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## Reluctant Victims into Challengers

### Narratives of a Kurdish Political Generation in Diaspora in Sweden

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# Reluctant Victims into Challengers

Narratives of a Kurdish Political Generation in Diaspora  
in Sweden



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Charlotta Zettervall





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Oh, the leaky boundaries of man-made states!

How many clouds float past them with impunity;

how much desert sand shifts from one land to another;

how much mountain pebbles tumble on to foreign soil

in provocative hops!

...

Only what is human can truly be foreign.

The rest is mixed vegetation, subversive moles, and wind.

(From Psalm by Wisława Zymborska, translated by Stanisław Barańczak and  
Clare Cavanagh)



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# Part I

## Opening



# Chapter 1 Points of Departure

## 1.1 Introduction

I am not in the service of any state, regime or political movement, leader or organisation. I am a literary writer, who from the bottom of his heart perceives the grief and pain of the suppressed and of victims, one who has made literature his world, who more than anything else attempts from grief and pain to create humanly relevant literary works. The central idea in my authorship is not ideological or political but humanitarian.

(from Mehmed Uzun's defence of his position, published in the Swedish edition of his novel *Light like Love, Dark like Death*, released in 2003).

There he stood accused, defending himself. The Swedish-Kurdish author Mehmed Uzun had travelled from the city of Stockholm, in the country where he once had been admitted asylum, to plead his own case in the State Security Court in Istanbul, April 4, 2001. He was prosecuted together with his Turkish publisher for "instigating separatist propaganda" in his book "*Light like Love, Dark like Death*".<sup>1</sup> The trip to Istanbul and the country from which he once escaped was a perilous one preceded by several intense months of solidarity actions and preparations for his defence. Human rights activists, well-known authors, journalists and the Swedish honorary-consul in Istanbul where among those who followed the trial there. All the attention given to the trial, and the presence of the accused allegedly surprised the judge and the prosecutor. Both the men were acquitted. In his defence speech Uzun emphasized the right to be an independent writer and artist, express himself in his maternal tongue without being accused of terrorism or political propaganda. Uzun was a Kurdish refugee from Turkey residing in Sweden where he had established himself, since many years back, as a Kurdish author. He

---

<sup>1</sup> The original title of the book is *Ronî mîna evînê-Tarî mîna mirinê*. In Swedish the title is: *Ljus som kärleken, mörk som döden*, Ordfront: Stockholm.

had participated in the Kurdish movements that had emerged in Turkey during the decades preceding the military coup of 1980. It was a loosely organised current having its roots in conservative circles and nationalist oriented groups, as well as in the emergent left wing movement in Turkey. During this period, a new generation of Kurds took shape. It was a political one, not because they necessarily intended to enter the political scene, but rather by virtue of their resistance, politically and symbolically, in the sense that they protested against the conditions under which Kurds were living in that country, and in their attempting to extend the limits of the possibilities for people to express their Kurdish identities in Turkey. It was a generation that became politicized and radicalised, and took upon itself the organizing of resistance on an ethnic base.

Another point of entry into the subject could be through the account provided by E, who expressed the sense of political marginalisation among the Kurds of his generation:

And after that new discussions began, on initiatives taken during the time we were in prison, among young people and students, that the Turkish left still was oriented to Kemalism and still ... . They could not think of a change ... and accept the Kurds as a people. And give the Kurds the right to decide over their own country ... also the Marxists you see, these Marxists you know ... there were just a few Marxists saying: "Yes, this is a matter of course. If the Kurds wants there own country - do by all means!" There were very few Turkish Marxists saying that, several well-known Marxists were strongly against. More than the Kemalists had been."

(E)

E first belonged to the left wing movement in Turkey, broke with it and organised in one of the many groups that operated clandestinely but appeared in public through groups affiliated with the Eastern question. Following the coup September 12, 1980, this current was eliminated, Kurdish activists who had participated in various forms of symbolic and political resistance were persecuted, arrested, sentenced to long imprisonment and several of them were forced to leave the country. Many of them ended up in Sweden, where they came to articulate Kurdish belongingness and participated in the formation of a Kurdish diaspora. Through their activism in Turkey, they had learned about how to organise and perform politically. This was at a time when they were still relatively young and in the formative period in their lives (Mannheim 1952 p. 364). In the diasporic context, their activism continued, but got new impulses and took on new ways. Their generation became the protagonist in a major political drama of our time. They were in a dilemma that they shared with other contemporary diasporic communities, in which generational experiences contributed to the dynamics and manifestation of identities. How are Mehmet Uzun and the people belonging to his political generation to

be regarded? Are they to be considered as being chased and persecuted victims or as being challengers present on the transnational political scene?

## 1.2 Aim and Questions

The present thesis deals with questions of how national identities are created and maintained in diasporic settings. More precisely, it concerns how the Kurdish national identities are constructed and are maintained in a political generation of Kurds who are residing in Sweden.

In some respects, their stories are shared by many other people. Over and over again in history it has happened that generations take shape that resist the political and social conditions of their time, actively take part in contemporary social processes, and resist and organize protests politically and symbolically. Their repertoire of actions can be considered as representing responses to overall historical and social processes, and as challenging and aspiring to change existing conditions in society. Thus, in a sociological sense, political generations take shape and are moulded in relation to the surrounding society (Mannheim 1952; Heberle 1951 Chapter 6). It happens that political generations are defeated, banished and the people belonging to them forced to take refuge from their original home countries (Lundberg 1989). In diasporic settings then, their struggle is reorganised and takes on new ways.

Edmunds and Turner (2002) emphasize the fact of generations often having a crucial role to play in the formation of nationalist consciousness (*ibid.* p. 71), but that the "specific" contribution of generational change in these processes is often "neglected" by scholars (*ibid.* p. 93). To my knowledge too, the generational contributions and specific stances taken in the formation of long-distance nationalism and diaspora that are manifested by refugees has not drawn much attention on the part of social scientists. However, generational contributions and experiences are certainly important for obtaining an understanding of the dynamism of such movements.

Although a majority of the political conflicts and contentions that in recent decades have caused refugee movements can be classified as being "ethnic conflicts", it should be emphasised that there is no "ethnic factor" as such that serves as a driving force behind such conflicts. Rather, conflicts of this sort tend to be rooted in unsettled political disputes or in conflicts over economic, political, natural or social resources. A consequence of many protracted and violent conflicts between central powers and their populations, however, is that people are forced to leave their home countries and continue their lives as refugees in other parts of the world. In recent decades hundreds of thousands have been forced away from their original homelands, and have settled down in other parts of the world, where they

have formed networks and communities, and in many cases have continued their political resistance.

The Kurds are one of the groups that in recent decades have established exile communities all over the world. Large number of Kurdish refugees have come to Western European countries and to other parts of the world following repression, forced displacement and persecution which they have been subjected to in the states of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, where large Kurdish populations are residing.

Turkey is the country in which assimilation policies towards the Kurdish population have been most radical, its for many years having even been officially denied that the Kurds existed at all. Up until the present times the Turkish regime has remained consistently intolerant of any expression of Kurdish identity. When the Kurdish question has been touched upon in public, it has been addressed in terms of "banditry", "fundamentalism", "tribalism", "economic underdevelopment" and "foreign incitement", thus being alluding to fairly problematic issues (see, for example, Yeğen 2011 p. 67). For many years, there was no Kurdish resistance movement openly challenging the public discourse. In recent decades, however opposing narratives have emerged. Many of these alternative narratives have develop in contexts outside of Turkey, in transnational arenas and among diasporic people.

Sweden is a country in which important parts of Kurdish diasporic activism have developed. Many of the Kurds who became politically active in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s were accepted as asylum seekers in Sweden, where they have continued to express, expand and maintain their Kurdish national identities.

The men and women belonging to the political generation of Kurds from Turkey who came to live in exile in Sweden are the main focus of the present study. Those taking part in the study were interviewed between 2001 and 2002, when most of them had been in exile for nearly two decades.

The thesis concerns how this political generation of Kurds have narrated their national belonging and pro-Kurdish activism in a Swedish context and what they have become after two decades in Swedish exile.

The study attempts to gain and provide an understanding of the formation in Sweden of a Kurdish political generation in a diasporic setting. The central aim of the study thus is to analyse and describe how narratives of Kurdish national identities are manifested in a diasporic context. More precisely, the aim is to describe and analyse the contents and the articulations of spoken and written expressions of Kurdishness, in terms of political and cultural belonging and exile, among different actors within the political generation of Kurds from Turkey who are living in Sweden.

The following three sets of questions are the guiding ones in the thesis:

First, there was a set of questions aimed at defining the Kurdish generation:

How do the members of this political generation present themselves? What does it mean to the members of the generation to be a Kurd? How do they define who is and who is not a Kurd?

Secondly, there are a number of questions concerning how the Kurdish generation is to be contextualised:

How do they relate to their country of origin? How do they relate to the present Kurdish movement in Turkey? How do they relate to the Kurdish diaspora? How do they relate to their country of settlement?

Thirdly, there are questions concerning the politicizing of a Kurdish generation:

How do they narrate their political background? How do they refer to their role and activism in the Swedish diaspora? How do they perceive of their situation, as that of their being diasporic people?

### 1.3 Why a Study of a Kurdish Political Generation from Turkey?

The present research grew out of long-term personal contacts I have had with members of the Kurdish diasporic community in Sweden. Today, diasporic Kurds represent one of the most active refugee groups in Western Europe and in various other parts of the world. This is a situation people in most of the settlement countries are quite familiar with, though this has not always been the case.

I remember the first time I ever heard of the Kurds. This was during my high school years in the late 1970s. One afternoon, when one of my friends and I were sitting at a café that we often frequented after school, we occasionally came into conversation with three men who sat at the table next to ours. One of them was Lebanese, and the other two proved to be Kurds from Iraq. We soon became involved in lively discussions of international politics and the situation in "the Third World". The two Kurds seemed to be more and more frustrated as our discussions continued. My friend and I were both interested in politics and followed the latest news from Lebanon, and also from Latin America and from South Africa. The Kurds, however, were a group we had never heard of before. The collapse of the Kurdish autonomy in Iraq and the subsequent armed conflict between

the Kurdish guerrillas and the Iraqi regime was also something we knew nothing about. I am not quite sure that we believed in all of the suffering and the atrocities they told us of. At that time, in the 1970s, there were still only very few Kurdish political refugees living in Western European countries who stemmed from Turkey. Few persons in "the Western World", with the exception of certain Middle East experts and others especially interested in the region, knew much about the Kurds. Despite the dramatic developments and political unrest in their home countries, the Kurds were only seldom reported on in the media or in international forums.

For my part, it was not before I moved to Gothenburg some years later that I in earnest became interested in the Kurdish question. My Kurdish acquaintances and my involvement finally in solidarity work for the Kurds provided me insights into their situation both in the Middle East and in countries in which they took refuge. I learned that the Middle Eastern countries that hosted large Kurdish populations differed from one another in terms of political space and possibilities for Kurds to organise (Chaliand 1979; Entessar 1992; Natali 2005).

This was in the mid-1980s. At that time the Kurdish question was scarcely well-known to the public, either in Sweden or in any other of the countries receiving large numbers of Kurdish refugees.

Kurdish national identities seemed to develop in opposition to the national state projects of the countries in the Middle East that hosted large Kurdish populations. As Abbas Vali has put it: "Opposition to the denial of Kurdish identity and resistance to the imposed "national" identities remain the fundamental cause of Kurdish rebellions" (Vali 1998 p. 82). In each of the four countries - Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey - guerilla-styled resistance movements driven by nationalist sentiments developed in the decades following the Second World War. In each of those countries the movements that developed were conditioned by specific historical, political, cultural and social developments in the country in question (Chaliand 1979; Entessar 1992; Gunter 1990). The Kurdish resistance movements within the states of Iraq, Iran and Turkey were not recognized by the authorities in these countries (Chaliand 1979; Entessar 1992; Natali 2005). In Turkey, an assimilation policy directed against the Kurds, one so harsh that even the very existence of a Kurdish population in the country was denied, had been carried out against the Kurds since the founding of the Republic in the 1920s. The Kurdish question has continued to be a major challenge to the modern Turkish Republic over the years (van Bruinessen 1984, 1988; Gunter 1990; Eccarius-Kelly 2010; Entessar 1992; Natali 2005).

From the early 1980s onwards, Kurds began to arrive in Western Europe in increasing numbers, due to the political turmoil in their home countries. Following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iran-Iraq War that commenced in 1980 and the military coup in Turkey in 1980, the attitudes of the homeland governments towards their Kurdish populations hardened. First of all, these developments led to

an extensive internal migration of Kurds in the Middle East region, from the countryside towards the major cities inside and outside of Kurdistan.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, an increased number of Kurdish refugees migrated to countries outside the Middle East,<sup>3</sup> the Kurdish question gradually becoming internationalised and "deterritorialized" (van Bruinessen 1998 pp. 48ff.). The headlines reporting the news of political murders committed by the *Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)*<sup>4</sup> in the 1980s were followed a decade later by headlines telling of violent Kurdish demonstrations after the gas bombings of Halabja, of Kurdish migrants being involved in honour killings, of Kurdish refugees being stranded in the border areas between Iraq, Turkey and Iran, and of the spectacular abduction of the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan from Kenya.

It was also a time when reports on the Kurds were increasingly present on the front pages of the newspapers around the world. It was the actions of the PKK that drew the attention of the media and of journalists, not least of all in Sweden. Among the incidents the party was accused of being involved in was a murder of one of the party's defectors that took place in Uppsala, Sweden in 1984. The organisation was then labelled a terrorist organisation by Swedish authorities and nine of its members were held in "commune arrest" for several years (see Gunter 1990 p. 104). After the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in Stockholm in February 1986, the Stockholm Chief of Police at the time, Hans Holmer, pointed to the PKK and to the Kurds as perpetrators. Holmer offered various motives for why that particular group should have carried this out. All of this came to have negative consequences for a majority of the Kurdish refugees in Sweden. In the media generally, and in the newspapers, Kurds were described as being associated not only with the PKK, but also with political violence. For example, there were headlines reading: "Now We Are Going to Chase Kurds with Soldering Lamps". Less often, reports appeared in the media concerning the circumstances which they were faced with in their home countries and the reasons

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the socio-economic and demographic developments in Kurdistan, see Jafar (1976), van Bruinessen (1992 pp. 14-21); White 2000, Chapter 5. For an overview of migration patterns in the Kurdistan region see Geerse 2011 pp. 163ff. ; Jongerden 2007 pp. 78-89; Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) 1996. Nowadays, Istanbul is by many observers considered to be the largest Kurdish city in the world, with an estimated Kurdish population of 1-1,5 million (Gunter 1997). In Mersin, in the south-eastern Mediterrean region, the Kurdish migration is reported to have caused a major demographic change such that the Kurds are now in the majority in the population.

<sup>3</sup> van Bruinessen 2000; Emanuelsson 2005.

<sup>4</sup> PKK is the Kurdish acronym for The Kurdistan Workers Party. In Kurdish: *Partîya Karkarên-y-Kurdistan*.

why they were seeking asylum in foreign countries, as well as to their situation in the countries in which they settled.

All of this contributed to nurturing my growing interest in the situation of Kurds in Turkey and the Kurdish resistance that had emerged there in the decades following the Second World War (Gunter 1990; Ibrahim and Gürbey 2000; Ecarius-Kelly 2010; Entessar 1992; Natali 2005).

In the diasporic settings that now came into being, Kurdish activists found themselves in a transnational space in which they could establish relations to both their new countries of residence and their old home countries. In addition, new arenas in which Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan could meet developed. Following the Gulf War in 1991, the Kurdish question gradually became recognised by the international community, resulting in the establishment of a "safe haven" for the Kurds in Northern Iraq (Cook 1995). Diasporic Kurds played at least some role in these changes (Emanuelsson 2005, 2008). However, as Natali (2005 pp. 160-179) points out, the transnational spaces and diasporic settings were diverse, dynamic and complex in terms of recognition, political support and the possibilities present in relation to the countries of settlement as well as the countries from which they had once emigrated. Relations with and responses from diverse contexts such as homeland regimes, countries of settlement and transnational space can vary. The political generation that concerns us here had experience from Turkey, where they organised clandestinely, as well as on the transnational scene, in Sweden and elsewhere where they could manifest their Kurdish national identities openly.

A particular repertoire of actions could thus develop in a specific political climate, which in each case gave the Kurdish Diaspora dynamics of a specific sort. In addition, diasporic settings are complex, diversified and dynamic in terms of recognition, political support and possibilities in relation to their settlement countries, the countries they left and the transnational spaces in which they were acting. They thus involve a myriad of jostling and competing identities. Diasporas are a complex phenomena, involving relations to the homeland and to the country of settlement, as well as to a transnational space. In a sense, diasporas are somewhere between being transnational and being exile. The men and the women belonging to the political generation the thesis is concerned with were once forced into exile and they should thus be considered more as diasporic than transnational (cf. Emanuelsson 2005 p. 216; Tölölyan 2007 p. 652-654). Accordingly, the creation of Kurdish diasporic identities and the emergence of a "long distance nationalism" as viewed from the perspective of this political generation from Turkey, are issues that merit close examination here.

## 1.4 A Kurdish Political Generation and its Constitutive Others

In this section I will examine more closely the contexts in which the "self", Kurdish diasporic identities, and "others" are created by the political generation. The men and the women in question were originally from Turkey, defined themselves as Kurds and participated in the loosely defined Kurdish nationalist movement that appeared in that country in the 1960s and the 1970s. Most of them came to Sweden or to other parts of Western Europe in the years around the time of the military coup of 1980, their commitment to the Kurdish issue continuing, and their being reorganised in line with a long-distance nationalism that developed in diasporic settings.

Abbas Vali (1998) has pointed out that Kurdish national identities are affected by the "political and cultural fragmentation" of being created in relation to four emerging national states in the Middle East. These conditions have contributed to that: "The dialectic of denial and resistance assigns a specifically transnational character to Kurdish nationalism" (ibid p.82). Vali underscores the "specificity" of Kurdish nationalism, its being "defined in part by the changing relationship of Kurdish identity to its 'others' " (ibid. p. 83). Thus, it seems plausible to assume that the long-distance nationalism emerging in diasporic settings is created in relation to the constitutive complexity of perceived "others" such as states in the original homeland as well as in the country of settlement. Thus, the contexts in which a given generation can be assumed to construct their "self" and "others" are crucial to our understanding of them.

A fundamental principle within most shared collective identities is the claim that a distinction should be made between "us" and "them", implying that the construction of the "self" is reflected in the "other" and that both of these need to be contextualised. Stipulating that for every "we" or "I" there must necessarily be an opposing "them", Chantal Mouffe (1992) writes:

There will always be a 'constitutive outside', an exterior to the community that is the very condition of its existence. It is crucial to recognize that, since to construct a 'we' it is necessary to distinguish it from a 'them', and since all forms of consensus are based on acts of exclusion, the condition of possibility of the political community is at the same time the impossibility of its full realization.

(quoted by Westlind, 1996, p. 72).

Accordingly, imagining "others" is crucial to creating of the perceived "self". However, imagined "selves" and "others" are dynamic and in a flux. The political generation of Kurds we are concerned with here can be expected to share an imagination of a Kurdish "we" that is created in opposition to "others", who can be

contextualised in terms of the time and the spaces in which they are acting (Westlund 1996 pp. 72, 80-84; Mouffe 1992; Mouffe and Laclau 1985).

### *A Political Generation*

Regarding the existence of a political generation, a few words are in order first concerning why and how the men and the women of primary interest in the thesis came to constitute a political generation and how this can be understood as a sociological phenomenon. In his seminal essay *The Problem of Generations* from 1927, Karl Mannheim established the idea that by a sociological generation is meant, "a common location in the social and historical process" which thereby limits it to a specific range of potential experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action" (Mannheim 1952 p. 291). A "sociological" generation is different from a "biological" one, since people belonging to the former category are united not only by virtue of their age and date of birth, but in addition belong to this location (ibid.). To label people as belonging to the same historical community as a sociological generation is the broadest use of the term. People of the same age who belong to the same "generation location" are not necessarily members of the same "generation unit". For example, not all Kurds in Turkey were politically active in the 1960s and 1970s, and not all of them took part in the pro-Kurdish currents that developed during that period, and there were also people who did not escape or attempt to escape the country. One crucial consideration here is that of how to define where a generation begin and where it ends.

A sociological generation is dependent upon the biological calendar and rhythm, but this does not follow through strictly. Instead, it is far more dependent upon historical-sociological processes, events and junctures. Thus, a sociological generation can be composed of many biological generations (Heberle 1951 pp. 118-127). This is an extremely broad and general definition, however. A more precise discussion of why a given group of people constitutes a "sociological generation" is thus called for. In the emerging literature on the Kurds in Turkey, many argue that there was not simply one generation but that there were several generations that, in the course of time, emerged on the scene in these decades. This definition may be too narrow, however, to serve as a satisfactory analytical tool, especially since the thesis concerns in particular how the political generation appeared in diasporic settings in which there can be said to have been a first generation of immigrant political actors, one that perhaps at the beginning could not be considered to be composed of transnationals.

The men and the women belonging to the political generation that concerns us here for the most part were born between about the late 1930s and the 1950s, the youngest one being born in the 1960s. They were too young to remember either the Kurdish rebellions or the repression of the Kurds in the early years of the Turkish Republic. Yet they were old enough to become politically aware in the decades that preceded the military coup of 1980.

The generation considered here can be characterised as a "political" one in the sense that it became committed to and mobilised around issues that were political, even if some of the members of the generation did not perceive these issues as such. In my view, a political generation is the equivalent of what Edmunds and Turner (2002) term an "active" generation, since it consists of a number of persons who "make a generative contribution to a social community or polity rather than passively accept a given culture" (ibid. p. 16).

The people belonging to the political generation was challenging and attempting to extend the limits of their political space in Turkey, or in the words of Edmunds and Turner: "A generation that has a strong consciousness and maintains its social solidarity has the capacity to act in politics, and to meet contingencies and exigencies of its particular historical location" (ibid. p. 16). However, their repertoire of actions of resistance was not always aimed at becoming political. Mehmed Uzun, for example, fled his home country while awaiting a pending trial, his having been sued for being the editor of a journal in Kurdish (Uzun 1998 pp. 37-38, 90-91, 2008 pp. 140ff.).

#### *A Kurdish Generation*

Since the men and the women the study concerns are Kurds born in different parts of the Kurdistan region or in other parts of Turkey, all of them having a relationship to the Kurdistan region and having been championing the Kurdish cause, a brief presentation of the Kurds and of Kurdistan is in place. A majority of Kurds reside in the Kurdistan region, which extends across the borders of the modern states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria and also has enclaves in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Kurdistan has never been a state of its own<sup>5</sup>. Situated at the crossroads between Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, the Kurdish society came to emerge in the periphery of several historical empires. Throughout history, wave after wave of raiding armies - Arabs, Turkomans, Seljuqs and Mongols - swept over this area.

Van Bruinessen has shown how the geopolitical position of Kurdistan, historical developments in that area, and its topography, formed the basis for the development of a diverse and heterogenous society (van Bruinessen 1992 pp. 15-25). The Kurdish society is varied and is intermixed in terms of political, cultural and religious affiliations. Approximately 75 % of the Kurds are Sunni Muslims, their also following the Islamic Shafi'i school of jurisprudence (McDowall 1996 pp. 10ff.), whereas an estimated 15 % are Shia Muslims (ibid.). Further religious

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<sup>5</sup> Two independent Kurdish political entities in modern times can be mentioned: 1) the Kurdish Republic in Mahabad (Iran) in 1946, 2) the Kurdish *de facto* state in Northern Iraq from 1992.

<sup>6</sup> This differs from the Turks, a majority of whom follow the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

communities that exist in the area, and that claim a Kurdish ethnic identity, are the Alevis, the Ahl-I Haqq and the Yezids<sup>7</sup>. In addition, there are other groups, such as Jewish, Zoroastrian, Armenian and Chaldean Christian groups (see Entessar 1992). In addition, Kurdish society is, like most other societies, linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous. Two main dialects predominate, these being Sorani, spoken mainly in Southern Kurdistan (mainly in present-day Iran and Iraq), and Kurmanji, which is dominant in Northern Kurdistan (mainly in present-day Turkey). Alevism<sup>8</sup> is a heterodox religion having a strong influence on Turkish society (White 2000 pp. 41-42). Zaza (also known as Zazakî, Kirmanci or Dimli) is an Iranian language, often considered distinct from Kurdish (see McDowall 1996 p. 4; White 2000 pp. 47-50).

Although there is a marked overlap between Alevis and Zaza speakers, there are Alevis who consider Kurdish to be their maternal tongue, at the same time as it is also possible to find Sunni practising Zaza speakers as well. In addition, a substantial Yezidi population used to inhabit the Kurdistan region in Turkey, until a few decades ago. Yezidism is a highly syncretic religion that contains elements from such pre-Islamic religions as Zoroastrism, Sufi-Islam and Christianity (van Bruinessen 1992 pp. 23-25, McDowall 1996 pp. 10-13). Historically speaking there never was a Kurdish leader strong enough to gain a monopoly of power in Kurdistan. For a long time, Kurdish society was organised in terms of small principalities ruled by local princes (mirs), their coexisting with tribal communities and with confederations of tribes that were nomadic, semi-sedentary or sedentary, living side-by-side with population groups without any tribal affiliations.<sup>9</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the Ottoman and Safavid Empires contested for power in the area, a frontier line finally being agreed upon between the belligerent state powers that was formally recognised in the Treaty of Zulab in 1639. From this time on, the major parts of Kurdistan, were annexed to the Ottoman Empire. However, the Kurdish principalities were incorporated into the Ottoman state structure under conditions essentially favourable to them. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire finally collapsed. The political map of the Middle East was then redrawn, several new state formations being created. In 1920 the peace negotiations first resulted in the Treaty of Sèvres. In accordance with the Treaty, the Ottoman territory was to be partitioned between France, Britain, Italy

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<sup>7</sup> A syncretic religion with elements of Zoroastrism, Manicheism, Nestorian Christendom, Judaism and Islam ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) 2012-03-21).

<sup>8</sup> Alevism contain elements of Zoroastrianism, Pre-Islamic religions, Turcomen shamanism and Shi'ism (see White 2003 Chapter 1).

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough description of the tribal and the political organisation of Kurdistan see van Bruinessen 1992.

and Greece. Section III of the Treaty included the articles 62-64, stipulating that independent Kurdish and Armenian states should be established, north of Lake Van in territories that presently belong to Turkey (Hurewitz 1956 p. 74).<sup>10</sup> However, the Treaty of Sèvres remained unratified and was replaced in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne, which finally recognised the establishment of an independent Turkish state in the lands of Rumelia<sup>11</sup> and Anatolia. In the new Treaty, all the promises of independence for Kurds and Armenians had been removed, the possibility of creating an independent Kurdish state being eliminated for a long time to come.

When the Treaty of Lausanne came into effect, the Kurdish population in the Middle East in practice became distributed among four states: Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Even today, from a Turkish point of view, the Treaty of Sèvres is regarded as a threat to the integrity of the Turkish Republic, reminding one of the fact that these lands were planned to be carved up into Greek, French and Italian entities (see, for example, Pope and Pope 1997 p. 55; Yapp 1996; Zürcher 2004 p. 147). The Kurds generally look at it differently. Nezan Kendal, a Kurd from Turkey residing in exile in France since 1971, and presently director of the Kurdish Institute in Paris, summarises this as follows:

Sèvres had been humiliating for the Turkish people and deeply unjust to the Kurdish people. Lausanne, in contrast, was undeniably a victory for the Turks, but for the Kurds it marked the beginning of a new phase of servitude (Kendal 1979a p. 58).

Following Jongerden (2007 p. 142) what henceforth is referred to as the Kurdistan region are the following 19 provinces (*il*) in south-eastern Turkey: Adiyaman, Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Erzincan, Elazığ, Hakkari, Iğdir, Kars, Malatya, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şırnak, Tunceli, Urfa and Van.

#### *Committed to the Kurdish Cause*

After the establishment of new states in the Middle East, the Kurdish national struggle became limited, essentially different Kurdish currents developing within states that hosted large Kurdish minorities (Entessar 1992; Natali 2005; McDowall 1996 p. 416). In Turkey, a first cycle of open Kurdish resistance against the Kemalist regime took place in the early years of the Republic, when the political and

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<sup>10</sup> The text of the Peace Treaty is published in Hurewitz 1956 p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Rumelia is the European part of Turkey.

ideological structures of the state were not yet fully established. The early resistance that developed then culminated in three major rebellions. All of them were brutally crushed, this being followed by severe repression of the Kurds (see, for example, van Bruinessen 1992; Kendal 1979b; More 1984 pp. 64-66; Olson 1989; McDowall 1996 pp. 194-211; White 2000 pp. 73-89).

The next cycle of Kurdish resistance took form in post-Kemal Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. This time the Kurdish resistance can be seen as a reaction to the repressive policies of the Turkish state (Bozarslan 1996, 2000; Gunter 1990; Grojean 2008; McDowall 1996 Chapter 19, 20; Gürbey 2000; Kendal 1979b; White 2000). A number of coinciding factors gave impetus to the emergence of a Kurdish movement: the sweeping economic and political changes that took place, the introduction of a multi-party system, the country's closer political relations with NATO that developed, initial attempts to become integrated into the international capitalist economy, and in particular the new constitution of 1960, which provided a certain degree of political freedom.

After two decades of political turmoil a military coup was staged September 12, 1980, this largely eliminating the political system in Turkey as a whole. All of the political parties and trade unions were suspended, several newspapers and publications closed down and extensive purges against people suspected to have been involved in subversive activities were carried out (Ahmad 1993 pp. 183ff. ; Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 152-153; Zürcher 2004 pp. 278-280). The country was then under direct rule by the military, and from 1983 on until the year 2000 the Kurdistan region was placed under Martial Law (Jongerden 2007 p. 53 n. 12). Many Kurdish activists were arrested, imprisoned and tortured (Amnesty International 1984; Gunter 1990), many of them belonging to the political generation that chose to leave the country.

#### *Refugees and Immigrants*

The political generation of particular interest here can be contextualised in terms of its consisting of refugees and immigrants residing in a diasporic setting. Migration, be it voluntary or forced, is patterned by various political and economic developments in the countries of origin and in the recipient countries, respectively. Throughout history, the ancient practice of banishment has been employed by many Middle Eastern rulers in order to punish undesirable persons or as a means of collective punishment. Examples of this include the Kurdish aristocrats and landowners who the Ottoman authorities sent away from their Kurdish lands to Constantinople, and the tribes of Kurds that were forced away to the province of Khorasan in Eastern Iran during the period of the Safavid dynasty in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, several Kurdish communities became established outside the Kurdish dominated lands in Western and Central Asia. Kurdish speaking communities are to be found today in Istanbul, Damascus, Bagdad and Teheran, as well as in Beirut, Khorasan, Caucasus, Central Anatolia and Central Asia. Several tributary peo-

ple, not simply the Kurds, were subjected to the policies of banishment. Hence, the experience of exile is a theme that is to be found in Kurdish mythology and history writing, yet these exiles were not political refugees in the modern sense of the term (Lundberg 1989 pp. 21-23; Said 2000 Chapter 17).

Only a few Kurds made their way to Europe and to the Americas in the period prior to the Second World War. A majority of those who arrived were men belonging to the Kurdish aristocracy or to prosperous families who had been sent abroad for education. There were others who were exiles and who had been forced to leave the Ottoman territories because of their involvement in oppositional movements. Important figures of this type include, for example, members of the prominent Bedr Khan family who published journals in the Kurdish language in Paris and in Berlin, as well as Sherif Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador to Sweden in 1890s, who later became the principal representative of the Kurds in the peace negotiations following the First World War (McDowall 1996 p. 121). According to Alakom (2007), the first Kurdish refugee in the modern sense of the term who came to Sweden was a man named Alexander Suleiman Knutas. It is told that after a dramatic escape from Tonstra in Kurdistan he had been adopted by a family in the Swedish settlement in Ukraina and that he came with them to the Swedish island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea in 1929 from the Soviet Union (*ibid.* p. 45).

Between the Second World War and up to the early 1960s the few Kurds coming to Europe and to the US consisted mainly of male students (Sheikhmous 2000). From 1965 on, both the migration patterns and the social composition of the Kurdish migrants changed. This was at a time when the economies and the industrial sector in Western European countries were prosperous and expanding. There was a strong demand for labour, migrants being actively recruited from such Southern European countries as Greece, Italy, ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey (Castles and Miller 2009 pp. 97-101.; Johansson 2008). Among the considerable numbers of Turkish guest workers and labour migrants who arrived in Western European countries at this time were several Kurds. The exact numbers of them involved are difficult to determine, since the Kurds were registered as Turks, their being Turkish citizens. West Germany was the country that received the largest numbers of incoming Kurds during this period, its being estimated that there were between 400,000 and 500,000 of them. A clear majority of the Kurds arriving in Sweden, in turn, originated from the area of Kulu in Central Anatolia (Berruti et al 2002; Khayati 2008; Sheikhmous 2000; Svanberg and Tydén 1998).

From the mid 1970s onwards, immigration policies in all Western European countries became increasingly restrictive (Castles and Miller 2009 p. 97; Johansson 2008). The economic recession and increasing oil prices affected most Western countries, this period of time contributing to the changing of policies. Labour migrants were not permitted, which in turn led to increasing numbers of people applying for family reunions or political asylum (Appelqvist 1999 p. 2; see also Appelqvist and Zettervall 2008; Johansson 2008).

The increasing flow of Kurdish asylum seekers was fostered mainly by the many political crises and the instability in their home countries. Kurdish refugees from Iraq arrived after the first Gulf War in 1980-88 and in the aftermath of the second Gulf War in 1991, when hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds escaped their homes and crossed the borders of Iran and Turkey (McDowall 1996 p. 372). Kurdish refugees from Iran began to come after the revolution in 1979. In Turkey, it was the social transformations and the political turmoil in the 1960s and 1970s that culminated in the *coûp d'états* of 1971 and 1980, that led to major migration flows to Western Europe. Many of the refugees who arrived from Turkey after the coup of 1971 returned a few years later, just to escape from there for a much longer period of time after 1980. The military intervention of 1980 had lasting effects since the military regime carried out radical changes and produced a new constitution (Sheikmous 2000). Since it became difficult, if not completely impossible, for many activists to return, 1980 must be considered a turning point in the life of many Kurdish activists of that political generation.

As immigrants in Sweden, the Kurds were registered as Iranians, Iraqis, Syrians or Turks, in accordance with their citizenship. Accordingly, it is not possible to establish, in any exact way, how many Kurds are presently residing in Sweden. Until 1965, according to estimates made by Alakom (2007), there were only a handful of Kurds residing in the country. That year, however, about 25 Kurdish immigrant workers arrived, and in the early 1970s there were about 100 Kurds living in Sweden (*ibid.* p. 66). When waves of Kurdish refugees were coming from the Middle Eastern countries, the numbers of Kurds increased considerably. Emanuelsson (2005) mentions there being between 25,000 and 40,000 Kurds living in Sweden around 2000, these numbers being based on updated estimates made by the Kurdish Institute in Paris (Emanuelsson 2005 p. 83). Alakom (2007) discusses the difficulties and uncertainties connected with establishing how many Kurds are living in Sweden. In accordance with figures provided by the Swedish Migration Board, based on the numbers of immigrants that have come from their countries of origin, figures of between 40,000 and 50,000 seems plausible. However, Alakom also refers to a former Iraqi president's suggesting that there must be about 100,000 Kurds living in Sweden, given the increasing numbers of refugees from Iraq that have been arriving in recent years.

Among the political refugees arriving from Turkey in the late 1970s and early the 1980s one finds those who belong to the generation of particular interest in the thesis. Like Mehmed Uzun, most of them ended up in the suburbs of Stockholm, Uppsala and other major Swedish cities. In Sweden, immigrant policies were guided until the early 1970s of the principle of assimilation. From 1975 on, Sweden then implemented a strategy of "multiculturalism" based on the principles of equality, freedom to choose and partnership. The idea was that immigrants should be given the same rights and obligations as Swedish citizens and equal access to the Swedish welfare system, and in addition should be given the freedom to

choose between on the one hand "incorporation", i.e. be given the possibility of maintaining "their culture", and on the other hand assimilation (Johansson 2008; Khayati 2008 pp. 182-187). Finally immigrants were to be given the right to vote, after 3 years of residence, in elections for municipalities, for the church and for the county they resided in (Johansson 2008; Khayati 2008).

In order to promote "multi-culturalism", a set of reforms were carried aimed to facilitate the life of foreigners who settled down in Sweden, examples of this being the Mother tongue reform in 1976 and the decision to implement municipal immigrant offices. A number of laws aimed at protecting and supporting immigrants were enacted, among these the law against illicit discrimination, and the law against threat and agitation directed against some groups of people (Khayati 2008).

### *Diaspora Activism and Transnational Spaces*

Along with the globalisation process and increased numbers of political refugees moving in the direction from "South" countries to Western European and North American countries, the world has witnessed a proliferation of intra-ethnic communities acting politically across state borders and through international networks. The Kurds constitute one of many diasporic communities in the world, other examples of active diaspora formations today being those of Palestinians, Circasians, Somalis, Kosovo Albanians, Tibetans and Cambodians, each of these formed and conditioned by specific historical, political and social circumstances. International migration and the occurrence of social formations consisting of refugees are phenomena that affect society, both in the countries of residence and in their countries of origin (see, for example, Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Cohen 1997; Olsson 1999a; Povrzanovic-Frykman 2001; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001a, 2003).

The Kurdish guest students in various European countries who arrived there in the 1960s and 1970s frequently became members of the association *Kurdish Students Society in Europe* (KSSE).<sup>12</sup> This group was founded in 1956 and organised Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan and different political affiliations, the fact notwithstanding that, since 1975, a majority of its members sympathised with Barzanî (More 1984 pp. 214ff.; Grojean 2008 p. 111; see also Emanuelsson 2005 pp. 85ff.). In the 1970s the KSSE splintered due to internal conflicts. New groups emerged, organising the Kurds in Europe mainly along party lines or on the basis of local affiliations. Grojean (2008 p. 111) describes the *Association of Kurdish Students Abroad* (AKSA)<sup>13</sup> as being the most influential of these, one that at-

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<sup>12</sup> The Kurdish name of the organisation was *Komela Xwendkarên Kurd li Ewropa*.

<sup>13</sup> The Kurdish name of this organisation is *Yekitiya Xwendevanên li dervayî Welat*.

tracted in particular sympathisers to the *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)*,<sup>14</sup> In addition there were two associations that above all organised Kurds from Turkey. One of these was *Hevra*, (together) founded in Germany in 1965. A second group that Grojean points to is *Bahoz*<sup>15</sup> founded in Sweden in 1970 by a former member the KSSE<sup>16</sup> (Grojean 2008 pp. 102; Grojean 2011 p. 184).

In the course of time, a complex web of Kurdish organisation extending across continents emerged. The Kurdish diaspora activism of today is conducted through a number of different organisations, as well as independent NGOs, private individuals and political institutions. In North America, Australia and several Western European countries, Sweden among them, members of the Kurdish diaspora have actively sought to further their cause by means of political lobbying, and attempts to influence public opinion in the direction of politics regarding Kurds in the Middle East being changed. Khayati (2008) asserts that the "political performances of the diasporan Kurds in Sweden displayed the experiences of living across the state borders of several nation states" (ibid. p. 253).

Thus, Sweden can be seen as having become an arena for transnational activities. For instance, Kurds from Turkey residing in diasporic settings have published widely in the Kurdish language, have actively participated in debates and actions concerning Turkish membership of the EU and human rights issues in Turkey, submitted reports to the Council of Europe on violations of Kurdish rights, and brought cases of human rights violations to the attention of the European Court (KHRP 1996; 1998). Emanuelsson (2005) has pointed out that transnational networks have been established among the Kurds, ones that "involve actors at the sub-state, state and supra-state levels and accomodate 'unbounded' ideas/values in both territorial and non-territorial terms" (Emanuelsson 2005 p. 215).

These networks can be located in the countries of settlement, in the countries of origin or both. The political impact of diasporic networks has been disputed, its often being considered marginal, but it has prospects of increasing in a present globalised world. Although their impact should not be exaggerated, the diasporic Kurds have been challenging the fundamental principles that have guided the Turkish Republic (see, for example, Yeğen, 2011). As political or politicized actors, they also confront the regimes in the settlement countries with new dilemmas

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<sup>14</sup> In Kurdish: *Yekyete Nîştîmanî Kurdistan*. The PUK is one of the two dominant political parties in Iraqî Kurdistan.

<sup>15</sup> *Hevra* means together and *Bahoz* mean storm.

<sup>16</sup> According to Grojean (2008 p. 103) both of these associations appear not to have been active since 1975.

in terms both of international political relations and of the domestic political situation.

### *Kurdistan Iraq and Transnational Space*

The diasporic networks extend from European countries to North America, and Australia and the Middle East, this also including the imagined homeland of Kurdistan. Once the Kurds were portrayed as "a people without a country", referring to the fact that they did not have a state of their own. This was essentially the situation when the political generation with which we are primarily concerned here began to organise politically in Turkey, and during its first decades of exile in Western Europe. Today, however, a de facto Kurdish state has developed in Northern Iraq. In the aftermath of the First Gulf War in 1991, a no-fly zone was created north of the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel, one encompassing a large part of the Kurdistan region in Iraq, after an estimated half million Iraqi Kurds had taken refuge near the Turkish borders out of fear of the regime. The Bush administration's appeal to the population of Iraq to rebel against its government lay partly at the basis for this.

As Kurdish protests become organised, no support for them was provided by the US forces. In the internationally recognized "safe haven" that nevertheless developed, the Kurds have gained autonomy and "assumed a territorial identity apart from central and southern Iraq" (Natali 2005 p. 66). These developments have provided the Kurds new possibilities of mobilizing as a national group, as well as the opportunity of creating a democratic Kurdish state and society (Natali 2005 pp. 64-69; Emanuelsson 2008 p. 31). Free and open elections were held in the Kurdistan region in 1992. These led to the establishment of a regional government located in the city of Hêwler/Erbil, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (McDowall 1996; Natali 2005; Olson 2005).

These positive developments were set back, however, by power-sharing agreements and by infighting between the two dominant political parties in the region: the KDP-Iraq and the PUK during the period between 1994 and 1998. Negotiations for reconciliation were initiated by the United States and were conducted in meetings between the belligerent Kurdish parties that were arranged in various European capitals (Natali 2005 p. 164). Since the overthrow of President Saddam Hussein in 2003, Kurdish autonomy has continued and is now recognized in the Permanent Iraqi Constitution from 2005, the Kurdish region being seen as a distinct region in the federal state of Iraq (Olson 2010; Romano 2010). Relations between the two dominant parties have also normalised and improved. Nowadays, the following quotation by the Premier Minister Massoud Barzanî is, for example, to be found on the homepage of the KRG: "To ensure the defence of an autonomous Kurdistan, cooperation between the KDP-Iraq and the PUK is essential" (www.krg.org 2012-09-27).

Several rebuilding projects have been carried out since 1992 in areas that were partly destroyed by the Iraqi regime during the *Anfal* period<sup>17</sup> in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of laws having been passed to facilitate foreign investments, tourism and the sale of natural resources in the Kurdistan region.

The creation of the KRG did not attract much attention on the part of either the public or the governments involved either in the US or in Europe. However it did attract numerous civil society organisations, NGOs and donor agencies that later became active in the area. The Kurdish diasporic community has been involved in the process of reconstruction in this area and in long-distance nationalism in the region (Emanuelsson 2005; Khayati 2008; Natali 2005 pp. 163ff.). Diasporic Kurds have been playing the role of intermediaries between KRG representatives, on the one hand, and politicians and governments in Western European countries, on the other. Many diasporic organisations have established close contacts with the KRG and are involved in reconstruction projects, providing financial support, material sources, skills and ideologies and are involved in many cases in supporting their families in Kurdistan (Emanuelsson 2008 pp. 43ff.).

Diasporic Kurds have actively sponsored activities in the areas of business, culture, education and human rights. Many Kurds returned to the region for several reasons: to meet with friends and family, to participate in politics or in the reconstruction of the country, and in some cases to conduct business. A number of European Kurds have been elected to the parliament. Some Kurds returned on a permanent basis, whereas others chose to circulate between Kurdistan and Europe (ibid.). The process of building a democratic society in the Kurdistan region and aspirations regarding this have not been without problems, however, carrying out what has been needed having proved to be a long-term and difficult enterprise. At the same time, there has been considerable criticism directed at the KRG-administration.

The two dominant political parties have been criticized by diasporic Kurds for their failure to create a democratic structure and civil society in the region (Khayati 2008 p. 104). The situation for women is difficult, there having been various reported cases of "honor killings" and of "self-immolation" (ibid p. 104). Reports tell of corruption, social inequalities and human rights abuses. On the other hand, as Emanuelsson (2008) has put it: "Another big problem among the sceptics is that their expectations with regard to the Kurdistan Region are too high" (ibid. p. 46).

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<sup>17</sup> The Anfal campaign was conducted during the period between 1986 and 1989 in the Kurdistan region by the Iraqi regime, one that took on genocidal proportions and culminated in the gas attack against the Kurdish city of Halabja in 1988 in which 5,000 people were killed.

Developments in the Kurdistan region of Iraq have at least two major implications, I would argue, for the political generation the study deals with primarily. They have contributed to a changing geopolitical situation in the region, one that challenges Turkey. For Turkey the question of Kurdistan and of any prospects of independence for the Kurds have been sensitive topics ever since the early years of the Republic. This is reflected in particular in Turkish policies towards its own population. From a Turkish perspective, the Kurdish question has essentially been considered "a security matter", especially since Kurdish guerillas have operated from Iraqi territories. The prospects of an independent Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq has caused fears in Turkey that requests for, and measures aimed at political independence will spill over to Turkey (Olson 2005; Romano 2010). In recent decades, formal relations between the Turkish regime and the KRG administration have been established. Turkey opened an Honorary Consulate in Erbil in 2010 and has become a main trading partner for the Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq ([www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org) 2012-09-13). From a long-term perspective, this may have an impact on its policies toward its own Kurdish population.

Furthermore, developments in the Kurdish region in Iraq have contributed to an increase in the transnational space in which the two potentially opposing parties are acting. The Kurds in Turkey have never benefitted in the same way from transnational recognition and possibilities as the Iraqi Kurds have, even if conditions in Turkey have changed in recent years. Several highly active persons belonging to the political generation of major interest here have visited the region and been involved in developmental projects and transnational activities in the region. Some of those interviewed have referred to the region as "Kurdistan", which I understood as referring to "the existing Kurdish country".

## 1.5 Previous Research

For a very long time, research on Kurds was scarce, its only constituting a very marginal area, one in which only few scholarly works were produced. This has changed considerably in recent decades. Nowadays, a myriad of aspects of the Kurdish issue have engaged scientists from a variety of disciplines, resulting in an increased number of academic studies and books in the area. However, in Kurdistan proper, research on Kurds is still scarce. Despite all the efforts that have been made in Turkey to live up to EU standards, publishing articles or books on Kurdish issues remains a perilous enterprise in Turkey. The only part of Kurdistan in which the government so far have been positive toward research on Kurdish issues is in Iraqi Kurdistan.

### 1.5.1 Research on Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey

A historical-sociological perspective is necessary in order to understand the emergence of the political generation in Turkey. So as to provide a historical and socio-political framework, the study draws on the rich body of scholarly literature available on the development of a Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey. This literature has been essential in illuminating the context in which the political generation emerged and was first organised. For a long time, most of the research regarding Kurds concentrated on the emergence of Kurdish nationalist movements. The Dutch anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen, who conducted long periods of fieldwork in all parts of Kurdistan in the 1970s, broke new ground with his monograph *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the social and political organisation of Kurdistan* from 1978. At the outset of his research, van Bruinessen was concerned with the reactionary features and strains in the tribalism he could discern in the Kurdish movement there and that he regarded as being different from other rebellious movements. Van Bruinessen points out that the social organisation of Kurdish society, dominated politically by feudal, tribal and religious leaders, is closely linked with and created by the political processes and structures in the states hosting large Kurdish populations. This argument is further illustrated in his analysis of the Sheikh Said rebellion<sup>18</sup> (van Bruinessen 1992 p. 317).

Another pioneering work on the early phases of Kurdish nationalism is Robert Olson's *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism in the Shaikh Said rebellion* from 1989, devoted primarily to the Sheikh Said rebellion. Olson's study also highlights geopolitical and geostrategic facets of the Kurdish question and the role played by the Great Britain in the political game in Kurdistan at the time.

Due to the tough position that Turkish authorities take against all expressions of Kurdish identity and against attempts to discuss the Kurdish question in public, it has been extremely difficult to conduct research on Kurds in Turkey. Only very few academic works on the Kurds have been written by domestic researchers. Changes in this regard have been occurring in recent years, however. The first and for a long time the only researcher who wrote about the Kurds in Turkey is the sociologist Ismael Beşikçi. Because of his commitment to the Kurdish question, had to spend several years in prison, being given prison penalties of a length that took on absurd dimensions. In the work *Kurdistan: An Interstate Colony*, he argues that Kurdistan is an interstate colony partitioned between the state powers of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In that work he criticises the Turkish State ideology

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<sup>18</sup> The Sheik Said rebellion, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4, took place in Turkey in 1925. It is generally considered as a watershed in the Turkish State formation process as regards Kurdish-Turkish relations.

and urges Turkish intellectuals to take their stand on the Kurdish question. In recent decades however, many scholars in Turkey, including Yeğen (2011), Kirişçi (2010) and Cizre Sakallıoğlu (1996, 1998), have published works on the Kurdish question.

Conclusions similar to those of are arrived at in Majeed Jafar's dissertation in 1976 *Under-underdevelopment: A Regional Case Study of the Kurdish Area of Turkey*. The study deals with socio-economic developments in Kurdistan in Turkey from the 1920s up to including the 1960s. The author found that a process of increasing inequality in terms of social welfare, income, investments and the likes between the Kurdish areas in the Southeast and the Western parts of Turkey took place during these years. Jafar found it to not only be the case that Kurdistan has remained an underdeveloped part of the country but that it has become more underdeveloped since establishment of the modern Turkish Republic.

The emergence of a modern Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, its defeat following the military coup of 1980, and the ensuing revival of the PKK have been thoroughly analysed by Michael Gunter in *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma*, from 1990. Gunter analyses the situation of the Kurds in Turkey in terms of "relative deprivation", suggesting that the conditions Kurds were living under in Turkey finally paved the way for the emergence of a militant Kurdish nationalism that was promoted by the PKK.

The anthology *The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey: Obstacles and Chances for Peace and Democracy* from 2000, edited by Ferhad Ibrahim and Gülistan Gürbey, provides a number of analyses concerning the implementation of political violence in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey as well as prospects for a peaceful and democratic solution. The volume *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* from 2003 and edited by Abbas Vali concerns the historiography and the epistemology of Kurdish history writing. Of importance for the present study is an essay by Hamit Bozarslan discussing Kurdish history writing in a Turkish context.

The anthology *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s: Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East* (1996) edited by Robert Olson discusses further the development of Kurdish nationalist movements and the role they play in Turkish politics and in the Middle East generally, together with what new dilemmas and options they may offer. Of relevance for this study are the contributions by Gülistan Gürbey, Michael Gunter and Hamit Bozarslan in which the emergence of a Kurdish movement, together with its possibilities and consequences, are illuminated from different angles.

In a study entitled *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers: The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey* from 2000, Paul White examines the Kurdish political leadership, in particular developments within the PKK. White concludes that the Kurdish leadership of today has changed considerably since the early 20th century, its having changed from being dominated by members of the traditional Kurdish agha and sheikh families, the primordial affinities this included and the

role that personal interests played standing in the way of the implementation of nationalist aims and goals, to this having largely been replaced today by a modern political leadership that gives priority to nationalist aims and purposes, his referring to those bringing it about as, "revolutionary modernisers".

In her work *Activist in Office* from 2010, Nicole Watts has scrutinized the pro-Kurdish political parties in Turkey and their interactions with the legal framework of Turkish politics. Watts employs the institutionalisation movement as a key concept, showing that in semi-democratic or authoritarian political systems institutionalisation can result in more aggressive marginalisation and does not necessarily prevent prosecution or further marginalisation of the movement. She considers that due to the semi-democratic political structure in Turkey today, efforts to institutionalise pro-Kurdish parties, have produced conflicts and at the same time a greater unity between moderates and radicals within the movement (see Watts 2010a; Watts 2010b).

Watts asserts that the political space in Turkey makes it difficult for pro-Kurdish parties to operate there for two main reasons. First, state institutions carry out coercive measures against legal pro-Kurdish parties (Watts 2010a p. 121). Secondly, the PKK did not recognize the development of a new party organisation (ibid. 176). Thus, Watts argues, the legal pro-Kurdish parties have been obstructed from developing a moderate alternative in Turkey. Hence, Watts contributes with a fresh explanation to the emerging radicalisation of pro-Kurdish activism in that country.

Vera Eccarius-Kelly's book *The Militant Kurds: A Dual Strategy to Freedom* from 2010, is devoted to the political organising of Kurds in Turkey, particularly that involving the rise of the PKK, as well as the international dimensions of the Kurdish question. Like Watts, she concentrates on developments in Turkey in recent decades, her analysis also including matters of the Kurdish transnational web, its political organisation, and the reactions and responses of Kurds in Europe. The works of both authors have contributed to my understanding of the radicalisation of Kurdish politics, of the complex factors behind it and how the current Kurdish movements have developed.

### 1.5.2 Research on Diasporic Kurds

As the numbers of Kurdish refugees residing in diasporic settings outside the Middle East has increased, research on transnationalism and diaspora among the Kurds has increased considerably as well. In his research van Bruinessen (1998, 2000) has noticed that national sentiments and the awareness of national identities have become particularly important in exile settings. This is probably particularly significant of the Kurds from Turkey, who for the first time "dare to emphasise" their Kurdish identities openly. Van Bruinessen shows how Kurdish diasporic networks

are constructed and examines them in a context of global politics generally. He discusses the capture of the PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan as pointing to the extent to which Kurdish nationalism had developed into a transnational phenomenon. Within just a few hours, the PKK activists had mobilised, protest actions regarding the kidnapping being organised at strategic sites all over Europe.

In addition, the treatment of the PKK-leader shown again and again in TV-programmes caused a general upsurge of national sentiments, also among the Kurds, who did not at all support the PKK. Such non-territorial Kurdish networks, as van Bruinessen calls them, contributed to the re-emergence of Kurdish actors on the international political arena after decades of the attempted integration of Kurds into the nations of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. This was in many respects a new phenomenon, since while reorganising in the diaspora the Kurds also created new political structures and social networks (van Bruinessen 1998, 2000).

In comparative studies of the mobilisation and organising that occurred among Turkish-born immigrants in Germany, both of Kurdish and of Turkish origin, Østergaard-Nielsen (2001b) noted homeland politics to have found its way from demonstrations and solidarity actions in the streets into more formal actions and institutional bodies in the settlement countries. At the same time she points out the responsibility that the governments of the receiving countries should take to prevent immigrant organisation from being marginalised. In addition Østergaard-Nielsen demonstrates how organisations working on foreign soil tend to adapt their political agendas and repertoire of action to the political standards and values prevailing in the host countries as well as to the global political arena. She states:

In my own research, patterns of dialogue between Kurdish and Turkish political organisations and German or Dutch political actors illustrate how transnational political networks change their formulation of political agendas in order to comply with more internationally accepted discourses of human rights.

(Østergaard-Nielsen 2001b p. 17).

She notes a shift in the activities, strategies and goals of Kurdish organisations in Germany, for example from having been revolutionaries and radical left-wing politicians in the early 1980s, to their emphasis on human rights issues and on political dialogue in the 1990s. A similar shift in political strategies and goals in the Kurdish Diaspora has been noted by Sheikhmous (2002) and Emanuelsson (2005).

A study entitled *Kurdish Diaspora's: a comparative study of Kurdish refugee communities* by the sociologist Östen Wahlbeck (1999) is devoted to the situation of exiled Kurds in Finland and in Great Britain. Wahlbeck demonstrates how not only the idea of the lost homeland, but also the socio-political environment in the receiving countries contributes to a strong orientation to the homeland often being

found among the Kurdish refugees. Simultaneously however they orient towards new arenas in settlement countries and transnational spaces.

Similar results are presented in Alinia (2004). In her dissertation *Spaces of Diasporas: Kurdish identities, experiences of otherness and politics of belonging* she demonstrates how the diasporic Kurds in Sweden shape their "Kurdishness" to be clearly opposed to the dominant national identities of the regimes in their home countries, and also in relation to their experiences within Swedish society, these involving on the one hand their possibilities of organising that democracy provides, and on the other hand their experiences of being confronted with everyday racism and exclusion. Although there is no strong movement to return in the Kurdish diaspora, perceptions of "home" and of "homeland" are important for the Kurdishness constructed in the diaspora. From her interviews with Kurds residing in the diaspora, Mino Alinia concludes that their conceptions of "home" not necessarily linked to a specific territory. For the Kurds that she interviewed, "home" was located in the diaspora:

The centrality of homeland for diasporas is related to the forced migration and conditions of exile and exclusion. It is a response to feelings of displacement, to experiences of otherness and subordination, and to a need of identification and belonging rather than an effect of any essential bond between people and territories.

(Ibid. p. 320)

Alinia points out that "their transnational networks and communities, social relations and activities regarding the politics of location have in this process become their 'home' " (ibid. p. 330), since diasporic Kurds are acting within various spaces, these ranging from their home countries, to their host countries and to transnational spaces. She also underscores the complexities in terms of the social spatial composition of the Kurdish diaspora as regards such matters as class, gender, social education.

In a dissertation entitled *Global Diaspora Politics: Kurdish transnational networks and accommodation of nationalism* that Emanuelsson (2005) wrote in Sweden, the global policies and the formation of transnational networks among Kurds were analysed. The study concerned eight Kurdish organisations, located in Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and the United States.

In the dissertation it is concluded that the Kurdish organisations working in the Diaspora since the 1990s have strengthened their transnational networks, particularly through accommodating their policies to the climate of opinion, existing at the times in the early 1980s their having been concerned in particular with the question of Kurdish independence, thereafter there being a shift in goals and in values, their since the 1990s being increasingly concerned with questions of human rights and cultural and political pluralism. Since Kurdish activists and organisations are actively concerned with political developments in their new home

countries, in due course many of them commit themselves just as much to the political values and agendas in their new home countries as to those in their countries of origin.

The role of the diaspora is discussed by Uçarlar (2009), who in a dissertation entitled *Between Majority Power and Minority Resistance: Kurdish Linguistic Rights in Turkey*, investigates the struggle for Kurdish linguistic rights in Turkey. She shows that intellectuals in Europe, in their endeavouring to transfer cultural and linguistic "accumulation" from the diasporic settings to Turkey provides, "a basis on which a new generation of Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey can engender a kind of transformative resistance" (p. 276). Her work has been important in providing insights into the responses to diasporic activism among Kurds in Turkey.

In a thesis entitled *From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship?: Diaspora formation and transnational relations among Kurds in France and Sweden* from 2008, Khalid Khayati challenges what he labels the traditional victim discourse among diasporan Kurds. In comparing various action modes that diasporan Kurds have adopted in France and in Sweden, respectively, Khayati maintains that Kurds residing in Sweden have adopted a more flexible diasporic discourse and generally are more integrated in their host society, which in turn appears to have had an impact on how they view themselves as migrants and on their participation in society and political life in the host country. The author found that in Sweden the Kurds are more socially diversified, there being a group of elite individuals there who successfully manage various transnational and institutional arrangements.

In his dissertation *A Stranger in my homeland: the politics of belonging among young people with Kurdish background in Sweden* Barzoo Eliassi (2010) draws attention, however, to the fact that life in Swedish society can be problematic. He finds that young people of Kurdish origin in Sweden experience discrimination and stigmatisation to a considerable degree in many areas of society, such as in the labour market, in mass media, in the legal system and in the areas of housing and education. In his interviews with 28 young people of Kurdish origin residing in Sweden, a wide range of responses to the ethnic discrimination that they experienced was accounted for, such as the heightening of differences between "us" and "them", the occurrence of name changes, violence, silence and strategies to coping with the racism and marginalisation that they as young immigrants were confronted with.

Concerning research on Kurds in diasporic settings, somewhat differing results have been reported. Whereas one group of researchers note in particular that national identities grow stronger in exile (Alinia 2004 p. 331; van Bruinessen 1998, 2000), others challenge this view noting that in the diaspora Kurdish nationalism accommodates to "universal" values, assigning greater importance to the active role that Kurdish refugees come to play in the host society in which they are

residing (Emanuelsson 2005; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001a, 2003; Sheikhmous 2002; Wahlbeck 1999).

### 1.5.3 Significance of the Study

Previous research on diaspora has been extremely valuable to the present study. Many of the works presented in the section above have contributed in terms of insights into the development of a transnational network and diasporic organising among the Kurds. In addition the present study has benefitted from critical theoretical insights on diasporisation and what diaspora mean to people. Alinia, Emanuelsson and Khayati have demonstrated that a diasporic condition not necessarily implies a state of constant "suffering" and "in-betweenness". Alinia and Eliassi in particular have problematised how home and homeland is perceived among diasporic Kurds. The result of their research shows that the authentication of home is a relational and social process. Home is about belonging rather than longing.

This thesis, however, takes an approach somewhat different from the various studies concerned with the Kurdish diaspora referred to above.

First, since it together with diaspora and nationality draw on the theoretical concept of sociological generations developed essentially by Karl Mannheim.<sup>19</sup> Sociological generations as a analytical tool explain how people sharing a common historical location come together in their formative years, are conditioned by and responding to the social and historic processes of their time as well as the spatial context in which their repertoire of action is developed.

Secondly, the methodological point of departure taken in this study is a narrative one which I in my view can contribute to a more adequate understanding of the complexities of diasporic identities and politics.

Third, the present study contrasts with the studies of Kurdish diasporas referred to above in that it concerns a clearly delimited group of Kurds and places their nationalism in a historical perspective that takes account of the "exit" and "voice" aspects of their migration that Østergaard-Nielsen (2003 p. 27) refers to.

Eliassi has an emphasis different from mine. His being primarily concerned with younger individuals and people who are generally labelled as being a "second generation of immigrants". In addition his theoretical approach is different, his work being based on post-colonial theory, belonging and identity formation.

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<sup>19</sup> Mannheim (1952); Eyerman and Turner (1999); Edmunds and Turner (2002); Schatz (1989); Heberle (1951).

Wahlbeck, Østergaard-Nielsen and Emanuelsson, who differ in the analytical levels they adopt, focus on the political practices and strategies of Kurdish diaspora organisations. Emanuelsson being concerned in particular with global diaspora networks extending between three different continents. Alinia and Khayati deal with, or deal partly with, diasporic Kurds in Sweden.

Khayati has a comparative perspective his examining the tendency of exiles to become transnational citizens that is conditioned differently in different political and institutional frameworks. Alinia takes a different approach where she, analysing as I do the narratives of Kurdish actors residing in Sweden, a difference between us however being that she has conducted interviews with Kurds from all four parts of Kurdistan. Thus, Alinias' study highlights the intra-Kurdish dynamics that in fact are a very important aspect of our understanding of Kurdish nationalism and identity politics among diasporic Kurds. This is a similiarity of the present study. A difference, however, is that the present study deals with the narratives of diasporic Kurds, not only all residing in the same country, Sweden, but also having emigrated there from the same country, Turkey.

Thus the members of the group investigated in this study can be expected to have had similar experiences regarding the political structures and institutions and politics in the country of origin as well as similar experiences of the immigrant politics and the mechanisms of exclusion in the country of settlement. This makes it possible to study better in depth, and in a more detailed and concrete way how the Kurds tend to relate not only to the country of settlement but also to the country of origin and its politics, and sometimes as well to changing politics regarding the diaspora.

Thus the study concerns specifically the emergence of a Kurdish diaspora as seen in relation to Turkish politics towards the Kurds, both domestically and in the diaspora. Considering only one rather specific group makes it possible to analyse both changes over an extended period of time and differences between various internal actors in a short term perspective, thus to obtain insights into internal divisions and contrasting perspectives of the individual actors in their perceptions of Kurdish identities and long distance nationalism. The analytical perspective of differing generations in a sociological sense can help to deepen the understanding of the complexity, the contentions and the dynamics of diasporas, as well as of these persons political strategies and relations with the original home country and the country of settlement. The theoretical perspective of sociological generations can also contribute to an understanding of how time and place are intertwined in diasporic identities and actions.

## 1.6 Methodology: A Narrative Approach

I find narrative analysis to for many reasons be a useful approach to in analysing the accounts of a given political generation here. First, a narrative is exploratory, its enabling the interviewees to express themselves very clearly and to associate freely. Thus, it provides insights into and explores the meaning that people are giving to their perceived belongings, nationalities, diasporic identities and so forth. Secondly, a narrative is sequential and explanatory, which means that it provides comprehensive stories about how people perceive certain phenomena. Therefore this approach seem suitable to the present research concerning people's perceptions of their national identities and of their pro-Kurdish activism.

The term narrative is one that has been widely used in recent decades, the many applications in which it can be used making it difficult to arrive upon a clear definition of it. However there are obviously certain fundamental criteria for defining what a narrative is, since otherwise the concept itself would be wishy washy and of no use. In the sections that follow I will discuss use of the narrative as a methodology and its point of departure in the theory of science, will endeavour to point out both its limits and its potentialities, and will finally explain how a narrative approach is employed in the thesis.

### 1.6.1 The Discursive Field and "The Linguistic Turn"

A narrative is created linguistically, and takes form in the interaction between the narrator and her or his authentic or imagined audience. This is complicated since language is not a neutral medium of expression. Rather it reflects the social context, time and space in which the narrative is produced.

Methodologically, the narrative approach emanates from what Winther and Jørgensen (2000 pp. 8ff.) has labelled as "the field of discourse analysis". Both these concepts have their origin in the philosophy of language and have in the course of time been influenced by a number of theoretical and methodological currents, such as linguistics, semiotics and psychoanalysis (Hall 1999; Silverman 2001 p. 177; Westlind 1996 pp. 114-125).

Michel Foucault (1993) operated with the term "discursive formations", with which he implied that discourses constitute "a group of statements providing a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic" (Hall 1992 p. 292). Foucault rejects the idea of economic determinism his instead emphasising the forms of power involved having changed in the course of history (Foucault 1976 pp. 28ff.). He underscores how practice, power and discourses are intrinsically bound together. When discourses are employed within a particular area, such as medical science or psychiatry, then in effect truths are created through the discourses that develop within these fields. This

in turn entails power relations being established and maintained through discourses. The various discursive orders in Foucault's sense emerge in the form of practices that serve to regulate and determine not only what is expressed, but also when and by whom. Power in modern society, he asserts, emerges increasingly in what he characterises as a "capillary form", its neither being exercised from above, nor being fixed to a given source, but rather existing everywhere, throughout in society. Hence, power increasingly takes on the form of control of the subject and appears as a "disciplinary" function or in the form of individual "self-discipline" (Foucault 1976).

Foucault concludes that there is no knowledge of any sort, scientific or otherwise, that exists outside of discourses. Hence, Foucault rejects the importance of distinguishing between false and true knowledge. Rather, in his view, the implications of discourses are political, its being the historical effects of the "truth" produced in discourse that is of relevance. Foucault also objects to the idea of a "false consciousness", which means that he questions whether a concealed meaning at all can be revealed by discourses. Rather, in his view, meaning is revealed in the discourse itself (Foucault 1993 pp. 7ff.).

Linguists and researchers engaged in conversation analysis commonly work with short texts, and sometimes also with fictive examples, in endeavouring to reveal what is concealed in language. Within the social sciences in contrast, discourses are commonly analysed in a much broader perspective, are contextualised and cover much longer periods of time, as well as much larger bodies of text (Boréus and Bergström 2005; Jacobsson 1997). Hence, the mood of thinking behind is that the social context constitutes the language at the same time as the language constructs "the social". Within discourse analysis, various patterns are distinguished in what is expressed by language and by symbols, whether spoken, written or otherwise. The idea is to analyse how concepts are related and how to discern comprehensive patterns of thought and meaning.

Within a post-structural framework in which both discursive and narrative analysis can be positioned, there are many common strands between the two. First, both of them imply a break with the idea of a "Grand Theory", their thus rejecting any overall and comprehensive theoretical modes of explanation. Instead local histories, experiences and accounts are emphasised. An important ingredient in the post-structural project is thus the attempt to give voice to what is repressed and kept silent, to construct opposing accounts that go against the dominant ones. Secondly, a primary concern is that of subject formation, the role of the subject in structure being emphasized. This leads us then third, to a matter more relevant to the present work, namely the central role that identities play in a post-structuralist framework.

Foucault described subject formation in terms of practice instead of essence. His ideas later paved the way for an anti-essentialist view of identities. The post-structuralist framework is embodied in the very use of the term discourse instead

of ideology, which in effect is an objection to the idea that identities are stable and unitary. In turn these ideas serve to question what has been considered a dominant "Western" and "ethno-centric" stance. Within a post-structuralist framework, the anti-essentialist view of the identity concept has been elaborated upon further, for example in the theorising of political identities by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe who draw on the hegemony concept developed by Antonio Gramsci, which laid the ground for a rethinking of the Marxist ideology concept. According to Laclau and Mouffe, the very existence of identities presupposes a "constitutive outside" (Mouffe 1992; Mouffe and Laclau 1985).

### 1.6.2 The Narrative

Let us return now to the question of what a narrative is. Narratives are produced within the field of discourse or within separate discourses, their being distinct and representing an approach in their own right. The term narrative is derived from *narrō*, meaning "to account", or to narrate and the sanscrit term *gnā* which means "to know" (Collins English Dictionary 2000 pp. 1033 - 1034; Johansson 2002 p. 41).

In literature on methodology it is sometimes pointed out that narratives only rather recently were recognized as a valuable methodological positioning tool (Somers 1994). Narratives are often criticised for not being exact reproductions of what has taken place. The story of a certain event is never told in exactly the same way more than one time. As a result the relevance of narratives is often challenged with reference to their alleged lack of objectivity (Riessman 1993). Accordingly the claims of knowledge that can be made using a narrative approach are different from, and are not general in the same way as those made on the basis of a discursive analysis, or methods attempting to reach exacting, objective truth about the conditions of the world. The nature and character of a narrative is useful, however through its contributing to our understanding of people's differing conceptions of the world and of the social conditions under which they are living. In this sense a narrative provides a view from the inside of various social contexts.

Hence, a narrative is not only about storytelling but it refers in addition to knowledge. This has been noted by Labov and Waletzky (1997),<sup>20</sup> two of the first who employed linguistic methods in analysing interviews, their defining a narrative as "a particular way of reporting past events, in which the order of a sequence of independent clauses is interpreted as the order of the events referred to" (Labov

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<sup>20</sup> First printed in 1967 and then reprinted with comments in 1997.

2003 p.1). Thus, a narrative is not just "another story". Rather a narrative implies a structuring of time and place, although it can be organised in many different ways.

A narrative analysis takes its point of departure in accounts people provide about their lives, although the interest of the researcher is not limited to the content of what is presented by the narrator. Kohler Riessman writes: "Narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself" (Riessman 1993 p. 1). Hence, "the story itself" represents more than the content itself and is clearly broader than that. A narrative analysis can consider how "the story" is performed, or may instead concentrate on its shape and structure, for example. To work properly, a narrative needs a beginning, a *plot*, and an ending. According to Labov, a "fully formed" narrative possesses six main properties: "beginning with an abstract, orientation, an evaluation section embedded in complicating action, a resolution and a coda" (as quoted by Wästerfors 2003 p. 24).

A narrative is sequential. It generally begins with a very brief summary which gives the listener a hint of what the story is all about. This is followed by an orientation in which the participants, as well as the time and the place in which the narrative takes place, are introduced and described, and in which such questions as those of who? when? where? what where they doing? are answered. The story teller then account for the course of events. There follows then an "evaluation clause" in which the story is evaluated and its main point is underscored. Finally, the narrative is rounded off with the help of a *coda*. In case the evaluation is an external one the storyteller turns to the audience. The evaluation may also be internal (Labov 2003; Johansson 2005 p. 192).

The definition and the properties of a narrative that are suggested by Labov are helpful in deepening our understanding of how a narrative can be organised in terms of clauses and sections. Two criticisms that have been raised against Labov, however, are that he does not consider the interaction between the storyteller and the audience, and that he does not pay attention at all to how narratives are performed (Johansson 2005 pp. 203ff., 292).

Narrative approaches are employed in a myriad of ways. One that I have found useful and inspiring is to emphasize the dramaturgy of the narrative, in particular since this is an approach that generates analytical perspectives. Indeed, the narrative of a generation of political refugees from Turkey can be understood as a drama of our time. Two theoreticians have served as major sources of inspiration regarding this, namely Erving Goffman and Kenneth Burke.

Although Erving Goffman never made use of the narrative concept, his work has been pivotal to the development of dramaturgical perspectives in narrative approaches. He concerned himself with the ways in which people identify and present their selves. According to his dramatic perspective, the storyteller appears on a stage attempting to perform herself or himself as an acceptable participant in social life. On the basis of participant observations of disprivileged people that he has made he distinguishes between different moral careers and different types of

stories that people tell and which mediates their self-concept. First, there is the success story which presents the picture of an individual guided by a positive personality who is looking forward to a successful future. Secondly, there is the tragic story of a defensive personality leading a life full of tristess and adversities. Goffman referred to these as "fictions" since they are "more solid than pure phantasy" but "thinner than facts" (Goffman 1973 p. 112). I consider Goffmans' perspective to be somewhat instrumental and one-sided, since in reality people often move between different roles and positions throughout their lives. Nevertheless I found his dramaturgical perspective inspiring for the analyse I have carried out.

In his work *A Grammar of Motives* the literature historian Kenneth Burke (1962) developed *dramatism* as a method for critically analysing language, one that proved to be useful in the interpretation of narratives and interviews. His point of departure is that in narrating stories people employ a set of grammatical resources that can be described in terms of the following pentad: 1) The Act - answering the questions of "What actions? What is going on?" 2) The Scene - answering the questions of "Where is the act happening? What is the background?" 3) The Agent - answering the questions of "Who is involved in the action? What is their role?" 4) The Agency- answering the questions of "How do the agents act? By what means?" 5) The Purpose- answering the questions of "Why do the agents act?" (Burke 1962 p. 127; see also Cronqvist 2004 p. 49 ; Riessman 1993 p. 19; Wästerfors 2003). By posing these questions regarding a narrative, understanding each of them and how they work together, Burke suggests that one can reveal how a narrator convinces her audience, her motives and her worldview. The analytical approach provided by Burke is more comprehensive than that of Goffman, taking the complexity of human agency into consideration. Hence, his approach is a useful complement to Goffmans' dramaturgy.

### 1.6.3 The Political Counter Narrative

Narrative research is employed increasingly for understanding not only peoples' personal lives, but also broader social and political phenomena. The thesis concerns men and women who came to participate actively in the political processes of their time. The narratives collected and analysed are personal stories concerning in particular their political lives and views, or the parts of their lives that became politicised. Inspired by Molly Andrews (2007), I have employed the term "political" in the sense of small "p" politics, referring to it since I am interested in relations between peoples lives and the social and political frameworks in which they are active. By political I mean activities through which people articulate, negotiate and amend the general conditions under which they live. As Andrews points out, it is important to find out "how people view the struggles in which they have partici-

pated", and also to see "how they locate themselves in a wider political process" (ibid. p. 2) .

Thus narratives are produced in broad perspectives, within and responding to the political grand narratives or discourses of their time. The perspectives on political identities formulated by Mouffe and Laclau have been applied to a Turkish context by Betül Çelik (2000), who analyses the changing Turkish nation building project in his study of the articulations of the "hegemonic" Kemalist state ideology.

Betül Çelik demonstrates how the space for accounts that oppose the dominant state ideology has expanded in recent decades, a development that has been contemporaneous with the Turkish accommodation to a market economy and the attempts to advance politically in the direction of Western Europe, this setting the stage for the opposing stories that have been accounted within recent decades. For example the accounts of the Kurds, the Armenians and the Islamists are different from, and opposed to, the changing Kemalist ideology. One of the points of departure taken in this study is that Kurdish national identities are closely linked to the state formations in their home countries in the Middle East. Hence, it could seem reasonable to assume that the Kurds from Turkey construct their national identities exclusively in opposition to the Turkish nation building project.

I see there being a risk here, however, of presenting too simplistic a view if only one "hegemonic outside" is defined. Rather, there can be seen to be a number of external and internal elements that interact in this process.

The aim of bringing narrative analysis into this study can be seen as justified by the intention of providing a synchronous dimension, enabling one to analyse the different positions and contrasting views that Kurdish actors take toward matters of Kurdish identity politics and diasporic experiences, so as to distinguish the various issues that bind Kurds together, as well as their leading to controversies and challenging Kurdish national identities. The intention then is to reveal patterns, contrasts and ruptures in the formation of Kurdish identities in diasporic settings, particularly in regard to how these are related to articulations of the self, the other, the country of origin and the country of exile.

The first matter of worth one might consider is the standpoint that political identities must necessarily be treated as anti-essential. This is a point of departure for my thinking regarding national identities too. In theoretical debates on nationalism there are two extremes, the one being the instrumentalists/constructivist position (Anderson 1991; Gellner 1983) which asserts that national identities are social constructions, the other extreme being the position of the primordialists, their essential view based on the idea that nations are built upon origins and kinship relations people have in common (see, for example, Shils 1957). In modern theorising however, a vast majority of scholars reject the view that nations are based upon ties of kinship, even if such ideas often appear within ideologies of nationalism.

A second consideration of dimension of significance for the study at hand is the assumption made by Mouffe and Laclau (1985) that identities exist in relation to the "constitutive outside", a view that fits well with a discourse analysis of nationalism and national identities. As will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, a fundamental principle within all nationalist ideologies is the claim that a distinction should be made between "us" and "them". The existence of nations presupposes there being boundaries that encompass the people who belong to the nation and thus exclude others. I am convinced that national identities are essentially imagined and are based on the somewhat misleading idea that the borders and boundaries that divide people from one another are ultimately socially constructed. Still I consider their connection to the social context and the specific historical circumstances in which they took shape, to be important to consider, since it indeed means that national identities unlikely simply came "just out of the blue". At a first glance symbolic dimensions have often been found to be of great importance here. It is thus difficult to regard national identities as being entirely instrumental. Even if people cross national boundaries, for example through intermarriages and migration, most of us not likely change our national sense of belonging just overnight.

## 1.7 On Method

The thesis is based on interviews and written sources from which the narratives of a number of individuals belonging to the political generation of Kurds from Turkey were constructed. The interviews are the major primary source used. In the analysis written sources such as biographies, novels, pamphlets and written interviews having been taken account of as well. From the beginning the aim was to carry out a study concerning Kurds in diaspora settings across Europe and in Western Turkey. All in all, 36 interviews were conducted in Sweden, Great Britain and Turkey, and in addition a number of shorter informal interviews were conducted with representatives for human right organisations, with scholars, with journalists, and the like. At the end of the process I realised, however, that it would be necessary to narrow the scope of the study somewhat. Hence, the interviews conducted in Great Britain and Turkey were excluded, however interesting the perspectives on the Kurdish diaspora they could provide might be. These interviews may be analysed later on. In addition, there were 4 interviews carried out in Sweden that did not provide substance enough for the study as intended. There finally were 23 interviews then that were selected for closer analysis.

The selection of interviewees may need some explanation and justification. The criteria employed were that the interviewees were originally from Turkey, defined themselves as Kurds and had participated in the Kurdish movement that

appeared in that country in the 1960s and 1970s. It was never my ambition to obtain a representative selection of informants, for example as regards gender, class background, maternal language, place of birth in Turkey, membership in political organisations and the like. Most of the interviewees came to Sweden or to other parts of Western Europe in the years surrounding the military coup of 1980. A few of them arrived earlier, and one of them remained in prison for more than a decade before being released and being admitted political asylum in Sweden.

To find the interviewees was not always easy. My personal contacts with people in the Kurdish diaspora community are essentially with Kurds from Iraq and Iran. Hence it took me some time to get in touch with Kurds who belonged to the circles that I was interested in exploring. I owe much to Mr. Omar Sheikmous, then a researcher at Stockholm University, himself a Kurd from Syria and a highly respected and distinguished personality within Kurdish circles. He helped me with a first strategic selection of people who met the criteria employed. Thereafter, additional interviewees was added through use of a snowball method, some of the interviewees having recommended me further to other persons who could be suitable informants. Thus, Mr. Sheikmous and other informants worked as the kind of gatekeepers who open doors, their helping me get in touch with the people I wanted to talk to. There were some people however who expressed suspicion or were not at all ready to help me further to new contacts. This could be for many various reasons. Informants could have been hesitant about where my sympathies were or about how I was going to deal with the information I got, or about my contacts with other interviewees, as well as with people belonging to the Kurdish community generally.

There were also persons confessing that they were only ready to help me get in touch with people they were sympathetic toward. One of the interviewees, for instance, commented the one person who gave me his telephone number in the following way: " Then I have to confess that he is a much better person than what I am. I would never have recommended you to speak with him." Thereafter, he explained to me that they had become enemies and would never talk to each other again. One interviewee wanted to meet with me several times and conversed with me informally about his political life and cultural activities both in Sweden and Turkey a great deal before he agreed to participate in an interview.

Gender is an important matter to consider in a research project such as this. An overwhelming majority of the interviewees are men. Indeed this is a gender issue which is important to consider. This can be said to be due to the male dominance in the Kurdish currents that appeared at the time of the political generation. Perhaps not surprisingly too, it was somewhat difficult to find female interviewees. Few of the people I asked said that they knew of any woman who had been politically active in Turkey. At last, however, I managed to find five women who were willing to be interviewed. This is not to say that women did not participate in the resistance movements. For example, many wives of arrested political activists

organised protest actions outside police arrests, courts and prisons when their husbands were in prison (Mojab 2001). Most scholars dealing with Kurdish issues have noted the absence of women in influential positions in Kurdish politics and their subordinate position within organisations and parties (Mojab 2001 pp. 12ff.; Watts 2010), although women indeed not should be considered as merely being passive, since they organize and take part in political life in various ways, or in the substantial parts of their lives support political activities. To my knowledge, there are no studies thus far however, considering these aspects of resistance or examining the role of Kurdish women in the political generation scrutinized here.

Rather accounts of these currents tends to be essentially gender-blind (cf. for example, Chaliand 1979; Entessar 1992; Gunter 1990; Ibrahim and Gürbey 1996; Kutschera 1979; More 1984), with exception from an article by van Bruinessen (2001). Yet Kurdish women's role in politics has appeared as an emerging field of research in recent years (Weiss 2010), as has women's role in the formation of the Kurdish diaspora (Alinia 2004). I have considered gender aspects of the stories, since from the outset I decided to talk with both men and women, bearing this in mind both when the interview guide was made and in the analysis of the stories as well.

It was above all in the analytical process however that my eyes were opened to the richness of the gender perspectives expressed, and not expressed, in the narratives. Nevertheless, in the chapters based on the literature and on previous research, devoted to the historical background and the political processes in which the generation studied here emerged, questions of gender were not of central concern in analysis of the area. The aim of those chapters was to provide a macro-perspective and a historical framework. Although those chapters could well have taken up gender perspectives to a greater extent in a different way this would have required a somewhat different focus on things and a consideration of sources not taken up here. I did not make use of such alternative approaches to macro-analysis of the historical background at the outset of my research, and can only do so in future research.

I was generally received with warmth and generosity and a curiosity about my project that was for the most part very pleasant. On some occasions I was asked about how other informants had answered a particular question, and some of the informants were curious to know whom else I had been talking to. Several times I was invited to people's homes for the interview. In some cases we had dinner together, and sometimes coffee afterwards, and I often had the opportunity to converse with family members and friends of the interviewee as well. Although the interviews often took place in a room separate from the rest of the apartments involved, we were sometimes interrupted by telephone calls or by children. Ten of the interviews took place at people's offices or workplaces. Some of the participants wanted us to meet in public spaces, mostly at cafes of their choice, in central Stockholm. Meeting these people for interviews in public spaces turned out to be

much more convenient than what I first had expected, regarding sound recordings as well as concentration and focus during the interview. It happened only once that an interview was interrupted, although that only very briefly, by a friend of the interviewee who came up to our table to speak. Otherwise the interviews went on more undisturbed in these public settings than they generally did in people's homes and workplaces.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical questions are important to consider in all research. In recent years in Sweden ethical codes and guidelines have become formalised in a way they were not at the outset of this research.<sup>21</sup> However, the main principles that have become more clearly stipulated now have basically been accepted in practice among social scientists for many years. The interviewees were informed about the aim and purposes of the research when contacted and about my affiliation with a university. They were also informed about how the data that was collected was going to be dealt with and published. They were informed that participation was voluntarily and that they could interrupt whenever they wanted to and could choose not to answer certain questions.

In order to respect the integrity of the interviewees, they have been anonymized in the text. This is for many reasons. First, since the thesis intends to explore the overall narrative of a particular political generation nothing could be gained anyway in revealing which account a given and named person has provided. Secondly, the men and women I conducted interviews with have all fled their original home country for political reasons. There were different standpoints concerning anonymity among the informants, however. The interviews took place at a time when many of them did not think that they would ever be able to return to Turkey. When the question of anonymisation was brought up in the informal conversations we had before the interviews began it could happen that people laughed and said that it made no sense to be secret about things since they would never be able to go back to Turkey again anyway. One person was skeptical toward anonymization with reference to the fact that he was not involved in any "illegal activities". When these lines have been written, the political situation in Turkey has changed so that many of them who said so indeed have returned to Turkey for longer or for shorter periods. However, it is still a risky enterprise to be involved in research on Kurdish issues or to become a pro-Kurdish activist. Since it is the responsibility of a researcher to be careful with the data I find it most sen-

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<sup>21</sup> Ethical codes and guidelines for research conducted in Sweden are established by the Swedish Research Council.

sible that all the interviewees are kept anonymous as far as possible. One exception was made with a person holding a position that could not be anonymized. Particularly since I have analysed standpoints and positions they took about ten years ago.

#### *Position, Distance and Closeness*

The "insider-outsider dichotomy" is widely debated among scholars (Narayan 1993; Raudvere 2002; Lundström 2007 pp. 32-37). For a long time there was an underlying assumption that insider positions are more advantageous and provide better insights and perspectives for gaining an understanding and drawing conclusions. This idea implies there are "genuine natives" and takes on in practice an essentialist position that has been widely criticised in recent decades (Narayan 1993; Lundström 2007 pp. 35-37). Narayan (1993 p. 673) argues that the "quality of relations" established in the field and the carrying-out of long-term field studies are much more relevant than if the researcher is an outsider or is an insider. She underscores the importance of multi-faceted relations between researchers and the people they are studying in an increasingly complex world: "In this changed setting it is more profitable to focus on shifting identities in relationship with the people and issues an anthropologist seeks to represent" (Narayan 1993 p. 682). In addition she argues in favour of "rethinking" the outsider positions attempting to "melt down other related divides" such as "walls" between narratives and theoretical analysis (ibid. p. 682). Despite not doing extended field work, I would argue that Narayan's reasoning corresponds to much of the experiences I have had in meetings with informants for the present research. This is not to say, however, that encounters with the men and women who were interviewed were not affected by asymmetries and social divides of different kinds.

Although I did not experience much of a "cultural distance" between me and interviewees in our meetings, through my being non-Kurdish I was certainly not considered as an "insider", or for that matter a "native", by the interviewees. Rather, the impression I got was that I was seen as an outsider, although in some cases "an informed outsider" (Emanuelsson cf. 2005 p. 27). I do not consider myself an "attendant" in the way that Lundberg (1989) considered himself in his research on Latin American refugees. To some extent I think that my long-term close friendship with Kurds and my commitments to the Kurdish question created in many cases closeness, and facilitated the interviewees opening up. It was generally expected that my sympathies would be with the Kurds and that I would write accordingly. The solidarity committee I had been involved with was well known to some persons, whereas others seemed to have only a diffuse conception of it. My being non-Kurdish but writing on the Kurdish issue seem in one case to have invoked expectations of my "being more objective". It could have contributed instead though to create a greater distance on my part, that could be regarded as a certain disadvantage. My role was different from that of Alinia (2004) who, being

Kurdish and writing on the Kurdish diaspora, considered herself as someone on the border between being an insider and an outsider (ibid. pp. 147-151).

In some cases, the accounts were presented to me as if to someone well initiated. In other cases, I had the feeling of the interviewees taking the role of "informing" me about the Kurdish issue.

Lundström (2007) underscores its perhaps being too simplistic to "rely on similarities" between oneself and the interviewee since it is not in itself a guarantee of achieving a better understanding and more adequate knowledge. In fact, being a stranger or an outsider may be a strength as well (ibid. p. 36). Outsiders are, for example, often less threatening to the persons being interviewed, since they are not involved in internal conflicts or arguments. People sharing an ethnic or class background may still differ in their experiences and attitudes. In research work, scholars generally hold a privileged position (Lundström 2007 pp. 34ff.). Being a researcher, a woman who was younger, but only a little bit younger, than the interviewees were other aspects of how I was positioned vis-à-vis the interviewees. In some cases, my impression was that these factors could contribute to making me closer, although not as close as an insider, as well as to creating a distance between the two of us in the interview sessions.

One important matter to consider is that of language. All the interviewees that are included were conducted in Sweden with people who, in most cases, had been residing in the country for two decades or more at the time of the interviews. With one exception, all of the interviews were in Swedish. Most of the informants had good command of Swedish, and at first sight it could perhaps appear unproblematic for the interviews to have been conducted in that language. The ability to manage Swedish varied, however, among the different participants. Many of them had long experience in expressing themselves in both spoken and written Swedish after the years they had spent here and had used the language very actively in everyday life, in work, studies, cultural life and politics.

However, there were differences in their language skills, and it should be born in mind that there can be distortions when two or even more languages are involved, its being important to consider the fact that the maternal tongue of the interviewees was not Swedish, but rather Kurdish (Kurmançî or Kirmancî) or Turkish. It can be reasonable to assume that differences in language ability in Swedish can contribute to a sense of power asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee. As Lundberg (1989) calls our attention to, it takes time to be fluent in a foreign language, and languages can in fact be composed of many different genres and nuances. In areas such as the humanities, the bureaucracy and the health care we find specific vocabularies which it takes considerable time to learn. As Lundberg also points out, it may be "humiliating" for a person who is an intellectual and uses language as a working tool to not be able to express herself/himself properly (ibid. p. 130). Also, even for a person with advanced skills in

a foreign language it may sometimes be difficult to find words to express certain phenomena, i.e. to find equivalent expressions in two different languages.

On two occasions, other people were around who could be asked to help. Sometimes the interviewees put in Turkish or Kurdish words to express themselves and we took the time to sort out what they intended to say. It could also occur that an interviewee took a pause to find time to find the right word or precise expression in Swedish.

In one case the interview was conducted with the help of an interpreter who translated between Kirmançî and Swedish. The difficulties in working through the use of interpreters have been discussed in many scholarly works (Arvidsson 2003; Lindberg 2001). Lindberg underscores there being distortions already in the communication between two persons of the same tongue: "When a second language and a third person intervene between two interlocutors the potential for distortion can be magnified exponentially" (ibid. p. 70). This is a matter for the researcher to deal with as best as possible. A careful and initiated discussion of this matter is provided by Carlsson (1997) who points out the difficulties of controlling exactly how data is created, since the questions and answers are in a sense interpreted first by the translator (see also Arvidsson 2003). The Kurdish I knew was not sufficient to follow the discussion between the interpreter and the informant. Things worked out nevertheless though the interviewee in question understood and speaking Swedish to an extent but finding it difficult to express himself well enough to be interviewed in that language.

An important ethical issue concerns the subjects, and the nature of the themes that the interviews evolved around, and the questions these posed. It is important to consider and handle adequately in the interview situation the feelings, associations and memories that the questions posed may bring to the fore and what these can mean to the interviewee. It could happen that informants became evasive or blunt in their answers, their responding only rather briefly, despite open-ended questions having been posed. Others opened up much easily and provided long and intricate answers their being very generous in sharing personal and sometimes difficult memories. This can be seen as positive in the sense of interesting and highly personal reflections being provided. However it can sometimes be difficult to foresight when a subject become too sensitive regarding communicating his or her thoughts to another person. Once it occurred, for example, that an interviewee opened up and became very committed in his story while telling it and then all suddenly burst out in tears and turned the recorder off since his account evoked memories of his family's destiny that turned out to be too difficult for him to talk about.

#### *Interview procedures*

An interview is not an everyday conversation. Although this may be very obvious, it is important to bear in mind that an interview can be a highly "constructed" con-

versation created in a situation that can be considered to be almost "artificial" since it is guided by the questions and aims of the researcher and would never have come about otherwise (see, for example, Lantz 1993). The process of data collection almost never turns out to be as neat as it is often described in methodology books. Thus, it is important to take into consideration and report any difficulties and problems that come up during interviews and research process.

The present research aims at exploring the narratives of the political generation in question regarding their views and commitments to Kurdish identities. The aim, and what I find to be a strength of a narrative approach, is that of learning about matters involved through the comprehensiveness of the accounts provided by the interviewees. Such interviews can be combined with content analysis to deepen the understanding of what is reported, although it is highly important to chisel out not simply what is reported but also how it is told. Doing this allows so the underlying content of what is told, or the agenda of the interviewee, which is revealed to be taken note of. In order to chisel out the comprehensive narratives each of the interviews was read and listened to several times. After that, the transcriptions were organised in themes and sub-themes.

Since I was very much interested in the personal views of the interviewees and their reflections concerning their belonging to and their commitments to the Kurdish cause, I found it appropriate to conduct the interviews in such a way that came close to conversations. Thus, I constructed the interview manuals thematically, including a few open-ended questions, which are particularly likely to produce reflections and in-depth answers (see Riessman 1993 pp. 54ff.).

The interviews lasted from half an hour to four hours. Most of them took approximately something between one and a half and two hours. The interviews were semi-structured and were designed in a way that was intended to make it possible for the interviewees to express themselves and associate freely. The discussions were concerned mainly with four themes: their commitments to the Kurdish question, their Kurdish identity, their exile and the contemporary political situation of the Kurds. In the interviews one thing discussed was how and why the interviewees had become involved in the Kurdish question. By way of introduction, I asked them to present themselves and their personal background. We discussed their commitments to the Kurdish issue in Sweden and in the diasporic context generally, and the contemporary situation of Kurds in Sweden and in Turkey. The situation for women, children and the next generation was often considered when the situation of Kurds in Sweden was discussed. It became obvious to me that each individual had his or her own way of dealing with all of these themes and issues.

As always is the case in qualitative research, however, various questions were added and some questions were excluded in the course of the research process. This flexibility I think brings with it both rewards and obstacles. A positive aspect of it is that new themes of relevance are brought up in the discussions and

that questions and themes to some extent can be adapted to the knowledge and interests of each of the interviewees. A problem this brings about, however, is that not all the themes are covered entirely in the interviews. It some times happened, for example, that an interviewee emphasised and incessantly returned to his or her political commitments in the 1970s, at the same time there were some interviewees who avoided such matters entirely.

In the meetings with female interviewees, particular attention was directed at the situation of women. There were a few of the participants I talked with twice, with the aim of making the interview results more complete. Regarding this it has been recommended that the qualitative researcher continue collecting information until a state of saturation has been achieved, a process in which certain assumptions can be confirmed and certain patterns may be repeated (Bertaux 1997 pp. 186ff.). At the end of the data collection period I could distinguish a variety of patterns in the interviews, at the same time as I realized that always new topics were brought up in the conversations that could have been explored further if time had allowed. The research period could probably not have continued much longer since it was restricted by both time and budget constraints.

As has been pointed out by Gubrium (2004) a research interview needs to involve at least two active parties. As the researcher, I was the one responsible for structuring the interviews and posing the questions. The role that I took during the interviews was largely that of a listener, though not a passive one, but rather an attentive listener who supported the accounts the interviewees were providing by giving affirmations, brief comments, as well as posing attendant questions, so as to stimulate the interviewee to take her or his reflections further.

In many respects there is an asymmetric relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. This did not mean, however, that the interviewees were reduced to passive respondents to my questions. In fact from time to time it could happen that they were "talking back" (Yang 2010 pp. 121-127; Burcar 2005 p. 36; cf hooks 1989). For example there were interviewees who declined to answer some of my questions, and it happened that some of them made ironic comments to questions or to affirmations that I made, or challenged in various ways the perspectives I presented.

I would emphasize the fact that one of the most important qualities of an interviewer is surely that of being a good listener. Being an inexperienced interviewer at the outset of the research period, I first had the idea that I should take notes during the interviews and did so relatively ambitiously in the first few interviews, until I developed better skills of listening and only wrote down the key words during the interviews.

I recorded the interviews in those cases in which it was possible and was agreed upon with the interviewees. However, some of the interviewees declined having their interviews recorded, this being respected. On such occasions I took

notes carefully and made a reasonable written account of it immediately after the interview.

There are a number of factors creating uncertainty that should be considered by the researcher. The issue of objectivity is a central feature in every scientific enterprise, although should be seen in relation to the aims involved and to the specific questions being posed. Kvale (1997) notes the fact that the meaning of the term objectivity can be highly diverse and emphasises that the qualitative interview is sensitive to and reflect the "true nature" of the interviewee (Kvale 1997 pp. 64-66).

This is a comment that is highly relevant in relation to the present study, since the intention here is to reveal patterns that are recurrent in the accounts of the interviewees, and to elicit diverse and subjective experiences of theirs, together with contrasts and controversies in their constructions of their Kurdish identities.

The interaction between the researcher and the interviewee is also of major significance. An interview is a special situation in its own right, and the researcher needs to be well aware of his or her aims in conducting an interview, as well as of the interviewee generally having his or her own motives in agreeing to participate. One thing that is important to consider is what kind of information the interviewee is prepared to provide the researcher with. Factors such as age, the gender of the researcher, and the status the researcher has in the eyes of the interviewee can partly determine the kinds of answers that are given. Once in Istanbul, for example, a friend told me the following: "I have heard Kurds who change their view in accordance with whom they are talking to. For example, someone comes from Germany and they say that Kurds want a state of their own. Then, if someone comes from Sweden, the same person says that the Kurds don't strive for a state on their own. That is because Swedish politics towards Turkey is different from the German."

On some occasions I was warned not to trust certain people, and not to entirely believe all of the answers I got. This, I think, is a phenomenon that is very common and is something that all researchers have to deal with in interview situations. The informants' concerns regarding certain other persons provided information too, for example concerning their various positions within the diasporic community. It opened my eyes to the occurrence of internal arguments and disputes within the political generation at hand, and reflected on the motives people could have for attempting to discredit others. Also it helped me see more clearly that not only the researcher, but also the interviewee, has, or may have, an agenda.

Finally, it helped me to become more critical, and pose questions in my research concerning why certain information was given to me and other information was not, and to look beyond what people expressed in the interviews and on what their motives were.

Researchers have observed many times that people tell things differently on different occasions, people sometimes putting things and events in a specific order,

to serve a particular purpose as well as highlighting certain memories, events or facts and repressing others (Arvidsson 2003 pp.23-25; Lindberg 2001 pp. 66-70) for similar reasons. This can come about consciously or unconsciously, depending on what the interviewee remembers, who the interviewer is and the type of relationship established between them in the situation (Kvale 1997 pp. 39, 104, 118-120).

In addition, the memories of the interviewee should be considered critically. In the present study, for example, people were asked about why they became committed to the Kurdish question, the interviewees thus being asked about events that occurred many years before the interviews took place. Some memories fade away, whereas others tend to become stronger or even to become excessive. The researcher should therefore consider the distance in time involved, since forgetting and individual motives for obscuring facts which may develop over time can affect the answers given (Johansson 2005 pp. 223-224; Lindberg 2001). Reflecting over these matters in the analysis of oral histories, Lindberg (2001) writes: "Certainly, many stories purport to describe what 'actually' has happened in years gone by" and quoting Personal Narratives Groups add that people also "lie sometimes, forget a little, exaggerate, become confused, get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths" (Personal Narratives Group, as quoted by Lindberg 2001 pp. 61-62).

It is well known that many memories fade away over time and that interviewees may adapt their accounts to the context of the interviews. Nevertheless, the associations and the statements they actually make reflect in some way how they perceive and relate to the issues they are asked about. Alvesson and Deetz write: "The accounts provide uncertain but often interesting clues to social reality and of ideas, imaginations, values and other 'subjective' aspects" (Alvesson and Deetz 2000 p. 86).

A matter, which is important for the researcher to reflect upon is the question of who has the right to speak for other people? Who can represent a group? In studies of diaspora and other collective identities, the question of representation appears to be particularly crucial. One of my informants concerned himself a great deal with problems of this sort and asked me why I did not go to the cafes in the suburbs of Stockholm to talk with, what he termed, "ordinary people", i.e. Kurdish immigrants who never had been politically active and did not participate in the activities of Kurdish organisations. This is a comment full of insight I think. Nevertheless, the present study is limited to persons who have been politically active, since their argumentation and their writings have an appreciable impact of the form Kurdish political activities take. Representation must be considered in the course of conducting interviews. In the analytic work that follows consideration must be taken of the number of options provided when questions are asked, which excerpts from interviews are selected for inclusion in the text, etc. The researcher is responsible for how people's voices are presented and in connection with this there is a need for caution when material is interpreted.

### *Analytical work*

The analytical work was the most time consuming step in the research process. This part of the work made me increasingly more aware of the power relations present in which the scholar has a very privileged position, and the creation of knowledge it results in (Lundström 2007 pp. 32-34). This emphasizes the importance of one's being able to keep a distance from the material, in some senses even becoming a stranger to it (Alinia 2004 p. 151). Being an outsider facilitates being able to take a step back, my sympathies with the Kurdish issue was sometimes a hindrance to overcome in the research process. It could be an emotional challenge my sometimes being "touched as a listener" or a reader when listening to tapes or reading transcripts although I perhaps was never touched by material quite as deeply as Alinia (2005 p. 150) for example was, who shared many experiences of her own with those of her informants. A challenge for me here in the research process was that of becoming conscious of having my own opinions and preconceived ideas about certain developments.

The process that took place from the conducts of the interviews and the reading of written material to production of the finalised manuscript, anchored both in a theoretical and an empirical sense in the literature, one that followed a rather windy road. The text presented is composed in part of stories from the material, selected, organized and analysed by the researcher. The analytical tools used by researchers create what can be seen as a discrepancy between what is said in interviews and what we as researchers see when employing our tools to see beyond the words that the interviewees have expressed.

Working with observations and field notes Abu-Lugodh (1993 p. 41) asks whether results as analysed constitute in reality 'a betrayal' of the informants. Raudvere (2002) writing on female dervishes in Istanbul, concludes: "The discrepancy between what I see with the help of my analytical tools and the way the women expressed their situation is striking, but it is also the very aim of analysis" (ibid. p. 59). Raudvere problematises the use of field work notes, basically after conducting observations, the citation above pointing to the challenge it can represent emotionally and intellectually, to take on the distance to the subject of research that is required to conduct really trustworthy research. This is a process that requires both distance and what Mulinari (1999) terms as "qualitative researcher's intellectual responsibility" (ibid. p. 54), this being presented by Alinia (2004) as representing the importance of "daring to be alone with your material, your doubts, your uncertainties and, I would add, with your contradictory feelings" (ibid. p. 151).

As the interviews were to be transcribed, and read, interpreted and analysed, a myriad of options opened up. The responsibility of deciding which concepts and theoretical points of departure to be used, of organising and reorganising the material, of deciding which narratives were to be included and to be excluded respec-

tively, and finally of formulating the text is, after all, up to the researcher. This requires a great deal of both carefulness and responsibility.

Johansson (2005 p. 282) points out that the analytical work begins already in the interaction that take place during the interview sessions. This is an experience that I shared as many different conclusions were drawn on my part, and as notes were taken and follow-up questions asked as the interviews moved on (see also Kvale 1997 pp. 171-172). I transcribed each of the interviews, yet the restricted time periods that I had in Stockholm made it impossible sometimes to transcribe each interview before conducting the next one. In transcribing taped interviews and making reasonable fair copies of my initial notes my ambition was to formulate the transcriptions literally. However, some minor adjustments had to be made here due to such factors as interviewees speaking with an accent, and the word order and the colloquial expressions they employed. It has sometimes been put forward by scholars as an ideal to let accents and popular expressions be revealed in quotations (Arvidsson 1998; Ehn 1993).

My position, however, is that the aim and the research questions in a given study should be the guiding principles here. Ehn (1993) has pointed out the risk in making adjustments in transcriptions of people's oral expressions, since the very character of the person in question may be changed as a result. In the present thesis, given its aims and the questions it deals with, I think there is risk involved in not doing any adjustments in the transcriptions of the interviews. For example that the attention of the reader might have been directed to errors as regards the language of the interviewees, rather than to what they were saying. Matters are also very complicated since all of this was translated into a third language.

To some extent, non-verbal expressions, laughter, and the likes have been included in the transcriptions (cf. Johansson 2005 pp. 300ff.; Kvale 1997 pp. 155ff.; Riessman 1993). As soon as an interview was transcribed, I reviewed and listened to the tape recordings a number of times. In a first step, I distinguished overall themes and, what Riessman refers to as narrative sequences (Riessman 1993; Johansson 2005 pp. 192-194). In narrative analysis "holistic" approaches which emphasize form and performance in narration are often given prominence (Johansson 2005 pp. 288ff.). Riessman is interested in form and she advocates, as far as I understand, what Tuval Mashlach (2006 p. 252) has categorised as a "holistic-form" type of narrative analysis. As Johansson (2005) points out, however, this is in practice rarely done downrightly. I organised thematically the narrative sequences that were selected and identified new subordinate themes step-by-step. When these were finally organised thematically, I analysed the content of each selected sequence inspired by Burke's pentad: The Act, The Scene, The Agent, The Agency and The Purpose (Burke 1962 pp. 127ff.). Hence, my analytical approach adheres basically to the terminology of Tuval Mashlach characterised essentially as being a "categorical-content" approach to narrative analysis.

What further complicates matters is that many years have passed since I conducted the interviews that were analysed for the thesis. There are several reasons for this, which brings with it effects that are partly negative and partly positive. One negative aspect of it is that things have changed continuously since then which means that some of the data collected may have loosed its actuality. It has been a time-consuming process to repeatedly be "on again" and have to update information and the literature seen as relevant, each time with the use of lenses informed by new perspectives and insights about methodology, theory and the empirical field at hand. For example since conducting these interviews I have conducted numerous others, mostly for projects of evaluation. Perhaps it is both positive and negative in its connotations that these experiences have made me increasingly aware, each time I had the opportunity to go back to the earlier work I had done, of all of the deficits that are to be found in the interviews that were conducted for the thesis.

On the positive side, the many and sometimes very long interruptions of the research process helped to make it easier for me to take a step back, become analytical and look at the material from a distance. It has been with new lenses each time. In the course of time I have reworked things, often in portions, and reinterpreted the texts and interviews several times. Thus, the interpretations of the stories presented here are the ones that were arrived at the moment when it was finally decided that the work was to come to a halt.

## 1.8 Disposition of the Thesis

This study is in four parts. This introductory part, Part I, consists of two chapters. In Chapter 1 the aim, the basic questions posed, and the methodological concerns are presented, together with a general background account of the Kurds and Kurdistan. In Chapter 2 that follows, central theories and concepts used in the study are discussed.

Part II then provides a historical background to the presentday events taken up and seen within the context of the early phases of the internationalisation and regionalisation of Kurdish nationalism. Chapter 3 analyses the formation of the modern Turkish Republic. Chapter 4 deals with Kurdish resistance in the formative years of the Turkish Republic and the repression that followed thereafter. The aim here is to describe the historical, political, social and cultural processes in which the Kurdish political generation and their parents were moulded. Chapter 5 explores the emergence of the Kurdish political generation focused upon here, as a social protest movement during the 1960s and 1970s.

Part III consists of two chapters in which the stories about being Kurdish, collected for the thesis are analysed. Chapter 6 is devoted to what could be labeled as backward looking stories. In this chapter two main types of stories are distin-

guished. First, there is a set of stories dealing with experiences of suffering. Secondly there is a set of stories that can be seen as being national-romantic, often with a flavor of nostalgia in them. Chapter 7 deals with accounts that look to the present and the future. This chapter focuses on stories of "re-orientation" and "challenges", thus dealing with the diasporic narrative from a different angle. In the chapter I will show that the interviewees perceive themselves being confronted with ambiguities and challenges in the diasporic setting. Part IV consists of Chapter 8 and is the closing section in which the study is summarised as a whole, its main conclusions being presented and discussed.

## Chapter 2

# Political Generation, Diaspora and Long-Distance Nationalism

In this chapter the theoretical points of departure of the dissertation will be presented. Three main theoretical concepts will be employed in analysing how the generation can best be defined and contextualised, and for helping to demonstrate and understand the process of its politicization. In the first section these three concepts, those of political generation, diaspora and long-distance nationalism, are briefly introduced. In the three sections that follow then, each of these concepts is discussed to some length. Reference here will be made back to the methodological points of departures presented in the introductory chapter. This pointed to a social constructivist approach that assumes diasporic identities to be continuously renegotiated and reconstructed. In recent decades, post-colonial theories have become influential in both the field of diaspora and the field of nationality/ethnicity studies.

Post-colonial theorising has undoubtedly contributed to broadening our understanding of assymetric power hierarchies and global inequalities (see, for example, Eriksson et. al 1999; Kothari 2002). However the present work is not essentially based on post-colonial theories. In line with criticism advanced by Buruma and Margalit (2004), I would argue that post-colonial theories mostly present and conceive of "the West and the rest" as a configuration rather than problematising their complexity and the interaction between the internal and the external forces involved, for example in the emergence of diasporas (see, for example, Hall 1999, 2000). Neither do the post-colonial theories contribute in my view to any genuinely new perspectives on diasporas or to our understanding of them appreciably (cf. Björklund 2011 pp. 128ff.; Sökefeld 2006). In the closing section I discuss similarities and differences between the three concepts referred to above, and present the analytical framework of the thesis.

## 2.1. Three Concepts

The concept of political generation is the most central one of the three referred to. It draws on the sociological theory of generations developed by Karl Mannheim (1952). The thesis concerns specifically a group of people born more or less in the same time period who became politically active in the decades following the Second World War. The narratives included in the thesis were told, however, by people present in a diasporic setting, after many of the political parties found earlier had been reorganised or closed down and commitments to the Kurdish cause had taken new paths.

Since the Kurdish currents that emerged in Turkey during this period had at a first glance many similarities with a social movement, the political generation concept may be a fruitful analytical tool here, though my choice of it calls for a more thorough explanation. Certainly, the movement involved was only a loosely organised one, its consisting of small political groups, independent intellectuals and writers. Since in many respects it can be described as a protest movement, social movement theory is also an optional that could have been considered. However the present study concerns specifically directed a limited group of persons and a limited period of time within the Kurdish diaspora, although it of course can be considered to be a part of a broader movement.

Diasporas are dynamic phenomena, involving many different jostling stances, positions and strategies, and the assumed identities continuously being renegotiated. In this dynamic process, the contributions of certain generations play an important role, as Edmunds and Turner (2002 p. 109) have emphasized. However generations are then to be considered in the sense of their being sociological phenomena in the manner suggested by Karl Mannheim (1952).

As Mandel (2008), for example, points out generation may be a problematical category, since the life trajectories of migrants not are linear, so that "first generation immigrants", for example, may have quite different experiences due to such factors as migration, gender, education and the fact that migration patterns need not be similar among people within a given generation (ibid. p. 12). Here is where a sociological understanding of the generation, as elaborated by Mannheim, makes particular sense. The present thesis concerns a group of men and women whose life trajectories converged at a particular historical moment, their sharing a particular location in history, as their repertoire of actions and their socio-political consciousness being moulded and developed on the basis of essentially the same historical, political, social, cultural and economic events and contexts. All of this, in turn, affected their contributions to the emerging Kurdish diaspora and its politicization and complexity. Thus I argue that the notion of a political generation serve the aims of this study rather well.

Diaspora is a notion at the centre of attention here and is one that has become widely used within the field of modern migration studies. It is often been used interchangeably with the term "trans-national community" that would have been an alternative term here. Both of these concepts relate to ties that migrants have to their countries of origin. It is thus recognized that migrants relate both to their countries of origin and their countries of settlement at one and the same time. They lead their everyday lives in the receiving countries, and therefore may be involved in political and economic life there, but they maintain their contacts with their countries of origin, remain committed to ongoing developments there and preserve relations with friends and with their family back home. Both of these concepts referred to capture the ongoing exchange and interactions across borders that can occur when migrants become dispersed to many different countries and parts of such countries.

Thus, the concepts of "diaspora" and "trans-national community" are more convenient for use in the present study than such concepts that have tended to dominate the field of migration research like "migrants", "refugees", "emigrés" and the like, since the latter concepts presume that migration is a process that simply goes on in one direction and that refer only to their status in the migrant country. What is the difference then between a "diaspora" and a "trans-national" community? And what makes "diaspora" the more convenient concept of the two for the present study? In migration literature the notion of diaspora has broad applications (see, for example, Björklund 2011; Mandel 2008; Tölölyan 2007; Sökefeld 2006; Brubaker 2005; Cohen and Vertovec 1999; Cohen 1997). Like "trans-national community" it is used for designating communities of refugees, guest workers and voluntary migrants. Contrary to "trans-national community" however, "diaspora" is a historic concept that derives from the experiences of "victimization" of the Jews in dispersion, it makes more clear allusions to experiences of displacement and thus clearly pertains to exiled communities and to people with experiences of forced migration. I thus consider "diaspora" as a more suitable concept for this study.

Long-distance nationalism is the third concept considered here, one that constitutes the main principle of political organisation today and has replaced most other forms of political belonging, such as religion and identities based upon local affinities. Also, "nationalism" has become the basis for legitimizing political independence.

A question that is often posed is whether the Kurds are really nationalists or are simply struggling for their human rights or to their equal rights in their home countries and as migrants. In a study of a political generation of refugees struggling for their rights and their recognition, first in their home countries and then on foreign soil, alternatively "citizenship" could have been employed as an analytical tool as well. After all, in everyday speech "citizenship" is often equated with "nationality". However, the latter concept has ethnic connotations while "citizenship"

rather is denoting the rights and responsibilities people have as members of a given state. The notion of "citizenship" has been frequently discussed in recent decades in relation to issues of migration and nationality (Bauböck 1998; Faist 1999). Thus, "citizenship" can be related to efforts made by migrants to continue with their already existing political activities and their efforts to preserve their cultural identities, customs and networks. Migrants' citizenship rights are also an issue of prime concern both for the governments in their countries of origin and those in their countries of settlement. At the same time, the forms of recognition envisaged by "citizenship" is ultimately formal in character and is regulated by laws that are maintained by state powers.

However, the concept of long-distance nationalism serves our purposes better than the concept of citizenship does, since the present study concerns a group of Kurds who are organised on an "ethnic basis" in terms of political parties and organisations. Such long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1992) has often been engendered, accommodated to and even strengthened among people living outside the borders of their home countries. In the present study, the formation and existence of national identities among people living in a diasporic setting is examined and with this the long-distance nationalism of a political generation.

## 2.2 Political Generation

### 2.2.1 Concept

The notion of political generation employed in the thesis draws on Karl Mannheim's concept of "sociological generation", which will now be carefully explicated. The term generation is derived from the Latin word of *generare*, which means "to bring forth". It gradually came to have the literal meaning of "body of individuals born in about the same period", which is how the term is generally used in everyday speech.

A glance in the Collins English Dictionary (2000) indicates that the term has broad applications, extending from, "The act or process of bringing into being, production or reproduction, especially of offspring" to "All the people of approximately the same age especially when considered as sharing certain attitudes" and "Belonging to a generation specified as having been born in or having grandparents born in a given country i.e. a third generation American" (ibid. pp. 639f.), so that the concept of generation can be employed in a number of ways. First, the term can refer to a process of advancement and as such hold out the prospect of certain dynamism. Secondly, it also imply a time boundedness, or a biological rhythm, normally imagined to span a period of about 30-35 years. However, there

are no fixed time boundaries to it so that a generation can span a considerable longer period of time (Abrams 1982 p. 259; Heberle 1951 p. 121; see also Schatz 1989 Chapter 1). Finally it can allude to ideological stances that belong to a particular time period. Thus, the term is complex and, alluding both to the calendar of some form of biological rhythms, and to the calendar implicit in a historical process, it could at first glance appear somewhat contradictory.

This complexity, in turn, reflects the broadness of the concept's applications and the difficulties to find exacting denotations when the concept is employed scientifically. Edmunds and Turner (2002) distinguish two main epistemological vantage points among scholars concerned with the phenomenon of generations. First, generations are commonly defined in terms of being cohorts consisting of individuals who are born at a given time. Secondly, generations are defined on the basis of the emergence of "cultural and political consciousness" that evolves within a generation. In terms of this approach, date of birth is less important than the historical setting in which the generation takes shape (ibid. pp. 6-7). Generation is a concept that has been employed in a variety of ways, by social scientists. Although it is widely recognized that certain generations have made particular contributions to the emergence of different cultures and nations for example, the concept has neither been theorized very much about nor fully explored in other respects in scholarly studies.

### 2.2.2 Generation as a Sociological Category

A significant contribution to the theory of generations has been made by Karl Mannheim, who in his essay *Das Problem der Generationen*, first published in the *Kölner Viertelsjahrhefte für Soziologie* in 1928-29, outlines a social theory of the generation phenomenon. The essay is a fruitful and thorough theoretical elaboration of the concept and also contributes to an understanding of its relevance as an analytical tool in studies of social change. The essay was part of a more comprehensive epistemological programme that Mannheim was working on, but also an expression of his aspirations of developing a theory of social change representing an alternative to the one based on materialist principles developed by Karl Marx (Eyerman and Turner 1999).

In the introductory parts of the essay, Mannheim brings forward a critical discussion in which he problematises "the positivist" and "the romantic-historical" stances, as he labels them, that both in his time and earlier were quite generally adopted by scholars in considering the phenomenon of generations. Mannheim points out that researchers taking a positivist position are inclined to "find general laws based on biological laws" (Mannheim 1952 p. 277), and hence to reduce the problem of generations into one that are defined in quantitative terms alluding then to the idea that human existence is determined by quantitative factors alone.

Mannheim points out that the opposite position, a "historicist-romantic" does not solve the problem either, its instead rather "inverting" it, since proponents of such a position tend to overemphasize generational unification on the basis of ideological and idealist matters at the expense of gaining an understanding of the underlying biological rhythms. Mannheim dismisses the idea of the existence of a "spirit of the time"<sup>22</sup> that was imagined to impinge upon the agency and the political or ideological positioning of generations. Rather, he presents and supports theoretical arguments that he considers to account for how social processes work in the formation of generations and to how individual and collective actors respond to these processes.

The phenomenon of sociological generations is based, according to Mannheim's view, on "biological calendars and rhythms", his idea being that biological as well as anthropological data can help us to explain and understand the limits of reproduction cycles and peoples' life spans. He maintains however that such data "offer no explanation of the relevance these preliminary factors have for the shaping of social interrelationships in their historical flux" (ibid. p. 290). He thus concludes that sociological generations are phenomena in their own right, with their own characteristics, and thus are not to be reduced simply to biological facts or historical locations. A crucial point that Mannheim makes is that the historical location involved is based on the biological rhythm of generations, although this needs to be integrated with a perspective of cultural and historic consciousness in order to provide a sociological understanding of the phenomenon.

Accordingly, Mannheim dissociates himself from both of the aforementioned positions and sets out to elaborate on how generations can be conceptualised and understood as a valuable social category, a sociological generation not being simply a "concrete group". His arguments evolve around what the uniting principles of each category are and the extent to which people can move across the boundaries of a given category. On the one hand, a generation is composed of individuals who are not so closely knitted together as they would be in belonging to a community group or, in the terminology of Mannheim, within the sphere of the *Gemeinschaftsgebilde*. At the same time a generation does not have the openness that characterises the sphere of the *Gesellschaftsgebilde* such as "associations" or "organisations" created with a specific purpose or aspiration and which members can enter and leave freely (Mannheim 1952 p. 289).

Instead, Mannheim distinguishes between "concrete groups", to which organisations and associations belong, and "locations", *Lagerung*, which could be described as "clusters of opportunities, life chances and resources" (Edmunds and Turner 2002 p. 10). Thus, he considers there to be an analogy between the phe-

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<sup>22</sup> *Zeitgeist* is the term used in the English translation of Mannheim. See Mannheim 1952 p. 284.

nomena of generation and that of class. A class position, he argues, is based upon the existence of a "changing economic and power structure". Mannheim concludes that generations unite in a fashion that is reminiscent of class, which is constituted by a location in the economic structure, since, as he puts it, it is "constituted essentially by a similarity of location of a number of individuals within a social whole" (ibid. p. 290). Hence, he argues that a sociological generation can be distinguished on the basis of its location in time and space and the common experiences acquired by people who were born in the same time period: "The fact of belonging to the same class, and that of belonging to the same generation or age group, have this in common that both endow the individuals sharing in them with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action" (ibid. p. 291).

Accordingly a generation is different from a class since the latter is united by economic and power positions in society, whereas the location of a generation is unified and defined by *sentiments, actions, ideas and attitudes*. The differences and similarities between class and generation have been considered by researchers who take an interest in the phenomenon of generations in society. Eyerman and Turner (1999), for example, draw on the theories of Weber stating that: "Generations, like social classes in Weberian sociology, are organized in terms of social closure to maximize access to resources of its members" (Eyerman and Turner 1999 p. 247). A conflict perspective on generations is also developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1988), who emphasizes conflicts, for example in academia, often emanating from struggles over resources, such as those of economic and cultural capital, between generations that are 'socially produced' within these conflicts:

Contrary to what was thought and written at the time of the crisis of May 1968, the conflict which divided the faculties did not oppose generations understood in the sense of age but academic generations, that is agents, who, even when they are the same age, have been produced by two different modes of academic 'generation' .

(Bourdieu 1988 p. 147).

Hence, Bourdieu's assumptions about generations are in many respects reminiscent of those that Mannheim developed, for example as regards the attention both of them give to different belligerent generations within the same age group.

### 2.2.3 Historical Location, Actuality and Generation Units

At first glance, it may seem as though generations were phenomena that appear preliminarily in a diachronic process in which one generation is nicely succeeded by the other. For example, Heberle (1951) writes in the introductory lines of his chapter on this issue that the discussion of generations is generally based on a "very basic principle" namely, "that younger people tend to differ from older people in their outlook on life and consequently in their political views" (ibid. p. 118).

However, as Mannheim underscores, "there is no epoch in which there is only for example a conservative/romanticist generation existing, however it might well be an epoch in which such a generation is dominating" (Mannheim 1952 p. 310). Hence, Mannheim, like Heberle, draws attention to the importance of considering the synchronous aspects of the phenomenon of sociological generations.

Thus, the historical location of a sociological generation is to be considered as the broadest form of a generational unit. Such a unit, however is not likely to be inclusive of all individuals who, for example, are born the same year. Mannheim argues that a generation may have "potentialities which may materialize, be suppressed or be embedded in other social forces" (Mannheim 1952 p. 303). Hence people sharing the same historical location are "potentially capable" of sharing the same destiny or participating in the same protest movements, yet all people born the same year will not necessarily participate, or even if they do, not all of them will have exactly the same experiences. It is also important to note that there is no epoch in history entirely dominated by any single ideological stance.

An additional matter to consider is that of there always being a particular political and social differentiation in every society. Thus, to form an "actual" generation it is necessary that its members co-exist, not only in time but also in the same "cultural and social region", so that its members are "exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization" (Mannheim 1952 p. 303) and are oriented to each other, however they may take antagonistic positions. Thus, in Mannheim's thinking there are three constitutive criteria involved in the creation of a sociological generation. First, there is a "generational location", a set of opportunities that a given generation has. Secondly, in this very location the generation emerges as an actuality, namely as a number of individuals who shares a set of historical responses to its location. Third, in every generation there are units to be found "which articulate structures or knowledge or a consciousness that express their particular location" (Edmunds and Turner 2002 p. 10).

Mannheim underscores there being differentiations within generations as well. Not all individuals of the same age have the same experiences, not even of the same events. For example if people reside in different parts of a given country or in different parts of the world, they are unlikely to be affected by the same events, or it may be that they are affected by the same events but in a myriad of different ways. Mannheim exemplifies this by noting that "the young people in

Prussia" and "the people in China" do not "share the same generation location" (Mannheim 1952 p. 302). There is never only one mentality that pervades a whole society during a given period of time (ibid. p. 314). This is also noted by Heberle (1951), who exemplifies this with the remark that "rural youth and urban youth will experience the same war in different ways" (ibid. p. 118). Thus, in the view of Mannheim, every "actual" generation can be separated into a number of, often opposing and struggling, generation-units, such as conservatives and liberals for example.

A generation unit "tends to impose much more concrete and binding ties" (Mannheim 1952 p. 307) on its members than what can be observed among the members of an "actual" generation or of a group of people within a given "location". Since people belonging to a "generation unit" are more likely to share the same principles, ideas and values, a unit of this sort has a more socialising and formative effect than a location alone does.

Finally, one should note that Mannheim considers the complexity of social structures and underscores the existence of alternative formative factors that impinge upon the social process. Thus, he points out that a "formal sociological analysis" always needs to consider more than only one factor alone to explain and understand a given social process. He warns for and criticizes historical theories that single out one single factor for explaining a particular social process.

#### 2.2.4 Becoming a Political Generation

Since the men and women who constitute the basic subject matter of the investigation carried out, are labelled for the purposes of this study as being a "political generation", this term merits an explanation.

In his pivotal essay, Mannheim elucidated how generations are socially constituted. His insights into the role that generations can play, socially and politically, are still of crucial importance to our understanding of the generation phenomenon. At the same time, one should bear in mind that Mannheim's theorising concerning generations took place in the 1920s. In view of his interest in the development of conservatism in Prussia, he very probably had that political landscape and the accompanying socio-political structures in mind in considering this issue. This was a time when the repertoire of political actions employed by generations, and by other political actors, were largely contained within the boundaries of nation states. Thus, he could not have foreseen the emergence of trans-national networks and of the global processes of today. Accordingly, as Eyerman and Turner (1999) and Edmunds and Turner (2002) have pointed out, the generation concept needs further elaboration if applied to the contemporary world.

Mannheim contributes to one's understanding of generations as a sociological phenomenon, but has been criticized (see Schatz 1989) for not really exploring

how it comes about that generations develop generally, mobilize, and why certain generations becomes decidedly political. Drawing on Mannheims theorising, Heberle (1951) discuss just how political generations are developed and become manifest politically. Heberle elaborates on the tentative concept of "decisive politically relevant experience" (ibid. p. 122), which he considers to be based on the following "key elements": a) the general conditions of social life during the formative period, b) the important political issues of the period's controversies and the like, and c) the concrete internal and political struggles of the period in question; i.e. strikes, insurrections, revolution, civil war.

Heberle emphasizes the importance of political socialisation and the impact of the formative years on one's world view and the repertoire of agency that people develop and maintain. For example, he describes Nazism as having been conditioned by the experiences of people who were young during a period of political and social unrest in Germany in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the Bolshevism conditioned by the experiences of people who were young during the tsarist regime. The importance of the formative years of a generation has been implied in more recent empirically based scholarly studies (see, for example, Lundberg 1989, 1993).

Exploring the cultural dimensions of generations, Eyerman and Turner (1999) consider the idea that a generation essentially "involves organisation of collective memory" (ibid. p. 247). Inspired by the occurrence of generations that manifested themselves culturally and in post-war Western society, the authors elaborate on a generation concept based on the idea that generations are "sharing a common collective culture" (ibid. 1999 p. 250), their defining time, temporal identity and collective memory as their key concepts. In so doing they develop a line of reasoning taking as its point of departure the development of culturally formed generations and generation units. A major source of inspiration to them is Pierre Bourdieu, and another is David Wyatts' study *Out of the Sixties: Storytelling and the Vietnam Generation* from 1993. In his work, Wyatt explores stories of the personal and the political as told by artists belonging to the generation that "was shaped by the war in Vietnam".

The stories are reported to convey a cultural richness oscillating between an emphasis on the war and an appreciation of the counterculture that developed in the sixties. Wyatt bases his conception of a cultural generation on the idea that the generations developed following a common trauma. He summarizes this in the following points, concerning what he consider generations to be constituted by, a traumatic incident or episode, a set of cultural or political mentors who stands in an adversarial relation to the dominant culture, a dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society, a privileged interval that connects a generation with a cycle of successes and failures, the creation of a sacred space within sacred places, the notion of "the Happy Few" who provide mutual support for individuals "who know and support one another" (Wyatt 1993 p. 4; see also Eyerman and Turner 1999 p. 25)

From this cultural perspective, therefore, attention is paid to the various modes through which a generation embodies its collective identity in response to traumatic and formative events.

Eyerman and Turner (1999) outline a theory of generations in which collective memory is a key concept. Inspired by Bourdieu and Wyatt, they argue that generations "embody its collective identity in response to traumatic or formative events (wars, civil conflicts and other disasters)" (Eyerman and Turner 1999 p. 251). In their argument they emphasize the importance of events associated with wars in the formation of generations during the 20th Century, as for example the First World War, the Spanish Civil War and the Vietnam War.

Heberle (1951) argues that generations are formed in a process in which people respond to certain "decisive, politically relevant experiences" (ibid. p. 122). His exemplifying with the Nazi movement in Germany, which was led by people whose political views were formed by their experiences from the First World War and its aftermath (ibid p. 121). I find the idea that generations can be conditioned by traumatic events very pertinent for the present study, since the basic subject matter is a generation of refugees. However, I think such a position should be problematised, since it may be difficult to point out one single event as being crucial to the formation of a sociological generation.

Rather I agree with Abrams (1982) who argues that it may be difficult to determine exactly which experiences that are "decisive politically relevant" for a sociological generation to emerge (ibid. p. 259). In fact, generations may develop very gradually, evolve around several events and involve less traumatic conditions as well. In many cases therefore "the process of formation has the character of an accumulating sequence of events" (quoted in Schatz 1989 p. 26). Thus, the visibility and self-consciousness of a sociological generation may develop gradually. Schatz employs this perspective on the rise of generations in his study of a generation of Polish Jewish communists, his emphasizing that "a generation is about becoming and being and moreover that generations are time-bound and as such necessarily dynamic: it thus implies time dimensions of past, present and future" (Schatz 1989 p. 26).

Mannheim asserts that generations rather than classes are of central importance in the production of knowledge. He also points out that generations often have a key role in processes of social change. In his view, it is largely generations, rather than classes, that have contributed to the currents of ideas - political, cultural and ideological - that dominate contemporary society. Edmunds and Turner go further, elaborating on the thoughts of Mannheim, their putting forward the argument that "generational awareness" is of central importance in the creation and re-creation of national identities. These authors underscore "traumatic events" being critical in the formation of generations, these in turn being "fundamental" to the process of national identity construction and national consciousness (Edmunds and Turner 2002 pp. 115ff.).

Edmunds and Turner (2002) elaborate on Mannheim's reasoning, their suggesting that a political generation is "distinctive in its rejection of status quo and its attempts to overturn current political values" (ibid. p. 7). They note the distinction between "active" and "passive" generations, and point out that active generations make a "generative" contribution to the society in which they live, rather than their passively accommodating to existing cultural and social conditions.

Both of these scholars underscore the usefulness of distinguishing between active and passive generations, according to their terminology its being possible to divide active generations into various strategic generations, the latter having the capacity to, "capitalize on the resources and opportunities that are presented to them" (Edmunds and Turner 2002 p. 17). In his analysis of conservatism, Mannheim distinguished analytically between "forward-looking groups" and "back-ward looking groups". Drawing on this distinction, Edmunds and Turner find it useful to make a distinction between "utopian intellectual generations", on one hand aspiring to change present conditions and on the other hand "nostalgic intellectual generations" who tends to look back to the past (ibid. p. 119).

### 2.2.5 Summary of the Section

I argue that the generation that is the particular subject matter of this thesis is to be defined as a political one. I find the discussion of generations being organized around collective memories that Eyerman and Turner put forward relevant for the study. I also find Schatz's insights into the importance that sequential considerations and dynamic dimensions can have in the formation of generations to be important to consider in a study of a diaspora generation composed of individuals who have been transgressing state boundaries (Schatz 1989, Chapter 1).

The generation under study needs for one thing, to be located in a Turkish context. All of the members of the group studied here, were, with one exception, born in the Turkish Republic, and all of them grew up there. They share the experience of having been politically active in clandestine organisations and parties in the decades between the Second World War and the military coup of 1980. During this period, the one-party system in Turkey was replaced by a multi-party system, at the same time as those parties that ran for election had to be approved by the military, in the amended constitution of 1960, a climate of relative political liberalisation taking shape and certain political liberties being introduced then (see Ahmad 1993 p. 129; Pope and Pope 1997 p. 96; Zürcher 2004 pp. 244f.). This also became a period of political instability and vacuum that made it difficult for the military to control the Kurdish areas as intensively as they had done in the previous decades. Thus, it became possible for the Kurds to organise politically, also if only clandestinely. This was something that had been impossible in the generation of their parents. Thus, they can have been limited by the oppressive circumstances

and the brutal reprisals following the Kurdish rebellions in the 1920s and 1930s that the generation of their parents experienced (McDowall 1996 Chapter 9; Chaliand 1979 pp. 60-68; van Bruinessen 1992 pp. 281ff.; White 2000 pp. 73-83). In addition, they share the experiences of brutality and suffering that followed the military coup in 1980.

In addition, the representations of this political generation that were studied need to be located in a Swedish context, sharing the experiences of their being a first generation of political refugee immigrants, as well as Swedish asylum, Swedish immigrant politics and the institutional arrangements of Swedish society. As first generations of migrants, they may well have stronger ties to their country of origin than their children born and brought up in Sweden and socialised into Swedish society from the beginning, had. Thus this generation of Kurds can be contrasted with a) the generation of their parents, b) the second and still younger generations of Kurds, and c) their Kurdish contemporaries who did not participate in the political life in Turkey prior to 1980.

## 2.3 Diaspora

### 2.3.1 Concept

The second concept is that of diaspora. This is perhaps the most ambiguous one. In recent decades the concept has proliferated widely and has become debated vividly by scholars. "Diaspora" is originally a Greek word, comprised of the terms *dia* (*across*) and *sperein* (*saw, scatter*) and has come semantically to mean dispersion (Brah 2002 p. 181; Cohen 1997 p. ix), but alludes to "acculturation" as well (Björklund 2011 pp. 122-123, Brah 2002 *ibid.*).<sup>23</sup> In antiquity, from 400 BC on, diaspora was a notion employed by the Greeks referring to the migration to, and colonisation of, Minor Asia on the Mediterranean coasts and the trade societies established and developed there (Cohen 1997 p. xi, p. 2; Björklund 2011 pp. 122ff.; Povranovic-Frykman 2001). In these settlements, language and affiliations to Greece were preserved for centuries, or as Björklund (2011) has put it they, "remained 'greek' in terms of language, culture and social structure" (*ibid* p. 123). A few hundred years later there was a shift in the meaning of diaspora as the term gradually came to imply forced dispersion as associated with the Babylonian Exile (Björklund 2011 pp. 124-128; Cohen 1997 pp. 1ff.).

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<sup>23</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the etymological and historical roots of the diaspora concept, see Björklund 2011 pp. 121-128; Tölölyan 1991, 2007.

From then until rather recently, diaspora has been a notion addressing first and foremost the Jewish experience of exile (Cohen pp. 1ff.; Esman 1986 pp. 12-13; Vertovec 1999 p. 130), emphasizing such occurrences as deportation from the homeland and the catastrophe, losses, trauma and dispersion that followed (Chaliand and Rageau 1995).<sup>24</sup> In line with this the meanings of "reproduction" and "acculturation" faded away. Diaspora was for long a notion reserved for a few "classical" cases, including the Jewish case depicted as the "paradigmatic case" (Brubaker 2005 p. 2), the Greek and the Armenian ones (Chaliand and Rageau 1997; Vertovec 2009 p. 130).

In recent decades, criticism of this view of diaspora, which was given priority in the Jewish case, has developed. First, it was considered too constrained, since there were many well-established migrant communities with experiences of displacement and dispersion, such as the African, the Lebanese, the Chinese and the Palestinian, not encompassed by this concept (Tölölyan 2007 p. 648). Secondly, in addition as long as the Jewish case was regarded as the paradigmatical one, diasporas were generally considered to involve victimization (Wahlbeck 1999 p. 29; Brubaker 2005 p. 2). From this it follows that attention was drawn to the fact that the Jewish experience was far more multi-faceted and complex than what the emphasize on "catastrophe" and trauma implies. Several authors have attempted to portray a more diverse picture of the Jewish diaspora narrative. Boyarin and Boyarin (2003 pp. 11ff.), for example, shows how memories of family histories, everyday practices, piety, education and the like contained in people's personal accounts seem in most cases seem to have been more relevant to many of them than a sense of doom and imaginations regarding catastrophe.

Cohen (1997) provides many examples of the opposite, such as the advances in medicine, art, literature and science made by members of the Jewish diaspora in medieval Spain (ibid. pp. 23f.). Cohen's conception recognizes the complexity of diasporas and may help one to discern certain key features useful in analysing the conditions of people living in diasporic settings (see Povrzanovic-Frykman 2001 p. 20). Thus, the conditions under which people in a diaspora live might very well be safe and flourishing, and be perceived as home (Alinia 2004 p. 320; Alinia 2007 ; Cohen 1997; Tölölyan 2007 p. 649).

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<sup>24</sup> There are commentators who suggest that *Galut* is a better term for describing the Jewish experience.

### 2.3.2 Dispersion, Homeland Orientation and Boundaries

As the concept of diaspora has become increasingly attended to by scholars new and broader definitions and conceptions of it have appeared in the field of migration research. Whereas some scholars have argued for a more pragmatic use of the term, others have advocated greater stringency in the discussion and conceptualisation of the term, without which, it was argued, it would lose its explanatory value. One of these taking side for a more stringent use of the term is Brubaker (2005), who has suggested there to be three "constitutive criteria" for diaspora - dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance.

He regards dispersion as clearly being one out of three "constitutive" criteria for defining diaspora (ibid. p. 5), pointing out that it can be considered recurrent in definitions of diaspora generally (see Tölölyan 1991, 1996, 2007; Marienstrass 1989; Cohen 1997; Connor 1986; Safran 1991). Dispersion is the criterion that Brubaker considers to be the first and most fundamental one in any attempt to define or analyse a diaspora. Dispersion is a trait also included in most scholarly definitions of the term. Diaspora necessarily means that the group in question is dispersed geographically, across state boundaries. On the basis of various legends, biblical texts, literature, historical documents and decrees, dispersion appears to have been the hallmark of the Jewish people.

Tölölyan (2007) points out how the diaspora has often been used interchangeably with the term "dispersion". One example of a definition of this sort is provided by Connor (1986), which reads as follows: "that segment of a people living outside the homeland" (quoted in Tölölyan 2007 p. 649). Indeed, such a broad definition makes it possible to use diaspora to describe the most diverse groups of migrants, voluntary and involuntary, as well as minorities residing across state borders, and all new patterns of mobility across the globe (Björklund 2011; Brubaker 2005; Chaliand and Rageau 1997; Cohen 1997), such as for example "domestic house workers" and "executives of transnational corporations" (Tölölyan 2007 pp. 648). Not all of them are necessarily migrants, for example as in the cases of "a Queer diaspora" or of transnational adoption in terms of a "diaper diaspora" (see, for example, Patton and Sanchez-Appler 2000; Quiroz 2008) that have appeared in the literature.

These widely stretched meanings of the notion and its applications led the editor of the journal "*Diaspora*", Kachig Tölölyan, to write: "Diaspora has become an occasion for the celebration of multiplicity and mobility - and a figure of our discontent in our being in a world apparently still dominated by the nation states" (Tölölyan 1996 p. 28). Many commentators are critical of too broad applications of the term. This raising conceptual problems having the consequence of its ending

up as a catchword instead of its becoming a useful analytical tool (see, for example, Björklund 2011 pp. 115ff. ; Brubaker 2005 p. 1; Tölölyan 2007).<sup>25</sup>

It is in the light of such developments that attempts to create a more stringent definition of the term are to be understood, in connection with many such attempts its being emphasized that homeland is the component that a diaspora evolves around. One attempt of this sort was that provided by Safran (1991) in arguing that the term diaspora can be applied when "expatriate minority communities share several of the following features:

they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original "centre" to two or more foreign regions;

they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland, including its location, history and achievements;

they believe they are not - and perhaps can never be - fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;

their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return;

they believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and

they continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship (Safran 1991, pp. 83-84).

Indeed most definitions of diaspora refer to the group in question being dispersed from a homeland. This implies that a diaspora is dispersed from somewhere and thus involves more than simply dispersion (Wahlbeck 1999 p. 33). Homeland orientation is also the second constitutive criteria suggested by Brubaker (2005). He notes that the homeland can be "real" or "imagined". At the same time, as many scholars have pointed out, an emphasise on "homeland orientation" can be problematic. Indeed, Safrans' definition has been criticised because of the homeland taking such a central position and for it being too rigid as such and for taking diasporic discourses as "objective realities" without taking their political dimensions into consideration" (Alinia 2004 p. 320). There is a risk, as Khayati (2008) points out, that too much attention may be directed at a homeland orientation, whereas as a result the conditions under which immigrants lead their "real" lives in countries where they reside may become marginalised (p. 15). He argues, in turn that this

may be a basis for racism and for the culturalisation of immigrants. This is also a problem he argues when a social constructivist approach is employed, since as he asserts it aims at "where are you from?" rather than "where are you at?" (Khayati 2008 p. 15; cf. Hall 2000; Gilroy 1991). This is a risk that should be considered. Tölölyan (2007) emphasizes that home must be considered where people live and feel at home (ibid. p. 650). Home can also be conceived of as a de-territorialized space, Alinia pointing out that the diaspora can be considered to be home (Alinia 2004 p. 323). Still, I agree with Björklund (2011) that without the perception of a homeland there is no basis for speaking about a diaspora. Otherwise there is the risk that the idea of diaspora can be, as Tölölyan has put it, "collapsed" (Tölölyan 2007 p. 647), to its simply meaning dispersion, so that it loses its explanatory value, or as Tölölyan states: "it is helpful to distinguish it from a dispersion that is the consequence of individual and chain migration, motivated by economic reasons" (Tölölyan 2007 p. 649).

A criticism often raised is that when a homeland orientation is involved in the conceptualisation of diaspora, a return movement is generally implied. As Tölölyan (2007) emphasizes, however, this can be about a re-turn, without actual repatriation: "they turn again and again toward the homeland through travel, remittances, cultural exchange, and political lobbying and by various contingent efforts to maintain other links with the homeland" (ibid. p. 649).

A third constitutive criteria suggested by Brubaker, inspired by Armstrong (1976) and Barth (1969), is that of boundary maintenance. Brubaker argues that diaspora, "involves the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society (or societies)" (ibid. p. 6), and points out how boundary maintenance can be either voluntary or unintended (ibid. p. 5), depending on the circumstances. This is a trait of diasporas that also has been noted by Tölölyan, who argues: "Diasporicity manifests itself in relations of difference" (Tölölyan 2007 p. 650). Important to keep in mind is that these differences are imagined and symbolically marked.

Here Brubaker (2005) points to an "ambivalence in the literature". First, we find theories considering "boundary erosion" as representing a constitutive criterion of diaspora. Secondly, we find other scholars emphasizing "boundary maintenance" as a crucial criterion of the phenomenon (ibid. p. 6).

### 2.3.3 Consciousness, Cultural Production or Social Formation?

In the myriad of definitions that have appeared, Vertovec (1999) distinguishes three main approaches to diaspora. First there is the one stance considering of diasporas as a *type of consciousness*. This is a stance stemming from post-modern and post-colonial theorizing. Such a position is taken by Clifford (1994), who emphasizes there being a "diasporic awareness" that develops among what he defines being "diasporan people". Clifford's stance is that diasporas can be minorities

that are not necessarily migrants. He argues: "diasporic language appears to be replacing, or at least supplementing minority discourse" (Clifford 1994 p. 311). The mode of thinking behind this stance is the idea that human beings have many and diverse origins and many stories to tell. This perspective opens things up for a very broad application of the diaspora concept, diaspora people being considered as "being both here and there", weaving together their lives in their original and in their new home countries.

Scholars oriented to post-colonial and/or post-modernist theories have presented what they describe as "new insights" about diaspora and migration. One such insight is that migrants not only are linked to old relationships but also develop new ones, both in their original home country and in the countries in which they are residing. In addition migrants establish transnational relationships. All these processes go on simultaneously (see, for example, Betrell and Hollifield 2008 p. 120; Eriksson et al. 1999 Chapter 1; Glick Schiller et al 1994, 1995).

However, such dual- or multifaceted orientations have long been well known to scholars in the migration research area. Both social scientists and historians have also since long observed and recognized that migrants tend to adopt a dual orientation, their identities being shaped in relation to the sending countries and the settlement countries simultaneously (see, for example, Brah 2002; Lundberg 1989; Povrzanović-Frykman 2001; Wahlbeck 1999; Brubaker 2005; Björklund 2011). I would rather draw attention to the numerous examples found in the literature of migrants' developing relationships that in modern terminology are designated as being "transnational", contacts with their original home countries being maintained at the same time.

Classical works such as *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by Thomas and Znaniecki (1953) and *Beyond the Melting Pot* by Glazer and Moynihan (1963), just to mention two, provide examples of how migrants are simultaneously committed to the political, cultural and social life in countries of settlement as well as in the countries from which they once emigrated. In Glazer and Moynihan (ibid.) it is for example stated that: "And even today, trade with foreign countries is still in large measure carried on by nationals of the country involved, who have a special knowledge of language and conditions and local customs" (Glazer and Moynihan 1963 p. 11). Thus it has long been recognized that migrants play a certain role in trade and political relations, for example, with their original home countries and that contacts with these countries are never entirely broken. What is new, I argue, is the unprecedented degree by which communication, collaboration and exchanges are undertaken.

A diaspora can also be understood in terms of *cultural production* that can be linked to a globalising world (Vertovec 1997; Cohen and Vertovec 1999 p. xix). In this vein, diasporas are considered to represent a "*world-wide flow of cultural objects, images and meanings*" (p. xix) which points to diasporas being syncretic, heterogeneous and incessantly moving. The most prominent representative for this

position is Stuart Hall (1999) who asserts that diasporas continuously creates new constellations of people, which he refers to as hybridity. In developing his arguments regarding this Hall takes as a point of departure the Afro-Caribbean experience referring to 'the diasporan people', arguing that the "New World", or "America or Terra Incognita", has been the fundamental arena characterized by diaspora in which "diversity, hybridity and differences" have developed (Hall 1999 p. 241). This can be seen being in interesting contrast to the approach in which the Jewish experience is seen as being perhaps the prime example of diaspora. Like Björklund (2011 p. 137), however, I find Hall's argument somewhat contradictory. He refer on the one hand to "the Caribbean people" in a way that implies their constituting an entity, a group or a community. For instance, he call them "the diasporan people". On the other hand, he argues that they represent creolisation, syncretism and argues that the conditions diasporan people live under are constantly in a state of flux. According to this view, diaspora is more about boundary transgression or boundary erosion than boundary maintenance (Brubaker 2005 pp. 6-7).

A third approach to this area, propounded by Cohen and Vertovec (Vertovec 1997; Cohen and Vertovec 1999 p. xvii) is to regard diasporas as a *social formation*, or a network or an organisation, that extends across state borders. In this view diasporas are to be considered in terms of their being a globally dispersed group or network of co-ethnics organised and organizing across state borders. Vertovec (1999, 2009) emphasizes this approach to diasporas being useful to illustrating and analysing a fundamental problem, that of "how to survive as a group" (Vertovec 1997 p. 130), or more precisely how to survive as a group in a globalized world.

If diasporas are to be understood in terms of *consciousness* or *cultural production*, this assumes a diaspora to be a *social formation*, its otherwise running the risk of being a concept used for "everything in transgression" (Björklund 2011 p. 138; see also Sökefeld 2006). In line with Björklund I would argue that these two positions imply "possible effects" of the diaspora rather than their providing criteria for how a diaspora is to be defined. Sökefeld (2006) suggest that consciousness shall be replaced with "discourse" since: "consciousness nees to be expressed in discourse in order to produce social and political effects" (ibid. p. 267). Brubaker (2005), referring to what he label "diaspora talk", expresses a skepticism toward the idea, often put forward in recent decades, of there being an epochal shift in our contemporary world, his asserting that what is considered as "new" with a new theory of diasporas in reality not mark a very radical "shift in perspective" (Brubaker 2005 p. 7).

This third approach assumes that diasporic people in the areas of "social relations", "political orientations" and "economic strategies" are oriented towards "a) globally dispersed yet self-identified ethnic groups, b) the territorial states and contexts where such groups resides, and c) the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forbears came" (Sheffer 1986; as quoted by Cohen and Vertovec 1999 p. xviii). Thus, in this view, the imagining of a homeland that is lost

through one's being forced to leave it, one that may be either literal or real (Tölölyan 2007), is a central trait of a diaspora (Björklund 2011 pp. 131-133). Critics consider this approach "essentialist" because referring to the Jewish diasporic experience and assuming a diaspora to represent a group formation or a network of co-ethnics who emphasize their homeland and returning (see, for example, Alinia 2004; Eriksson et. al 1999 Chapter 1; Hall 1999), however, one should note that, most contemporary scholars concerned with subjects such as migration, nationalism, ethnicity and diaspora regard ethnic identities as being situational and as being re-constructed continuously there being numerous conflicting identity accounts within any population (Guibernau 1996; Emanuelsson 2005; Lindholm Schulz 2003; Björklund 2011; Mandel 2008). Such an approach involves all three of the constitutive criteria suggested by Brubaker: dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance.

I would argue however, that there are two additional concerns to be taken account of. One of the basic issues that Brubaker (2005) brings to the fore is the "teleological" approach to a diaspora, one that frequently appears in the scientific literature. Brubaker is critical of the idea of a perceived "awakening" of diasporas and of diasporas being regarded often as "entities", since not all migrants and refugees, in fact commit themselves to either return movements, developments in the original homeland or matters of co-ethnic identity. Indeed, there are migrants who not perceive of themselves as being in a diaspora at all. Brubaker suggests therefore that a diaspora should be considered a stance, rather than an entity, and be dealt with as such by researchers (ibid. p. 13).

A second concern I would call attention to is that a diaspora has connotations for the transnational space as well. The notion of a diaspora alludes to a situation of "banishment" and is in that sense reminiscent of the term exile, which in everyday talk often refers to political refugees as well as people who became refugees for reasons other than political ones.<sup>26</sup> Diasporic communities also organize, communicate and maintain relations across state borders, or as Tölölyan states: "Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (Tölölyan 1991 p. 4). As Tölölyan also points out, the term transnational is often used interchangeably with that of globalization. As such, the diaspora concept is useful for gaining an understanding of situations of displacement as well as of de-territorialized people. In fact globalisation, transnationalism and diaspora are in a

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<sup>26</sup> One of the lines of argument in Svante Lundberg's thesis is that "the exile has *meaning* which is part of a collectively maintained definition of the individual precisely a political refugee, and which consist in a (declared) intention to return to the home country as the political subject." (Lundberg 1989, Chapter 5 and p. 184).

way nested with each other (Tölölyan 2007 p. 642). Thus diasporas in which relations across state borders are maintained are a) globally connected and differentiated and thus b) involve actors who maintain relations to their original homelands, to their settlement countries and to transnational spaces.

#### 2.3.4 Connected and Differentiated

As noted above, a central feature of diasporas, when considered as social formations, is that of the aspirations of those involved for sustaining a relationship to co-ethnic solidarity across state borders (Björklund 2011; Cohen 1997; Vertovec 1999, 2009; Tölölyan 2007). Diasporas can thus be said to be globally connected, at least to an extent, discussions taking place within networks that extend across state borders, that protests and actions of solidarity in various places are being partly synchronised (Björklund 1993; Mariensträs 1989).

One example of synchronisation is that of protest actions all over Europe taking place when the Kurdish PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured by Turkish state authorities. The protest actions were violent in some places and were directed against official Turkish goals. These protests confronted all members of the diaspora community as a whole with questions and dilemmas. Most Kurds, whether they sympathized with the PKK or not, were critical to the circumstances under which Öcalan had been hijacked and publicly degraded by the Turkish authorities (see, for example, Østergaard-Nielsen 2001b).

Björklund (1993) provides similar examples from the Armenian diaspora. One such example was the occurrence of political violence that various Armenian diaspora organisations directed against Turkish goals between 1975 and 1985 in the cities of Athens, Beirut, Ankara, Paris, Rome, Geneva and Los Angeles. The attacks against Turkish embassies, diplomats and the like were all executed in the name of the Armenian cause. This confronted the Armenian diaspora with a number of questions and dilemmas (ibid. pp. 348ff.).

At the same time diaspora groups are generally highly differentiated and at least as heterogeneous as all social communities are. They are internally differentiated because of geographical dispersion, their being located in quite different places, and being divided up by class, gender, age and political allegiances, as well as by differing experiences in connection with exile and migration. Diaspora groups tend to operate at a global and a local level at one and the same time, their being both sustaining solidarity with co-ethnic members of them worldwide and adjusting to the social and political culture in the countries in which they reside. Thus, there is a wide range of different movements and organisations with differing motives and aims that endeavour to represent the interests of the people and peoples belonging to them (Shain 1989; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001b).

Thus, diasporas can be mobilised globally and closely connected, and yet be very much divided up by social, political and cultural differences within.

### 2.3.5 Triadic Relations and Transnationalism

Various authors with a post-colonial or post-modern perspective assert that what they label as "traditional diaspora theories" put too much weight on analysing diasporas through the lense of the nation state and criticize the idea that diasporas are linked to a certain place or a given history of origin (Eriksson et. al. 1999 pp. 44ff.). I would agree that diasporas, also when considered as social formations, must be seen in relation to transnational spaces. Diasporas are actors on a transnational arena. They operate across state boundaries and are involved in complex relations with actors who are considered to be external. Diasporas definitively contains a political dimension (Castles and Miller 2009 pp. 295ff.). Clearly they play a major role on the political arenas, both in intra-state and in international conflicts, although they are mostly not the decisive factor in these conflicts (Shain 1989).

The dual or even transnational orientation of diasporas is pivotal for their political commitments. Individual members, as well as political groups and organisations belonging to a diaspora may influence the economic and political relations between the countries involved. Members of the diaspora work not only through their own organisations but also through political parties and institutions in the countries of settlement. They can provide economic or military support to opposition movements in their original home countries, and they can either act legally or illegally in the diaspora (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001a p. 186).

Important to consider moreover, is the potential that diasporas can have in political and social processes in their original home countries, through economic remittances and through social and political knowledge they possess. Until recently this actions of this kind were initiated mainly of the initiatives of the migrants themselves, although a shift can be noted in recent years, where governments, as well as international organisations, more often than before involve diasporas in various political processes and projects aimed at development (see Castles and Miller 2009 pp. 70-73; DeHaas 2006).

This phenomenon is referred to by Gabriel Sheffer (1986) as "triadic" relations that diasporic groups are involved in - reflecting relations between the country of settlement, the country of origin and the institutions and actors that belong to the different diaspora groups. This can lead to intricate, complicated and sometimes tense relations between all the actors involved (ibid. p. 11).

One can note first, that the activism of diasporas concerns relations between the diaspora and the regime in the country of settlement, whether it is possible at all for members of diaspora groups to organise and act politically, in order to pro-

tect their own interests, depends on the structure of society and the political system in the receiving country (Esman 1986 pp. 344, 348). Diasporas may work in dialogue with the host society, using that society's political institutions to endeavour to put pressure on the regime in the country of origin, working through their own organisations and directing activities of national actors in the country of settlement or international organisations, or they might work illegally through underground organisations. The political successes and misfortunes of the Jewish diaspora can serve as a clear example. In the US the Jewish diaspora is politically well organised and has had the possibility of acting successfully as a forceful pressure group. Conversely Jews residing in Russia and other states of the former USSR, have been met with suspicion and been regarded as dissidents and agitators if they act in this way (Esman 1986 p. 338). Crucial for the success of a diaspora group is also their internal political organisation and political experiences.

Secondly, one can note that the activism of diasporas is an issue that concerns to a considerable degree the regimes in their countries of origin. The interest that regimes in the countries of origin take in diasporas can be either positive or negative for the diaspora group involved. Sometimes the diaspora is seen as an economic or political asset by the regime in their countries of origin and one they willingly exploit. For example Ministry of Indians Overseas support Diaspora Knowledge Network as a way to present high skilled Indians abroad with opportunities and job openings in India (Castles and Miller 2009 p. 71).

An example of such phenomena often referred to is the economic and military support that for a long time was given Israel by the US, as a result of the activities of the Jewish diaspora in the US (Esman 1986 p. 346). Moroccan and Turkish regimes supported and initiated regime friendly immigrant organisations in Western Europe (Castles and Miller 2009 p. 72). In recent years Turkey has showed an increasing interest in the Turkish diaspora living in Europe, realising the economic and political potential it holds. However, the activities of diasporas are often regarded as a threat by the regimes in their countries of origin. There are occasions on which members of the diaspora are looked upon suspiciously and accused of lacking solidarity with their new home country (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001a; Lundberg 1989; Shain 1989).

Third, since diasporas to a large extent act politically in transnational and global arenas, their activism may also be an issue that concerns the international community. Diaspora organisations and migrant groups increasingly act through non-state-based organisations. One example is that of the Turks and Kurds in Germany who act throughout Europe with the aim to mobilise public opinion on issues such as Turkey's possible membership of the European Union, human rights in Turkey and so forth (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001a).

It can be assumed that in political conflicts diasporic people are sometimes more loyal to the regime in the old home country than that in the country of residence. On some occasions members of the diaspora are met with suspicion and

with growing hostility by the surrounding society (Castles and Miller 2009 pp. 291ff.; Chaliand and Rageau 1997 passim). History provides many examples of how population groups, also that have resided for a long time in a given country, feel unsafe and threatened and may be subjected to persecution and xenophobia of different forms. Outbursts of anti-Semitism in places where Jewish communities have resided for a long time and in which they were well integrated are an example. Further examples are the anti-Chinese riots in Denver in the 1880s and the massacre of Chinese residents in Indonesia in 1965 and 1970. The genocide of the Jews, together with the persecutions of gypsies are horrendous examples from our own time (Chaliand and Rageau 1997 pp. 27, 50ff., 106, 134, 136).

On the other hand, there are examples of diasporic groups being critical of the regimes in the countries of origin and supporting resistance movements and opposition groups there (Castles and Miller 2009 pp. 278ff.). Under such circumstances representatives of diasporic groups may seek for help from the regimes in their countries of settlement, bring their cause into international forums or act on their own. In fact, relations between diasporas and the countries of origin are in many cases extremely sensitive. The regime in the country of origin may attempt to put pressure on members of the diasporic group to act in favour of their interests.

Finally, the existence of a diaspora may contribute to complications between the original country and the country of settlement. Powerholders in the country of origin may feel threatened by activities initiated by diasporic groups inducing the governments in the countries of settlement to circumscribe the activities of the diaspora (Shain 1989; Esman 1986 pp. 341ff.).

### 2.3.5 Summary of the Section

In this section it has been demonstrated that diaspora is a complex concept with many connotations. I argue that a diaspora must be understood as a stance and an imagined social formation involving the three constitutive criteria of diaspora as identified by Brubaker. First, and perhaps most widespread, is the connotation of *dispersion* that a diaspora has. A diaspora is a group, a community, or a network of people dispersed to at least two foreign countries. There are other traits involved, however, which if ignored engender the risk of diaspora being reduced to a state of dispersion alone.

Here we arrive at the second constitutive criteria for a diaspora, namely that of *homeland orientation*. In most conceptualisations of the term it is assumed that a diaspora is created by dispersion from a homeland. In addition it is assumed that a relationship to this homeland is maintained. The homeland in question may be either "real" or "imagined". Important to consider is that diasporic people maintain relationships across state boundaries, with sending countries and in networks with

co-ethnics, that extends across state boundaries. Thus, they can also be regarded as actors in triadic relations and transnational spaces. The third criterion is that of the maintenance of boundaries, imagined, flux and porous.

## 2.4 Long-Distance Nationalism

This section concerns the notion of long-distance nationalism. This is a term of relevance for the thesis since the men and women belonging to the generation of major concern here feel strongly identified with the Kurdish nation and has been involved in pro-Kurdish activism during a particular time period. This generation came together in currents of struggling for the Kurdish issue in Turkey and also in diasporic settings. The sense of identity of these persons was conditioned by events that they experienced in a common historical location. Their imagination of a Kurdish community is a central feature of their narratives.

It shall be emphasised however, that the nationalism emerging among these migrants is not identical with the nationalism that develops in their countries of emigration. A nationalist movement that develops and/or reorganizes in exile settings is not the same movement as the one that developed in the country of imagined origin. Rather, the nationalism constructed by migrants or exiles and in diasporic settings is constructed in, and is strongly affected by, the political, social and cultural settings in which the migrants reside and act (see, for example, Anderson 1992 pp. 4ff.; Olsson 2007 p. 221).

It is a well known phenomenon that many of the early nationalist movements developed outside the imagined home countries. In describing nationalist currents that developed in the colonies in the Americas and Latin American countries Anderson (1992) writes of "non-Spanish Spaniards" and "non-English Englishmen" in referring to early nationalist movements of immigrants who were oriented politically, culturally and economically to their countries of emigration for long after they had settled down in the colonies. Anderson writes: "It was of great historical importance that the exiles did eventually make their place of exile a heimat, and that this attachment produced those classical nationalist movements which found their final political form in the world's first cluster of true nation-states; and that, however turbulent their domestic lives, these states kept their boundaries more or less unchanged up till our own era" (Anderson 1992 p. 4).

### 2.4.1 The Concept

Nationalism is both a political doctrine and a theoretical concept. Empirical observations indicate that nationalism is a shifting phenomenon, appearing in various

forms and shapes across the globe. Nationalisms appear in the form of radical liberation movements, and in extremely conservative versions, can be implemented from above by state powers, and from below by minority groups struggling for self-determination. They can be produced within the homelands they aspire to or through transnational networks. Hence, nationalism is a paradoxical phenomenon in many respects. On the one hand, it has been emulated as a model of political organisation all over the world and could in a way be considered a universal principle. On the other hand, a central feature of every form of nationalism, in a political ideological sense, is the emphasis on specific and particularistic traits of the people included (Hettne et al. 1998 p. 405).

Thus, contemporary political developments and ideological discourses within nationalist movements frequently nurture an understanding of nationalism at more theoretical level. As a theoretical concept, nationalism is not very complicated. Ernest Gellner's often quoted definition of the term reads for example: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent." (Gellner 1983 p. 1).

This definition provided by Gellner has become widely accepted (see, for example, Hobsbawm 1990 p. 9). Nationalism is a term alluding to political independence, at the same time as it is implied that the national, political and territorial can differ from one another. Aspirations for political independence are often pointed out as being one of the most crucial facets in the political doctrine of nationalism. In addition nationalism theory involves the idea of a "people" and "culture".

It seem plausible to assume, therefore, that nationalism emanates from different spheres of society, its thus appearing in a variety of forms and shape, such as state building or liberation movements, radical or conservative movements, transnational and long-distance movements, irredentism and secessionism. Nationalism is clearly related to aspirations of possessing political sovereignty or to joy at having it. Hence, nationalism is closely related to concepts such as "state", "nation" and "ethnie". These components will be discussed more in detail in the next section.

#### 2.4.2 State, Nation and Ethnie

As noted in the section above, nationalism connotes to the existence of political independence as well as acceptance of the idea of a people. It possesses dimensions of nation as well as of a state, although in everyday speech these two are not always separated. Rather, these two concepts are surrounded by confusion, since they are often used somewhat thoughtlessly in a reciprocal manner. In everyday speech these terms are often used interchangeably. The United Nations is an organisation for example composed of states. The term nation is often used to refer

to a state, but is sometimes also used with the meaning of "cultural community". The concept alludes to the independence of a nation, this being complicated by difficulties in defining and delimiting what a nation represents.

One of the most influential thinkers regarding modern state formations is Max Weber. He distanced himself from the Marxist class-based conceptualisation of states, since he "believed that Marxists' political ambitions took as their premise a deficient understanding of the modern state, the organising principles of politics and the complexity of political life" (Held 1992 p. 114). Weber did not deny the importance of economic mechanisms and class structure in the state-building processes, but he stressed the autonomy of state powers vis-à-vis society.<sup>27</sup> Weber did never develop a cohesive theory of states, but rather his thinking circled around a handful of crucial concepts, those of *territory*, *violence* and *legitimacy*. His focus on violence, however, have been widely criticised in modern theorising (see, for example, Mann 1993 pp. 54-63; Hall and Ikenberry 2003; Jongerden 2007 pp. 15ff.).

In modern theorising on state formation, these key concepts of his have been further elaborated upon by Mann (1993 Chapter 3) with the aim of obtaining an operative and modern definition of what a state is. He suggests the following definition of it:

1. The State is a differentiated set of institutions and personnel
2. embodying centrality, in the sense that political relations radiate to and from a center, to cover a
3. territorially demarcated area over which it exercises 4. some degree of authoritative, binding rule making, backed up by some organized physical force.

(Mann 1993 p. 55).

If Weber was guided by a conviction, in regard to modern societies, that "obedience in virtue of belief in the justifiability of legality" of "rationally created rules" (Held 1992 p. 114; Weber 1972 p. 79), Mann complicates one of the basic principles in Weber's thinking on how modern states are constituted, namely Weber's argument that the monopoly of physical violence is pivotal if state power should be maintained. Mann comments: "Many historic states did not "monopolise" the means of physical force, and also in the modern state the means of physical force have been substantially autonomous from the rest of the state" (see Mann 1993 p. 55).

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<sup>27</sup> A good review of the major schools of state-formation theories is provided by Mann 1993 Chapter 3. See also Hall and Ikenberry 2003.

"Nation" is a far more ambiguous concept than that of "state". In order to understand its complexity adequately it can be illuminating to discuss its semantic meaning and its transformation. A glance in Collins English Dictionary provides one with the following, rather broad, definition:

- 1) an aggregation of people or peoples of one or more cultures, races etc. organized into a single state : the Australian nation
  - 2) a community of persons not constituting a state but bound by a common descent, language, history etc. the French-Canadian nation.
  - 3 a) a federation of tribes esp. the American Indians.
  - 3 b) the territory occupied by such a federation [via Old French from Latin *natio* birth, tribe from *nasc~1* to be born].
- (from Collins English Dictionary, Glasgow: 2000 p. 1035).

Thus nation is a concept having broad applications. On the one hand, nations can be confused with states, since the concept is used in order to signify a community based upon a territorial state. On the other hand, a nation may equally well be a community sharing certain traits and values, but not constituting a state. Finally, the term "nation" denote a tribe, both as a social and a territorial unit. Today, the concept possesses political connotations that it did not have from the beginning. As stated in the quotation above, the term nation, is derived from the Latin word *Nascor* (*Natio*), originally meaning "born" and indicating there to be a common descent or origin. The term appeared in ancient Rome, where it held a pejorative ring and was used to distinguish people from a certain geographic area that were seen as having a status below that of Roman citizens. In addition the term "nation" used in the sense of its meaning a group of foreign persons who were born in the same place. In the Middle Ages, the term nation was one used at universities for categorizing people originating from various geographical areas (Greenfeld 1992 pp. 3-9, Hobsbawm 1990 p. 14).

In time the term "nation" became increasingly frequently first equated with "people", and it has in recent centuries gradually come to mean "sovereign people", indicating an equating of nation, people and state. National identity, in its conventional contemporary use, should then mean membership or belonging to a certain "people" (Hobsbawm 1990 pp. 15-18; Eriksen 1993 p. 97; Greenfeld 1992 pp. 6-8; Smith 1986, 1991), and in addition a "people" that can be connected with a particular territory. The political meaning that the concept of nation has pertains not only to a territorial unity, but also to "popular sovereignty" and to "people of a common origin". Gradually "nation" as a loaned word, also acquired more or less the same meaning as the word "Volk" in the German language (Hobsbawm 1990 pp. 15ff.).

The term "ethnicity" shows many similarities with that of "nation". "Ethnicity" originates from the Greek word *Ethnikos*, which etymologically means "foreign people". Nowadays, the term has acquired connotations similar to those of 'nation'. The term was introduced in the English language in the mid-14th century and for a long time was used generally in the sense of meaning "heathen" or "pagan", but in the course of time it acquired racial connotations (O'Dell 2002; Eriksen 1993 pp. 3-4; Johansson 2000a). In the US, for example, "ethnic" in the period around the Second World War was used for "referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely British descent" (Eriksen 1993 p. 4).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the term came to be used more broadly than earlier, in its being used to replace the concept of "race". One of the intentions was to change the connotations of the term "people", so it would no longer purport "ties of kinship" but would instead refer to cultural belonging. The intention was that it should be associated simply with people's sharing a common culture with no connotation of race. It was assumed that the term "ethnicity" possessed more proper descriptive values. It is argued, however, by Gilroy (2000), for example, that allusions to "race" and "kinship" are still manifest in popular debates, as well as in academic discourses on ethnicity, culture and nationalism, its thus contributing to providing a picture of people based upon hereditary characteristics (Johansson 2000a; O'Dell 2002).

"Ethnicity" was long considered to be a phenomenon that stems from isolation, representing the view that "ethnic groups" are organised on the basis of cohesive cultural "units" or groups. This view has been more or less abandoned in modern theorising. Fredrik Barth (1969), who is one of the harshest critics of such an approach to "ethnicity", has observed in his fieldwork that "ethnic groups" are continuously in contact with one another. Eriksen (1993) points out that one of the focal points in his criticism is that: "First, a focus on the cultural uniqueness of ethnic groups wrongly presupposes that groups tend to be isolated. On the contrary, Barth suggests, shared culture may profitably be seen as an implication or result of a long-term social process, rather than as a primordial feature of groups" (Eriksen 1993 p. 37).

In addition, Barth draws attention to the fact that there tends to be a flow of people crossing the boundaries between most "ethnic groups", which in turn engenders cultural variations within and between groups. Thus, Barth's view that "ethnic groups" are essentially to be considered as social organisations (Barth 1969 p. 11; Eriksen 1993 p. 37). With that Barth rejects definitions of the term "ethnic groups" that are based on criteria or elements of "objective culture" (see, for example, Eriksen 1993 p. 12).

The concepts of "nation" and "ethnie", like those of "national identity" and "ethnicity" are often used reciprocally. There is no doubt that these concepts have many traits in common. Both "nations" and "ethnies" entail the establishment of a

dichotomization between "us" and "them". The idea is that belonging to "ethnies" and "nations" contributes to create a sense of community between the individuals in the group to build a common collective identity. At the same time, it is argued that through mechanisms that create shared cultural values and a sense of solidarity, a distinctiveness is created that helps people to separate themselves from other "ethnies" or "nations".

There is one major difference between these concepts, however, one that is generally recognised by researchers, namely that the political connotations commonly associated with "nation" and with "national identity", contrary to "ethnie" and "ethnicity", imply aspirations for independence, self-determination and political autonomy (see, for example, Eriksen 1993 pp. 7, 98-100; Johansson 2000a pp. 97-98). A nation being viewed as a community is not restricted to the political and administrative spheres only. Nations, or rather the idea of nations, permeates almost all spheres of modern societies, political, economic, cultural and social.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.4.3 Constructed, Imagined, Challenging

Contemporary scholars studying issues of nationalism largely agrees on an "instrumentalist" or "constructivist" approach to the phenomenon. According to this approach national identities are modern phenomena and "invented" affinities rather than natural ones. Yet very few scholars in the field are proponents of a "radical constructivism".

One of those who most clearly adhere to the position that nations are socially constructed entities is Ernest Gellner, who describes nations in terms of their being the artefacts of modern societies (Gellner 1983 p. 7). He consider nations in terms of contingencies, describing them as a time-bound phenomena attributed to the structural transformation of industrial society, which requires homogenous social entities. In Gellner's view nations are essentially created through the political project of the state, by nationalism and essentially from above:

Nationalism is not the awakening to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.

(Gellner 1964 p. 169).

National identities are thus based on shared cultures, although in the view of Gellner, cultures are created by the "will" of its members. As Gellner states:

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<sup>28</sup> In the following I will use the terms ethnie and nation interchangeably.

Initially there were two especially promising candidates for the construction of a theory of nationality: will and culture.

(Gellner 1983 p. 53, see also p. 7)

Gellner also points to arbitrariness as being a typical feature in national history writing. It is not that Gellner rejects the existence of historical-cultural units. His objection is directed against the earlier predominant idea that there is a continuity with earlier existing ethnic communities or old cultural communities. Rather, he considers modern nations to be constructed in order to suit the aims of modern nationalists, "historic facts", myths and cultural elements thus being intertwined in accounts of nationalism that are invented and arbitrarily composed. Gellner states polemically:

The cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred or patch would have served as well.

(Gellner 1983 p. 55)

Hence in Gellner's view a nation is *invented* and *fabricated*. Benedict Anderson (1991) takes a different modernist position inspired by post-modern perspectives in defining a nation as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" p. 6). A nation is *imagined* since it is impossible that all its members, even in the smallest of nations, are acquainted with or even have heard of each other. The nation unites members from the past, the present and the future. Hence, the nation must necessarily be something imagined. A nation is limited because it never includes all mankind, or as Anderson put it: "even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (Anderson 1991 p. 7).

One crucial aspect of Anderson's definition is that a nation is "imagined as a *community*" because it is a solidarity form capable of binding people together, despite inequalities and social divisions (ibid. p. 7). He draws our attention to the idea that any society larger than a small primordial one in which all inhabitants can meet face-to-face must necessarily be imagined. This is not only an issue of space, since the possibility of meeting other nationals also involves a time perspective. Anderson argues that since shared cultural values, such as the historical memories that link the past and the present, cannot be remembered, they must necessarily be *narrated*. Anderson shows how nations can be imagined in numerous ways, from different social positions in the same society, the "official national-

ism" implemented by the state representatives, and the "popular nationalism" initiated by the bourgeoisie (Anderson 1991 pp. 67ff., 83ff.).<sup>29</sup>

Anderson shares Gellner's view in maintaining that nations are modern, socially invented phenomena. However, his modernist lenses are different from Gellner's. Anderson is critical, at least as regards the use of historical memories in modern nation building processes. Whereas Gellner views nationalities being fabricated, Anderson consider them as being narrated. In my view, Andersons approach gives room to recognizing the importance of how people perceive of and practice nationality, and emphasizing the importance of how memories, events and the like are incorporated into nation building processes, and into shared collective meanings in history writing.

Anderson and Gellner both draw our attention to the circumstance that the elements that the nations consists of are socially invented and shifting. However, I find Gellner's argumentation to be problematical for three reasons at least. First, Gellner's theoretical point of departure is that nation building processes are necessarily implemented from above, which tend to make his analysis narrow-minded and state-centred. Secondly, Gellner's theorising is based mainly on an account of the European nation-building process. I find his conceptualisation of nation to be "static" and one-sided. Gellner provides an analysis of the social consequences of an emergent industrial society, but has no ambitions of looking beyond. Third, in line with that Gellner confines himself to considering the rational effects of nationalism as being "an offspring of industrialisation" (Jongerden 2007 p. 19), but tends to neglect its dark sides or, as Jongerden puts it, "appear to have missed out perhaps the most important of all 20<sup>th</sup> century facts, the Second World War and the Holocaust, the direct results of nationalism as expressed through the rise of fascism and its culmination in Nazism" (ibid. p. 19).

The definition of nations as "imagined communities" that Anderson provides, I would argue, can better serve as a useful analytical tool than Gellner's. It is open-ended and neutral, recognising both the political and cultural aspects of nations, without claiming that any particular elements need necessarily be included. Thus, Anderson's conceptualisation holds to general claims, with few defining attributes, that are easy to apply in analysing nations of the most shifting forms, whether they are based on "ethnic" or "civic" principles. Anderson's approach can be helpful for scrutinizing how nation-building processes are imagined by individual members of a nation, thus taking account both of objective and of subjective definitions, making it possible to reveal how the elements of a particular nation are composed. However, nations are paradoxical phenomena, their being both "universal" and

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<sup>29</sup> Compare with the discussion on popular proto-nationalisms and the government perspective on nationalism in Hobsbawm 1992 Chapters 2 and 3.

"particular" at the same time. In Anderson's approach, the specific historic circumstances are not accounted for.

Anthony D. Smith, who strongly emphasises the historical continuity of nations, argues that nationalism derives its force and its mobilising potential precisely from its "historical embeddedness" (Smith 1995 p. viii, 153). The theoretical position that Smith takes is sometimes labeled "perennialist," placing it in between the "essentialists/primordialist" and the "constructivists/instrumentalists" (Smith 1986, 1991, 1995; Guibernau 1996). In this view, the persistence of ethnicity in nation building processes is emphasised. Nations are seen as having their origins in 'ethnic cores', these providing a means of establishing a collective location, their existing long before the era of modernization. Consequently the old ethnic cultures inevitably become politicised in the modern world, a process that also implies a territorialisation of cultures (Smith 1986 pp. 155ff.).

Smith proposes that a nation should be defined by at least some of the following elements, "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for its members" (Smith 1991 p. 14).

Also, if nations are built on "ethnic cores" or "ethnies" as Smith also refers to them, they contain both "ethnic" and "civic" elements.<sup>30</sup> Smith points to the salient role that specific historical circumstances and particular experiences under which the nation-building process took shape play in people's perceptions of their national belonging. I agree with those who warn that Smith's theoretical approach has many shortcomings and contains many fallacies. I am critical of the idea that nations are chiefly built upon "ethnic cores" that long existed as "potential nations," since this is an assumption that inevitably leads to an essentialist position<sup>31</sup>. An advantage with Smith's theoretical approach, as compared with Anderson's, is that the incorporation of historical circumstances and experiences from the past that really took place are accounted for. A further important aspect of Smith's approach is that account is taken of the persistence of ethnic affinities that mainly extend through successive generations.

Indeed, as both Gellner and Anderson remarked, myths and legends, memories of events and personalities are retold in a selective way in nationalist discourses. This is a matter not rejected by Smith, however, he points out that what is most important is not whether historical accounts and memories are authentic, but their integrative purposes that matter. An important matter that cannot be neglected is that people perceive the shared historic memories and cultural values

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<sup>30</sup> Smith is influenced by Hans Kohn (1944) who originally introduced a model that makes a distinction between an "Eastern" and "Western" form of nation. This distinction has been criticised for example by Anderson (1991) and Guibernau (1996).

<sup>31</sup> This is discussed at length in Anderson (1991).

that constitutes their national belonging as being real rather than fabricated or invented. This, I think, is recognized in Smith's theoretical approach.

#### 2.4.4 Three Central Aspects of Long-Distance Nationalism

In this section I will outline three main aspects of nationalism that are recurrent in the literature and that I find crucial to our understanding of nationalist movements, be they long-distance nationalist movements or popular currents that develop as resistance movements within states or nationalisms created from above by governments. I will first argue that nationalism necessarily is guided by the idea of homogeneity, secondly, that nationalism is about creating and maintaining boundaries vis-à-vis imagined "others," and thirdly, that nationalism(s) are dynamic phenomena. Within every nationalist movement there is an ongoing discussion about who is allowed to represent the nation. Hence national belonging is continuously contested.

##### *2.4.4.1 A Vision of a "Homogeneous People"*

A central facet of nationalism is the idea that a nation consists of a homogeneous group of people sharing a common origin, their thus making claims to a common territory and history. Nationalism thus strives to create "a people" with a common origin, sharing a common history and linked to a common territory.

First, it creates a common history. In accordance with the rhetoric of nationalism it becomes important to show that the population has a history in common. Claims of historical continuity can be articulated in many ways. As was implied in the section above history writing has become one of the most important features of every nationalist movement. For these endeavours, nationalists make use of historical records, ancient myths, legends and cultures, although generally in a very selective way. Myths are created from legends and also from events that took place in the past, that might well be glorious or traumatic, such as periods of oppression or of migration. Personalities from the past or from mythology may be given the status of being heroes and become glorified. In nationalist accounts, events and personalities that are ranked as being prominent are often radically transformed to suit the purposes of the nationalist discourses of the day. In the course of time they can be replaced, erased or just fade away.

Another feature that often appears in nationalist accounts is the idea that a nation originates from prosperous societies or epochs in the past, in the Smith's terminology designated as "golden ages," that serve as "focal points of comparison with the present" (Smith 1986 p. 200). The memories preserved and reactivated from the Golden Age contribute to providing the population hope that the high status of the past will be recovered, and finally acquired once again. Memories of

the past constitute moral examples for the population (Smith 1986 pp. 22, 67; 1991 pp. 66, 126).

Secondly, nationalism creates its own myths which serve the purpose of justifying its legitimacy. These myths serve as instruments used by contemporary nationalists, and moreover also have explanatory values. The myths that accounts for the situation of the present, may serve to explain why the nation is suppressed, is glorious or is in a tense relation to a neighbouring country.

Third, nationalism creates common symbols and traditions purportedly derived from local popular cultures. Flags, coins, national hymens and festival days are symbols that often allude to ancient heritages, their representing the nation in modern times, together with sport events (Eriksen 1993 p. 10), and that have proved to serve as effective means in the construction of common heritages, values and culture that appeal to the whole strata of the population.

Fourth, nationalism aims at creating a shared culture, shared values and a sense of community. Gellner (1983 p. 34) emphasize that in modern industrial societies the educational institutions often play a major role in the socialization process of its members. Thus these institutions are crucial in the process of creating homogeneous societies. Anderson (1991 p. 97) and Hobsbawm (1990 p. 12) have discussed the significance of the vernaculars. In modern societies education needs to be provided in terms of vernacular languages if one is to speak of mass education at all. This is a difference from older times when persons belonging to the upper strata of society tended to be educated in Latin, Greek or French.

Finally, as Benedict Anderson (1991 p. 7) writes, "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship". Thus the aim of nationalism is to create a form of solidarity that bind people from all social classes and strata in a given community together. In this respect it is different from most other forms of collective belonging, such as for example "class", which is based on socio-economic divisions. Class is moreover appealing to internationalism in accordance with the motto, "workers all over the world, unite". Nationalism is ostensibly uniting the poorest of proletarians with the richest most landed ones in a given country (Anderson 1991 p. 7; Eriksen 1993 p. 102).

As Anderson and Smith point out, however, nationalism has in this respect certain affinity with religion. This becomes obvious as regards its capacity to bind together people from all society together. In turn this is explaining in part the strong mobilising potential that nationalism possesses (see Anderson 1991; Smith 1991, 1986). Anderson draws attention to that this, in turn being one of the problems of nationalism: "Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries for so many of millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly die for such limited imaginations." (Anderson 1991 p. 7).

Thus, a central feature in nationalism is that of the aspirations it creates for achieving a sense of solidarity and for creating shaping a "we" that is distinct from people belonging to other nations. Nationalism strives, through history writing,

myths, symbols, traditions and the initiation of common values that are viewed as "ours" to create a common past and present, providing its members with prospects of a common future. Thus, homogenisation is an important aspect of nationalism.

#### *2.4.4.2 Maintaining Boundaries*

The idea that nations consist of homogeneous populations implies that only a "particular" people are to be included in a nation. Thus, nations presuppose the existence of boundaries. Through history, myths, symbols, culture and shared values, typologies are created that help people hold them separate from other groups, creating a dichotomisation between "us" and "them."

National identities presuppose there to be other nations as well. Thus, one of the central facets of nationalism is to uphold boundaries against "the others", thus excluding some people at the same time as others are included. Maintaining boundaries becomes crucial in order to separate population groups from one another, whether it be national groups or ethnic.

One of the first to emphasize the role of boundaries in the articulation and maintenance of ethnic belongingness was Fredrik Barth (1969), who asserted that the ethnic belongingness persists also in multi-cultural environments and in processes of interdependence as a result of which interaction between groups, or between internal and external agents, does not lead to the elimination of any of the groups involved.

A central point in Barth's argumentation is that ethnicity is preserved and maintained by the very social processes that create boundaries against "the other". The boundaries and the processes of maintaining them determine and establish who is to be included in the group or excluded from it. These boundaries are neither given nor static, and are created through interaction between internal and external agents. Barth concludes that ethnic boundaries are always social but do not necessarily have territorial counterparts. Thus, Barth advocates that studies of ethnicity be directed at the boundaries and not at the cultural contents they surround (Barth 1969 p. 14).

The idea that the boundaries of ethnies and of nations are socially constructed, elastic and flexible, resulting in the contents included shifting in line with the political, social and cultural developments over time. Exactly where the boundaries run is a matter disputed incessantly.

Barth's research dealt with ethnic boundaries. As was just indicated, however, the difference between nation and ethnie is subtle, the mechanisms appearing to be similar, though in a nationalist context the borders are politicised. Maintaining boundaries is a central aspect of nationalism, since the process of creating a sense of community among those belonging to a nation is also exclusive of others (Anderson 1991; Billig 1999; Gellner 1983; Greenfeld 1992; Hobsbawm 1990; Smith 1991).

#### 2.4.4.3 *Contested Belonging*

Beneath the surface of the forced homogenisation inherent in nationalist ideologies, nations can be seen as often being highly heterogeneous, many questions being highly contested and disputed. Throughout history, most societies have been marked by significant social inequalities, thus being far more fragmented and heterogeneous in character than what is presumed to be the case in nationalist accounts. In reality, there are always grey zones and hatch-crossings to be considered in nation building projects, since people have always been crossing national borders, having migrated, or married across national borders, resulting in children who are the offspring of cross-national marriages, and the like.

For one thing, historically it has been widely observed that nationalism tends to be unevenly spread across various strata of a population, with the consequence that it often takes a long time before the entire population shares the conception of their belonging to a nation they have in common. Ideas of nationalism are often first embraced by intellectuals and within elitist circles, and thereafter come gradually to be supported by broader strata of the population, different popular movements successively developing (see, for example, Guibernau 1996; Hroch 1985; Hobsbawm 1990 p. 12; and Yapp 1996).

In addition, nationalism tends to be articulated and perceived in a myriad of different ways by various groups and individuals within the state simultaneously, among groups of people each perceiving of themselves as being a nation, or within a given nationalist movement. This aspect of nationalism has been commented on by Eric J. Hobsbawm who writes that "official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what is in the minds of people" (Hobsbawm 1990 p. 11).

Hobsbawm adds that national identities intersect with other forms of belonging, such as those of regional, gender, class. Thus, national identities are not a priori excluding in character, nor do they supersede other dimensions of people's belonging, such as class, gender, age, or regional or local considerations.

Nationalism, finally to be said, serve different purposes, those representing different groups and interests. It has been widely observed in Western Europe that nationalism can be implemented from above by the state authorities (Hobsbawm 1990). However, nationalism can also originate elsewhere, such as from vernacular movements and different interests that civil society involves. This has been demonstrated by Benedict Anderson who has shown how in Latin America for example the "popular nationalism" emanating from vernaculars has been challenged by "official nationalism" articulated by other social groups in society. Nationalism can be both an expression of a polyethnic ideology stressing shared civil rights, and equally well be an ideology stressing shared cultural origins. Eriksen points out too that, whereas some people within a given community considers themselves a nation and demand political rights, others within the same community may strive to limit their demands to cultural rights (Eriksen 1993 pp. 107, 118ff.; Guibernau 1996).

National belonging may also be situational, based on hierarchical structures and discrimination within a multi-cultural society. Harald Eidheim (1969) conducted field research among the Samis in a mixed Sami-Norwegian community in the coastland areas in Norway in the 1960s. He describes the Sami identity in these areas as being a stigmatized identity. As an outsider in the small fishing village where he stayed it took a long time before people took him into confidence and spoke openly with him about their Samic identity. In public spaces all spoke Norwegian with a local accent and could not from appearances easily be distinguished from their Norwegian neighbours. The dominant view in the surrounding society was that Sami culture was inferior to Norwegian, described as being "primitive, backward, stupid and dirty by the dominant Norwegians" (Eidheim 1969 p. 51). In the private sphere, in their homes together with their family and with other Samis, they habitually spoke Samic.

Thus, the Samis in the coastal areas "undercommunicated" their Samic identities in public situations, at the same time as they "overcommunicated" their Norwegian belongingness in presenting themselves as Norwegians to others (ibid. p. 53).

A question to be posed in this context is that of when national identities become important. Empirical studies have shown that national identities often becomes more important for people, and grow stronger, in situations in which they are challenged or threatened. In connection with the conflicts that developed in former Yugoslavia, peoples' identities as Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks and Slovenians became stronger after the ethnic cleansing started than they had been before the wars (Eriksen 1993; Povrzanovic-Frykman 2001).

Nations are thus continuously in a state of flux, nation building processes necessarily being dynamic and contested fields. This is highlighted by Montserrat Guibernau for example who writes: "If the symbols that represents the nation receive a completely fixed, restricted and confined interpretation, they will probably die and become "empty shells" of fragmentary memories" (Guibernau 1996 p. 81).

#### 2.4.5 Summary of the Section

Nationalism appears in highly differing forms ranging from radical liberation movements to conservative extremist movements, can be guided by ethnic and cultural or political overtones, and can originate either from state structures or from popular movements. Nationalism can thus be understood as a conception of belonging to a socio-cultural community that has political aspirations, one that separates it from other nations through the creation of homogenisation.

I argue in theoretical terms in favour of an anti-essentialist position, one of there being no cultural matters or components that constitutes nations, the cultural matters and components instead shifting. Thus, nations can be regarded as imag-

ined communities. It is important to note however, that for the men and women who see themselves as belonging to a nation, national identities are real and not simply fabricated. Rather, historical memories of nations are neither fabricated nor simply narrated but real. Thus, historical events and conjunctures, and perceptions of ethnic identities transgressing generations, should not be neglected. For example, a majority of the Kurdish refugees included in the present study had been told by their parents and their grandparents of the atrocities that Kurds had been exposed to in the early years of the Turkish Republic. Memories themselves are essentially based on real and lived experiences, but when narrated they can be adapted to suit current needs. Narratives do not just come out of the blue, but are usually based on real events, yet memories of even the very recent past may be partly neglected and new details added. This can affect contemporary Kurdish national identities. The next generation of Kurds may tell narratives differently and thus affect future Kurdish national identity constructions in line with this. Imaginations of the homeland and maintenance of boundaries, enclosing "us" and excluding "others", are crucial to the construction of national identity.

## 2.5. Closing of the Chapter

In this chapter I have discussed the concepts of "political generation", "diaspora" and "long-distance nationalism".

First, I have explored the notion of generations in a sociological sense, on basis above all of the theories of Karl Mannheim, and have pointed out that the formation of sociological generations revolves around the experiencing of historical, social and political processes that essentially take place in the formative years of the members of a generation. To become an 'actual' generation, in the terminology of Mannheim, it is necessary that its members come together following common experiences that they have had - these thus sharing a common destiny. From the theoretical perspectives on generations provided above I draw the conclusion that, to become a political generation in this sociological sense, a generation needs to develop a common repertoire of actions and a common consciousness. It was noted by Karl Mannheim (1952) that a sociological generation is unified by sentiments, actions, ideas and attitudes (ibid. p. 291). A sociological generation often take shape on the basis of a common collective memory, a cultural trauma or through a long and complex process following a sequence of events that are critical to their creation of social identities and a repertoire of actions appropriate. To become a political generation a generation needs to actively respond to or resist certain social and political conditions of their time (Edmunds and Turner 2002 p. 16). This is important to consider, I would argue, in studying a political generation

of Kurds that became exiled. Equally important to consider is how these generational experiences contributed to the diaspora.

Secondly, I have explored the concept of diaspora in terms of its being a useful tool to employ for understanding the ideas concerning the Kurdish diaspora manifest in a generation of political refugees.

I argue in favor of a social constructivist position. Hence, I understand a diaspora as a network or an imagined social formation of people, perceiving themselves as being co-ethnics, who maintain relations across state borders. Like Brubaker (2005), and Sökefeld (2006), I find it appropriate to consider a diaspora as a stance, involving them to whom diasporic identities and strategies are important. In the line with Brubaker, I argue that "dispersion", "homeland" and "boundary maintenance" are being central traits to consider in conceptualising and analysing a diaspora. I use the term in a connotative sense. As such the term is useful for analysing and exploring the problems and the lives of refugees, and of de-territorialized and displaced people generally.

The view taken here is that diaspora as being a social form not can be separated from diaspora as being a consciousness. Rather these must be conflated.

A diaspora is simultaneously more or less triadic and more or less transnational. In line with Björklund (1993) I consider people belonging to a certain diasporic community as being both "connected" and "differentiated". First, they are "connected" because they organise for the same purposes across state boundaries. Secondly, it must be taken into consideration that diasporas are "differentiated" stances, sometimes divided social formations. Diasporic identities are constructed in a myriad of various contexts regarding for example class, gender and geographic location. The members of a diaspora may respond differently to various issues and problems of concern for the diaspora.

The third concept is that of long-distance nationalism. This perhaps merits an explanation since use of the term nationalism by no means represents any attempt to equate directly the concept of a diaspora with that of a nation. The intention is rather, as Abdelhady (2011) notes, to indicate "a process of forging an identity that connects the past to the present within complexities of migration and multiculturalism" (p. 178).

Long-distance nationalism created by migrants residing outside the imagined homeland are never to be equated with nationalist movements that develop inside these countries, not even when re-constructed among exiles (Olson and Wahlbeck 2007). Long-distance nationalism contains many components that are similar to those that constitute nationalism. In the study of a political generation such as the one considered here, the fact that long-distance nationalism contains components in common with those of nationalism is important to consider. In this chapter I have defined and taken up ideas regarding the vision of a homogeneous people, boundary maintenance and a sense of belonging as being important components to consider. In addition I have argued in favour of a social constructivist approach, in

line with Anderson (1991) in considering nations as being imagined. In the chapters that follow I will employ these concepts in defining and describing the political generation of interest here and in contextualising the experiences around which the generation is organized and having become politicized. Thus, it should be borne in mind that the generation of concern here was a political one. It was a generation that responded actively to the conditions of their time. The Swedish scene from which the narratives are told is nested in a complex transnational one, continuously changing and highly challenging.



## Part II

# The Modern Turkish Republic, The Kurdish Question and The Emergence of a Political Generation

We were the sons and daughters of ... so to speak ... analphabet parents, we began school and learned, first ABC, but also things that made us discover that we did not want to be treated the way they had been.

(V)

As V describes it in this account, the generation of concern here was different from that of its parents and of its grandparents, its being a generation of resistance and protest. Those in this generation tended to be better educated than their parents had been. They came in contact with one another very much in urban spaces in Turkey. They emerged during a specific period and in a specific spatial context, their commitment to the Kurdish cause being conditioned by the specific socio-economic and political developments of their time. They spent what Mannheim has termed their "formative years" in Turkey, a state that a few decades before they were born was founded on the remnants of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. In later parts of the thesis we will see how some of their accounts were informed in part by memories transmitted and told by their parents and grandparents, involving dramatic events and conjunctures that took place during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire and in the early years of the Turkish Republic. This part of the thesis is devoted to these historical socio-political developments, and aims at providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the conjunctures, settings and developments that influenced the political generation in question. It consists of three chapters. Chapter 3, which is the most historical one, concerns the political developments and the situation of the Kurds in the late Ottoman Empire and during the period when the modern state of Turkey was established. During this period, the aspirations the Kurds had for an independent Kurdish state were crushed for a very long time to come. Chapter 4 deals with the early decades of this mod-

ern Republic, with particular emphasis being placed on political and ideological developments, the Kurdish resistance during this period and the repression that followed. The very existence of Kurds in Turkey was to be denied and harsh assimilation politics carried out. Chapter 5 provides a brief overview of the political developments in Turkey during the decades following the emergence of the political generation of Kurds in Turkey that were active at some time during the period of 1960-1980. This is the Kurdish political generation of our central concerns here. The chapter chronicles the political organisations they established as well as the political and symbolic resistance they carried out. The account is complemented by a discussion of Kurdish politics and the Turkish governments' responses during the decades following the coup that took place in 1980. In this sense, the chapter provides a framework for the Kurdish activism that developed in diasporic settings, activism that can be considered to in part have been a response to these developments.

# Chapter 3

## Becoming Marginalized: From Ottoman Empire to Turkish State

### 3.1 Introduction

The Ottoman Empire was the homeland of many people. The Kurds resided within its borders together with Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Assyrian, Jews, Greek and several other religious and ethnic communities. According to most historical records, the Ottoman authorities was, as compared with the authorities in many other states, relatively tolerant toward minority groups. It was not an egalitarian state, however.<sup>32</sup> Equality before law was not even an ideal, for example, and people were treated differently, depending on which ethnic, religious or social group they belonged to (see, for example, Zürcher 2004 p. 14).

In the Ottoman Empire, power was concentrated in Muslim hands, the religion of Islam being seen as the cement that held the state together and justified a collective identity, its forming the basis for people's loyalty to the state. The Empire was governed by the Sultan, who also was given the title of "Caliph<sup>33</sup> of all Muslims on Earth and the Protector of the Two Holy Cities (Mecca and Medina)".<sup>34</sup> The Caliph had the symbolic meaning of being the representative of the Prophet on earth. In practice, however, the power acquired by the Sultan was derived from the material political reality at hand, the rulers of the Empire generally having to set the interests of the state above Islamic interests (Hourani 1990 p. 251; Karpát 2001 p. 241-243).

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<sup>32</sup> The Ottoman State can be considered as a "traditional" empire, different in structure, from the modern state formations described in Chapter 2. I reject, however, the strict and somewhat rigid distinction some scholars make between "traditional" and "modern" in studies of the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim societies (cf. Gellner 1981); for a different view see Karpát 2001.

<sup>33</sup> The term Caliph is derived from the Arabic *halifat rasuli-llah*, the successor to the prophet (Karpát 2001 p. 241).

<sup>34</sup> Karpát 2001 p. 65.

Christian, Jew and Zoroastrian people were considered to be "the people of the book" or dhimmi people. Theoretically speaking, this meant that they were protected by the state. In practice, they were given a limited degree of autonomy in exchange for the payment of a special tax. There was also a more sophisticated system of self-administration in the form of the millet<sup>35</sup> system, essentially administered at the local level (Hourani 1992 pp. 268; 275-276; Poulton 1997 p. 43; Zürcher 2004 p. 11).

The Ottoman Empire has been considered too have been different from the contemporary Habsburg and Romanov Empires in its lacking an ethnic or cultural core (Karpas 2001 pp. 357ff.). Although the Turks were certainly the dominant ethnic group, they were not given a priority to power. For example, a large part of the administrators in the military and in the bureaucracy were technically speaking slaves stemming from the Balkans. Osmanlı, the language spoken in elite circles can be considered to be a mixed language, since it reflected the Persian and the Arabic worlds in its vocabulary to a considerable extent.

### 3.2. Tightened State Control

Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman authorities began to intervene in the relative autonomy enjoyed by the feudal Kurdish chieftains. Gradually, the imperial power loosened its grip in Europe, the Empire crumbling at the fringes. External threats came rather notably from the Western powers. French, British and Dutch inroads were made in the form of increasing numbers of missionaries and merchants, the establishment of foreign consulates, not only in Istanbul but also in Van in Eastern Turkey, and the introduction of new educational institutions, all of this challenging the Ottoman authorities, not only militarily and politically but also in the economic and ideological spheres. In addition, Russia was encroaching on the northeastern frontiers of the Empire, allegedly establishing bonds with the Christian minorities, the Armenians and the Nestorians that inhabited the area thus threatening the Ottomans. Throughout the century, the Kurdish-dominated lands became the scene of both the "Ottoman-Russian" (1828-29, 1877-78) and the "Ottoman-Persian"<sup>36</sup> wars, resulting in enormous suffering of the population in the form of destruction, pillages and the plagues of all other forms that come with war.

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<sup>35</sup> *Millet* is a term that signifies the self-administration or self-rule of a community. Sometimes millet has been translated as "people" or "nation".

<sup>36</sup> Referring to several conflicts between 1514-1823.

The period between 1839 and 1871 (according to some sources until 1876) is known as *Tanzimat*, meaning literally reorganisation. During this period, a set of reforms was implemented aimed at modernising and centralising the Ottoman state power. These reforms were essentially carried out in the areas of bureaucracy and administration, taxation and conscription. In 1876 a new Sultan, Abdül Hamit II, assumed office. His policies seemed at first sight to go in a direction opposite of his predecessors. Zürcher (2004 p. 78), for example, describes the direction of the new sultan's politics as being a "continuation of the Tanzimat" or even a "caricature" of the period, and at the same time "a break with the past". The sultan carried out a number of measures that proved to be decisive for the social transformation of Kurdistan. First, he abolished the constitution and also replaced the modernising reforms undertaken by his predecessors by a "pan-Islamic" policy.

Secondly, one of the most important measures he took in order to master the Kurdish chieftains was the establishment of the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments (*Hamidiye Sürvarı Ayları*), in 1890. These irregular forces, modelled after the Russian Cossacks, were purportedly aimed at suppressing nationalist sentiments in the Armenian population. Selected Sunni Kurdish tribes that had proved to be loyal to the Sultan earlier were to be included into the new cavalry, consisting of irregular forces of about 600 men each, that were to be dispersed except when they were called for. This resulted in the power of certain Kurdish chieftains increasing considerably. According to White (2000 p. 46) it was mostly the Sunni Kurds that benefited from the system whereas the Alevis became marginalised.

From the perspective of the chieftains, the Sultan worked as a protector who granted them independent positions (Klein 2007 p. 141). It has been argued that in some cases the Hamidiye regiments were provided with a high degree of immunity, so that neither the civil administration nor military authorities had the capacity to control them. A Kurdish tribal chief appointed to head a Hamidiye cavalry also was invited to send his sons to tribal schools in Istanbul and Kurdistan. Thus, the Kurds included in these irregular forces were expected to become incorporated into the Ottoman state structure (Klein 2011, see also McDowall 1996 p. 59).

Olson (1989) argues that the establishment of the Hamidiye Light Cavalries had both positive and negative effects on the emerging Kurdish nationalism. First, among the negative effects that Olson points out is that of the Hamidiye contributing to the exacerbation of intra-tribal hostilities, that in turn strengthened tribalist tendencies and undercut the possibilities of a unified Kurdish community. Secondly, one of the positive effects was that the Hamidiye Light Cavalries brought large numbers of Kurds into contact with modern political ideas, and provided many Kurds with knowledge of military technology and with military equipment and with capabilities of using it. In addition, the presence of the Hamidiye contributed to a "reduction" in the power of the sheikhs (Olson 1989 pp. 7-14; White 2000 p. 63).

Most observers agree that the formation of the Hamidiye Light Cavalries contributed to fueling the growing social unrest in the area. Klein (2007) describes, on the basis of her research in the Ottoman archives, the creation of these irregular regiments as being "one of the worst kind of abuses committed by the Hamidian regime" (ibid. p. 141). In addition she points out that the Hamidiye chiefs were involved in several criminal activities that the authorities tended to turn a blind eye to, such as "murder, raids and land-grabbing" (Klein 2007 p. 141). In particular, the Hamidiye Light Cavalries have been blamed for several anti-Armenian atrocities, such as the Sasun massacre in 1894 in which 1,000 Armenian villagers are reported to have perished, and the massacres in 1896 in which the Hamidiye Cavalries were used against the Armenians.

### 3.3 The Kurdish Sheiks

A decisive phenomenon in the early Kurdish nationalist movement was that of the Sheikhs. In Kurdistan, two Sufi orders, the *Naqshbendiyya*<sup>37</sup> and the *Qadiriyya*, were dominant during the decades before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Around the year 1800 only two Qadiri dynasties had been dominant in the area (van Bruinessen 1992 p. 220). Both these families had a *seyyid*,<sup>38</sup> meaning that they regarded themselves as descendants of the Saint who founded the order.<sup>39</sup> These sheikh families were rich and owned considerable land, together with herds of animals. Some of its members had obtained status as ulema, which gave them a very influential position both religiously and politically (van Bruinessen 1992 p. 220).

Traditionally, the mirs had had the power and ability to maintain law and order within the borders of their emirate, and had worked as mediators between conflicting tribes or tribal sections. The new Ottoman administrators were able to rule in the towns but could never exert control in the countryside without making reprisals. Van Bruinessen (1992) writes that power then went through a process of "devolution" as many Kurdish fiefdoms disintegrated (p. 195). The Sufi sheikhs

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<sup>37</sup> The Naqshbendi order has been in evidence in Kurdistan and in Turkey until present times. It is probably one of the most widespread and influential Sufi orders presently existing in the world.

<sup>38</sup> A *saayyid*, is a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed.

<sup>39</sup> Sayyids from these both families regarded themselves as being descendants of the famous saint Shaikh Abdul Qadir al-Gilani (1077-1166) that once had founded the order (see Edmonds 1957 p. 63; see also McDowall 1996 pp. 50-53).

became, by virtue of their positions, the only actors then who were able to mediate in inter-tribal disputes and to mobilise people across tribal boundaries (van Bruinessen 1984 p. 286). Another matter that van Bruinessen mentions is the Land Code of 1858, from which people from the upper strata of Kurdish society, including land proprietors, aghas, and sheikhs together with merchants, could benefit (van Bruinessen 1992 p. 233). All of these internal developments contributed to fueling unrest and conflicts within the area. After the Congress of Berlin in 1878,<sup>40</sup> the Ottoman Empire lost nearly 80 % of its European domains. There were decisive external factors that contributed to the staggering political climate of the time. Great Britain occupied the provinces of Bagdad and Basra.<sup>41</sup>

The Ottoman authorities allegedly suspected that Russia had heightened nationalist feelings among the Armenians based on demands by Christians.<sup>42</sup> This led to relations between Christians and Muslims becoming increasingly tense.

One of the major Kurdish rebellions that broke out in 1880 in the area of Nehru at the Ottoman-Persian border under leadership of Sheikh Ubayd Allah, aimed at uniting the Ottoman and the Persian Kurds illustrates this. The sheikh revolted on behalf of self administration and Islam. This rebellion has by some scholars been labelled as, "the first stage of a greater consciousness of Kurdish nationalism" (Olson 1989 p. 1; see also Olson 1992; Jwadih 1960 pp. 215, 225).<sup>43</sup> The rhetorics and idioms used by the sheikh is full of allusions to nationalism and to ideas of a Kurdish distinctiveness. In a often cited message, once sent to the British Consul-General in Persia, William Abbott in Tibriz in Persia, the Sheikh writes:

The Kurdish nation ... is a people apart. Their religion is different (from that of others), and their laws and customs are distinct ... the Chiefs and Rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan, one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on in this way with the two Governments [Ottoman and Qajar], and that necessarily something must be done,

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<sup>40</sup> The Berlin Congress 1878 was a meeting between leading statesmen from the Ottoman Empire and the leading major European Powers. The meeting resulted in the Empire losing more than 20 per cent of its territories (see Zürcher 2004 p. 80).

<sup>41</sup> Baghdad and Basra are presently provinces of Iraq.

<sup>42</sup> In Western Europe and the US, concern for the Christian minorities in these areas increased in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hence a growing number of missionaries were sent to northwest Asia. Relief organisations to support the Armenians and the Nestorians were established in many European countries.

<sup>43</sup> Here attention should be directed at the fact that the use and meaning of the term "nationalism" has been changing, also in academic circles.

so that European Governments having understood the matter, shall inquire into our state. We also are a nation apart. We want our affairs to be in our own hands.

(as quoted by McDowall, 1996 p. 53)

### 3.4 The Kurds in Istanbul

Fazlhashemi (1998) draws our attention to the fact that at around 1900 Istanbul was a city considered by many in the Muslim world to be, "a window towards Europe" (ibid. p. 71). Its being at the same time the political and the commercial center of the Ottoman State, Istanbul attracted people from every corner of the empire and from the countries surrounding. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the urban setting of Istanbul gradually became a new arena for public actions by the Kurds. It was in Istanbul where many of the intellectuals and learned people in Western Asia of those days first encountered ideological and political thoughts and currents that were brought in from Europe, such as those of nationalism, liberalism and positivism, as well as such inventions as the printing press, journalism and newspapers just to mention a few. In the decade preceding the First World War, an estimated number of 30,000 Kurds were residing in the city (McDowall 1996 p. 93), among them were members of the deposed prince's families, sons both of the agha's and of many wealthy sheikhs. A great many Kurds were educated in the schools or military academies of the Empire, and many of these heirs of the Kurdish aristocracy of the time obtained prominent positions in the ranks of the state administration and of universities and took up such positions as those of lawyers, engineers and journalists (Kendal 1979a p. 34; McDowall 1996 pp. 49ff.).

Early in the 20th Century there was widespread discontent with the Ottoman regime. In July 1908 a constitutional revolution by the Young Turk Movement was carried out, the *Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)* seizing power. The Sultan was then forced to reinstate the constitution and the parliament, both of which had been suspended for 30 years (Ahmad 1993 p. 55; van Bruinessen 1992 p. 270; Poulton 1997 pp. 69-70, p. 86; Zürcher 2004 Chapter 8; Pope and Pope 1997 p. 33), the Sultan's power being circumscribed accordingly. When the constitution was reinstated it was a measure welcomed among the urban intellectual Kurds in Istanbul. Concomitant with this the Hamdiye regiments were disbanded, although they were soon to be reorganised. The political climate in the Empire had become tense, political opposition being prohibited. Still, several oppositional groups were formed in Istanbul and were inspired to open oppositional clubs and societies throughout the Empire, as well as among exiles residing in the major Western European capitals (van Bruinessen 1992 pp. 270ff.; McDowall 1996 p. 91, 99; Yapp 1996; Zürcher 2004 pp. 93ff.).

### 3.5 The Political Vacuum

In the era of relative liberalisation that followed the seizure of power by the Young Turk regime in 1908, the first Kurdish nationalist organisations were formed and a number of journals were published. Already in 1879 a magazine that can be regarded as being "Kurdish" was edited by Mihdad BedrKhan. That journal had first been published in Cairo but could in the Young Turk Spring could be printed in Istanbul for a short period. The journal was a bilingual one, publishing articles in Kurdish and in Turkish on largely cultural and educational issues. Because of political circumstances, the editors were forced to leave the country, the publishing of the journal then having to continue abroad, first in Geneva and then in England (Klein 2011 pp. 123-125; McDowall 1996 p. 90).

However, political mobilisation along ethnic lines seems to have been only one of the many possible responses to the transformation process that Ottoman society underwent (Klein 2007; see also Natali 2002 pp. 1ff.). A majority of the members of the organisations and clubs in Istanbul were aristocrats and notables, the Kurdish political scene in Istanbul being dominated by two of the Kurdish dynasties. The Kurdish nationalism that emerged in this period may be considered a proto-nationalist one (cf. Guibernau 1996; Hobsbawm 1990; Hroch 1986) It was mainly people from the aristocracy, together with intellectuals who became organised, the Kurdish clubs and societies attracting only few people outside these circles, their never being transformed into a mass movement. The nationalism during that period was articulated essentially in terms of cultural markers and made no territorial claims. Some sources indicate that people from the lower social strata in the Kurdish community in Istanbul were also attracted to the nationalist groups:

For instance, the *murids* of the Khalidi branch of the Naqshibandiyya, and the porters (*hammal*) of the Ottoman capital, usually Kurds, were known to be "close to Kurdish nationalism" and as such were feared by the inhabitants.

(Bozarlsan 2003b p. 166)

### 3.6 Political and Social Challenges

Ottoman society underwent enormous social transformations in the period between 1912 and 1923. The country was devastated by the war, large areas lay in ruins, and people were uprooted and had suffered very much from atrocities, from the winter cold and from epidemics. In addition, the country had been plagued in the decades prior to the war, by internal discontent and social tensions (Mango 1999 p. 347). Greek community there was largely eliminated through emigration of those

belonging to it. In 1914, an estimated number of 1.8 million Greeks were residing in what today is Turkey. Emigration among the Greeks had started in 1912 and continued intermittently in the years that followed. It culminated after the Greek occupation of Izmir<sup>44</sup> and the destruction of the city in 1922. It is estimated that by 1923 there were only 400,000 Greeks still remaining in the country (Keyder 1987 p. 31). At the same time as the Greeks were leaving the country in large numbers, there was a considerable inflow of Muslims from, the former Ottoman territories in the Balkans, above all (Yapp 1996 p. 150).

The destiny of the Armenians was far more terrible than that of the Greeks. The Armenians were eliminated through extensive deportations and cycles of persecution that culminated in the genocide in 1915. Officially, Turkey denies that the CUP government was responsible for the atrocities that took place in the Armenian areas.<sup>45</sup> Thus even today, the partial annihilation of the Armenian population remain a controversial matter in Turkey, the numbers of Armenians killed are also being disputed. According to public Turkish figures, about 200,000 - 300,000 Armenians died in the war (see, for example, Mann 2004 p. 140; Pope and Pope 1997; Zürcher 2004 p. 115).<sup>46</sup> Turkish officials also assert that most of them died from the winter cold and from hunger, or when participating in combat. Armenian historians, on the other hand, allege that as many as 1,5 million were killed. The sociologist Michael Mann suggest a plausible estimation to be that 1,2 – 1,5 million Armenians were killed during the war (Mann 2004 p. 140).

The Kemalist regime had also to deal with an unstable and destituted economy. The Ottoman state had been bankrupt for decades, and extensive loans from the European banks were unable to be repayed. Accordingly the Ottoman state was placed under the to control of the European powers (Ahmad 1993 pp. 28ff.; Zürcher 2004 p. 42, pp. 84-85).

The country was industrialised only to a very limited extent, a vast majority of the population residing in rural areas, its being estimated that only about a quarter of the population were town dwellers (Jafar 1976 p. 44). Before the war, trade and various parts of the industrial sector were dominated by the Ottoman minorities, such as Greeks, Armenians and foreigners from other countries, most of these persons later emigrating or being expelled from the Ottoman lands (Yapp 1996 p. 148).

When the leaders of the Ottoman Empire realised that their position vis-à-vis the Major Powers in Europe was weakening, their policy became one to eliminating

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<sup>44</sup> At this time the official name of the city Izmir was Smyrna.

<sup>45</sup> Also a well reputed Turkey expert such as Stanford J. Shaw denies the CUP governments' responsibility in the extermination of the Armenians.

<sup>46</sup> Zürcher (2004) asserts: "Between 600,000 and 800,000 deaths seems most likely" (p. 115).

the independence of the peripheral areas and concentrating powers in Istanbul. In Kurdistan the *mirs*, the princes of the emirates, had been granted a relatively high degree of independence. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century their independence was circumscribed. The strategy of the regime was to integrate these principalities into the Ottoman state structure. The Kurdish fiefs were replaced by governor officials appointed by the Ottoman authorities. These governors were not able to keep law and order, neither to take a conciliatory role in local conflicts. The consequence was that the Kurdish emirates gradually disintegrated and abolished.

### 3.7 Kurdish Nationalist Aspirations

The end of the First World War marked a new era for the Kurds. First, a new geo-political situation developed, the period from October 1918 to June 1919 presenting the Kurds with their best opportunity ever to set up their own national state.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, the political activism of the Kurds in Istanbul can be distinguished from that in previous periods, since the first time demands for Kurdish independence were formulated (Bozarslan 2003a pp. 21ff.). According to Olson (1992), the creation of an independent Kurdish state would have been possible until 1921. He points out that Great Britain argued in favour of an independent Kurdish body as long as it coincided with their political interests.

In the wake of the war, nationalist sentiments flared up again among the Kurds in Istanbul. Efforts were made then by prominent Kurdish personalities to reconstitute the old Kurdish organisations, *The Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kürd Teyalii Cemiyeti)* being founded. Aristocrats and "intellectuals", such as the BedrKhan family and Sheikh Abdulkadr, the son of Sheikh Ubayd Allah, still constituted the core of its members. However many observers emphasize that the urban middle class and tribal chiefs were much more involved than what they had been ten years earlier (McDowall 1996 p. 123; White 2000 p. 67).

Bozarslan (2003a) describes the organisation as being "distinguished from earlier Kurdish organisations in the late Ottoman Empire by the claim to national independence and statehood made by some of its members" (ibid. p. 21), and often by its being a "passive receiver" and "active user" of "Western ideas", since it was infused with the same ideological ideas as the Young Turk Movement (ibid. pp. 22-26).

Kurdish nationalism developed in response to Armenian and Turkish nationalism, its involving the same components and being inspired by the same ideological

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<sup>47</sup> This is further discussed in Olson 1991, 1992, 1996.

thoughts. However, the Kurdish nationalism of this period remained marginalised, limited to a relatively small circle of Kurdish dignitaries, it never developed into a mass movement. At the end of this period Kurdish activism declined. Factionalism, personal rivalries and antagonism cut through the major Kurdish organisation in Istanbul.

Bozarslan (2003b) cites three main reasons for Kurdish nationalism remaining weak during this period. First, the Kurds in Istanbul did not have a clear political programme. Within the ranks of Kurdish society there were some who advocated the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, the BedrKhans, for example. Still others, such as Abdulkadir, the president of the organisation, argued in favour of a Kurdish autonomy within the frontiers of the Turkish state, and finally there were a few who supported a future political integration with the Turks (ibid. pp. 168-170).

Secondly, the Kurds were still regarded as a "legitimate component" of Ottoman and Turkish society, "Kurdishness" being a term perceived by the majority as an alternative expression of Ottoman or Muslim belongingness. Accordingly, the attitude among the Istanbul Kurds toward the possibility of an independent Kurdish state could in some respects at least be depicted as "ambivalent". For example Kamuran BedrKhan remembered later: "The majority had one foot in the Kurdish Camp and the other in the Ottoman-Islamic establishment – they wanted to become ministers" (Kutschera 1979 p. 26). Hence, for the vast majority of Kurdish dignitaries "statehood did not represent a priority" (Bozarslan 2003b p. 170).

Third, Bozarslan draws attention to the fact that the Kurdish leaders were "alarmed at the prospect of the formation of an Armenian state" (Bozarslan 2003b p. 171). At this time, the Major Powers in Europe were rather concerned about the situation of the Christian minorities in Anatolia, and in particular of the Armenians after the extermination of 1915 in particular. Protection of the Armenians was given high priority by the Western Powers. Thus supporting the establishment of an Armenian state had become a "sine qua non condition for the formation of a Kurdish state" (Bozarslan 2003b p. 171).

Finally the Kurds elected an "exile", General Sherif Pasha, the former Ottoman ambassador to Stockholm, to head the Kurdish delegation in the peace negotiations in Sèvres.<sup>48</sup> In Paris Sherif Pasha prepared a document, *Memorandum sur les Revendications du peuple Kurde*, together with maps of Kurdistan, that were sent to other delegations and governments. However, he did not represent a united Kurdish front, the Kurdish position being weak, the final solution presented in the

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<sup>48</sup> Sherif Pasha was forced to leave his post as ambassador in Stockholm in 1908 since it became known that he was involved with exile groups oppositional to the Sultan.

Treaty of Sèvres being considered "a half measure" by many of the Kurdish activists. All in all, three different standpoints within the Kurdish camp in Istanbul, could be distinguished. The first was "Turkish-Kurdish" and "pan-islamistic" in character, influenced by the Turkish nationalists and employed by them to propagate an anti-British atmosphere in Kurdistan.

The second standpoint was more pro-British, its supporting the idea of autonomy, this strategy was supported among others by Abdulkadir. Finally, there was a current under the leadership of the emir Emin BedrKhan that propagated for a totally independent Kurdistan (Kutschera 1979 p. 27; McDowall 1996 pp. 134). Others inside the Kurdish camp supported the politics of "Muslim fraternity" promoted by Mustafa Kemal. At the time of the Peace negotiations, Abdulkadir and BedrKhan rejected the map of Kurdistan that Sherif Pasha presented at the Conference (Natali 2005 p. 77). Distrusted by both the Kurdish factions, he finally resigned from his post, the Kurds thus being left without a representative when the treaty was to be forged (McDowall 1996 p. 134).

In the course of the nineteenth century relations between the religious communities had deteriorated. A number of developments coincided in producing these tensions (Poulton 1997 pp. 65ff.; Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 32-35; Zürcher 2004 pp. 82). There was a growing discontent among different Christian groups, mainly in the European provinces, that had never been fully integrated into the Ottoman society. With this, latent conflicts and local disputes came to the fore. Local uprisings were often supported by the various European governments, these resulting in a loss of provinces and in the establishment of the new independent states of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia in 1878. Serbia and Romania became independent after the Congress of Berlin 1878, whereas Cyprus was leased to Britain (Holt et. al 1970 pp. 359ff.; Hourani 1992; Mango 1999 pp. 10ff.).

In the aftermath of the First World War the Ottoman Empire finally collapsed. The political map of the Middle East was then redrawn, several new state formations being created. In 1920 the peace negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Sèvres. In accordance with this Treaty, the Ottoman territory was to be partitioned between France, Britain, Italy and Greece. Section III of the Treaty included the articles 62-64, which stipulated that independent Kurdish and Armenian states should be established north of Lake Van in the territories today belonging to Turkey (Hurewitz 1956 p. 74). However, the Treaty of Sèvres remained unratified and was replaced in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne, which finally recognised the establishment of an independent Turkish state in the areas of Rumelia<sup>49</sup> and Anatolia. In the new Treaty, all promises of independence for Kurds and Armenians had been removed, thus eliminating for long time to come any possibility of creat-

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<sup>49</sup> The European part of Turkey.

ing an independent Kurdish state. Four basic reasons for this political shift in the strategy of the Major Powers in Europe may be discerned:

- 1) Until 1921 it was a strategic interest for Great Britain, to consolidate its position in Iraq create a buffer zone between Iraq and Turkey. From 1921 the British politics towards the Kurds changed.
- 2) The advance of the Turkish nationalist movement, which demanded these territories (Olson 1989, 1991, 1992).
- 3) The position of the Soviet Union, which at the time ardently supported the Kemalist regime.
- 4) The internal dissension among the Kurds that weakened their position<sup>50</sup> (see Kutschera 1979 p. 27; McDowall 1996 pp. 131; Natali 2005 p. 76-77; Olson 1989 p. 24-25 ; Poulton 1997, p. 94; Zürcher 2004 p. 144).

When the Treaty of Lausanne came into effect, the Kurdish population in the Middle East became largely distributed between the four states of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Even today, from a Turkish point of view, the Treaty of Sèvres is regarded as a threat to Turkish independence, its stipulating that Anatolia was to be carved up into British, French and Italian entities. The Kurds tend generally to look at it differently. Nezan Kendal, a Turkish Kurd residing in exile in France since 1971 and presently director of the Kurdish Institute in Paris, summarises as follows:

Sèvres had been humiliating for the Turkish people and deeply unjust to the Kurdish people. Lausanne in contrast, was undeniably a victory for the Turks, but for the Kurds it marked a new phase of servitude.

(Kendal 1979a p. 58)

The formation of the modern Turkish state was a reaction to on one the hand the external pressures exercised by the expanding Western powers that occupied the Ottoman territories, and on the other hand to the extensive internal discontent and social unrest that emerged during the last few decades of the Empire. Even today Turks feel, with reference to the Treaty of Sèvres, that their national identity is

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<sup>50</sup> "As long as there are fine people with honour and respect, Turks and Kurds will continue to live together as brothers around the institution of the *khalifa* and an unshakeable iron tower will be raised against internal and external enemies." Mustafa Kemal 1919, quoted in MacDowall 1996 p. 187

threatened by external forces aimed at splitting their country up. These developments are also referred to when unwanted expressions of opinion are crushed.

The first cycle of open Kurdish resistance to the Kemalist regime took place in the early years of the republic, when the political and ideological structures of the state were not yet fully established. This early resistance culminated in three rebellions: the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, the Ararat Rebellion in 1930 and the rebellion in Dersim in 1937. All of them were brutally crushed and were followed by severe repression of the Kurds.

The next cycle of Kurdish resistance took form in post-Kemal Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. This time too the Kurdish resistance can be seen as a reaction to the repressive policies of the Turkish state. A number of coincident factors gave impetus to the emergence of a Kurdish movement: the sweeping economic and political changes that took place, the introduction of a multi-party system, the country's close political relations with NATO, initial attempts to integrate Turkey in the international capitalist economy and in particular the new constitution of 1960, which allowed for limited political freedom of the Kurds. How the Kurdish movement took shape and interacted with these factors will be analysed in Chapter 5.

### 3.8 Closing of the Chapter

This chapter has described the situation for the Kurds during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. In the first part of the chapter the social and political organisation of Kurdistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were accounted for. The social and political unrest in Kurdistan and the Ottoman Empire were described, as well as the social transformation of the Kurdish society that took place during this period. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Empire was threatened by the encroaching European Powers. In addition the increasing internal political and social unrest contributed to its weakening and crumbling. Nationalist movements emerged among the various ethnic groups inhabiting the century, for example, Greece and Bulgaria declared their independence.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century both Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals were influenced by contemporary nationalist ideologies. The Kurdish movements were concentrated to Istanbul but local clubs were also founded in the cities of Kurdistan. Finally the chapter discuss the peace negotiations following the First World War. In the peace negotiations that first took place in Sèvres promises of future independent state formations were given to the Kurds and the Armenians. In the final peace agreement, signed in Lausanne in 1923, these commitments have been annulled. From now on the Kurds became minorities in four different states in the Middle East.

Table 3a: Chronology ca 1839 - 1923

1839-1876	The Tanzimat Period - an era of reforms along bureaucratic lines aimed at centralising the administrative and political power structures of the Empire.
1908	The Young Turk Revolution - The Committee of Union and Progress seizing power. Their first year in power meant a period of relative liberation. Oppositional groups, many of them pro-Kurdish, organised freely. A year later, however, their power became much limited.
1920	The Treaty of Sèvres.
1923	The Treaty of Lausanne.

Table 3b: The Generation during this period

This chapter deals with historical developments that took place in the decades before the people belonging to the political generation of our major concern here were born. During this period, the Ottoman Empire underwent dramatic political, economic and social transformations. The political structures of the Middle East of today were created. In this process, the relative autonomy that Kurdish princes and fiefs had enjoyed became circumscribed. The Empire collapsed and a number of nation states were created in the Middle East. As a consequence, the Kurds became incorporated into Iran and the newly established states of Iraq, Syria, Turkey as well as those of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The political and social developments that took place during this period affected very much the regionalised Kurdish movements that emerged in the 1960's onwards.





# Chapter 4

## Repression: The Kurds and the Turkish Nation Building Project

The aim of this chapter is to describe and analyse the emergence of the modern republic of Turkey. The first part of the chapter concentrates on the consolidation of the modern Turkish Republic in the 1920s and 1930s. At that time nationalism became a founding principle of the modern Turkish state. This section also deals with the political leadership of Kemal Atatürk, as well as with the socio-economic structure of the country that the Kemalists took over. The political and ideological ingredients in the emerging Turkish nationalism that will be scrutinised, in addition questions of how the Turkish nationalism was carried out in practice in terms of political reforms, education, the writing of history and endeavouring to create a modern Turkish vernacular being briefly discussed.

The second part of the chapter is devoted to the responses made to Kemalist policies and the repercussions that this resistance had for the Kurds. Questions of how the resistance was organised, how the Kurds responded to the Turkish nation building project, Kurdish responses to expanding state control, and the political organisation of the Kurds from Ottoman times up to the early years of the Turkish Republic in the 1930s are discussed.

### 4.1 The Turkish Republic

#### 4.1.1 President Kemal Takes Office

The modern independent Republic of Turkey was proclaimed on October 29, 1923. This was a great victory for the Turkish nationalist camp. Still today, the Turkish struggle for independence, as well as attempts to create a modern and

secular Turkish state, is ascribed in popular narratives to Mustafa Kemal, more popularly known as Kemal Atatürk, alone.<sup>51</sup> Mustafa Kemal became the first president of the Turkish Republic, a position he held until his death in 1938. As president he became celebrated and admired by large masses in the Turkish society, his being given such epithets as "the immortal leader" and "the saviour" of the Turkish nation. The portrait of Kemal as the sole leader has also been promoted by Western scholars and by observers of Turkish politics (see for example Lewis 2002). His political and ideological ideas doubtlessly influenced the creation of the modern Turkish Republic, to a marked degree moulding both its institutions and Turkish nationalism (Ahmad 1993 p. 56; Zürcher 2004 pp. 156-160). Although the role of Kemal in the Turkish nation building project is clearly important, in recent decades a more balanced picture has been provided by scholars generally and by serious observers of Turkey (Keyder 1997; Mango 1999; Poulton 1997 pp. 95, 171; Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 54ff; Zürcher 2004 pp. 151-152).

Recent research has revealed that his position as a leader was actually far more disputed and insecure than what rumour tells (Mango 1999 pp. 419, 444-446, 502-503; Poulton 1997 p. 92; Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 65-66; Zürcher 2004 pp. 167-168). Zürcher, for instance, shows that the resistance to Kemal that developed when he came to power was largely organised by former CUP members and members of groups possessing political shades of opinion such as those of the Second Group and the Progressive Republican Party<sup>52</sup> (Zürcher 1984, 2004). Pope and Pope (1997) points to its being unlikely that Kemal could have reached the position he did as an executive of the Turkish resistance movement without support from some where (ibid. pp. 52ff.).

Mustafa Kemal was born in Salonica, in present Greece, in a poor middle class family. He had a solid military education and came to belong politically to the modernising flank of the Ottoman Army. He joined the Young Turk movement and became a member of the CUP<sup>53</sup> in 1907. During the First World War the Ottoman lands became occupied by the Entente powers.<sup>54</sup> In 1919 the still relatively unknown Mustafa Kemal was appointed inspector of the Third Army and was sent

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<sup>51</sup> The name Atatürk, literally mean "Father of the Turks". This was a surname that he had chosen himself, that was granted to him by the parliament in 1934 and made forbidden for anyone else to wear. Henceforth he will be referred to as Mustafa Kemal.

<sup>52</sup> The Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) was the only legitimate oppositional party in the early years of the Turkish Republic. The party was established in 1924 and was forced, by the Turkish government, to close down in 1926.

<sup>53</sup> The term Union here alludes to the idea of ethnic unity that was a central idea in the ideology of the Young Ottomans and is also to be found in the name of their organisation Ottoman Unity Society (*İttihad-i Osmani Cemiyeti*), (see, for example, Zürcher 2004 p. 86-87).

<sup>54</sup> These are France, Britain and Russia. The Ottoman Empire participated in the war on the side of the Central Powers.

to Erzurum in Eastern Anatolia, being made responsible for the Ottoman troops in the area. The formal organisation of the resistance as established then was given the name of *The Association for the Defence of National Rights in Anatolia and Rumelia*<sup>55</sup> (Poulton 1997 p. 94; Özdalga 1978 p. 20-22).

In the fall of 1919, Turkish nationalists took control over the parts of Anatolia that were not occupied by foreign powers (Zürcher 2004 p. 157). Ankara, the old provincial town of Angora, was claimed as a new capital, the next step of the nationalists then being to establish a parliament in the territories that they controlled. The regime of the Sultan was still recognized by the foreign powers, as the legitimate rulers, although its influence did not extend far beyond Istanbul (Ahmad 1993 pp. 49-50; Hourani 1992 p. 359; Mango 1999 pp. 278ff.; Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 33ff.).

#### 4.1.2 The Consolidation of the One Party State

On September 9, 1923 the Republican Party (*Halk Fırkası*) led by Kemal, declared itself a political organization. This was the governing party in Turkey between 1923-1950. In 1935 the name of the party was changed to the Republican People's Party (CHP). Kemal and his regime had a vision of creating a modern and secular Turkish State. In line with this they prepared for large changes and carried out a "modernising" policy designed to represent a radical break with the past and with the Western European nation states, in particular France, as a model (see, for example, Mango 1999 p. 396). Since the *Tanzimat*, the reform era that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state apparatus and political discussion in the country had essentially been dominated by three ideological currents.

First, there was a current that in the literature is labeled as *Ottomanism*. It was based on the idea of establishing "a union of the different communities around the Ottoman throne" (Zürcher 2004 p. 127), irrespective of language or religious affiliations and believed in equality among the millets. Secondly, a current can be distinguished generally referred to as *(pan)-Islamism*. Adherents to this current promoted Muslim unity and aimed to "regenerate the empire on the basis of Islamic practices and solidarity within the Islamic *Ümmet* (community)" (ibid.). Third, there was a current heavily influenced by the ideas of nationalism, and in the literature is referred to as *(pan)-Turkism*. Its proponents were aspiring for "a union of the Turkic peoples under the Ottoman flag" (ibid.).

Ottomanism was the official ideology between 1908 and 1913. From 1913 until it was dissolved, the Ottoman state was governed by the CUP and the Young

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<sup>55</sup> In Turkish: *Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri*.

Turks, and Turkish nationalism becoming the dominant ideological current (Zürcher 2004 pp. 4,121,127; see also Mango 1999 passim).

A number of reforms were carried out in the Kemalist era that contributed to a radical transformation of the Turkish society and more or less touched the daily lives of its citizens. First, there was a set of reforms aimed at taking the influence of religion out of the public sphere. Already on November 1, 1922<sup>56</sup> the Grand National Assembly passed a resolution intended to separate the Caliphate from the Sultanate, and in 1924 it was definitely abolished. The abolition of the Caliphate proved to be a much more controversial matter than it had been to suspend the Sultanate. Several of the deputies in the Assembly still regarded the Caliph as the legitimate sovereign and head of the state - "a kind of constitutional monarch" (Lewis 2002 p. 256), the Caliphate coming to be used by the opposition as a symbol and protest actions being organised (Lewis 2002 p. 260; Poulton 1997 p. 92).

One of the plans of the regime was to implement a uniform public system of education. A law passed in 1924 stated that all schools, also the religious ones, should be under the control of the Ministry of Education. At the same time, Turkish was made the instruction language both in elementary and in religious schools (Stålesen 1996 p. 67; Zürcher 2004 p. 188). Consequently, the religious schools, the *medreses*, where the *ulema*, the Islamic jurisprudence, had been taught in Arabic, were closed down. A further consequence was that linguistic minorities, for example the Kurds, that previously had used their maternal tongue as a language of education in the *medreses* from now on could only be taught in Turkish (Mango 1999 pp. 403ff.).

Islamic institutions came under state control and all religious courts were closed down. In addition, family laws became secularised and were removed from the jurisdiction of the *ulema*. Religious marriages and polygamy were prohibited. Islam was retained as the state religion during the first years of the republic, although there was a clause stipulating that it was to be removed in 1928 (Mango 1999 p. 463; Raudvere 2002; Zürcher 2004 p. 181). The Kemalist government expanded the school system with the aim of increasing the literacy rate in the country. Yet, still in 1923, according to estimated figures, more than 90 % of the population was illiterate (Stålesen 1997 p. 67). Literacy, was considered to be 17 % for males and 4.8 % for women. Officially, there were 4,894 elementary schools registered in the

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<sup>56</sup> For example Mango (1999) describe these events as follows: "The record shows only that in the early hours of 2 November 1922, the assembly passed a resolution (dated 1 November) declaring that the sultan's government had ended on 16 March 1920, when Istanbul was occupied by the Allies, that the government of the Grand National Assembly was the only legitimate authority in the country, that the caliphate was vested in the Ottoman dynasty, but that the assembly had the right to chose the caliph" (ibid. p. 364).

schools registered in the country, in Kurdistan the number of schools being estimated in 1925 to be 215 (Weiker 1981 p. 151).

In addition there was a package of reforms aimed at westernisation. In 1925 the traditional Turkish headgear, the *fez*, was banned and was replaced by the Western styled cap, or top hat. Traditional courtesy titles such as *bey*, *pasha* and *efendi* were taken away. Within a few years, a new civil code and a new criminal code were established. In 1934 the Western use of surnames was introduced and in 1935 a decree was issued that Sunday was to replace Friday as the official day of rest (for details on the reforms, see, for example Ahmad 1993 p.54; pp. 80ff., Lewis 2002 pp. 266-271, 272, 276-279; Mango 1999 p. 433, pp. 437ff.; Pope and Pope 1997 p. 62; Zürcher 2004 pp. 173ff.).

One of the most radical reforms, however, was the alphabet reform. A similar reform had been planned by the Young Turks about a decade earlier. In a decree of November 1, 1928 the Arabic script was replaced by a Latin alphabet. A preparatory committee was allowed three months to draft the proposals for the reform. The date on which the use of Arabic script was to become illegal was January 1, 1929. A consequence of this was that even the literate and well educated were cut off from the past, all officials also being obliged to learn and use the new script (Ahmad 1993 p. 80; Poulton 1997 p. 110).

A next step in the reform program was that the Turkish language was cleansed of all Arabic, Persian and Muslim elements. *Osmanlıca* or Ottoman language, spoken mainly by the upper strata in Ottoman society, was to a large extent influenced by Arabic and Persian loanwords. Turkish vernaculars and dialects were spoken by those in the lower strata, however. During the Ottoman period, the very concepts of "Turk" and "Turkish" had a pejorative ring, the language spoken by the lower strata of society being referred to as *kaba Türkçe* or "vulgarised Turkish" (Schlyter 1997 p. 115; Poulton 1997 p. 110).

A number of further campaigns were launched, for example one that was intended to collect Turkish substitutes for what were considered to be loaned words. It was believed that a number of genuinely Turkish words were to be found in spoken Turkish and dialects, words that were not to be found in dictionaries. Forms were sent to areas in which local committees, leaders and teachers could collect words and return them to the institute. A similar campaign presented 10-20 Persian words every day in the newspapers, people being encouraged to suggest substitutes for them (Schlyter 1997 p. 124). A significant part of the Arabic and Persian words disappeared from the Turkish vocabulary, although in practice people continued to use many words originating from these languages, and French terms continued to be used, particularly within the areas of bureaucracy and administration.

The reform had far-reaching consequences, one of them being that the language people speak in present-day Turkey is quite different from the vernacular of Turkish citizens in the early years of the republic. In addition, young Turks today

generally find it difficult to understand Mustafa Kemal's classical speech *Nucuk* from the early 1920s.

#### 4.1.3 "Kemalism" and "Nationalism"

The thoughts and ideas that guided the founding principles of the Turkish state are generally attributed to Kemal. However, the Turkish nationalism that took shape in the 1920s and 1930s was also informed by ideas and developments that evolved in the decades previous to the establishment of the Turkish Republic (Karpas 2001; Mardin 1962 *passim*; Poulton 1997 p. 88; Zürcher 1984, 2004 pp. 121, 127).

The historian Kemal Karpas distinguishes three periods that have been significant for the development of Turkish nationalism. First, between 1865 and 1908, in the Hamidian period and the Tanzimat era, new elite groups emerged on the political arena, with aspirations for a modern constitution, attempting to reform the Ottoman state. The second period began when the Young Turk government took power in 1908 and the Sultan Abdülhamid was deposed. The political ideals of a secular republic in which state and religion were to be separated can be traced back to the Young Turk era. Also in this era the CUP initiated a campaign aimed to "turcify" the population, its being directed against both non-muslims and non-turkish speaking muslims (Stålesen 1997 p. 67).

The third period that Kemal Karpas describes was in the early years of the Turkish Republic, during two brief periods between 1923 and 1930 and between 1930 and 1946. During these periods a nationalism based upon a one-sided account emphasizing the Turkish ethnic past only was developed, with a sacrificing of the Ottoman and Islamic heritages. In turn, social, cultural and ideological conflicts came to the fore (Karpas 2001 pp. 402 ff.; Poulton 1997; Zürcher 2004).

The nationalism of Turkey can at first sight be perceived as being what, in the terminology of Anthony D. Smith (1986, 1992), is a "civic" nationalism. In its aspirations there was a clear ambition to include all inhabitants of the Turkish territories, irrespective of ethnic origin or religious affinities, in the nation-building project. Gradually, however, the nationalism of Turkey became essentially "ethnic" since a Turkish identity, also in terms of language and culture, was to be imposed on all of its citizens (Ahmad 1993 pp. 77ff.; Natali 2005 Chapters 4 and 5; Poulton 1997 pp. 9, 92-100, 114).

The political reforms mentioned in the previous section were strongly influenced by the founding principles of Kemal, that later were elaborated upon and formulated in a doctrine called Kemalism (*Kemalizm*) or Atatürkism (*Atatürkçülük*), after the Turkish leader. It aimed at defending the integrity of the Turkish Republic and evolved gradually in the course of the 1930s. It never became a coherent ideology, but rather took on the form of a set of attitudes, though it was never defined in detail (Ahmad 1993 pp. 61ff.; van Bruinessen 1992 p. 274; Öz-

Özdalga 1978; Poulton 1997 Chapter 4; Zürcher 2004 p. 189). The basic principles of Kemalism were laid down in the party programme of 1931. They were those of Republicanism, Secularism, Nationalism, Populism, Statism and Revolutionism/Reformism.<sup>57</sup> These six principles, symbolised in the party emblem as six arrows (*Altı Ok*), were incorporated into the constitution in 1937. Together they constituted the state ideology of Kemalism and became used as a vehicle for indoctrination and mobilisation in schools and the educational system generally, in the media and in the army. However vague some of them were, these tenets cast light on the political thinking of Kemal and contemporary Turkish politics.

First, Republicanism was made a basic principle of the Turkish state, already in 1923. It has been described as the most "rigid" of the Kemalist arrows and was aimed at prohibition of any political activity that was in favour of the monarchy (Weiker 1981 p. 5). Second, the principle of Populism is vague and somewhat difficult to grasp. This principle expresses the belief that the revolution was aimed for all people in Turkey, its thus putting the interests of the nation before those of different classes or of groups with special interests. Accordingly, class divisions were claimed to not exist in the country, this principle also entailing a prohibition of political activities based on class. As Martin van Bruinessen has pointed out, it became possible to officially deny the existence of a Kurdish population in the country (van Bruinessen 1978 pp. 367).

Third, the principle Revolutionism/Reformism based on the idea that Turkey was in the throes of a continuing and fundamental revolution that would result in a complete break with its past. The alternative label of reformism implies there being a continuous transformation, although of more moderate means. Yapp explains the ambiguous formulation of the principle with a lack of agreement between contemporary Turkish leaders regarding the "pace and scope of change" (Yapp 1996 p. 162). Weiker describes the ambiguity as follows:

The republicans generally took it to mean the summation of the great Atatürk reforms but they should be legitimately debated. It was therefore at least nominally possible to dissent without putting the legitimacy of the entire Revolution in danger, and without tarnishing the image of Atatürk, who had become the very symbol of Reformism.

(Weiker 1981 p. 7).

Fourth, the principle of Secularism that was touched upon in the previous section, has been considered to be the most dramatic Kemalist doctrine, its becoming a

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<sup>57</sup> For a detailed account of the principles see for example Weiker 1981, for a background see Özdalga 1978.

subject of intense controversy (Weiker 1981 p. 6; Zürcher 2004 pp. 189, 195). Fifth, the principle of *Étatism*, based on the doctrine that the state should play an active role in economic development, and added to Kemalism in 1931, implies new efforts at economic development being made. A few decades later, in the early 1950s, when Turkey entered the international capitalist market economy, this principle was deleted from the constitution (Ahmad 1993 Chapter 5, pp. 132ff.; Weiker 1981 pp. 6ff.).

Finally, sixth, but no least, is the principle of Nationalism, an important and dominant ingredient in Kemalist ideology. In the 1930s this ideology developed into an extreme and chauvinistic form of nationalism, and was also used as the prime instrument for building a new Turkish national identity. Since the content and formation of Turkish nationalism is of particular interest in the present study it will be dealt with below, both separately and at some length. The political developments in the early years of the republic were essential to the formation of the Turkish nationalist doctrine. As Turkish society went through a process of huge transformation underlying conflicts in the country came to the light. Protests and actions against the regime emanated not only from Islamic groups. Resistance was also widespread in Kurdistan. Also, minor groups involving other minorities as well as left wing groups came to be in opposition to the regime, although these groups were more marginal.

The ideology of the Turkish state, the line of arguments employed in efforts to impose a Turkish identity upon the minorities in Turkey, was taken from the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, a philosopher and poet belonging to the inner circles of the CUP, his coming to be a sort of "chief ideologist of a Western oriented Turkish nationalism" (Mango 1999 p. 96). In his influential work *Principles of Turkism*, Ziya Gökalp writes:

a nation is not a racial or ethnic or geographic or political or volitional group but one composed of individuals who share a common language, religion, morality or aesthetics, that is to say, who have received the same education. ... the only solution is to recognize as Turk every individual who says 'I am a Turk,' and to punish those, if there are any, who betray the Turkish nation.

(Gökalp 1969 p. 15).

Ziya Gökalp, or Mehmet Ziya, was born in 1876, in Diyarbakir, a Kurdish-dominated town in the Kurdistan region in Turkey, or Southeastern Anatolia, his allegedly being of Kurdish or half-Kurdish origin. He became involved in the Young Turk circles and became in time a member of the CUP (Mango 1999 pp. 95ff.; Berkes 1959 pp. 13ff.; Poulton 1997 p. 76). His theoretical thinking was essentially inspired by French philosophers and attempted to achieve a synthesis of the various ideological currents in the Ottoman society - Islam, Ottomanism and

Turkism - mixed with ideas of Western modernisation based essentially on the sociological ideas of "corporate solidarism" and "collective conscience" developed by Émile Durkheim (Karpas 2001; Bozarslan 1996 p. 138; Mango 1999 pp. 5ff.; Poulton 1997 p.79). Gökalp took a nationalist point of departure that became evident in particular in his application of Durkheimian theories, his replacing the concept of society with the concept of nation. Central to his thinking was the idea that education should be more significant than ethnic origin in the constructing of national identities, an idea that still holds sway in pedagogical thought in Turkey (Kaplan 2006 p.39).

It is sometimes held that "Gökalpism" is a more adequate name for the official ideology that laid the foundation for Turkish state nationalism, than Kemalism (see, for example, Bozarslan 1996 pp. 136ff.). On the other hand, Gökalp's Kurdish origin is sometimes taken as proof of his ideology not being ethnic in character. Other interpretations of his texts hold that he in reality recognizes a distinct ethnic identity of the Kurds. The Kurdish historian Hamit Bozarslan draw our attention to the following passage in one of the main works of Gökalp: "Nationalist movements among the Arabs and Kurds also began as cultural movements; the second stages were political and the third economic" (Gökalp 1969 p. 55).

The Kemalist ideology was launched in various campaigns aimed at spreading it to the masses. A network of People's Homes (*Halk Evleri*) and People's Rooms (*Halk Odalari*) was established across the country as a whole in the 1930s. These institutions were controlled by the local branches of the party, and students together with educated party members being sent out into the countryside to inform people of Kemalist ideals and principles (Weiker 1981 p. 4; Zürcher 2004 p. 188). A nationalist historiography became an important element in these campaigns. In the 1930s the construction of a Turkish thesis of history was initiated by Kemal. The Turkish History Thesis (*Türk Tarih Tesis*) written between 1929 and 1932, reflected the ideals of a unitary Turkish nation. It was created by an academic committee appointed by Kemal. The Turkish History Thesis thought that the Anatolian Turks originally emigrated from Central Asia, that they constituted the most ancient civilisation in the world, and came to influence all other existing cultures. The results of these efforts of the academic committee was published in 1931 in the four-volume work History (*Tarih*), which became a standard reference work for schoolbook writers (Stålesen 1997; Poulton 1997 p. 106).

The thesis was extended, in the view of some commentators its also being vulgarised, (see Poulton p. 111; Stålesen 1997 p. 64) in its claiming that Turks were the founders of all great civilisations, the Turkish language being described as "the most important in the world" and the Turkish race as "a motor of history" (Poulton 1997 p. 106; Stålesen 1997 p. 113). This theory was used to prove the continuity of the Turkish race, declaring that Turks brought their civilisation to all other parts of the world, its being argued in line with this that the Turkish language

should be ranked higher, at universities and elsewhere, than it previously had been (Behar 1998 pp. 107-109).

In tandem with the History Thesis, a Sun Language Theory (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*)<sup>58</sup> was launched, purporting to demonstrate the supremacy of the Turkish language and its very special role throughout history. The thesis marks as depreciating the Ottoman period, the Ottoman Empire being depicted as a retrograde phase of development, referred to as being "alien" and "non-Turkish". The close identification with the one party-state, one can note here is shown in especially clear terms in volume four, which deals with the history of the Turkish Republic. Poulton (1997) argues that the Turkish History Thesis should be regarded as a reaction against the European perceptions of the Turks as being an inferior race, its also corresponding to a need for the use of history in the nation-building process (Poulton 1997 pp. 101, 106; Stålesen 1997) and exemplifying an ultra-nationalist strategy in claiming an equal or more prominent place for one's own national group. The volume *Tarih* was used as a reference work for Turkish history books up to the 1950s and continued long afterwards too to influence Turkish history writing.

## 4.2 Kurdish Resistance

Kurdish resistance could be considered to be weak in the years of political vacuum preceding the creation of the Turkish state but it grew stronger after the Turkish Republic was established. In contrast to the previous period, violence now became a dominant political means employed in the Kurdish struggle. Between 1925 and 1938, three major rebellions challenged the regime in Ankara. Bozarslan (2003b pp. 175ff.) points out that this can be considered a paradox and argues that the radicalisation of the Kurdish resistance can scarcely be explained only simply as a response to the repressive Kemalist regime, since Turkish politics not was "ethnified" in the first decade of the republic. During the Turkish struggle for independence, Kemal was still inclined to talk about a distinct Kurdish population and expressed a tolerant view of it speaking of the existence of different ethnic groups in the country. In his speeches he argued in favour of a "Turkish-Kurdish fraternity" by making reference to Islamic community and to anti-Christian sentiments:

...there are Kurds and Turks. We do not separate them. But while we are busy to defend and protect, of course the nation is not one element. There are various

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<sup>58</sup> In Turkish: *Güneş Dil Teorisi*.

bonded Muslim elements. Every Muslim element which makes this entity are citizens. They respect each other, they have every kind of right, racial, social and geographical. We repeated this over and over again. We admit this honestly. However our interests are together. The unity we are trying to create is not only Turkish or Circassian. It is a mixture of one Muslim element.

(as quoted by McDowall 1996 p. 188).

There are sources that also indicate that when the Grand National Assembly opened in Ankara in 1920, Kemal was still thinking of a special position for Kurdistan. A proposal for autonomy being granted the Kurds was discussed in the Assembly as late as February 22, 1922. Olson points out that the most telling sign of the "contemplated nature" of this Kurdish autonomy is probably the Article 16 of the proposal declaring: "The primary duty of the Kurdish National Assembly shall be to found a university with a law and medical faculty" (Olson 1989 pp. 39-40). This proposal was rejected by the Kurdish deputies of the Grand National Assembly (McDowall 1996 p. 188; Olson 1989 p. 140).

When the Treaty of Lausanne was ratified, all hopes of an independent Kurdish state were finally shattered, Kurdish politics in Turkey gradually turning more radical then. Bozarslan (2003b) give three main explanations of why. First, the Kurdish leaders realised that Turkish nationalism was going to be institutionalised through language and symbols. Secondly, the abolition of the Caliphate eliminated the common basis for a Kurdish-Turkish Muslim brotherhood. Third, there was growing fear among the Kurdish leaders that the Kurds were going to face "the same treatment as that which was meted out to the Armenians" (Bozarslan 2003b pp. 182).

#### 4.2.1 The Sheikh Said Rebellion

Concerning the personality of the ringleader Sheikh Said it appears to me being of interest to mention that he, it is told by the former Head of the Ottoman Banks branch office in Bagdad, Mr Reid, who explain himself both to have seen him and heard much about him, could be characterised as a fanatic of a type rather like the noted/well-known Ghandi.

(Swedish General-Consul, Constantinople, 10 March 1925 quoted from appendix in BedrKhan 1995, this excerpt being translated from Swedish).

In February 1925 a large rebellion broke out in the Kurdistan region in Turkey. The leader of the rebellion was a Sufi sheikh, named Said, born in 1865, in the town of Palu, north of Diyarbakir. He was a member of a rich and powerful family, a leader of one of the most important branches of the Naqshbendi order in

Kurdistan, and an influential leader of the tribes in the area (Bozarlsan 1992 p. 12). In the diplomatic correspondence of the time quoted above he is compared with one of the most well-known political freedom fighters and spiritual leaders of the time. The few Turkish scholars who have paid attention in any way to this event tend to argue that it was instigated by "conservative" and "reactionary" circles having the support of Great Britain. In Kurdish circles on the other hand the insurrection was sometimes pictured in terms of its being a "popular" uprising. Sureya BedrKhan, for example, in a pamphlet addressed to a Western public, label the Sheikh Said rebellion as the "Kurdish revolution of 1925". He continues by stating: "The Kurdish people, now harried and hounded like criminals by the Kemalists, responded gallantly and eagerly to the call to arms" (BedrKhan 1995 p. 46).

#### 4. 2.1.1 Preparation and uprising

The rebellion was initially prepared by an organisation referred to as *Azadi*<sup>59</sup> that was established in the city of Erzurum and gradually moved its activities to Istanbul and Kurdistan. The organisation was mainly dominated by Kurdish intelligentsia and officers, although local religious leaders such as Sheikh Said, who became radicalised during this period, allegedly belonged to its inner circles (McDowall 1996 p.192; Olson 1989 p.41, n. 20, appendix). *Azadi* has been described as a political organisation, available sources reporting that it had above all the following three aims: "to deliver the Kurds from Turkish oppression, to give Kurds freedom and an opportunity to develop their country" (Olson 1989 p. 45). Documents show that the organisation held a congress in 1924 at which decisions to prepare for a general Kurdish rebellion and to seek foreign support for it were made. The organisation participated in meetings with Turkish representatives and presented a proposal for a more far-reaching autonomy than what had been proposed in the Grand National Assembly. The date for instigation of the rebellion was decided on being sometime in May of 1925 (Olson 1989 pp. 47, 102; van Bruinessen 1992 p. 292). According to sources consulted by Olson, the congress decided that the rebellion should be given a "religious appearance"<sup>60</sup> (Kendal 1979a p. 61; Olson 1989 p. 92; van Bruinessen 1992 p. 292). Throughout 1924 preparations for the rebellion continued. In September, however, the plans failed. A number of incidents occurred that led to the Turkish authorities realising how serious and threatening the Kurdish demands were. Reprisals followed, the leading figures in *Azadi* being arrested, so that the plans for organising and for the rebellion had to be

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<sup>59</sup> *Azadi* means freedom in Kurdish. The full name of the organisation was from the beginning *Ciwata Azadi Kurd* meaning Kurdish Freedom Society, a name that later was changed to *Ciwata Kweseriya Kurd* meaning Kurdish Independence Society.

<sup>60</sup> Progressive Republican Party (*Terraki-perver Cumhuriyet Firkası*)

modified (van Bruinessen 1992 p. 283; Olson 1989 p. 91). Finally Sheikh Said, by virtue of his influential position, assumed command and began to coordinate the preparations for a general uprising, in accordance with the new plan was to take place in March 1925 (MacDowall 1997 p. 194; Olson 1989 pp. 91-95).

On February 8, 1925<sup>61</sup> broke out prematurely in the village of Piran. On February 14 Sheikh Said called for the rebellion through issuing a *fetva* in which he called upon the Kurds to revolt against the government in Ankara. In the *fetva* he stated that he was the "commander of the faithful and fighters for holy war" *emir al-mujahadin* of the rebellion, emphasizing his role as leader of the Naqshbendi *tarikāt* and as the sole representative of the Caliph of Islam (Olson 1989 pp. 93-94, 108). Furthermore he declared that he "assumed the supreme leadership over the rebellion" and "wanted everyone to join the holy crusades" and to become a "holy fighter" (*mujahadin*) (Olson 1989 p. 108; see also McDowall 1996 p. 197; Arfa 1966 p. 38; Bozarslan 1992 p. 13). Darhîni was declared the provincial capital of Kurdistan (Kendal 1979a p. 62; van Bruinessen 1992 p. 286).

At first, the rebellion spread fast and it soon enveloped major Kurdish areas in Turkey. A number of weaknesses in the organisation and the coordination of things soon became evident. First, the gap between towns and the rural areas became obvious. A number of provincial centres fell in the rebels hands. The strategically most important front, that was under the leadership of Sheikh Said himself, aimed at capturing the strategically important city of Diyarbakir. However the rebels did not manage to take control of it, due to the well organised resistance that the commanding Turkish general and the Turkish troop reinforcements provided (Olson 1989 p. 109).

Secondly, linguistical allegiances and tribal loyalties appear to have been stronger than nationalist sentiments. According to the sources available a vast majority of the tribes that participated were Zaza-speaking (Olson 1989 p. 95). It remains unclear whether the two Kurmanji speaking tribes that joined participated fully or not (van Bruinessen 1992 pp. 293ff.; Olson 1989 pp. 94, 96; Kutschera 1979 p. 82).

Third, as Olson points out, there was a lack of coordination. In some cases Sheikh Said apparently had difficulties in determining who was an ally and who was a foe (Olson 1989 pp. 92-97).

Fourth, far from all the participants appear to have been guided by the goals and visions promoted by *Azadî*. The documents scrutinized by Olson reports about the sacking of public buildings, of prisons being opened, and of lootings and the like. It is reported that in the city of Elazığ after a number of such incidents the

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<sup>61</sup> Different dates are provided by different authors. For example Mango 1999 p. 559 asserts that the rebellion started on February 11.

notables and the town dwellers organised a militia, that attacked the rebels and "drove them out of the town" (Olson 1989 p. 111).

Finally, there was a power asymmetry. The Kurdish rebels were facing a power, the Turkish Army, that was militarily superior and much better organised. The Turkish government had the advantage of better communication and logistics and of being able to mobilize larger forces than the Kurds. Thus they could concentrate these troops much faster and had superior military resources and modern vehicles, such as aeroplanes, at their disposal (Arfa 1966 passim; Olson 1989 pp. 118ff.).

#### 4.2.1.2 Defeat and Aftermath

The rebellion was short in endurance. However Ankara's reactions to the uprising were somewhat delayed. On February 16 the outbreak of an uprising was reported in Turkish newspapers. Thereafter it took a few weeks before Ankara intervened to crush the rebellion. Olson gives a number of plausible reasons for this, three of which were the following: a) the government very likely underestimated the strength of the Kurdish resistance, b) problems in obtaining information from the area of the rebellion, for example its being that the telegraph lines had been cut, and d) that there were not enough Turkish troops in the area to effectively quell the rebellion (Olson 1989 pp. 102-106).

The Turkish government reinforced its troops in Kurdistan before attacking the rebels and then it captured them between two fronts. Swedish diplomatic sources tell of up to 52,000 Turkish troops being mobilised by early April, and of this time the Turkish troops easily being able to contain and crush the rebellion. It is also reported that France permitted the Turks to use Syrian rail facilities, enabling 25,000 troops, about 2,000 every day, to be transported across the Syrian border into the Kurdish areas in Turkey. About the 14th of April, Sheikh Said was captured, together with some of his closest men, when they attempted to force the encirclement line that Turkish forces had set up around Darhini (BedrKhan 1995, see also Kutschera 1979 p. 85). By this time the most important battles had already been fought. According to Olson it has been stated that this was an ambush and that Sheikh Said was betrayed by one of the chiefs of the Cibran tribe (Olson 1989 p. 116).

In connection with the rebellion having been suffocated, measures were taken to strengthen control over the Kurdistan region. Immediately after the Sheikh Said rebellion had been crushed, a harsh and brutal repression started. Already on March 4<sup>th</sup> the *Law on the Maintenance of Order*<sup>62</sup> was passed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, providing the government extraordinary dictatorial

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<sup>62</sup> In Turkish: *Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu*. As referred to by Zürcher 2004 p. 171.

powers for a period of two years. That same day, two Independence Tribunals were established, one in Ankara and the other one in Diyarbakir (Mango 1999 p. 422; Zürcher 1984 p. 140). The government declared religious fanaticism to be one of the causes of the rebellion, and a desire to proclaim an independent Kurdistan to be another. They expressed suspicions that the rebel leaders aimed at achieving a union with the Kurds in Iraq.

The Turkish government also hinted the possibility of their being underlying British intrigues, since Turkey at the time was involved in a dispute over the elayet of Mosul (Arfa 1966 p. 36; Bozarlan 1992). A great number of Turkish troops were stationed in Kurdistan in Turkey. Many people were sentenced by the *Independence Tribunals* (İstiklâl Mahkemeleri), that were established in Ankara and Diyarbakir. Zürcher (1984) writes of the members of these tribunals were theoretically being appointed by the Grand National Assembly, but in reality Kemal hand-picking them. The tribunals also failed to adhere to normal juridical procedure. Zürcher refers to sources telling that purportedly had 7,446 people been arrested and 660 executed in accordance with the Law on the Maintenance of Order during the two years they were in effect (ibid. 1984 p. 146).

Most observers point out that the rebellion came to have far reaching political consequences and facilitated the consolidation of the not yet fully institutionalised Turkish state. Olson regards the consequences as having been "more important than the rebellion itself" (Olson 1989 p. 157). An initial effect was that of a change in government. President Kemal realised the threat that the existing opposition represented and replaced the Prime Minister Fehti Okyar with the much more loyal Ismet İnönü (Zürcher 2004 p. 140). An additional effect which came soon afterwards was that the rebellion was employed as an excuse for carrying out measures to eliminate the religious opposition.

In September 1925 Kemal declared: "Gentlemen and those of the nation: all of you should know that the Turkish nation cannot become a nation of shaykhs, dervishes, religious fanatics, and charlatans. The most correct and truest path of the nation is the path of contemporary civilization" (quoted in Natali 2005 p. 81). After that repression in Kurdistan became increasingly extensive and ruthless, and militarisation of the area intensified. Many commentators agree with McDowall (1996 p.198) that controlling Kurdistan then became a "prime function" and "raison d'être" for the Turkish army.<sup>63</sup> A number of Kurdish aghas were deported,

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<sup>63</sup> A more exacting picture is provided by Robert Olson: "It was stated in chapter 5 that seventeen of the eighteen military engagements in which Turkish military forces fought from 1924 to 1938 occurred in Kurdistan. Information about post-1938 Turkish military engagements is not available, but, if it were, a similar situation would probably be noted. Turkey's armed forces intervened in Hatay in 1938, in Korea in 1950-53, and in Cyprus in 1974. The military engagements against the Kurds far exceed the number of external interventions and engagements. By the 1980s, Turkey's

being sent into "internal exile" in the Western parts of Turkey, peasants were massacred and villages were burnt to the ground. In Diyarbakir, a majority of the Zaza Kurds that had been arrested after the siege of the town were executed outside the city walls, and many others were hanged in public places. Sheikh Said himself was sent to the gallows on June 29, 1925, together with 46 of his closest men at a square just outside the city wall that surrounds the old town of Diyarbakir (van Bruinessen 1992 p. 291; Olson 1989 p. 127; McDowall 1996 p. 196; White 2000 p. 76).

#### 4.2.2 The Ararat Rebellion

The second major Kurdish rebellion broke out in the area of Ararat in 1930. From time to time it has been regarded as being a continuation of the Sheikh Said rebellion. It was initiated by Kurdish intellectuals and nationalists who had escaped Kemalist Turkey. In the spring of 1927 Kurdish exiles arranged a congress in the town of Bahmbour in Lebanon, in which a new political organisation, the Kurdish National Committee, better known as *Khoybun*,<sup>64</sup> was established. The aim of this organisation was to continue the Kurdish struggle and defend what were claimed to be Kurdish territories: "until the last Turkish soldier had left Kurdish soil" (Jwadih 1960 p. 617).

Preparations for the new rebellion began and a permanent headquarter was established in Syria. The area for a future rebellion, Mount Ararat, was chosen strategically. For one thing, there was a geostrategic reason for this choice since the fact that the area was situated close to international borders, the slopes of Mount Ararat extending into Iranian territory making it impossible for the Turkish Army to encircle the rebels. In addition the Kurdish tribes occupying the area were already in rebellion against the state. The area was, except from Dersim the only one in the Kurdistan region of Turkey at that time not yet fully controlled by Ankara (McDowall 1996 pp. 207-208; White 2000 p. 77).

Kurds who participated in this organisation reported that relations were established with other political actors in order to gain international support for the Kurdish cause. Purportedly, good contacts were established with the French High Commission in Syria and with intellectuals in a number of countries. In addition Kurdish delegations were sent to meet with representatives of the Western powers

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military actions against the Kurds had assumed external as well as internal proportions" (Olson 1989 p. 161)

<sup>64</sup> In Kurdish: "to be one's self" alluding to independence.

and of the League of Nations (BedrKhan 1995 p. 53; appendix p. 58). Efforts were also made to establish contact with the Soviet Union. An alliance was also forged with the Armenian nationalist *Dashnak Party* (McDowall 1996 p. 203; Jwadih 1960 p. 624). From Jwadih one learns that a protest resolution of the Executive of the Second International against the harsh suppression of the Kurds in Turkey was passed at their session in Zürich in 1930:

The executive of the I. O. S draws the attention of the world to the massacre by means of which the Turkish Government is seeking not only to reduce the Kurds struggling for their liberty but also to exterminate the peaceful Kurdish population which did not take part in the insurrection, and by which means they are seeking to inflict on the Kurdish people the fate of the Armenians without the public opinion of the capitalist countries protesting against this bloody barbarism.

(Quoted in Jwadih 1960 p. 624)

The Turkish authorities were well aware of the rebels being supported by a Kurdish tribe in Iran, so that they could operate across the border and then withdraw into Iranian territories. Available sources point to that some kind of support, tacit and possibly even formal, being given by Iran which was "playing the Kurdish card" in order to put a pressure on Turkey. The reason for Iran supporting the Kurds was that there being unsettled land disputes between the two countries (Entessar 1992 p. 85; McDowall 1996 p. 206). At the same time the Turkish forces were supported by the Soviet Union, which allowed them to cross the border and use Soviet rail facilities in their efforts to stamp out the rebellion.

By the autumn of 1929, the Kurdish forces dominated a vast area in the region of Mount Ararat in 1930. Turkish troops began to be concentrated around the Ararat Mountain and for a period of time it seemed as though the rebels had been defeated. Soon it became however apparent that the rebellion had not been quelled and that the Kurds had taken shelter in the inaccessible mountains in the area (Frödin 1930 p. 330). In July of 1930 the Turkish government directed a warning against Teheran, demanding that the Iranians prevent the rebels from using Iranian territory (McDowall 1996 p. 205). A number of treaties were signed between the Turkish and the Iranian government in 1932, later to be confirmed by the Treaty of Non-Aggression, better known as the Sadaabad Pact signed, between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan on July 8, 1937 (Olson 1998 p. 24). Four of its ten central articles implicitly address the need of controlling nationalist sentiments among the Kurds.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> An abridged English version of this agreement is published in Hurewitz 1956.

By the end of August 1930, Turkey had mobilised about 50,000 troops and the estimated 3,000 Kurds were surrounded on the mountain of Ararat, and were finally defeated (McDowall 1996 p. 205) by brutal means, or as Jwadiéh (1960) puts it, the quelling was, "accompanied and followed by drastic punitive and draconian measures including deportations, mass arrests, and summary executions" (ibid. p. 623; see also Kendal 1979b pp 64ff.; White 2000 p. 79). Sources tell of every Kurd found with a weapon in his hand being executed and every man or boy, in the Ararat region, from the age of 12 upwards, being sent to Western Turkey. These deported boys and young men were not allowed to return to their home areas again before 1936 (Kendal 1979b pp. 66ff.).

The repression continued for many years and was carried out through a number of special laws that were passed in the Grand National Assembly. On May 5, 1932 a law was passed in the parliament stipulating that measures of deportation and dispersion should be taken against the Kurds. Reportedly they were to be repatriated into Turkish villages, in manner such that they would then constitute five per cent of the population in accordance with the following declaration: "Four separate categories of inhabited zones will be recognised in Turkey as will be indicated on a map established by the Minister of the Interior and approved by other Ministers.

- No. 1 zones will include all those areas in which it is deemed desirable to increase the density of the culturally Turkish population.
- No.2 zones will include those areas in which it is deemed desirable to establish populations which must be assimilated into Turkish culture.
- No. 3 zones will be territories in which culturally Turkish immigrants will be allowed to establish themselves, freely but without the assistance of the authorities.
- No. 4 zones will include all those territories which it has been decided should be evacuated and those which may be closed off for public health, material, cultural, political, strategic or security reasons.

(as quoted by Kendal 1979b p. 66)

It is difficult to estimate exactly to what extent these measures were implemented. Jongerden (2007 pp. 171, 174, 177) argues that it is a too narrow a perspective to consider these repressive measures as being solely instruments aimed at depopulating the Kurdistan region. He argues that the Settlement Act was partly aimed as an instrument for creating a homeland for people from parts of the Ottoman areas who came to Turkey and having "a larger, positive, objective of creating a Turkish homeland" (ibid. p. 174), however adding that there were indeed settlement acts aimed at the Kurds.

Leaks of information from the by that time highly militarised area speak of villages being sacked and destroyed, of killings and of deportations. A report from the British consulate in the Turkish town of Mersin describes how "hordes of Kurds" from the Ararat region were streaming into the town, driven away from their homes without possessions of any kind:

One hundred Kurds, mostly women and children, arrived here [Mersin] by road from the interior... They were very scantily clad and many went barefoot. Four carts containing their ill and dying, and their few personal belongings, completed their procession. They are the remnant of the Ararat Kurds...

(quoted in McDowall 1996 p. 206)

In the diplomatic report it is also stated that most of these families were settled in Western Turkey (McDowall 1996 p. 213 n. 43). The former Iranian ambassador to Turkey, Arfa describes the situation in his memoirs in terms of "atrocities" and "persecution", and accounts of how Kurds fled from Turkey to Iran in search of shelter and protection (Arfa 1966 p. 42). The Swedish geographer Frödin obtained permission to travel in the area of Van in 1936. During his visit there he observed some of the effects of the displacement politics and met with groups of Kurds returning home from what he describes as "concentration camps", at the same time as he encountered new settlers, mainly Turks from Bulgaria, who had been given land plots in the area (Frödin 1948 pp. 182ff.). He told of Kurds residing in some of the abandoned Armenian villages and of the local culture of nomadic pastures being substantially reduced. Once he came to the village of Shidan, not far from the Van lake, the village was in ruins and only one of the houses there was inhabited. Frödin was informed that 3,000 Bulgarian Turks had arrived in the area the previous year, and that another 5,000 were expected to come in 1936 (Frödin 1948 pp. 70, 90 ). The deportations of Kurds were stopped at the end of 1935 however preparations for "pacification" of certain areas of Kurdistan were still in the making purportedly for the area of Dersim.

#### 4.2.3 The Rebellion in Dersim

The last great Kurdish rebellion in the early Turkish Republic broke out in the area of Dersim in 1937. It is estimated that between 60,000 and 70,000<sup>66</sup> people resided

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<sup>66</sup> Van Bruinessen lean on figures referring to the present administrative district of Tunceli. However he pays the readers attention to the fact that the historical region of Dersim is essentially lar-

in the area at the time, a vast majority of them speaking Zazakî and Alevîs (van Bruinessen 1994 pp. 3-8). This area is known for its rugged and nearly inaccessible mountains. It had always been difficult for the central powers to control and its population was known to be "defiant" of state authorities. Historical accounts tell of enormous difficulties in collecting taxes in the area, its tribal leaders having never joined the Hamidiye Light Cavalries, having refused to participate in the Turko-Russian wars and not taking part in the Sheikh Said rebellion (van Bruinessen 1994). Also in the 1930s the tribal leaders in Dersim organized pockets of resistance against the Turkish regime and governed the area according to their own rules. This was regarded as a threat to the government, which prepared plans for an administrative reorganisation of the region. refers to a special report presented to the the Grand National Assembly in 1926 it was established that, "Dersim is an abscess on the Turkish Republic and it must be removed ,for the sake of the country's well being" (as quoted by White 2000 p. 79).

In the 1930s a number of measures were carried out intended to serve as instruments to "pacify" the population in the area. Thus, the uprising can be considered as representing a response to the repressive state policies and the intensified militarisation of the region at the time (see, for example, McDowall 1996 pp. 207-209). In 1935 a special law on Dersim was passed, the name Dersim was replaced by the Turkish name Tunceli and a plan for the administrative reorganisation of the region was announced. In 1936 a state of siege was declared and a new military governor for the district was appointed. In June 1937 military operations began in the district and many troops were concentrated there. These actions by the state power led to fear of massacres and deportations among the people in the region. The Alevi cleric and tribal leader Sayyid Reza appealed together with other tribal leaders in the area, to the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, and to the Secretary - General of the League of Nations. Their statement speaks of "these tyrannies of the Turkish government against human rights and the Kurdish nation" (as quoted by White 2000 p. 81), its pleading for help and resistance. In the letter it is pointed out how the Kurds had suffered from the Turkish assimilation policy, Kurdish publications being banned, and people persecuted if they spoke their Kurdish mother tongue, many being forcibly deported and many having been executed. Sayyid Riza demanded freedom and peace for the Kurds in their own country (Arfa 1966 p. 43; McDowall 1996 p. 208; White 2000 p. 81).

Under the leadership of Sayyid Riza and local Alevi elites, the population in Dersim organised a "guerrilla-like" war in 1937 and resisted the Turkish forces

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ger which can explain why higher population rates are provided by other sources (van Bruinessen 1994 p. 2 n. 4).

until late in October of 1938. The inhabitants of Dersim had been surrounded and cut off from outside aid ever since 1936, but their resistance continued long after their leader Sayyid Reza had been captured and executed by the Turks (Arfa 1966 p. 43; Kendal 1979b p. 67; McDowall 1996 p. 208). Finally, they ran out of ammunition, were forced to surrender and became subjected to widespread executions and to large-scale deportations. The rebellion in Dersim was stamped out by harsh and brutal means (1990; van Bruinessen 1994 pp. 1-2, 8-9; McDowall 1996 pp. 184-213).

In his article "*Genocide in Kurdistan?*" van Bruinessen (1994) refer among others to the present British vice-consul at the time in Trabizond on the Black Sea coast who compared the incident in Dersim with the, "massacre of the Armenians in 1915" (ibid. p. 4). The British diplomat reports: "Thousands of Kurds (...) including women and children, were slain; others, mostly children, were thrown into Euphrates; while thousand of others in less hostile areas, who had first been deprived of their cattle and other belongings, were deported to the vilayets (provinces) of Central Anatolia" (ibid. p. 4).

Three Turkish Army Corps comprising 50,000 troops altogether were concentrated in the area in order to combat the uprising. In addition aerial bombing, artillery barrages and purportedly poison gas were all used against the population (McDowall 1996 pp. 207-209; Arfa 1966; Olson 1989 p. 105). Thousands of people perished. Stories are told about how large groups of women committed suicide throwing themselves from cliffs into ravines or into the rivers, about women and children who were burnt alive, locked in haystacks or covered with kerosene (van Bruinessen 1994 pp. 7-8).

When the leader of this uprising, Sayyid Reza, decided to surrender he was arrested by the Turkish Army and executed. Thereafter, the Kurdish rebels continued their armed attacks and held out in their struggle about one more year before they were out of ammunition. There are no Turkish official figures available regarding the number of people who lost their lives or were deported. Jwadiéh mentions the estimated numbers of 40,000 being killed and 3,000 families being deported after the rebellion had been quelled (Jwadiéh 1960 pp. 632-633; se also McDowall 1996 p. 209).

Van Bruinessen (1994) comments that "the only figure on deportations from Dersim in the 1930s that I have seen is given by the retired general Esengin, according to whom 3,470 persons, belonging to many different tribes, were deported to Western Turkey (...). The actual number may well have been higher" (van Bruinessen 1994 p. 11 n. 35). At the time when the Dersim rebellion broke out Turkish nationalism had come to be highly chauvinist and aggressive. After the Dersim rebellion had been quelled, Celâl Bayar, the Prime Minister of Turkey at the time, declared that "the Kurdish problem no longer existed and that the brigands had been forcibly civilized" (Jwadiéh 1960 p. 633). This marked the beginning of an era of complete denial of the existence of a Kurdish population in Turkey, Kurds

coming to be referred to as "Mountain Turks" (McDowall 1996 p. 210; Jafar 1976 p. 120 n. 121; Jwadih 1960 p. 633; Natali 2005 p. 93; Poulton 1997 p. 121; White 2000). It was first in 1946 the Turkish authorities decided to lift the special emergency regime for Dersim (McDowall 1996 p. 209). As recently as in 2011 the Turkish Premier Minister Recep Tayip Erdoğan presented excuses for the massacres in Dersim on the part of the Turkish regime ([www.bianet.org](http://www.bianet.org) 2012-10-15).

## 4.4 Closing of the Chapter

In this chapter the articulation of Kurdish political identities in the period of transition from the Ottoman empire to the system of nation state based upon fixed territorialized borders and Turkish nationalism has been described. It deals with the period when the parents and grand-parents of the political generation of our concerns were politically active. During this period the political structures of the Turkish Republic were created. The first part of the chapter chronicles the formation of this modern state. The chapter took its point of departure in the early 1920s. First, an overview of the reforms, aimed at modernisation, that were introduced by the Kemalist government in the 1920s was provided. Thereafter the chapter describes the Kemalist ideology and the Turkish nationalism that developed in the 1930s. In Turkey, gradually, a highly "ethnified" political space was created. In the course of the 1920s and 1930s, Turkish nationalism went increasingly chauvinistic and aggressive, at the same as possibilities of expressing in public ones belonging to any other ethnic group than the Turkish was eliminated.

The last part of the chapter chronicles the Kurdish responses to the Kemalist state building project. The Kurdish protests in Turkey became articulated in the three major Kurdish rebellions that erupted in the first decades of the Turkish Republic: the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, the Ararat rebellion in 1930 and the rebellion in Dersim in 1937. In contrast to the Kurdish uprisings that occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Kurdish rebellions that took place in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s were guided by ideas of independence and by nationalist sentiments on the part of their organisers. Certainly there was a tribal predominance to be found among the participants and there clearly being a number of difficulties in mobilising large groups of Kurds. Nevertheless, these rebellions were better prepared for than earlier uprisings, and they continued even after their leaders had been seized.

Fourth, the chapter touched upon the responses of the Turkish state to the Kurdish uprisings. As has been shown, all the rebellions were crushed with harsh and brutal means. The Sheikh Said rebellion became a watershed for future relations between Kurds and Turks. The rebellion had both included nationalist and religious features and was thus seen as a challenge to the Kemalist project. It revealed the strength of a still existing opposition in the country. In the view of the

Kemalists, the rebel leaders represented values that impeded the construction of a modern and secular Western oriented state. In the aftermath of the rebellion a number of laws were implemented that effectively limited the activities of the opposition. Accordingly, Olson (1989) writes that the Sheikh Said rebellion could be seen to "create the atmosphere and mechanisms" necessary to accomplish the extensive political purges among all groups resistant to the ideas of the Kemalist project that followed in its aftermath. He also argues that: "The reason why the Sheikh Said rebellion is so important for Turkish history is that the laws and institutions created for its suppression were agreed to by those who opposed Kemalism" (ibid. p. 159). In connection with that he remarks that "no patriotic Turkish official could tolerate a contending nationalism" (ibid. p. 159). Thus the one party state was consolidated and a "greater articulation of the Turkish nationalism on which the party and the state were based on" (ibid. p. 158) become possible.

Finally, Kurdish ethnic identities in Turkey became, in the terminology of Eidheim (1969), "undercommunicated" in public arenas. As far as their cultural identities was concerned the Kurds were prohibited from speaking their maternal tongue openly, and in public spaces they had to say that they were Turks. The home was also not always a place where Kurdish could be spoken freely. Politically, the opposition was prohibited but it continued its activities underground, and it was never completely eliminated. After the rebellion in Dersim was so brutally crushed in 1938, there was no further open Kurdish resistance in Turkey for decades to come. In this respect, the "pacification politics" of the Turkish regime had been successful, or as van Bruinessen (1994 p. 11) concludes: "After the Dersim rebellion had been suppressed, other Kurdish regions being 'civilised' from above knew better than to resist".

Table 4 a: Chronology ca 1919 - 1938

1919	Greek forces, supported by Great Britain, land in Smyrna (Izmir).
1920	British forces occupy Istanbul.
1922	The sultanate is abolished by Mustafa Kemal.
1923	The Turkish Republic is proclaimed.
1924	The Caliphate is abolished by the Turkish Parliament. Simultaneously with this, Kurdish associations and newspapers are closed.
1925	The Kurdish rebellion under the leadership of Sheikh Said Piran. This rebellion is brutally stamped out and Sheikh Said is executed on June 29 <sup>th</sup> .
1925-1930	A set of reforms is implemented aimed at modernisation and secularisation.
1930-31	The Ararat Rebellion occurs. It is quelled by brutal means by the Turkish Army Forces.
1937-38	The rebellion in Dersim (Tunceli) take place. This rebellion is brutally stamped out.
1938	President Mustafa Kemal dies. He is succeeded by İsmet İnönü.

Table 4b: The Generation during this period

This chapter deals with the early decades of the modern Turkish Republic. The oldest persons of those included in the study was born during this period. This is the period of the previous generation, that became silenced in the repression that followed the Kurdish protests and uprisings in the early Turkish Republic. It moulded the generation of their parents, who experienced the rebellions, the repressive measures and learning to deny in public spaces that they were Kurds. Many of the men and women interviewed for the study have told of how they grew up with this silence, fear and heavy repression.

The implementation of Kemalist principles, above all that of nationalism, came to permeate many fields of social life. The principle of nationalism came to influence, for example, what was learned about society and history in school. The repressive laws and the prohibition of the Kurdish language and all expressions of Kurdishness came to have an impact on all Kurds, although people dealt with it differently. Children from Kurdish-speaking families could not be educated in their maternal tongue and the children was forbidden to speak Kurdish in schoolyards or with friends in their leisure time.

# Chapter 5

## Resistance: Post-Kemal Turkey and the Kurdish Nationalist Movement

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the formation of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey in the decades following the Second World War. During this period, the Kurdish struggle, generally speaking had become regionalized and basically limited to the political arenas within the states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. In each of these states, different political spaces developed. In Turkey the formation of a Kurdish political movement was carried out by a new generation of Kurds who had not been involved at all in the Kurdish currents that existed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was no continuity between the earlier Kurdish movements and those that appeared then after the Second World War. The movements that developed into rebellions in the early Turkish Republic took place at a time when religion had been subordinated to state power.

The Kurdish resistance that emerged in the early Turkish Republic had been influenced by the nationalist movements and ideologies that were dominant at that time. The Kurdish movement that emerged in the decades following the Second World War, in contrast, was strongly influenced by nationalism, and by Marxism and left-wing oriented ideologies that were quite predominant in the universities at the time. It was a resistance movement brought about primarily by a) the socio-economic structures that developed in Turkey with wide economic gaps between the south-eastern part of the country, where the Kurdistan region is situated, and the western parts of it, b) the political structures at the time, which existed in a highly "ethnicized" political space and did not allow at all Kurdish national identities to be expressed, and c) the repression since earlier of the Kurds that still persisted.

The members of the political generation of concern here had in common that they were born during the time of the modern Turkish Republic's existence and were brought up by parents who had the horrific massacres and harsh repression of the Kurds by the Kemalist regime fresh in their memory. Thus, among their par-

ents and their grandparents there was widespread fear of being discovered bringing the Kurdish question up in public spaces. They themselves were too young to have participated in the Kurdish movements that emerged early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but were old enough to have become actively involved in the cycle of Kurdish resistance that took place in the decades before the military intervention in 1980.

After years of silence following the Dersim rebellion, this new political generation tested carefully how far the rights recognised by the constitution of 1960 could be extended. Signs of resistance could be distinguished a few years earlier. It is difficult to establish exactly when a generation of this sort takes shape. The constitution of 1960 opened up new opportunities of organising, although political opinions that were expressed were still expected to fit into the Kemalist mould. Paragraphs 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code from 1926 were still in force. According to these political organising and the dissemination of propaganda that could "destroy or weaken the nationalist feeling"<sup>67</sup> of Turkey were strictly forbidden. Thus, organizing resistance and participating in it, either politically or symbolically, in line with Kurdish ethnic interests was still prohibited and continued to be dangerous.

## 5.2 Multi-Party System

When Mustafa Kemal died in 1938, he was succeeded by his Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, one of his most experienced companions. İnönü was to continue with the policies introduced by Kemal. At the same time, however, the country began to open to the international community and was gradually integrated into the world capitalist system, a development that led to the country's being faced with many new challenges. Turkey had taken a neutral position during most of the Second World War, before finally entering it on the side of the Allies. When peace was finally reached in 1945, Turkey became a founding member of the United Nations (UN), was admitted as a full member of the NATO in 1952, and participated with 25,000 troops in the Korean War the same year. The country became a key element in the NATO strategy aimed at blocking any Soviet aspirations of reaching the Mediterranean countries. Ever since the revolution in Iran in 1979, the country has, largely because of its geopolitical situation, been of increasing strategic importance for NATO, its representing the south-eastern flank of the organisation.

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<sup>67</sup> Quotation from KHRP 1997 p. 7.

At the same time, the Turkish government continued fostering its relations with Eastern Europe, above all with the USSR, as well as with other Middle Eastern countries and became a member of the European Council in 1949 (Ahmad 1993 pp. 119, 123-125; Zürcher 2004 pp. 274, 332).

In addition, extensive economic, political and social changes took place inside Turkey, there being a new middle class hoping for liberal reforms. Late in 1945, president İnönü openly admitted that the one-party system was a shortcoming for Turkish democracy and declared that the general elections in 1947 would be free. Parties were allowed to register, although a political organisation on the basis of either class or ethnic interests was still forbidden. The *Democrat Party (DP)* was registered on January 7, 1946. This party, chaired by Adnan Menderes, soon got widespread support and won a landslide victory in the elections in 1950 (Zürcher 2004 p. 221). The party remained in power during this decade.

The political structures had gradually changed. The army had been a dominant factor in Turkish political life, as the rule of a dominant elitist bureaucracy originating from the Ottoman state structure had also been. Under the CHP regime, the bureaucracy and the party apparatus had been merged. Zürcher (2004) writes: "one could say that the party was just one of the instruments through which the state controlled and steered society" (ibid. p. 221), a power structure that was broken, however, when the DP government came to power.

At the beginning of its period in office the DP regime appeared to fulfil the wishes of those voting for them. Several attempts were made to modernise the infrastructure of the country. Schools and new roads were built, the electrical power network was extended and considerable investments in infrastructures were made (Pope and Pope 1997 p. 89). Gradually, however, the party's popularity began staggering. The economic situation deteriorated, which in turn caused a growing discontent among the groups that had supported the party. The military lost buying power due to the growing interest rates and the incessantly worsening economic situation (Ahmad 1993 pp. 117, 125; Zürcher 2004 pp. 225ff., 238ff.; see also Özdalga 1978).

In the final years of the decade the political situation grew increasingly tense. Prime Minister Menderes initiated amendments of laws aimed at increasing control over the universities, i.e. prohibition of political activities on the part of professors, and laws that could force judges and professors to retire, together with a tightening of the press laws, and the introducing of censorship laws (Pope and Pope 1997 p. 92; Zürcher 2004 p. 223). This gave way to widespread discontent, first and foremost at the universities and in the bureaucracy. People employed in these sectors backed the military overthrow and played an important role in toppling the Menderes regime (Pope and Pope 1997 p. 89).

Early in the morning on May 27, 1960, Colonel Alparslan Türkeş, later leader of the ultranationalist *National Action Party* (MHP),<sup>68</sup> announced on the radio that a coup had been staged by the military. President Celâl Bayar and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes were sent into the prison of Yassıada Island in the Marmara Sea, where they were executed by hanging, after accusations of having violated the constitution (Ahmad 1993 pp. 136-137; Zürcher 2004 p. 248).

### 5.3 The Socio-Economic Landscape

The people belonging to this political generation had been born and raised in a country in which there were marked socio-economic cleavages, and apparently unequal regional conditions. Most striking was the difference between the western parts of the country, on the one hand, and, the south-eastern parts where the Kurdistan region is situated on the other.<sup>69</sup>

Some of the socio-economic conditions, and the changes there, which the generation experienced will be chronicled here.

First, urbanisation was much slower in the Kurdistan region than in the western parts of Turkey. In the Kurdistan region there were no city of 100,000 inhabitants or more in 1960 and in 1970 there were three cities of this size, "Diyarbakir having 139,000, Elazığ, 108,000, and Urfa, 100,000" (Jafar 1976 p. 90). Jafar tells of a majority of the urban centres in the region lacking basic facilities. In most city centres in the Kurdistan region, amenities such as running water, sewage systems, electric power and gas supply, bus services, slaughter houses, and the like, were poor or non-existent in many towns. If they existed they were generally in a very poor condition and there were no plans for repair or maintenance of these facilities.

Secondly, there was a wide economic gap between Kurdistan and the western parts of the country. As many commentators have pointed out, economic growth had been much slower in Kurdistan. Until the 1960s,<sup>70</sup> the economy of the region was essentially self-sufficient, its being based on animal and stock breeding.

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<sup>68</sup> MHP is the Turkish acronym for *Milliyet Hareket Partisi*.

<sup>69</sup> The unequal socio-economic and regional conditions in the country have been described by many observers. See for example Jafar 1976 Chapter 3; McDowall 1996 p. 400; Wadieh 1960; van Bruinessen 1992, White 2000.

<sup>70</sup> Still in the 1950s a majority of the Turkish citizens lived in the countryside. From the 1960s onwards urbanisation increased rapidly and today the urban population double that of the rural areas (Jafar 1976 pp. 90-93; White 2000 p. 121).

Mechanisation was introduced to agriculture from the 1950s onwards, and the numbers of tractors increased, which led to rising unemployment rates among farmers, and as a result migration into the city centres of the region and in time into western Turkey. Migration could be incited by unemployment or by local disputes. Economic instability, together with increasing interest rates, contributed in the coming decades to a decrease in profitability for small farmers and share croppers. However, in the city centres too a large part of the population of this time was involved in farming activities (van Bruinessen 1992 pp. 15ff.; Jafar 1976 pp. 60ff.; McDowall 1996 pp. 401-402; White 2000). From the 1950s onwards, there was a substantial outward migration from the region, although one should note that city centres in Kurdistan also grew as a result of migration. White (2000) mentions the cities of Diyarbakir, Bitlis and Muş in this respect (ibid. p. 122).

Social structures in the region were unequal as well. The distribution of land holdings was unequal and was concentrated in the hands of a few landowners who controlled large estates, in many cases entire villages. For example, the Bucak family in the Siverek district is reported to have owned about 60 villages (McDowall 1996 p. 401). Great numbers of the share cropping peasants were forced to pay a fixed proportion of their crops to the landowners. Van Bruinessen (1978) states that the share in question could vary as much as between 10 and 80 % of the crop, while other peasants, "received small fees for working under the landlord and his supervisors" (as quoted by White 2000 p. 98; see also Ghassemlou 1967 p. 117).

As Geerse rightly remarks, gender is a factor neglected in most literature on Kurdish society and the Kurdistan region. Most of the migrants in the 1950s and 1960s were single men, often coming to the cities to apply for seasonal jobs. In time, if the job opportunities increased, it could happen that relatives and families followed them there (Geerse 2011 pp. 163ff.). Geerse refers to Karpat (1976), who found that 40 % of the female migrants "wanted to migrate themselves" (Geerse 2011 p. 164), and that the female migrants "had much clearer views on the advantages of urban living conditions than men: they wanted to live in the city to escape the difficulties of agricultural and house work in the village, and to create better opportunities for their children" (ibid. p. 164).

White (2000) provides a picture of the socio-economic structures in Kurdistan that is somewhat different from what commentators generally do. He emphasizes industrialization, the incorporation into a capitalist economy and the emergence of a proletariat, however small, in the region. This scholar warns: "The reader is cautioned against accepting the picture of present-day Kurdistan comprising simply agas, sheikhs, goatherds and smugglers that is proffered in so many accounts claiming to describe Kurdish society" (ibid. pp. 113-114), his pointing out that the Kurdistan region in Turkey is "part of a modern, industrialized economy" (ibid. p.122). White asserts, moreover, that there is a Kurdish proletariat that "cannot be considered separately from that existing throughout Turkey." (ibid. p.

114). The figures White provides establish that: "There were already factors in the Kurdistan region in Turkey employing over a thousand workers by the early 1950s" (ibid. p. 114). Thus, White provides us with the picture of a region incorporated into a capitalist economy and caught up in a process of social transformation.

Mining and petroleum production are two of the major industries in the region. Turkey is one of the largest chrome producers in the world, extraction essentially being concentrated in the province of Elazığ. Also, Kurdistan is the sole producer of petroleum in Turkey, there being oil deposits in the province of Siirt and refineries in the cities of Dörtöyl and Batman (Jafar 1976 p. 68).

State expansion in the form of infrastructure, such as schools and health centres, were scanty throughout Turkey. Jafar (1976), points to there being a discrepancy between official documents and practises, his noting that the central government was "obliged by the constitution of the country to improve health service without favourism or discrimination" (ibid. p. 110). However particularly in Kurdistan, state investments in social services were practically non-existent in some districts (ibid.). On the basis of the literature and of stories by informants it seems reasonable to conclude that the state was essentially a distant institution, diffuse or known through its repressive means, to many people in Kurdistan at the time when people belonging to the political generation of concerns here were being raised.

A similar observation is made by Geerse (2011), who on the basis of interviews with Kurdish migrants in Istanbul notes that in their stories "the state" was perceived as distant, mostly present in the person of the gendarmerie officer, the teacher at the local school, and the nurse at the local health post - if there were schools and health post" (ibid. p. 154). The state interventionism that was carried out was apparently aimed at controlling the population by means of violence. In these areas the government invested in police stations and gendarmeries, and it increased its military presence in the region. Until 1965 it was forbidden for foreigners to travel in the area (Pope and Pope 1997 p. 251; Chaliand 1979 p. 68).

Statistical data provided by Jafar indicates that the magnitude of the inequalities between the Kurdish region and the rest of the country regarding health services was greater in 1967 than in 1955. In 1965 there was reportedly one physician per 6,667 inhabitants in the Kurdish districts at an average compared with 2,680 in the country as a whole. Even worse was the situation regarding dentists, there being only one per 100,000 inhabitants available in the Kurdish districts as compared with one per 6,667 in the country as a whole (Jafar 1976 p. 111).

Literacy was much lower in the Kurdistan region than in Western Turkey. Jafar states that the literacy rate was 31 % among men and 7 % among women in the countryside in the Kurdistan region of Turkey in 1965. He notes, however, that in the urban areas "the situation was slightly better", with a literacy rate of 66 % for men and 28 % for women. An increase in the rate of literacy came about in the country as a whole in the 1950s (Jafar 1976 p. 115).

The political generation of concerns here was generally better educated than their parents. Still, while they were growing up Turkey struggled with socio-economic injustices and there were enormous regional cleavages between the eastern and western parts of the country. Jafar (1976) reports, for example, that the literacy rates in Turkey generally were 34,6 % in 1950, whereas in the Kurdish dominated south-eastern region they were only 8,7 %. In 1965 the literacy rates had raised to 48.8 % in Turkey generally but were 26,8 % in the the southeastern, Kurdish dominated areas. Jafar also points out that not only the literacy rates but also the numbers of children attending school at all were much lower in the Kurdistan region. From the statistical sources that he has managed to come by he draws the conclusion: "The ratio of pupils attending primary schools, to the primary school age population was in 1965 twice as large in the whole country as in the Region" (Jafar 1976 p. 116). Since institutions for higher education were essentially concentrated in the cities in the western parts of the country Kurdish students had to move there to continue their education. Many Kurdish children were also sent to boarding schools (*Bölge Yatili Okulları*), where they became separated from their maternal tongue (Hassanpour 1992 p. 133).

Turkish language training became an important element in educational policies since it was the language of instruction.<sup>71</sup> This, in turn, made it difficult for many Kurdish children to become successful students. In the early 1960s it was still estimated that "more than three quarter's of the Kurds in Turkey still did not speak Turkish" (Hassanpour 1992 p. 126). Lord Kinross, one of the few foreigners who had the possibility of travelling in the area those days describes strikingly the dissonance between the language of the community and the language of schools in Kurdistan. He writes: "Education has now reached Hakkari<sup>72</sup> itself, since the policy of the Turks, is no longer to suppress, but to civilise these unruly highland clansmen. But as few of the teachers spoke Kurdish and few of the pupils spoke Turkish, its progress was slow" (as quoted by Jafar 1976 p. 114 n. 115). Even if the teacher happened to know Kurdish it was not of much help for the pupils, however. As Jafar aptly adds, "even if teachers could speak Kurdish they were not allowed [...] to instruct in that language" (Jafar 1976 p. 114 n. 115).

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<sup>71</sup> Indeed there were schools in Turkey in which education was provided in other languages, for example in English, French and German. Kurdish, on the other hand, was strictly forbidden and was many times not even referred to as a language. For example it was claimed to be: "a language with no grammatical rules and with a mixed vocabulary of 8,428 words", few of which were considered to be Kurdish words (Hassanpour 1992 p. 133).

<sup>72</sup> Hakkari is a district in the Kurdistan region, situated in the very southeastern corner of Turkey where the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Iran meet.

## 5.4 1960 - 1980 Political Openings and Turmoil

The interim government initiated preparations for a future return to civil rule. A new and significantly different constitution was ratified by referendum July 9, 1961. Its aim was to support the future stability of the country. Several articles were included in it that opened the way for a more liberal political climate. For example, the new constitution allowed a broader spectrum of unions and political parties, than earlier, to be established (Ahmad 1977; Ahmad 1993).

On January 13, 1961, political parties were again allowed to be registered and elections were held in October the same year. Eleven new parties were registered, two of them to be dominant in parliament during the coming decade. First, the old CHP went into political life with a new manifesto, which emphasized issues of social justice and social security. With ambitions to attract voters from lower strata and the inhabitants of the *gecekondu*,<sup>73</sup> the party was oriented towards Social Democracy. Before the elections in 1965, party leader Bülent Ecevit, positioned the CHP "to the left of the centre", which became a slogan of the party in the 1970s (Ahmad 1977). In addition, the *Justice Party (AP)*,<sup>74</sup> a conservative party, chaired by Süleyman Demirel, was considered as a successor of the old DP.

A more tolerant political climate for parties outside the Kemalist mould thus appeared. Traditionally, ever since Ottoman times, there had been a rift between religion and secularism and also divisions between conservatives and modernisers in Turkish politics. In the 1960s a radicalisation and polarisation of Turkish politics began.

Now the left could enter the legal political scene. In February 1961 the first legal left-wing party in the modern Turkish Republic was established, namely the *Turkish Workers Party (TİP)*,<sup>75</sup> that was modelled after the British Labour Party. In the elections in 1965 the party gained 3% of the votes cast and took seat in parliament. The party was a controversial voice in Turkish politics, for example by paying attention to the Kurdish question. In 1968 the party split due to conflicts over the position taken towards the Soviet Union.

A second tendency was that ultranationalist or right-wing extremist groups appeared on the political scene. Their leader, Alparslan Türkeş, developed an ul-

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<sup>73</sup> *Gecekondu* literally means "built over night". The term refer to illegal settlements without land titles. See, for example, Zürcher 2004 pp. 269-270.

<sup>74</sup> In Turkish: *Adalet Partisi*.

<sup>75</sup> In Turkish: *Türkiye İşçi Partisi*. The oldest left-wing party was the hardline pro-Moscow Communist Party. This party had been banned in the 1920s, yet still had a small and devoted following inside the country.

tra-nationalist programme for the party, one that reminded a lot of the aggressive Kemalism of the 1930s, but with a more violent nationalist tune. For example, the ideology of the party, named CKMP (Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi), included a vision of pan-Turkism and the reunification of all Turks in Asia. In 1965 the party changed its name to the MHP.<sup>76</sup> The party's youth organisation, popularly known as the Grey Wolves, in Turkish Bozkürtler, was founded in the same year. The name of this group alludes to a figure in old Turkish mythology. The group received para-military training and in the late 1960s went to the streets with the explicit aim of intimidating left-wing sympathisers and people with liberal views (Poulton 1997 pp. 139ff.; Zürcher 2004 p. 257).

A third tendency, which appeared, at the end of the decade, was that a religious party, the *National Order Party (MNP)*,<sup>77</sup> was founded in 1970. The party was led by Necmettin Erbakan, at the time an independent parliamentarian from the religious stronghold of Konya in central Turkey (Ahmad 1993 p. 144; Zürcher 2004 p. 259).

In the last years of the 1960s and in the early 1970s the situation in Turkey turned increasingly more violent. There were political clashes in the streets; robberies, kidnappings and pitched battles between left-wing and right-wing groups. According to Zürcher, there is not much doubt that the left-wing groups started the military violence in the streets, from the fall of 1968 onwards, however, the violent actions of the militant right surpassed the violent actions of the left (Zürcher 2004 p. 258).

On March 12, 1971, a group of officers demanded that President Süleiman Demirel step down. A new civil government, composed of technocrats and representatives of various political parties, was installed. Martial law was imposed on several provinces and a new reform package was introduced. Several parts of the constitution were curtailed, which led among other things to repression of the trade unions and the introduction of laws aimed at tightening control over the university campuses. In addition, the military began a witch hunt against progressive people and several persons were arrested. Some decades later the existence of a counter-guerrilla organisation that had been built up with the help of American support in 1959 in order to prevent a communist takeover was revealed (Zürcher 2004 p. 259).

The 1970s became a decade of violent political instability. Elections were held again in October 1973. However, since no party gained an absolute majority of the votes, the establishment of a coalition government was inevitable. The situation of minority- and unstable coalition governments continued throughout the

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<sup>76</sup> In Turkish: *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*.

<sup>77</sup> In Turkish: *Millî Nizam Partisi*.

decade. No less than ten different cabinets were formed in Turkey between 1971 and the military coup in 1980, not a single one of them having a majority of seats in the parliament (Ahmad 1993 pp. 162ff.; Gunter 1990 p. 24; Zürcher 2004 pp. 261ff.; Özdalga 1987 pp. 119-124).

As the political power was incessantly being weakening, the militant violence grow worse. Two notorious incidents, in 1977 and 1978, respectively, contributed to pouring petrol on the fire. In 1977 a Mayday demonstration that had gathered an estimated 200,000 participants at Taksim square in central Istanbul turned into a bloody massacre after unknown gunmen, apparently positioned on one of the surrounding rooftops, opened fire and 39 people were killed (Gunter 1990 p. 30; Pope and Pope 1997 p. 134). In Kahramanmaraş, in southeastern Turkey, the same year, the death toll rose to more than a hundred in a massacre after pogroms, organized by the right-wing extremist Grey Wolves, had been carried out against Alevites. On December 25, 1978, following the incident in Kahramanmaraş, Martial Law was declared first in 13, later extended to 20, of the Turkish provinces, most of them in southeastern Turkey. The political violence gradually escalated. Competing groups, left-wing and right-wing, fought against each other in the streets, controlling whole neighbourhoods and parts of the university campuses that were declared by them to be "liberated zones". In April 1980 the death tolls reached a level of twenty to thirty people a day (Gunter 1990 p. 29). Pope and Pope (1997) describe the increasingly fragmented political structure of Turkey in the 1970s in this way:

For the remainder of the decade the country lurched from clash to clash, gradually dividing not only left from right, but Turk from Kurd, Sunni Muslim from Alevi Muslim.

(Pope and Pope 1997 p. 134).

Gunter (1990) describes the situation as a "political deadlock". Political murders and kidnappings became commonplace. Pope and Pope (1997) note how political and ideological divisions were to be found in most public spheres:

University campuses were the most obvious ideological battleground. But government buildings, teachers' unions, police forces and, towards the end even army boot camps became radically divided. Supporters of each tendency would eat in different canteens or sit on opposite sides of offices.

(ibid. pp. 130-131).

The political violence gradually slid into a situation difficult to manage, often referred to as "anarchy" and "extremism" (Gunter 1990 p. 24; Özdalga 1987; Pope and Pope 1997 Chapter 9; Zürcher 2004 pp. 263-264). Political organisations, left-

and right-wing, were struggling with each other, were splintered, divided and re-organized to form new ramifications of them. Along with the left-right dimension that appeared in Turkish politics in the decade, religious and ethnic political lines could also be distinguished, although these groups were not allowed to organize openly. Several observers state that the combats involved were not on equal terms (Poulton 1997 pp. 161ff.; Zürcher 2004 p. 263). Zürcher asserts that right-wing groups affiliated with the ultra-nationalist MHP were protected, their also infiltrated the police and armed forces (ibid. p. 263).

Pope and Pope (1997) refer to a quotation of the later junta leader General Kenan Evren admitting that the generals supported the right. The situation was not unambiguous, however, since there were some polices who sided with the leftists as well (ibid. p. 133). The political atmosphere in the Kurdistan region, and all over Turkey, in the late 1970s, can best be described as "chaotic" and "anarchic". Political groups controlled "liberated zones" in the towns, and various areas in the countryside as well. Throughout the decade, the governments in power were weak and brief in endurance, unable to manage to fully control the situation in the Kurdish areas. This, in turn, provided the Kurdish activists with a space in which to act, small underground groups mushrooming in theatre groups, political organisations and cultural clubs.

It was during this period of economic, social and political transformations, which gradually turned into a political chaos, that the political generation of interest here became politically active, Kurdish nationalist sentiments emerging and developing into a nationalist protest movement.

## 5.5 Kurdish Resistance

After the rebellion in Dersim was finally stamped out in 1938, it seemed as though all Kurdish resistance in Turkey was crushed, with the exception of a few minor protests that were carried out. The period following this is sometimes referred to by Kurds as being "the quiet years". In the late 1950s there were certain signs of Kurdish nationalist sentiments coming to the surface. A new generation took shape, also in sociological terms. In this section the emergence of the Kurdish resistance movement during the 1960s and the 1970s will be chronicled. First, the early signs of Kurdish resistance, conducted by people that could be labelled as being spearheads, and the repression against it will be described. In the following sections, an overview of the Kurdish nationalist movement will be provided, and some of the main parties and organisations that appeared during this period will be accounted for. As will be demonstrated below, the Kurdish movement that developed within the state of Turkey was immense and is thus difficult to map. Gürbey (1996 p. 23) provides a picture of how the movement was patterned, she's distin-

guishing three dominant currents of it. First, there was a current with roots in Kurdish nationalist circles, essentially the KDP-Iraq, that became manifest with the creation of the *Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey (KDPT)* in 1965. Secondly, Gürbey identifies a current with roots in the legal Turkish left of the 1960s, essentially in the *TİP* and circles of people who left the party and established the *Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (DDKO)*<sup>78</sup> in 1969. Third, there was a current with roots in the radical Turkish left manifested in the establishment of the PKK. Below, a brief background of why Kurds in Turkey began to organize during this period will be provided. Thereafter these currents will be chronicled at some length.

### 5.5.1 "The 49" - the Spearheads

On April 1, 1961, the conducting of a remarkable trial was announced in the Turkish newspapers. After a year of incarceration in the military prison in Sivas in Eastern Turkey, 49 Kurdish men were facing charges of being "Kurdists".<sup>79</sup> The indictment included counts of among other things "disseminating racist propaganda", "separatism", "collaboration with foreign powers" and "instigation of racist hatred". In Kurdish circles, this group of prosecuted Kurdish men is known as "the 49",<sup>80</sup> their symbolic actions in favour of, "equal rights for the people in the East", as they expressed it, marking the beginning of a new era of Kurdish resistance in Turkey.

What these men had purportedly done were seen as serious crimes in Turkey. Despite the mitigating political climate in the 1950s, it was still prohibited to address the Kurdish question overtly. Hence, all expressions of Kurdish identities were, in the terminology of Eidheim "undercommunicated" in public spaces. Why did the first signs of an emerging Kurdish movement appear then? Why did these men attempt to bring the Kurdish question into the public arena? How did it come about that they took the risk of challenging the political hegemony in Turkey?

First, at a personal level, these young people had all been confronted with the picture of themselves as what could best be described as "subordinated others". One of them, Musa Anter, was a prominent Kurdish journalist and author who was arrested for having published a poem in Kurdish. His commitment to the Kurdish question seems to have developed in connection with his education. Born in 1918 and described as a bright young school boy, he was "handpicked" by the local

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<sup>78</sup> In Turkish: Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları.

<sup>79</sup> In Turkish *kürtçü*, see Kendal (1979 p. 74).

<sup>80</sup> See Kendal (1979).

authorities in the city of Mardin and sent to a boarding school in Adana.<sup>81</sup> Thereafter, he was admitted to the Law Department at Istanbul University. In the student dormitories of Istanbul he came in contact with other young male Kurdish students who had been sent to Western Turkey for university studies. Still others were also sent abroad. An old Kurdish activist, Q, with whom I had an informal discussion in Turkey told me that when young Kurds came to Istanbul, or abroad, they became increasingly aware of the existing injustices and social cleavages in Turkey. Furthermore that it was in these settings their resistance and criticism against the existing conditions took shape.

Secondly, at a structural level a number of internal and external developments contributed to paving the way for an emerging oppositional current. Faced with the socio-economic standards of Istanbul, Western Turkey and from abroad the Kurdish students became increasingly aware of the vast economic inequalities and the enormous social differences between Western Turkey and Kurdistan. Musa Anter and his Kurdish comrades began very carefully to bring the question of inequalities between Western Turkey and Kurdistan into the public arenas. Being a group of articulate persons, they worked as spearheads of further Kurdish protests in Turkey.

In the 1950s the political developments in neighbouring Iraq contributed to the rise of emerging nationalist sentiments among the Kurds in Turkey. After the coup d'état by General Qasim and the Free Officers in Iraq on July 14, 1958, the Iraqi Kurdish rebel leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who had been driven out of Iraq in 1945, was allowed to return from his exile in the Soviet Union. President Qasim announced the implementation of a new constitution stating that "Arabs and Kurds are partners in the Iraqi homeland and their national rights are recognised within the Iraqi state" (Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett 1987 p. 79). The Kurds in Iraq were then granted a number of rights in the constitution and were allowed, from 1959 on, to publish a weekly journal, *Xêbat*,<sup>82</sup> in Kurdish. In addition, news of the developments in Iraq and the advances made by its Kurdish population reached the Kurdistan region in Turkey through radio broadcasts in Kurdish from Iraq and from Jerevan in the Armenian Soviet Republic. Purportedly, the broadcasts reached large numbers of people in the Kurdish population in Turkey. In the coming decades, it was above all young people from urban settings in Kurdistan who were caught up in the political struggle.

One of them, the well-known Kurdish politician Mehdi Zana, was at the time a young tailor apprentice in the town of Silvan. Zana describes how important it

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<sup>81</sup> Adana is situated on the Eastern Mediterranean coast in Turkey.

<sup>82</sup> *Xêbat* is Kurdish for struggle.

was to have the opportunity to listen to programmes in Kurdish. He recalls how he used to listen to the radio programme "The voice of the Kurds" together with his friends, despite its being "barely audible", his stating that "for us it was extraordinary" (Zana 1997 p. 5).

An episode in the city of Kirkuk in Iraqi Kurdistan July 14, 1959 came to have violent political repercussions in Turkey and contributed to heightening the anti-Kurdish sentiments.<sup>83</sup> Fighting between rival groups, on the one hand Kurds adhering to the *Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)*, and on the other politically conservative Turkmens, resulted in what were killings of mostly Turkmen people.<sup>84</sup> In Turkey, Deputy Arsim Erin called for revenge, declaring that "Kurds killed our brothers, come let us kill as many Kurds as they killed Turkomans. Are you not going to repay with interest?" (as quoted by McDowall 1996 p. 403). In a protest rally shortly thereafter, 80 Kurdish students in Turkey manifested openly against Erin's statement, which in turn led to the arrestation of "the 49" (Natali 2005 p. 96).

The arrest of "the 49" gave rise to new waves of protests among the Kurds, these in turn followed by new arrests in the early 1960s (Kendal 1979b p. 74; McDowall 1996 p. 403). Kurdish-Turkish relations became strained still more following the military coup of 1960 and deteriorated further as relations between President Qassim and the Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani in Iraq became rapidly more tense. The prospect of a future war in Northern Iraq led to warnings by Cemal Gürsel, president of the military interim government, who announced to the Kurds that: "The army will not hesitate to bombard towns and villages: there will be such a bloodbath that they [any rebels] will be swallowed up in their country" (McDowall 1996 p. 404; see also p. 416 n. 17).

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<sup>83</sup> Kirkuk is a city situated in one of the most oil rich regions of Northern Iraq. The city is essentially inhabited by Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens all making claims to the city. In 1970 an Autonomy Agreement was reached between the Iraqi Baath regime and the Kurds, aimed to guarantee political and national rights to the Kurds. The Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani laid claim to the city, which since then has been a disputed territory. After the US invasion in 2003 the Kurdish government in Northern Iraq seek to integrate Kirkuk into the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region. A referendum was due to 2007, was planned to decide whether the city was to be incorporated into Iraqi Kurdistan Region or not. Still while these lines are written, in the early spring of 2013, the question of Kirkuk remains an inflamed and disputed one.

<sup>84</sup> Details about the number of people killed in this massacre varies between 39 to 79 (see, for example, Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett 1987 p. 71).

### 5.5.2 Eastism

In time a loosely organised informal current generally known as the Doguculuk, meaning "Eastism", developed. Their activities can be described as being a campaign devoted to highlighting the socio-economic conditions of the Kurdistan region in Turkey. Still, it was dangerous to speak openly about the Kurdish question or to publish on the topic. The Kurdish students in Istanbul and Ankara had to be very careful, to avoid discussions being overheard. One interviewee, X, told, for example, that someone found in a police raid having a piece of paper with Kurdish words written on it was in serious trouble, since it was still considered a crime that one could be charged for. Words such as "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" were not mentioned in speeches or written documents, which instead they publicly addressed the "Eastern question", thus attempting very cautiously to bring into open discussion the economic and social situation in "the Southeast" that Kurdistan in Turkey was now publicly labelled (More 1984; White 2000 pp. 131ff.).

One example of such difficulties was that of further restrictions directed then at use of the Kurdish language. The important role of languages, symbolically and practically, in binding people together and creating a common national identity, was apparently taken account of by the Turkish authorities. In the early 1960s Musa Anter returned to Kurdistan and lived in Diyarbakir where he published the journal *Illeri Yurt*<sup>85</sup> dealing mainly with the neglected socio-economic situation in the southeast (Kutschera 1979 pp. 339ff.). Most of these publications were confiscated after a few issues only, and closed down by the Turkish authorities. Several Kurdish journalists, editors and authors were prosecuted and had to pay fines or serve long prison sentences. Further restrictions were declared on the use of the Kurdish language. In January 1967, for example, the following decree was issued by the Turkish government: "it is illegal and forbidden to introduce to, or distribute in, the country, materials in the Kurdish language of foreign origins in any form, published, recorded, taped or material in similar form" (quoted from McDowall 1996 p. 408). Repressive measures were directed at anyone who dared to be defiant of this decree. One of the most conspicuous cases is the one of the author Mehmet Emin Bozarslan. In 1969 he was arrested because of publishing an elementary ABC-book in Kurdish and in addition for having translated and published the Kurdish epic *Mem and Zin* into Turkish. His books were cancelled and were burned by the Turkish authorities, and he had to spend several years in prison because of his books (McDowall 1996 p. 408).

The Kurds, in turn, mobilized. Protest actions, known as "the East Mass Meetings" were organised all over Kurdistan, political pamphlets in defence of the

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<sup>85</sup> *Illeri Yurt* is Turkish for "Forward Fatherland".

people in the east being circulated and manifestations being organised by people belonging to subgroups and to circles of the TIP and DDKO. On August 3, 1967, mass meetings were arranged in several towns and cities in the Kurdistan region in Turkey assembling large numbers of people. Reportedly as many as 10,000 people participated in the town of Silvan and an estimated crowd of 25,000 in Diyarbakir. Among the demonstrators there were people from many social strata; students, tribal leaders, artisans and labours (Zana Gündoğan 2011; Kutschera 1979 p. 340; Kendal 1979b p. 66). In 1969 the mass meetings continued on a still larger scale.

### 5.5.3 An Emerging Kurdish Nationalism

In the coming two decades, the Kurds began increasingly to organise along ethnic lines. Since Kurdish parties by definition were prohibited, it was a movement involving small underground parties, associations and loosely affiliated persons. In its structure, the Kurdish movement reflected the culturally, socially and politically fragmented Kurdish society in Turkey. In public they acted through various legal student, youth and cultural organisations. In its structure the Kurdish movement reflected the cultural, social and political fragmented Kurdish society in Turkey. It was interconnected, in a complex way, with the Turkish society in which it appeared. Bozarslan (1992), for example, describes how "confusing" the impression of Kurdish manifestations in the 1960s and 1970s could be: "photographs of Atatürk (identified as a symbol of the anti-imperialist struggle), Lenin (showing the road of salvation) and Sheikh Said (symbol of the Kurdish resistance) were ranged side by side" (Bozarslan 1992 pp. 97-98).

The first of the three currents distinguished by Gürbey (1996) that I mentioned above was essentially influenced by Kurdish nationalism, in particular KDP-Iraq, which resulted in the founding of the KDPT in 1965. It is said to have appealed to conservative parts of Kurdish society. The party was founded by Faik Bucak and Sait Elçi, who both had been active in conservative Turkish parties. Bucak, who became the party leader, was a lawyer holding a seat in the Turkish Parliament (More 1984 p. 193). He came from an influential agha family in Siverek, in the Urfa district. Sait Elçi, was an accountant who had earlier been active in the DP party in his hometown Bingöl. Allegedly, the party attracted sympathisers among the traditional upper strata of Kurdish society (McDowall 1996 p. 406). In public, the party acted through a small "Turkish" right wing party, the New Turkey Party,<sup>86</sup> (Natali 2005 p. 96). Its first party programme declared that the Kurdish nation is "ancient" and that the aim of the party was to struggle by peace-

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<sup>86</sup> In Turkish: *Yeni Türkiye Partisi*.

ful means and that it was to accept the National Pact,<sup>87</sup> which meant that they did not intend to challenge the territorial integrity of the Turkish state (Gündoğan 2002 p. 22).

It was also demanded in the programme that the Kurds be recognized in the Turkish constitution, that Kurdish should be the official language in Kurdistan and that publishing in that language should be allowed. The party had its stronghold in the area of Bingöl-Diyarbakir and the districts along the Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Iraqi border (see *ibid.* pp. 32, 45).

As a small clandestine party operating in a turbulent political environment, it was vulnerable both to external and internal challenges. Faik Bucak was murdered in a Kurdish protest rally in 1966, allegedly knocked down by agents from the Turkish police. Thereafter, the KDPT weakened quickly. Bucak was succeeded by Sait Elçi, who became party secretary. Elçi in turn was arrested when he participated in the previously mentioned East Mass Meetings in Diyarbakir in 1967 and was sent to serve one year in prison in Western Turkey. The following year the entire group of the central committee and its members in Diyarbakir were arrested and tried in Antalya<sup>88</sup> (Gündoğan 2002 pp. 22ff.). The activities of the party then ceased until 1969. However that year the party splintered due to internal conflicts.

The new faction was led by Sait Kirmizitoprak, better known as dr Şivan. In 1971 the two rivalries were both murdered in Iraq under obscure circumstances. Purportedly Elçi was first killed by doktor Şivan, who in turn a few months later was executed by Barzani. Another version circulating accounts that MIT, the Turkish Political Police, was involved in both murders (van Bruinessen 1988a, Kutschera 1979; see also Gündoğan 2002).

Gürbey (1996) distinguishes a current having roots in the legal Turkish left, essentially the TİP. Radical Kurds in the early 1960s saw the TİP as an alliance between progressive Kurdish and Turkish forces, a party they could be represented in. In fact many important positions in the party were held by Kurds. For example, the General Secretary between 1968-1969 was Tarek Ekinci from Diyarbakir, and Mehmet Ali Aslan was the chairman of the party from 1969 on. At the fourth party congress a resolution was passed that openly recognised the existence of a Kurdish population in Turkey (Kutschera 1979 p. 342; More 1984 p. 69), although in time many Kurds began to question TİP's standpoints regarding the Kurdish question. The critics argued that there was "a core of influential members", all of them ethnic Turks, in leading positions in the party who were indifferent to the situation of the Kurds. In reality, they claimed, TİP's policies supported the feudal structures

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<sup>87</sup> *Misak-I Milli.*

<sup>88</sup> Allegedly except for one whose real name was not revealed.

of Kurdistan, exactly as the already established Kurdish organisations (Imset 1992 p. 387; Kutschera 1979 p. 341). From 1969 onwards the party splintered, due to internal schisms, with the result that the Turkish left became increasingly fragmented and appeared more and more in the form of militant groups, ramifications and factions that were fighting each other (Kendal 1979b pp. 79ff.).

From then on socialist oriented Kurds also began to organise along ethnic lines. In Ankara and in Istanbul in 1969 the organisation the DDKO was formed. In public, the organisation appeared as a society for "revolutionary youths", and the group being described as "the first legal Kurdish organisation" (Entessar 1992 p. 90). Soon the organisation had branches in most Kurdish cities in Turkey (van Bruinessen 1984 p. 8; Kendal 1979b p. 80). From the spring of 1969 until June 1970, due to the relatively open political climate, the DDKO could operate overtly and organized Kurds at the universities and in urban settings. People that belonged to the organisation represented a wide range of political standpoints, although a majority of its members sympathised with TİP, and in many cases membership in the two organisations overlapping (van Bruinessen 1984).

In connection with the growing political instability in the late 1960s, the organisation increasingly attracted the interest of the political police. In October 1970 its front figures were arrested and in the time of the military coup of 1971 the organisation was closed and several of its leading members were imprisoned (More 1984 p. 69). Some of the Kurdish activists escaped the country. Others had to spend the coming years in prison and were not to be released before the time of the election campaigns in 1974. That year amnesties were promulgated that made it possible for many of them who had left the country to return. The time was well chosen. Following the extensive arrests of people, the situation had become tense, especially in the Kurdish districts. During his tours in the election campaign, Bülent Ecevit gave promises to the Kurds of his taking up the Kurdish issues if he should win the elections.

In addition, international developments contributed to putting pressure on the Turkish government. One factor was the oil crisis in 1973-74 that created considerable problems for the Turkish economy. Another one was that of the consequences the Cyprus crisis in 1974 had. Turkey's military intervention resulted in the island becoming partitioned. President Bülent Ecevit became a great hero in the eyes of a majority of Turkish citizens. Internationally, however, the position of the country was strained. The United Nations called on several occasions for the withdrawal of the Turkish troops from Cyprus and the US declared an arms embargo against the country (Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 125, 128). Or as E, one of the interviewees included in the present study said: "it was not possible for the government to deal with such an internal tension"(E).

#### 5.5.4 "Radicalised" and "Ethnicized"

After that Ecevit had decreed a general amnesty in 1974 and many people had been released, the Kurds began to reorganize and a more radical Kurdish movement began to develop. Prisons have often served to nurture the political activism and ideological formation of activists. Thus, Gündoğan has a point in emphasizing the role that having to spend time in prison following the military intervention of 12 March played for many of the Kurdish activists in their ideological schooling and radicalization: "Kurdish political prisoners began to study the Kurdish history, the language etc. more deeply. They discussed intensively the social and political situation of their country (Kurdistan) and re-evaluated their relationship with the Turkish left" (Gündoğan 2002 p. 33). The radicalisation of young Turkish citizens that began in the late 1960s was to continue and intensify during the coming decade. A clear leftward shift could then be distinguished in the Kurdish movement.

There are several factors that may explain the increasing radicalisation of Kurdish activists and politicians during this period. Turkey modernized and the market economy penetrated the country increasingly, resulting in growing socio-economic inequalities. This, together with the increasing unemployment rates, forced increasingly larger numbers of Kurds to migrate to urban centres in Kurdistan and Western Turkey (McDowall 1996 pp. 412ff.; Natali 2005 pp. 95ff.; van Bruinessen 1984, 1988a; White 2000 pp. 133-134). In Western Turkey the Kurdish migrants gathered in the shanty towns, the *gecekondu*s, that mushroomed around the cities.

Simultaneously, there was social unrest among young people. Turkey's investments in higher education did not meet the needs of the increasing numbers of young students aspiring for an academic degree. Far from all of them who wanted to could get to study at a university. McDowall (1996) points out that in 1977 there were 360,000 applicants but only 60,000 places, at the same time as the unemployment rates were increasing in the 1970s (McDowall 1996 p. 411).

One can see here a process of radicalisation and ramifications of it within the nationalist camp emanating from the KDPT. Splinterings of this party continued in the 1970s. As many observers (see, for example, Entessar 1992; Gunter 1990 pp. 16, 65; Kendal 1979b; Kutschera 1979 p. 340; More 1984; White 2000 pp. 131ff.) point out, the conservative oriented leadership of the old party failed to respond to the ongoing radicalisation among young and intellectual Kurds in Turkey. As a result they became manouvered out by factions increasingly influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideologies. According to Gunter (1990) the KDTP had continued to exist "as little more than an appendage of Mullah Mustafa Barzani's KDP" (ibid. p. 66) after the former leader Elçi had been killed in Iraq. In this context it is of relevance to note that the Iraqi Kurdish movement was weakened during this period.

The Kurds in Iraq had been promised autonomy in 1970 (Vanly 1979 pp. 168ff.). When the agreement between the Iraqi regime and the Iraqi Kurdish mo-

movement collapsed then their leader Barzanî instigated a rebellion that was to continue until 1975 (ibid. pp. 182ff.). During this uprising, the Iraqi Kurds were supported by the Shah of Iran. When a peace agreement was reached between the Shah and the Iraqi Baath regime in 1975, which entailed the Shah immediately withdrawing his support of Barzanî, why the Iraqi Kurdish rebellion collapsed as did the prospects of a Kurdish autonomy in Kurdistan Iraq (Vanly 1979 pp. 168ff.; McDowall 1996 pp. 335-337; Natali 2005 pp. 60-61).

In 1978 the Marxist wing of the KDPT formally established a new group which was called the *Kurdistan National Liberators (KUK)*. This group emerged in the aftermath of the defeat of the Iraqi Kurdish leader Barzanî in 1975. The group operated across state borders and managed to gain strong support in the districts of Mardin in the Kurdistan region in Turkey. This group allegedly continued to support the Iraqi KDP. It claimed to be the legitimate representatives of Barzanî's old party in Turkey (Imset 1992 p.397, van Bruinessen 1992). Like many other Kurdish political groups of the time it was weakened by internal splinterings and, reportedly, was finally divided in 1978.

The group once led by Dr. Sivan (Shwan) continued its activities, first named PPKK, the *Kurdish Vanguard Workers Party (PPKK)* founded thereafter in the 1970s, after the dividing up of the KDPT. Within the Kurdish movement it was known as *Pesheng*, the Kurdish word for Vanguard (More 1984 pp. 194f.; Imset 1992 p. 389).

This process of radicalisation also took place in the movement having roots in TIP and DDKO. Immediately after the amnesty in 1974 an attempt was made to unify all progressive Kurds into a single organisation. A group of members of the banned DDKO founded then the *Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations (DDKD)*.<sup>89</sup> At that same time too, preparations were made for establishing a radical Kurdish party that was to be connected with the organisation but was to operate clandestinely. The twists and turns surrounding the establishment of this underground party may appear confusing. The plan was that the party should be named Kurdistan's Workers Party and be given the acronym PKK. However, before they launched the name in a broader circle of Kurds, the radical group around Abdullah Öcalan announced the establishment of a party with the same name. The party connected with the DDKD was then given the same name in Turkish: *Kürdistan İşçi Partisi (KİP)*. The emerging Kurdish left came to meet the same fate as the Turkish one did. Soon this organisation splintered into a myriad of different groups and branches, many of which in time splintered up in turn (van Bruinessen 1984 p. 10; Kutschera 1979 p. 79). A few of them will be described briefly below

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<sup>89</sup> In Turkish: *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği*.

in order to provide a picture of the character of the movement, with all its differences and overlappings.

One group with roots in the DDKD, named *Rizgari*<sup>90</sup> was founded in 1976 around a group of intellectuals who published a magazine of the same name. Their magazine was prohibited after the first issue, but they continued to publish it illegally. The group aspired to establish a Kurdish socialism independent of the two communist blocs of the Soviet Union and China. *Rizgari* was weakened, however, because of internal adversaries and splinterings (Entessar 1992 p. 93; Imset 1992 p. 395; More 1984 p. 199). In 1979 a splinter group named *Ala Rizgari* was formed.<sup>91</sup> The adherents of this group defined themselves as "non-communists" and advocated that "democratic organisations" should play a prominent role within the Kurdish liberation movement. In their view the Kurdish proletariat could not be in the forefront of a socialist revolution in Kurdistan, since, as they argued, no strong proletariat had developed in the area because of the feudal socio-economic structures that still predominated. Because of the criticism the group directed against the Soviet Union, some commentators believed them to be Trotskists (Gunter 1990 p. 66ff.; Imset 1992 p. 396; More 1984 p. 200).

*Kawa* was a small group that emanated from the DDKD organisation, the name of it alluding to a legendary blacksmith who plays a heroic role in Kurdish mythology.<sup>92</sup> This group allegedly broke away from the DDKD after internal debates about relations with the Soviet Union. The members of *Kawa* took a strong anti-Soviet position and allegedly developed a Maoist ideology (Imset 1992 p. 392). However, most of the activities of the party took place in urban settings in Istanbul and Kurdish towns. From 1977 on the group was divided into a handful of minor groups, purportedly because of internal struggles and debates about China's Third World Theory (Imset 1992 p. 393; More 1984 p. 200; Gunter 1990 p. 67).

In addition there is one left wing group that especially merits presentation. A number of former TÎP sympathisers came together in a political group outside the DDKO structure that still exists today and gain some influence among Kurds living abroad. A number of progressive individuals gathered in the *Socialist Party of Kurdistan of Turkey (SPKT)*<sup>93</sup> that was established in 1974 and still exists.<sup>94</sup> The

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<sup>90</sup> *Rizgari* is Kurdish for liberation.

<sup>91</sup> *Ala Rizgari* is Kurdish for "The flag of liberty".

<sup>92</sup> The legend of the blacksmith Kawa (in Kurdish) or Kaveh (in Persian) who led an uprising against Zahhak - an evil tyrant ruler with serpents growing from his shoulders- exists in Kurdish and Iranian mythology.

<sup>93</sup> In Kurdish: *Partiya Sosyalist a Kurdistanê Tirkîyê*.

<sup>94</sup> In the literature varying information is provided concerning the year in which the party was established. Sometimes it is said that the party was formally established in 1979, although the long

name was later changed to the *Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK)*. For 29 years it was to be led by General Secretary Kemal Burkay, a Zaza speaking lawyer from the area of Dersim, who once belonged to "the 49" and is a distinguished Kurdish poet and writer. In the 1970s the party published two journals, one in Kurdish, *Roja Welat*, and one in Turkish, *Özgürlük Yolu*.<sup>95</sup>

The PSK mainly attracted members from urban settings, working class people and people organised in the radical trade unions. The ideology of the party can be described as being a moderate variant of socialism mixed with pragmatic claims to independence. In its program it is stated that it is a party of "working class people" and "poor farmers in Kurdistan", a future revolution in two stages also being predicted. Gunter (1990 p. 64) quotes from the party program: "Because Kurdistan has not got its national independence yet and done away with feudalism, the character of the revolutionary stage facing the Kurdish population is the national democratic revolution. This revolution is going to take the colonial fetters off the people, wipe out the foreign domination and liberate the Kurds" ... "Our Party knows very well that only socialism can put an end to exploitation and backwardness" (ibid.; see also Enessar 1992 p. 92). Hence, Kurdish self-determination was a central theme in the programme of this party. The party took a pragmatic position concerning a future independence for the Kurds, however, pointing out that there are two possible solutions to the Kurdish question: "there will be set up either a federation in Turkey or the Kurdish people will establish their own independent state. ... Time and the historical development will tell" (Gunter 1990 p. 64).

Also the PSK advocated that the struggle for liberation to be conducted by peaceful political means (see Burkay 2004 pp. 78ff.) and criticised other Kurdish and Turkish groups that chose to struggle by armed means. In the view of the General Secretary Kemal Burkay, the armed struggle in Turkey had been inconsiderate and contraproductive, "However before the military coup of 12 March 1971 the Turkish left wing movement, out of impatience, chose underground activities and misdirected armed actions. And the Kurdish nationalist movement before 12th September 1980, without weighing pros and cons, also decided to wage an armed struggle" (Burkay 2004 p. 84).

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term general secretary Burkay states that it was in 1974 (Burkay 2004). The name of the party has later been changed into *Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan* (PSK). Since the party still exist it will henceforth be referred to with that name.

<sup>95</sup> *Roja Welat* is Kurdish for "Sun of Homeland" and *Özgürlük Yolu* is Turkish for "The Path of Freedom".

Hence, as the argument goes, organisations that opted for an armed struggle were "trapped" by the Turkish government, since the armed struggle contributed to heightening fascist and racist overtones and were taken as an excuse for the Turkish authorities continuing to pursue its repressive policies against the Kurds. Burkay directed sharp criticisms at the PKK, the policies of which purportedly had had the effect that, "instead of fighting the bourgeois system, directs an aggressive policy against the revolutionary movements of Turkey and of Kurdistan" (White 2000 p. 157; see also More 1984 p. 185). In recent years, however, Burkay have criticised the double standards of the European politics concerning the PKK. In a statement he comments that the PKK has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU in the following way:

It makes one wonder why such a resolution was not passed when the PKK were resorting to acts of violence in the 1980s and up to the mid 1990s, particularly within Europe. Instead the resolution is passed at a time when the PKK have ended their armed activities. It is also clear that the resolution has been passed in an atmosphere following September 11<sup>th</sup> and is a result of persistent demands from Turkey.

(Burkay 2004 p. 152).

His conclusion is that the EU policies in reality serve to support the Turkish government's "uncompromising and aggressive stance" concerning the Kurdish issue (ibid. p. 153).

Over the years the SPK has actively been calling for the establishment of a Kurdish national front in Turkey and been involved in the formation of a number of alliances with the Kurdish parties in the neighbouring states (see Burkay 2004 pp. 66-68). A meeting between Kemal Burkay and the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan took place in Damascus in 1993, after the latter had offered a unilateral cease fire in the guerilla war that it waged against Turkey (White 2000 p. 69; see also Marcus 2007 p. 217; Gürbey 2000 p. 82). Like most Kurdish parties at the time, the SPK operated in public through a legal youth front, the *Revolutionary Peoples Cultural Association (DHKD)*.

The politician and taylor from Silvan mentioned above, Mehdi Zana, affiliated with the SPK, became the elected mayor of the city of Diyarbakir in 1977. He ran as an independent candidate in the municipal elections. Pictures from those times show his supporters celebrating his victory in huge processions in the streets of the city. By the political and military authorities his success at the polls was met with open disapproval, however:

I was elected from fourteen candidates, with about 54 percent of the vote - two times more than the candidate from the incumbent party of Bülent Ecevit. The Tur-

Turkish authorities, the prefect and the military commander were appalled by my election but I was elected democratically

(Zana 1997 p. 7)

Mehdi Zana held his position as mayor of Diyarbakir until the military intervention that occurred in 1980. He was then arrested and imprisoned for many years because of his activism in the SPK.

### 5.5.5 The PKK

Finally, Gürbey (1996) distinguishes a third current in the Kurdish movement that appeared in this period. Since Kurdish organisations were prohibited many Kurds were involved in the Turkish revolutionary left-wing movements (Bozarslan 2000; Gunter 1990; White 2000). In the mid 1970s, a Kurdish group with roots in the Turkish radical left entered the arena, namely the *PKK*.

At first the group became known as *Apocus* or *Apocuslar*, a name based on the word Apo, which is Kurdish for "uncle", and was the nickname of the party leader. Abdullah Öcalan was born around 1950 in a village in the Urfa province in Kurdistan. He was given a scholarship to the Political Science Department at Ankara University. It is reported that he was seen initially as a kind of a steady model student. Soon, however, he became caught up in radical political movements and finally dropped out of the university. Abdullah Öcalan was first a member of a small leftist group known as *Ankara Higher Education Union (AYÖD)*<sup>96</sup> (White 2000 pp. 135ff.). At that time Öcalan lived in a student collective in an apartment in the suburb of Tuzluçayır. It is told how young radicals and militants were coming and going in the apartment, some of them staying there for longer and others for shorter periods of time. Radical students used to gather in the apartment often for night-long discussions. Allegedly, Öcalan and the circle of people surrounding him were at the start tolerant and quite open to differing opinions, but gradually became more and more dogmatic.<sup>97</sup> In 1974 he decided, together with a group of his ideological closest friends, to form, together with a group of his ideological closest friends, an informal pro-Kurdish group, *Kurdistan Revolutionaries* (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a p. 128). In the inaugural

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<sup>96</sup> This is the Turkish acronym for: *Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği*, that according to White was based on an earlier "Guevaraist" organisation, the *Turkish Popular Liberation Party-Front (THKP-C)* (see White 2000 p. 135; see also Gunter 1990).

<sup>97</sup> Informant's account.

meeting, problems of Kurdistan and the situation of the Turkish left-wing movement were discussed.

According to available sources the Kurdish issue was not given a very prominent rank in this meeting. According to Gunter (1990 pp. 58ff.), it was decided that the group, from that day on, should be distinguished from the Turkish left. This first period has been characterised as being their years of "ideological group formation" (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a p. 135). Gradually, the group moved its activities to the towns and cities in the Kurdistan region in Turkey, where they soon came in conflict with other Kurdish groups and parties (see, for example, Imset 1992 p. 13).

The period of 1977 to 1979 can be seen as having been "the stage of party construction" (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a p. 135). On November 27, 1978 the Apocular group organised to form a political party, the PKK. At the same time, a party programme, containing its founding ideological principles, was proclaimed. It was established in the party programme that Kurdistan was to be considered a "classical colonial country" that was held down by four colonial powers, namely Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria (Gunter 1990 p. 59). As Gunter points out, it is interesting to note that the Soviet Union was not mentioned in this context. The party programme also established Kurdistan being "semi-feudal" and "underdeveloped", criticising members of the bourgeoisie and the land-owning class who cooperated with the colonial powers for betraying their national identities. Examples mentioned in the party programme were such acts as to participating in the Turkish parliament and tolerating the establishment of the Turkish school system in Kurdistan. In the view of the PKK, these activities were to be considered as interactions with the colonial powers, their serving to destroy the national identities of the Kurds (van Bruinessen 1988a pp. 40-46; Gunter 1990 pp. 71ff.).

The party initiated its armed struggle for independence in 1979. During this period, their actions were essentially directed against the feudal system in the Kurdistan region in Turkey. A powerful and influential landowner, Mehmed Celâl Bucak, a parliamentarian for the conservative party, was selected as a target for their first armed attack. The attempt to murder Bucak failed, however. As a result, a bloody feud commenced between, the Bucak family, on the one hand, purportedly supported by "elements of state authority" (Gunter 1990), and the PKK on the other, assisted by two minor tribes loyal to them. As the political climate turned more violent, the armed attacks spread and soon involved several landowners and left wing-groups in the clashes that took place.

Gunter also points out that another result was that large numbers of youths joined the armed PKK geurilla groups. The PKK attempted on their part to exploit local conflicts for their own purposes. It is reported, for instance, that in the Mardin province the party was involved in armed conflicts with the KUK, which had been active in the area for a long time and had strong support among the people residing there (van Bruinessen 1988a p. 42).

When the military coup took place in Turkey on September 12, 1980, the leadership of the party had already managed to escape to Syria. Öcalan settled down in Damascus and could, with the help of the Syrian government, establish training camps in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a pp. 130ff.; Gunter 1990 pp. 71ff., 99). As has also been observed, the persecution and repression of those PKK members who were still left in Turkey in the wake of the military intervention was particularly severe (Amnesty International 1984).

The politicians had lost control over the situation. The Army, seeing themselves as guardians of the republic, were planning to step in. This time, the coup took a long time to mature, the plans made being more detailed than before, since the military saw it as important to not repeat the mistakes they made in their earlier interventions in 1960 and 1971. Early in the morning of September 12, 1980, General Kenan Evren declared that the military had taken charge of political power. In a communiqué sent out by the military, it was announced that the aim of the military was to "restore the authority of the state and remove the obstacles in the way of the democratic order" (quoted from Pope and Pope 1997 p. 142). The communiqué continues:

The state has become unworkable and constitutional organs have fallen into dissension and silence. The sterile and uncompromising position of political parties mean they have not been able to create the necessary unity. Destructive and separatist forces...have put the life and property of citizens i danger...promoting reactionary and other perverted ideologies...that have brought us to the brink of division and civil war.

(quoted from Pope and Pope 1997 pp. 142-143).

This time the military junta had prepared for fundamental changes. Immediately after the coup, the parliament was dissolved, and all political parties and two of the most radical unions being suspended. All political leaders, with exception of the ultranationalist Alparslan Türkeş, were arrested. Equally interesting to note is the role played by Turgut Özal, a liberal economist with a background in the World Bank and responsible for a reform programme under President Demirel's cabinet. Özal was appointed Prime Minister under the junta between 1980-82 (Zürcher 2004 p. 306). A new constitution was elaborated and was subjected to referendum on November 7, 1982. Voting were made mandatory. The result arrived at was that the constitution was approved by 91,4 % of the votes casted. Zürcher (2004) points out that a high percentage of "no" votes was only to be found in the Kurdish provinces (ibid. p. 281).

The new constitution strengthened the power of the president, a temporary article sanctioning the presidency of General Kenan Evren for seven years, after the constitution was adopted. Many of the liberties that had been granted in the constitution of 1960 were then restricted or suspended (Zürcher 2004 p. 281). Several

Articles were clearly aimed at protecting the integrity of the country. The aspirations for a unitary Turkish identity were expressed particularly in those parts of the constitution concerned with ethnicity and nationality. For example, one Article stipulated that: "Everyone bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk" and Article 3 established that "The State's language is Turkish". A passage in Article 26 read: "No language prohibited by law shall be used in the expression and determination of thought", its purportedly being aimed at the Kurdish language.

On November 6, 1983, elections were held. A few months earlier the establishment for new parties was permitted. Out of 15 parties that were registered, only 3 were approved by the *National Security Council* (Ahmad 1993 p. 188). In the elections, the *Motherland Party (ANAP)*<sup>98</sup> gained a majority of the votes. Its leader Turgut Özal formed a cabinet and was a few years later, more precisely in 1989, elected as the first civilian president after the coup, a post he held until his sudden death in 1993 (Zürcher 2004 pp. 282, 291-295; McDowall 1996 p. 437).

## 5.6 Defeat and After

### 5.6.1 Eliminated

Following the coup, efforts were made to stamp out the Kurdish current and a more stringent control of the public arena was established. In this period the Kurdish movement became further "ethnicized" (Natali 2005 Chapter 5). A significant example of this was the new language law, no. 2932, introduced on October 19, 1983, the underlying implication that the Kurdish language was totally forbidden (McDowall 1996 p. 424; Natali 2005 p. 109). Initially, in the first article of the law, the language question is presented in terms of being a security matter, "in order to protect the indivisible unity of the state, with its land and nation; the national sovereignty, the national security and public order". Its second article indicates what languages could not be used in Turkey: "No language may be used for the explanation, the dissemination, and the publication of ideas other than the first language of each country which recognises the Republic of Turkey". In Article 3 finally the native language of Turkish citizens is specified:

The mother tongue of the Turkish citizen is Turkish. It is forbidden a) to develop any form of activity in which a language other than Turkish is used an disseminated

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<sup>98</sup> In Turkish: *Anavatan Partisi*.

as the mother tongue; b) at gatherings or demonstrations, to carry posters, bannes, signs or other such objects written in another language ... or to broadcast records, tapes or video-cassettes or other objects of the media in another language without the consent of the highest official in the region.

(as quoted by McDowall 1996 p. 443 n. 12).

As an effect of this law the private use of Kurdish became a criminal offence. Immediately following the military coup d'état, the numbers of arrested, detained and tortured increased dramatically throughout Turkey. The country was now under the direct rule of the military (Ahmad 1993 p. 181; Zürcher 2004 p. 278). For years to come, people suspected of "terrorism" were seized and mass trials continued on into the early 1990s. Large numbers of university teachers and people employed in the public sector were arrested or suspended from their work. It is difficult to obtain exact figures on the number of people arrested in the aftermath of the coup. Gunter states: "In the year following the September 12 intervention, a total of 43,140 persons, including 21,864 leftists, 5,953 rightists and 2,043 separatists (Kurds) and 13,289 people whose political orientation had not been established were arrested" (Gunter 1990 p. 31). Zürcher (2004) found that in 1982 the number of arrests had risen to 122,600, and still in 1983 as many as 80,000 remained in prison, 30,000 of them still waiting for trial (ibid. p. 279). According to Amnesty International (1984 p. 2), in referring to the Turkish Milliyet, 178,565<sup>99</sup> people were arrested, were taken into custody and were interrogated by the security forces. Most of the cases of torture took place in police stations while the arrested were still being held in detention incommunicado.<sup>100</sup> In huge and very protracted mass trials, people were sentenced to serve long terms of imprisonment. Some

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<sup>99</sup> McDowall (1996 pp. 413-414) comments on the varying figures of arrested Kurds in the purges following the military take over: "But this was achieved at an enormous cost. During their period of office, according to their own statistics over 60,000 people were arrested. Of these 54 % were leftists, 14 % were rightists and only 7 per cent Kurdish separatists. While such figures bore out the incontestable fact that like all Turkish administrations, the generals were much more harsh on the Left than on the Right, it was difficult to believe the statistics on the Kurds. It was important for Ankara on the one hand to warn for the danger of Kurdish separatism but on the other to deny the actual extent of it. So the number of officially arrested were limited to less than 4,500. The International League of Human Rights provided a very different story. It claimed that no fewer than 81,000 Kurds had been detained between September 1980 and September 1982. This suggested the problem of Kurdish dissidence was much more widespread than the generals cared to admit. The fact that two thirds of the Turkish army was deployed to Kurdistan in order to guarantee its tranquillity was not advertised."

<sup>100</sup> In Turkey the period of time after arrest a detainee could be deprived of communication with, as for example relatives and lawyers, i.e. be held in detention incommunicado, was 30 days. During the period after the military intervention of 1980 this period was extended to 90 days. The period being reduced thereafter to 45 days in those areas still under martial law.

were released waiting for the pending trials, many of these persons seizing the opportunity then to leave the country (Amnesty International 1984; Gunter 1990; Natali 2005).

Inside the prisons the conditions were reported to have been bad, if not to say horrific. Torture was widespread. Various reports and testimonies indicated prisoners to protest incessantly through hunger strikes and to in some cases sign protest petitions against "inhuman treatment". F.H Koers, a Dutch lawyer who, on mission for three different organisations, attended mass hearings in Turkey in 1982, also reports of defendants complaining at the trials of their confessions having been obtained under torture: "At the opening of the session of a trial known as the 'Fatsa trial' on 12 January, one of the defendants refused to cooperate in establishing his identity until the court first heard his complaints concerning treatment in detention and during interrogations. The spokesperson for the court said that complaints should be filed at 'the appropriate place' and that they were not in order at the time. The defendant replied that up to that time the many complaints made by the detainees had yielded no results" (Amnesty International 1984 p. 7).

A personal picture of the conditions prevailing inside the prisons of Turkey is given in Mehdi Zanas' published memories of his 11 years in the notorious prison No. 5 in Diyarbakir.<sup>101</sup> Mehdi Zana, who as pointed out previously, was the mayor of Diyarbakir at the time of the coup. In his capacity of being a leftist and a well known Kurdish activist, he was one of the first to be arrested. On September 24, 1980, he was detentioned and sent to the then newly constructed military prison Diyarbakir. His case opened in May 1981 and closed in the fall of 1983. The verdict was that he was sentenced to 24 years of imprisonment for "offending Turkish nationalist sentiments" (Zana 1997 p. 6).

Zanas' and others stories (see, for example, Amnesty International 1984) bear witness to the conditions in the prison being extremely harsh. It was overcrowded, housing far more inmates than what the buildings were planned for.

The prisoners were subjected both to physical and to psychological torture. Zana and others were repeatedly tortured during their time in prison. However, his account of the years he spent behind the bars is essentially a "counter narrative". Zana describes how he was determined to resist, at least mentally, the grim treatments in order to provide a role model for the other prisoners, most of them much younger than he. However, in particular resistance among the PKK-adherents is reported to have been well-organized and to have contributed to that the group gaining respect. The prison is known in addition to have been a training ground for that party (Eccarius-Kelly 2010 p. 110; Marcus 2007 p. 67). Not all of them could

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<sup>101</sup> Mehdi Zana has been imprisoned and sentenced on three occasions and has spent 16 years in Turkish prisons altogether because of his political commitments.

stand the inhuman treatment they were subjected to in the prison. Some of them went insane, others were beaten to death or chose to commit suicide (Zana 1997). According to McDowall (1996), official records acknowledge that 32 people died in custody in Diyarbakir between 1981 and 1984. However, the author adds that unofficial sources claim that it was at least twice as many (ibid. p. 425). In his account, Zana recalls several former political colleagues and friends who ended their lives in the prison:

On the night of January 20 and 21 1984 Rezi Aytur a member of the Kurdish movement Ali Rizgari hung himself in his cell. 'I love life but not to suffer this torture. This is how I protest. I wish bravery to all my prisonmates'. In the meantime a group of agitators were driven to the steam room for special treatment. One of them, a remarkable man that I had known for years, Necmettin Büyükkaya, had his skull fractured. He died on January 24, 1984.

(Zana 1997 p. 31).

Violence, threats and reprisals became part of everyday life in most of the Kurdistan region for years to come. Repression not only took place in the prisons, but most of the Kurdish districts had been under emergency laws since 1977, and after the coup they were ruled under martial law for several years. In 1987, martial law was lifted to be immediately replaced by the *Emergency Rule Law (OHAL)* in 13 provinces. According to OHAL, extraordinary powers were given to the regional governor stipulating that: "The governor could empower security authorities to search homes and party offices without warrant, order evacuation of entire villages, and restrict public meetings" (Watts 2010a p. 89). Four of the provinces remained under OHAL until 2002 (Jongerden 2007 p. 84 n. 38). The number of army troops increased to 200,000 in the early 1990s (McDowall 1996 p. 425). When Mehdi Zana was arrested in 1980, the Kurdish issue was still a marginal one in the political discourse in Turkey.<sup>102</sup> When he was released in 1991, it had turned into the most burning domestic issue of all. In the aftermath of the coup, the Kurdish movement became more or less eliminated. In the 1980s the PKK was to be the dominant Kurdish party in Turkey.

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<sup>102</sup> Geerse for example, refers to interviews with Kurdish left-oriented migrants in Istanbul in the 1970s, stating that people of the left generally did not separate between Kurds, Turks and Alevis then (Geerse 2011 p. 169).

## 5.6.2 Armed Struggle

It was rather widely believed that after the extensive political purges that took place, and the increasing military presence in Kurdistan following the military intervention, the armed resistance in the region was finally suffocated. From Syrian soil, however, the PKK then began to prepare for its revival. The period between 1979 and 1980 was a time "when the guerilla warfare was prepared and organised" (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a p. 135). At the party congress in 1982, the PKK adopted a strategy in three phases, "defence, balance and offence" (Gunter 1990 p. 72; Jongerden 2007 pp. 60-61). The process with a guerrilla war was to start and hopefully develop into a "conventional battle" against the Turkish military forces. Portrayed as different ideologically from other Kurdish groups in Turkey, the PKK openly supported the idea of an independent Kurdish state across the present borders of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria.

An incident on the night August 14-15, 1984, in the small towns of Eruh and Şemdinli at the Syrian border marks the beginning of the bloody protracted armed uprising against the Turkish state that was to last for years to come (Pope and Pope 1997 p. 258). The attack was carried out by the *Kurdistan Freedom Brigades (HRK)*,<sup>103</sup> the first front organisation within the PKK structure to be declared. After the attack, the rebels withdraw to training camps in Iraq. The geopolitical situation in the early 1980s was propitious for the PKK, the ongoing war between Iraq and Iran resulting in free reins being given to the Kurdish parties in northern Iraq because of the government troops of that country being needed at the frontiers. An agreement with the Iraqi KDP made it possible for the PKK commandos to locate their forces there (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a p. 131; Marcus 2007 pp. 69ff.; White 2000 p. 136). A group of "recognisers" was purportedly sent secretly into Turkey in 1982 with the mission of examining the political situation there, gathering information concerning the strength of the Turkish military in the Kurdish areas, place hideouts in the mountains and, if possible, establish contacts with local people (Gunter 1990 p. 71; Imset 1992 p. 31).

HRK was soon reorganised into the *Peoples Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGK)*,<sup>104</sup> later complemented by an organisation mainly concerned with political activities, the *National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK)*.<sup>105</sup> Within 9 years the PKK were growing from a group of some hundred rebels to a well or-

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<sup>103</sup> In Kurdish: *Hêzên Rizgariya Kurdistan*.

<sup>104</sup> In Kurdish: *Artesa Rizgariya Gêlê Kurdistan*.

<sup>105</sup> In Kurdish: *Eniya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan*.

ganised group consisting of male and female fighters.<sup>106</sup> Between 1984 and 1987 the main goals of the struggle were military plants, patrols and village guards. A further goal of the activities was to recruit new guerrilla troops among "the revolutionary people", that is the poor peasants and unemployed who should be educated in guerrilla warfare (Marcus 2007 p. 37; Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011a pp. 128-131).

The PKK fought a hardcore guerilla war during the 1980s. Rugman and Hutchinson were among the foreign journalists who had an opportunity to visit the PKK training camps in the Bekaa Valley. They reported on the hard drill and discipline found among the guerilla troops in the training camps:

Physical training for recruits began at six in the morning, followed by several hours of indoctrination in class rooms decorated with pictures of Marx, Lenin and Che Guevara. The guerrillas were told the 'errors' of other tribal or non-tribal violent groups, and taught how to incite civilians to revolt. The PKK leader presented himself as a concoction of ideologies, telling his disciples that he was not only a Marxist-Leninist, breaking the mould of traditional Kurdish society, but also a Kurdish patriot and a good Muslim. Visitors reported that Öcalan's fervent followers varied in age from 9 to 50, and that they slept in tents and unheated rooms to prepare for life in the mountains of southeast Turkey.

(Rugman and Hutchinson 1996 p. 32).

However, some of the methods employed were criticized. The PKK had become known for its brutal methods and its attacks on civilians. Many commentators provided examples of internal critics and dissidents having been subjected to grim reprisals. Several testimonies given by dropouts tells about party members being obliged to engage in self-criticism (White 2000 pp. 144ff.; Imset 1992 p. 83; Marcus 2007 pp. 96, 138ff., 259). Entessar (1992) points out that the reading of texts other than those produced by the party was strictly forbidden (Entessar 1992 p. 96).

In 1990 the party decided to stop its attacks and massacres against the civilians, and that guerilla troops committing actions of these types should be punished. In the early 1990s the party's popularity among the Kurdish population increased. Marcus (2007) points out, for example, how the good reputation of the PKK came for the population of the Mount Cudi. The soldiers became known for "their honesty and respect of their people" (p. 119). According to Marcus the

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<sup>106</sup> In the early years of the PKK, the overwhelming majority of its guerilla troops were men, the number of women beginning to increase in the early 1990s. According to Marcus (2007 p. 173), about a third of the PKK troops in 1993 were women.

moral of such stories was that "the rebels were exacting but fair, and those who did not cross the PKK would not face problems " (ibid. p. 119).

In 1993 and 1995 a unilateral ceasefire was declared by the PKK. However since the party was understood by the government in Ankara as being a "terrorist organisation" their unilateral peace offer was not responded to (McDowall 1996 p. 436). The armed struggle of the PKK continued during the 1990s, although the rhetoric and the political claims had changed. On March 17, 1993, the party leader Öcalan proclaimed a unilateral cease fire from March 20 to April 15, and attempted to initiate a dialogue with other Kurdish party leaders (Kutschera 1994 p. 15). The Turkish authorities did not accept Öcalan's offer. Öcalan decided in turn to extend the cease fire. About the same time, an agreement between the PKK and other Turkish-Kurdish parties was arrived at. In May the cease fire was broken after a group of PKK soldiers, allegedly without order from Öcalan, attacked a bus filled with Turkish soldiers.

In the early 1990s the Turkish president Turgut Özal took a pragmatic position and initiated a number of openings regarding the Kurds, supporting discussions for a solution of the Kurdish issue (Kirisci 2010 p. 59; McDowall 1996 pp. 429, 431; Natali 2005 p. 109). Meetings between the Turkish government and the PKK started during his time in office. President Özal died of a heart failure in April 1993, and for many years rumours circulated that he had been murdered, his relatives claiming that he had been poisoned. In 2012 an autopsy was finally made, the results showed that his body contained poison, however, the actual cause of his death could not be established (Reuters 2012-12-12). After Özals' death, the idea of a possible dialouge with the PKK was abandoned, although, according to an article published in MERIP-reports the meetings continued sporadically in the 1990s and further meetings carried out between 2009 and 2011 (Hess 2012).

### 5.6.3 The "Social Earthquake"

On September 20, 1992, a 74 year old man was suddenly gunned down at the outskirts of the city of Diyarbakir. It was the author and poet Musa Anter, who had been a front figure in Eastism (see section 5.4.2). Together with a friend he was visiting a Cultural Festival in the city of Diyarbakir. He was probably murdered by a death squad with connections to the security forces and in 2006 Turkey was found guilty for this murder by the European Court of Human Rights (see, for example, Today's Zaman August 27, 2008). The news of his death was a shock to Kurdish as well as Turkish intellectuals, since Anter was seen as a man of dialogue advocating peaceful means as a mode of operation.

Turkey is a country that long has been accused of human right abuses. In the years following the military coup in 1980 however, the number of reported cases of assault increased dramatically. In the early 1990s, the numbers of extra-judicial

imprisonements and disappearances escalated dramatically (Amnesty International 1990). Human Rights reports indicate how particularly vulnerable the situation of people was who took a position critical of the state ideology. The numbers of civilian - journalists, intellectuals and others - who became victims of the violence, Musa Anter being only one of them, amounted to thousands of persons.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the war between the PKK and the Turkish army resulted in civilian casualties and affected most people in the Kurdistan region in Turkey very negatively. The Turkish government basically responded to the activities of the PKK in two ways. The one was by intensification of military activities in the region. The other was by the establishment of a Kurdish militia. The village guards were employed by the state and were armed by the military for self-protection purposes. These guards generally were recruited from tribes classified as being loyal to the government having right or far right political sympathies or were considered "criminal" or "delinquent" by the government (see, for example, McDowall 1996 p. 422). Far from all of the village guards had enrolled voluntarily, however.

In many cases, manpower was offered to the militia by tribal leaders. There were economic incentives for many people in being guards, in view of the high unemployment rates, the impoverishment and the low average incomes (Jongerden 2007 pp. 55, 260ff., see also; McDowall 1996 pp. 421ff.; Geerse 2011 pp. 171ff.). McDowall reports, for example, that in 1992 the monthly salary for a village guard was slightly more than \$ 400, whereas the average annual income per capita was about \$230 (see McDowall 1996 p. 422). This author also points out how Kurdish landowners exploited the system to their own gain, since individual villages were often forced to pay a share of their salaries to the local *agha*<sup>107</sup> with the result that the number of village guards increased considerably when such a system was established. McDowall (ibid. p.422) reports, for example, that there were some 25,000 village guards in 1990 and that the number had increased to 35,000 in 1993.

The implementation of the village guards contributed to the situation for the Kurdish civilians deteriorating, in particular in the countryside, where they become trapped between the guerrilla forces of the PKK on the one hand and the military forces of the Turkish state on the other (Besikçi 1990 p. 63; Imset 1992 Chapter 7; McDowall 1996 p. 46; Geerse 2011 pp. 171ff.). The conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army forces developed into a regular war.

From the beginning, huge military resources were invested in combatting the PKK. Military actions were essentially directed at the Kurdish civilian population, and in the course of the 1980s the violence escalated enormously. During these

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<sup>107</sup> *Agha* is a chieftain of a tribe or of a section of a tribe. The title can also be given to landlords.

campaigns that were carried out, people were driven from their houses and forced to line up in front of the military forces who beat, humiliated, tortured or even sexually abused the villagers in front of their neighbours (Jaber 1988; Geerse 2011 pp. 112ff.).

The year 1988 proved to be a particularly violent year in the Kurdistan region in Turkey. Yet it was also a year in which public attention was drawn to the Kurdish question through two situations or series of events in particular. The one, which was attended to by the international community with a great deal of interest, was when 60,000 Iraqi Kurds (McDowall 1996 p. 360) were forced to flee across the Turkish border to escape the gas bombings carried out by President Saddam Hussein. A second was that of the Turkish press from that year on beginning to write about the Kurdish question. An attack by military commando units on the village of Yeşilyurt near Cizre in 1989 attracted public interest and detest after a Turkish newspaper had published about the incident. The villagers were first beaten by the military, forced to lie down in snow for hours and then given human excrements to eat. Due to the public attention given the case, it was taken to the European Commission on Human Rights (Rugman 1995 p. 35).

The left-wing journal *İkibine Doğru*<sup>108</sup> wrote about mass graves containing the remains of many Kurds who had disappeared. The Kurdish discontent led to an uprising against the Turkish army forces in the town of Silopi, where Turkish journalists watching the incidents were beaten by the police. In the early 1990s the occurrence of military raids against the villages increased. The military employed a scorch-and-burn policy, driving people from large parts of the countryside. More than 3,000 villages and hamlets in the region were razed and completely demolished by the Turkish army forces during this period (Information and Liaison Bulletin nr 126-127:1995; Jongerden 2007 pp. 80ff.). In addition, there were incidents in which Kurdish towns were destroyed either completely or partly. For example, Sırnak with its 25,000 inhabitants was reduced to ruins.

However, the major cities in Kurdistan also became swollen by refugees. For instance, it is reported that the city of Hakkari had 80,000 inhabitants in 1996 compared with 35,000 two years earlier. Diyarbakir had 400,000 inhabitants in 1990 but had grown to 1,5 million in 1996. The heavy inflow of migrants produced enormous pressure on the cities, where there was generally a lack of housing facilities and where unemployment rates were already high (Information and Liaison Bulletin no. 105 p. 5; Middle East International 96-12-04).

Critical voices pointed out that the effects of the state policies against the PKK were essentially "counterproductive" and contributed to radicalising large groups of the Kurdish population (see, for example, Gunter 1990 pp. 25ff.;

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<sup>108</sup> In Turkish: Towards 2000.

McDowall 1996). People began increasingly to sympathise with the PKK and become more tolerant toward them. This can be exemplified by a quotation of a man from Bismil, a township near Diyarbakir, who witnessed the following:

Last week the Turks had an operation here. They herded up 2,000 people, and took away 25 for questioning. The PKK is a symbol of our freedom here. Yes, they burn schools, but the schools are teaching our children Turkish nationalist ideas. We don't want our children growing up to become our enemies.

(as quoted by Rugman and Hutchinson 1996 p. 86).

At the same time, the PKK guerrillas were reported to have attacked villages in which people had joined the village guard militia. Individual village guards were often punished in a grim fashion. In some cases, children and women reportedly were burned to death in their houses following PKK campaigns (Entessar 1992 p. 103). In addition, there are reports of people who were considered to have "collaborated" with the state and who belonged to the village guards who in many cases were subjected to reprisals by the PKK. The British journalist Jonathan Rugman (1999), who travelled to the town of Cizre, near the Syrian border at the time of *Newroz*<sup>109</sup> in 1990, reported of individual village guards being severely punished:

I arrived in Cizre at the eve of Newroz to find that the PKK had already begun celebrating in its own grim fashion. Thirty people had been killed in violence last week. The latest PKK victims were three village guards, found hanging from town lamp-posts. When the bodies were cut down it was discovered that their mouths were stuffed full with bank notes. There was the equivalent of £ 120 in each mouth – a village guards salary.

(Rugman 1996 p. 45)

A Kurdish insurrection that began on March 12, 1990, reportedly stemmed from combat between the PKK and Turkish military troops in the area of Mardin. It was asserted that during the combat the Turkish military bombed Kurdish villages and the fields surrounding them. The funeral of one of the guerrilla fighters developed into a mass demonstration in which about 5,000 participants took part. The atmosphere grew increasingly tense when civilian participants were attacked by army troops. Arrests of some 700 persons took place and many persons were injured.

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<sup>109</sup> *Newroz* refers to the traditional Iranian new year holiday. It is celebrated in the time of the northward equinox (18-23 March) throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, for example in Kurdistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

The following day a protest manifestation was organized in the town Nusaybin, where shops were closed and students boycotted their classes. The insurrection spread to other towns and cities, where manifestations of solidarity were organised. In the town of Cizre, a manifestation led to a gathering of 15,000 persons. For years to come protest actions took place at the celebrations of the Kurdish New year on 21 March (McDowall 1996 p. 427; The Middle East International 1990-04-13, 1990-04-27, 1990-06-22).

In a report, the mayor of Nusaybin later pointed out that people protested since the situation had "exploded from within". It was told that the protests were "due to humiliation and terror" that the military had carried out against the civilian population. The mayor was dismissed from his post and the government announced the possibility of further displacement actions. In 1992, 103 people were reportedly killed during demonstrations in Kurdish towns. Investigations showed that the military had been shooting civilians unprovoked and it was found out that the military had been shooting at a civilian building for more than 20 hours (Jaber 1992; Imset 1992 p. 327; The Middle East International 1990-04-13, 1990-04-27, 1990-06-22).

All in all, the incessant escalation of violence in the Kurdish areas, which targeted civilians and militants alike, as well as such respected personalities as Musa Anter, together with the increasing numbers of unsolved murders as well as state officials committing serious crimes against human rights with impunity, undermined people's reliance on state authorities and contributed to resistance and to criticism of the regime.

#### 5.6.4 Openings and Deadlocks

While Mehdi Zana was in prison his wife became politically active. Leyla Zana was 14 years old when she was married to her cousin, who was 22 years older than her. She was 19 when her husband was being imprisoned in 1980, pregnant with their second child. Having had only a few years of education, she did not master the Turkish language. As one of the wives of political prisoners, she became involved in organising protest manifestations outside the prisons. In the process she became involved in political activities as a reporter and a human rights activist. She allegedly learned Turkish from her son's school books. She was arrested in 1988 and was severely tortured and sexually humiliated by the police (Marcus 2007 p. 173). In 1991 she was elected to the Turkish parliament as a representative of

the Kurdish dominated *Peoples Labour Party (HEP)*.<sup>110</sup> The ethnic based HEP party was then a novelty on the public political arena in Turkey.

A number of political changes that were carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s made it possible for a Kurdish ethnic-based party to obtain seats in parliament. The influx of Kurdish refugees from northern Iraq who were fleeing the gas bombings of Saddam Hussein contributed to drawing international attention to the situation of the Kurds in the Middle East. In 1991 President Turgut Özal saw it necessary to recognise "the Kurdish reality". However, at the same time, there were new and further restrictions that made obvious how difficult it was to carry out a democratic transformation of the Turkish judicial and political system. The Grand National Assembly removed the law that had restricted the use of Kurdish language (Kurdistanbulletinen No. 3 1989). In addition, the notorious paragraphs 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code, stipulating that people could be punished for 'insulting' Turkish nationalist feelings were abolished, but were replaced by a new Anti-Terror Law. According to paragraph 8 of this Anti-Terror Law people could be arrested and punished for separatist activities, even if they did not use or advocate the use of violent means. In several cases, people became charged, with the authority of this paragraph, for separatist propaganda when speaking or singing in Kurdish in public spaces (Amnesty International 1990, 1992, 1994; Gürbey 2000 pp. 62ff.; Muller 1996 pp. 179, 181ff.).

In 1989 a group of Kurdish parliamentarians were thrown out of the *Social Democrat People's Party (SHP)*<sup>111</sup> after attending a congress on the Kurdish issue in Paris (Watts 2010 p. 62). Their exclusion led to strong reactions on the part of Kurdish politicians, many of whom chose to leave the party in protest. They reorganized and established a new party, in June 1990 the HEP being founded (Middle East International no. 361 1989; Turkish Daily News 1995-01-24). Demands on their agenda were that the village guard system be abolished, the emergency laws lifted and the special military teams that operated in Kurdistan be moved out of the region. They also demanded cultural rights for the Kurds, such as TV-broadcastings and education in Kurdish.<sup>112</sup> In Turkey there is a 10 % barrier preventing small and regionally based parties from obtaining seats in parliament. HEP

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<sup>110</sup> In Turkish: *Halk Ekmek Partisi*. HEP is perhaps not to be considered a "Kurdish" party, but rather a pro-Kurdish one. As Marcus (2007) points out, "In keeping with the professed desire to be a party for all of Turkey, HEP's chairman was supposed to be Turk and the general secretary a Kurd" (p. 128).

<sup>111</sup> In Turkish: *Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Partisi*.

<sup>112</sup> The party's political agenda is compiled in a letter by the parliamentarians addressed to the spokesman of the European Parliament 1992-06-02. It is published in an internal briefing by the Swedish Committee for the Human Rights of the Kurds, see *Svenska Kommittén för kurdernas mänskliga rättigheter: Meblemsbrev juni 1992*.

succeeded in forming an alliance with SHP, their agreeing to cooperate with the pro-Kurdish candidates, basically for pragmatic reasons. HEP obtained 22 votes in parliament in the 1991 elections (Middle East International no. 418, 1992-07-05).

At the inauguration ceremony in the parliament, the HEP deputies wore ties, scarfs and headbands in green, red and yellow. These are the three colours of the Kurdish flag. Wearing them together was seen as a provocation by a majority of the members of the Grand National Assembly.<sup>113</sup> Leyla Zana and one of her party colleagues also provoked strong negative reactions in taking their parliamentary oath partly in Kurdish. There are many versions circulating of exactly what Leyla Zana was saying. Marcus quotes from the prison writings of Zana: "I will fight for the fraternal coexistence of the Kurdish and Turkish people within the context of democracy" (as quoted by Marcus 2007 p. 165). It also proved to be difficult to carry through a pro-Kurdish policy in parliament.

The HEP politicians soon became branded as subversive elements, the alliance with the SHP being dissolved. In addition, a preliminary investigation of the party was undertaken at the constitutional court in Ankara, and on July 15, 1993 the party was prohibited. Together with 12 other HEP deputies, Leyla Zana was stripped of her parliamentary immunity on March 2, 1994. Seven of them being prosecuted in the State Security Court in Ankara, charged for high treason and separatist activities (Information and Liaison Bulletin no. 104-105 p. 71). The prosecutor first demanded a death penalty. Leyla Zana was sentenced, in accordance with paragraph 125 of the Turkish Penal Code, to serve a 15 year prison term, but was freed by amnesty in 2004. The same year, her husband Mehdi Zana returned to Turkey after being in exile in Sweden for 10 years. The other indicted deputies were to spend between 3 1/2 and 15 years in prison (see, for example, *ibid.*; Gürbey 1996 p. 27).

Over the years, HEP has been succeeded by a series of different pro-Kurdish political parties. Each of them has been prosecuted and the party forbidden, and thereafter Kurdish activists having reorganised, doing so again and again, each time with the use of a new party name.

Turkey has been striving for membership in the European Union since it became an associated member in 1963. Now, there are several amendments of its legislative bodies and its political structures that are required of Turkey in order for it to meet the Copenhagen criteria<sup>114</sup> that Turkey needs to fulfill before negotiations with the European Union can commence.

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<sup>113</sup> The combination of red, green and yellow has been considered as being subversive and provocative. In fact in the city of Batman in 1992 the mayor considered changing the colours of the traffic lights in order to avoid the combination of these three colours.

<sup>114</sup> The Copenhagen criteria are the political measures that must be fulfilled for membership in the European Union. The criteria were established at the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993.

Since the early 2000s the reported numbers of physical torture has diminished Keyman (2005). However, torture is still frequent and few perpetrators punished. In addition, more sophisticated methods of abuse and ill-treatment have become common instead. For example, the number of investigations and prosecutions of people considered as being political liabilities have increased. One such example is that of the young mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, member of the pro-Kurdish DEHAP party and both a lawyer and human rights activist. In July of 2006 he purportedly had no less than 126 court cases going on against him because of his political activities. In post-1980 Turkey no Kurdish movement has emerged the way such movements did in the 1960s and 1970s.

Instead the new generation of pro-Kurdish politicians, such as Leyla Zana and Osman Baydemir, operate mainly within the established political system. They organise openly within parties that make no use of the word Kurd in their party names, yet strive for Kurdish rights and the recognition of Kurds (Watts 2010a; Watts 2010b). The following observation made by Watts<sup>115</sup> at the *Newroz* festival in Diyarbakir in 2004 serves to illustrate the elements of ambiguity that can be distinguished in political manifestations in pro-Kurdish circles in Turkey:

On the one hand, festival organizers billed the event as a multicultural "rainbow" celebration, a tactic pro-Kurdish activists have increasingly used as a way to duck charges of separatism and to recast notions of Turkish nationhood. On the other hand, there was no doubting that organizers and participants saw *Newroz* as a Kurdish national (though not necessarily nationalistic) event. Songs were mostly in Kurdish, and Kurdish national colours of red, yellow and green were everywhere on clothes and banners (Watts 2004b p. 2)

Turkey is a country that has been modernising rapidly in recent decades. Still, there are huge socio-economic cleavages between the Kurdish districts and the western parts of the country although in the 1990s extensive resources were invested in schools, roads, hospitals and the like in the Kurdistan region. The infrastructure, however, is still poor and the unemployment rates high. The political scene in the country is still fragmented and is full of nuances. Natali (2005) points

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Turkey became a candidate country 1999. In 2001 Turkey signed a protocol with the EU in which the steps the country needed to take to meet the Copenhagen Criteria were declared.

<sup>115</sup> The text entitled "Turkeys Tentative Opening to Kurdishness" is available at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero061404>.

out how the complex structure of the political arena in Turkey influences the Kurdish political scene as well.

The political treatment of the Kurdish issue in Turkey may be considered as "paradox". This can not least be illustrated by the efforts of the pro-Kurdish activists and nationalists to extend the limits of the Turkish democracy. Generally it is recognised among scholars and other observers that "the Deep State", that is the military, still govern the country (see, for example, Zürcher 2004). On one hand commentators on Turkey often claim that the country has went through a positive process of modernisation which in turn has brought with it the establishment of several democratic institutions (see Mango 1999; Lewis 2002). On the other hand more critical observers, scholars and others, points out that the democratic institutions in reality are weak and ineffective. Natali (2005) for example labels the country in terms of being a "quasi democracy". In his analysis of the modern history of Turkey Keyman (2007) emphasise the distinction between "democratic institutions" and "democratic consolidation". Hence Turkey has been successful carrying the former out, but failed to establish the latter, and so far a plural and liberal democracy has not yet developed in Turkey.

On the positive side is the fact that the Kurdish question was thus recognized, at least formally, although still with limits and restrictions. The Kurdish language had become legalized for private use but could still not be used in political or other contexts without the risk for repressive measures. In 1999 Turkey was accepted as a candidate country for membership in the European Union. This entailed the need that a process of amending the constitution in the areas of politics, bureaucracy and jurisdiction and other areas of societal relevance began.

Such developments could be conceived as being contradictory, however. The AKP government that came to office in 2003 had approved several reform packages. During their time in power a number of initiatives had been taken to achieve a resolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey. During the last decade, nevertheless, a more tolerant climate has come about for the discussion of Kurdish issues in public forums. One example of this is the documentary film that has been produced concerning on the horrific conditions that were present in the Diyarbakir prison No.5, in which several Kurds were imprisoned in the aftermath of the coup of 1980. This film was awarded the title of being the best documentary in the film festivals in Ankara and Antalya. Also in 2011 the Kurdish politician, author and poet Kemal Burkay, leader of the SPK, was able to return to Turkey after 30 years of exile in Sweden. In November the same year Premier Minister Abdullah Gül apologized for the massacres that took place in Dersim in 1937-38 ([www.bianet.org](http://www.bianet.org) 2011-11-24).

On the other hand, however, there are tendencies pointing to continued repression and difficulties in implementing policies that change the situation. Many of the initiatives for reforms and other improvements in the situation of the Kurds that have been carried out by the government can be regarded as shallow and thus

have failed (Eccarius Kelly 2010 pp. 192-193, 198). In 2006 a new terror law was introduced, allegedly based on a very broad meaning of terror. In very recent years, numerous human rights activists, Kurdish authors and politicians have been arrested, according to most observers without proper evidence or on shallow grounds. When these lines are now written, in the fall of 2012, Turkey is still the country in the world in which the largest numbers of reporters is imprisoned. In March of this year, several academics and authors writing on the Kurdish issue were imprisoned, allegedly for their ties to the *Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK)*,<sup>116</sup> which is an umbrella organisation for PKK and other organisations. The KCK-trials are still going on, and there are reports coming of clashes between the PKK and the army, and of the arrests of many people (www.bianet.org 2012-09-28, 2012-09-13, 2011-12-13, 2011-03-09).

## 5.7 Closing of the Chapter

This chapter has described Turkey and its Kurdish issues during the period following the Second World War. It was during this period that the political generation at the centre of our concern here emerged. Particular emphasis in the chapter is placed on the development of the Kurdish nationalist movement in which they participated.

The early sections of the chapter concern the political framework in which the Kurdish movement in Turkey developed, a brief overview of the political and socio-economic developments in Turkey up to 1980 being presented. It was shown that in Turkey a certain degree of political liberalisation took place during this period, that provided the possibility of new actors appearing on the political arena in the country. Right-wing, left-wing and islamist political dimensions was gradually to be distinguished during these decades. However, due to the laws in force and various judicial restrictions that existed it was impossible for any ethnically based or pro-Kurdish organisation to appear overtly. The Kurds of the political generation organised in clandestine groups and parties that appeared in public in the name of cultural organisations or publishing houses. In the 1960s and the 1970s, social and political conflicts came to a fore, a political radicalisation gradually taking place in the country, of both a left- and a right-wing character, with subsequent social and political unrest and turmoil, all of this culminating in the military interventions in 1971 and 1980.

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<sup>116</sup> In Kurdish: *Koma Civakên Kurdistan*.

The sections thereafter chronicled the Kurdish movement that emerged in Turkey during the decades preceding the coup of 1980, in which the political generation of central interest here participated. Various events critical to the emergence of the movement were pointed out, such as the socio-economic inequalities between the Kurdistan region and Western Turkey, the emergence of a Kurdish movement in Iraq and the highly ethnicized public political space in Turkey. The Kurdish protest organisations began their efforts here with the expression for cultural identities, attempts to draw attention to "the eastern question", and efforts to attain influence and sympathy for the Kurdish issue within the Turkish left. Gradually, the movement became more radicalised, and at the same time more fragmented. In the 1970s it was drawn into political turmoil that culminated in the military coup in 1980. In the wake of the coup, the Kurdish movement was suffocated, many of its key figures escaping from Turkey, various of those who remained inside Turkey being prosecuted in long protracted mass trials that often led to their being sentenced to long periods of imprisonment. One party, the PKK, initiated a guerilla war in Turkey.

The final sections of the chapter were devoted to developments concerning the Kurdish issue in Turkey during the decades following the 1980 coup. The 1980s and the 1990s could be characterised as decades of repression, involving much civilian suffering and many clashes between the Army and the PKK. There were openings as well, however. In 1991 "the Kurdish reality" was recognized by president Turgut Özal and certain restrictions against the Kurdish language were lifted. In the early 1990s a new generation of politicians entered the scene, essentially operating within the legal pro-Kurdish parties that existed then.

Repressive measures continued to be carried out under the emergency laws in the Kurdistan region, against pro-Kurdish activists, journalists and human rights activists, however. In the Kurdistan region thousands of people were forcibly displaced from their homes as villages in the area were evacuated, allegedly in search of PKK-guerillas or "terrorists" as it often was declared.

The year 1999 was a turning point in repression. The PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan was hijacked in Kenya and was brought back to Turkey where he was detained. The same year Turkey was recognized as a candidate country for membership in the European Union. During the decade that just passed, there have been both openings and deadlocks. On the one hand, the political climate has opened up and been mitigated to some extent. Martial laws have been lifted from the Kurdistan region, the Kurdish issue has been recognized in public debate as the very existence of a Kurdish population. In 2011, for example, the Kurdish politician Kemal Burkay decided to return from his exile in Sweden, where he had resided for 30 years, and Kurdish has become an elective subject in Turkish state schools.

On the other hand, people are still arrested, accused of "being members of an illegal organisation", young Kurdish guerilla soldiers are still dying in the mountains, and there are obvious discrepancies between what is stated in public docu-

ments and how things are actually carried out in practice. Keyman (2007), a political scientist following developments in the country, has emphasised the distinction between "democratic institutions" and "democratic consolidation". Turkey has been successful in carrying the former out, but has failed to establish the latter, and thus far the Kurdish issue has not yet been solved in Turkey.

Table 5a: Chronology ca 1960 - present

1946	Multi-party system implemented.
1950	Open Elections are carried out for the first time. Democrat Party (DP) wins.
1952	Turkey becomes a member of NATO.
1960	A military coup removes the Democrat Party led government from power.
1961	Ex-President Adnan Menderes is executed. A new constitution is implemented.
1971	A military coup removes President Süleyman Demirel from power.
1965-1980	The emergence of a number of pro-Kurdish political parties that operate clandestinely and appear in public through legal cultural organisations. Many of these groups are splintered into numerous branches and new parties. Radicalisation and ethnification of the emergent Kurdish movement.
1978	The establishment of the PKK.
1980	A military coup led by general Kenan Evren.
1981	The military abolishes all political parties.
1982	A new and more restrictive constitution is implemented.
1983	The military returns power to civil hands.
1984	The PKK initiates its armed struggle against the Turkish state.
1984-1999	3,000 villages in the Kurdistan region are evacuated and demolished by the Turkish Security Forces. A majority of the evacuations take place 1993 and 1995. These actions are carried out by brutal means, such as beatings and extrajudicial executions, destruction of property, burning of houses and livestock. Hundreds of thousands of people were forcibly displaced.
1987	Pre-1980 politicians are allowed to return to politics.
1991	"The Kurdish reality" is recognized in public by President Turgut Özal. 500,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees attempt to cross the Turkish borders. The refugee camps for Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Turkey draw attention to the Kurdish question.
1991-	Ongoing: On several occasions Turkey sends troops across the Iraqi border to suppress the Kurdish guerilla (PKK, PJAK). At several occasions Turkish bomb raids are carried out in Northern Iraq to eliminate the Kurdish guerillas.
1991-	Ongoing: A number of legal pro-Kurdish parties are formed, experience repressive measures and harassments and are finally forced to close down, only to be succeeded by new pro-Kurdish parties. The first legal pro-Kurdish party HEP (People's Labor Party) is formed in 1991.

1992	Kurdish New Year clashes. Some 92 people die.
1993	President Turgut Özal dies.
1997	A "Covert" military coup.
1999	February: The PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan is captured in Kenya and is imprisoned in Turkey. November: Turkey is granted candidate status to the European Union.
2003	The Islamist AKP (Justice and Development Party) wins the general elections.
2004	The European Union agree to initiate accession discussions with Turkey.
2011	The Kurdish politician, author and poet Kemal Burkay, returns to Turkey after more than 30 years of exile in Sweden. November: President Abdullah Gül apologizes for the massacres in Dersim in 1937-38.
2012	March: The imprisonment of several academics and authors for writing about the Kurdish question. Clashes with the PKK continues. Dozens of people arrested and detained in operations against the KCK Kurdistan Communities Union (an umbrella organisation to the PKK).

Table 5b: The generation during this period

1950-1960	The political and social structures that developed in the Turkish Republic influence the Kurdish youth during their schoolyears as they are facing various expressions of Turkish nationalism in school and in other public spaces.
1960-1980	The people belonging to the political generation became politically active and their actions became increasingly radicalised. Many politically active Kurds are forced to leave the country. A certain political liberalisation facilitates political organizing, but pro-Kurdish organisations could not operate overtly.
1980-	Several politically active Kurds leave Turkey in the decade before the coup. Kurdish refugees settle down in many parts of the world, some becoming political refugees in Sweden. The generation emerges as a diaspora political actor.

# Part III

## Diaspora and Resistance: The Story of a Kurdish Political Generation in Diaspora

### Introduction

Those short and colourful nights haunt me now all the time. Inevitably, most of those words, which gleamed like pearls in the dark, could not escape the fierce waves of time hence - - they vanished. However, one memorable expression survived as part of my destiny: **welatê xerîbiyê**. My grandmother, who would be transformed into a fairy inhabiting her epics, tales and stories, would constantly repeat these mysterious words: **wêlate xerîbiyê ... welatê xerîbiyê ... welatê xerîbyê**.

(Uzun 1995 p. 197)<sup>117</sup>

In his short story *Separation is Such a Grief* the Kurdish author Mehmed Uzun recalls the many tales he heard from his grandmother during his childhood. To him her words were magic, the intrigues she told of enchanting and fascinating. Still, most of it faded away in the course of time. Yet there was one expression that became written into his mind - *Wêlate Xêribîye*.<sup>118</sup> These words, implying an unknown destiny in a foreign country, were recurrently repeated in his grand-

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<sup>117</sup> This is from the English version of the short story *Separation is Such a Grief*, published in *Kurdistan Times* No.4 1995 pp. 191-205. The Swedish version of it is to be found in the anthology *Granatäppelblomning* from 1998.

<sup>118</sup> Khaled Khayati (2008 p. 2) mentions other concepts used by Kurds alluding to the exile as a trauma, and to dispersion and uprooting such as *hândāran*, *tarawagā*, *awarābun*, *darbadarî* and *mānfa* in Kurdish. Appellations that are frequently used in lullabies, in popular culture and in the popular narrative of the home country are *azar* (trauma), *sitam* (oppression) and *qurbani* (victim).

mother's tales, symbolising the destiny of many Kurds who throughout history had been forced away from their Kurdish homelands to lead their lives in distant places. So it was told to him.

When he became older, Uzun heard the same theme repeated in the ballads and epics told by the Kurdish *Dêngbêjs*, the minstrels and story tellers who passed the oral cultural traditions on to new generations. In the late 1970s his life story took a new direction, his being forced to leave his home country. Uzun writes that he then "joined the two-hundred-year-long caravan of exiles" (Uzun 1995 p. 199), his following a path many Kurds before him had been forced to take. As Uzun's account implies, the experiences of displacement and deportation have been common ingredients in the tales and stories that shape the collective memory of the Kurds.

The imagination of a "foreign country" presupposes there to be an idea of a home country and there being features that bind the Kurds together into a community, a nation. In popular narratives the Kurdish nation is often considered an "oppressed nation" moulded by centuries of repression and occupation by foreign powers (Alinia 2004 pp. 320ff.). Many Kurdish men and women belonging to the political generation of particular interest here were, like Mehmed Uzun, following the "caravan of exile". In this part of the thesis, the accounts told by the 23 interviewees will be analysed together with some written sources produced by people of their generation.

Kurdish political refugees from Turkey began to arrive in Sweden already in the mid-1960s. Some of the interviewees were here then for shorter periods of time as refugees or as exchange students. Among those who arrived in the aftermath of the coup in 1980, many had first spent a period of time in neighbouring Middle Eastern countries before coming to Sweden. However, it was not before the period of increasing political turmoil in connection with the coup that large numbers of Kurds left Turkey to settle down in Sweden and other countries. The first major concentrations of Kurds in Sweden were in Stockholm, Göteborg and Uppsala and other large cities (Alakom 2007 pp. 69-75; Kuutman 1983; Yetkin 1984 p. 129). It was in these cities that the interviews were conducted in 2001 and 2002.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, those belonging to the political generation arrived at a time when the Swedish welfare state was still expanding and an earlier "assimilationist" immigrant policy had shifted shortly before into a new strategy, one that can be characterised as "multi-culturalist". The intention was to give immigrants the same basic political and social rights as the native-born Swedes (Johansson 2008; Khayati 2008 pp. 182-190; Svanberg and Tydén 1991 Chapter 26).

These policies contributed to the development of an institutional framework from which the political generation could benefit. The Kurdish immigrants obtained support from the Swedish authorities, and were provided with new resources and with opportunities that made it possible for them to reorganize and to

develop new strategies for their lives. Indeed, Sweden has from time to time been depicted as "a haven" for the Kurds since the Kurdish community in Sweden is well organized. Sweden more or less become a centre for Kurdish politics of identity.

Alakom (2007) writes that "Stockholm is not only the capital of Sweden, it is the cultural and literary capital of the Kurds as well" (ibid. p. 73). Indeed Stockholm played a prominent role in Kurdish diasporic activism, and it is, most probably there that Kurdish manifestations in Sweden once began to develop. It has been documented for example how Kurdish delegations participated in demonstrations of the Social democrats and left-wing groups in the mid-1960s (Alakom 2007 pp. 150, 153). Many Kurdish parties and organisations that are active in Sweden have their head offices in Stockholm, which in addition is the city in which the majority of Kurdish publishing houses in Sweden are located. At the time when they began to arrive the Kurds was still a group largely unknown to the Swedish public, their encounters with Swedish society not being without challenges.

Seen from a historical perspective, the refugee-, immigration- and immigrant policies at that time were relatively generous (Appelqvist 1997 p. 2, 1999; Abiri 2000). According to Appelqvist (1999), a vast majority of the asylum seekers coming to Sweden in the early 1990s were given residence permits in that country, under the Geneva Convention, or these could be obtained by people recognized as de facto refugees or war resisters (ibid. p. 2).<sup>119</sup> Comparatively speaking, citizenship was relatively easy to obtain after living a certain period of time in the country. The entitlement to citizenship in Sweden is based on the principle of *Ius sanguinis*,<sup>120</sup> which mean that "inclusion is based on "law of the blood" and genealogy, with citizenship justified through ancestry" (Mandel 2008 p. 210). In accordance with the Swedish Citizen Act from 2001 double citizenship is allowed.

In popular terms Sweden has for long time been considered essentially an ethnically "homogeneous" country. In reality however, the picture is much more diverse and complex (see, for example, Svanberg and Tydén 1991; Hagerman

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<sup>119</sup>According to the Aliens Act 3:1 p. 3 to be considered a de facto refugee is he "who is unwilling to return to his country of origin because of political circumstances and therefore is willing to adduce weighty reasons to support his consideration" (quoted in Appelqvist 1999 p. 8). The term de facto refugees was later replaced with "humanitarian needs" which has been criticised as being an unprecise criterion (Appelqvist and Zettervall 2008 pp. 232ff).

<sup>120</sup>This is in contrast with *Ius soli*, which states that children are to automatically be given citizenship in the country in which they are born, even if their parents are not natives of that country. This principle is applied, for example, in Australia, Great Britain and the US. A third principle is *Ius domicilii*, according to which citizenship is given on the basis of long-term residence in the country.

2006; Johansson 2000b). First, there have always been ethnic minorities residing in Sweden,<sup>121</sup> although these were recognized as such as late as 2000 ([www.sprakradet.se/minoritetssprak](http://www.sprakradet.se/minoritetssprak); Prop. 98/99). Secondly, there has always been immigrants coming to Sweden. In the 1930s their numbers for the first time exceeded the number of emigrants (Corman 2008 p. 176).

With a growing economy the Swedish Welfare state and its public sector began in the 1940s to expand. Now there was an increasing demand for labour, the authorities actively recruited people from abroad and immigration was "seen as necessary for development of the whole Swedish welfare society" (Appelqvist 1999 p. 8). This continued until 1972, when the recruitment of non-Nordic labour definitely came to a halt. This marks the beginning of a new phase of immigration, dominated by refugees and family re-union. From then on, the only way for non-Nordic immigrants to obtain a residence permit in Sweden, unless they were being united with family members or close relatives who were Swedish residents, was to apply for asylum (Appelqvist and Zettervall 2008 p. 200, Johansson 2008 ).

As all countries Sweden has its own dark legacies as well. For example, the country was influenced by nationalist and other contemporary ideological currents that flourished in Europe and other parts of the world in politics and science throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One such example is the National Institute for Race Biology, which was established in 1922, and was the first one in the world of its kind (Johansson 2000b p. 329; Broberg and Tydén 2005; Svanberg and Tydén 1998 pp. 258-267; Khayati 2008 p. 196). The aims of the institute were to study eugenics and genetics, and to establish in what areas the "Nordic race" was most applicable.

Other dark legacies of Swedish history are the sterilisation policies conducted in the 1930s and 1940s and policies that were directed against the native Sami people and other minorities (Svanberg and Tydén 1991 p. 360ff.). Immigrants arriving in Sweden in the late 19th century, many of them Jews from the Baltic states, Poland and Russia where the subject of contemporary racist immigration debates (Svanberg and Tydén 1991 p. 264). In a study of the murders of alleged Bolshevik agents conducted by Russian exiles in Stockholm in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Lundberg (2004) describes how suspicions against immigrants were raised. "The Russian Danger" was a term used at the time to express concerns about which challenges and threats to "Swedish" society immigration might possibly entail. That author argues that, at the time, the imaginations, and suspicions, of danger and "orientalism" could be directed at immigrants from Eastern Europe and that similar ideas of "dangerous immigrants" are still to be seen today, yet directed

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<sup>121</sup> Those recognized as national minorities in Sweden are Finns, the Sami people, Roma, Jews and Torne Valley Descendants.

now at new immigrant groups. Lundberg points out for example that Muslims are now perceived as dangerous and are portrayed in media often with connotations of terrorism, violence and the like (ibid. pp. 241-244).

The interviews and the collection of empirical material for the thesis took place at about the same time as Lundberg's book was published. By now the multiculturalist immigrant policy had been replaced with a new policy, this time with an emphasis on integration.

Attention was drawn to the fact that, despite the good intentions of the social and cultural policies targeting immigrants, they tended nevertheless to be excluded or marginalised in many fields such as in housing, the labour market and politics (Dahlstedt 2008; Franzén 2000; Lange 1999; Urban 2005, 2007; Berruti et al. 2008). For example, it was found that unemployment rates were higher among immigrants and that many had difficulties in finding a job commensurate with their qualifications (Berruti et. al 2002; Franzén 2000; Höglund 2008). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the possibility for non-citizen immigrants to vote in municipality and regional elections was introduced in 1975.

According to Castles and Miller (2009), the participation of non-Swedish citizens in these elections has "declined over time" (ibid. p. 285). Participation in the elections was particularly low in certain housing areas with high concentration of immigrants, such as in Rinkeby where only 35 % of the residents in that area voted in municipality elections in 1998 (Dahlstedt 2008 p. 264). Sweden had also experienced the emergence of anti-immigrant movements and the occurrence of racist attacks of refugee camps. A referendum against the reception of immigrants was also held in Sjöbo in southern Sweden in 1988.

Another thing that had changed was that Kurds were no longer an "unknown" immigrant group in Swedish society. Many Kurds had successfully participated in social life in Sweden. Books by such authors as Mahmut Baksi, Mehmed Uzun and Mehmet Emin Bozarşlan were published in Swedish, a Kurdish library opened in Stockholm and a Kurdish woman, Nalin Pekkûl, had been a parliamentarian for the Social Democratic Party ever since 1994.<sup>122</sup> Kurds had obtained very much sympathy when hundreds of thousands were forced to escape in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991. Swedish artists and NGOs arranged concerts, fund-raising and solidarity actions to support the Kurds. However, the Kurds in Sweden has also been connected to a number of incidents that attracted negative attention. For example, in connection with the murder of Olof Palme, the murders of dissidents of the PKK in the 1980s, and two cases of honour killings drew the attention of the Swedish media: Pela Atroshi in 1999 and Fadime Şahindal in 2002.

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<sup>122</sup> Between 2003 and 2011 Nalin Pekkûl (then Baksi) was the chairman of the *National Federation of Social Democratic Women* in Sweden.

The following Chapters 6 and 7, deal with the narratives of the political generation of interest here and their participation in the manifestation of a Kurdish diaspora.

Chapter 6 analyses stories that can be described as back-ward looking, containing a flavor of nostalgia, are analysed. Suffering and fortitude are the guiding themes of this chapter. The stories echo experiences that the interviewees have made when they were living in their original homeland, as well as experiences of displacement. Some of the stories deals with memories inherited from their parents or grand-parents. Generally these stories fit into the dominant discourse of diasporic people being victimised and idealising their original homelands. These are the stories of a defeated generation. However the stories also displays the senses of defiance and resistance among the interviewees.

Chapter 7 deals with stories that can be considered as forward-looking. The chapter focuses on stories on experiences from the country of settlement and the diasporic situation. The interviewees came to Sweden when they still were relatively young activists. In Turkey they had committed themselves to the Kurdish question. Many of them had been members of radical left wing organisations. In the diasporic setting new political strategies emerged. Gradually the interviewees got involved in transnational networks. In the chapter questions of how members of this generation view their possibilities and difficulties in developing practices and strategies in a diasporic setting are discussed. The chapter revolves around the themes of re-consideration, challenges and of becoming challengers. The stories included in this chapter essentially challenge the dominant victimisation discourse.

# Chapter 6

## With A Sense of Nostalgia

### 6.1 Introduction

The introduction of this part of the thesis began with a quotation from a novel by the author Mehmed Uzun. From the stories told by his grandmother the word *Wê-latê Xêribîye*, foreign country, remained in his memory. In the novel he depicts himself as one among all the Kurds that have been forced to escape across state borders and to become diaspora Kurds. This is an experience that he shared with several others of his generation. As was pointed out in the introduction the idea of escaping to a "foreign country" intimates the existence of belonging to a "home country". Uzun belonged to a generation that had been politically defeated, escaped their home country and ended up as political refugees. They continued to closely follow the contemporary developments in their home country and in the exile committed themselves to the Kurdish cause in various ways. Hence many of them were as activists politically oriented to the developments in the original home country. These experiences certainly informed the narratives about what it mean to be Kurdish.

In this chapter accounts of what it mean to be Kurdish to the members of the political generation are presented and discussed. Two basic threads that run through the narratives can be distinguished.

First, there are a number of stories to be distinguished that have to do with *suffering*. These stories fits well with the traditional view of diasporas as their members feeling "victimised" suggested by Cohen (1997), alluding to the connotations the term may have regarding conditions of a catastrophe and of displacement (ibid. pp. 3ff., 25ff.). The suffering reported concerns "loss" and "deprivation" and alludes to difficulties that the Kurds have gone through in the present and also have been through in the past. The production of a collective identity draws on selected memories from the past as well as on events and occurrences experienced much more recently. In Chapter 2 it was pointed out that diaspora have connotations of victimisation and displacement alluding to the Kurd and the people around them having been forced to escape from catastrophic situations in their home countries. These matters are reflected in many of the stories told by the interview-

ees. As will be taken up below, the people telling these stories had been forced to escape from their original home country, often after being persecuted for long periods of time or when their situation had become unbearable.

In the accounts of their being Kurdish, obtained in the interviews, a second stance can be distinguished, one that implies a perspective of *national romanticism*. These accounts tell of their being a strong people. In these accounts the implicit point is made that the Kurds have survived as a people throughout centuries of repression and atrocities that they have been exposed to, their also being a people with rich resources in land, culture and history. The term *national romanticism* alludes to a movement that developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries involving the idea of political legitimacy based on organic links to a given territory and promoting the idea that their language, culture, people. *National romanticism* also imply that elements such as language, race, culture, history, customs and religion are indigeneous and evolve within every given culture or nation. The national romanticist view is thus built on essentialist assumptions. One such assumption is for example the idea that boundaries of a nation and its imagined cultural or ethnic essence merges.

The accounts presented reflect the experiences of the interviewees, or in the words of Mannheim (1952 p. 297), their "stratification of experiences" referring to constellations of factors, events and opportunities during a specific period of time, as well as responses to these from a common "vantage point" (Edmunds and Turner 2002 p. 8) and location in history.

## 6.2 The Suffering People

### *Desecrated Homeland*

The meaning of being Kurdish was a theme recurrently discussed in the interviews. Mention was made in the interview situation, from the diasporic viewpoint taken, of a homeland they had been dispersed from, as was the idea of a common history and ancestry of a people stemming from the specific territory of Kurdistan. In many of the accounts the idea of a common territory of origin was mentioned as a central feature characterising Kurds. In these narratives particular landscapes as well as nature were often commemorated and given a prominent place. In most narratives concerning nationalism and national belonging, the land concerned is referred to in terms of "what grows and what the land gives" (Lindholm-Schulz 2003 p. 103). Guibernau (2007) points out that the territory referred to in nationalist discourses and narratives "embodies ideas, aspirations, sentiments, some of wich evoke a strong sense of national meaning" but she also underscores the meaning and importance that the territory often has as, "people's primary source of nourishment" (ibid. p. 23). This territory has a basic geopolitical and geostrate-

gic meaning to them just as it is commemorated and evokes a sense of distinction. In addition, the status of the imagined homeland is intimately linked to the status of the people. In writings, lyrics and statements Kurdistan is many times presented of as its being a "suffering" country and emotional relationships to the homeland are often expressed as Kurdistan is depicted. In the account of B allusions to nature, nourishment and the status of the country and its people are all expressed:

It is an old, old, very old geographical region. Kurds have lived there for thousands of years. It is an area with many cultures, people and minorities, such as Assyrians, Syrians, Armenians, a beautiful country with high mountains and rich waters, divided, a country waiting for justice. People living there should have peace, should live in peace and have calm, with peace and rest, like all other people. The country should not be bombarded. The trees should not be burned down. Even animals should not be forced to escape because of an ongoing war there.

(B)

In B's statement above one can see how the idealized picture of the homeland contrasts with sentimental reflections of the occurrence of a catastrophe. He conveys the picture of a land that is rich and beautiful, abundant in natural resources and hosting myriads of people and cultures. This picture is darkened, however, by the circumstances prevailing in the time when the narrative was told. It is about a country that has not been left in peace, that which is living and is growing in the country being devastated and ravaged. These reflections are similar to what can be found in research on other refugee communities as well. In a study of the Palestinian diaspora, Lindholm-Schulz (2003) describes how the present status of Palestine is sometimes referred to in terms of being "a feeling of immense injustice" (ibid. p. 93).

The same allusions are to be found in B's account as he describes Kurdistan as being a country which is "divided", under attack yet "waiting for justice". The country is seen as being bled white as its natural resources are being devastated, people being driven from their lands, and not even the animals are saved, this implying that the country is being deprived of its capacity to nourish its people. The present is referred to at the same time, however, in terms of that the country is still awaiting the pending justice, where waiting becomes a condition which is present (ibid. pp. 94-95). The country is described in terms of passivity and its being victimized, although the account points to the future, the hope being nurtured of that justice being administered at some point.

Such presentations of the land are abundant in written presentations of Kurdistan directed at the public. A similar description of Kurdistan is to be found in an essay written by the then exiled Kurdish politician Kemal Burkay (2004) who attempts to explain the main factors behind Kurdistan's present status. Burkay

asserts that "tribal social structure, divisions between religious movements and confession, and the institutions of land ownership and the sheikhdom have always been obstacles to the unification of national forces" (ibid. p. 35), his thus problematising the internal social structures of Kurdistan in terms of being "tribalist" and the like. But he also writes: "The true reasons that have prevented the Kurdish nationalist movement from succeeding are external ones" (ibid. p. 35), his continuing:

Kurdistan's extraordinary wealth and its strategic location are the most important reasons why our country is still divided and our people still subjected to so much suffering. For the abovementioned reasons Kurdistan drew the attention of the Western Colonizing states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The English, the French, and the Russians struggled for control over our country. Then, after World War I, they once again divided it up according to their own interests

(Burkay 2004 p. 33).

In the text Burkay portray Kurdistan as "one of the wealthiest countries in the world" (ibid. p. 31), and paint the picture of a land abundant in resources such as those of fertile soil, as well as minerals and extensive deposits of oil. At the same time the underlying message seems to be that the existence of natural resources makes the country rich, the occurrence of them becomes a curse and a major factor behind the exploitation and suppression of Kurdistan. He continues the text then describing the Kurdish struggle first against the Ottoman and Persian Empires and thereafter against the dominant powers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (ibid. pp. 35-36).

It is interesting to note that Burkay, in the final sections of his article, predicts that the present state borders in the Middle East will be renegotiated sometime in the future: "The borders will lose their significance. Artificial borders, which today divide Kurdistan with barbed wire and land mines, will then disappear." (Burkay 2004 p. 39). Thus, one can see that Burkay perceive the division of Kurdistan as a condition that is temporal and "un-natural" rather than its being permanent.

### *Colonised*

In diasporic circles it is often asserted that interest in trade policy and in the extraction of natural resources, above all through the oil wells, have been critical factors in impeding the development of an independent Kurdish state body. Kurdistan and its status are central features in many of the written presentations of the land that were made and proliferated by the political generation in question in their countries of settlement (see, for example, Burkay 2004 p. 24; Baksi 1974 pp. 10-12; Uzun 1996). In the sources collected for the thesis the condition that the Kurds never have been united under one single leadership is frequently ascribed to external forces and circumstances (Burkay 2004 p. 35; Baksi 1974 pp. 17-28).

In an essay entitled "Kurdistan in Turkey" written by Kendal Nezan, a prominent Kurdish intellectual in Europe, the developments leading to the contemporary situation of Kurdistan, a country extending across several state borders, is described as "the Colonial Carve-Up of Kurdistan" (Kendal 1979a p. 58). Gunter (1990) describes how in the Kurdish ethno-nationalist movements that advanced in various parts of Kurdistan in the 1960s and 1970s, Kurdistan was often referred to in terms its being a "colony" and an "occupied" country (Beşiçi 1991; Gunter 1990 Chapter 5; Jafar 1976 p. 144).

The Turkish sociologist Ismael Beşiçi has described the status of Kurdistan as an "international colony" referring to the land being "exploited" by four states. This has also been how Kurdistan has been referred to in presentations of the country directed at a Swedish audience. This is also how the author and journalist Mahmut Baksi describes the status of Kurdistan in a book he wrote while he still was living in Turkey:

It should be emphasised that Kurdistan, despite its rich natural resources, today constitutes one of the poorest and least developed areas in the Middle East. The reason for this is the semi-colonial policy conducted by the ruling bourgeoisie in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria and the merciless policies of exploitation carried out in collaboration with the imperial monopolies

(Baksi 1974 p.12, this excerpt of it translated from Swedish)

In the passage quoted Baksi describes Kurdistan as a poor country, subjected to the "semi-colonial" policies carried out by the four states. In the quotation presented above, however, the policies carried out by these governments are placed into a broader perspective, that of imperialism and of capitalism. The conditions present there were further complicated by the fact that the state powers governing Kurdistan are allied with the "the imperialist powers", its being asserted that the exploitation of Kurdistan was sanctioned by "influential" external powers. The quotation thus illustrates the radical left-wing oriented positions that many of them belonging to this political generation took.

In other texts Kurdistan's situation is referred to in terms of "colonisation", something which had persisted for a long period of time. One example is to be found in the 5th party programme of the PKK, in which the periods when Kurdistan was conquered by the Persian Empire, and about a century later on was being islamized are referred, its being stated that, "our people began a phase of permanent occupation or subjection to tyranny" (PKK Party Program Chapter 2 p. 1). On the basis of this it is concluded that:

The Islamic ideology took over from national development, and in this way our people were alienated from their own values and were thereby hindered in their national development. This was an important factor which led to our people remaining under the control of the foreign feudal powers.

(PKK Party Program, Chapter 2, p. 1)<sup>123</sup>

It seems to be assumed in this passage, that the national development of Kurdistan has been impeded and obstructed by external forces. Here the islamisation of Kurdistan is mentioned as an example. In the text it is described how the Kurds throughout history have been subjected to several "enslaving empires" such as the Persian, Greek, Roman and Ottoman. It is furthermore suggested that the Kurdish people have been "alienated from their own values". In connection to what is written in this excerpt it is interesting to note that White (2000) points out that a central feature of the ideology of the PKK is that of their creation, or "re-discovery", of a "natural Kurdish personality" which, according to the rhetoric of Abdullah Öcalan, implies that the Kurdish people had been "dispossessed of" this "true Kurdish personality" by "their colonisers" (ibid. p. 137).

The Kurds are frequently, in various sources, presented as being "one of the largest ethnic groups without a state of their own" (see, for example, Kurdistan Times 1995 p. xi) or, in a more exacting way, as "one of the largest ethnic groups in without a state of their own" (ibid. p. xi; [www.landguiden.se](http://www.landguiden.se)). An underlying message here is that of the Kurds not only being a stateless people, but their also representing a "nation" that has the right to have a state of their own, their having been deprived of "the right" to govern themselves. It is thus implied that the governments in the Middle Eastern states that are hosting large Kurdish populations are not "legitimate".

The picture of Kurdistan as a colonised and occupied country has been manifest among the diasporic Kurds. Ever since I was first introduced to Kurdish diaspora settings in the mid-1980s, I have heard again and again Kurdistan being referred to as a "colony" and "occupied country". The apprehension of Kurdistan as an occupied country is been expressed by diasporic Kurds in many ways and settings. For instance, at *Newroz* parties, the celebrations of the Kurdish New Year, a common feature of the programme in the 1980s and 1990s was a performance in which a man recited a poem about Kurdistan, simultaneously with this the flags of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria were brought onto the stage one after the other, thrown to the floor and trampled on (own observations). In this way, it was demonstrated that the powers governing Kurdistan not were considered as being the legitimate government of the Kurds there.

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<sup>123</sup> The party program is available at <http://www.hatford-hwp.com/archives/51/169.html>.

In recent decades the apprehension of Kurdistan as a colonised country has partly been challenged. Iraqi Kurdistan has become an autonomous region. This self-administrative entity was based on the UN resolution 688, which allowed for the establishment of a no-fly zone north of the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel in Iraq. Since the implementation of a new constitution in Iraq,<sup>124</sup> this area constitute a self-administered region within the federal structure of the Iraqi republic (Natali 2005 p. 163). In some circles, the autonomy has been referred to as a *de facto* state and hopes been nurtured that it would be the emerging embryo of an independent Kurdish state (Olson 2005). Recurrently, the autonom region is referred to as "the Free Kurdistan" (see, for example, Jîn Kurdisk Kvinnobulletin no 1, 1994 p. 6). For example T said that he "visited Kurdistan in 1994" in recounting a trip to Iraqi Kurdistan, and in the same vein the director of the Kurdish Library told of aiming to contribute to the founding of modern libraries in "Kurdistan". Thus, hopes were nurtured that the KRG-administered area would develop into an independent political entity.

### *The Silenced People*

The narrative of the political generation is to some degree the story of "a people" who have been silenced, marginalised and concealed. Shared collective memories are of central importance generally in narratives or national identities. These can be about events from the past that are celebrated or traumas that are commemorated and mythified (Hettne et al. 1998 pp. 255ff.). Other events are dealt with quietly or are concealed from collective memory. There may be tacit consents to not talk about certain events, although this does not necessarily mean that these are obliterated from collective memory. Eastmond (2007) points out: "In the production of social memory and a common narrative as a community personal narratives may merge with those of others and draw on other previous historical accounts of repression and displacement, some of them learnt in childhood" (ibid. p. 256). In the narratives of the members of the Kurdish political generation studied here we finds examples of memories that have been transmitted from earlier generations.

The men and women who came to belong to the political generation that was involved in the Kurdish movements of the 1960s and 1970s were children and grandchildren to persons who personally experienced, and had sometimes suffered very heavily from, the extensive repression carried out in the Kurdistan region in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. Many of them, for example E and Z, had parents and grandparents who were actively involved in the Kurdish uprisings that took place during these decades. Suffering, fear and sacrificies that older relatives had been through were also mentioned in the stories of M and S. There were many who recalled, in their interviews, how the memories of these events were dealt

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<sup>124</sup> This is the Constitution of 2005.

with in their families while they were growing up. Like S many recalled how they were kept quiet if they tried to ask more about what had happened than what they had already been told:

and in 1938 the state carried out a massacre in my home town. My mother and father were newly-born at the time. Many were murdered, many were expatriated, in one month between 70,000 and 150,000 ... no one knows exactly. But I know that I have lost many, many relatives, aunts of mine that disappeared, uncles that were ... grandfather that was murdered before the eyes of my grandmother, who was pregnant. We grew up with stories of such kind. There were no pictures taken, nothing written down, nothing like that, at the time. But we listened, about the people being murdered. My maternal grandfather and grandmother and all others in their generation were in a way marked. All told of their being sad, and that they were marked, because they had been hiding in the mountains, for weeks, several months, without food. All this made one start to wonder. "How was it that it became like this?" If one asked about something, the adults did not want to tell anything and they did not want us to ask again. They were terrified.

(S)

The repression of the Kurds is placed in a historical framework in this account, although a framework involving only the relatively recent past, on the basis of stories told by older relatives. Here the scene and the agency were placed in the recent past and S as the narrator was not directly involved in the course of events. The fear expressed is not one the narrator herself has experienced. Rather it is a fear that she has observed in others or heard about. Similar memories concerning older relatives reluctant to tell of what had happened, were told by many of the interviewees.

Mentions was made of how many people were shocked and traumatised by the harsh repressive measures carried out. In many families it was a topic that was avoided and seldom touched upon. P told how it could happen occasionally that those belonging to the grown up generation touched upon these events, their talking for example about older relatives who were killed or had disappeared. E told for example of the circumstances under which his grandfather was killed in the aftermath of one of the uprisings, having been kept secret from him until he was nearly an adult.

In the parents' generation the massacres and the repression that followed the Kurdish uprisings in the early years of the Turkish Republic were followed by an "initial silence" that could be observed in communities that had experienced extensive massacres of this type, being labeled as a "survivors syndrome" (Cohen 1997 p. 49). In the narratives told by these who became involved in politics in the decades following the Second World War, these rebellions were increasingly more commemorated, the suffering that the older generation went through having be-

come a major ingredient in their accounts. Bringing up these events could be interpreted as a way of legitimatizing the Kurdish struggle in the present and legitimatizing a position "oppositional" to the Turkish identity.

### *Assimilation 1*

The assimilation policies directed at the Kurds in Turkey have been discussed in earlier chapters. Many of the accounts can be understood as being in opposition to the public discourse in Turkey in which the Kurdish issue, in the words of Yeğen (2011) was to the effect that "The Turkish state denied the ethnic component of the Kurdish question" (ibid. p. 71), thus its being adressed as primarily "a social issue" (ibid. p. 72). In the accounts included here, there are many examples of repression and attempts to assimilate the Kurdish population that the interviewees have experienced themselves.

As when stories of this kind are told, reference is frequently made to experiences in everydaylife contexts, often experienced already in their childhood. As was described in previous chapters the public sphere in Turkey is known to be highly "ethnicized" (Natali 2005 pp. 93, 103; see also Houston 2001 prologue p. ix, passim). One example of this is the banderols on which there were statements declaring "How happy is he who can say 'I am a Turk' "<sup>125</sup> decorating strategic places in squares and public buildings in every city and town. The state ideology created a "hegemonic" structure, one mirrored in public places and practices. One such memory was revealed in B's account, telling of how he dealt with Kurdish identity while growing up in Turkey where Kurdishness was strictly forbidden in all zones that could be considered public or, in Goffmans' terminology, "front-stage":

My name is ... actually I have two names, and most Kurds have two names. My name is Brûsq, the name that I was given by my father and.. my parents ... father and mother. That was Brûsq. Lightning. But during registration ... my parents were obliged to change my name and they wrote Birol, so in all public documents my name is Birol. This is not my real name. My name is Brûsq. And none of my parents, or of my friends or any of my acquaintances know me as Birol. They know me as Brûsq.

(B)

The story is located in the Turkey of his childhood and illustrates how in public spaces he, like all Kurds, was denied the use of his Kurdish name, the name his parents had given him, in public spaces and how citizenship rules penetrated into

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<sup>125</sup> Ne mutlu Türküm diyene.

the everyday lives of people. Although he was a member of the Kurdish community and as such was identified as Kurdish, in crossing the frontier to the public sphere he becomes Birol, a citizen of Turkey and from that moment on he could not, according to his story, openly express his Kurdish identity. Brûsq is his "real" name and symbolised, in his words, the person "who he in reality is".

Given names have a strong symbolic meaning, since they signify social belonging, such as that of ethnicity, class and gender. Giving a Kurdish name to a child under the condition that non-Turkish names were forbidden could be interpreted as a symbolic act of resistance (Guibernau 1996), as a lived struggle against assimilation. The description B providing fits into what Eidhem reported on (1969) in a study of how Norwegian Samis in Norway managed their position in public spaces since outside their homes they rejected to speak Samic, they "under-communicated" their national identity in public spaces, and in most forms of social interaction with the majority population, many of them having at the same time cautiously articulated their ethnic belongingness through symbolic actions. As is intimated in B's account having two names was an experience that he shared with many other Kurds from Turkey. In his memoirs, for example, the author Mehmed Uzun write of how he was first given the name Hême by his parents, but since this name was not approved by the local authorities he was to be called Mehmet (Uzun 2008 pp. 41-43).

Another example of how the Kurds were prohibited by the Turkish authorities from giving Kurdish names to their children was provided by the author Dilşa Demirbag-Steen, who told in the Swedish radio programme "Summer" in June 1999 that the authorities approved her given name only after that her father had changed the spelling of it so that it could be written exclusively with letters from the Turkish alphabet. In Kurdish circles it is widely believed that prohibitions against use of non-Turkish names are in reality aimed specifically at Kurdish names. One of the women interviewed for the thesis for example remarked: "My own name for example, my name is R, and that is not a Turkish name. It is an Arabic name, but it is not forbidden" (R). Her continuing that the issue of name permission has been actualised further in recent years, through parents having organised protest actions against state employees having rejected the registration of Kurdish names, with reference to that these names are non-Turkish.

The story told by B, as well as other examples of stories that have been told, shows that from their experience it became a necessity to adapt, partly at least, through organising daily lives in accordance with the demand of assimilating Kurds in the Turkish nation-building project. They can also be understood as examples of a symbolic resistance (Guibernau 1996), since it tells of how parents continued to give Kurdish names to their children, despite its being prohibited, and also of how people found ways of continuing to use these names within certain circles and in certain contexts.

### *Assimilation 2*

The theme of assimilation was brought up in almost every interview. In many of these accounts the meeting with authorities and representatives of the Turkish state is in focus. There are generally only a few Turks residing in the Kurdish dominated towns and villages in the Kurdistan region in Turkey. Most of them either military personnel and their families, or state employees such as doctors, teachers, governmental administrative personnel and policemen. Hence, in Kurdistan, the only Turks that many ordinary Kurdish citizens encountered were state representatives (Baksi 2006 p. 67; cf. Geerse 2011 p. 154). Many of the interviewees, for example D, E and C, told that these persons followed various strategies aimed at assimilation. The school years had a prominent place in the memory of many of them belonging to the political generation of interest here. Many of those interviewed describe themselves having been punished, or how they had witnessed classmates who had been punished, ignored or belittled by their teachers because of their not knowing Turkish when they started school. One of these interviewees, E, tell that he "hated" the teachers because of this.

At the same time a somewhat different picture was provided by a man with whom I had an informal discussion at the outset of the work with the thesis who told me that there were teachers that "just shook their heads and laughed at how impossible the situation was" (Ü). Thus, in the interviewees and in various texts we can note varying experiences of the school system on the part of those belonging to the political generation, if all of them were faced with the prohibition of speaking Kurdish in school. There are several accounts of their experiences in school, in which they emphasise the attempts that were made to assimilate them into a Turkish nationality by means of the school system. In his memoirs the author Mahmut Baksi describes how the children in the boarding school he was sent to were encouraged to dissociate themselves from their Kurdish backgrounds:

Every week we went to see Turkish films in school. In these films there was much joking about peasants and the way they talk and how they are dressed. People who reminded us of our parents and brothers and sisters were depicted as underdeveloped, yes dangerous. We, on the contrary, looked more or less like the actors on the movie screen. We began to identify with these Western-style dressed smart people. Not only the films, but also our teachers influenced us in that direction. Many of the pupils made efforts to forget their Kurdish language. They believed that by doing so they would become perfect in Turkish. They did not want anyone to become aware that they were Kurds, since Kurds according to our teachers, were worthless people, which we also could read in our schoolbooks. In time, many of the boys lost contact with their parents. More and more pupils refused to go to their home villages to see their parents in the summers. They did not want to be children of poor Kurdish rural workers or to be peasants any more.

(Baksi 2006 pp. 86-87; this part from it being translated from Swedish).

The scene presented in this quotation took place in one of the boarding schools that many Kurdish children were sent to in order to receive an education. As Baksi recalls, during his years spent in this school there was a sense of inferiority implanted into the children because of their Kurdish background. In the school that Baksi described, the pupils encountered not only a completely different language than their mother tongue, but were also confronted with a lifestyle and manners that were different from theirs and presented as being better and more civilized than what they were used to from the rural areas that they came from (Baksi 2000 pp. 85-99). His description of the educational politics in Turkey reminds one of the ideas launched by Gellner (1983), who emphasised the importance of the school system in the nation-building processes.

Schools are often considered to be a suitable arena, or instrument, for spreading a sense of people's belonging to a nation, with all the classical ingredients this has of a common history, origin and the like. The school system in several countries has been an instrument for attempts of integrating minority children, in Sweden for instance where boarding schools were first established with the purpose of bringing up, educating and also to "civilise" Sámi children (Lantto and Mörk, 2008 p. 142). For the Turkish regime, as for many other governments across the globe, the school became an instrument for socialising the children to conformity with an ideological or standardised system, and here for teaching the children the Turkish language. The text above suggest that many children indeed became assimilated to a considerable extent, yet it is plausible to assume that the boarding school system tended to alienate many Kurdish children and a number of sources suggest that in the long run the boarding schools created many of the staunchest Kurdish nationalists (see, for example, Kendal 1979b p. 74).

#### *Adjustments*

Many of the stories presented above fed into the widespread idea that a diasporic narrative is one of victimisation (Cohen 1997). In both the previous stories for example, the implementation of assimilation policies in Turkey and the negative consequences for the Kurds in that country that these had, were referred to. The picture is however much more complex and, as we will see, the dominant narrative full of contrasts. Among the interviews collected we find several accounts that point out effects of these policies how people had to adjust to sometimes paradoxal situations and different environments. These stories imply that the assimilation policies had failed, yet still had consequences for people of Kurdish origin in their everyday lives. V, for example, mentions that there was a discrepancy between the Turkish society he read about in his schoolbooks and the Turkish society he observed. He emphasise that the society he learned about in school was far more democratic and equal than the one he encountered in his every day life. U tells that the stories about Kurdish history he learned at home was completely different from them taught in school.

Many stories tell about how many belongings became natural and socio-cultural boundaries managed and easy to get on with. In everyday life encounters between people were often friendly and not at all dramatic. In some local areas of Turkey, children were immersed, from early years in an atmosphere of diverse cultural settings and languages. The Hançepek quarter, also known as *Gavûr Mahallesi*,<sup>126</sup> situated in the old town of Diyarbakir, in which the Jewish, Assyrian and Armenian population of the city resided, is vividly described in Mehmet Uzun's essay *Pomegranate Flowers*. He lived for various periods of time there during his childhood and acquired many Armenian acquaintances. Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian could all be spoken at the same dinner table (Uzun 1998 pp. 13ff.). Thus, to many people managed in their daily lives the co-existence of several languages and cultures.

At the same time, an example of how relations between different population groups could become tense is given in the memoirs of Mahmut Baksi. Several Bulgarian-Turkish families had immigrated to Turkey and were assigned land-plots and houses in Kurdistan by the authorities. Baksi writes about how Bulgarian-Turkish families came to his home town. New houses were built for them, and they were given land. At the beginning the atmosphere was tense, the Bulgarian children and their families being harassed by the Kurdish children, but in time they were becoming friends and the Bulgarian learning to speak Kurdish. Baksi writes, however: "Then again we did not learn Turkish" (Baksi 2007 p. 31).

Finally, in the 1960s and 1970s an increasing urbanisation took place in Turkey. Thus, there were many Kurdish families that moved to the cities in Western Turkey. Many of them, especially the women, girls and young children, came there without having command of Turkish. M, who grew up in a rural setting where only Kurdish was spoken, moved to Istanbul with his family at the age of five. He describes how frustrating and incomprehensible the first meetings with Turkish speaking people were to him:

And before we came to Istanbul I learned [the] Turkish alphabet without knowing a word of Turkish. It was an interesting experience and it was my uncle who taught me the alphabet. I simply recognized these words and signs, not their meaning. And I knew by heart the words and signs that were written there, for example a and ı, but I did not know what they meant. In this way I learned the alphabet and a little bit of Turkish but without knowing what they meant. So when I as a child for the first time met a person who spoke Turkish, ... I was shocked. In Istanbul, when we came there Istanbul, ... I did not understand anything. As far as I knew, all people spoke Kurdish. So when we came to Istanbul and went out in the streets, and

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<sup>126</sup> The Christian neighbourhood. Gavûr mean infidel in Turkish.

I tried to talk with a boy ... he did not answer me, and he reacted in a strange way, I remember that I said to my mother: "Mom, no one can speak my language, what shall I do?"

(M)

The only person in the family who knew Turkish at the time they moved to Istanbul was his father. After being there for a while however, the family, like many other Kurdish migrant families, gradually shifted language from Kurdish to Turkish. Two years later they returned to their home village. By then, M recall, he had become a bit of an "outsider" in his old home village because he had forgotten his Kurdish. Now he was not able to communicate with his class mates in the school yard since they were speaking Kurdish there. In the school in the township children were taught Turkish, but they communicated in Kurdish in their everyday lives outside schools. In the little village where M lived with his family, there were only a few people who could speak Turkish. Thus, it became necessary for M to learn his maternal tongue partly anew. It took him a summer in the village before he was able to communicate adequately in Kurdish again. Finally, he concludes, laughing, "my Kurdish ... it came and went".

As M moved from Kurdistan to Istanbul, he had to deal with some of the socio-cultural boundaries and language barriers that existed within Turkey. Since these boundaries and barriers had been perceived by him, in accordance with the state ideology in Turkey however, they had been neglected as being Kurds (Houston 2001). In Istanbul he became an outsider at first, unable to communicate effectively with other children. As he expressed it he was "shocked" the first time he met someone who spoke Turkish. Suddenly, his maternal tongue had become useless when he went to play with other children in the streets. When his family returned back to Kurdistan, he became an "outsider" again. In Istanbul a monolingual use of Turkish had been encouraged. In the home village he found himself once again in a situation in which he was excluded because of his language, this time by his classmates at the schoolyard in Kurdistan. Neither could he communicate with relatives of his in the village at the time of returning there. However he easily adjusted to the new settings as his family moved away from the home village and back again.

### *Taking side*

In many of the stories it is emphasised that being Kurdish is an active choice. In none of the states of Iraq, Iran and Turkey one could say that the Kurds: "consistently differentiated themselves from Arabs, Turks and Persians" (Natali 2005 p. ii). Many of those interviewed more or less explicitly, suggested that actively taking sides in the matter is necessary to become a Kurd. Still in Turkey, it was told, at least it would have been a possible option for them to adjust to the assimilation

policies there and become a "Turk". Simply sharing a given location in history is not sufficient for any group to constitute a generation in a sociological sense since it does not necessarily create a common "generational consciousness" (Mannheim 1953 pp. 306ff.). Accordingly, as was discussed in Chapter 2, Mannheim suggested the occurrence of "differentiated antagonistic generation units" (ibid.) sharing the same location in history. This fits in to what G says when he discuss how to define a Kurd. G stated clearly, for example, that being a Kurd has nothing to do with a person's language skills, or how acquainted he or she is with Kurdish history, music, customs, traditions and the like, there being many persons in Turkey, who denied the existence of the Kurds, even if they, as G explain:

    speak Kurdish much better than I do, are dancing Kurdish dances much better than I do. But all the same they are saying that there ... are no Kurds.

(G)

Thus, there are persons in Turkey who could be considered as being Kurds when attributes considered as "objective" criteria in defining ethnic belonging are used. Yet, these persons do not, in using subjective criteria, perceive themselves to be Kurdish. Or they have chosen, voluntarily or involuntarily, not to appear as Kurds in public spaces. And it happens that some of these people even deny the very existence of a Kurdish people. G chose a well known personality to illustrate what he mean:

    (...) a very competent foreign minister, like Hikmet Çetin.<sup>127</sup> He is from my home town. Together with one of his relatives I was a refugee while he has been one of Turkey's most successful foreign ministers. And he could speak Kurdish much better than me ... in the 1980s when he was a minister of foreign affairs in Turkey he spoke Kurdish with his mother. But he was a Turk in public. Thus his identity was that he was a Turk, he was a citizen of Turkey and he was the foreign minister of Turkey. There are many many examples.

(G)

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<sup>127</sup> Hikmet Çetin, born in Lice, the Diyarbakir province, was Turkey's minister of foreign affairs between 1991-1994.

In Turkey there are many examples to be found, in all sectors of society, of persons of Kurdish origin who have achieved prominent positions in society, as politicians, business people, academics and so forth. In the capacity of being Turkish citizens, and with a good command of Turkish, anyone has the basic possibility of having a good position in society in Turkey, even if he or she in reality can be classified as being a Kurd, providing he or she makes no mention of it. Thus, being Kurdish in a Turkish context, it is implied by G, takes an effort and some sacrifice. Struggling for the right to express ones national identity openly is an active choice.

### *Defeated*

Taking refuge from the original homeland or being banished from it are remembered as "lived experiences" and real memories for the first generation of refugee immigrants that the men and women the present thesis focuses on actually constitute. It seem thus plausible to assume that the metaphor of suffering symbolizes what they express in terms of imaginations of belonging to a homeland out of reach. Cohen (1997 pp. 27, 31) coined the term "victim diasporas" to refer to diasporic groups that have been formed as consequence of forced migration and traumatic events in their original homeland. In his work Cohen argues that narratives of diasporas often emphasise their "catastrophic origins" and regard the diasporic condition as a trauma. Examples of victimisations also abound in accounts and narratives of the Kurdish diaspora, Kurds often being portrayed in terms of their suffering and being to a large extent subjected to repression.

The "de-territorializing" perspective that Cohen provides has been criticized, however, for limiting the diasporic condition to its being applied to refugee communities only. In the narratives about Kurds we also find accounts of that Kurds have been banished and been forced to leave the Kurdish homeland for long periods of time, either recently or in a historical perspective. Looking at the Kurdish issue at large shows it to be difficult to find some single and well-defined process that caused the immense migration flows of people migrating from Kurdistan although from the 1980s onwards emigration from all the states hosting large numbers of Kurdish residents has increased. Kurds were leaving Kurdistan and Turkey in small numbers in the 1960s and 1970s and thereafter the emigration increased. For the generation of major concern here the military coup of 1980 was a critical juncture. For Y it was recalled as being a really serious political situation:

And then, 1980 the military coup took place. (...) This seizure of power was very bloody. Many people died in prison, they became abused and tortured. [The junta] did everything to eliminate the Kurdish resistance against the regime. They [the Kurds] were not well organized, and in addition they were left-wing. But everything was done then to eliminate such movements, it led to many people escaping Turkey, others being imprisoned. They were maltreated. During this period, between 1980 and 1984, ... for four or five

years, the military maintained the power in Turkey. It was much, much worse than what happened in Yugoslavia for example or what is happening in Rwanda.

(Y)

Developments in Turkey during the period immediately following the coup prevented the men and women who had been active in the pro-Kurdish movement to continue the careers of political resistance they had commenced with. Inside Turkey extensive political purges took place. Many Kurdish activists were imprisoned, others were either sent out of the country by their political organisations or were forced to escape.

In Chapter 5 it was chronicled how the Kurdish movement was completely shattered following the military intervention. From this time and for many years on it was virtually impossible for them to continue their activities in Turkey, and it became increasingly difficult following the implementation of the new constitution in 1983. Harsher restrictions were then imposed on the Kurds. Accordingly 1980 changed the situation for all of them completely since the military intervention had effects so far reaching that they also affected those who had managed to escape Turkey before the coup took place.

#### *Dispersed and Scattered*

As was pointed out earlier a diasporic condition involve by necessity a sense of belonging to a "people" or a community which is dispersed from the imagined homeland and as such distributed across borders (Brubaker 2005 p. 5; Björklund 2011 pp. 136-137). The condition of belonging to "a people" that are dispersed virtually all over the world is shared by all diaspora groups and constitutes one of the central elements characterising a diaspora (see, for example, Brubaker 2005; Clifford 1997; Cohen 1996; Marienstras 1989). Today, Kurdish settlements are to be found basically all over the world and there are still Kurdish migration flows from the Middle East. In connection with the European Year Against Racism declared by the EU in 1997, for example, representatives of the Kurdish party SPK, active in the exile settings wrote the following:

About 25 million of the roughly 35,<sup>128</sup> million Kurds still live today in their original homeland of Kurdistan. As a result of expulsion, war, and migration, most of the remaining 10 million Kurds live in other areas of these four states, in neighbouring countries, and in the diaspora, which

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<sup>128</sup> For a discussion on the number of Kurds see Chapter 1 in the thesis.

includes scattered groups of Kurds in Europe. Today an estimated one million Kurds live as labour migrants and refugees in Europe alone.

(from *On the Situation of the Kurdish People in the European Year Against Racism* by the Socialist Party of Kurdistan, Stockholm 1997 p. 3, see also Burkay 2003 p. 41).

In the text it is argued that the vast majority of Kurds "still" live in their "original" homeland, which in turn indicate implicitly an extensive displacement from the homeland. The readers attention is drawn to the condition of very large numbers of Kurds nowadays residing outside Kurdistan proper. The text reports of Kurds moving away from their homeland in large numbers because of such factors as "expulsion", "war" and "migration", the last one being probably in part for socio-economic reasons such as those of employment and education.

Being dispersed from the Kurdish homeland meant that one was living outside the imagined territory of Kurdistan, implying that Kurds in Istanbul, Baghdad and Teheran are dispersed and separated from their original homeland. As a result a Kurd born in Kurdistan in Turkey is perceived as being dispersed from his or her original homeland even if the new place of settlement is situated within the territorial borders of that state. In addition, it is of significance that the occurrence of forced migration from Kurdistan was a burning issue at the time when the text was published. For decades there had been a considerable emigration from Turkish Kurdistan, one that accelerated in the 1990s. In the mid-1990s there were still a war raging between the Kurdish PKK-guerilla and the Turkish Army. Large numbers of Kurds were escaping the warring area, many of them forced away from home and belongings by the military (Geerse 2010 p. 20; Jongerden 2007 p. 72).

In addition large numbers of people were escaping from other parts of Kurdistan. The situation in neighbouring Iraq was still uncertain and destabilised, even if Kurds administered the area of Iraqi Kurdistan since 1992 which engendered large numbers of refugees being located there (Cook 1995; Natali 2005 p. 66; McDowall 1996 pp. 378ff.).

#### *Homeless and Uprooted*

Rootlessness and homelessness, referring here to the losses and suffering of migrants, are common metaphors used to signify a diasporic condition and have been observed in the narratives of various diasporic groups (see, for example, Lindholm-Schulz 2003 p. 86). These metaphors have been criticised because their allusions to "re-territorialising" claims (Alinia 2007 pp. 275ff.; Sökefeld 2006 p. 280), since it can surely be asked whether people really have "roots" and not are capable of finding themselves new homes. To many people, however, the condition of being an exiled person means something more than just being detached from a particular territory and all the social and material resources linked with it.

The diasporic condition has been described as: " a condition of 'alienation' " (Lindholm Schulz 2003 p. 21). In numerous scholarly studies it has been exemplified and underscored how a period of "uncertainty" and "homesickness" often is to take place following the leaving of one's original home country. (Lindqvist 1989; Lundberg 1989 pp. 102ff.). Edward Said (2000) discusses exile partly in terms of its being a cognitive exercise, in his calling attention to emphasize the phenomena of "solitude" and "spirituality" pointing out a number of existential dilemmas that are evoked when a person is in a state perceived as being one of liminality (ibid. p. 181). H describes his first period of time in Sweden as one in which life seems not to have a direction and in which freedom and other facilities acquired seem meaningless:

But it was difficult. [We were] apathetic, powerless, idle ... . Yes freedom, but like in a luxurious prison. You did not have the capacity to do anything that had any kind of meaning of any sort. Everything was like ... as if it were made of plastic, as if life, ... as if there was nothing that could make an impression.

(H)

A liminal phase is a floating condition, to some persons its being very temporal, and to others something more permanent. H's account imply a condition of homelessness in a symbolic sense, or an existential condition since he describes a situation in which "home and life" are "shattered" and a sense of "estrangement" develops (Said 2000).

On the one hand, he perceived himself to be recently arrived refugee who is separated from, and thus no longer completely a part of, the original home country, detached as he was, from the territory of the homeland, and accordingly from friends, relatives and well-known places that have become out of reach, and developments there in the homeland have become difficult or impossible to follow closely. A possible interpretation of this account is that a person in such a situation does not perceive himself as having a proper place in the receiving country, where the settings and customs still may be unfamiliar, and where old skills and the maternal tongue, serving as a means of communication, maybe is useless with exception for within a close circle of family and friends.

One experience shared by refugees is that of not only being stripped of the territories of the original home country but also being thrown into a new socio-cultural context, in which earlier manners and knowledge maybe are of no use. Or as Lindqvist (1989) put it: "The self-evidence of the social world is lost and ingrained agency patterns prove inadequate in the new context" (p. 109).

In the material collected for the dissertation, there are many examples to be found of how the first period in Sweden was perceived as what could be described as an "artificial childhood" (ibid. p. 109). When the author Mehmet Uzun de-

scribes his first period in Sweden, he portrays a situation of vulnerability and helplessness:

My mother tongue suddenly became useless, meaningless and a burden. It stopped protecting me, it stopped giving me a sense of security and strength. I could not express myself. Deprived of my mother tongue I lost my identity and personality.

(Uzun 1996 p. 202)

Having a language in common is crucial to being able to communicate and create a sense of commonality, its also being linked with a sense of identity and of the personality one has. When Mehment Uzun describes his first period in Sweden he emphasise how he was confronted with a completely new society and culture in which he did not entirely grasp the social codes and scripts of how to behave. As the text moves on, he then give various examples of how skills and talents he had learned and managed were not "applicable" in the society where he had just settled down. Uzun points out its having been difficult to interact with people since the "values" that used to be "obvious" and "unquestionable" became of no use (Uzun 1996 p. 202).

### *Temporality*

A reccurent theme in the accounts is that the escape to another country often was not intended as being permanent. This is a phenomenon that has been observed by various commentators, that of refugees at first considering the refuge and exile involved as temporary conditions, often with a short time perspective (Lundberg 1989; Lindqvist 1989; Lindholm-Schulz 2004). Thus, many of them have arrived in the countries in which they were given asylum without any intention of building up a new life there (cf. Wahlbeck 1999 pp. 106-109). Rather it seems, from the stories told, to have been common to arrive in Sweden with the expectation that it would soon be possible to return to the original homeland. The escape from the original home country is generally considered by refugees to be a temporal solution. Thus, the life in exile could be viewed as follows:

When we came ... I never thought of buying an apartment, or saving money. No, 'in a few months we are going to return'. But it did not happen. After one year, two years, three, four, five years. Time just went on. (...) And I was never thinking of having an apartment, a kitchen table like this ... I was never thinking of that. Because you have the idea that you should return and struggle. After some time when I married and got children ... I realised ... 'but this is not realistic'.

(D)

D changes his voice when he recall how he was thinking during his first years in Sweden, in doing so marking the fact that he nowadays find this belief a bit naive, or that he now has a better overview of the situation. His now being an observer of things from a distance, he can see the unreasonableness in the situation. Over time his perspective had shifted although it took him a long time to obtain insight that the defeat of the generation, as well of his settling down in Sweden, was to be of a more permanent character. When D tells of his thinking at the time of his arrival in Sweden he mentions that he was thinking of a return within "a few months, one year or so", and expected it to be a limited period of waiting until the situation in Turkey had calmed down. His journey to Sweden had involved longer periods of waiting in other Middle Eastern countries while on his way. During the first years in Sweden, the political struggle was what was essentially occupying his mind and his time. Aspirations of creating a new home then came with marriage and having a family.

In accounts and written documents, the interviewees frequently refer to shared knowledge about the past. A further matter brought up in the interviews was that different times and places may either contrast with one another or conflate as people transgress the borders between them. It has often been observed that immigrants, in particular refugees, perceive of themselves as "in-betweeners" situated in a state of alienation from both the past and the present resulting in "temporal confusion" for some period (see, for example, Lindholm Schulz 2002 pp. 108-111).

Also regarding the prospects of the Kurdish struggle a shift in time perspective can be noticed. For example, U recalled his reactions when he had asked a Kurdish friend how long a time that person had been in Sweden:

So I definitely came to make politics. I thought that I would go back as soon as possible. When I came here ... I remember once, I asked X ... I asked him, ... 'For how long have you been here?', He said 'five years'. I said nothing to him but said to myself ... 'How stupid he is. How can he stay here five years.' Yes. I thought that I would be here only for a few months, or that after a year I would return. Yes, but now I'm [still] here, after more than twenty years. And still it feels like a very short time [laughs].

(U)

To U this was, at the moment, a very long period. At the time for the interview, however, he perceived 5 years to be a rather short period of a person's life. As the interview moved on U told of his having believed: "Within 5 years Kurdistan should be free". To him, and many others, it took some years to realize that the time for a possible return to Kurdistan or Turkey would have to be postponed for a

long time to come and that life in a diasporic setting was to become a more permanent condition.

It seems difficult to establish exact when and for what reasons the exile will end. The opinions regarding this expressed in the interviews ranged from presentations of the exile as a more or less permanent condition to statements in which the exile condition was basically denied or rejected. To D it was the initial period in Sweden that became a state of limbo, while to A the limbo seemed to be more permanent. The director of the Kurdish Library, for example, labelled a lecture he gave at Uppsala University as, "Kurdish literature in permanent exile",<sup>129</sup> alluding to his experiencing of a complete escape whereas F says he has no idea of what a life in exile is like and advises me to talk with someone else about that subject.

At the time of the interviews, return was not a concrete matter for most of those interviewed, when life in the diasporic setting was discussed. It was rather the impossibility or difficulty of return that was touched upon. Indeed, at the time when the interviews were conducted several of those interviewed had not been able to return to Turkey all since coming to Sweden. Although there were persons who had been allowed to make short visits to the country, or had been advised by friends and or by networks that it would be possible to go to Western Turkey only for a short trip. Spending a week or so there were by many considered to be without risk.

### *Alienation*

Becoming a political refugee in Sweden has for many of those interviewed proved to be far from a painless experience. In some of the accounts their feeling themselves to be at some distance from what they consider to be meaningful and important in life is described. There are accounts in which a sense of alienation vis-à-vis contemporary conditions and life in Sweden is expressed. A describes his situation as a Kurdish political refugee in Sweden as follows:

Yes, it is a tremendous distress, a tremendous persecution. It means that ... you have to struggle incessantly for your identity. What [does] this mean? Yes, many things. Yes, that I am from a noble family, I have never missed anything in my life. But now in Sweden where I lead a slightly better life, I miss a lot. I miss a job, I miss my friends, I miss social relations, I miss ... yes ... . In my country there were hordes of people that expected me to come

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<sup>129</sup> Lecture given at Centre for Multiethnic Research, Uppsala University March 4, 2000.

and see them. Just go and see them. Here there is no one that just comes to see me.

(A)

The story A tells here illustrates how detachment from his home country brought with it more substantial losses of both material and social resources. His present situation is depicted as one of gloom and passivity, as such very much in contrast to his far more active and prosperous past that is now out of reach. For A, who is unemployed at the time of the interview, and who regards himself as "a defeated Kurdish personality", it is his lack of a position and his difficulties in establishing social contacts in the new home country that disturb him most. His story reminds one of what Lundberg writes about Latin American exiles in Western Europe, namely that "defeat and exile have a double meaning" (Lundberg 1989 p. 37). His exemplifying this by a quotation of Igonet-Fastingier (1984) who writes that exile means "the collective failure or defeat for a socio-historic project as well as the individual failure or defeat of a life project" (Igonet-Fastingier 1984, p. 234). When A was politically active in Turkey, and later in Iraq, he worked clandestinely, left his work and lived on money he could get from his relatives. To him the political movement he participated in was defeated, the social position that he acquired through his political career also being gone. His story is thus not embedded in a safe social context. The social and economic security achieved in the new home country cannot compensate for his losses in social contacts, the feelings of emptiness and the existential difficulties that this brings with it (Lindqvist 1989; Lundberg 1989 p. 39).

## 6.3 National Romanticism

### *The legitimate nation*

Anthony D. Smith has pointed out that one of the main reasons for national identities having become such a common "fundamental shared" identity in our contemporary modern world is that they are "ubiquitous" phenomena (1991 p. 143). Nations are found all over the globe, and wherever national and ethnic conflict emerges claims of national sovereignty can be raised. The contemporary world is a world of nation-states, and nationality gives political resistance and ethnically based liberation movements legitimacy. Thus, becoming a nation could give the Kurds a status of legitimacy as a people. This is a tendency reflected in the answers given when the interviews evolved around what being Kurdish mean to the informants:

Yes, you see, we know that what constitutes a basis for national identities (..) is above all language, a common history and traditions. All of this you can find in a Kurd. We have a common language, which is Kurdish. And we have a common history, which is very dramatic, and it unites us all emotionally in our fight for independence and in our struggle for human rights.

(R)

Several times when the question of Kurdishness was brought up in the conversations the interviewees at first, like R above, began to discuss, in very general terms, what principles are needed to bring a nation into being. R expresses both a rational and an emotional relation to her nation, emphasizing that the Kurds possess several of the attributes required to be recognized as a nation. This could be interpreted as implicitly meaning that the Kurds fulfill the principles established for national self-determination. Most of those interviewed maintained that the Kurds constitute a "nation" on an equal footing with all other "nations" around the world. In the interviews it was emphasized generally, more or less explicitly, that the Kurds should have "the same rights" as other nations in our contemporary world. U, for example, said he felt that the Kurds "have the same right to political independence, to cultural independence as any other people".

It was pointed out by the interviewees generally how the very existence of the Kurds as a people had been denied in the recent Turkish history and that the Kurdish nation building process had become decayed for several reasons. The picture that emerged from the answers and statements of the interviewees indicated them to consider the Kurds constituting a people, one that normatively speaking was eligible to be a nation, and that is still waiting for its legitimate status as a nation. However, exactly what a recognition of the Kurds was to bring about was more unprecise and was disputed. One finds cautiousness and the taking of different positions. As the interview with R moved on she said that "suppression give way to resistance", and that there would not have been as much Kurdish resistance if the linguistic and cultural rights of the Kurds had been recognized. Among the persons interviewed we find those who, like T, says:

I am in favour of a Kurdish nation state, but I do not say that we should establish a state through the use of violence ..., first we must have the [necessary] qualifications ..., people must be elected, through referendum or through similar arrangements, and if the people decide that they want to belong to Turkey, okay, then they can belong to Turkey, for example, or to Iraq or Iran, ... must accept the solution arrived at and continue with a democratic approach to the problems ... .

(T)

Most interviewees express that a longing for justice and independence for Kurdistan. While some of them, like T, are talking of an independent Kurdistan, others advocate a recognition of the Kurds in Turkey in the form of language rights or autonomy, or kindly decline to talk about it or even to talk about any political aspects of the Kurdish issue. There surely are quite different opinions and positions regarding such matters among those interviewed, and it is possible that some of them have changed their viewpoints and opinions over time. They might well also change the answers they would give to the questions depending on who the interviewer is.

### *Idealising the Past*

National romanticism often alludes to the past. In several of the accounts the past is idealised. Also in many written documents and books produced by people belonging to the political generation of our concerns there is a flavour of nostalgia to be found. In his essay *Separation is Such a Grief* Mehmet Uzun suggests that this is a general phenomenon since:..."Both Ovid and Mevlana lived in the shadow of their memories." (Uzun 1996 p. 200). To further emphasize for the reader how important the past and memories from of the original home country becomes to refugees he provides an example from when he once acted as the moderator of a conference panel on exile literature. He asked all of the participants whether they had ever dreamt about their new home country during their first years as exiles. Their unanimous answer was "no". In the first period of exile, all their dreams had concerned the country perceived as their "original" home country, and had generally been in their maternal tongue. Regarding this Uzun writes as follows:

As I was waiting to apply for asylum at the Immigration Office of Stockholm Airport, my mind and heart flew, like two white pigeons, back to my own country: to the loved ones I had left behind, to my grandfather's grave which I would never visit again; and to my old friend Apê Xelîl, a witness to the recent Kurdish history whom I had met in prison in the 1970s...In my new country, I jealously claimed the colourful memories and painful experiences of my former life, the faces that shaped my personality...everything from my past that had drifted away from me. Aware that I was living my new life in the shadows of my memories, I tried to make the shadows visible.

(Uzun 1995 p. 200)

Physically, his body was in Stockholm, Sweden. His "mind and heart" however returned immediately to the place he considered to be home. This could be interpreted as if he mentally was in his original home country, though his body was too far away for him to be able to follow his loved ones and he had no possibility of closely following what was going on at the places that he missed. Thus, it became

an important mission for him to "make the shadows visible". His orientation to his homeland thus was more than room and space.

To some of the interviewees the involuntary refuge from the home country was expressed as a turning point, sometimes even as a juncture at which life ended. One of the best-known examples of this is perhaps something the Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz expressed, commemorating his exile in Latin America by comparing this period in his life with a "grave" (Uzun 1998 p. 85). A similar position can be detected in some of the stories told by members of the political generation. To A for example life in Sweden seem to be a condition of waiting, remembering and suffering, a marginalized position it would seem. While we were talking he returned recurrently to the past, to the movement he participated in during the 1970s. This he explained as follows:

Yes, the 1970s was my best period of time, my youth. And I will never become tired of talking about the 1970s, because I live in Sweden as a defeated political person. The only thing I have left is to look back and (...) yes think about the 1970s.

(A)

As anyone thoroughly conversant with national identity constructions should know, narratives on this theme told about the past more often than not have more to do with the present than with history (Anderson 1991 pp. 102ff.; Hettne et al. 1998 Chapter 6). The account told by A takes the shape of being a tragedy with a flavour of nostalgia in it. A tragedy because it is implied that most of what was important in life is gone. The past is glorified and described as a period when life had a real meaning. The present seem difficult to deal with, at least at the time of the interview and the memories of the past seem to be more important than the present.

#### *A Quest for the "True Kurdishness"*

As was pointed out earlier, a central element in national identity constructions is the imagining of there to be a common past alluding to there being a "natural" and "continuous" link they have with the original homeland. Several examples are to be found in the material providing the basis of the present thesis, Kurdish national identities being presented there as if they were "natural" or "essential", alluding to what an ancient origin the Kurds have and to their continuous historical links with the land of Kurdistan. At the same time, as has been pointed out by a number of commentators, essentialist positions taken within a nationality discourse need not necessarily be dismissed as signs of "racism" or "chauvinism", but can also be seen as attempts to give voice to a people's perceiving themselves as being subordinate (see, for example, Brah 1996, who presents a critical discussion of essentialism), making reference to connections with ancient times in narratives con-

cerned with national identities readily serving the purpose instead of providing the group in question, and the nationalism that evolves, legitimacy (Deniz 1999; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Smith 1991). Hamit Bozarslan (2003a p. 14) asserts that "historiography", the writing of history in the present, is "the instrument par excellence" for the creation of nationality narratives. In historiographical narratives selected episodes and fragments from history are told, and used in a way that makes such narratives suitable for explaining the groups' current situation. In A's account for example, references to the existence of Kurds in ancient times serves as a springboard to giving legitimacy to the modern Kurdish nation building process:

The Kurds are an ancient nation originating in Mesopotamia. They have not moved anywhere. They have been living there all the time. At present, the historical documents that exist are not available for us Kurds. Yet so far we have heard, or have read here and there, we are a much older people than the Jews, or the Bible. (...) . Then, to return to your question, we have a great deal to be proud of as human beings ... . We have never been Arabic or Persian or Turkish nations.

(A)

In the passage quoted A establishes that the Kurds have a strong and continuous link to their lands, his also indicating that the Kurds are a strong people, since they have not been assimilated into any of the nations that since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century have been politically dominant in the area. In line with this he emphasize the strength of the Kurds, who have been able to withstand "the occupation" of their lands and have managed to survive over the centuries as "a people". He draw attention immediately thereafter, however, to the precarious situation the Kurds are presently in, and says that the historical documents that could prove the existence of the historical circumstances he has told of are not accesible to the Kurds. Thus, the story he told can be interpreted as an attempt to justify the Kurds' nation building project, at the same time as he places himself in opposition to contemporary political conditions and the current status of the Kurds.

Since historiography represents an important ingredient in the construction of national identities it is important to organise and to control historical documents that prove the claims of the Kurds of their having very deep historical roots. In various studies of nationalism attention has been drawn to the occurrence of national institutions such as archives, museums, libraries and the like, their role in creating a national consciousness being pointed to in the nationalisms constructed by states (see, for example, Anderson 1991 p. 178 ; Gellner 1983 ; Hettne et al. pp.

303-307; Hobsbawm 1990). In Turkey and Iraq archival records covering periods that are considered to be grisly or involve acts having been committed that are are labelled as politically sensitive have been difficult to get access to.<sup>130</sup>

As the interview with A continues, it becomes increasingly evident that in his view the Kurds have become marginalised since they fail to have control over such institutions as museums and archives in the states in which they reside. A contrasts the present situation of the Kurds in Turkey with how it used to be in Ottoman times. The establishment of the Turkish Republic serves as his "focal point" in comparing the present situation with that in the past. He says that the Kurds were a "dominant group within the Ottoman Empire" and continues asserting that "Mustafa Kemal took it away from us". Thus, at the same time that he is legitimizing the Kurdish project which he himself is part of, he is deligitimizing the present political order.

In A's view it was when the multi-faceted social fabric that existed earlier, involving several different semi-independent groups of subject people, was transformed into a modern state, guided by ambitions of creating a homogenous nation that the status of the Kurds changed, their losing the influence then that they had had earlier. In the Ottoman society Kurds had held influential positions, whereas in modern Turkey their status deteriorated. As an example, he mentioned the Kurds living in the cities in Western Turkey having been forced to "forget their identity", their becoming in this way a marginalized people in the modern Middle East.

#### *The Symbolic Value of Language*

In discussions in the interviews regarding what it meant to be Kurdish the Kurdish language was frequently mentioned as contributing very much to create a sense of togetherness and shared collective identity among the Kurds. Their language was also seen as the element that most clearly distinguish the Kurds from their "others". Languages doubtlessly have a strong practical role in binding people together and creating a sense of communality in local settings, both socially and culturally. Yet language boundaries are not necessarily fully congruent either with political, social or cultural boundaries. Historically speaking the standardisation of national

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<sup>130</sup> For example, although the Ottoman archives in Istanbul were opened in 1985, it has continued to be difficult to get access to some of the archives, researchers having been banned from the archives if their works is not considered to be in line with Turkish public discourses and principles or concerns dark episodes in Turkish history. A well known example is the German expert on Armenian genocide, the historian Hilmar Kaijser, who was banned from the archives from 1995 to 2005. The archives concerning the Kurdish rebellions, for example, or the Courts of Independence in the early years of the Turkish Republic, have not yet been opened. However, steps have been taken in the direction of providing a more liberal climate.

languages is a novelty, one that according to Anderson (1991) commenced with the development and spread of printing technology (pp. 37ff.). For obvious reasons, languages can also serve as one of the most evident excluding mechanisms. In the struggle for national rights among the Kurds, the language issue has played a prominent role, especially so in the case of Turkey (Ahmadzadeh 2003 p. 153; Hassanpour 1992 pp. 132ff.; Uçarlar 2009 Chapter 7).

The language issue, I would argue, is also, and has been, a central question for this political generation, due to the long-term prohibition of speaking or using Kurdish in Turkey. This has contributed all the same to making use of Kurdish an important marker for identifying persons as being Kurds. Among those who belong to the political generation the thesis deal with there are native speakers of Kurmancî as well as of Zazakî. All of them know Turkish, however, since that was the sole language of education in Turkey when they grew up. Some of the interviewees grew up in settings in which use of the Turkish language dominated particularly, in the western parts of the country. Not all of those interviewed were fluent in Kurdish, and a number of them said that they first learned to read and write in this language when they came to Sweden. In some cases, certain informants' knowledge of Kurdish was questioned by various other informants. This is a problem of a type pointed out by Tayfun (1998 pp. 45ff.) for example in criticizing how readers for assessing different books are selected before purchases of books for Swedish libraries are decided upon.

The Kurdish language issue in Turkey is also gendered. In Kurdistan the Kurdish language has continued to be the major language, in fact employed in part because many women never having gone to school and never having learned Turkish.

Since the very existence both of Kurds and of the Kurdish language was denied until 1991, many Kurds who moved to Western Turkey shifted language to Turkish. Accordingly there are people who do not speak Kurdish yet define themselves as Kurds, as well as people who can manage in speaking Kurdish yet consider themselves to be Turks.

Discussions of language and of belonging become easily perplex in a Kurdish-Turkish context, since there are so many there positions people can take and strategies they can follow considering the language use. Many of those interviewed provided examples of how their were going back and through between use of Turkish and of Kurdish during their childhood. One of them is R, who grew up in a large city in Western Turkey, where her family resided in a neighbourhood in which Turkish inhabitants predominated. Turkish was the language spoken in public spheres and in school and she managed the language very well. At home use were made of both languages. R told of how, when her parents were speaking to each other in Kurdish, she spoke Turkish to them, since although she could understand Kurdish, as she says, she did not manage to speak it. At the same time her mother, like a great many Kurdish women residing in western Turkey, never be-

came fluent in Turkish. They found ways of communicating within the family satisfactorily in two different languages:

Yes, they were speaking Kurdish among themselves. My mother, she told us long, long fairy tales, and she only told them in Kurdish because her Turkish was very weak. But I read Turkish books to her, novels and stuff like that. She listened with pleasure while I was reading. So we were both satisfied. She told me Kurdish fairy tales and I read Turkish novels to her [laughing].

(R)

R says that, despite her not learning to speak Kurdish very well while she was growing up, her closeness to the language and the skills in it she acquired facilitated her learning Kurdish properly as an adult while then in a diasporic setting. Socialised into a setting in which the Turkish language dominated, her Kurdish was "implicitly" (cf. Mandel 2008 p. 276) there all the time, or as she put it, she had "passive Kurdish inside her head".

When V spoke about the significance of language he was referring to literature, asserting it to be impossible to label an author writing in a language other than Kurdish a Kurdish author. For example he mentions its being discussed whether or not Yasar Kemal can be considered to be a Kurdish author since, though of Kurdish origin, he wrote in Turkish. Rhetorically N asked: "What about a Swede travelling to Kurdistan and writing about that? Would that be a Kurdish author?" D took a similar though somewhat more ambivalent position:

Charlotta: How would you define a Kurd?

D: A Kurd?

Charlotta: Yes. Who is a Kurd?

D: If you feel like being a Kurd, then one is a Kurd. Thereafter comes the language. First you need to feel that you are a Kurd. If I feel that I am a Kurd then I am a Kurd. I can't force someone, like: "you are from this town, so you must be Kurdish". But, after saying you feel you are Kurdish comes the language. If you don't have the language, you cannot feel you are a Kurd. That is a bit difficult.

(D)

In D's view "having a sense of being Kurdish" is of critical importance, although he remarked, that it would not really be possible to have such a sense without knowing the language. However, that would not be really possible without knowing the language. D felt he should not impose a Kurdish identity on anyone else. Changing his tune and making a quotation while declaring that he doesn't want to impose a Kurdish identity on anyone, he distances himself from those who write their categorisation on others. Thereafter he made his own position clear. He could

not understand how anyone could have a sense of being Kurdish without having a command of the language, one's otherwise having no sense of belonging. He remarked that a Kurdish song, if he had been unable to understand its content: "would have been like a song in Arabic or Hindi", and would have been without meaning to him. His concluding that if the existence of the Kurdish language were threatened, so that it was about to vanish, Kurdish identity would in turn become challenged.

D dwelled upon the language issue at some length. He pointed out the importance of a language, not only for creating a bond of togetherness between people, but also to serve as a distinguishing marker, this, according to him, being particularly important in a Middle Eastern context to separate between different groups of people. According to D there is:

... there is no difference between me and a Turk, and an Arab, and a Persian, and a Greek. Because we all remind of one another. No big difference, the same nose, same eyes and hair. But when he starts to speak: 'Yes, he is a Greek, and he is a Turk, and he is an Arab' and then you know the difference.

(D)

D considered ethnic boundaries to have become more blurred in the contemporary world and other differentiating markers, such as clothes and food, customs and tradition to have become increasingly similar across cultural and ethnic boundaries, languages remaining however important. This explained, he felt, why language has become such an important distinguishing marker among Kurds from Turkey. Due to the Kurdish language being forbidden and people being punished for speaking it in public places, he considered there to be a risk that it could vanish, which in turn could contribute to the erasing of the Kurdish identity.

### *Places*

In narratives on national identities, certain places often take on central prominence, their being given a strong symbolic importance. A place recurrently referred to in the material collected for this thesis is Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdistan region of Turkey. The city is often labelled as being the unofficial Kurdish capital in Turkey, as its a centre for Kurdish culture and politics. In Kurdish circles the city is also known as Amed (van Bruinessen and Boeschoten 1988 p. 127). In the 1960s and 1970s the city received many immigrants from the surrounding townships and villages. The first university college was established there in the 1960s, and in 1974 the first university in the Kurdistan region in Turkey was established there as well. Diyarbakir was also a city that came to symbolize very much the suffering of the Kurdish people. In Chapter 2 the role that traumas can have in the creation of generations was discussed. A trauma, as I pointed out, does

not necessarily refer to just one such event, but can well consist of series of events the generation has been through or can be referring to (Abrams 1982 p. 259).

The Diyarbakir Military Prison No. 5 has a very negative meaning for all the Kurds who were imprisoned and tortured there in the wave of arrests that took place immediately after the military coup in 1980 (Zana 1997). In an Amnesty International Report on this from 1984, the horrendous conditions in this prison and the mass trials of pro-Kurdish activists are described. Many Kurdish politicians and Kurdish personalities well-known in other respects had to serve time there. Diyarbakir is a city that many of the men and women in the political generation studied here have a relation to. Several of the persons included in the thesis spent part of their youth in the city, acquired their education and became involved in political life or in various forms of resistance there. Many, though far from all, of those who have celebrated Diyarbakir in their songs, texts and speeches were born in the city. In the poem I love you the author and writer Nedim Dağdeviren express his longing for the city:

Words of love engraved on the city wall in Diyarbakir live on  
visible if you scrape a little  
For mothers with no other words than these  
of comfort for their sons  
who died of consumption, malaria or speeding bullets  
they grew out of the unconditional abundance of their mothers flesh: "Ez  
kurbana te me lawo, Ez kurbana te me."<sup>131</sup>

(from *I Love You* by Nedim Dağdeviren quoted in Grive and Uzun (1995) *Världen i Sverige* Stockholm:Ordfront, pp. 78-79. Translated from Swedish by Robert Goldsmith.)

In the poem above, the city, Diyarbakir is the beloved one. Dağdeviren was born and raised in Bismil, a small town situated a few miles to the east of Diyarbakir. As a student he moved to Diyarbakir where he later worked as a teacher of Turkish and Turkish literature, his residing in the city a number of years before he was forced to leave Turkey. It was in Diyarbakir that he became involved in politics and in cultural life. And it was in Diyarbakir he was arrested and tortured in the aftermath of the military coup of 1980.

Another example of how the city of Diyarbakir is honoured in poems and lyrics is to be found in the works of Mehmed Uzun, who spent part of his childhood and youth in Diyarbakir, and who chose to live there a last time then when he re-

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<sup>131</sup> These lines are Kurdish for: "Let me suffer in your place my son, let me suffer in your place."

turned from his exile in Sweden in 2005.<sup>132</sup> The city is often mentioned in his works, at the same time as he found it difficult to describe it in a manner that lived up to its true magnificence:

How can I describe the city with the long wall of chiseled stones famous for its high towers, this enchanting city once the centre for so many cultures, the Hurrite, the Assyrian, Urartu, the Medes, the Persians, Rome, Bysans, Islam and the Osmands?

(Uzun 1995 p. 12)

The city is known as being very old and is famous for its long solid black basalt walls that encircle the old town, their often being referred to as the second largest in the world, after the Great Wall in China. Uzun's universe, Diyarbakir has a strong symbolic value as a centre, not only because of its central place in Kurdish cultural and political life, but also for its role in the emergence of numerous cultures that have been influential in the area. Uzun describes Diyarbakir in terms of being an impregnable city.

Inspired by a passage in Italo Calvino's work *Invisible Cities*, he writes that Diyarbakir was a city that could respond to, "the desires of its inhabitants" (Uzun 1998 p. 12). A bit later on in the text he states that the town has been "the cradle of so many cultures" (ibid. p. 13), however, it is simultaneously expressed that the city has become 'dishonoured' since it had a military prison with a terrible reputation.

#### *Practices*

Places are associated however not only with buildings, parks, historical sites and the magic flavour these can have. When asked about Kurdishness, some of the interviewees emphasised that the local settings in which they were born and had spent their childhood had done very much to create a sense of belonging for them. U, for example, mentioned the atmosphere in his home village where all the other inhabitants were native Kurdish speakers, and that it was the customs and the daily life there that he related to most when thinking of his being Kurdish. V explains what makes him long for his home district:

When we travelled to Istanbul and Ankara, so ... we longed very much to get to Diyarbakir. What is it that makes me long so much for my home district?

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<sup>132</sup> Mehmed Uzun died in Diyarbakir October 10, 2007.

It is the fact that it is my home district. It, it is what was there, when we were playing, for example. These were Kurdish games. When we did this or that it was Kurdish. These were Kurdish things. It was something that we did. It was not what someone else did in Çorum, or in Manisa, but it was what we did in Diyarbakir, in Van, in Bitlis. That, in my opinion, in a way has always been [there] as a basis for everything.

(V)

It was thus the social relations and the togetherness that were created in the places in question that caused the longing. When asked about his Kurdish identity W said that he didn't think it was so easy to "grasp theoretically" what made him Kurdish. He considered himself as being the "result" of the customs, practices and traditions that were developed and maintained in his home district:

Take the flavour of a dish. One prepared by my mother, but that has also been prepared earlier by my grandmother, as well as by yours and yours [pointing at a number of imagined listeners while he is talking]. It may be about dolma. ... Greeks make it, Turks make it, Persians make it, Arabs make it. But we make it in a different way. Another flavour. ... I don't know if you've eaten dolma in Diyarbakir, it is not prepared with minced meat but [with] small small pieces of [chopped] meat. And this is what created me. It is something common that we eat. How is it that when you see a carpet you say, 'this one is Kurdish'. This makes me feel confident. This is my description of it all.

(V)

In his account, V explains the meaning of being Kurdish by binding a place, local practices and the past together. He expresses the sense of togetherness created in his encounters and interaction with people and in the different practices and the like that take place on an everyday basis. The picture he paints, however, is frozen, its describing a place in which customs and the traditions have been the same for long periods of time. In so doing he give voice to his thoughts of a continuity with the past (Billig 2009).

#### *The Chauvinism of "Other People"*

In an earlier chapter it was pointed out that, in the contemporary world, nations constitute the most legitimate political bodies and actors. To organise on the basis of nationality has become the apparently most justified and effective instrument for claiming political and cultural rights. However, not all of those who organise within political parties or movements based on ethnicity fully agree with the ideologies of nationalism. Here, one should recall that nationality is only one facet of a person's social identity and a facet that can become "active" and/or "politicised"

under certain circumstances (see, for example, Bradley 1996 pp. 24ff.). As the relevance of an individual's belonging to an ethnic or a nation can be perceived and activated during certain periods of time and may fade away during other periods of one's life. Having been involved in a movement organised on an ethnic basis does not necessarily mean that nationality and ethnic belonging remain, or that it ever was perceived as being the most important facet of a person's social identity. Homogeneity is generally proclaimed by nationalist movements and in nationalist discourses. However, the idea of homogeneity is not necessarily shared by all of those who perceive of themselves as belonging to a particular nation.

The men and women belonging to the generation of primary concern in the thesis, its members had been experienced the Turkish state nationalism that did not recognize the existence of the Kurds. Among the interviewees the Turkish nationalism was perceived by as being "chauvinist". When discussing nationalism some of the interviewees were conscious of the fact that their aspirations for national rights could be perceived likewise. During our conversations on nationality there were various reflections made regarding the complexity of national belonging. Many of the interviewees were explicitly critical to "essentialist" or "chauvinist" positions. The view that nationalities are blurred and multi-faceted phenomena was strongly emphasised by certain of those interviewed. For example, U reflected a great deal on the complexity of nationality and social identities:

You decide yourself whether you're Kurdish or not, or how much of a Kurd you are. There is not simply one single form of collective national identity. Yeh, maybe there is in some periods. But this is not the case when it comes to boundaries and to content. And then too ... you're a human being, not simply a nationality.

(U)

U refers to a world in which a myriad of jostling Kurdish identities exist side by side. His understanding of Kurdish identities is of their being contextual and shifting, both over time and in space. Most important he sees Kurdishness as being only one of the many components of a person's identity. U's statements can be interpreted as if he is allowing an openness, an inclusiveness and an individual interpretation of Kurdish nationality. In several of the accounts, there is a defence against the clichés that often appear in the presentations of Kurds that tend to flourish. Finally U emphasises that social identities are indeed are very complex.

When M is asked about who a Kurd is, he points out that the picture of Kurds painted in circles of Kurdish nationalists is stereotyped, and is cut and dried. The stereotypes presented giving the impression of Kurds being traditional. One example that M brings up is that of Kurds being pictured as wearing such traditional clothing as Shalvars and the like. For example, that Kurds wear traditional clothes in everyday life:

... an imagined picture of the Kurds that reflects a nationalistic discourse. For example if you take a look in a book with a chapter on Khani. In their everyday lives, they don't wear this kind of clothes. They are like modern political people. But when it comes to the imagination [of who a Kurd is] they say that "this is a Kurd, a Kurd wears a pushi"<sup>133</sup>, a traditional buggy trousers and so on.

(M)

M places the story within the clichés and stereotypes of how Kurds are that, as he points out, exist more or less everywhere. He distances himself from expressions of chauvinism and racism that are often dominant in national identity narratives. E, in turn, takes a similar position, his attempting to provide a picture of Kurdish nationalism as being inclusive and tolerant:

Regarding Kurdish identity, I think you can say like this, that on the one hand there is an ethnic Kurdish identity and on the other hand a cultural Kurdish identity. By ethnic identity I mean if you have a pure Kurdish blood, in racist terms, such as you're being born of Kurdish parents, having a Kurdish paternal grandfather and a maternal Kurdish grandfather and Kurdish ancestors. This is racist you know. I have nothing to do with this, since I'm of the opinion that Kurdish identity is more cultural than ... ethnic. First, in Kurdish we used to say that there are [several groups that have crossed our lands], and that we thus don't have pure Kurdish blood in our veins. There may be all different kinds of blood. This is not what we think. But culturally, I see people with a common language, a common culture, a common tradition; yes a common history and a sense of belonging to a certain cultural group.

(E)

E thus distance's himself from positions that he perceives as being essentialist and racist, based on the idea of Kurds having the same blood in common. Thus, in this view and that of many of the others who were interviewed, the national sentiments they commit themselves to are of a different kind and are quite distinct from those of a Turkish nationalism that were a guiding principle in the Turkish state in which they grew up. Those interviewed emphasized the importance to legitimate the idea of the nation and the national unity of Kurds, who they see as having the legitimate right to national rights that they have on the basis of their language and of their ethnic roots. At the same time, they distance themselves from nationalism of

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<sup>133</sup> *Pushi* is a Kurdish scarf.

violent or chauvinist forms, and criticise national sentiments that are excluding, racist or oppressive.

## 6.4 Closing of the Chapter

This chapter has attempted to distinguish how the members of the political generation of interest here perceive of themselves as Kurds, and to complement the picture generally presented of the Kurdish diaspora narrative as a narrow minded "victimization narrative". Here a more dynamic picture, rich in the contrasts, becomes salient. A narrative of continuous resistance and reflection.

Many of the narratives described are homeland-oriented and contain multiple references to a sense of belonging. First, the narrators refer to Kurds as "ordinary people" with "the same rights as other people", the Kurds being perceived as "a nation" in the sense of its being "a nation among nations", one that should thus be given the same rights as other people recognized as nations are. In so doing they place themselves within a broader narrative of people's freedom and dignity. It may thus be interpreted in terms of the Kurdish issue that is referred to being an issue of humanity and equality. Secondly, there are narratives referring to experiences that they perceive as being specific to the Kurds and that are common to all Kurds regardless of in what state they were born or of their citizenship, for example that the "common history" of the Kurds is "very dramatic" and that the lands of the Kurds are divided.

Third, the narrators make references to experiences specific to their generation, exemplifying how place and time are entwined in the nationality constructions the generation forms. For example, the experiences of being obliged to undercommunicate Kurdish belongingness in public spaces, the emphasis on their language, their encounter with the school system and the idea that it is an active standpoint being a Kurd. Salient becomes a narrative which is dynamic and rich in contrasts with a number of underlying themes that may be distinguished. There is a tension in the narratives between essentialist/historicist and universalist positions. On the one hand there are accounts that imply an essentialist and national romanticist view, for example when anxiety regarding the Kurdish lands is mentioned, and when there is a sense of nostalgia, such as for example regarding memories from childhood and youth.

On the other hand there are accounts in which a more dynamic understanding of Kurdishness is demonstrated and where the narrators problematize the idea of a homogeneous and "static Kurdishness", defending themselves against stereotype pictures of Kurdishness. In several of the accounts, the narrators present themselves as "an ordinary people" alluding to the idea of their having the same standards as other people around the world. Suffering can be experienced and narrated

in a myriad of different ways, referring to one's country, one's people and one's memories from everyday lives. In the narratives presented in the chapter, one can see Kurds described in terms of their being an incessantly persecuted people, deprived of control of their land and its resources and of historical sources that could contribute with further insights in their dramatic history.

In many of the accounts the scenes are placed in the context of historical events or reflect contexts belonging to a recent past involving memories transmitted from the generation of their parents as well as family histories that often are surrounded by silence of a sort. In contrast, those interviewed did not simply imagine themselves as being passive victims since examples of the Kurds presented as a strong and struggling people were provided in the narratives. For example, it is intimated that the Kurds have always put up resistance and been struggling. Hence, the overall narrative oscillate between the extremes of suffering and strength. It was intimated in the accounts that the Kurds are "impregnable", in a sense a people who have never really been "conquered" but rather have shown the capacity to withstand all of the atrocities they have been exposed to.

A salient feature that emerges then when a comprehensive picture of the narratives is put together is rather that the generation perceives of themselves not as a passive generation of victims but rather as "reluctant victims", alluding to the more archaic meaning of reluctance derived from the Latin term *reluctare*, meaning to offer resistance or opposition which in turn is derived from *luctari* meaning "to struggle" (Collins English Dictionary 2000 p. 1302).

# Chapter 7

## Looking to the Future: Ambiguities and Challenges

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with accounts of challenges and ambiguities that the people belonging to the political generation in question were confronted with in the diasporic setting in Sweden. Their views and actions representing a "generational response" (Edmunds and Turner 2002; Eyerman and Turner 1999) to the conditions under which Kurds had been living in Turkey. As a political generation they did not accept their struggle having ended up in a final defeat in any sense when they came to Sweden as exiles. Protests and resistance continued in the settlement country. In the diasporic context a complex and multi-faceted political landscape took shape, moulded by socio-political structures in the settlement country as well as being open to trans-national arenas. The narratives revolve around the themes of re-consideration, taking the scene, expanding symbolic resources, challenges and the implications of diasporic activism. Their commitments to the Kurdish cause took on new ways, and their overall narrative does as well. Two new strands of their thinking can be distinguished, one that of their referring to their project as one of emancipation and the other that of their being challengers.

### 7.2 A Myriad of Organisations

The political situation of Kurds in Turkey had long been highly complex and conflictual, and it became no less so for those Kurds who had left Turkey and were living in a diasporic setting, though many of them became reorganised, splintered and had new ramifications added (Gunter 1990 p. 103; Grojean 2011).

Two of the political parties in question managed to continue having a political influence and still dominated the political landscape of the Kurds from Turkey who were in exile. The best-known of the two is the PKK which today consists of

a complex network of different parties and organisations (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011b pp. 159f.).<sup>134</sup> One of these affiliated groups is The Kurdish Parliament in Exile, established in The Hague in 1995 and led by Yaşar Kaya from DEP.<sup>135</sup>

Allegedly this platform was basically constituted by members of the PKK and organisations affiliated with it. The parliament was abolished in 1998 when it joined the PKK affiliated *Kurdistan Democratic Confederation* (KDC), that meets in The Hague. In 1999 the *National Congress of Kurdistan* (KNK)<sup>136</sup> was founded as an umbrella network, organising Kurds in the diaspora as well as representatives of various parties, religious and cultural institutes and independent organisations and intellectuals (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011b p. 159 n. 10). During 1981 and 1982 several members of the PKK central committee came to Europe (Grojean 2011 p. 187).

The second major party that has managed to survive is the SPK,<sup>137</sup> which has affiliations with the organisation Komkar and has ramifications all over Europe. This party was the largest and most influential Kurdish-Turkish party in Europe up to 1984, when the PKK initiated its armed struggle. In 1988 the party succeeded, so as to initiate and build the political front, *TEVGER*, which included several parties, though not the PKK. This platform has reportedly been limited to Kurdish communities in Europe (Gürbey 2000 pp. 84-85; Zürcher 2004 p. 317).

In the diasporic setting, numerous Kurdish organisations, associations, solidarity groups and institutes were founded, some of which organised Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan, whereas other organisations recruited members exclusively from Turkey. In the various diasporic settings involved, organisations outside the party structures have mushroomed. It is difficult to obtain a comprehensive overview of the Kurdish diasporic organisations that exist and their activities. There are a myriad of organisations, over the years many of them having established local branches as well as special groups directed at young people and at women. In addition, various organisations changed their names or closed down.

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<sup>134</sup> The complexity of the PKK and its ability to transform itself makes it difficult to obtain an overview of the organisation. Or as Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden (2011) puts it: "It is difficult to present the organisation with a traditional organisational flowchart. As the members and sympathizers of the PKK refer to Abdullah Öcalan, as a sun (*güneş*) we may develop this analogy and compare the organisation of the party-complex as a planetary system: The planets (PKK, KONGRA-GEL, KKK/KCK, KNK and guerilla forces) are in orbit around the sun (Abdullah Öcalan) and various moons (institutions, committees) are in orbit around these." (Hamdi Akkaya and Jongerden 2011b p. 147).

<sup>135</sup> The Democracy Party - a pro-Kurdish party existing between 1993 and 1994.

<sup>136</sup> In Kurdish: *Kongra Netawîya Kurdistan*.

<sup>137</sup> Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (see p. 165-166 in the thesis).

As was pointed out earlier some of the organisations were extensions of the Kurdish political parties (Alakom 2007). From the 1970s and on up to the early 2000s, many Kurdish organisations were established in Sweden.

In Sweden it has become possible for immigrant organisations to receive state subsidies to organize and form association, although a condition for receiving subsidies is that an associations must be "purely" cultural and not political or religious (Hellgren 2008; Berrutti et al. 2002 p. 172).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Kurdish students began to organize in Europe already in the 1950s. The KSSE<sup>138</sup> was founded in Wiesbaden in then Western Germany in 1956. Later ramifications of such organisations were founded throughout Europe, the Swedish branch of it apparently being founded in 1966. The KSSE reportedly held its Fourth Congress in Stockholm August 2, 1970. The congress gathered Kurdish students from 14 different countries, among them 17 participants from Sweden (Alakom 2007; see also Emanuelsson 2005 p. 85). A few years later, the organisation splintered, and the ramification AKSA being established.

In Sweden the Kurdish Worker Organisation that recruited its members largely from the Kulu province in Turkey and from different parts of Kurdistan was established in 1976. According to Alakom (2007), this was the first Kurdish workers organisation established in Sweden. Yetkin (1984) reports, many Kurds from Turkey had experienced there being a "gap" between Kurds from Kurdistan in Turkey and from central Anatolia. The aim of the organisation was to gather Kurds from different parts of both Kurdistan and from Anatolia (ibid. p. 151).

There were many organisations that aimed at uniting the Kurds, independent of their country or political affiliations, with the aim of uniting different Kurdish political strategies and drive both solidarity and cultural issues. What is perhaps the best-known and most influential organisation operating at a national level in Sweden, the *Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden* (KR),<sup>139</sup> was established in 1981.

Inspecting various documents and reports from the time when the organisation was founded shows there to have been an ambition then of creating a unified organisation for all Kurds in Sweden. Yetkin reports of a meeting in the ABF-house in Stockholm in 1980 in which the possibilities of organising were first discussed: "almost all Kurds were there, it was like the Kurdish national day Newroz. Everyone left their disputes behind, greeted each other heartily and hoped for a unification of Kurds in Sweden" (Yetkin 1984 p. 154). In a report from The National Board of Health and Welfare, Yetkin (1984 pp. 154ff.) refers to excerpts from a leaflet produced by the KR to inform the public of the organisation. From

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<sup>138</sup> In Kurdish: *Komeley Xwendekaranî Kurd Le Ewrûpa*.

<sup>139</sup> In Swedish: *Kurdiska riksförbundet*.

these excerpts one learns that KR was aimed at being a "mouthpiece" for Kurds living in Sweden, "consciously working for the democratic and social rights of the Kurdish immigrants" and "informing about and creating opinion for the Kurdish people's democratic and national rights". In the excerpt presented by Yetkin, the situation of children and of women were emphasized in particular. It is, for example, told of Kurdish women having difficulties in adapting to the situation in Sweden, because of their being "illiterate", "isolated" and having "language difficulties".

The children were said to have "identity problems", as well as "psychological problems", the leaflet quoted being formulated as a quest for active contacts with Swedish authorities and interest organisations in order to provide with them an understanding of the Kurdish issue (ibid. p. 138).

On their web page it is stated that the organisation is "unique in the world" because of its organising Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan (<http://www.fkks.se/>). The Kurdish Women's Association, affiliated with KR, was established in 1985; in Stockholm the organisation had about 600 members in 2002.

However Svensk-Kurdiska kulturföreningen i Sverige, which sympathizes with the PKK, has been left outside of KR. Two years later it established, together with a number of other organisations, "Kurdistan Demokratiska Riksförbundet i Sverige" (Yetkin p. 154).

In addition several Kurdish institutes, Kurdish interest groups, minor organisations have been established in Sweden such as the *Kurdiska läkarförbundet*, *Kurdiska författarförbundet* and *Kurdiska lärarförbundet*.<sup>140</sup> Many cultural organisations or groups, such as theatres and dance groups, have likewise been formed, together with other minor groups working for special interests, participation there being basically on an idealistic, non-profit basis, these groups not receiving state subsidies for their activities. One of the theatre groups was *Teyater Medya*, founded by a group of Kurdish women in Stockholm in 1990. According to one of its former members the group has consisted of housewives, workers and students. A short article on the group appeared in a women's journal, *Jîn: Kurdisk kvinnobulletin*, in 1994, the group's ambition as being presented there to, "describe contemporary and historic Kurdistan from a cultural and sociological perspective, to show the reality of Kurdish women under the veils of colonialism and patriarchy, and to challenge prejudices and taboos of all kinds in society, especially the prejudices directed against women in Kurdish society" (*Jîn* 1994 p. 15).

The political landscape of Kurdish activism in diasporic settings has developed into a pluralistic one, comprised of a myriad of associations comprised of groups

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<sup>140</sup> Association of Kurdish Physicians, Association of Kurdish Authors and Association of Kurdish Teachers.

working in a formal political sphere, as well as individual actors, informal groups and networks. Many of the institutes and organisations established in diasporic settings have manifested themselves both in the countries of settlement and in transnational political space, often with extensions to groups and networks in other countries and other parts of the world, local and global activism being linked together in this way (Wahlbeck 1999; Emanuelsson 2005; Khayati 2008; Eccarius-Kelly 2011).

A large part of the activities carried out by people belonging to the political generation considered here could be designated as "transnational", since many of these people cooperate with political parties and organisations, Kurdish groups and individual actors in other countries, there in addition being examples of activities of this sort that have been carried out in Turkey with support from Swedish NGOs and the Swedish governmental agency *Swedish International Development cooperation Agency (SIDA)*. For example, people belonging to the generation focused on here have been involved in projects in Turkey concerned with distribution of journals and with language training.

### 7.3 Reconsiderations

Still there is, a rather small group in Germany, and in Switzerland, I don't know, perhaps in France there was, since it is a rather small group, it is difficult to find out who has dropped out, who is left...

(M)

In the quotation above M attempts to describe what happened with the political organisation that he once had been a member of in Turkey. As far as he knew it had been closed down and the members searched through by the police. People with a prominent position in the organisation had been captured and arrested. Many former members had reorganized then in various subgroups ramifications. Other Kurds from Turkey, who were forced into exile had had somewhat similar experiences. The defeat of the Kurdish movement and the dispersion of its activists across many different countries was certainly a traumatic juncture for many of its former members, the political parties involved suffering from splinterings and divisions, the movement being more or less eliminated after the coup of 1980. The quotation above conveys a sense of distance and of reorientation, for one thing because it implies that the situation got out of hand, and also because the narrator, who was still a Kurdish activist, had only a vague idea of how the group he once was a member of now was organised and whether it is still was active or not. M told of how the group had several times, in the years following the coup, made fruitless attempts to reorganize.

And this last attempt came to nothing. So one could say that these activities and the organisation ceased to exist at that time. So at that time I declared that I was not a member of the organisation. Because at that time there were no such organisation. Okay, there were people ... in European countries and they, like an exile group, continued their activities. And they considered themselves an organisation and they issued publications and such things. But it was an exiled group and in my opinion an exile group cannot bring about a Kurdish revolution. So I could not see any future under such conditions. So I said that I am a 'maveric', an independent person, I am not a member of any organisation.

(M)

It had finally become obvious that the group could not operate inside Turkey and so M declared himself being an independent activist instead. The group was bleeding white as its members were imprisoned or escaped the country. The police also relocated the group repeatedly, and found out about any attempts being made to reorganise. Since it became obvious to M that the exiled group did not have the capacity to achieve the radical transformation of society that he had been striving for, he decided finally to leave the organisation. For him, commitment to the Kurdish cause had taken new directions in Sweden, where he at the time of the interview was occupied with his academic studies and spent much of his spare time editing a magazine for a Kurdish-speaking audience.

Many of the pro-Kurdish activists that concern us here continued to be involved in the political parties, at least during the first few years in exile, their still feeling themselves committed to the struggle going on in their original homeland. When the political situation in Turkey deteriorated in the aftermath of the military coup there in 1980, several Kurdish organisations in Turkey advised their members to flee the country. For example G told of the parties in many cases making strategic decisions concerning the countries to which their members would best be moved. Various activists in central positions in the Kurdish movement in Turkey were sent out from the country by their parties, many of them continuing the struggle for many years after the coup then as members of radical Kurdish parties located abroad.

A central thought in Karl Mannheim's theorizing on generations from a sociological perspective is that of their being united by a common consciousness. The political generation studied in the present case was informed of the Kurdish cause from childhood on and was radicalized in the 1970s. In the interviews there were examples of how different aspects of the movement had gradually been challenged by various of its members after some two decades in exile. Some of the accounts reflected how the narrators in question had distanced themselves, anywhere from partly to completely, from the ideological and political views that had guided them when they participated earlier in Kurdish movements in Turkey. D,

for example, was still sympathetic toward the aims and ideals of the group of which he had once been a member, yet there is one thing he found compromising two decades later:

There is only one thing, one thing that I regret, and that is that we believed in the Soviet Union. That was a big mistake. Because of the ideology we said to [the Kurds in] Iraqi Kurdistan, the Kurds who were fighting then against Iraq, that it was not right for them to do so, because Iraq and Syria were both a bit left wing. At that point we were against our people there. But otherwise I think we were doing good work...but we were all escaping then ...

(D)

The account above reflects how the narrator dissociates himself from the pro-Soviet view that led to their taking a position against certain other Kurds, and from the understanding of political standpoints he had when he was young. In the interview with D it became palpable that this political radicalization had been influenced by Marxist ideology and left-wing ideals. He regretted having taken sides against other Kurds, who were in Iraq, because of their fighting against a pro-Soviet country.

For others, looking back on the commitments they had made to the movements in the 1960s and 1970s seemed to call forth self-criticism of a deeper sort. In reflecting on the situation in the aftermath of the coup that took place in 1980, two decades later, H had dissociated himself from clandestine organisations of all kind:

I continued to be active in the same organisation up to the military coup of 1980. But then, at the time of the coup in 1980, I realised in a way that something had went wrong. Because it appeared that all organisations, Kurdish or Turkish did not matter, were tremendously infiltrated by the Turkish intelligence service. ... I then thought, "I'll never work in an illegal organisation again!". Because as soon as you enter an illegal organisation it is in a way to invite the intelligence service to infiltrate. That is much worse than ... . Because the police becomes irritated if you work legally. That confuses them and they don't know what to do. But if you work in an illegal organisation ... then the police are happy about this. That was what I realised in 1980 and after that I never again worked politically. Because there was no legal-democratic popular movement. There were only small, highly infiltrated illegal ones, and I didn't want to be in such an organisation.

(H)

H's story reflects a sense of pessimism and self-criticism. He is putting forward a criticism of a deeper sort, pointing to ideological and structural problems. Throughout the interview he distanced himself from contemporary Kurdish co-

activists in Sweden. For H the developments following the coup of 1980 led him to conclude that belonging to underground organisations was not a sensible way to go. In a similar vein, he was critical of movements and groups that re-organised after the coup. Since these were not, as he expressed it, "legal-democratic popular" organisations. He felt that they were not in line with developments over the course of time. In a study of Latin American exiles by Lundberg (1989) pointed out that positions of that sort taken by H, involving criticism of what appeared to be outdated political approaches and "illusions regarding their own importance" are common among refugees (ibid. pp. 44-47). Lundberg emphasizes such criticism often being directed at structural problems in resistance movements and organisations generally rather than at specific individuals.

The escape and arrival in Sweden did not mean that people belonging to the generation thought that the struggle was over. As was taken up in Chapter 6, many of them had plans to return soon and much of their activism was oriented directly to developments in their former homeland. A problem many perceived was that it was difficult to follow their situation in the former homeland closely, the geographical distance being a great hindrance or as R put it: "the people who were in exile could not do much". In the course of time the commitments shifted and expanded in the direction of an increasing interest in the conditions under which Kurdish immigrants and refugees were living in Sweden:

I came to Sweden at the end of 1986. And I was thinking the whole time until 1992 that I would return. I had no problem in accepting Swedish society. But I could not return and I could not accept that. But also I couldn't do anything about matters in Turkey and Kurdistan. I could not. But what can you do here? So I began in the 1990s to contact the Kurdish Association and I worked there. And I was member of a committee working for political refugees.

(K)

K arrived on her own in Sweden in the 1980s. Her story reflects a sense of defeat, since she gradually realised that she was cut off from the political struggle in which she had been active and was unable to do anything about the situation in Turkey. In addition, the fact that she could not return to Turkey had the consequence that she had become separated from friends and relatives in the old home country. At the same time, her story is in many respects in line with the criticism that Malkki (1995a, 1995b p. 510), for example, has directed at the view that refugees are passive victims who are alien to the societies in which they settle down. In many cases the original homeland has not necessarily has been an ideal place to live in either (Geerse 2011 p. 36). Indeed K had escaped a difficult and precarious situation, for her however the issue was not that of becoming socially embedded in a new society but rather of not being able to contribute to the Kurdish struggle.

Over the course of time she had committed herself more and more to the situation of Kurdish refugees in Swedish society.

In some stories the arrival to Sweden is depicted in exclusively positive terms, with an emphasis on the new opportunities and resources available in the new home country. When the author Mahmut Baksi, who escaped Turkey just before the coup of 1971, came to Sweden, there were only a few Kurds residing in the country (Baksi 2007 p. 27). That author describes how it at that time, in the early 1970s, was relatively easy to become established as a foreign writer. He describes how, as a political refugee, he was generously received and was introduced into circles of other journalists and authors:

Now a fantastic period began. I was the luckiest newly becoming Swede of all and hoped that it would continue this way. I was 27 years old. And Sweden was like Paradise. Also 'The Swedish Writers Union' received me, I felt like a king. My friend Memo followed me to their secretariat and I was introduced to the chairman of the union, Jan Gehlin, lawyer Anders Fischer and Jane Hallberg. They were also generous and gave me 2,000 Swedish crowns from a recently established fund for foreign authors. For a period of a few weeks I was permitted to borrow a three-room apartment near Mosebacke with a view over the nearby lake and the boats in it. From there I moved to Alvik.

(Baksi 2007 p. 131, this excerpt of it translated from Swedish)

This excerpt is from a book in which the author narrates his memories of life as an exile in Sweden. It reflects a sense of success, happiness and generosity in describing his arrival to Sweden and first meeting with the Swedish Writers Union. From the account he provides, we learn that it was relatively easy for a newly arrived political refugee and writer to become introduced to a circle of Swedish colleagues. Baksi came to Sweden by ferry May 25 1971, after having spent a short period of time in Germany with, as he put it: "a small bag with some of my books" (Baksi 2007 p. 128). He applied for asylum, which was approved and he took a train then to Stockholm. Friends had helped him in advance with various arrangements, so that he had a place to stay, and they took care of him, making it easy for him to adapt himself to the new situation and the new country (ibid. p. 128).

From the quotation above we can draw the conclusion that the atmosphere in the Swedish Writers Union was a welcoming and generous one. A similar picture of the reception of political refugees that were writers and arrived to Sweden during this period is provided in Mehmed Uzun's memoirs. Uzun had been accepted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International and was soon integrated into networks and circles of professionals (Uzun 2008 p. 295).

To many it became more relevant to commit themselves to social issues in the society of settlement and establish contact with the government, with authorities and with Swedish associations and solidarity groups in order to make the Kurdish

issue known among Swedes, than to be fixated simply on what was going on in their country of origin. A few of the interviewees were also or had been active in Swedish political parties. Others found it difficult to become a "Swedish politician", as G for example, who was highly committed to his work directed against racism and other social injustices and who participated actively in Swedish social life, but who reasoned as follows:

But there is one thing that I never did, and that I will never do. I will never commit myself to, or become a member of, a Swedish political organisation. That would mean double loyalties. You will always be a hindrance for the one or the other. I have considered myself as a Kurdish politician ... insofar as I could be seen as a politician at all.

(G)

In G's account above it is implied that he is a activist who takes part in many areas of Swedish societal life, for whom, nevertheless being member of a Swedish political party is out of the question since it would mean "double loyalties". In doing as he does, of he marks off a boundary, to use Tölölyan's (2007) term, a limit to how much he wants to participate. His statement can be interpreted as his reserving himself against being assimilated, which is completely different from being integrated (Bettrell and Hollifield 2008; Tölölyan 2007). Being assimilated would perhaps be a clear abandonment of his Kurdish identity, and the position he takes reflecting an unwillingness to give up his identity as a "Kurdish" politician.

## 7.4 Bringing the Kurdish Question In

### 7.4.1 Taking the Scene

Many of those who were interviewed participated in organisations, solidarity groups and protest actions of various kinds. Many of them were committed to opposing the extensive human rights abuses that were going on in Turkey.

Alakom (2007) describes how protest manifestations were arranged to inform the public about the conditions of the Kurds in Turkey and in Kurdistan (Alakom 2007, newspapers). Kurds were also active in sister organisations in their new home countries and Alakom (ibid.) tells of Kurdish delegations that participated in May Day parades in Stockholm in the 1960s and 1970s. In the first years of exile, most of the activities of the Kurdish refugees were essentially what can be characterised as "homeland oriented", in the sense that they were activities concerned with the situation in Turkey and in Kurdistan.

Many of the Kurds who arrived in Sweden and in other countries in the 1970s and 1980s perceived, rightly enough, that there was a lack of knowledge of the Kurds and their situation on the part of the authorities and of the public in the societies in which they settled down. Since many of the Kurdish organisations from Turkey were left-wing oriented, many of the activities that were intended to draw attention to the situation in Kurdistan and Turkey remained in or was directed at left wing circles. One example of this was the youth organisation DDKD, which organised protest actions to draw attention to the arrests and imprisonments of their members in Turkey and the situation for the Kurds generally:

We must inform the progressive world opinion about the unfair trials, about the oppression and the attacks systematically carried out against the people of Kurdistan. We must protest against the military fascist junta in Turkey and these trials. We must reveal the truth about these trials.

(Armanc (1981) *Solidarity with DDKD* p. 19, this excerpt of it translated from Swedish)

This excerpt is from a leaflet produced by the organisation DDKD that was distributed in the early 1980s, at least by Kurds in Sweden and Germany. The leaflet is an appeal for "solidarity" and it reflects the radicalisation of the Kurdish movement. It is explicitly directed at a "progressive audience" and aims to draw attention to the contemporary situation in Turkey and the ongoing mass trials against its members. During this period most of the Kurdish diasporic activism was carried out in limited spaces, or in what Goffman would have termed "back stage zones". Not much of the Kurdish activism, nor its aims and purposes, were known to the public in the settlement countries.

In time protest actions aimed at a wider audience were also arranged. The author Mahmut Baksi, for example, as a political refugee, found it important to attract attention to the Kurdish issue, making it his business to keep informing people about the situation his people were in and what was happening with them in his original home country of Turkey. Many accounts dealt with the failure of people generally to know much about the Kurdish issue. In Sweden there were no difficulties in arranging manifestations expressing solidarity with immigrant groups, independence movements or ethnic minorities. The problem was rather to attract attention from the public audience. Mahmut Baksi describes the following situation:

Since we were political refugees we believed that [people in] Sweden should be informed about why we were coming. The military junta had captured 68 student leaders and demanded death penalty for them. From the very beginning we protested by pasting up leaflets in the Stockholm underground. Despite our sometimes risking our lives regarding such matters the

newspapers didn't take us seriously, writing little or nothing about the military junta. Because of this we decided to conduct a hunger strike at Sergels torg in the middle of the winter. ... our hunger strike at 17 degree below zero attracted considerable attention during the six days the strike lasted. One night, a group of about 150 sympathizing with the fascist Turkish Grey Wolves attacked us. Yet we had our defenders and friends. The Grey Wolves were condemned and the Swedish press and the media were filled with articles about the cruel military junta in Turkey. Thanks to the hunger strike we also got many Swedish sympathisers.

(Baksi 2007 p. 133, this excerpt of it translated from Swedish)

The conditions under which immigrant groups can organise, act and give voice to their opinions are moulded by the political and social structures in the countries of settlement. In Sweden there were no formal hindrances to organizing either for the Kurds, or for the Turkish nationalist groups. Activities considered as "extremist" were not tolerated, whereas Baksi and his friends gained sympathetic support in terms of Swedish public opinion. In research on the political activism of immigrants and refugees it has been shown how informal factors regulate the kinds of activities that are accepted and kinds of groups that can appear and be accepted in the country of settlement. The excerpt from Baksi's text imply that it from the beginning was difficult to attract attention from the Swedish public to the situation for the Kurds. A similar situation is illuminated in Lundberg's (1989) work on left-wing Latin American activists in exile in Western Europe. The Latin American refugees perceived their being kept at a distance by left-wing activists in their new home countries, despite the fact of their belonging to quite similar ideological movements (Lundberg 1989 p. 7).

Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) point out that there often are "thresholds" that "shape the agency of the homeland political actors" here (ibid. p. 105). In addition, she points out (2003 Chapter 6) that there are informal "thresholds of tolerance" that serve to regulate immigrant activism. For example, there is a higher degree of tolerance for activities that are peaceful and are exercised by groups, parties and organisations that are perceived as being democratic and "non-extremist". In the case described by Baksi, of Kurds being attacked, the Kurdish movement benefited from a reverse threshold of tolerance effect, due to the group that attacked them definitely exceeding the "threshold of tolerance", as it was perceived by the Swedish media and by the public generally, this resulting in positive attention and sympathy being directed at those that were attacked.

In the course of time, the scene broadened and activities were more consciously directed to a wider audience. One example of this is the establishment of The Kurdish Library in Stockholm in 1996 by a man who for a long period of time had used a room in his private home for collecting books that could be included in such a library. The library became a reality when the project received financial

support from *The Culture of the Future Foundation*, together with positive interest and moral support provided by the Swedish authorities at both the national governmental and the municipal level.<sup>141</sup> Space for housing the library was provided at Skeppsholmen in the very centre of Stockholm. Dağdeviren was employed as the director of the library. His goal was to make it into a "national institution" accessible to Kurds all over the world. The following can be said to represent the gist, more or less, of his remarks at the time:

We define ourselves as a nation. Yet a nation without institutions does not exist. Having a library of their own has for a long time been a major need of the Kurdish people. There are a large number of institutions throughout the world in which books about the Kurds are available yet without someone taking responsibility for systematically collecting, preparing and making Kurdish literature available to the public. The present library should be seen against this background and need. That there may be one particular person running it ... is not relevant here ... the need of such a library having long existed ... . We have been given the opportunity in Sweden ... of having such a library ... as a national institution collecting literature in this area without reservation: printed material, postcards, maps and so on.

In the interview, the director emphasized both his role of being a "representative" of the Kurds and the "need" of an institution of this kind. In addition, Dağdeviren emphasizes that the Kurdish library in Stockholm is different from other cultural institutions around the world, some of which at the time had much larger collections of book relating to the Kurds. When the library opened there had been a critical discussion in the press concerning the claims that the library should be labelled a "national library" (see also Lindberg pp. 4-5). The library is an example of a project that contributed to making the Kurds in Sweden visible to a wider audience. Its activities, including lectures, exhibitions and book presentations were directed from the start both at a Kurdish and a Swedish public. For example, language courses in Kurmancî and numerous presentations, in Swedish were arranged at the library.

The narrative told by Dağdeviren contextualises the establishment of the library and the activities it carried on within a complex transnational space, one that can nevertheless be considered as being located within a Swedish context. As the interview moves on he expresses the "logic" he sees in a project such as that of the Kurdish library established in Sweden, expressing some of the cultural politics of the country and its support of immigrant organisations. In a way it was an outcome of opportunities provided at both a local and a national level. At the same time, the

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<sup>141</sup> The library was, for example, inaugurated by Marita Ulvskog, then Swedish cultural minister.

library can be placed within the broader context of transnational activism. For example, one of the intentions of the library was to develop a digital library catalog that would be accessible all over the world. Also the library had established contacts with libraries in Iraqi Kurdistan and cooperated in joint projects in the areas of education, digitalisation and cataloguing.

#### 7.4.2 Expanding Symbolic Resources

##### *Becoming Writers and Publishers*

From time to time it is stated that Sweden is the country in the world in which the greatest amount of literature in Kurdish is produced and published (Ahmadzadeh 2003; Hassanpour 1992 p. 454; Tayfun 1998). Certainly, Stockholm is a centre for Kurdish literature, although as Gröndahl (2002) points out this is true primarily regarding literature in Kurmancî. In Southern Kurdistan, or Northern Iraq, there is extensive publishing of literature in Soranî, only a small part of the literature written and published in this dialect being produced in Sweden (ibid. p. 333). The role of Sweden as supposed "haven" of Kurdish literature needs to be seen in proper perspective. The publishing of literature in Kurmancî, for example, was permitted in the former Soviet Union and a number of Kurmancî speaking authors and poets have been active there<sup>142</sup> (Gröndahl 2002; on book publishing in the USSR see Ahmadzadeh 2003 pp. 167-168; Hassanpour 2002 pp. 212ff.). *The Kurdish Institute* in Paris was founded already in 1983. It has been prominent in the role of developing the Kurmancî and of publishing in this dialect (van Bruinessen 1998 p. 46).

During the time that the interviews were conducted, it was estimated that about 80 % of all active authors writing in Kurdish were residing in Sweden (Gröndahl 2002). A solid inventory of Kurdish publishing in Sweden was conducted by Tayfun (1998). A few Kurdish journals were also published in Sweden during the 1970s, and, according to Tayfun, during the period between 1980 and 2000 more than 130 Kurdish journals was published in Sweden. Between 1971 and 1997, 402 books in Kurmancî and in Zazakî were published in Sweden, as compared with 109 books in these dialects in Turkey during the same period. It is noteworthy that from 1971 and up to 1990 there were only 11 books in these dia-

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<sup>142</sup> Also Joyce Blau, professor in Kurdish at the University of Sorbonne in Paris, draws attention to the occurrence of literature in Kurmanî produced in the former Soviet Union at a symposium on Kurdistan that took place in Lund, autumn 2007. However the literature produced in the former Soviet Union is written in cyrillic alphabet and not accessible to Kurmancî speakers in other parts of the world unless they are similar with that alphabet.

lects published in Turkey (Tayfun 1998 p. 42). There is also a Kurdish bookstore, Sara, located in the centre of Stockholm.

Tayfun points out that many of the books that were published in Turkey either were written or were first issued in Sweden. Between 1980 and 1997 15 journals in the dialects of Kurmancî and Zazakî received state subsidies from the Swedish Arts Council (Tayfun 1998 p. 34), as did 19 publishers that issued works in these languages (ibid. p. 30).

As a result, the publishing of books and other printed material in Kurdish has been of particular importance for the Kurdish dialects that have played a dominant role in Turkey. It is interesting to note in this context that Stockholm has been portrayed as being "a Kurdish capital" (see, for example, Alakom 2007), both in Kurdish circles in Sweden and among Kurds from Turkey generally. It has also been pointed out that the cultural political atmosphere in Sweden has contributed to "a renaissance for the Kurmancî literature", since novels have been written on the basis of plots found in the old epics, of old lexica and journals in Kurmancî having been compiled and published in Sweden, from which it has become accessible to a Kurmancî speaking audience.

In accounts of how Kurdish literature and the Kurdish language have expanded in Sweden, it has been emphasized that a "renewal" of the Kurdish literature has taken place (see, for example, Dağdeviren in Friesel 1999 p. 79), and that there has been an expansion of literary genres in the language as well as an expansion of the language:

Then the first children's journal was published in Stockholm, the first satiric, or as I said humoristic paper, was published in Sweden, the first women's journal, and the first journal in a dialect that we call Dîmlî or Zazakî. (...) The first journal in that dialect being published in Sweden, the first real Kurdish printing house and publishing house is here in Sweden, as well as the first kindergarten, and the first Kurdish library. All of these had an influence on the other ... and then on film, theatre and music.

(D)

In his account, D convey the message of publishing in Kurdish having flourished, mushroomed and gradually spread to all different literary genres and fields in Sweden. D explains how the generous and open political climate and the interest in language issues among the Kurds conspired to result in an expansion and a renewal of Kurdish literature and publishing. The publishing of literature in Kurdish Kurmancî and Zazakî also includes books translated into these dialects from other languages. A number of classical works and world literary works have been translated into Kurdish. W, D and E, for example, have all been involved in translating literature and other texts into Kurdish.

In the context of diasporic and ethno-nationalist mobilization, it is interesting to note that children's literature has become a major genre in publishing activities in Kurmancî in Sweden. Tayfun (1998) found that children's books represented about a quarter of all the literature published in Kurmancî. Many of these were translations of Swedish children's books such, as Ludde and Pippi Longstocking, and of Alfons Åberg into Kurmancî as well as the other two main Kurdish dialects. Providing literature for children in their maternal tongue is certainly a way of reinforcing and protecting the language, and of transferring it on to succeeding generations. The meaning that books like Ludde and Pippi might have for children in Kurdistan has also been discussed. Gröndahl (2002) for example suggests that the extensive publishing of children's literature in Kurdish is an attempt to integrate and transfer social norms of Swedish society to the children involved.

The lack of literature in Kurdish was probably one reason for writing and publishing in Kurdish having been carried out. A further aspect of it is the matter of the norms and values in Turkish text- and schoolbooks provided, which was underscored by C who first in Sweden worked as a home language teacher in Turkish:

I started with these publication activities because of my work as a teacher, this putting me in touch with Kurdish children as well. And there was also not much material of this sort available. There was a lack [of material] in Kurdish generally. And when I taught Turkish it was with material that contained state propaganda.

(C)

C draws attention here first to the fact that there was not much literature for children produced in Kurdish that could have been used in education in that language. Secondly, he puts forward the matter of norms and of democratic values. As the interview moved on, C pointed out that the content of the Turkish schoolbooks was "very ideological" and "nationalist", and "that they are not accommodated to what is established in the Swedish curriculum for education" saying that people should not be racist, since "these books are racist". C also added that "these books are not accommodated to the children". He said finally that there were "conflicts" in which other teachers, as well as parents, were involved concerning the matter of Turkish parents "wanting the classroom to be like those in Turkey".

U told of his having a sense of its being almost "a duty" of his, as a politically active and committed Kurd, to immerse himself in the Kurdish language, history and culture, and to provide a broader Kurdish audience with the sources and the knowledge he had acquired through supplying them with articles and books in Kurdish:

And I wrote a number of articles, which were not very scholarly, but as to my identity I was politician, you see. I was not sufficiently grown up and mature to become a politician, but felt all the time that as a politician it is very important to have knowledge about Kurds, about their politics, history and language.

(U)

He adds that:

It helps in the struggle, you know. In the Kurdish struggle (...) if a history book or grammar, or other literary book. It is a tool you see (...) in the Kurdish struggle, it is not only about knowledge, it fills a propagandistic role as well.

(U)

In the story of U producing literature as part of a struggle, literature in Kurdish becomes a "tool" in the political struggle generally, his implying that the very existence of Kurdish literature is important. In reading his account, the idea launched by Benedict Anderson (1991) of how printed literature has played a central role in the creation of national communities comes to mind: "the convergence of capitalism and printing technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of there being a new form of imagined community, the basic morphology of which set the stage for the modern nation" (ibid. p. 46). This could be interpreted as the story told by U implying that the publishing here has a broader purpose, that of every book, journal and other type of script published in Kurdish seeing to it that the Kurds have a body of literature and a language in which they can express themselves.

One can note that book publication and authorship can be considered as highly "gendered" activities. According to Tayfun (1998 p. 16) there was only one female Kurdish author from the Kurdistan region in Turkey who had published in Sweden during the period he investigated. His report, based on statistics from the Swedish Council of Arts, shows that publishing houses were run by men and only few women were on the editorial boards of journals, there also being few women who had obtained state subsidies for publishing. It should be added, however, that there were politically active women writing and producing texts for various purposes. During a short period of time a small group of women affiliated with the *Kurdiska kvinnoförbundet* also published the journal *Jîn: Kurdisk kvinnobulletin* mentioned in a previous section.

### *To Conquer a Language*

As was described in Chapter 6 the Kurdish language has a central role for many Kurds from Turkey since it has been prohibited for such a long period of time.

Kurdish refugees from Turkey, in several European countries, began the work of publishing and writing in their maternal tongue. Indeed, many Kurds were writing and presenting their intellectual thoughts in Turkish, while the use of Kurdish often was limited to the sphere of everyday life. Van Bruinessen (1998) emphasize the role of the diaspora in producing a working Kurdish language. Claims of linguistic rights are prevalent in the accounts here. In the accounts it is sometimes emphasised how Swedish immigrant policies supported the maintenance and expansion of maternal languages among immigrants. Some of those interviewed declared that Turkish was their maternal tongue, others that their Kurdish was "very weak" since they had not spoken Kurdish with their parents. X declared that he had first learned Kurdish properly in Sweden at the age of 25.

As has been mentioned in earlier chapters, Swedish municipalities have been obliged to offer home language training to immigrant children ever since 1976. For various reasons it took some time before Swedish authorities observed that there was a need of home language training for the Kurds. One reason was that in public population statistics the Kurds were registered as being either Turkish, Iranian, Iraqi or Syrian. The first Kurds arriving in Sweden were the guest workers from the Kulu province in Turkish Anatolia who spoke Turkish but had never attended school. The occurrence of Kurdish speaking immigrants became known to Swedish authorities first when families with wives and children who were only Kurdish speaking came to Sweden (Yetkin 1984 pp. 135-137).

Interest in education in Kurdish became increasingly articulated with the arrival of political refugees to whom linguistic rights were important. The author Mehmet Emin Bozarslan was one of those who actively struggled for the establishment of language training in Kurdish. He wrote of the lack of knowledge he perceived authorities to have concerning Kurdish immigrants:

What they know is that a large group of immigrants comes from what on the map is called Turkey and then they set up a programme of education involving home language teachers in Turkish.

(Bozarslan 1981 p. 8, this excerpt of it translated from Swedish)

In Sweden people from different parts of Kurdistan came together, many among them having been given the opportunity to learn Kurdish and being offered education in it with the support from Kurdish organisations. The organisation KR was active in the establishment of a program for the education of teachers in the maternal Kurdish tongue. The first Kurdish classes were provided by Kurdish authors with a good command of spoken and written Kurdish, initiated by Kurdish and Kurdish-Turkish organisations in Scandinavia. Kurdish classes were also provided for adults, although this was an activity that was not uncontroversial:

Because the Turkish regime has decided to eradicate the Kurdish language and culture, it attempts to carry out the same oppression also outside the borders of Turkey, i.e. in Europe, where the Kurds can use their language freely. The following situation developed in the final stages of a language course that was given in Copenhagen: The 25<sup>th</sup> of July the advisor of Turkish at the embassy called the general secretary of the 'The Association of Kurdish Workers from Turkey', Mahmut Erdem, to try to persuade him to stop the Kurdish language course. The motivation for this given was that Kurdish is prohibited in Turkey, and that Kurdish children are not to be given education in Kurdish. When the advisor of the embassy was asked whether he was aware of this being the case in Denmark and that it was here the course was being given, he answered: "Turkish children are not to learn Kurdish".

(Bozarslan 1981 p. 3)

The excerpt above is in line with observations made by Sheffer (1986 p. 391) of homeland regimes often being "ambiguous" regarding such matters and sometimes intervening or attempting to stop or limit the activism of diasporaic populations from their countries. The Turkish government's interest in the activities of "their emigrés" was not limited to such statements as those by the Turkish ambassadors. The language restrictions on Kurdish were made more stringent in the aftermath of the coup in 1980, led to the concerns of Turkish authorities regarding language training in Kurdish in Scandinavia. In the accounts of such matters provided here there are several examples of its being perceived that Turkish authorities control and supervise the activities of Kurdish refugees in Sweden. One such example is provided by D, who recalls when the Turkish authorities called on the Swedish embassy in Ankara as well as the Swedish foreign ministry to express their attitude toward the opening of a Kurdish kindergarden in Stockholm. In an article in the daily Svenska Dagbladet, the ambassador Haluk Özgül explain his concerns as follows: "Turkey has according to the constitution one language-turkish" and continues: "The parents and their children in the kindergarden are Turkish citizens and because of that they ought to speak Turkish and no other language there." (Svenska Dagbladet 1985.01.11 quoted in Tayfun 1998 p. 44).

Individual Kurdish authors have been prosecuted in Turkey because of their work. For example, Mehmet Uzun authored a novel, written in Sweden but distributed in Turkey, that allegedly argued for "separatism". In 1996 Mehmet Emin Bozarslan and his Turkish publisher were prosecuted after the publication of a translation of the Kurdish classical epic *Mem and Zin* into Turkish. Kurdish home language training was provided to school children in Sweden from 1981. When education in Kurdish was provided, an inventory of the need for textbooks and

teaching aids was carried out by responsible instances (SIL 1984 pp. 2, 18, 21).<sup>143</sup> It is interesting to note that Swedish authorities felt called on to underscore the importance of informing parents selecting mother-tongue language classes in Kurdish for their children about the consequences it might have since Kurdish not is a public language and no education in Kurdish is provided in their home countries. In Sweden the schools in some cases became an arena for conflicts between parents belonging to different ethnic and political groups. The Kurdish attempts to use their language and claims to linguistic rights diverged from the Turkish public narrative that for years had denied the very existence of the Kurds. There are examples of Turkish-speaking parents sympathising with the ultra-nationalist Turkish parties attempting to prevent Kurdish-speaking parents from sending their children to home language training in Kurdish, or attempting to convince them to not do so.

Another theme that can be distinguished in the accounts is of how the Kurdish language had expanded in the Swedish diasporic setting. It has often been emphasized that Kurdish is widely used among Kurds in Sweden. In Sweden, Kurdish has effectively been employed in public Kurdish arenas, such as in meetings and manifestations. In the interviews this was described as differing from the situation in other countries hosting large Kurdish communities. D compared it with the situation of Kurds residing in Germany. He spoke of meetings there in which Kurds usually spoke Turkish at Kurdish meetings and conferences. At first, when Kurds were meeting, they spoke Turkish, though Kurds from Sweden were making their speeches in Kurdish. In the course of time, Kurds from Germany began speaking Kurdish when attending meetings and manifestations in Sweden:

D: But when they come to Sweden, they at once start to speak Kurdish. Because you have to follow this norm ... but automatically it turns out like that. Because then, they say all over the world that in Sweden Kurds are very active and do many positive things.

Charlotta: But how did it become like this. There are so many Kurds in Germany?

D: Yes, half a million live in Germany.

Charlotta: But they do not speak Kurdish?

D: No, they do not speak Kurdish. They speak German or Turkish.

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<sup>143</sup> SIL is the acronym for *Statens Institut för Läromedelsinformation*, in English The Government's Teaching Material Authority.

Charlotta: What if they meet Kurds from Iraq or Iran?

D: Then they speak German.

(D)

In Germany the authorities did not support the Kurdish claims to linguistic rights, since this was seen as being a "step towards recognising the establishment of a Kurdish state" (Emanuelsson 2005 p. 113). Thus, Kurdish gradually became a "lingua franca" for the exiled Kurds. D's account illustrates how a diasporic community is, in the words of Björklund (1993), simultaneously "differentiated" and "connected", differentiated since it shows how highly diverse practices developed at local and national levels in diverse diasporic settings, and connected not only because of their organizing across state boundaries and arranging common meetings, but also in the sense of influences being transmitted, as was the case for Kurds from Germany speaking Kurdish at meetings in Sweden.

One theme that can be distinguished in the accounts is that it has become possible in Sweden to develop and modernise the Kurdish language. One of these interviewed mentioned for example that the Kurdish language in Sweden could be described as much more advanced than that in Kurdistan or elsewhere:

But if you travel, for example, to Van or to Diyarbakir, and ask about the Kurdish language, they will definitely tell you: 'okay, we don't speak a pure Kurdish [language], but if you go to Stockholm you will hear a clear and rather modern and advanced Kurdish language'. Thus for them, Stockholm and Sweden are symbols of linguistic advancement, cultural advancement and so on.

(M)

Another matter brought up in the conversations was that the language had "developed" and become "modernized" in the diasporic setting. It was emphasized that this would never have been possible if all Kurds from Turkey were still residing there. N, for example, described the language as having become "focused" in the struggle, noting that the Kurdish language was something "we have returned to" and "conquered" and that people in Sweden nowadays have the Kurdish language as "their first language", which can be interpreted as being quite a difference compared with how it used to be. It was thus felt that the diasporic arena had made it possible not only to perceive and make use of the symbolic resources available, but also to strengthen and expand them.

## 7.5 Becoming Swedish-Kurds

### *Becoming "Immigrant Others"*

One theme brought up frequently in the interviews was the experience that certain attributes are ascribed on the basis of their being immigrants, in particular Kurdish immigrants. This is a well-known phenomenon. In Sweden, just as in other Western countries, there is a debate about the "stereotypes" often attributed to immigrants in the media and in public discussions (Brune 2008; Pripp 2002). A number of incidents that have occurred have been the source of a negative conception of the Kurds in the media. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s Kurds were generally placed in the media side by side with the PKK, following the murder of two of its defectors. In this connection there was an emphasis in the media on incidents in which violent methods were employed.

When the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme was murdered in 1986 considerable attention in the media was directed at the Kurds again, due to its being attributed to the PKK path initiated by the Swedish police chief Hans Holmér. Also, two young Kurdish women, Pela Atroschi and Fadime Şahindal, were murdered, the one in 1999 and the other in 2002, by their relatives. These murders attracted an enormous interest in Swedish media and otherwise in the public debate. "Honor killings" were debated by journalists, politicians, scholars and many others. The debate soon took a "culturalist" turn. "Kurdish culture" and "Islam" were terms frequently used to explain the murders. These murders also caused widespread and strong reactions among Kurds in Sweden and in many other countries. Several scholars have seen indications of that the debate on "honor killings" affected many Kurds negatively (Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008; Eliassi 2010). When these "honor killings" are brought up in the interviews it becomes evident that they had a stigmatising effect both on men and on women.

G is one of these persons who tends apparently to bring up such issues when the situation of Kurds in Swedish society is discussed. He maintains that politically active persons in Sweden are generally well aware of the Kurdish issue and sympathize with the Kurds, but that, among persons who are not politically active, prejudices regarding Kurds and a negative picture of them tends to flourish. I makes use his own private experiences in describing how he perceives of Kurds as being portrayed in public and in the Swedish media:

Not exactly terrorists [laughing], but something like that, I think is what's inside people's heads, the idea of Kurds' never being reasonable, being disorderly and noisy, or in the best case simply noisy. I think that these murders have now led, at least in Sweden, to there not being a single Kurdish girl who hasn't been asked about her parents, who's in school hasn't been asked about her father, yes, her father in particular. My daughters have been asked anyway, and they were very upset. About. Eh. Their classmates

were asking them: "What is your father like?" with implicit negative expectation regarding him. Not about profession, or his appearance. No, nothing like that. But: ... "Does your father want to kill you?" Despite that ... they've been going to school [together] ... . The oldest starts her last year in college this year, and the younger one is sixteen. ... They've been asked about such things by classmates of theirs who've been in our home.

(G)

This account involves the sense of being an "other" and of being "categorized". An "other" because it imply that his daughter was asked whether her father was a possible murderer, just because he was a Kurdish father. "Categorized" because in being seen as someone capable of killing his daughters certain norms and values were ascribed to him. What concerns G is the fact that Kurds as a group are looked upon as "outsiders", and that "bad characteristics" is being attributed to them. The "othering" process he describes is also not one conducted by people he meets occasionally, but are to be found in what may be his closest circles of acquaintances.

What G says fits in with observations made by Brune (2007), who argues that reporting on immigrants often involves stereotyping them. She points out that when events, such as the murder of Fadime Sahindal, is reported in the media, dichotomous pictures are often conveyed where Kurds or other immigrants are attributed to putative "traditional values" whereas Sweden is attributed with values such as "equality" and "modernity" (ibid. p. 351).

If Kurdish men perceived themselves as being attributed with the character of "noisy", completely opposite attributes were given to the Kurdish women. Rather, there was a tendency that women were characterised as "powerless". One such example was provided by R, who told an anecdote about a woman friend of hers who was a physician. This woman had been asked by one of her colleagues how it was possible for her, as a Kurdish woman, to be allowed to obtain a qualified education:

She was asked how it could be that she, who was Kurdish, could have been allowed to qualify herself to become a medical doctor? 'She who was a Kurd' and 'Kurds that are so conservative.' Did they all believe that Kurds come out of medieval caves and have a medieval mentality? That they have women who are slaves and are not allowed to qualify themselves or to move freely? In my opinion it's just a very small group who carry out such oppression against their wives and their daughters. [It] exists of course, [it is] more or less a patriarchal system. But I can't say that it's more intense among Kurds than in any Latin American or Arabic family. [They] can't see the different shades of white and grey. They believe that [we] all belong to the same category.

(R)

R clearly dissociates herself from prejudices and from a stereotyped picture of Kurdish women that she thinks prevails in the media. Her message is that prejudices regarding Kurdish women are bred among people who are otherwise expected to be "well educated" and "enlightened". Thus, in her view, such a stereotype is surprising and irrational. R perceives of Kurdish women as generally being portrayed as "weak" and "oppressed", and as not being given access to resources that could have given them the possibility of obtaining an education and a profession or of taking their place in public and political spaces.

She points then out the place and the situations in which prejudices are discussed, that they are discussed in public spaces, Kurds thus being confronted with them in their everyday lives whether they want to be or not. R points out that people not only air their prejudices regarding Kurdish women in private rooms but also in interactions between people in everyday situations.

What she and also I tell of reminds one of what Pripp (2002) has found in his research concerning people who are presented in a stereotyped way in the media, his pointing out that a consequence of this is that such people are not able to avoid the pictures of them that are provided and the effects these have on how people perceive of them (ibid. p. 68). Both I and R describe stereotypes they are confronted with in Swedish society, and it is implicitly understood that they conceive of other Kurds in Sweden being confronted with these as well. Something clearly common to the accounts of I and of R is how they distance themselves from the stereotypes they report being confronted with, leading to their being characterised as ethnified outsiders. Explicitly they express that they find it difficult to defend themselves from these stereotypes.

### *Representativity I*

An often disputable issue concerns who should be given the right and the legitimacy to speak for the group and whose interests should be attended to and be given priority. Although little research has been conducted thus far on the role of Kurdish women's organizing, one exception to this is Mojab (2007) who points out that this is a subject often neglected in the literature and by Kurdish political organisations. Referring to the opening of a Kurdish Womens' radio station in Stockholm, Mojab remarks: "The absence of high-profile Kurdish political party representatives (all male) was notable" (ibid. p. 69). Wahlbeck (1999) has observed that the emancipation of women and the equality of the sexes are subjects that are not ranked high on the agendas of Kurdish organizations (ibid. p. 120).

When I was conducting the interviews, for example, it proved to be difficult to get access to women, and in speaking about this with male acquaintances and those who were interviewed many of them said: "I don't know of any women who are active in the Kurdish movement. Most Kurdish women are housewives". Although this statement no longer reflects adequately the situation today, it is in line with what has been written in reports on the Kurdish immigrant group issued by

the Kurdish Project in the 1980s. According to these reports a majority of the Kurdish women coming from Turkey were housewives, many of them illiterate, and some of them without knowledge of Turkish. They had followed their husbands to Sweden or in some cases been given residence permits as in the case of family reunions (see, for example, Turan 1984).

However, there were a number of women belonging to the political generation in question who were politically active. When I was finally able to get in touch with various women in this regard, it turned out that some of them belonged to networks including also male interviewees who had told me that they did not know any women who had been politically active in Turkey. It would thus be reasonable to conclude that much of women's diasporic activism at the time went unattended.

One matter involved concerns what questions were included in the political agenda. An issue that was brought up in some of the conversations was that of women's issues always having been subordinated to the "bigger" and much more "important" question of the emancipation of Kurdistan:

During this long period of time I was always involved with men, and with the Kurdish issue. They reminded me continually of their feeling that 'We must not bring up women's issues. [That will be] after the Kurdish issue'. And that's how we did it. We were waiting until some kind of freedom was given us so that we then could start with women's issues.

(J)

J noted that being a woman in a male-dominated organisation was not a problem in itself, what was at issue being rather when to pursue the question of women's emancipation. R remarked, in a similar vein, that when she worked in a Kurdish political party she could write about the women's situation as long as it not was referred to as feminism. J came to Sweden in the 1980s but returned after a few years to work politically in various Middle Eastern countries. In the organisation in Sweden she had been active in there were only a few women in leading positions. At the time of the interviews she chose to give priority to questions concerning women's emancipation and in addition committed herself to the situation of Kurdish children and teenagers in Sweden.

Many women were active in the political generation in Turkey, although they did not constitute a majority there, and there were very few of them who obtained an influential position within the organisations in which they were active. R said that "we just went along", since women's issues were allegedly never on the agenda. According to K, women had no influence in the organisations in which she was active and questions of equality between men and women were not on the agenda.

agenda. J returned to Kurdistan after a short period in Sweden and did obtain a leading position in her party there.

This brings us to a further theme that was brought up in the discussions on gender equality. J, R and S all pointed out that it was difficult to mobilize women politically. J described this as follows:

They [the women] always get the heaviest [load of work] at home. The men always leave. So they [the woman] give up very easily. But that is ... when I'm with them, with these guys, and they say 'You are one of us', I sometimes say that they don't see us as women because of our being with them and struggling together with them and discussing with them all the time ... . They [the women] are always given many things to do at home and also have to work. You know in Sweden they are studying or they are working, and in addition [many of them] have several children and [that] takes up much time. So women don't get much free time ... it's difficult to take one's place elsewhere.

(J)

J described these conditions from the standpoint of being a politically active woman. She contrasts herself in a way with women who don't participate in the activities of the political parties or whose main responsibilities for the household work prevent them from that. In many respects her reflections are in line with what was reported in the Tensta Project in the 1980s (see Turan 1984).

R and S, however, said that relations between Kurdish men and women in Sweden had changed. R gave examples from her own relationship saying that it was easier for her to be away from home in the evenings than what it was in her first years in Sweden. S pointed out that women had gotten the opportunity to study and to work outside the home, despite women often having to take the main responsibility for the household and the children. In her view however, women should take responsibility for their situation:

That's very difficult. But if you want to have equality, I think you have to enter politics. You have to participate. We've left ... yes the laws ... and everything we've left to the men. We've have left everything in their hands. We can't just expect then that they'll do everything for us. Maybe they don't have an idea of what we want. I think, then we have to take part and decide and build up [something].

(S)

On the one hand, the women were critical to how they found the position of women and young girls among the Kurds. K who for a period of time had been the editor of a women's journal in Stockholm telling, for example, about how daughters of Kurdish politicians and activists came to the women's group and told of

restrictions that were placed on them at home. On the other hand, the women who were interviewed told of Kurdish women at the time being depicted in a stereotyping fashion and being described negatively in the public media, their mostly being presented there as being subordinate and oppressed. R gave an example of women being made "invisible" in public discussions in Sweden. In the following example she reported on what she was told by one of her friends who was active in a Kurdish organisation when journalists were looking for information about the situation of Kurdish women immediately after that the young Kurdish woman referred to in the previous section, Fadime Şahindal, had been murdered by her father:

Also if the question as a matter of fact is directly about women, you can say that people tend to turn to men instead of to women. ... For example, someone told me about a journalist from one of our biggest newspapers coming twice to conduct an interview with the [male] chairman of our organisation. When the journalist was about to come for a third time, my female friend went outside the door and just grabbed him and said: "You must talk to me. You have something to do with us and not just with him". So she dragged him in there, into a room they have.

(R)

The anecdote that R told can be interpreted as there being a clear gendered hierarchy or as women being neglected within the organisation and in Swedish society, at least as far as Kurdish women are concerned. What she tells reminds one of Mojab's remark about Kurdish women, namely that "women are confronted with the relations of their *non-state* status, the politics of *state-seeking* projects, and the *immigration and settlement policies* of the host-land. Each of these relations reproduces patriarchy in specific ways." (Mojab 2007 p. 77).

R described how her friend was made "invisible" and given a subordinate position by her Kurdish colleague and by the Swedish journalist. The chairman of the Kurdish organisation, who was a man, did not direct the Swedish journalist to the representative of the organisation for Kurdish women when he was going to interview people about the situation of Kurdish women. This implied that the women's branch and the main organisation it was in were at least to a large extent separate spheres, which can be interpreted as there being a strong hierarchy within the organisation. In addition the anecdote can be seen as reflecting the view of Kurdish women in the majority society since the Swedish journalist passed her office every day without taking any notice of the fact that he was passing a Kurdish women's organisation and that he easily could have talked directly with the women there about how they perceived of their situation themselves. R interpreted this event as women being neglected. Alinia (2004) points to similar experiences he had had regarding the position of Kurdish women in Sweden.

### *Representativity 2*

In the overall narrative of the generation there are several contrasting and to some extent conflictual stories. As was accounted for in Chapter 1, Kurdistan is ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous. In recent decades, sub-groups and overlapping identities that hitherto had not been very visible in public spaces, such as political ones had begun to organize in Turkey and in various diasporic contexts (Uçarlar 2009 pp. 219f.). Matters connected with the question of whether or not their aspirations for rights and for recognition are politicised illustrate how fuzzy, complex and overlapping the constructions and negotiations concerning national belonging could become.

Among those interviewed one finds persons who considered Zazakî to be their maternal tongue, in the diasporic setting some of them having begun to manifest a "Zaza" identity. Many of the most prominent leaders and figures in Kurdish rebellions and in recent movements have been Zaza speaking. Of those included in this thesis who stated that they were Zaza-speaking most of them said they were "Zaza-speaking" Kurds". Hence, Zaza and Kurdish may be competing identity markers, as expressed in the account H told:

Now I say that I'm a European, a Zaza who live in Sweden and we are part of the EU ... . In 20 years you don't know. Maybe there are no borders left ... . But in my other circles, the Turkish, the Kurdish ... I say that I'm a Zaza who lives in Kurdistan, or who comes from Turkish Kurdistan, or the Kurdish part of Turkey. But that is disapproved of, also by Kurds, because they want to imitate Turkish chauvinism and assert that Zaza is a branch of Kurdish, which is completely unfounded. Internally, for the sake of democracy, we have to say that Zaza is a Kurdish language, since otherwise, the majority will want to assimilate us.

(H)

H describes a conflicting scenario, a position of being subordinate to Kurds. Most of them that I have talked with seemed that they considered themselves Zaza-kurds in a "complementary" way, implying that social identities can be complex and have many sources. For example is W and O who, it seemed to me, did not struggle for a distinct Zaza identity, his rather seeing the Zaza as one component of his Kurdish identity. P, who came from a religious family, employed a similar strategy, his describing there being three components of his identity that were important to him, the Kurdish, the Zaza and the religious. He said that as he grew older he realised that each of these components was equally important.

### *Next Generation*

The complexity of the processes by which national identities are constructed was highlighted in the discussions concerning the next generation. Several of those

interviewed alluded to how their Kurdish identities would be challenged by the next generation, on the one hand examples being given of how their children aspired to "preserve their Kurdish identity", and on the other hand R, in speaking about Kurdishness in Sweden, saying that "Kurdish identities are getting stronger, you want to preserve them, and ... yet, when it comes to one's children, this is unfortunately not so easy, "her going on to tell about how her son is "dreaming in Swedish" and how he wants "an explanation in Swedish from me" when discussions in Kurdish or in Turkish become too complicated or abstract. It is not primarily the Kurdishness of her own son that she sees as "threatened", even if she fears that his sense of being Kurdish will gradually "weaken" over time, but rather her doubts as to whether future generations will continue to really be Kurdish:

And if he marries a Swedish girl I think there will not be much left of his Kurdish identity. [Not] for his children anyway. It can only be for himself. Because he does feel like.. Because when I ask him he says that he definitely is Kurdish, not Swedish. I say to him that 'You are a Swedish citizen and you were born here. You can also be seen as Swedish' since he know Swedish better than our other two languages. He says 'No I am a Kurd'. Yes! He wants to preserve his [national] identity. But I think it will fade away in time. If he marries a Swedish girl, for which there is about a 50 percent [chance] things will go that way I think. And if they get children, I think, then there will be nothing left of a Kurdish identity. And it is natural for things to turn out that way. It is a process that you can't prevent.

(R)

R show herself to be aware of Kurdish identities continuously being challenged and reconstructed, the younger generation responding to the social and historical settings they grow up in. I was often told that the children not were going to 'be Kurds' in the same way as their parents. This often did not seem to be of much concern. Many were happy that their children were doing well and became well integrated in Sweden. U told, for example, of his daughter being both Kurdish and Swedish and of how he could not decide to what extent she was of each. Many told of difficulties and problems when their children went to Turkey to see their relatives there. U told of his children always complaining about their not being able to do things in the same way as in Sweden, Z telling about his son calling home and complaining about the weather and the food, and W was concerned about how he as a political refugee not was able to follow his son to Turkey to help him socialise with other Kurdish men. R, in the account of hers reported on above, expressed a grief when she opened her story. Many considered its being important however to socialise one's children in terms of Kurdish customs and traditions. Simultaneously it must be noted that when speaking of their children the interviewees tend to consider Sweden to be the present and future homeland for them and their children.

## 7.6 Transnational Actors

At the same time, as being a diasporic group the political generation are embedded in a transnational network, since Kurds are dispersed into various countries all over the world and tend to operate at a global and a local level at the same time. By doing so their both sustaining solidarity with co-ethnic members of the group worldwide and adjusting to the social and political culture in the countries in which they reside. From the mid-1990s Kurdish personalities, institutes and organisations increasingly began to collaborate in trans-national networks. These networks are extending across Europe, North America and the Middle East.

New technology facilitated communication between the Kurds in the diaspora and the Middle East. Diaspora Kurds have played a significant role in the establishment of a "Kurdish cyber-space". Today the Kurds have access to a myriad of TV- and radio-channels broadcasting in Kurdish and other Middle Eastern languages. In addition numerous Kurdish webpages have been set up. The Kurdish TV-channel MED-TV was established in London 1995 and reaches about 16 million viewers (Watts 2004a p. 131; see also Khayati 2008).

The escalating violence in Turkey in the 1990s influenced the commitments of many of them belonging to the generation. Many became involved in Human Rights organisations, political parties in their new home country, solidarity groups and other organisations that operated globally. The interviewees were generally staunch supporters of Turkish accession to the European Union. When Turkey applied for full membership in the EU in 1987 many of them, like many other Kurds in Europe many engaged with the human rights situation in Turkey.

### *Marginalized Actors*

Far from all the accounts of diasporic activism were positive, however. Many examples that were provided indicated the Kurds to find the impact of their efforts to marginal and very much limited. In several other studies, relations between refugees and those who remained in the original home country have been discussed. Many of those interviewed had concerns about the developments in the pro-Kurdish political space in Turkey. As X put it:

Why had they [the PKK] been struggling for 15 years? Our party (...) we thought [realised] at the start that an armed struggle could have [negative implications for] the Kurdish people [and that] we would be hit hard if we commenced an armed struggle [against the Turkish state]. And now this has probably come true. It would have been better if the Kurds in Turkey had created a Kurdish labour party, as in the 1970's when we issued journals, also in Kurdish, thousands of them in Kurdish. Now, when you are abroad,

you cannot reach the people in Kurdistan. They cannot get our publications in Kurdistan. In my opinion, nothing has advanced in these 20 years.

(L)

Under diasporic conditions Kurdish activists became separated from the political struggle that developed inside the home country. As I interpret the quotation above taken from L's account it became impossible to advise younger generations of politicians in Turkey and the activists who had escaped the country no longer had any appreciable influence on the political mobilisation in the Kurdish resistance that persisted and began to evolve anew a few years after the coup. Thus, the PKK became the most influential political group, and, according to many of the interviewees there were no actors there who could provide an alternative. Their struggle became separated from the one in the homeland. Olson (2007 p. 221) declares that political or nationalist movements in the exile "never are a by-product" of the movement that is active in the home country. Rather the exiles' struggle is about "putting together fragments" of the movement as it developed in the home country, as a model of it.

R described this separation between the struggle inside the original home country and the struggle outside as being a dilemma. She regarded it as if there were two different struggles being carried out. The one in the homeland. The second is the one that has emerged outside Turkey, where exiled pro-Kurdish activists continue to champion their cause, although under completely different conditions than those of their countrymen inside Turkey. Interestingly enough, R points out that other organisations could scarcely be as "effective" as the PKK. Inside Turkey the Kurdish movement became radicalised and increasingly militant. Virtually all of the moderate Kurdish voices were abroad or in prison during the 1980s (see Watts 2010).

#### *Brought to the Agenda*

Many of the accounts of diasporic activism by members of the generation in question could be labeled as "success" stories, telling about a Kurdish community that had worked to bring the Kurdish issue to the political agenda. M noted for example that this had contributed to making the Kurds visible and thus strengthened their position:

Turkey cannot stop [the Kurds] or say that: 'No there are no Kurds, and Kurds do not have any rights, and so on'. Once Germany's ... ambassador in Turkey was asked about the PKK by [Turkish] journalists who wanted Germany to make the PKK illegal. He said: 'Okay, the PKK are terrorists. We do say so. The PKK are terrorists. But this is a Kurdish question.' One of the journalists replied that: 'No, there is no Kurdish question'. He [the

ambassador] said: 'Maybe in Turkey there's no Kurdish question. But in Germany there is a Kurdish question.'

(M)

What M said in this anecdote sums up what many persons express when diasporic activism and its impact are brought up in interviews. As Kurdish immigrants and refugees become established residents, or even citizens, in their countries of settlement, their issues become issues also in these countries, and a subject for dialogue with representatives of the original home country. As in the example above, the Kurdish issue could not be neglected or be dismissed as "a matter of terrorism" when the German ambassador to Turkey brought it up publicly. Many of those interviewed noted that the diasporic context had facilitated the Kurdish issue and had brought it onto the agenda of international forums and organisations. Over the years, many politicians and well-known personalities from various Western European countries have committed themselves to the Kurdish issue.

The late Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh was known for her bringing up the situation of the Kurds in her contacts with Turkish authorities and when she travelled to Diyarbakir. Also the French president's wife, Danielle Mitterand, was committed to the human rights of the Kurds. The Kurdish issue has drawn the attention of many different organisations and governments (Watts 2004; Khayati 2008).

#### *Building Networks*

A further matter that was distinguished in the accounts was the mobilizing potential of the Kurds and the prospects of Kurds from many different countries uniting in the diasporic context. B's account challenged those who declared the Kurdish movement to be weak because of splinterings and divisions. On the contrary, he emphasized the Kurds being "indeed well organized" and continuing their efforts in diasporic settings:

It is very easy to come together and form organisations ... . To make use of the opportunities that are provided in a democracy. Talking on TV about the matters involved, for example, is very important ... to make people conscious.. and it is easy to communicate with people within the country, with friends and with relatives, and it is also possible to organize people in Kurdistan itself, and to create opinion in Europe supporting the Kurdish cause. Activities carried on within the diaspora is thus important, in particular for those of us from the Turkish part. We have institutes, like the present one, for example. Those in Turkey do not have such opportunities.

(B)

B mentions the diasporic setting having provided the Kurds with resources and opportunities that they did not have in their home countries in the Middle East. In the different Kurdish diasporic settings there are networks that operate from local to global levels and consist of a diverse spectrum of actors ranging from individuals to the major Kurdish political parties, NGOs and institutes. In diasporic settings Kurdish organisations have established networks that extend across state boundaries and continents (Emanuelsson 2005). Many of those interviewed participated in transnational networks of this kind. In the accounts participants provided I was often told that the informants were going to conferences abroad, being involved in projects together with Kurds in other countries, and also going to spend a period in someone of the Kurdish institutes abroad. Many were involved in projects in Iraki Kurdistan and several had travelled there.

#### *Towards an Integrated Kurdish Community*

S emphasize the opportunities and advantages that are provided in diasporic settings of being able to organize Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan:

For example, I understand the South Kurdish dialect much better now. I am [a teacher] in South Kurdish. Yes, I began to study to become a teacher in domestic languages here ... . We were only a few people at the time. There were students who were as old as my father, former lawyers. And my option was about developing ... to participate and to raise the status of the Kurdish language. It was because of that ... that I visited Syrian Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and ... I have felt a sense of belonging there, very much. I felt at home in Erbil, in Qamishli, and in Duhok. I did not feel foreign as you do sometimes in other countries. This is thanks to my contacts with my compatriots that I have come to know here in Sweden.

(S)

Many of the participants told similar stories about what their opportunities of meeting with Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan had meant to them. It was often told by those that were interviewed of their working together with Kurds from different countries in various organisations, how personal relations are built to Kurds from various parts of Kurdistan, a number of those interviewed also telling of their having become acquainted with the Soranî dialect of Kurdish spoken in Iraq and Iran. This in turn had the consequence of Kurds from various parts of Kurdistan being able to come together and communicate in Kurdish and become acquainted with the various Kurdish dialects.

As was mentioned earlier, there were many who had travelled to Kurdistan. Kurds have always attempted to organize and cooperate across state boundaries. B and T told of how Kurds from Syria and Iraq came to Turkey to help people there

organize, bringing books in Kurdish with them. The idea of Kurds in diasporic settings being integrated into a broader Kurdish community is not without complications, however. Wahlbeck (1999) found in his research on Kurdish refugees in Finland and Great Britain that the Kurds he interviewed socialised mainly with Kurds from their countries of origin and participated in networks "based on social relations in their countries of origin" (ibid. p. 142).

In my research many said that they had established contacts within the broader Kurdish community, and although there were language-barriers and differences in what they had experienced it seems that many had their closest circle of friends among people from Turkey. The diasporic arena has helped in establishing contacts, through different organisations and networks, however between Kurds in many different countries.

## 7.7 Closing of the Chapter

This chapter has examined accounts of pro-Kurdish activism and the direction it has taken in the diasporic setting of Sweden by those members of the political generation in question. To many of them the exile had become an arena for re-orientation and for new directions to take in the struggle on behalf of Kurds generally. From the accounts one can see that the diasporic political landscape is complex, a myriad of new associations having been established and a number of new issues have been brought to the agenda within a recent period of time. A general view that can be gleaned from the accounts is that the Kurds have consolidated their position in the diasporic settings involved. The repertoires of political and symbolic actions available have been adapted to local conditions and requirements, and actions and debates they have participated in have been oriented to both their home countries and their countries of settlement. In Sweden, for example, it has been possible for Kurds to expand and strengthen their symbolic capital, particularly through immigrant policies and cultural policies having provided resources of many kind. At the same time, just how effective the influence of the diaspora has been in this direction has been debated among members of this generation.

On the one hand, there are examples to be found in the accounts of limits and difficulties of diasporic actions, and in various of them diasporic activism is considered as being "marginal" and diasporic activists as being limited to the role of being little more than "observers". This point of view could be summarised as follows: although in the diasporic setting the Kurdish issue have been brought to the agenda to a very considerable extent, there is very little real influence over political developments in Turkey. For example, persecution in Turkey has continued during the exile of those who have left, as became evident when Mehmet

Uzun was prosecuted in Istanbul, and it can readily appear that their activism has little in the way of positive effects for the Kurds in Turkey.

On the other hand there are accounts in which the narrators depict their activism in terms of being progressive and challenging, taking the role of being "spearheads", and thus contributing appreciably to the advancement of the Kurdish movement, as to be seen, for example, in the dynamic development of organisations and the expansion of language and literature that has taken place in the diasporic setting.

Thus, the themes of Suffering and Strength that were taken up in Chapter 6 are also to be seen in the narratives included in this chapter on the diasporic setting. However, since the generation here describes their activism in terms of being active subjects, two further themes can be added: Emancipation and Challenge.

In some of the accounts, the political careers of those belonging to the generation can be described as representing an Emancipatory project, which in some cases also develops into an educational project when the narrators aim to reveal the history and the situation of the suppressed and subordinated Kurdish people in various of their home countries. These narrators focus on the history of the Kurds and on matters of their present situation and their rights, language and culture expressing aspirations of making the Kurds themselves, and the world in general, conscious of their situation and their rights.

In other accounts members the generation describe themselves as Challengers. These accounts tell of a generation that acted as pioneers, their in many respects breaking new grounds and entering new arenas in which their Kurdish identities and those of generations to come could be manifested. The generation of prime interest here challenged existing barriers and continued with this in their exile, also challenging the idea of a homogeneous Turkish nation and in Sweden the idea of a victimized Kurdish diaspora and political generation of refugees.



PART IV  
Beyond Victims



# Chapter 8

## Towards Triumph?

### 8.1 Recapitulation

This thesis is about a generation of pro-Kurdish activists from Turkey who ended up in political exile in Sweden. The aim here was to analyse and describe how their pro-Kurdish nationality was maintained and expanded in a diasporic setting through exploring, by means of interviewing, their narratives on Kurdishness and their strategies of activism. The method employed there was qualitative and empirically based. It was investigated how the members of the political generation of our concerns, from their exiled position perceived of Kurdishness, of the situation of the Kurds, and the prospects of Kurdish activism in exile generally. Thus, the analysis has evolved around the specific experiences of these members of the generation, its being concentrated on two key themes: "nationality" and "diaspora". The intention here has neither been to systematically map out the activism and organisations of Kurdish activists, nor to contribute systematically to the knowledge of the history, strategies and actions of such central actors as Kurdish political parties or institutes. Rather the empirical part of the thesis concentrates on how the generation members included in the thesis narrated and coped with its Kurdish national identities and politics of belonging. Thus, the analysis of these interviews takes the shape of a political narrative in the sense suggested by Molly Andrews (see Andrews 2007). The narratives told by these Kurdish political refugees from Turkey can be seen as being counter-narratives in the sense that they challenges the public Turkish narrative that has cultivated the myth of Turkey being an ethnically homogeneous country, the Kurdish issue there having been referred to essentially in terms of its being "a socio-economic" problem, a question of "backwardness", or in more recent decades, a "security matter" (see Yeğen 2011).

At the same time their narratives have been counter-narratives to the one-sided picture of refugees and diasporic people as victimized people often provided (Cohen 1997; Tölölyan 2007). As will be discussed later on in this chapter, the narratives of this political generation are much more multi-faceted and complex.

In the following I will recapitulate briefly the contents of the thesis as a whole so as to illuminate the diachronic dimension of the narratives.

Part I outlines the aim, problem and theoretical framework of the thesis. The aim has been to describe and analyse how diasporic Kurdish identities are manifested in a particular political generation of Kurds from Turkey. The research questions posed revolve around the question of how this generation presents itself, what it means to them to be Kurdish, how they relate to the country of origin and the country of settlement, and how they conceive of their pro-Kurdish activism in Sweden. Since diasporic communities all over the world are involved in the political developments and nation building processes in their home countries, members of diasporic communities tend to organise along ethnic or national lines. Kurds, Sikhs and Palestinians are examples of stateless nations that have active diasporic communities. Kurdish diasporic communities have been established to considerable extent worldwide and are involved in political and cultural processes at global, transnational, national and local levels.

The introductory chapter makes clear that a social constructivist position is taken as point of departure. The idea that social identities are created in opposition to a "constitutive other" is central to the work.

Molly Andrews's perspectives on political narratives has essentially inspired the narrative approach undertaken here. Furthermore, the theoretical perspectives guiding this work are centered around the concepts of sociological generation, diaspora and long-distance nationalism.

Part II outlines the historical, social and political setting in which the generation in question took shape. In the historical chapters, a number of key factors are defined that appear to have influenced the members of this generation during their formative years. The narratives take their point of departure in a certain course of events that took place in post-war period Turkey when the country underwent a process of socio-economic and political changes. These courses of events can be seen as crucial to understanding the worldview of the generation's members and the mould of the movement of pro-Kurdish activism in which they participated. During this period of time the public and political space was highly "ethnicized". There was an immensely strong repression that was directed, in their everyday life, at the people involved and that the generation of their parents had also suffered from. The generation of their parents shared a trauma that was silenced, their having had their own lived memories of the Kurdish rebellions that took place in the early years of the republic, and hence of the massacres, banishments and repressive measures that followed in their aftermath. In many cases they were frightened of addressing the subject even in private circles.

In the formative years of the members of the generation of central interest here, Turkey was a country in which there were vast economic inequalities and huge social differences between its Western parts and Kurdistan. From the 1950s onwards Turkey underwent an increasing urbanization, there being migration flows that went from the eastern parts of the country to the metropolies in Western Turkey. There were state resources directed at education in Kurdistan in Turkey,

such that the school system, which had hitherto been neglected in that part of the country, expanded. Hence, the members of the generation were generally better educated than their parents and a greater number of them attended school. Thus, a new and increasingly better-educated generation of Kurds was faced with the enormous differences between the Western parts of the country and Kurdistan. The constitution that was ratified July 9, 1961, allowed for a more liberal political climate to evolve and contributed to partly restructuring the political scene in the country. In the constitution a body of civil rights for all citizens of Turkey was recognized, such as the freedom to establish political parties and the freedom to organize and arrange meetings. During this period new currents were able to enter the political space in the country, such as the liberal and left-wing movement and the ultra-nationalist movement in Turkey. Still in force were the paragraphs 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code from 1926, in terms of which political organising and the dissemination of propaganda that could, "destroy or weaken the nationalist feeling" of Turkey were strictly forbidden.<sup>144</sup>

Since there were limits to the liberalisation process, however, the public and political spaces in Turkey remained highly "ethnicized". This, in turn, sparked a resistance and a political consciousness among the Kurds. In the 1960s various Kurds became committed to the Turkish left wing movement. A break came, however, around the time of the military coup in 1971 and afterwards, the Kurdish movement becoming increasingly radicalised, as Kurdish activists became influenced more and more by nationalism, Marxist thoughts and left-wing ideologies that predominated at universities and in oppositional movements of this period.

Nationalism was a further injection, the Turkish branch of KDP having organized Kurds from more conservative circles ever since 1965. During the decades in question a Kurdish movement developed that operated clandestinely but appeared in public through cultural and youth organisations and publishing houses. This movement took place in the atmosphere of inflamed political turmoil and deadlock that characterised Turkey in the 1970s.

Thus, the pro-Kurdish activists who participated in this movement can be distinguished as having been an "active" generation and a generational unit that was better educated than its contemporaries who did not devote themselves to pro-Kurdish activism. Also, they came together under particular political circumstances, were sensitive to social and ethnic injustices, and became gradually prepared to take the risk of attempting to extend the limits of what it was possible to express in the public sphere in Turkey.

The military coup d'état of September 12, 1980, marks a dramatic breakpoint and can be considered as being a shared trauma in the political as well as the eve-

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<sup>144</sup> Quotation from KHRP 1997 p. 7.

ryday life of the members of this generation, whether they were inside Turkey or not at the time. The coup dealt a severe blow to the movement that was to be severely decimated. Many Kurdish activists were considered, together with hordes of other people, as being political dissidents and were arrested, tortured and imprisoned for years to come, there being protracted mass trials that continued on into the 1990s. Many of the people belonging to the political generation were forced to leave the country.

The escape from Turkey to a life in exile in Sweden for the group studied here, marked a shift in scenery, and in the political lives of the members of the generation involved, who then became refugee immigrants. In their new home country a popular discourse was dominant, telling of Sweden being an ethnically homogeneous nation, which it in fact never was. The public and political contexts the generation members were faced with in Sweden were different from those in Turkey, and involved new openings as well as challenges. The political climate allowed for immigrant groups to organize and establish their own associations. In Sweden new guidelines for a policy of integration of immigrants were adopted in the mid-1970s, based on the three principles of "equality", "freedom of choice" and "partnership".

The intention was to facilitate integration in the social, political and cultural life, as well as making it feasible for immigrants and minorities to maintain "their" language and cultural heritage. An important feature of this policy was the mother tongue reform, carried out in 1976, under which Swedish municipalities received state subsidies so as to provide language training for children in schools and pre-schools. A second feature of importance for the generation was the providing of subsidies for immigrant literature that up to 1999 were generously distributed among immigrant authors, aimed at supporting publication in languages "that were lacking a literature in their own language" (Gröndahl 2002 p. 359). In Northern Kurdish literature the Kurmancî and Zazakî dialects spoken by many of the generation members became, as Gröndahl puts it, "a targeted language for these policies" (ibid. p. 360).

However, in Sweden members of the generation were also faced with ethnicized and racial imagined boundaries, xenophobic attitudes, and other mechanisms of exclusion. Being Kurdish they were also faced with the negative image of Kurds that was spread through the media following the murders of two dropouts from the PKK in the early 1980s and a number of violent incidents, which resulted in a group of Kurds affiliated with the party being held in communal arrest. The negative image in the media and in the public debate became accentuated with the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986, when the Stockholm Chief of Police linked the murder with the PKK, which resulted in several Kurds being arrested and interrogated by the Swedish police.

In part III the discussion revolves thematically around two key themes, those of "ethnicity/nationality" and "diaspora".

Chapter 6 concerns narratives that can be described as being informed by a "backward look", in the sense that it is told in these of who the interviewees are and about their past, many of the accounts conveying a sense of nostalgia. The chapter is arranged in two main themes "Victimisation" and "National Romanticism".

In several of the stories Kurds are described in terms of being a suffering people. In these stories actions and thoughts are framed, dealing with various difficulties and sacrifices that the Kurds have experienced. Several of the stories are exemplifying how Kurds have been persecuted, neglected and quitened, and how they have been forced to escape their homeland and been dispersed to several countries. It is also told about how the homeland has been exploited and devastated. In particular, these stories deal with experiences specific to the political generation and as such emphasising the situation of the Kurds in Turkey at the time when the interviewees were living in that country. In these stories the scene is often located to the original home country, situated in the childhood of the interviewees or in a historical perspective. The moral of the stories seems to be to draw attention to the experiences of suffering and sacrifices. The theme of suffering is also employed to capture the life in exile, in particular the time, or the years, following immediately after the escape from Turkey. These stories reveal a longing for the past that is often expressed in sentimental and idealistic terms.

In addition, there are accounts, informed by national romanticism, concerned with the idea of a nation being an imagined community, one based on the idea of there being a common "us" that marks a boundary in relation to "the other", the nation thus not being a universal community, but rather the existence of other nations organized according to similar principles being presupposed, a vital ingredient in the creation of nations being to maintain borders against perceived others. It is important to emphasize, however, as a variety of commentators have noted (Anderson 1991; Billig 1999; Eriksen 1993; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawmn 1990; Smith 1986, 1991, 1995), that the borders in question are porous and in flux.

When conceptions of "us" and of Kurdishness are discussed in the narratives that were studied, a tension between "the universal" and "the particular" could be distinguished. First, many presented initially, in very general terms or with reference to standardised or academic definitions of nationality, the meaning and the conception of Kurdishness. Implicitly, this can be interpreted as the stories being situated in a broader framework, or a larger narrative, about a world in which all people, i.e. all nations, have a right of self-determination. Hence, the interviewees' accounts can be interpreted in this respect as being pretentions to equality, to a legitimate right to their views. Otherwise, the thoughts of belonging that were to be found among the members of the generation included in the thesis were highly (original) homeland orientated. Furthermore, accounts of the specific situation of the Kurdish people in general were emphasized. These accounts concern the long Kurdish history and comprise the history and people of all Kurdistan. They could

perhaps be situated in a larger narrative of the Kurdish people's aspirations for recognition and to their right of self-determination.

Another major tendency in their reflections on Kurdishness, was to lean on experiences of theirs that were specific for the generation, often referring to social, cultural or political life in Kurdistan in Turkey and the position of the Kurds in the Turkish Republic. Many of these accounts are retrospective and concern the circumstances under which the interviewees grew up and/or became politically active. However, some of their stories refer to the contemporary situation in Turkey. The conceptions of an "us" that is not universal necessarily involves the conception of "the other", who is not included in the community and whom the national identity is defined in opposition to. "Others" are generally not explicitly defined in the accounts, however. In some respect the interviewees were defining their national identities in opposition to Turkish nationality, the Turkish state policies being defined in terms of being "repressive" and exclusive of the Kurds. A tendency was that when the members of the generation spoke of their national aspirations and belonging, it was essentially in terms of "inclusiveness" and "benign nationalism", as for example describing Kurdistan as a country in which many people live, whereas Turkish nationalism is referred to in terms of "chauvinism" and "exclusiveness".

At the time when the interviews were conducted most of the informants had been residing in Sweden for about 20 years or more. However, interestingly to note, not much of their experience of being a Kurd in Sweden were touched upon in the accounts. As in previous studies, the interviewees did not define their identities as their being in opposition to Swedes or to Swedish society. In this respect the results are similar to what can be seen in other studies of Kurds in Sweden (Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008). Rather, there were some accounts in which the interviewees dissociated themselves, or took a distance, from their attributed nationality, and from how Kurdish nationality is portrayed in Swedish society. Some of the interviewees pointed out that their social identities stemmed from various sources, only one of which was nationality. In some cases the fluidity of national identities was emphasized, as for example by one interviewee who considered his daughter to be "both Swedish and Kurdish", noting at the same time that it was difficult to "determine precisely where Kurdishness ends and where Swedishness begins".

The accounts of their belonging oscillated between that of their exposure to negative forces and circumstances, and that of their ability to survive. The first theme portrayed Kurds as being victims of historical and political circumstances, these accounts bringing forward their own and others experiences of repression and of belonging to an unrecognized and even denied nationality. Other accounts emphasised the persistence of the Kurds, a people who had survived all the atrocities they have been going through over the years, as well as their incessant preparedness to struggle for their rights and their being able to resist and survive during a

long history of suppression. All in all, the perhaps clearest tendency that can be distinguished in the accounts of their belonging is the complexity of the Kurdish nation-building process, or processes, generally and the complex situation of the Turkish Kurds in particular. Also the accounts suggest the members of the generation to have a pragmatic view of nationality and their homeland orientation. This attitude becomes obvious, for example in discussion of the language issue. It should be noted, however, that their understanding of Kurdishness seemed moulded to a high degree by the situation in Turkey. An example of this was that at least some of the interviewees alluded to their belonging to the Kurdish community as being an active choice.

Others provided examples of how Kurdishness to them and to many of their relatives had long meant a belonging that was communicated differently in private and in public spheres, or was undercommunicated in public spheres. Also among those who underscored the importance of language as a marker of national belonging, there was a tolerance they showed toward those who had not learned, or never gotten to know, Kurdish. At the same time, however, they expressed a fear regarding that language being threatened in Turkey, which could also be interpreted as their being very disturbed at Kurdish identity being so threatened. One can also note that the members of this generation tended to communicate a both tolerant and "benign" nationalist view.

Chapter 7 broadens the scope of the analysis, the emphasis shifting from their thoughts of being Kurdish to their discussing the direction this takes in a diasporic setting. Their stories are also "forward-looking". These stories complicate and challenge stereotypical assumptions about what it means to be a diasporic Kurd in the sense that a greater variation and diversity of experiences of life in the diasporic setting are revealed. The accounts revolve around the three basic themes of Re-Orienting, Challenges and Challengers. In this chapter it is shown that the diasporic political landscape is exceedingly complex and is difficult to obtain a detailed overview of, since there are a myriad of actors involved. Numerous Kurdish parties and organisations have been established, re-established or even closed down.

To many of the members of the political generation the diasporic setting has served as a platform for reorientation. These stories can be characterised as being forward-looking in the sense that they promote appreciations of opportunities given in the diasporic setting and illuminate the challenges of present life. In reading through and reflecting on the narratives it becomes obvious that many of the interviewees perceive of the Kurds having organised successfully and consolidated their positions in exile. In addition examples are provided of both actions and statements that are directed at the general public in the country of settlement and beyond, showing members of the generation to have established contacts with a diversity of actors at both state and non-state levels. Thus, the Kurdish issue is not limited to its being an internal matter in Turkey or in any other Middle Eastern

country hosting large Kurdish populations. Rather, it is intimated that the Kurdish issue has become a concern for the governments of the countries of settlement as well as its having become an international issue that the Turkish regime cannot avoid or part from. In particular, where Turkey is a country with the ambition of entering the European Union (EU) a dialogue concerning minority issues in the country has been required of them. Politically, the members of the generation have organized and established contacts with state and non-state actors. Symbolic resources and symbolic politics have been expanded in the diasporic setting, this having been particularly important for the Kurds from Turkey.

A question of relevance is that of how the generation regards the achievements and the strategies of the Kurdish diaspora. Here one can distinguish two positions concerning how place and space are referred to in the participants' accounts. First, there are accounts in which the narrators take the position of spearheads, placing themselves and the diasporic activism in the centre, points to diasporic activism being of crucial importance to Kurdish interests. In these accounts, the Kurds having strengthened their position within the diasporic settings they are in and their having been successful in expanding their language and their literature is emphasized.

In addition the importance and impact of diasporic Kurdish activism on the Kurdish movement in Turkey and for the Kurds in that country are emphasized, though not exaggerated. In this case the narrators can be seen as transnational or as transnational actors. In contrast to these stories however, one finds stories in which it is argued that the diasporic activism is marginal. According to these accounts diasporic activism is attributed more to the status of those in question of being observers, their emphasizing the spatial distance involved when looking at the role of diasporic pro-Kurdish activism and its impact on the situation of the Kurds in Turkey, their tending to describe their impact as being very much limited, or simply their having only a slight impact on the Kurdish issue generally.

In the accounts of these narrators the meaning and importance that place is assigned appears to be greater than in the case of the others. This highlights the meaning of place and territory that was discussed in Chapter 2, where the usefulness of the diaspora concept for analysing refugee communities was pointed out. This does not imply that some of the broader applications of diaspora that have been employed in recent decades can not be very fruitful. Such approaches have contributed to broadening the concept of diaspora by pointing to alternative ways of looking upon diasporas in an increasingly globalized world. However, as I have argued, those with an approach of this sort tend to regard a diaspora more in the sense of being a social formation. Diasporas have from time to time been considered to be an anomaly in a world of nation states. "Rootlessness" and "Homelessness" are common metaphors used to characterize the diasporic condition, alluding to the perceived distance from the "original" home country and to the members of a diaspora not being entirely assimilated into the society of settlement. Diaspora is

a problematical concept, one that has both similarities with and differences from the concept of nation. In connection with both these concepts, it is often asserted that a central ingredient of them is the conception of a homeland, although in the diasporic conception of things it could be an open question whether the homeland is territorialized or is de-territorialized, and among scholars it is sometimes debated whether, and to what extent, spaces other than the space of origin and the territory this represents is central to the identity formation associated with a diaspora (Malkki 1995b). Clifford argues for example as follows:

Decentred, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaption or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin.

(Clifford 1994 p. 306)

From the narratives that were collected it becomes obvious that the people belonging to the political generation in question did not really perceive of themselves as being embedded in a transnational network. Rather, they described the diasporic experience taking a position dual in its orientation, on the one hand a homeland orientation as well as a trauma, and on the other hand stressing the dynamics of the diasporic setting. This paves the way, however, to a transnational space.

Thus one result of the thesis is that, although there is a spatial separation between the members of the generation and their original home country, this is perceived as a "trauma" and by many as having a marginalizing effect, despite there still being strong links to the original home country. In the diasporic situation, the homeland orientation continued to be important to them belonging to the political generation of our concerns.

Thus, the people belonging to the political generation were not unaffected by the situation in their original home country. They had left the country in a chaotic situation, since the situation for the Kurds deteriorated after 1980. If the year 1980 can be seen as a shared experienced trauma for the members of the generation, the 1980s and 1990s became at least as traumatic for many of the Kurds who remained in Turkey. The repression they were faced with continued for many years and the very existence of Kurds was publicly denied in Turkey up to 1991. The situation deteriorated seriously in the 1980s when the PKK instigated an armed struggle against the Turkish state. In the 1990s the conflict intensified, and the violence escalated as some 4,000 villages in Kurdistan in Turkey were burned to the ground by the security forces, on the pretext that the villagers were harbouring PKK soldiers.

The civil war in Turkish Kurdistan in the 1990s led to enormous migration flows extending from the countryside to cities in Southeastern Turkey, and from the Eastern to the Western parts of the country. This, in turn, produced hundreds of

thousands of internally displaced persons (IDP's) in the country. The incessant and escalating repression during this period was a cause of concern for the generation. It influenced their political commitments and matters they carried out in Swedish society, and certainly contributed to the picture of the Kurds as it was presented in the country of settlement. In time, however, the situation of the Kurds in Sweden became more focused, an increasing number of activities on their part also being addressed to a Swedish or a Swedish-Kurdish audience. One example of this is the Kurdish library in Stockholm. Among its activities one find those essentially aimed at a Kurdish audience, such as language classes in Kurmancî and lectures given in Kurdish. At the same time, however, the library has arranged numerous events directed at a "mixed" audience, such as exhibitions of Kurdish rugs and Kurdish flowers, exhibitions in which all Kurdish and Kurdish-Swedish associations were invited to participate during 1997, and releases of Kurdish books with presentations in Swedish.

How were nation building and the diasporic experience combined among members of the generation? What aspirations developed in the diasporic setting? In the introductory chapter I referred to the various positions taken by scholars concerning whether or not nationalist sentiments are strengthened in diasporic settings (Alinia 2004; Emanuelsson 2005; Khayati 2008; Sheikmous 2000; Uçarlar 2009; Wahlbeck 1999; van Bruinessen 2000). This is a discussion that is not contained to the Kurdish issue itself, rather its often being argued there that nationalism and aspirations for national independence became more radical outside the original home country. This is a matter that has been discussed, for example, by Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm (1990 p. 104).

In the narratives collected for the thesis there is a tendency for the positions to oscillate in these regards. On the one hand the interviewees showed sensitivity for nationalist sentiments. For example many expressed nostalgic, essentialist and national romantic views in their accounts of their childhood and their homestead and in their references to Kurdish history. In these accounts their childhood and their homestead were depicted in terms suggesting them to be fixed or frozen in a sense, as if Kurdish life in the original homeland were going on in the same "traditional" way as it always had throughout history, without any external influences or changes.

Among the interviewees one finds those who emphasize the importance of "preserving their culture and language". In some of the accounts essentialist stances appear unintended, for example in the account presented by G, in which he motivates his never intending to join a Swedish political party. Thus, nationalist stances are expressed not only when old memories are referred to but also in accounts referring to contemporary life and practices. T gives expression to a more critical attitude, his arguing in favour of a Kurdish nation state and intimating that this is a standpoint that is restrained and "not really allowed" for the Kurds to ex-

press, or perhaps rather that the Kurdish nationalist discourse has accommodated itself to the expectations of others.

On the other hand there are accounts which support anti-essentialist ideas and values. In these accounts diasporic activism is motivated by arguments such as that Kurds should be granted equal rights because of this being a fundamental human right, the desire of creating a modern Kurdish language and literature also being expressed, along with the desire for world literature and classical works being translated into Kurdish so as to make world literature known to the Kurds and making it part of their education and values, together with the desire that children's literature be translated into Kurdish.

Thus, the narratives collected for this thesis partly support and partly complicate positions concerning how Kurdish national identities are formed and developed in a diasporic setting. It has been rightly emphasized by some scholars (for example Emanuelsson 2005) that Kurdish parties and organizations have not been promoting a policy of political independence since 1999, when the PKK withdrew from their party program their claims for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, and instead since then has been advocating simply autonomy for the Kurds. It also being the case that nationalism has accommodated to the various diasporic settings in which many Kurds live today and to the contemporary global political debate. However, I would argue, aspirations and accounts expressed in informal settings should not be underestimated, since nationalism has an enormous mobilizing potential. In addition generation-specific experiences are important to consider here, as well as the specific conditions that exist and circumstances present in the country of origin. There are no expressions of extremist nationalist views in the accounts that were given, although several of them adhere to an essentialist and historicist nationalist discourse.

## 8.2 Becoming Challengers

What do we learn from the narratives? What patterns can be uncovered in them? What are the underlying plots and motives in the narratives? More precisely, what do the narratives teach us regarding the generation of political refugees and pro-Kurdish activists studied in this thesis? A characteristic of comprehensive narratives is that they contain numerous "smaller" and competing undercurrents all contributing to the dominating narrative. A generation narrative is necessarily complex and can involve many different threads and patterns, told by persons who one rightfully considers as being active subjects. The variances and different viewpoints that are to be found among the narratives help to complicate and challenge the stereotype picture of the political generation as victims. So does the inconsistencies and variances between sequences that are to be found in individual

stories. The one-sided victimisation discourse that often is ascribed to the first generation of refugees and diasporas thus needs to be challenged.

In Part III I suggest that the narrative of this generation instead should be seen as one of a generation of *reluctant victims*, since as political refugees they on one hand have objected to political repression and been forced to escape their home country, but at the same time offered resistance in the original home country and then continued the struggle abroad. At least four different themes can be discerned in the narratives.

One theme that can be distinguished in the overall narrative is about *Suffering*. Constituting a first generation of Kurdish migrants and political refugees, many of the stories are about repression, persecution and the existential dilemmas of being separated from ones original home country. Many of the narrators express their concerns about the situation of the Kurds in the country of origin, and for the future of the Kurds and the Kurdish language. In some of the accounts the Kurds are depicted as being incessantly threatened and persecuted. These accounts also tell of a struggle against injustices and for recognition of the Kurds.

A second theme, contrasting with the first theme, is one about *Strength*, which appears as an sub-current. This is the narrative of a persistent generation that resisted and challenged the established political structures in their original home country, and who belong to a people who have survived and who have shown themselves capable of withstanding the difficulties with which they have been faced throughout centuries of injustices and oppression. It has also been pointed out how well Kurds have managed to organise and to reorganise. This is a more optimistic strand, one that points to a dynamic contemporary and future situation for the Kurds.

A third theme, likewise a sub-current, is one describing the political life of the generation in terms of its being a project of *Emancipation*. Emancipatory narratives aim not only at revealing to the audience the history and situation of an oppressed and subordinate people, but also at dismantling the structures of oppression. These narrators focus the history of the Kurds and facts concerning their present situation and their rights, their language and their culture, with the aim of liberating the Kurds. In these accounts the narrators tend to take the position of a) educating and mobilizing the Kurds, making the Kurdish masses aware of their situation and their rights, and b) enlightening the world regarding the situation of the Kurds and their aspirations. In these strands there is also room for alternative voices being heard, for alternative ways of being Kurdish, as well as various largely untold stories, such as those of the *Zazakî* and of women.

A fourth theme that can be distinguished is that of *Challengers* pointing to the story of the generation being one of success and advancement. Here, the generation is seen as being pioneers incessantly breaking new grounds. In such accounts note is taken of how norms and values in Turkish political culture have been challenged, and how they have been successful in establishing contacts with

state and non-state actors and in bringing the Kurdish issue to the political agenda in Sweden, Turkey and international forum. In addition, it is asserted that the Kurds have consolidated their position in the diasporic setting and that the generation is both a highly conscious and a well-educated generation. Their main identity is no longer that of being victims. Rather they have become challengers. Edmunds and Turner (2002) have suggested that generations often play a culturally "generative" role in political life, their posing the question of what role a generation has from a short-term and from a middle-term perspective.

Furthermore, these authors points out that the role of "active" generations in nationalist movements often challenges old structures and contributes to a new political culture. Although the influence of diasporic groups should certainly not be exaggerated, it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that the generation considered here contributed appreciably to challenging the public picture of Turkey, since it brought the Kurdish issue into the political space in Sweden, in other Western European countries and in the US. Attention was drawn to the Kurdish issue in the media, and through political channels to the situation of the Kurds in Turkey, so that it became one of the key issues in negotiations between Turkey and EU. In addition, a first generation of well educated women entered the political scene and helped to draw attention to the situation of Kurdish women. Thus Turkey cannot avoid being involved in a dialogue regarding the Kurdish issue. For the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden the considerable publishing of Kurdish literature and the modernizing of the language should be mentioned as well as efforts, among other things, within the area of human rights. Also important is the establishment of Kurdish institutes and associations such as the Kurdish library.

The themes that have been brought up here generate many questions to explore further in future research. Certain questions of this sort concern the migration of women and the organising in which they became engaged in diasporic settings, and the role of Internet in the mobilisation of the Kurdish diaspora. There are countless other questions, of course, to be explored.

### 8.3 Epilogue : Whither the Political Generation?

What role the generation studied here will have in a long-range perspective is an open question. It depends, for one thing, on developments in the diasporic community. During the last decade in Sweden, a new generation of artists and politicians of Turkish Kurdish origin has entered the stage, for example. Also in Turkey much has changed. In 2002, when the interviews I conducted were finished, Turkey was a country at the crossroads. Since then developments there have continued to be dramatic. In 1999 the country was recognized as a candidate country for the European Union, in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria.

A process of accommodation and considerable effort aimed at amendment of the laws and the constitution in Turkey were initiated, a number of efforts having also been made to facilitate the use of the Kurdish language in practice. Negotiations, the Oslo Talks, have been initiated between the PKK and the Turkish government (see, for example, *Today's Zaman* 2012-06-18, *Hürriyet Daily News* 2012-09-24), with the aim to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue.

The political climate has been mitigated and various well-known Kurdish authors, such as Mahmud Baksi and Mehmed Uzun, have passed away and are now buried in the city of Diyarbakir. At Uzun's funeral, that took place in that city on October 13, 2007, the ceremony was attended by tens of thousands of people, among them the author Yasar Kemal and the Swedish and the Greek vice councilors in Turkey. Several of the interviewees have been able to return to Turkey for longer or shorter periods. Still, Turkey is to be considered a country "at the crossroads" and the Kurdish issue still being an inflamed one and the political space remaining ethnified. One example of this is the imprisoning of the author Muharrem Erbey, that evoked protests among the Kurds who remain in the diasporic settings. As these lines are being written, news coming from Turkey reports of the year 2012 having been the bloodiest in 13 years and also of some 700 Kurdish political prisoners being on hunger strike in Turkish prisons (*Studio Ett* 2012-11-01).

Both in the diasporic setting and in Turkey a new generation of Kurdish activists have taken the scene. In this new generation of Kurdish activists many women have acquired prominent positions as politicians, artists, journalists and in many other fields of society.

The political generation of major concern here responded to the socio-political structure in Turkey and the repression directed against the Kurds there at a time when the Kurdish situation was not a major issue in public debate. This generation has come to challenge public discourse concerning a homogeneous Turkish nation and in addition has come to challenge the diasporic victimization discourse that is so often taken for granted. As a consequence their position as a defeated political generation was challenged. Resistance in Turkey is growing, Kurds continuing to organise in protest and new narratives taking shape. However these will be told in part by new generations, from the vantage point of a different point in history, at a time in which the Kurdish issue will have appeared for some time in public debate in Turkey and have been followed for some time abroad, at the same time as one can hope that a solution to many of the present problems will have been found.

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# Radio Broadcastings

Sommar i P1 1999-06-29

Studio Ett 2012-11-01



# Appendixes

## Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Name	Born	Sex/Gender	Arrival in Sweden	Education	Interview
A	1950s	M	1980s	High School	November 2002
B	1940s	M	1960s 1980s	University	March 2002
C	1950s	M	1980s	University	September 2001
D	1950s	M	1980s	University	September 2001
E	1940s	M	1970s	University	May 2002
F	1930s	M	1980s	Other/Compulsory school	November 2002
G	1950s	M	1980s	University	March 2002
H	1950s	M	1980s	High School	September 2002
J	1950s	F	1980s	High School	August 2001
K	1950s	F	1980s	University	December 2002
L	1930s	M	1970s 1980s	University	August 2001

Name	Born	Sex/Gender	Arrival in Sweden	Education	Interview
M	1950s	M	1990s	University	November 2001 December 2002
N	1950s	M	1980s	University	February 2002
O	1940s	M	1980s	High School	March 2002
P	1950s	M	1980s	High School	November 2002
R	1950s	F	1980s	University	March 2002
S	1950s	F	1980s	University	August 2001
T	1960s	M	1980s	University	August 2001 March 2002
U	1950s	M	1980s	University	September 2002
V	1950s	M	1980s	University	Jan 2002 Feb 2002
W	1950s	M	1980s	University	August 2001
Y	1950s	M	1980s	University	August 2001
Z	1950s	M	1980s	High School	May 2002

## Appendix 2: List of Informal discussions referred to in the thesis

Ş	1950s		University	July 2002
Q	1930s		University	July 2002
Ü	1950s	1980s	University	March 2001
X	1930s	1980s	University	July 2002
Nedim Dağdeviren	1950s	1980s	University	September 2001/February 2002

I have, with one exception, not described details of the interviewees in order to enhance their anonymity. The exception is Nedim Dağdeviren who was interviewed in his capacity of being the director of the Kurdish Library.

## Appendix 3: Interview Questions

### General Background

Personal background: Born, childhood, education, family, profession

Political background: How did you become politically involved? How did you become involved with the Kurdish question?

### Political Opinions

What are your opinion about the situation for the Kurds in Turkey today? What is your opinion about the negotiations between EU and Turkey? What do you think it will lead to for the Kurds? What is your opinion about the capture of Abdulla Öcalan? What do you think it will lead to for the Kurds? What do you think of the political openings regarding Kurdish language rights in Turkey? How important is the language?

### Identity

What is the meaning of being Kurdish? How would you define a Kurd? What does Kurdistan mean to you? Do you think there are differences between Kurds in exile and Kurds in Turkey? Kurds in Kurdistan and Western Turkey? If so what kind of differences.

### Diaspora/exile

Are you still politically involved? How have you been involved in the Kurdish question in Sweden? How do you consider the position of Kurds in Sweden/Europe? How do you consider the role of the Kurdish Diaspora? How can you describe Kurdish women's organisation in the Kurdish movements/ in the diaspora? /Kurdish womens position in Sweden?

## Appendix 4: List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )
AKSA	Association of Kurdish Students Abroad ( <i>Yekitiya Xwendevanên li dervayi Welat</i> )
<i>Ala Rizgarî</i>	Flag of Liberation
ANAP	Motherland Party ( <i>Anavatan Partisi</i> )
AP	Justice Party ( <i>Adalet Partisi</i> )
ARGK	Peoples Liberation Army of Kurdistan ( <i>Arteşa Rizgarîya Gele Kurdistan</i> )
AYÖD	Association for Higher Education in Ankara ( <i>Ankara Yüksek Öğrenim Derneği</i> )
<i>Azadî</i>	Freedom
<i>Bahoz</i>	Storm
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party ( <i>Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi</i> )
CHP	Republican People's Party ( <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> )
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress ( <i>İttihat ve Terraki Cemiyeti</i> )
DDKD	Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East ( <i>Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği</i> )
DDKO	Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths ( <i>Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları</i> )
DEP	Democracy Party ( <i>Demokrasi Partisi</i> )
DEHAP	Democratic Peoples Party ( <i>Demokratik Halk Partisi</i> )
DHKD	Revolutionary People's Cultural Association ( <i>Devrimi Halk Kültür Derneği</i> )
DP	Democratic Party ( <i>Demokrasi Partisi</i> )
DYP	True Path Party ( <i>Doğru Yol Partisi</i> )
ERNK	Kurdistan National Liberation Front ( <i>Enîya Rizgarîya Netewayî Kurdistan</i> )
HADEP	People's Democracy Party ( <i>Halkın Demokrasi Partisi</i> )
HEP	People's Labor Party ( <i>Halkın Emek Partisi</i> )
HEVRA	Association of Kurdish Revolutionaries from Turkey in Europe ( <i>Komela Şoreşvanên Kurdên Tirkiye li Ewropa</i> )

HRK	Kurdistan Freedom Brigades ( <i>Hêzên Rizgarîya Kurdistan</i> )
GAP	Southeast Anatolia Project ( <i>Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi</i> )
<i>Kawa</i>	The blacksmith Kawa was a legendary Kurdish folk hero. Kawa was also the name of a Kurdish political party in the 1970s.
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress ( <i>Kongreya Gele Kurdistan</i> )
KCK	Union of Communities in Kurdistan ( <i>Koma Civakên Kurdistan</i> )
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party ( <i>Partîya Demokrat Kurdistan</i> )
KDP-Iran	Kurdistan Democratic Party Iran ( <i>Partîya Demokrat Kurdistan Iran</i> )
KDPT	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey
KHRP	Kurdish Human Rights Project
<i>Khoybun</i>	Independence
KÎP	Kurdistan Workers Party ( <i>Kürdistan İşçi Partisi</i> )
KSSE	Kurdistan Student's Association in Europe ( <i>Komeley Xwendekarani Kurdistan li Ewropa</i> )
KR	Kurdish Federation ( <i>Kurdiska Riksförbundet</i> )
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government (the regional government of Iraqî Kurdistan)
KUK	National Liberators of Kurdistan ( <i>Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçular</i> )
MHP	National Action Party ( <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> )
OHAL	Emergency Rule Law ( <i>Olağanüstü Hal</i> )
ÖDP	Freedom and Solidarity Party ( <i>Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi</i> )
ÖZDEP	Freedom and Democracy Party ( <i>Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi</i> )
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party ( <i>Partîye Karkarên-y-Kurdistan</i> )
RP	Welfare Party ( <i>Refah Partisi</i> )
PPKK	Vanguard Party of Kurdistan Workers ( <i>Partîya Peşeng a Karkarên a Kurdistan</i> )
PSK	Kurdistan Socialist Party ( <i>Partîya Sosyalist a Kurdistan</i> )
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan ( <i>Yekyeteî Nîştîmanî Kurdistan</i> )
<i>Rizgarî</i>	Liberation

<i>Serxwêbun</i>	Independence
SHP	Social Democratic Populist Party ( <i>Sosyaldemokrat Halkçi Partisi</i> )
SIL	The Government's Teaching Material Authority ( <i>Svenska institutet för läromedel</i> )
<i>Tekoşer</i>	Fighter
<i>Tekoşin</i>	Struggle
TİP	Workers Party of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye İşçi Partisi</i> )
TKDP	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party ( <i>Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Partisi</i> )
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
TKSP	Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party ( <i>Türkiye Kurdistan Demokratik Partisi</i> )
YTP	New Turkey Party ( <i>Yeni Türkiye Partisi</i> )

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## Appendix 6: Notes on Spelling and Pronunciation

### Kurdish

a	a, as in father
c	j, as in jam
ç	ch, as in church
ê	like é in French passé
i	neutral like e in paper
î	like ea in please
j	as in French, jardin, jambon
ş	sh, as in ship
u	like u in church
û	like oo in food
x	like ch in German acht
w	like w in war

### Turkish

c	as j in jam
ç	ch, as in church
ı	like a in gentleman
j	like the s in measure
g	hard g
ğ	soft g, as in neighbour
ö	like the ir in bird, urge
u	as in put
ü	as in French tu