

# A CONSIDERATION OF THE KURDISH ISSUE IN TURKEY FROM A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE (2010 – 2022)

Prof. Dr. A. Betül Çelik  
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**CONTENTS**

About the Authors.....5

Presentation.....7

Introduction.....9

I. Roots of the Kurdish Issue and the Politics of Anxiety.....14

II. Discrimination and Social Polarization.....20

III. Cultural Rights and the Problem of Recognition.....24

IV. Political Rights.....27

V. Foreign Policy and Kurdish Politics.....30

VI. Approaches to the Settlement of the Kurdish Issue and  
the Agenda for Negotiation .....33

Conclusion and Evaluation.....37

Appendix 1: KONDA Surveys used in the study.....43

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## Presentation

Turkey has fallen on rough times. Ahead of us is a new election. It is clear that this election has much more significance attached to it than any other election before it. It will determine the future of the Presidential Government System voted on by the electorate in Turkey on July 9, 2018. Discussions concerning the transition to a reinforced parliamentary system are more heated than ever before. The Kurdish issue is almost always a part of such talk.

The Peace Foundation realized three different meetings under the title “Resolution of Conflicts in the Transition to the New Term: Problems and Opportunities”, the first one in İstanbul, on November 19, 2021, the second in İzmir on December 4, 2021 and the last one, on February 5, 2022 in Mersin. These face-to-face meetings, with members of the civil society also included academics from different disciplines, writers, activists and journalists.

The Peace Foundation started its search on this path seven years ago with a report written by Cuma Çiçek and Vahap Coşkun titled “The Resolution Process from Dolmabahçe to Today: Understanding the Failure and Finding a New Path”. The report focused on the failed attempt of the conflict resolution process in between 2013-2015, peace work and the search for peace.

This time, in a report prepared by Prof. Ayşe Betül Çelik, Prof. Evren Balta and Prof. Mehmet Gürses, titled “A Socio-Cultural Consideration of the Kurdish Issue in Turkey”, social change concerning the Kurdish issue over the past twelve years is analyzed and, perspectives vis. complications and possibilities concerning the resolution process in the new period are discussed.

Without being taken over by current political discussions, developments, this work is significant in that it attempts to prioritize the societal dimension of the problem, hence it’s importance from the perspective of the search for peace and conflict resolution. Survey results of KONDA Research and Consultancy firm in between 2010-2022 eased the analytical work while reinforcing the results.

Here, despite the general assertion that the youth today are more interested in the issues of resolution and peace, we are faced with a study based on the interpretation of real hard objective, data.

That the language used by the political leaders, the general approach they display determine the formation and change of the thoughts and emotions of the members of society is a striking piece of information that one walks away with after reading this study.

The report is evocative of one of Turkey's unique characteristics, its search in the near past of what was missing, its mistakes and its gains. On the other hand, it is also a reminder that for social institutions such as The Peace Foundation which focus on the resolution of conflicts and the search for peace, that the period ahead of us is going to be even more onerous than what we left behind. In this sense, it is a reminder of the responsibilities and duties of such organizations.

In the name of the Peace Foundation, we thank A. Betül Çelik, Evren Balta and Mehmet Gürses, those extremely rare and dear individuals who work for peace and show solidarity with organizations such as The Peace Foundation.

We also thank the KONDA Research and Consultancy Firm and our precious friend Mr. Bekir Ağırdır for sharing the results of ten years of their research with us and our scholars.

In addition we would like to thank the Turkey representation of the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung for helping with the publication of this report.

Hoping this report will serve as an inspiration for social peace, good readings!.

**The Peace Foundation**  
**Head of the**  
**Executive Board**  
**Hakan Tahmaz,**  
**March2022**

## Introduction

Quite a number of studies have been carried on in Turkey on the history of what has been known under various titles such as the Kurdish issue, and how it should be resolved. Most of these were about how the problem ought to be defined and how much the democratic alternatives offered could provide solutions to its various dimensions. The 2000s point to an important timeline in the history of the Republic of Turkey when the Peace Process was named and spoken as such for the first time. Unfortunately the number of comprehensive studies concerning the socio-cultural dimension of this process, i.e how individuals with varying identities viewed the problem, their thoughts and feelings and how it should be resolved are few and far between.

The Justice and Development Party (known widely as the AK Party in Turkey) won the elections held on November 3, 2002 with 34 percent of the votes which brought 65 of their members into the Parliament. With such an outcome, AK, was the first party to come power since 1991 without a coalition partner. During its first period, AK, created an atmosphere in which Turkey's relations with the West developed and bloomed creating a positive outlook for the solution to the Kurdish issue. When it further pushed for reforms- though limited- in the area of cultural rights for Kurds, the process of normalization progressed further. All throughout the 2000s there was talk about the solution to the problems of the Kurds where a political option was discussed and a Peace/Resolution Process attempted.

The speech made by the, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Diyarbakır on August 12, 2005, represented a historical milestone in the recognition of the Kurdish issue by the state. Claiming that by solving the Kurdish issue, the government of Turkey has shown to be a major world state, Prime Minister Erdoğan said: "To disclaim mistakes made in the past does not become the image of "a major world state", that the government would not walk away from the process

of democratization and, as such, owned the resolution to solve the Kurdish issue.<sup>1</sup> The process<sup>2</sup> which started in 2005 was not shared with the public at large until four years later. Announced by the President of Republic at the time, Abdullah Gül on March 11, 2009, mentioning that “some very good things are going to happen with the Kurdish issue in the near future”<sup>3</sup> the process took a start under the name “The Kurdish Window of Opportunity”, changed later to “National Unity and Brotherhood Project”, and finally came to be known as “The Democratic Initiative”. As can be discerned from the alterations in its title, it is obvious that definitive political actions were not planned and no steps taken in the direction of greater acceptance of the change by the public at large. Following the freezing of the process in 2011, internecine fights and clashes continued in a crescendo manner until 2013.

Di destpêka sala 2013an de hikûmeta AK Partiyê ragihand ku bi rêya parlamenterên aktora siyasî ya kurd Partiya Aştî û Demokrasiyê (BDP) di gel kadroyên PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) û di gel rêberê wê yê li Îmraliyê Ebdullah Ocelan pêleke nû ya gotûbêjan daye destpêkirin. Ya ji vê girîngtir, ji bo zêdetirkirina piştgiriya gel li Pêvajoya Aştîyê di gel beşên cuda yên gel ên li heft herêmên Tirkîyeyê axivîn û organîzasyonek da destpêkirin da ku hest û ramanên gel ên li ser Pêvajoya Aştîyê guhdar bike: Lijneya Mirovên Aqilmend. Li gorî pêvajoya qonaxa 2009-2011an, di vê qonaxê de At the start of 2013, the AK Party government, this time, with the aid of mp's from

1 Kürt Sorunu Benim Sorunum”, (The Kurdish issue is my issue) Hürriyet, 2005 <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/kurt-sorunu-benim-sorunum-341847>. Date accessed: Feb. 8 2022.

2 <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/247892-baris-girisimi-ve-bas-ba-kan-erdogan-la-ilk-gorusme>. (The peace initiative and the first talk with Prime Minister Erdoğan) Date Accessed: Feb .17, 2022.

3 “Başlangıcından Bugüne Gün Gün Çözüm Süreci”, (Day by day analysis of the Process of Resolution from its inception) CNNTürk, 2014, <https://www.cnnturk.com/fotogaleri/turkiye/baslangictan-bu-ne-gun-gun-cozum-sureci?page=3>. Date accessed: 19 January 2022.

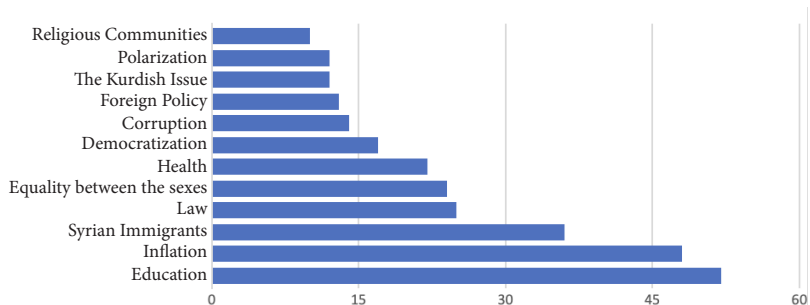
the Kurdish, Peace and Democracy Party, BDP, the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) staff and the leader of the party, Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned in the İmralı Island of the Marmara Sea, announced that it was starting a new wave of negotiations. More importantly, to increase public support for the undertaking, it initiated an additional process, a Wise People's Delegation whose members would hold talks and discussions with the public in seven different geographic regions of the country to hear the views of individuals concerning the Peace Process. The Delegation worked in between 2009-2011 when clashes between the sides were at a relatively low level, and the general public support for the Peace Process relatively high. This was suddenly interrupted/ended after the Dolmabahçe Summit on Feb. 28, 2015 even though a statement of reconciliation consisting of ten articles had emerged from the meeting. Many academic articles and views of specialists concerning this appeared following the sudden rupture. Today, we still do not have sufficient information concerning the whys of the cancellation process, or, of its social impact, for that matter. Furthermore, as to the state of exception of two years, installed following the Coup Attempt of July 2016 and the punitive approach adopted by the government towards political leaders of the Kurds and Kurdish municipalities in its aftermath, we have very few studies and little or no information concerning its influence in the narrowing arena of the democratic political sphere.

The 2000s were years during which the Kurdish issue gained significant public attention both in foreign and in domestic politics. The political elite in Turkey believed that there was a power vacuum created by the US's occupation of Iraq which led to the possibility of the creation of a unified Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq (KBY). There was an attempt to overcome this, on the one hand, by developing relations with the Kurdistan Regional Administration (KBY), and, on the other, by regional security agreements with Iran and Syria. Although relations with KBY were developed to some extent during the Peace Process, it is obvious that the developments in Syria generally affected the Peace Process negatively. The domestic war

that had been ongoing for nearly ten years in Syria, strengthened the presence of PYD (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat) in the region and Kurdish presence along Turkey's southern border, forcing the government to accept Kurdish presence there. From this perspective, the second decade of the 2000s forces one to recognize the narrowing of the democratic political sphere on the one hand, and the necessity to recognize the transnational dimension of the Kurdish issue on the other. These developments point to the necessity of paying attention not only to internal dynamics, but, as well to how the public evaluates such foreign policy issues while trying to understand the social perception dimension of the Kurdish issue.

The Kurdish issue stands before us as yet an unresolved political and social dispute here in Turkey. The KONDA data which forms the basis of this research show that the security/military approach to the problem has taken a back seat in its importance among those groups of the population who define themselves as ethnic Turks. These groups view the importance of the Kurdish issue at the end of a long list, comprised of education, inflation, immigrants, democratization, and equality between the sexes. As Graph 1 below shows, only 12 percent of the population of Turkey see it as a priority issue. However, the percent goes all the way up to 40 among those who define themselves as ethnic Kurds, going up to 60 percent among those who voted for the People's Democratic Party, HDP.

**Graph 1:** Which of the following is a problem of priority in Turkey? KONDA January 2020



This survey was undertaken at a time when, relatively speaking, the Kurdish issue was no longer at the top of daily agenda, and yet of great importance in the context of the democratization of Turkey and the yearning for equal and just citizenship. The aim was to determine the nature of the political sphere and the kind of possibilities that existed for a discussion of the Kurdish issue at this time. One of the most important findings from earlier periods of collision was that military/security “solutions” drew attention away from basic social problems on the agenda, even if for short periods, while it was also obvious that unless the structural and social problems created by this were targeted and a just and equal political system including every single person in the country was established, the problems leading to the skirmishes did not disappear. As a matter of fact, the State of Exception regime which Turkey found itself in, and the general, security/authoritarian practices, were, during this last term, also the justification for the security approach to the Kurdish issue; in other words, to have gone solely on the path of security-focused politics for the resolution of the conflict. The inability to find a long-lasting solution to this issue is the reason that Turkey has not been able to break the democracy/authoritarianism spiral.

In this study we have attempted to analyze the differences among the definitions of the Kurdish issue, the main approaches toward its solution, and the attitudes of the various groups vis-a-vis cultural and political rights, and, finally drawing from all this, how a lasting, sustained peace politics can be constructed here in Turkey. For this purpose we examined and combed through the main answers /results to the questionnaires of the KONDA Research and Consultancy Firm which were regularly applied every month to the public in Turkey, in between 2010-2022 (for the questionnaires please see Appendix 1). We analyzed our findings under six main headings: The Roots of the Kurdish Issue and Anxiety Politics, Discrimination and Social Polarization, Cultural Rights Concerning

the Kurdish Issue, Political Rights Concerning the Kurdish Issue, Foreign Policy and Kurdish Politics, How can the Kurdish Issue be Resolved and the Agenda for Negotiation.

In the results section, following the presentation of our analysis under these headings, we will discuss possibilities and difficulties concerning the steps that can be taken in the direction of a peaceful solution of the Kurdish Issue.

### **I. The Roots of the Kurdish Issue and the Politics of Anxiety**

One of the main reasons for the lack of societal support for Peace Processes is that the two sides in the conflict differ in the definition of its nature; i.e. the reasons for it, the sides involved and the history of the conflict. In this respect Turkey is no different from other countries that are/were involved in conflict.

Obviously the differences in the definition of conflict, also lead to a gap of understanding between the sides as to how peace is to be achieved. For those who define it as simply a problem of terror, for instance, peace is only possible by “ending terror”. The examples of other countries, however, show that in conflicts that take place over a long time period, although the initiation of such conflict may have started due to discriminating policies in various areas of life, over time they become multi-dimensional, more complicated, and the problems, interwoven. If one keeps in mind that the Kurdish question in Turkey has a history of nearly 40 years, over time, its political, cultural, relational, economic and security dimensions have become social realities encompassing far more problems than they started out with. The fact that the problem has become so complex, further polarizes the sides, triggering collision.

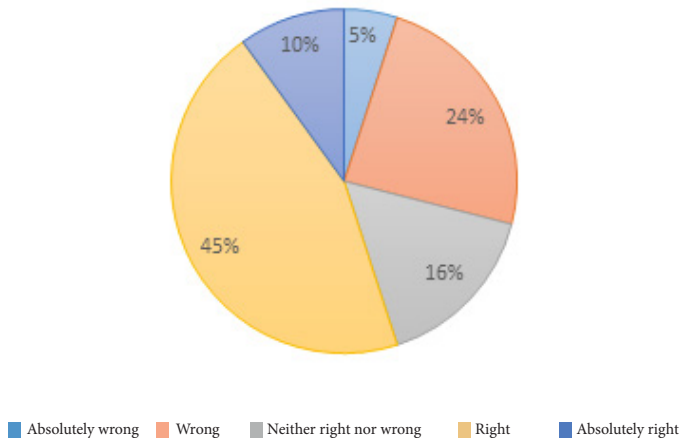
One year after the official initiation of Peace Process in 2009, in a survey conducted in April of 2010, KONDA asked the respondents to what extent they agreed with the statement : “The Southeastern and



the Kurdish issue originate mainly from the Kurds wanting to establish their own state” (see Graph No. 2). The answers show that more than half of the respondents (55 %) agree with the statement; being higher among those who define themselves as “Turks” (58.54%). 25 percent of the Turks think this is wrong, while 16 percent do not have a definitive opinion.

Teqriben piştî salekê ji 2009an ku cara yekem Pêvajoya Aştiyê (bi awayekî resmî) dest pê kir, di lêkolîna Nisana 2010an de KONDAYê ji beşdaran pirs kiriye ka çi qas hevfiqr in li gel fikra ku dibêje “pîrs-girêka Başûrrojhat û kurd ji ber daxwaza kurdan a avakirina dewleteke cuda heye.” (bnr. Grafîk 2). Bersiv nîşan didin ku zêdetirî nivê beşdaran (sedî 55) xwedî vê têgihîştinê ne. Ev rêje li ba wan kesan bêtir zêde ye ku xwe wek tirk pênase dikin (sedî 58,54). Teqriben sedî 25ê tirkan vê fikrê “şaş” dibînin, beşeke sedî 16î xwedî fikreke zelal nîn e.

**Grafik 2: Graph 2:** “The Southeastern and the Kurdish issue originate mainly from the Kurds wanting to establish their own state” KONDA, April 2010



Among those non-Turks, (which in majority were those who define themselves as Kurds), the support for the idea of a separate state remain in the vicinity of 30 percent. A more detailed analysis, reflects very weak evidence concerning the opinion among Kurds, that the Kurdish issue is one of separatism. Put more succinctly, 60 percent of the Kurds find the idea that this stems from “separatist” motives wrong, while only 25 percent of the Kurds agree with the statement that this stems from the “desire to form a separate state”. This tableau reflects clearly the fact that the Kurds and the Turks differ significantly in their perceptions and discourse vis-a-vis this issue. This cleavage and perceptual difference can change significantly, should political leaders undertake to solve the issue seriously and sincerely. (see Table 1)

**TABLE 1:** “The Southeast and the Kurdish issue stems from the fact that the Kurds want to form a separate state.” Distribution by Ethnicity, KONDA, April 2010

Responses	Other Groups Number (%)	Turks Number (%)
Absolutely wrong	82 (16.24)	111 (3.57)
Wrong	190 (37.62)	667 (21.44)
Neither wrong nor right	76 (15.05)	511 (16.44)
Correct	131 (25.94)	1,480 (47.60)
Absolutely correct	26 (5.15)	340 (10.94)
<b>TOTAL</b>	505 (100)	3,109 (100)

When we examine the process following September 2015, i.e. the ending of the peace process and the escalation of aggression, we find the surge of more pessimistic opinions. When the participants were asked to respond to how much they agreed with the statement “The only way to solve the Kurdish issue is to “get rid of terror”, more than half of the participants agreed with this judgement (of the 3,402 participants, 1,941, or 57.05 percent, in other words, responded as “true” or “absolutely true”).

When we examine the responses by party votes, however, we see a different side of the issue: Those individuals who support the statement as “absolutely true” and the AK Party voters who were strong supporters of the peace process, answer by responding “get rid of terror”, almost in line with the ultra-nationalist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), while the social democrat Republican People’s Party (CHP) electorate seem, increasingly opposed to the “war” vernacular. While 15 percent of the supporters of the AK party say that this approach is wrong, this runs to 30 percent among the social democratic CHP voters. Approximately 65 % of the AK and the Nationalist MHP supporters think along the “get rid of terror” axis, while the same is around 50 percent among the social democratic party CHP supporters.

We can surely read these responses within the context that, the AK Party government was the main carrier of the peace process at this time, and, hence those who voted for the party were the main supporters of reconciliation with the result that, when it was cancelled, they started endorsing security policies instead, while the social democratic party CHP supporters, opposed the AK Party discourse. In both cases, however, it is obvious that the electorate was influenced by the peace/conflict discourse of their party. This is one of the findings of the study that we want to draw attention to. Concerning public opinion in Turkey, it can be said that only a small fraction have clear opinions independent of their party but play a critical role in how party discourse is formed in this context and how it is understood by the public.

Since the main political polarization in Turkey is along party lines, the voters of the party in power and their opponents, both form their policies in exactly the opposite direction of what they see as the “other” side. The continuation of this polarization in such a major, burning social issue as the Kurdish one, prevents reconciliation and solution rendering it into a Gordian knot. In other words, the continuation of

the Kurdish issue encourages political polarization and political polarization feeds into the Kurdish issue. A supra-party discourse and reconciliation is of immense importance in its resolution.

In the survey conducted by KONDA in September of 2015, the respondents were asked to answer an open-ended question: "What should we do to solve the Kurdish issue?" When we categorize the responses as "security centric", "democracy centric", "economic centric" and what President Erdoğan emphasized for a brief duration following 2015 as "shared religion", two findings demand attention:

**1)** The respondents mostly mention security and democracy-centered solutions. While this is similar to the streak in 2010, if one keeps in mind that this is a period of conflict-in-action, it is clear that this is a picture of the fact people have not totally foregone positive democratic solutions. It seems that economic definitions and related solutions and religious solutions of the 1980s which Erdoğan alluded to briefly do not receive much backing from the public at large.

**2)** When the responses are analyzed by party affiliation of the electorate, even though one sees that the social democratic party, CHP voters are opposed to security solutions, they do not have unquestionable, crystal-clear support for a democratic remedies either.

It is clear from these replies that the reasons for and solution of the Kurdish issue still ply between the security and rights axis. Here one must underline the fact the CHP (social democratic party) voters play a critical role in this context. In a period such as the September 2015, i.e. keeping in mind the relinquishing of the peace process, the re-appearance of scrimmages, the tension arising from the transition to the presidential system and the toughening of the political language, the division of opinion among CHP electorate concerning security approaches show, that they would be easier to persuade in the direction of democratic rights, but need to informed more, and that more work needs to be done for their support in this area. As was pointed above, approximately one third of the CHP (social democrat) voters find the

security-centric approach wrong and roughly half support it. This can be interpreted as an indicator that the political elite of CHP are not as successful as the AK party in steering their party grassroots, and also perhaps, not having developed as clear cut a politics as AK on the Kurdish issue.

The definition of clashes along the security axis mostly result from fear. The main reason for this is the fact that, that part of the population in majority, generally define the source of ethnic conflict in terms of partition, and hence the splitting of the nation-state, thus by supporting the security based-approaches they close their minds to other dimensions of the issue. In Turkey this is generally known as the Sevres-paranoia and, as various studies have shown<sup>4</sup>, the ethnic majority strongly believe that foreign powers will provoke the minority and attack the nation-state. Such belief and discourse can also be found in the reports of the Wise People's Delegation.<sup>5</sup> When we examine the situation five years later, in January of 2020 we find that such fears are intensely widespread in the population. When we examine the respondents' answers to the statement "I am afraid of the secession of Turkey", we find that the majority, especially of those 2815 respondents who define themselves as "Turks", 1652, 58.68% say, they agree or strongly agree with it.

The Sevres paranoia prevailing since the foundation of The Republic of Turkey makes it easier for authoritarian political leaders to activate the idea of the question of perpetuity of the country in the public's mind each time there is a crisis, thus making it easier for the

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4 Çelik, Ayşe Betül, Bilali, Rezarta and Yeshim Iqbal. 2017. "Patterns of 'Othering' in Turkey: A study of Ethnic, Ideological and Sectarian Polarization," *South European Society and Politics*, 2017, 22 (2): 217-238; Çelik, Ayşe Betül. 2021. "Agonistic Peace and Confronting the Past: An Analysis of a Failed Peace Process and the Role of Narratives," *Cooperation and Conflict*, 56(1): 26-43.

5 UKAM. 2014. *Akil İnsanlar heyet raporları (Reports of the Wise People's Delegation)*, İstanbul, UKAM.

country's democratization to remain an incomplete project. Turkey's assured position as both a regional and national power, trusting itself and its neighbors, acting securely with its alliances and the forever support of this reliance by the politicians, is a pre-condition for the economic and political welfare of the country.

## **II. Discrimination and Social Polarization**

Conflict is defined as the disagreement or the perception of disagreement concerning two or more parties (persons or institutions) on one or more issue. In conflicts based on ethnicity or on the identity-axis, such as that concerning the Kurdish issue, the fact that the sides possess, (or think they possess) different identities or belongings and have disagreements concerning these, leading to ostracizing one another, are processes based at the root of the problem and surface and strengthen as long as the problem persists. In other words, concerning issues, such as the Kurdish one in Turkey, conflictual processes such as negative feelings toward and perceptions of one another and behaviors, continue and toughen among the two groups as long as conflictual processes go on. Simultaneously, as long as such negative behavioral patterns go on, it is difficult to continue, let alone start peace processes.

Even though the conflictual phase in the Kurdish issue started as a security problem between the PKK and the government, it developed into social tensions over the course of years. Quite a few studies done in the last few years, underline the negative perceptions, feelings and

behaviors of Kurds and Turks towards each other.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore as reports of the Wise People's Delegation<sup>7</sup> and academic studies show, the axis of conflict is not limited to the Kurdish issue, but, can be seen among other groups, especially in the Alevite-Sunni tension, and AK Party electorate and their opponents in other political parties.

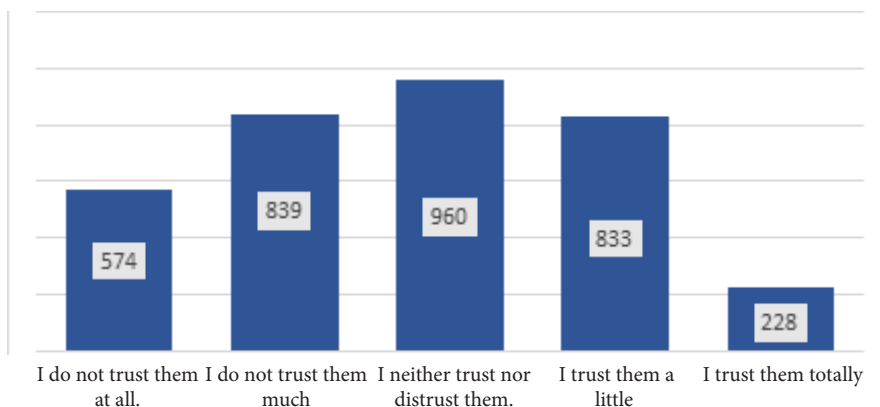
When we examine KONDA surveys of April 2010, in general we find some data with regard to the acceptance of ethnic differences. When the respondents are asked to what extent they are willing to accept members of other ethnic groups in their family via marriage, we find that the idea is, in general received positively (this response is 60 percent both among those who define themselves as Kurds and as Turks.) While 63 percent of the electorate regard this positively, the second highest vote in favor of this comes from BDP- Democracy for Peace Party (74%). When the same question, however, is asked concerning the acceptance of member of a different religious sect, the acceptance level falls below 50%. For those who define themselves as Turks this percent is 51 %, while for those define themselves as Kurds it is 61%. Among the AK Party electorate the same response is 48%, while among the supporters of CHP 71%.

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6 Çelik, Ayşe Betül, Rezarta Bilali veYeshim Iqbal. "Patterns of 'Othering' in Turkey: A Study of Ethnic, Ideological, and Sectarian Polarization." *South European Society and Politics* 22, no. 2 (2017): 217–238; Somer, Murat. "Turkey: The Slippery Slope from Reformist to Revolutionary Polarization and Democratic Breakdown." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681, no. 1 (2019): 42–61; Bilali, Rezarta, Ayşe Betül Çelik, and Ekin Ok. "Psychological Asymmetry in Minority–Majority Relations at Different Stages of Ethnic Conflict." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 43 (2014): 253–264; Bilali, Rezarta, Yeshim Iqbal, and Ayşe Betül Çelik. "The Role of National Identity, Religious Identity, and Intergroup Contact on Social Distance Across Multiple Social Divides in Turkey." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 65 (2018): 73–85; Saraçoğlu, C. 2009. "Exclusive recognition: The new dimensions of the question of ethnicity and nationalism in Turkey." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32: 640–58.

7 UKAM. 2014. *Akil İnsanlar Heyet Raporları*. (Reports of the Wise People's Delegation) Istanbul: UKAM Yayınları.

**Graph 3:** “To what extent do you trust those in the same group as yourself? KONDA, September 2015



In the September 2015 Survey, the respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement: “In this country and in the eyes of the state there are serious differences between the Turks and the Kurds”. About 30 percent of the respondents who defined themselves as Turks agreed that the state treats Kurds differently from Turks. The percent of the population who think that the Kurds face discrimination in the social and public arenas is still not low in spite of the ongoing Peace Process.

Coming to January 2020, those who respond positively to the question “My son-in-law or daughter-in-law can be of a different ethnic orientation” is about the same. 65 percent have answered “I agree” or “I agree strongly”. This is high both among the Kurds (63.5%) and the Turks (64%). Even though the Peace Process is now five years away and there has been no change in the recognition of ethnic differences in the private sphere, in either group. However, this response must be evaluated along with others. Although negative ideas and evaluations of Kurds continue in the public arena, their acceptance in the private sphere, is not so much a positive regard of multi-culturalism or of respect for differences, but rather, it has to



do with getting rid of differences in the patriarchal regime under the reigning culture, or, simply with the most optimistic interpretation, the possibility of overlooking them.

Between September 2015 and May 2016, social perceptions as to whether ethnic differences create discrimination in the public arena or not, is at a stand-still in the negative. For example, at both dates, 28 percent of the respondents believe that judges, prosecutors and the police behave and act differently depending on whether the person across from them is a Turk or a Kurd. While such perception falls down to 23 percent among the Turks, it goes up to 47 among the Kurds. In other words, similar to the acceptance of the difference seen at the societal level, there is also a significant dissociation as to whether such discrimination leads to a divergence at the level of the state or not.

Appraising the data in this section, we find that the polarization in Turkey during the past few years has created a differentiation in trying to understand discriminatory practices in the public and private arenas vis-a-vis the Kurdish issue. Even though in the private sphere, such as within the context of the family, ethnic differences do not seem to matter much, this cannot be said with regard to discrimination in the public sphere where there is a dissociation of belief. From this perspective, it may be useful for peace work to go on the path of the perception of discrimination among the Kurds and Turks to be researched so that it can be discussed publicly.

### **III. Cultural Rights and the Problem of Recognition**

One of the important axes of ethnic conflict are rights. The problems ethnic groups have vis. state institutions and other ethnic individuals in the areas of political, cultural and economic rights, can, in fact, be diagnosed as a question of the recognition of the existence of the ethnic group individuals. In other words, it is necessary that, concerning ethnic conflict, the state and various groups act towards the demands of ethnic groups, vis-a-vis how the latter want to live their cultural dissimilarities and protect them in the areas of diverse languages, belief systems, sectarian and other differences. These should be an important area of study; for otherwise, if such calls are not seen and responded to by violence, a peaceful atmosphere will never prevail.

One of the most important demands of the Kurds in the area of equal citizenship is the right to be taught in the mother-tongue. As to how this right will be used and the changes it will bring about in the status of Kurdish has been a frequent matter of discussion among both political and social actors almost since the inception of the Republic. While the Kurds and their political representatives put forth teaching in the mother-tongue as an inalienable human right and a first step in the solution of the Kurdish problem, various echelons in the state have responded with harsh declarations and given the Kurdish language only partial recognition in the public arena. In this report we will discuss the rate of social acceptance of this issue as well as the changes over the years, as we have done in other areas, rather than discuss its substance.

In the survey conducted by KONDA during April of 2010, there was a 41 percent social support among the public at large for the Kurds to be taught their mother-tongue. When analyzed by ethnicity, we find that 35 percent of those who define themselves as Turks support this. When analyzed by age, the younger population, in between 18-28 seem more negative towards the idea than other age groups.

When analyzed by party affiliation, almost all of those Kurds who voted for the BDP party<sup>8</sup>, (in a sense their representative, but not only that) supported this and those who voted for AK party are also relatively positive in this regard. While most MHP voters were opposed to the idea, among the social democratic party the voters' the support is also quite low. In other words, it seems that almost as a reflection of the period vis. voting patterns for various parties, the greatest support comes from AK and BDP electorate.

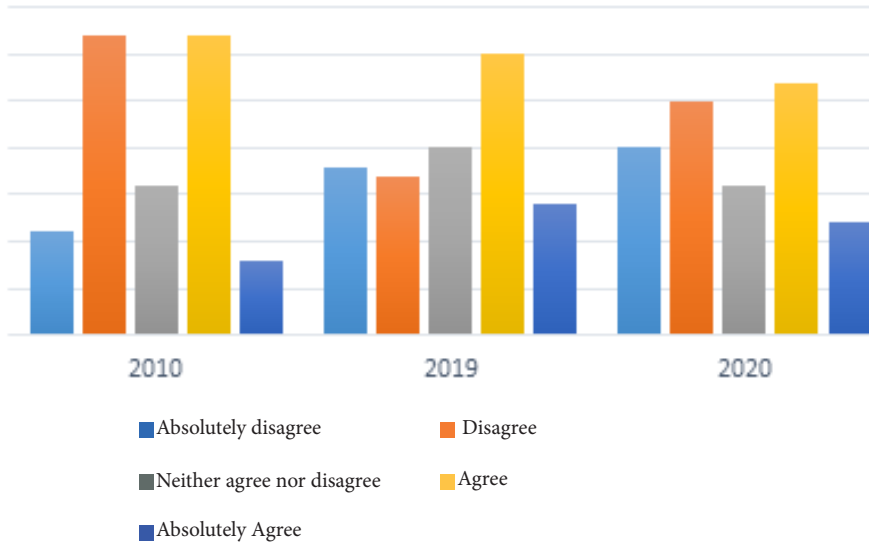
One of the basic demands of the political representatives of the Kurds, that they should be recognized as Kurds in the Constitution was questioned in a survey conducted by KONDA in September 2012. Of the total population 58.77 percent answered this in the negative, while 25 percent responded positively and 16 percent seem to be undecided on this issue. When analyzed by ethnicity, most of those (65%) who defined themselves as Turks answered this negatively while, 18 percent of the same group responded positively- the percent going up when we include those who responded as "neither right nor wrong." Among those that define themselves as Kurds, only 3 percent say it is "absolutely correct". When the responses are analyzed by party affiliation, both those who support the party in power (AK) as well as its adversary CHP, think such a change would be "wrong" (60 %). Similarly support for the idea from both party electors runs around 25%.

How has this picture changed following the volatile years of Turkey in 2020? In a January 2020 KONDA study, the respondents were asked whether they supported the idea of teaching Kurdish children in their native language. Just as in 2010, the acceptance of the idea runs around 40%, while those who are uninterested represent 16%. In other words, there has been no change with regard teaching in the mother-tongue in the past ten years. While 40 percent of the population support the idea of teaching in native language, 16 percent are undecided and 40 percent opposed. (See Graph No. 4)

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<sup>8</sup> BDP was founded in 2008 but changed its name to BDP (Party of Democratic Regions) later to be named People's Democracy Party, i.e. HDP

**Grafik 4:** “In Turkey Kurdish children should be able to get education in their mother-tongue” KONDA, 2010, 2019, 2020



Obviously, and, as can be expected the desire for teaching in the mother-tongue is much more prevalent among those that define themselves as Kurds (75%) in 2020, while among those who define themselves as Turks, it falls down to 32 %. When analyzed by party affiliation, the results are as follows: Most support comes from HDP followers (95%) while least support from the national party MHP supporters 21%. Of the AK electorate 43 % support the idea, but only 36 % of the CHP social democrats do so. (See Table 2)

**Table 2:** Support for Teaching in the mother-language by political party voters

Party	Percent
<b>HDP</b>	95
<b>AK Parti</b>	43
<b>CHP</b>	36
<b>IYI Parti</b>	26
<b>MHP</b>	21

As for cultural rights it is important to point out that 40 percent of the total population support them, and we must underline the fact that, even among the nationalist MHP electorate, the support percent runs around 20%. Such support is not always from the same individuals, and we can argue that it changes according to political attitude adopted by the party. The discussion concerning political rights in the next section also supports this finding.

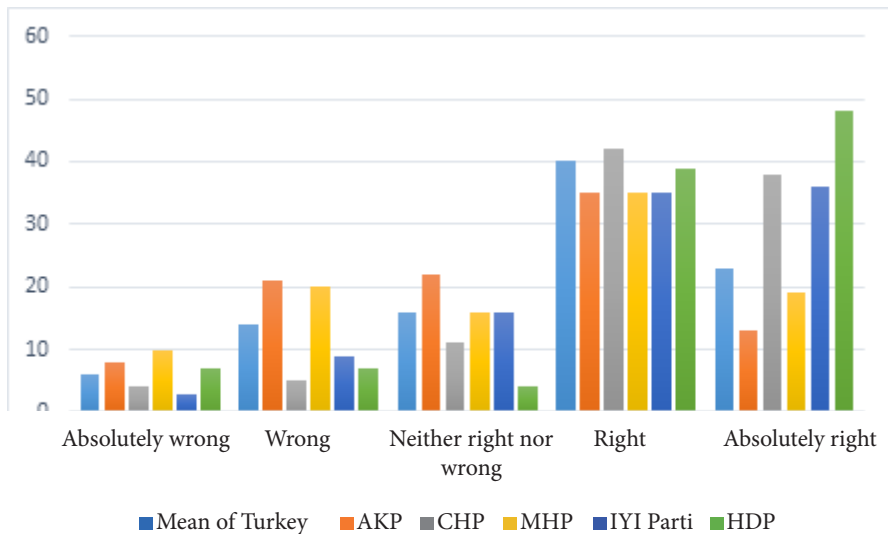
#### IV. Political Rights

Kurds have been joining the political arena with their own political parties in Turkey for the past 30 or so years. Simultaneously, however these political parties that have joined the political arena have faced many discriminatory/exclusionary closures, shut downs such as the forbidding of their representatives from politics via legal means, unjust custody, detention of their members, being subject to illegal procedures, forbidding of their open air-meetings and demonstrations, and de facto/legal banning of their meetings. During the last period, however, such oppression has been transformed and taken the form of removing them from office and appointing trustees to their positions; for instance in the case of legally elected municipal heads. Of the 65 municipalities won by HDP, the People's Democratic Party, following the March 31, 2019 elections, 6 did not get the certificate of their election, while 48 were discharged from

the municipality (later to be put in prison) and trustees put in their place.<sup>9</sup>

While 63 percent of those who participated in the KONDA survey of September 2019, think that it is wrong to unseat legally elected officials from office, those who support such a practice is about 20 percent. When the results are examined according to party votes, it is mostly the nationalist MHP supporters who agree with such a practice (30%), AK Party voters are next (29%) and the practice receives its lowest support from the social democrat CHP voters (9%). When analyzed by ethnicity, 60 percent of the Turks, and 73 percent of the Kurds think that elected officials cannot be dismissed from their positions in this fashion.

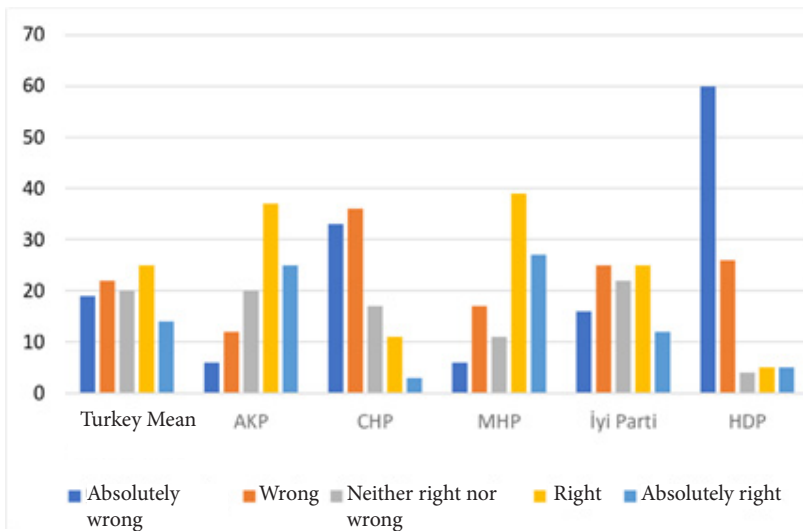
**Graph 5 :**“In a democracy it is wrong for officials elected by citizen’s votes to be arbitrarily dismissed from their position”, KONDA, September, 2019



<sup>9</sup> Evrensel newspaper, 2020.65 of HDP's elected officials were removed from office by appointing trustees in their place, while 6 were not given the certificate of their election. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/415521/hdp-nin-65-belediyesinden-48i-kayyumla-6si-mazbata-verilmeyerek-gasbedildi>. Date Accessed: Feb. 9 2022.

When, however, the same practice is asked vis. elected municipal heads of Diyarbakır, Van and Hakkâri, the situation changes. Those who think that it is impossible to place trustees in place of elected officials is 18%, while those who think that this is a correct practice is 38%. The same is approved by 10% of HDP voters, 14 % of CHP voters, 37 % of İYİ voters, 62% of AK, and 66 percent of MHP voters.

**Graph 6:** “Trustees can be appointed to positions of elected municipal heads such as those of Diyarbakır”. KONDA; November 2019



Precisely at this point, it appears that when it comes to the Kurdish issue, Turkey’s democracy problem has reached an impasse: While the public at large think elected officials cannot be removed from office in general, when the subjects of concern are elected Kurdish leaders, they approve the removal of the latter from their posts in higher ratios. This is directly related to the fact that Kurdish politics is perceived as illegal and its framing by politicians as a “terror issue”. However, the possibility of democracy to be put on hold for some groups, also makes it possible for the same to be put on hold for all other groups as well, thus ending in the democracy-authoritarianism oscillation that the country finds itself in.

## **V. Foreign Policy and Kurdish Policy**

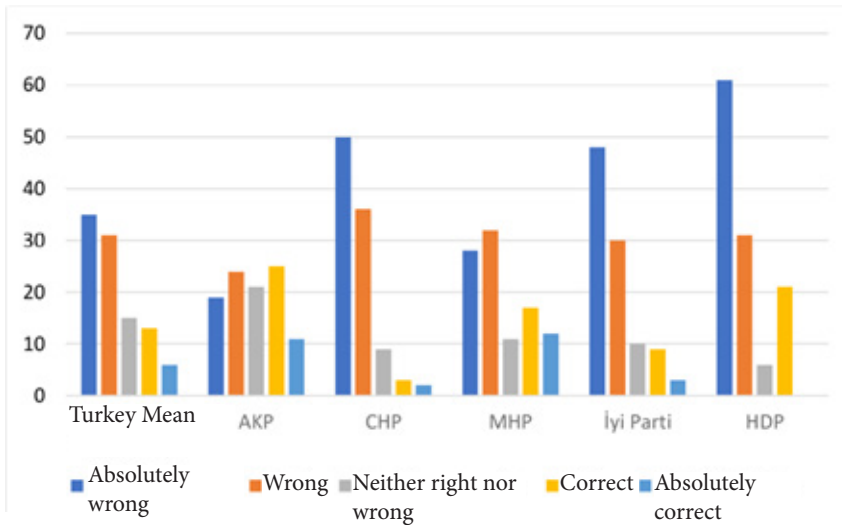
The Kurdish issue has been one of the most important factors influencing Turkey's domestic as well as foreign politics in almost every period in the history of the country. As we have discussed in other sections of this report, the Kurdish issue is related to the fear of partition of the country. After the insurrection of 2011 in the Middle East, of what has come to be known as the Arab Spring, and the civil war in Syria, the Kurdish issue here, has gone through a qualitative and quantitative transfrontier transformation and the fear of partition has revived very strongly.

The conservative nationalist coalition founded after 2015 received its basic legitimacy and its support from the state, via the steps it took in foreign policy concerning the transfrontier dimension of the Kurdish issue. Thus although the general support for the foreign policy of the People's Coalition (Cumhur Koalisyonu, AK and the nationalist MHP) is quite low, there is virtually national support for its foreign policy moves concerning the Kurds and the least noticeable differences between perceptions of the reigning party and its opponents surface in this area.

Based on the survey conducted by KONDA in the September of 2019, the Graph we prepared below shows that there is only 19 percent support for the government's policy concerning Syria and 66 percent are opposed to it. Also strikingly, the support for the Syria policy of the AK government is very low among AK party voters. While 36 percent of them support it, only 29 percent of the nationalist MHP voters do so. The CHP, İYİ and HDP electorate are very critical of it.

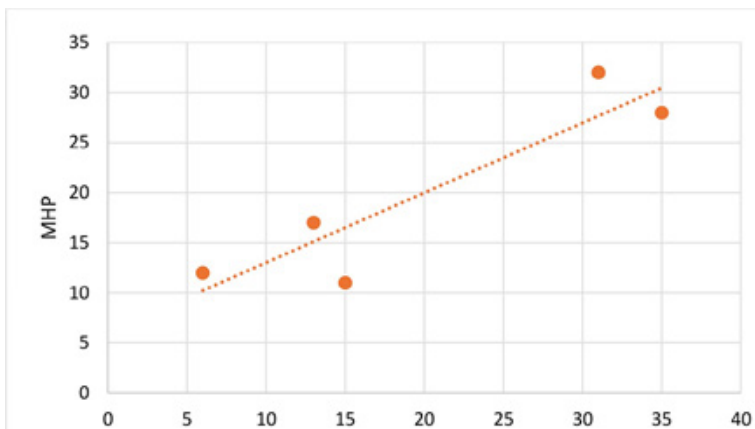


**Graph 7:** “I support Turkey’s policy on the subject of Syria” KONDA; September 2019



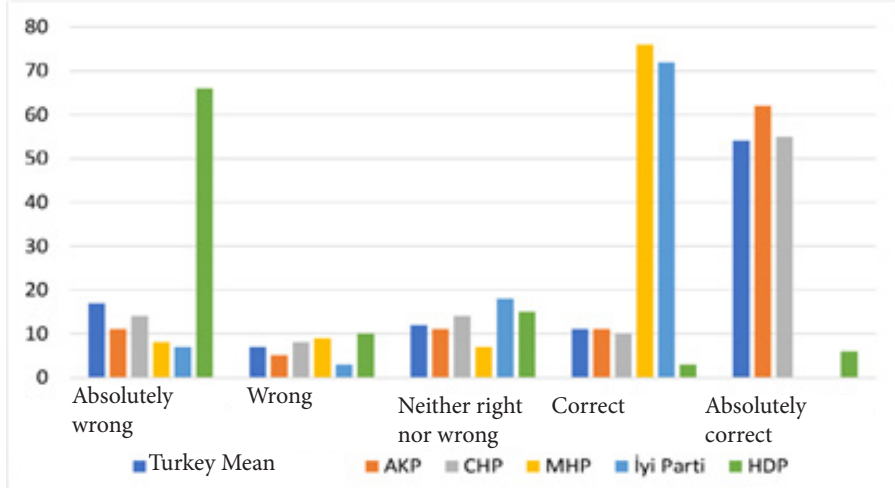
Again as we see in Graph No. 8, the mean public attitude in Turkey concerning the foreign policy of the government is quite similar to that of the nationalist MHP.

**Graph 8:** “Syria Policy- Mean of Turkey and that of MHP compared”, KONDA November 2019



When the same question is worded so as to read “Kurds should be prevented from establishing a state in Syria”, however, the electorate of all parties, except for the HDP, support it (See Graph No. 9). In the answers, overall, only 24 percent think this statement is wrong, with 64 percent supporting it. Among the MHP and İYİ Party (slightly, ever so slightly to the left of MHP) supporters for the statement are around 75 percent, while around 66 percent for AK and CHP voters. HDP voters, on the other hand, reflect a diametrically opposed view with 75 percent finding it wrong. In other words, a significant polarization exist in the responses to this question i.e. Kurdish presence in Syria. Whatever consensus may have existed among the voters and parties in opposition in the area of negotiation and cultural and political rights, disappears completely when the issue comes to the establishment of a Kurdish state in Syria and Turkey’s response to it.

**Graph 9:** “Kurds should be prevented from forming a state in Syria”  
KONDA, November 2019



## **VI. Approaches to the Settlement of the Kurdish Issue and the Agenda for Negotiation**

As can be seen by examples from around the world, there is no one way of resolving conflict or of transforming it. Each country should analyze its own dynamics, the needs of its citizens and the general atmosphere they find themselves in and eventually draw its own roadmap. While doing so however, it must draw lessons from the settlement of ethnic conflicts around the world.

Many ethnic conflicts around the world have been resolved by discussions, in other words, by negotiations between units within the state and the armed organization. The rate of resolution of conflicts in between 1940-1992 is 62 percent.<sup>10</sup> This has increased since the ending of the Cold War era with armed conflicts all the way from Guatemala to Indonesia having been solved in this manner.<sup>11</sup> The phase we have gone through in Turkey, in between 2009-2011 and 2013-2015 can be named as a pre-negotiation period. In this pre-negotiation phase, the leaders of the sides involved in armed conflict have used peaceful dialogue before significant issues would eventually be put on the table.

Many sections of the population perceive the negotiation procedure as legalization of what have been armed antagonized groups during the conflict period and are thus opposed to it. Hence the leaders should work for the acceptance of this dialogue in the pre-negotiation period. From this perspective it is important to examine the talks made by the leaders in Turkey, to determine how they perceive those legal actors that work to maintain contact with the adversarized groups and determine what sectors oppose the process.

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10 Walter, Barbara F. *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002.

11 Quinn, Jason, Madhav Joshi, ve Erik Melander. 2019. "One Dyadic Peace Leads to Another? Conflict Systems, Terminations, and Net Reduction in Fighting Groups." *International Studies Quarterly* 63(4): 863-875.

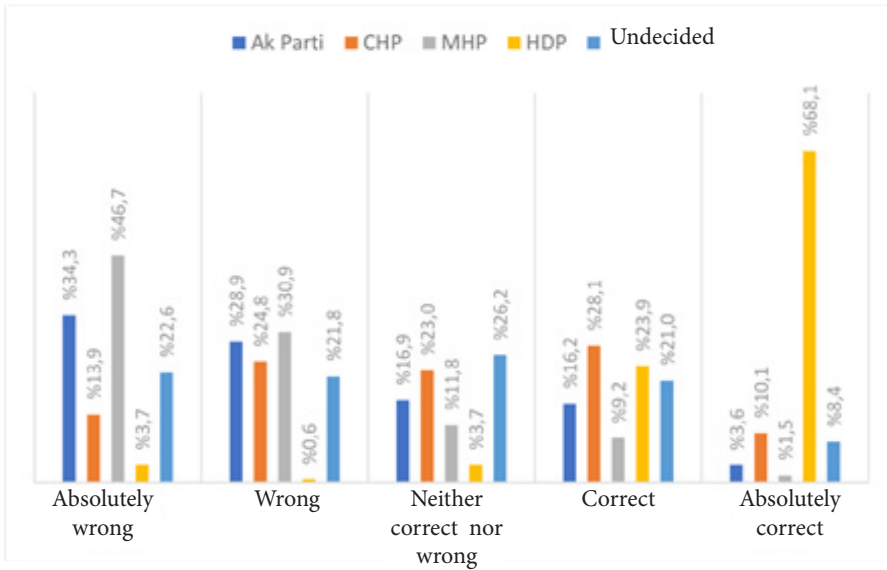
The peace process that was interrupted in 2011 and was revived during January of 2013. When we examine how this was received by the public at large, we see a serious approval. For example, during March of 2013, the respondents were asked to what extent they approved of BDP parliamentarians' parley with Öcalan. Even though the process was restarted during March of 2013 after a two year pause, 45 percent of the respondents viewed the parley positively. However, this support falls down to 34.54 percent among those who define themselves as Turks. In similar fashion, the responses to the question "Do you think the initiative started by the government recently can solve the Kurdish problem?" 47.25 percent of the respondents believe it cannot, 34.47 percent believe it can, or it definitely can, and the positive response falls down to 29.54 among those who define themselves ethnically as Turks.

When the same question is examined by party votes, we find that most of those who believe that a solution can be achieved, come from AK party supporters (nearly 50%) and we can say that the reason for this is the fact that it was AK party who was the main player in the Peace Process. Concerning the same question, however, the CHP social democrat voters, overwhelmingly, think it cannot resolve the problem, a response quite close to those of the nationalist MHP respondents. In both questions the striking finding is the response coming from the youth who portray a significantly more negative approach to a solution compared to older adults. Hence the often mentioned idea that the youth view social processes differently, is a thesis that should be researched and analyzed. It seems that the youth is not so democratic in its opinions concerning the Kurdish issue as is expected or argued in general.

Following the quitting of the negotiation table and the abrupt ending of the Peace Process, in May of 2016, the respondents were asked, "Concerning the Kurdish issue, the sides ought to return to the negotiation table" "Is this statement true or false?" In this period, the support for negotiations fell only slightly with 28.30 percent of the respondents answering that they still supported the negotiations, while 52.7 percent find the statement wrong or totally

wrong. The greatest decline is among those who define themselves as Turks (20%). When analyzed by party electorate (see Graph 10) we find that nationalist MHP supporters are mostly opposed, with AK supporters next in line, following them in opposition; HDP's mostly Kurdish and leftists voters are in favor of returning back to the negotiation table while social democrats (CHP) occupy a midpoint in the picture. As we mentioned earlier, these results underline a fact that we drew attention to earlier, acute polarization concerning the solution of the Kurdish issue.

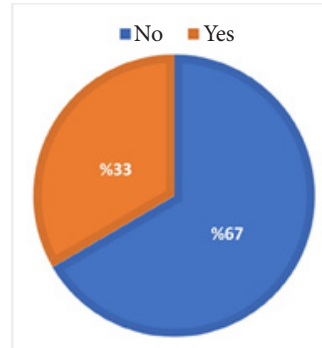
**Graph 10:** “There should be a return to the negotiation table.” Is this statement right or wrong according to you? Distribution by Party electorate



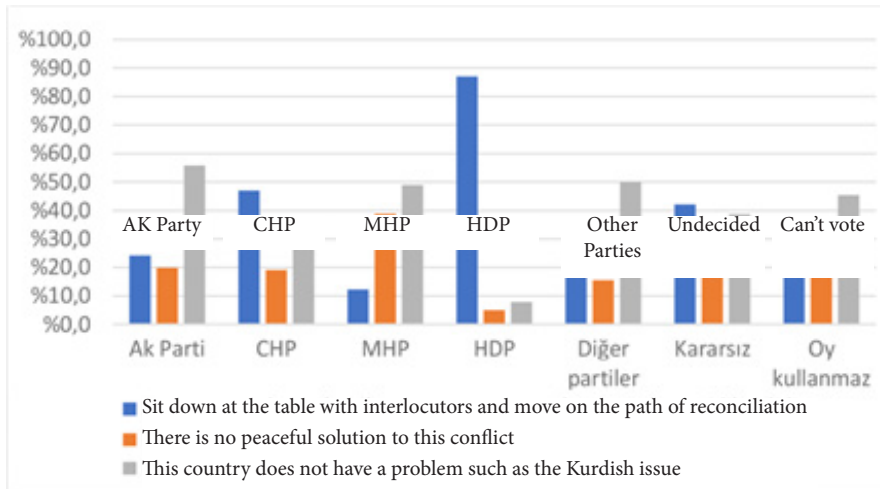
During December of 2016, when the peace table was totally annulled amidst many crises, the respondents were asked “What should be done to resolve the Kurdish Issue?” As before, about one third of the respondents said “the interlocutors in the process should sit down and attempt rapprochement.” (See Graph 11). That there should be a 33 percent support for this, even after all the hitches in the country, is evidence of the fact that, as we mentioned earlier, 30-40 percent of

the population support cultural/political rights, independent of the political climate and, that as long as there is a supra-party reconciliation, there will be public opinion support for it.

**Graph 11:** “The interlocutors should sit down at the table and attempt reconciliation.” KONDA, December, 2016



**Graph 12:** “According to you what should be done to solve the Kurdish issue?” Distribution by Party Electors, KONDA December, 2016



## Results and Assessment

As we have stated at the beginning, in spite of the abrupt ending of peace talks between the state institutions and the administrators of the PKK in 2015, and reviving of the skirmishes, the Kurdish issue continues to be one of the most important problems in the society at large in Turkey. In the final analysis, such subjects as, the mutual forgiving of political actors, discussing clashes beyond the border and the writing of a new constitution are all closely related to the yet unresolved issues concerning the Kurdish conflict.

In this study we have tried to examine the steps taken in the direction of the peace process, and what has been missing along the dimension of possibilities-hurdles. Our analysis has shown that even at the worst, most oppressive periods, the support for the peace agenda and basic political rights has not gone below the 30 percent level. Also in every period there is a 20 percent block that define themselves in the grey area. Unfortunately in the characterization of this 40-year clash period, ethnic identity and political choice continue to be the main determinants in the definition of the issue and the solutions offered. Although in the 1980s and 1990s, the roots of the issue was seen as a question of underdevelopment, in the 2000s “fear of partition” forms a major block against resolution. Politically speaking, while the resolution of the Kurdish issue continues to move along the democracy-securitization axis, particularly for those who define themselves as Kurds or Turks, the distance varies depending on the ongoing policies. It is obvious, for example, that the peace process has greatly aided in bringing about a social rapprochement in the definition of the Kurdish issue and the recognition of the cultural and political rights of Kurds.

Viewed from a positive perspective, however, both during the peace process and after, those groups that support a peaceful solution, behave in a manner parallel to the politics of their party. This may indicate that whatever mellowing may take place in the position of the leaders, will also impact the rest of the society as well. Simultaneously,

the negative aspect of the same finding is that whatever discriminatory, marginalizing and violent language that is present in the political arena will also move public opinion away from a resolution. In other words, the tackling of the issue with a reconciliatory discourse and attitude and supra-party compromise may lead to support from a large portion of the population (or least that there will be no opposition from them) and the formation of the agenda for negotiation. In addition, it is much easier to tackle this when the Kurdish issue is not a burning one than, when anxiety and fears concerning it are at a high level.

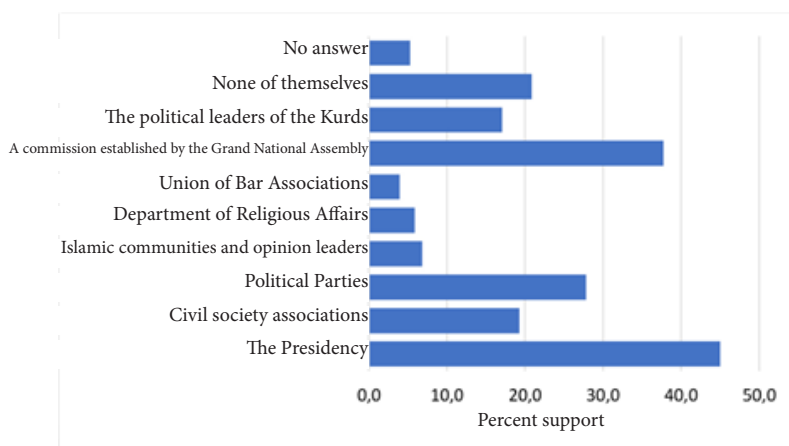
Another important point from the perspective of party alliance, is the tactical instrumentalization of the Kurdish issue stemming from the leaders' discourse and attitudes. Analysis show that, even though this subject is of such vital importance for the society of Turkey, such that it should never be instrumentalized, in fact, it is taken up by the voters in such a manner that they define their position, in opposition to the party whom they define as their opponent. What is so crystal clear in our analysis of the results of KONDA's various surveys, is that, although most HDP supporters consistently want a peaceful solution, AK Party electors' position is in line with that of their party's, while MHP voters are consistently opposed to a peaceful settlement. From this perspective it should be noted that the position taken by the social democrat CHP electorate may be of determining importance in potential peace processes. The fact that CHP electorate is divided on the issue of security-focused, solutions shows that, this section of the population would be easier to persuade than has been assumed; however, they need to be informed much more about democratic rights and must also be able to understand the need to support them. Also from the same perspective, the discoursification of the Kurdish issue from the perspective of democratic rights can be a window of opportunity for opening the public discourse concerning it.

Peace processes may be slow-moving, and include different stages such as pausing, reversing, and restarting. From this perspective we should not overlook the fact that, some day new steps will be taken



again in the direction of peace. In its 2022 February survey, KONDA asked the respondents which institution(s) they thought would contribute most to the solution of the Kurdish issue. As shown in Graph 13, the most important actor in this process is seen as the Presidency of the country (45 percent of the respondents). The second most important actor in the process, however, was the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. There is a significant percent of the respondents who think that a commission established within the Grand National Assembly will impact the peace process positively (38 percent).

**Graph 13:** “Who can contribute to the solution of the Kurdish issue?”  
KONDA February 2022



When this table is examined from the perspective of party alliance we are met with the following results. Although most of the AK and the nationalist MHP supporters point to the President of the Republic for the solution of the issue, a large percent of those opposition parties point to a commission to be formed within the Grand National Assembly. The second choice of AK and MHP supporters in this regard, is also a commission with 1/3 supporting it; hence it appears that there is a reconciliatory attitude toward peace in the country at large.

**TABLE 2:** “Who would tend to provide the most support for the solution of the Kurdish issue?” Distribution by Party Electorate- KONDA, February 2022

<b>Who would tend to provide the most support for the solution of the Kurdish issue?</b>	<b>AK Party</b>	<b>CHP</b>	<b>MHP</b>	<b>HDP</b>	<b>İYİ Party</b>	<b>Other Parties</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Cannot vote</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Presidency</b>	%61	%38	%50	%30	%39	%26	%50	%38	%45
<b>Civil society assoc</b>	%10	%28	%16	%27	%26	%23	%19	%15	%19
<b>Political parties</b>	%21	%34	%30	%42	%34	%28	%26	%20	%28
<b>İslamic Comm and opinion leaders</b>	%10	%4	%12	%6	%3	%7	%8	%5	%7
<b>Religious affairs</b>	%10	%4	%9	%4	%2	%5	%6	%4	%6
<b>Union of Bar Assoc.</b>	%2	%9	%1	%5	%3	%4	%4	%3	%4
<b>Comm in the Grand National Assembly</b>	%29	%50	%37	%45	%44	%39	%36	%29	%38
<b>Repr of Kurds</b>	%10	%17	%10	%62	%12	%20	%16	%12	%17
<b>None</b>	%18	%21	%20	%7	%25	%22	%21	%29	%21
<b>No answer</b>	%5	%3	%6	%2	%4	%3	%6	%7	%5

In spite of all these observations, it is important to underline that peace work needs to be conducted with “cautious optimism”. The longer it takes for clashes to continue, the tougher becomes the position of those who want a solution based on force and, hence, the more difficult to include them in the peace process. In Turkey, it is possible to speak of 55 percent of the population who can be placed in this category concerning this war that has taken over 40 years and cost millions of lives. When we take into consideration the fact that this is that section of the population who define themselves as ethnic Turks, and that historically speaking, form the political elite of the country-- we come to accept the difficult nature of the picture ahead of us.

From this perspective, work needs to be done in the area of what is known as the Sevres paranoia, i.e. the partitioning of the country. Again in order to weather the fears of this section of the population, it is necessary to hear them, bring them in close association with other sections of the population and to create a new language to persuade them. Obviously, in the process, the most compelling factors are Turkey’s foreign policy and the developments in Syria. Perhaps the most troublesome hurdle from the point of view of the peace process is the fact that the Kurdish issue now, has a transnational dimension. Our study has shown that although most of the individuals in Turkey, are opposed to its Syria politics, when the issue comes to the recognition of Kurds in Syria there is a big disparity between the general population and the Kurdish, somewhat leftist HDP. Hence if different dimensions of the issue are discussed at the societal level, it will be beneficial for opening the doors to the peace process. It must be generally agreed that the Kurdish issue is intertwined with societal polarization. Although the easing off created by the peace process continues in some areas, political polarization, definition of the Kurdish issue and identification of the methods to redress them continue their negative influence, and support the tense political atmosphere in its resolution. The fact of the high level of acceptance of social differences during the peace process and its

positive impact seem to continue even after its' ending. However, the perception of the discrimination that the Kurds face is impacted by the political atmosphere in the country. At the point reached, there is an overpowering perception that the Kurds have equal citizenship rights. However, the rejection of the issue during a conflict resolution session will create problems in opening the way for dialogue. Therefore it is necessary that there should be an opening for a discussion of the problems the Kurds experience in a democratic atmosphere.

Again from this perspective, it is important to point out to, what is known as the "conflict trap" in the literature, i.e. that the clashes will create long-term economic processes and harm the social fabric. We know from academic studies that the most important outcome of those disputes which end in deliberations is democracy, peace and welfare.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the results of our study show that the support of the younger generations for the untangling of the Kurdish conflict is at a low level, and their support for democratic solutions weak. This maybe due to the fact the younger generations have never lived in an atmosphere where peace prevailed. Thus, from this perspective we should emphasize strongly the urgent need for special studies and activity to be conducted with the youth. As we have expressed above, it would be important to discuss their fears, expectations and dreams and have them listen to different voices in this arena. There is also important work that should be conducted by the leaders. It should be explained to the younger generations that the peace atmosphere will return back to them as serenity, trust, freedom and economic opportunities. They should be reminded of the fact that the Kurdish issue is now a reality beyond national borders, and that peace will multiply its impact on the economy positively.

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12 Gurses, Mehmet and T. David Mason. 2008. "Democracy out of Anarchy: The Prospects for Post-Civil War Democracy." *Social Science Quarterly* 89(2): 315-336; Hartzell, Caroline and Mathew Hoddie. 2020; *Power Sharing and Democracy in Post-Civil War States: The Art of the Possible*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

What are seen as threats currently, may appear as opportunities when viewed from a distinctive perspective. It can be pointed out to young individuals that they can invest in important ventures in Iraq and Syria and the transforming of Middle Eastern geography may give them significant roles as dominant players. Otherwise, a political atmosphere involved in warfare is likely to negatively impact the future of younger generations even more.

#### **APPENDIX 1: KONDA Surveys used in this report**

April 2010  
September 2012  
March 2013  
September 2015  
May 2016  
December 2016  
January 2019  
September 2019  
November 2019  
January 2020  
February 2022

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