vulnerability of the Turkish state against the

strength of the PKK and influence the Kurdish people. Although it became an effective tool in attracting the people, the brutal and irresponsible activities of the PKK, even against the Kurdish population in the southeast, decreased the mass support in the latter years (Latif 1999, 106-107). Finally, in many cases, the PKK acquired the active support through coercion by threatening the villages, stealing their properties, and forcing them to provide aid for the organization (Latif 1999, 89). In conclusion, the policies and the propagandas of the PKK elite were both instrumental and symbolic suggesting an integrated theory for understanding Kurdish nationalism and ethnic conflict. During the formative years symbolic appeals based on ethnic identity and socialist ideology were prevalent, in the later years, the PKK tried to acquire mass support by using instrumental methods. In order to have mass support, the PKK offered economic improvements, shifted from a socialist party to a Kurdish nationalist organization, took advantage of Islam, used the power of terror and used coercion on its own people to enlarge the organization's militant base.

While exploring the fundamental motivation of the Kurdish elite, I found that they were motivated both through their own and their group's instrumental interests as well as through the ethnic sentiments of the Kurdish people. In personal interviews, Sirri Sakik and Serafettin Elci claim that most of the Kurdish elite who represented the southeastern region in the Turkish Parliament cooperated with the assimilationist policies of the Turkish Republic and contributed to the exploitation of the Kurds in Turkey since the 1950s. Sakik, a parliamentarian in the pro-Kurdish party, Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi – DTP), stated that the Kurdish elite who were officially active in the 1950s and 1960s pursued totally personal interests thus harming the Kurdish people. Elci further argued that only three of the Kurdish parliamentarians of that era, Mustafa Ekinci, Yusuf Azizoglu and Mustafa Remzi Bucak, worked for the interests of the Kurdish people by making contributions to some fundamental problems of the region such as health and construction.

Elci argued that there were two major incidents played as the ethnic motivating factors for the Kurdish elite – the 1961 Constitution and the activities of Mullah Mustafa Barzani who was the leader of the Iraqi Kurds in the 1960s. Elci and Sakik agreed that the Kurdish elite was influenced by socialism and organized through Marxist ideas after the 1961 Constitution which was relatively more pluralist than the former constitutions. The ethnic activities of the leftist elite became significant since the late 1960s. These elite appeared mostly in the cities following urbanization and were more devoted to the economic and cultural development of the Kurdish region. They advocated the equality between the people and the regions of Turkey and sought the improvement of the backward southeast region. According to Elci, another major motivation of the Kurdish elite in Turkey for an ethnic movement in the early 1960s was Mullah Mustafa Barzani's return from the Soviet Union in 1958. Elci stated that he and his friends were deeply influenced by the new Kurdish movement which sought independence in Northern Iraq, and the unification of the Kurdish lands in the Middle East. He stated that he became more aware of his ethnic identity, and joined several political activities for the survival and the spread of the Kurdish identity.

Sakik stated that his and many of his friends' fundamental motivation was the hardship that the Kurdish people experienced after the 1980 coup. The increasing

tension between the Turkish army and the Kurdish people after the coup created an impetus for the political activities. While some elite aimed at ending the ongoing conflict between the Turks and the Kurds through diplomatic ways, a significant portion of it radicalized and organized for a violent conflict. Elci and Sakik added that although there were some who followed instrumental interests and took the benefit of their position, a significant amount of the new elite mainly aimed at the wellbeing of the Kurdish people.

As a result, it can be stated that the conflict sources of the instrumental approach existed in the Kurdish-Turkish ethnic conflict. Accordingly, as the Kurds experienced modernization and its outcomes – increased literacy rate, mass media, improvements in transportation and communication, and mass migration – it increased awareness of the different societies and different life styles which emphasized the Kurds' backwardness and disadvantages in comparison to the other parts of Turkey. This awareness caused resentments among the Kurdish people because they attributed this social backwardness to their ethnic identity. In the developing urban areas, there was competition for scarce resources and increased tension in the labor market around the ethnic lines. Moreover, differences in the per capita income levels, living standards and unemployment rates between the southeastern and the western regions of Turkey created serious economic grievances among the Kurdish population in Turkey, justifying the relative deprivation theory of the instrumental approach. Finally, the conflict has been elite-led, meaning the ethnic elite organized the conflict and motivated the masses. Before the PKK, the claims of the Kurdish ethnic elite were both economic and cultural. In the early years of the PKK, the fundamentals of the PKK propaganda were to create a Kurdish identity based on the hostility against the Turkish state. It claimed that the Kurdish people should fight for their independence to live in a socialist state. However, in the later years, in order to gain support from the masses, the PKK followed a more instrumentalist path. It tried to persuade the people not only by an independent Kurdistan promise, but also by offering some economic amenities, reverencing Islam, applying brutal terrorism and coercion even to its own people.

Myths, Symbols and Fears

Fear arises from the insecurities of the people and is the most important tool for elite manipulation. Fear justifies hostility, extreme measures for self-defense, and the desire for political dominance (Kaufman 2001). Fear in the Kurdish-Turkish conflict stems from Turkish state policies of ethnic exclusion and fed by the Kurdish national mythologies (Oztalas 2004). Starting with the late 1980s, Kurds became more aware of their ethnicity through the introduction of their symbolic identity by the PKK elite. The Kurds wanted to preserve it against assimilation. After the PKK violence, Turkish elite concentrated more on assimilation which increased the fear of ethnic extinction to the Kurds. After the PKK propaganda, the fear of losing the culture and the symbols sharply increased and contributed to the severe ethnic conflict.

Although the existential fear among the Kurds was not at its highest levels before the PKK, the Kurdish emotional grievances and fears were formulated after the emergence of the Turkish Republic. Before the PKK propaganda, despite the

economical and emotional grievances in the region, a majority of Kurds was not even aware of their ethnic identity (Oztalas 2004, 208). They used to identify themselves either with their religion or with the name of their tribes. The Kurdish myth-symbol complex, hence the Kurdish identity mostly appeared during the 1980s as a result of the PKK propaganda. The PKK tried to create a Kurdish identity and mobilize the masses against the Turkish state. It claimed that the centuries of exploitation by the other regional powers and recently by the Kemalist state tried to take total control of the region and destroy the Kurdish existence (Oztalas 2004, 47). The PKK's messages focused predominantly on whipping up emotions of anger and hatred among radical Kurdish circles (Latif 1999, 64). The major source of those symbolic fears resulting from the existential fear of the ethnic symbols was the exclusivist policies of the Turkish Republic based on the denial of the Kurdish ethnicity. As a striking example, the "White Book," published after the 1980 coup, stated "…in the top of the mountains, snow stayed all the time… while people of those region was walking there… the steps sound like "kirt-kurt" Kurd is coming from those sounds" (Tusalp 1988, 265). Furthermore, according to the "Plan for Reforms in the East", as Kurdish areas were taken under military rule, Kurds were forbidden to be employed locally in the civil service, even in junior capacities. The Kurdish intellectuals Musa Anter and Ismail Besikci claimed that Kurds were the step children of the Turkish state. Besikci (1992) continued,

> "For 470 years, people of the Southeast had not had direct contact with the state; there were always middlemen in between. During the Turkish Republic, our region was destroyed and our culture was banned. People could not write, read, sing or name their children in their mother tongue, it was forbidden. In the East, the state was never connected with the people. Only oppressive forces, like gendarmes and tax collectors, represented the state which widened the gap between the people of the East and the Turkish state, and also caused these people to look at the state with suspicion" (598).

The symbolic grievances resulting from the exclusivist policies of the Turkish Republic include the land, language, religion, historical and cultural values, and ancient myths and incidents. These variables have been the most significant symbolic elements for the Kurdish people. Land became a symbolic fear element because of Turkish domination and the deportation of the Kurdish people from the indigenous land after the early uprisings. Kurdish national mythology accepts the southeastern part of Turkey as historically the Kurdish homeland.[3] According to this mythology, Kurds have been living in these areas for thousands of years. They claim that the Ottoman Empire won the Chaldiran War against the Persians with the help of the Kurds in 1514 (Oztalas 2004, 221). Until the centralization policies of Ottoman Sultan Mahmut II in 1848, they lived in those areas as an

[3] The major cities of the Kurdish region includes Adiyaman, Agri, Bingol, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Hakkari, Kars, Mardin, Mus, Siirt, Tunceli, Van, Elazig, Erzincan, Erzurum, Kahramanmaras, Sanliurfa, Malatya, Batman and Sirnak.

autonomous and feudal society. The first Kurdish uprisings Ubeydullah and Bedirhan fought for autonomy of the land after the centralist policies of Mahmut II (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 78-82). The Kurdish nationalists also claim that Kurds were deported and massacred by the Turks in early Turkish Republic periods, although they helped Turks in their Independence War. Accordingly, Turks tried to assimilate them and made them victims in their own lands.

Turkish domination on the indigenous Kurdish lands and the compulsory migrations of the Kurds to the western cities of Turkey caused the ethnic fear of Kurdish exclusion from the land. In order to increase the ethnic grievances and fears of the Kurdish people, the PKK argued that a foreign imperialism was ruling the Kurdish lands against the indigenous people's will (Oztalas 2004, 212). In the 1920s, especially after the Sheikh Said uprising, hundreds of villages suspected of rebel sympathies were burned to the ground and thousands of Kurds were deported to western districts. During the 1930s, the military consolidated control of Kurdish areas and stepped up efforts at compulsory assimilation (McKiernan 2006, 93). The ethnic domination of the land continued with the Settlement Law in 1934 which designated Kurdish areas closed for civilian settlement (Izady 1992, 109) as well as the deportation of the Kurds to the western regions of Turkey in order to ensure unification and assimilation of the country (Van Bruinessen 1994, 150). During and after the Dersim uprising, between 1937 and 1939, thousands of homes were burned and villages permanently depopulated with more than one million Kurds displaced (McKiernan 2006, 95). The migrations from the 1950s to the 1970s resulted from urbanization as a result of modernization and industrialization rather than compulsory migrations. In the 1980s, the PKK's propaganda focused on the migrations that the Kurds faced during the early uprisings to try to awaken the fears of repetition (Oztalas 2004, 208).

The second symbolic source of the ethnic conflict is the language. The prohibitions on the Kurdish languages were a major source of the emotional grievances of the Kurds and became an important tool of ethnic propaganda. Repression of language has always played an important role in policies of group domination and forced assimilation (Horowitz 1985). In the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Turkey, the Kurdish languages were denied and repressed. The Turkish Republic rejected the existence and the uniqueness of the languages which have been spoken by the Kurdish people (Kirisci and Winrow 1997; Van Bruinessen 1992-1993-1997; Gurbey 1996; Zurcher 1994; Olson 1989-2000). Accordingly, the Turkish government claimed that those languages spoken in the southeastern part of Turkey were a mixture of Turkish, Persian, Arabic and other local languages thus rejecting the Kurdish dialects as separate languages. As a result, the centralist and unitary Turkish state tried to prevent the usage of Kurdish by forcing Turkish throughout the country. Denial of the language and the prohibitions caused emotional ethnic grievances among the Kurdish people based on the fear arising from the usage and the survival of the language.

Starting from the early years of the Turkish Republic, several assimilation policies toward the languages spoken by the Kurdish people were applied in order to make Turkish the only spoken language in Turkey. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, by the 1924 Constitution, Turkish became the official language of Turkey. With the Law for the Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) in 1924, the traditional Islamic schools (medrese) were closed and Turkish

became the official language of education thus limiting the educational opportunities among the Muslim Kurds whose mother tongue was not Turkish (Van Bruinessen 1994, 148). More strikingly, the 1924 Constitution did not tolerate the ethnic activities such as the Kurdish media or associations (Earle 1925, 96-8). The words "Kurd" and "Kurdish" were removed from books published in Turkey and the Kurds were renamed as "Mountain Turks" (Boulding 1994, 149). Public use of Kurdish was prohibited (Zürcher 1994, 178). According to Article 14 of the "Plan for Reforms in the East," in the early 1930s, in provincial and district centers, people who used a language other than Turkish in government and municipal offices, schools and markets were considered guilty (Bayrak 1993, 486-7). After the 1960 military coup, names of the Kurdish villages were changed to Turkish names but the prohibitions toward the Kurdish language reached a peak after the military coup of 1980. In 1983, the military leadership made Turkish the sole state language by Law 2932. It was declared as the mother tongue of all Turkish citizens and publications in different languages were forbidden (Yavuz 2003, 192).

As a result, language became a central symbol representing the Kurdish ethnic identity. The prohibitions increased the fears attributed to the survival of the language and the continuity of the ordinary lives of the Kurdish people. Those prohibitions of the Kurdish language for decades created deep grievances among the Kurds and were an important tool for the ethnic propaganda of both the PKK elite and the former Kurdish leaders. Hence, the language became a factor of fear which was propagated and manipulated by the PKK elite in order to mobilize the masses against the Turkish state.

While religion was degraded by the nationalist elite in the later years, it played an important role during the early years of the Turkish Republic thus the PKK used religious propaganda in the late 1980s to gain mass support. During the Ottoman Empire, Kurds, as a Muslim minority, were attached to the Ottoman state by religious ties. The Ottoman Sultan was also the Caliphate of the Muslim world, an important aspect in Muslim unification, especially for some non-Turkic nations living in the Turkish periphery, such as the Kurds. The abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 weakened the religious ties between the Kurds and the Turkish government (Zürcher 1994, 178). This meant the substitution of loose bonds between the center and the periphery with the tyranny of the center imposed on the ethnic, cultural, economic, administrative and political elements of the periphery (Yegen 1996; Oztalas 2004, 236). The Caliphate issue directly affected the first well organized Kurdish uprising, Sheikh Said uprising, since the abolition of such a symbol paved the way for the Kurds to claim separation after the removal of the religious ties with the central Turkish government (Zürcher 1994, 174-178). Although, the urbanized Kurdish elite became socialist and the role of religion was degraded in the urban areas, the traditional Kurdish people in the region stayed religious thus contributing to the use of religious sentiments in the PKK's ethnic propagation since the late 1980s.

Moreover, the symbolic impact of cultural values and the myths of the ethnic grievances increased gradually as the prohibitions of the Turkish state increased since the early years of the republic. Newroz, the historical books and epics defining the Kurds and the colors representing the Kurdish identity have been the most significant examples of the cultural values of the Kurdish people. The ethnic fear among the Kurds partly arose from the threats which were directed

at the survival of those values. Accordingly, cultural values shape and mold the conflict and the very structural strategies that the elites follow (Kirisci and Winrow 1997, 18). The Kurdish existence and the continuity of the cultural symbols have been strongly emphasized by the Kurdish elite. During the 1980s and 1990s, Kurdish intellectuals developed Kurdish symbols to form a strong sense of community ties among the Kurds and Kurds began concentrating on the protection and dissemination of their cultural symbols. The method the Kurdish intellectuals followed emphasized the importance of the ethnic value of the cultural symbols creating group fear by indicating the prohibitions of the Turkish state against those symbols. They began talking about cultural genocide by the Turks and they justified their history by epics and books thus mobilizing the Kurdish people for the survival of these shared cultural values (Ozlatas 2004, 224).

The most significant cultural symbols in mobilization of the Kurds are the Kurdish celebration day Newroz, several ancient legendary stories and books, and the colors "yellow", "red" and "green". Newroz means "new day" representing the recognition of Kurdish independence in 612 B.C. and is celebrated as a spring fest but was banned by the Turkish state in 1923 (Oztalas 2004, 225; Gurbey 2000, 68). Starting in the 1980s by the PKK, it became a symbol of freedom and independence for the Kurds (Oztalas 2004, 226). Although 30 civilians were killed in 1992 during the armed battles of the Newroz celebrations, in 1994, the Turkish government approved Newroz by declaring it a Turkish holiday. However, this declaration further frustrated many Kurds for whom this policy was another attack on the Kurdish identity and another attempt to assimilate their symbols (Barkey and Fuller 1998; Van Bruinessen 1997). Besides Newroz, the Kurdish people read the ancient legend Mem u Zin of 1695 and an historical book of Sharafaddin Bitlisi, *Sharafname*, to gain ethnic awareness. In his interview, Elci stated that in the early 1960s as he became politically active, the Mem u Zin legend was an independence manifesto for him and his friends. *Sharafname*, correspondingly, identified the borders of Kurdistan as it was a united land in some time (Oztalas 2004, 224). Since all historical and sociological research related to the Kurds was banned, as the Kurds became aware of their history and past stories, they felt further resentments. The colors green, yellow and red, which are symbolic to the Kurdish identity, are used in the Kurdish flags, evident in the Kurds' dresses and publications (Nachmani 2003, 37). Because the PKK used the colors in its flag, they were associated with terrorist and separatist activities, and thus banned. For instance, the green light in the traffic lights was changed to blue in the southeast in order not to bring the colors green, red and yellow together (Moore 1999).

The early Kurdish rebellions, especially Sheikh Said and Dersim, left a legacy of bitterness, mistrust and suspicion that has subsisted for decades. The PKK awakened the ethnic sentiments of the public by recalling these memories thus encouraging more people on the Kurdish side to feel threatened and become more extremist and violent (Oztalas 2004, 209). The warnings about harsh state policies and references to Turkish fascism evoked memories of past massacres for the Kurds. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds died in the revolts during the 1920s and 1930s in fighting and in mass executions carried out by the Turkish army (Bullock and Morris 1996). During Sheikh Said rebellion, 206 villages were destroyed and 15,200 people were killed (Cafer 1979, 239). One million people were deported to the western part of Turkey after the Dersim uprising.

Consequently, it can be stated that the Kurds have shared myths, cultural and symbolic values throughout their history. Those values have constructed shared ethnic sentiments among the Kurdish people who suffered from the ethnic dominance over the status and the existence of those values. The political and military dominance of the Turkish Republic over the southeastern part of Turkey, the prohibitions over language and the traditional rituals, and degradation of the cultural values, especially the literature and the memories of the Kurdish uprisings in Turkey led to the ethnic exclusion of the Kurds. It hence created ethnic fear and shared emotional grievances based on those ethnic resentments. The ethnic resentments contributed to the formation of the legal and illegal organizations among the Kurds against the Turkish state.

Opportunities for Ethnic Mobilization

The ethnic grievances among the Kurds turned into an active and violent conflict since the necessary conditions for an ethnic mobilization existed and were activated by the PKK. Because the geographical conditions of southeastern Turkey made it difficult to maintain state authority, it made it easier for the PKK to militarily organize in the mid and late 1970s in the mountains which the Turkish state could not prevent. The harsh geographic conditions of the southeastern region of Turkey have been an important deterrent of state authority in the region. In the mountainous geography in which constructing a power base was hard there has been a feudal society that has a social structure based on the local authorities (Kislali 1996). For that reason, the Turkish state tried to co-opt the local powers in order to keep the region under control (Radu 2002, 129). However, this type of control was vulnerable by nature and created a lack of communication between the Turkish state and the Kurdish people. As a result of this disconnection, the Kurds in Turkey did not have the feelings of loyalty and respect to the state as much as the Turks (Anter 1991). Especially after the 1980 coup, although the military involvement in the region increased, the Kurdish irregulars started to organize activities in the mountains against the state. Furthermore, since the Turkish government could not realize the type of strategy that the PKK was using, the PKK had an opportunity to conduct its first actions, such as building up its organization, eliminating rivals, conducting low level terrorism and establishing a base of operation (Latif 1999, 243). Moreover, the willingness and the power of the PKK elite are significant particularly the early leaders' devotion to Kurdish independence. In addition, the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan had connections with several Middle Eastern and European countries[4] which improved the opportunity for the PKK to be strong and survive for three decades.

Besides the authority problem, some unofficial operations of the state, and the power and the willingness of the ethnic elite created opportunities for the

[4] International support came from Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and Iraq's KPD and PUK, Armenia, Greece, Cyprus, Russia and Europe. Many of Turkey's neighbor's used the Kurdish problem to settle their own issues with Turkey and many European states' involvement was the result of activism by their Kurdish populations.

Kurds. The socialist elite which then became Kurdish nationalists were more devoted to the economic and social rights of the Kurdish people than the tribal elite were. The socialist elite were quite effective in mobilizing the masses, representing them in the political arena as well as gathering attention and support since the 1970s. They tried to organize the Kurdish people in the southeastern region of Turkey for a struggle against the Turkish state. The founders of the PKK, Kemal Pir, Mazlum Dogan and M. Hayri Durmus, explained their targets and methods they applied to mobilize the masses in the courts held after the 1980s coup (Mahkeme Tutanaklarindan PKK Davasi 2005). Their ultimate target was to establish a socialist Kurdish state in Turkish lands. The role of the state is still debatable. Abdullah Ocalan argues that it was the MIT (National Intelligence Organization, a government based organization) that helped him organize a revolutionary anti-state movement in the 1970s with the aim of controlling the movement through him (PKK Tarihi 2006). Ugur Mumcu, a Turkish journalist and researcher before his assassination, proved that there were several connections between the MIT and the PKK which helped the PKK to grow (Mumcu 1993; Simon et al. 1996, 585).

However, the nationalist elite did not have enough power to mobilize the Kurds for an ethnic movement until the emergence of the PKK leadership. The PKK leadership benefited from modernization and received financial and lethal support from the powers inside and outside Turkey. The improvements in literacy, mass media, transportation and communication provided the necessary ethnic awareness for ethnic elite to pursue ethnic provocation to establish an ethnic movement. The propaganda to introduce and spread the ideology of the PKK started with meetings and seminars in the Kurdish region. The PKK used the tools of modernization, such as mass communication, transportation and media in its propagation activities. For instance, the PKK leadership controlled local media to stir up hostility and fear against the Turkish leadership and it began publishing magazines named Serxwebun (independence) and Berxwedan (defense) in Europe, influencing the Kurdish diaspora to favor an independent Kurdish state in Turkey (Gunter 1997, 94).

Briefly, the authority problems, the power and the willingness of the ethnic elite and the international assistance provided several opportunities for the Kurds in mobilizing for a severe ethnic conflict and violence. Along with the Turkish state's lack of interest in recognizing the Kurdish issue and paying enough attention to the growing threat of the PKK, the tough Kurdish geography in the southeastern part of Turkey caused many problems in creating central authority thus helping the Kurdish irregulars to mobilize around ideologies against Turkey. Moreover, the willingness of the PKK leadership for a violent conflict provided the major opportunities for the emergence and early survival of the organization. Finally, the various international powers from the Middle East to Europe became the most important source of support for the PKK in its survival for decades.

Conclusion

I have argued that both the instrumental and the symbolic theories have been significant in explaining the sources of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. The modernization path of the Turkish Republic paved the way for the social awareness

that led to ethnic resentments as the ethnic differences and disadvantages became obvious to the Kurds. Moreover, the economic struggles and the relative poverty that the Kurds experienced combined with the instrumental concerns of the ambitious Kurdish elite led to further ethnic awareness and resentment. Those instrumental resentments mobilized the Kurdish people for ethnic action and became a source of the ethnic conflict. However, although the Kurdish ethnic struggle is a modern phenomenon based on the instrumental interests, the roots of the ethnicity and the shared ethnic symbols have been significant in the collective action. As such, the common history and culture, shared symbolic values and respected myths have been fundamental to the existing Kurdish ethnic identity. The threats on the existence or the status of those values and symbols played an important role as the causes of several ethnic based clashes. As stated in the symbolic theory, as the Kurdish people organized around those ethnic symbols and myths, they mobilized ethnically against the threats to those symbols. Thus, we can conclude that both the instrumental and the symbolic theories have contributed to ethnic conflict in Turkey.

Another conclusion of this study is related to the severe ethnic violence that Turkey experienced for three decades. My findings show that although the conflict sources of the instrumental theory continued to exist for eight decades, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the elite campaign and the political developments increased the symbolic grievances among the Kurds convincing them to engage in a violent ethnic conflict. The PKK elite promoted the Kurdish ethnic identity by reminding and emphasizing the past and present disastrous incidents and how they threatened the status and the existence of the Kurdish values and identity. By doing this, the PKK leadership constructed a Kurdish ethnic identity based on the hostility against the Turkish state, hence, developing an ethnic war based on violence and terror.

Finally, I argue that mass support among the Kurds for the violent ethnic conflict is explained by the instrumental and the symbolic theories together. The violence against Turkey was initiated by a limited number of the Kurdish people. However, in the following years, the PKK elite applied instrumental methods, such as offering monetary support or applying coercive methods on the Kurdish people. As a result, since the late 1980s, the composition of the volunteers in the PKK has changed in terms of motivation as the rate of those who supported the violence for their economic and security concerns increased.

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