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Conflict Society and the Transformation of Turkey's Kurdish Question

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1. The Conflict Context and the Nature of Turkey's Conflict Society

Turkey's Kurdish question is strongly determined by the nature of the Turkish state and the manner in which it has responded to the Kurdish nationalist challenge. Of all the case studies analyzed by SHUR, Turkey's Kurdish question least fits the definition of an ethnic or ethno-political conflict. Far from representing a veritable conflict between Turks and Kurds – at least in its origins and predominant evolution – the situation in Turkey can be characterized as a conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish nationalist movement, with the identities of both having become increasingly interlocking. Whereas the specificities of the Turkish state have moulded the Kurdish nationalist challenge, the latter and in particular the actions of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) greatly contributed to the securitizing discourse of the Turkish state establishment. Alongside this, the nature of the Turkish state and democracy has also influenced critically the character of *Conflict Society Organizations* (CoSOs) in Turkey. It is the presence of an excessively "strong" while concomitantly "weak" and insecure Turkish state that has shaped both the evolution of the Kurdish question and of civil society in Turkey.

a. The Turkish State and the Evolution of the Kurdish Question

Built upon the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish republican project aimed at creating a civic nation in which all citizens would enjoy equal rights. This was because the founding fathers of the Republic, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in particular, blamed contrasting ethnic nationalisms for the fall of the "Sick Man of Europe". Hence, with the exception of three non-Muslim communities (Greek, Armenian and Jewish) recognized as official minorities in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, all citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, language, culture or religion were conflated into one community: the Turks. The creation of this new society as a homogenous and unified entity on which the Republican state based its legitimacy was also deemed necessary to 'extract recognition as a Western nation from the West'. The social diversity, pluralism and the emergence of an autonomous public sphere where this diversity crystallized were seen as 'disintegrative sapping the strength of the nation; strength deemed to be essential to achieve with the West' (Cizre 2001: 231).

Whereas in theory the choice of adopting a civic conception of the nation was not problematic, the problem emerged in practice when Turkish nationalism gradually acquired a distinctive ethnic slant (Tocci 2001). This meant that all non-recognized minorities, first and foremost the Kurds, were only accorded equal rights in practice if they abdicated their minority identities (Kurban 2005). Precisely because of this, many Kurds to this day refuse to be labeled a minority, fearing this would automatically imply unequal treatment and the failure to be recognized as a founding people of the Republic (Gunther 2007). One of our interviewees belonging to the pro-Kurdish association Yakay-Der for example expressly declared that: 'I do not identify myself as a member of a minority group. This is the general tendency among Kurds. We have been a founding element in the [creation of the] nation-state and regard the status of minority as an insult'. Naturally such a statement does not entail a renunciation of a separate Kurdish identity, but rather the claim for this identity to be recognized constitutionally as a founding element of the national identity/ies.

There where Kurds accepted to be assimilated into the "Turkish nation", they succeeded in reaching high-ranking positions in the world of politics and business. This point was frequently made by staunchly Kemalist organizations such as the Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Mothers or the Ankara Association for Martyrs' Families. However, when Kurds could not or refused to be assimilated, the state actively punished and repressed them. Indeed, largely in response to the Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 30s in Turkey's southeast – inhabited

predominantly by Kurds – Turkish authorities reneged on their promises of local Kurdish autonomy, violated their legal obligation (under Article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty) to protect the Kurdish language, banned the use of Kurdish names, enacted the repressive Law for the Reestablishment of Order, and enacted the Resettlement Law designed to dilute the Kurdish presence in the southeast. People were thus resettled, names of places and people were changed, the use of language was restricted, and the very existence of a Kurdish identity was adamantly denied.

The ensuing and mounting frustration felt by the Kurds erupted in mobilization and unrest by the 1970s. In that period, the Kurdish cause was advocated by Kurdish and leftist movements such as the Turkish Workers Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*), youth revolutionary movements (*Dev Genç*) and cultural clubs (Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths/*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*). Far from being presented in ethno-nationalist terms, the Kurdish cause in those years was essentially a quest for equal social and economic rights in the underdeveloped southeast. Under this banner, Kurdish and pro-Kurdish groups clashed with extreme rightwing and nationalist movements, leading to a period of profound instability that culminated in the 1980 military coup. Following the 1980 coup, the state's repression of rights and freedoms exacerbated, as illustrated by the highly restrictive nature of the 1982 Constitution. The Constitution's preamble stated that 'no protection shall be afforded to thoughts or opinions contrary to Turkish national interests, the principles of the indivisibility of Turkey as a state and territory, Turkish historical and moral values, or the nationalism, principles, and reforms of Atatürk and his embracement of values of modern civilization…'. Articles 312 and 216 of the Penal Code condemned the expression of opinions 'denigrating Turkishness' or 'inciting enmity and hatred'. Article 14 of the Constitution prohibited any political activity based on class, sect, language or race. Article 125 of the Penal Code allowed for capital punishment for those who acted against the state's territorial integrity. The legal system also banned the use of languages other than Turkish. In particular Article 42 prohibited education in languages other than Turkish and Article 3 recognized Turkish as the only language of the state.

State repression fuelled further the flames of Kurdish resentment, which by the 1980s acquired a distinctive nationalist and secessionist flavour. In the post-1980 period the Kurdish question rose to become the gravest (real and perceived) challenge to the Turkish state. The principal promoter of the nationalist Kurdish cause was the PKK, whose declared objective was to establish, through violent means, a pan-Kurdish state based on Marxist-Leninist principles. The PKK, led by Abdullah Öcalan launched its first attack on the Turkish armed forces in August 1984, and progressively used all means at its disposal, including terrorism and intimidation against the Turkish state, civilian dissidents, feudal lords and rival Kurdish and leftwing groups. By the mid-1990s the PKK counted approximately 8,000 militants operating inside Turkey and controlling large swathes of the countryside in the southeast. The organization also exploited its foreign connections, using Syria and Lebanon in the 1980s and northern Iraq since 1990-1 as training grounds and launching pads for attacks against Turkey. In the 1990s, the PKK also mobilized the Kurdish Diaspora in Western Europe to extend its struggle beyond the region.[1] It used the media and information technology to forge a sense of nationhood amongst Diaspora Kurds as well as Kurds living in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

A vicious circle was thus set in motion whereby mounting PKK violence interlocked with exacerbating Turkish state violence and repression. In response to PKK attacks, the number of Turkish troops in the southeast steadily rose and the state recruited village guards to fight the PKK.[2] Military forces used all licit and illicit means in their war, including the evacuation of villages, the displacement of persons, extra-judicial killings and disappearances, detentions, intimidation and torture. In 1987, the state imposed emergency rule (*Olağanüstü Hal*- OHAL) in ten provinces of the southeast, which lasted until 2002. OHAL implied the appointment of provincial governors with

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[1] Approximately 500,000 Turkish Kurds live in Western Europe, of which 400,000 are in Germany.
[2] The village guards are unofficial local (Turkish or Kurdish) militias, armed and paid by the Turkish state to fight the PKK.

broad powers to restrict civil rights and freedoms, thus giving rise to a dual system of law in the country (Kurban 2003: 190). In 1991, a new Anti-Terrorism Law provided an extremely broad definition of terrorism and legalized a wide set of measures to combat it.

b. The Turkish State and the Nature of Civil Society

The nature of the Turkish state has not only influenced the emergence and evolution of Turkey's Kurdish question. It has also critically shaped the nature of civil society in the country. Civil society in Turkey has been pivotally shaped by the "strong" and concomitantly "weak" nature of the Turkish state. Beginning with "strength", the meaning of civil society in Turkey: *sivil toplum*, is inextricably tied to the idea of a civilian/non-military society (Seçkinelgin 2004). Turkey's civil society has in fact tended to work against the illiberal features of the Turkish state, strongly influenced by the Turkish military especially since 1980. Particularly since 1980 and the ensuing implementation of a highly restrictive Constitution, "civil(ian) society" in Turkey became closely associated with the push for democratization and the protection of human rights and, because of this, has often been viewed with suspicion by state institutions.

At the same time, the overbearing presence of the Turkish state and its highly restrictive character greatly circumscribed the prospects and freedom of maneuver of civil society. Indeed in response to the instability of the 1960s and 70s, in the immediate aftermath of the 1980 coup, all strikes and lock-outs were declared illegal, media freedoms were severely circumscribed, mass trials took place against trade unionists, political parties and civil society organizations (Dağı 2001). The military junta with the aim of monopolizing the sociopolitical sphere required all associations to initiate establishment procedures from scratch if they wanted to continue their activities. In the years that followed, freedom of expression and assembly, and the rights of associations and foundations were constitutionally restricted, severely limiting the prospects for the emergence and consolidation of civil society in the country (Toprak 1996).

Beyond limiting the space for associational life in Turkey, these severe restrictions have had a further double-edged effect on the nature of civil society. One the one hand, "establishment civil society" groups, including all those legal foundations (*vakıflar*), clubs (*dernekler*), sectoral associations (*odalar*), bar associations (*barolar*), universities, media groups and trade unions, while often pushing for democratization, did so within the un-spelt confines of the Turkish republican project. The "social contract" between the state and "establishment" civil society foresaw the protection of the latter's rights and freedoms alongside their compliance with or non-opposition to the fundamental tenets of the Kemalist regime. Hence as Seçkinelgin (2004) explains, there where actors or events shook or appeared to shake Kemalist principles, civil society's 'socio-cultural reflex' would contract, leading the state to speak in unison with civil society. In these instances, civil society would become an additional voice at the service of the "father state" (*baba devlet*) (Kalaycıoğlu 2002). Because of this, establishment civil society groups have been conceptualized as part and parcel of the state's national security project (Bilgin 2007), being more willing to ally with the state than with anti-establishment groups. An interesting manifestation of this, related to the real/perceived threat of political Islam, were the mass demonstrations organized by state organs, establishment political parties and civil society groups in opposition to the proposed election of Abdullah Gül to the presidency in April and May 2007.

On the other hand, all those groups which challenged the strict interpretation of the republican project were relegated to the margins, unable to shed their image as a grave security threat to the Turkish state and society. "Anti-establishment civil society", often banned and thus operating beyond the confines of the law, has tended to include all those groups pursuing ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious rights. In doing so, these groups have questioned the dominant understanding of the Turkish nation-state as homogenous, secular, modern and Western. Because of

this, their claims have been pursued at or beyond the fringes of the narrowly defined space of legal and legitimate action, often in overt confrontation with the state. Kurdish groups, recognizing themselves as such and pursuing Kurdish claims, have fallen squarely within this category.

At the heart of this black-and-white, us/other, "either with us or against us" characterization of civil society in Turkey is the high degree of securitization by the Turkish state and society. It is here that the "weakness" of the Turkish state emerges in full force. Challenging or even questioning the precepts of the republican project has been portrayed as an existential threat to the Turkish nation-state. This threat is rendered all the more vivid and plausible to the public by historical memories – often dubbed as the Sèvres syndrome[3] – and Turkey's turbulent geopolitical environment at the crossroads of the Middle East and Eurasia. It is within this context that international presence in Turkey, particularly if related to the Kurdish question, has been strongly resisted. The formal official involvement of the international community in Turkey's Kurdish question is in fact largely absent because of the Turkish state's refusal to accept international monitoring, mediation or peacekeeping. International civil society involvement is somewhat more visible, although still circumscribed and viewed with utmost suspicion by the Turkish state. The absence of a formal international role has allowed the principal parties in the Kurdish question to act in a largely unrestrained manner in their struggle.

Moreover and bearing direct relevance to the Kurdish question, the emergence of the PKK as a militant organization declaredly threatening the territorial integrity of the state strengthened the securitized – and thus highly circumscribed – space for civil society in Turkey. Indeed any group articulating a separate Kurdish identity has been unequivocally dubbed as a threat to the state and nation and grouped in the same basket as the PKK. A recent comment made by Turkey's Chief of General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt forcefully reveals the threat value ascribed to the articulation of non-Turkish identities. In a statement by the Office of the Chief of General Staff in April 2007 it was stated that 'anyone who objects to the understanding "How happy is the one who says he/she is a Turk"[4] is an enemy of the Republic and will also be so' (Minority Rights Group 2007: 7). In other words all citizens and civil society groups which espoused and pursued the recognition of a separate Kurdish identity, be this through violent or peaceful means, or as part of an inclusive or exclusive understanding of Turkish identity, were lumped together as a threat to the Turkish nation-state.

The fate of successive Kurdish/pro-Kurdish political parties further illustrates this point. The Turkish legal system has in fact been used and abused repeatedly to ban pro-Kurdish parties (Barkey 1998). [5] In 1993, the People's Labour Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi* – HEP) was closed for allegedly basing itself on racial grounds. It was succeeded by the more radical Democratic Labour Party (*Demokrasi Partisi* – DEP), but in 1994 the Constitutional Court lifted the parliamentary immunity to several of its deputies and then banned the party itself. The same fate awaited the People's Democratic Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* – HADEP), closed in 2003, and the Democratic People's Party (*Demokratik Halk Partisi* – DEHAP), dissolved in 2005. DEHAP was replaced by the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* – DTP), founded in 2004 by former DEP members released from jail. A case has been brought against the DTP and a court ruling is pending, although no less than 20 independent parliamentarians, associated with the DTP, succeeded in entering parliament in 2007. In all legal proceedings and judgments, the main accusations advanced against these parties were their links with the PKK and their attempts to challenge the unitary nature of the Republic. Paradoxically however, the lifting of parliamentary

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[3] The Sèvres syndrome explains the value ascribed by Turks to the country's territorial integrity in view of their collective recollection of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, in which foreign powers redesigned and drastically scaled down the size of the prospective Turkish state after the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This factor has often led Turkey to interpret international recommendations and pressures as undue external interference aimed at disintegrating the Turkish state.

[4] This being one of the most cited quotes by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

[5] Since 1980 the Turkish Constitutional Court has taken eighteen decisions to dissolve political parties as they were deemed to threaten the unity and secular nature of the state (Shambayati, 2003).

immunities and the banning of parties has drastically reduced the prospects of Kurdish political or civil society groups emerging and operating independently of the PKK (Koğacıoğlu 2003: 273).

Alongside the restrictive and securitized environment created by the Turkish state, the nature and mode of operation of the PKK presented a further formidable challenge to the emergence of an independent and vibrant Kurdish civil society. As described in detail by Marcus (2007), over the course of the 1980s and 90s all those Kurdish associations (legally registered or otherwise) which attempted to operate independently of the PKK at best lacked the necessary funding and political backing to make an impact on Kurdish society and at worst were threatened and intimidated by the PKK.[6] This is what subsequently allowed or facilitated the PKK's continued influence in Turkey's southeast following Öcalan's capture in 1999. Through the control of political and associational life in the southeast, the PKK retained influence in the region despite its leader's imprisonment and the flight of its militants to Northern Iraq. In other words, caught between the Scylla of an omnipresent PKK and the Charybdis of a repressive Turkish state, a genuinely independent Kurdish civil society struggled to emerge.

Finally the underdevelopment of Turkey's southeast also circumscribed the potential for a vibrant Kurdish civil society. Since the 1950s, the mass industrialization of western Turkey was pursued at the expense of the neglected and agricultural southeast, a region that was already highly debilitated by the harsh climate, geographical isolation and the tribal structure of society. Increasing regional disparities led to further population movements, from the rural southeast to shantytowns (*gecekondular*) in the urban centres of Istanbul, Adana, Ankara and Izmir, further eroding the fabric of Kurdish society. These inequalities were exacerbated further by the civil war against the PKK, with the large-scale destruction and evacuation of villages this implied (Çelik 2005). The economic solution presented by the state in the 1980s was embodied in the monumental South East Anatolian Project (*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi* – GAP), intended to use the Tigris and Euphrates to fuel the agricultural and industrial development of the region. Yet to date, although the partial implementation of GAP (through the Atatürk dam on the Euphrates) has provided water and electricity to most villages of the region, it has benefited more the industrial west than the underdeveloped southeast. Furthermore, GAP has failed act on the specific realities of the southeast, where land distribution is highly unequal, illiteracy is widespread and investment is almost non-existent. Indeed GAP notwithstanding, in the 1994-2004 period, the southeast consistently ranked last in terms of literacy and health indicators, and yet received on average a mere 3.2% of public investment on education and 4.8% on healthcare (Beleli 2005: 7).

2. The Role of Conflict Society in the Kurdish Question

Since the 1980s the Kurdish question has been amongst the principal issues occupying civil society's agenda in Turkey. It has acted as a defining issue around which civil society organizations positioned themselves in the domestic political system. Those demanding recognition of a separate Kurdish identity and cultural/collective rights, and denouncing the state's violations of human rights took the sphere of the "anti-establishment". Others, that could be defined as "establishment" CoSOs, adopted, to a fuller or lesser extent, the official state line and blamed anti-establishment civil society groups for being pawns in the hands of the Kurdish separatist movement. As will be made clearer in the subsequent pages, most CoSOs belonging to the former category continue hesitating in working with local official figures even when they consider it necessary to realize their aims. There are a few exceptions to this however, including organizations which try to carefully set a distance from both the state and the Kurdish movement, to which we will return below. In this

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[6] For example, as late as 2005, Hikmet Fidan, a HADEP member who publicly distanced himself from the PKK, was allegedly killed by the PKK.

section, we analyze in what ways and with what consequences CoSOs have been involved in the Kurdish question. We will distinguish CoSOs according to their three principal impacts: securitizing, holding and de-securitizing.

Securitizing Civil Society

i. Type of Actors and Identities

CoSOs which have tended to securitize the Kurdish question can be categorized as establishment/nationalist Turkish NGOs, the mainstream media and some Kurdish or pro-Kurdih associations. Turkish nationalist/establishment CoSOs tend to embrace an assimilationist identity and, in the case of Ankara Association of Martyrs' Families, an ethnocentrist one. Assimilationists can be placed at the inclusive/non-egalitarian nexus since they make references to the recognition of Kurdish individual rights as long as Kurds consent to being assimilated into the dominant Turkish identity. They negate the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity and the acknowledgment of collective rights to them. These organizations explicitly promote the rights of an exclusive group, i.e. martyrs' families or secular Turks, and resist any dialogue with or integration of non-Turkish elements in their actions and strategies. The Ankara Association of Martyrs' Families, which prioritizes the primordial rights of ethnic Turks and denies recognition any individual or collective rights to ethnic Kurds instead embraces a racist identity. Turkey's mainstream media has more often than not acted as a spokesman of the dominant state discourse, espousing civic or assimilationist attitudes regarding the Kurdish question. Turning to the anti-establishment category, Kurdish nationalist CoSOs and some of the activities and discourse of the Human Rights Association[7] have often played a securitizing role in their promotion a multicultural identity. Demonstrating an egalitarian yet exclusive outlook, Kurdish CoSOs advocate equal collective rights for all communities, yet fail to transcend ethno-centric interpretations of identity. As in the case of nationalist Turkish CoSOs, their membership and actions target like-minded groups and organizations. An exception in this respect is the Human Rights Association, which is less vulnerable to the criticism of sticking to ethno-nationalist interpretations and targets a larger audience while articulating human rights violations especially in relation to the Kurdish question.

Turkish organizations behaving as securitizing agents in the conflict range from establishment CoSOs, e.g. the Association for Atatürkist Thought (ADD), to right-wing trade unions, i.e. Türkiye Kamu-Sen, and organizations with ultra-nationalist tendencies, e.g., the Ankara Association of Martyrs' Families. They converge on the objection to the definition of the Kurdish question as a "Kurdish problem" and on perceiving it as 'a problem of terror' (Interviewees 2, 6, and 7) that could only be resolved with a resort to violent means. 'The solution to the problem of terror lies with a more authoritarian and decisive policy of the state. It should make people understand that terrorists will be harshly punished' (Interviewee 7). For establishment CoSOs, it is the mistaken tolerance of the state towards 'the separatist and cruel acts' (Interviewee 7) of terrorists that has hindered the settlement of the problem and prepared the ground for the provocations by separatists and their external allies at the expense of Turkey.

Turkish CoSOs with a securitizing impact most notably ADD and Türkiye Kamu-Sen even reject the existence of a distinct Kurdish culture and identity. Society is taken to be a homogenous entity defined by its Turkish character. 'As Atatürk stated, "the people who founded the Turkish

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[7] Although it should be noted that only some segments within this organization, in carrying out some of their activities, may be classified as securitizing, rather than the organization itself, which, a we shall se below, we include again when discussing peacebuilding CoSOs

Republic is called the Turkish nation." Thus, 77 million people living in Turkey are Turkish' (Interviewee 8). 'Therefore, it is not possible to imagine them [Kurds] as a nation or people different from us' (Interviewee 2). This rejectionist stand heavily fuels the conflict by making it impossible to engage in any dialogue with political figures and CoSOs demanding the recognition of Kurdish cultural and collective rights. Thus Kurdish CoSOs and politicians are not accepted as legitimate actors in any public debate on the Kurdish question but are rather securitized as existential threats to "the country's territorial integrity and indivisible identity with the country and the nation". The closure of pro-Kurdish parties and the punishment of human rights activists are often justified by establishment/nationalist CoSOs and the mainstream media as the state's natural reflex to protect its unity.

This rejectionist attitude also manifests itself in the assumption that Kurdish does not exist as a distinct language. It is either 'a dialect of Turkish language' (Interviewee 2) or a 'distorted form of Persian language' (Interviewee 8). Hence any demand for education and broadcasting in Kurdish is 'mere political rhetoric' and may not be associated with democratic rights. This approach reflects closely that of state institutions. For example within the framework of the EU reform process, the Turkish parliament made constitutional and legal amendments lifting the ban on teaching and broadcasting in languages other than Turkish, yet with tight conditions. As a sign of the state's unwillingness to acknowledge Kurdish as a language in its own right, the regulation formulated by the Radio and Television Higher Board (RTÜK) to allow broadcasts in languages other than Turkish is quite revealing. In this regulation, these languages are referred to merely as 'traditional languages and dialects Turkish citizens use in their daily life'.

It is a widespread conviction among nationalist Turkish CoSOs that the Kurdish question has an inexorable external dimension, which exacerbates the perception of the question as an existential threat. In order to emphasize how imminent and vital a threat Turkey has been exposed to due to the Kurdish question, demands for recognition of Kurdish collective rights are associated to insidious plots devised by external enemies to carve up Turkey. A number of interviewees explicitly stated that the Kurdish question has been abused particularly by Western powers to divide and 'weaken Turkey by inventing a new ethnic group' (Interviewee 2). The Kurdish question is often contextualized into a centuries-long intervention of major Western powers and Russia (Interviewee 2) competing to uphold their interests in the Middle East and surrounding regions. 'The problem stems from the long-lasting imperial aims and "divide and rule" policies of Britain and the West in the region for the sake of oil and water resources. These external forces attempt to galvanize a Kurdish movement and an artificial Kurdish state in the region'. All our interviewees from establishment/nationalist CoSOs are convinced that the PKK is extensively used and financed by the West, a claim often articulated through a language laden with religious connotations. 'The US has been using the PKK in the same way it has used Israel in the Middle East' (Interviewee 6). 'The terrorist organization is used as a tool by countries who cherish the same ideals as Christian Crusaders. To achieve their aims, they used ASALA in the past and now they are using the PKK' (Interviewee 7). As we can see from the last quotation, the Armenian and Kurdish issues are often linked to emphasize the magnitude and emergency of threats Turkey faces (Interviewee 2). The conviction that the Kurdish question has been used by major powers in the region is also shared by Kurdish CoSOs. However, they diverge from establishment ones when they argue that although the EU 'has double standards when it comes to the rights of Kurds' (Interviewee 4) and has not acted as 'an honest broker' (Interviewee 5), it should maintain its involvement in the Kurdish question due to its historical responsibility and act as a peace builder in the conflict (Interviewee 1).

The mainstream Turkish media, adopting a civic and/or assimilationist attitude as regards the Kurdish question, has also substantially contributed to the securitization of the issue in public discourse. As our interviewees from Kurdish associations and human rights organizations emphasized, the official state line is hardly problematized in the mainstream media due to political as well as commercial reasons (Interviewees 21 and 3). Excessive securitization and demonization of human rights activists and associations, misrepresentation of their activities and the

representation of Kurds as 'corrupt, feudal and male-dominated' (Interviewee 5) are among the typical manifestations of the securitizing role played by the Turkish media in the Kurdish question. Human rights CoSOs are also often misrepresented in the media as pro-PKK (Interviewees 3, 20), divisive or fundamentalist (Interviewee 23) (see also Plagemann 2000). The media's coverage of the Turkish army's incursion into northern Iraq to allegedly root out PKK camps is also quite revealing to understand the securitizing impact of the Turkish mainstream media in the Kurdish question. The military operation which commenced on 21st February and lasted eight days was widely supported in the mainstream media through an intense chauvinistic rhetoric and was justified as a "just war" to defend the country against de-humanized terrorists and separatists.

As stated at the beginning of this section, some Kurdish CoSOs which have vocally espoused a predominantly nationalist or multicultural agenda focusing exclusively on Kurdish rights, have had an equally fuelling impact. This is because they have contributed to the securitization of the Kurdish issue either by failing to distance themselves from the PKK and its separatist agenda or by advocating exclusively Kurdish collective rights and thus raising fears of a hidden separatist agenda. Hence, paradoxically perhaps, even organizations which have adamantly pursued a conflict resolution or transformation agenda, such as the Peace Mothers Association (*Barış Anneleri*), Göç-Der, Yakay-Der, the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre (*Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi*) and in some instances the Human Rights Association (IHD) may have inadvertently fuelled the conflict by heightening suspicions and feeding securitization. In particular, Kurdish CoSOs do not avoid using the word Kurdistan to refer to the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. The use of this term tends to fuel the conflict as it symbolizes for the bulk of Turks and Turkish CoSOs the separatist and seditious aspirations of the Kurds. These Kurdish CoSOs are also vocal in underlining the state's responsibility in the persistence of violence in the region in a securitized manner: '[T]he state continues its ever lasting policy of denial, assimilation and massacre against Kurds' (Interviewee 4). Even if these Kurdish CoSOs stress the immediate necessity of establishing dialogue, they cite a number of prerequisites for this dialogue including the constitutional recognition of Kurds as one of the founding peoples of the republic (Interviewees 4 and 5).

ii. Frameworks of Action

The frameworks of action chosen by fuelling Turkish and Kurdish CoSOs display patterns commensurate with their identities and types of impact. CoSOs which adopt a securitizing language can mainly be placed at two opposite ends of the spectrum of action, namely conflict escalation and conflict transformation. As one might expect, nationalist/Kemalist CoSOs approaching the Kurdish question in terms of national security and threat operate in a conflict-escalating mode. Kurdish associations and in some cases human rights organizations articulating the imminent consequences of the conflict and the human rights violations by the state find themselves in the category of transformation or attempted transformation. However, since their actions and language are couched in security terms, their role falls short of leading to genuine peace-building.

The Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Mothers, the Ankara Association of Martyrs' Families and the Association for Atatürkist Thought have all contributed to the escalation of the Kurdish question in two principal ways. First, they have reinforced the dynamics of the conflict by reacting to political developments by issuing press releases or organizing demonstrations to protest specific actions of opposing CoSOs or the government. For example the mass demonstration held in June 2007 to denounce the increasing attacks of the PKK, the inept policies of the government and to urge the Turkish army to launch a sweeping military operation in northern Iraq was organized by the Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Mothers in cooperation with other associations of martyrs' families, the National Union of Turkish Non-Governmental Organizations (USTKB), the Organization for Support of Contemporary Life

(ÇYDD), and the Contemporary Education Foundation (ÇEV) among others. Second, these organizations have pursued lobbying activities to influence decision-making regarding the living standards of martyrs' families and to discard any political initiatives for the passing of general amnesty and repentance laws for PKK members. Furthermore, they have monitored trials in "terror-related cases", e.g. Öcalan's trial at the European Court of Human Rights, and have filed court cases against political figures, intellectuals or anyone they deem as "threatening Turkey's unity or territorial integrity". In particular, for the Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Mothers the filing of court cases has been a useful strategy to fiercely react to current developments, gain publicity and promote its agenda. For instance, the association has recently sued on the grounds of denigrating martyrdom and martyrs' families the incumbent prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for his speech on martyrs' soldiers and renown singer Bülent Ersoy, who, in a live television programme, opposed the army's latest incursion into northern Iraq beginning on 21 February 2008. At the other end of the spectrum, Peace Mothers, Yakay-Der, the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre and the IHD have attempted to alter the structural underpinnings of the Kurdish question, and hence act in a conflict transformation mode. These predominantly Kurdish CoSOs with a conflict-transformation agenda have focused on the consequences of the Kurdish question, i.e. bans on Kurdish culture and language and investigation into the cases of missing people and discrimination. Their campaigns, documentation of displaced and missing people, hunger strikes and cultural activities aim at sensitizing people to the Kurdish cause and reinforcing a solidarity network among "victims of state violence" via legal assistance and common actions.

iii. Political Opportunity Structure

The political opportunity structure affecting civil society actions in conflict has been defined as an aggregate of structural conditions in which CoSOs operate and exert an impact on conflicts (Marchetti and Tocci 2007). These conditions, by constraining and enabling civil society interventions, reconfigure the impact of CoSOs' in successive phases of a given conflict. The structural conditions shaping the political opportunity structure for CoSOs with a securitizing impact can be categorized as follows: time contingent factors, domestic institutional and socio-political environment (relations with the state, media and other CoSOs), and the involvement of external actors – most notably the EU. Time contingent factors may be categorized as both general and specific. The general timing factors influencing and remoulding associational life in Turkey will be elaborated in detail in the third section on civil society and conflict dynamics. Here, we focus on the specific time factors that have impinged upon the impact of securitizing organizations in particular.

In order to gain a better insight into how the impact of securitizing CoSOs is re-structured by time contingent factors, a clear distinction needs to be made between nationalist/assimilationist Turkish CoSOs on the one hand and Kurdish and human rights organizations on the other. The escalation of armed conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK has often provided fertile ground for establishment Turkish CoSOs to justify their *raison d'être* and disseminate their inflammatory and securitizing rhetoric publicly. To illustrate this point, the Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Mothers was founded in the mid-1990s, the years when the armed conflict in the southeast intensified and casualties increased. In such times of conflict escalation, these associations found more maneuvering room to mobilize the masses by issuing press releases, organizing marches and instrumentalizing funerals of martyrs' soldiers "to denounce terror and Kurdish separatism".

When the Kurdish conflict relapsed into violent phases, Kurdish CoSOs and human rights organizations inversely tend to lose ground as they become subject to greater marginalization and misrepresentation in the public sphere. They themselves become the objects of securitizing and

inimical rhetoric by nationalist Turkish CoSOs and the media, which often induce counter-securitizations on the part of Kurdish organizations. They have tended to adopt a defensive and reactionary discourse presenting the Kurdish question as a matter of self-defence and "survival" (Interviewee 4) for all Kurds. At times of escalation, also the Human Rights Association has tended to use a harsher language regarding the state's human rights violations, contributing to the polarization of positions. This has often rendered this organization an easy target of accusations of treachery and betrayal, even if its identity and actions are often carried out in a conflict transformation mod of action and will also be treated below in the section on peacebuilding CoSOs.

When examining the domestic socio-political environment in which securitizing CoSOs operate, the same distinction between pro-establishment and anti-establishment organizations emerges since patterns of relations with state authorities and the media display sharp contrasts in these two cases. In the case of Turkish establishment organizations, relations with the state are characterized either by approval and sympathy, i.e. martyrs' families associations or mutual indifference, i.e. the Association for Atatürkist Thought. With the exception of Türkiye Kamu-Sen, which faced physical pressure from police forces in a few cases during demonstrations (Interviewee 2), interviewees belonging to these associations did not mention any legal or physical pressure from the authorities at national and local levels. However, while establishment CoSOs display an unquestioned and strong loyalty to the state and its nationalist ideals, they frequently criticize the AKP government for 'not being strict and powerful enough' against PKK terrorists and not advocating the rights of martyrs' families (Interviewees 6 and 7).

The relations of Kurdish and human rights organizations with state organs are generally characterized by mistrust, disapproval, distance (Interviewee 1), and, in some cases, animosity. All our interviewees in this category emphasized that they had experienced legal and physical pressure from state organs, including torture (Interviewee 4), imprisonment (Interviewee 20), legal proceedings (Interviewees 1, 3 and 18), killing of members (Interviewee 3), and a banning of cultural activities (Interviewee 5). Some anti-establishment CoSOs are convinced that they are still forced to work under legal pressure and judicial animosity. According to Hüsnü Öndül, the current chairman of the Human Rights Association, the judiciary still 'considers human rights in general and IHD in particular as a threat to the state'.

The nationalist and establishment CoSOs are generally satisfied with the way in which their activities are covered by the media with some minor reservations. To Türkiye Kamu-Sen for instance, although the media is willing to follow their activities, 'the current government at times intervenes in the press seriously through implicit channels' (Interviewee 2). According to the two organizations working on the rights of martyrs' families, the media is strongly reluctant to criticize the government (Interviewee 6) and tends to publicize their activities only 'in a way it thinks appropriate for its own purposes' (Interviewee 7). Our interviewees belonging to Kurdish CoSOs and the Human Rights Association converged on the idea that the mainstream Turkish media has had a partial and biased approach towards them, which has resulted in their misrepresentation or marginalization. In particular, IHD has suffered much from a selective coverage of its activities in the media. In fact, all human rights organizations in Turkey insist that 'they were represented as being tied to certain political forces and their statements were evaluated accordingly. Considerable parts of their work were thus hardly reflected at all in the media' (Plagemann 2000: 440) The media, for example, did not report on IHD's open protest campaign against the PKK for having threatened Kurdish intellectuals who did not adopt the PKK line (Interviewee 20). According to Peace Mothers, the Turkish media, which they refer to as 'war media' (Interviewee 4) depicts them as terrorists, a conviction shared also by the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre. Other small Kurdish associations such as Yakay-Der and the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre complain about their marginalization and misrepresentation by the media as being close to the PKK (Interviewees 5 and 18).

A further element conditioning the political opportunity structure of fuelling CoSOs are relations between CoSOs involved in the Kurdish question. Nationalist/assimilationist Turkish

CoSOs portray a securitized and in some cases demonized image of Kurdish and human rights associations, which are conceived as part of a security equation arising from the Kurdish question. They are perceived at best as organizations whose aims and motives are dubious and at worst as 'legal representatives of the PKK' (Interviewee 7). In both cases, human rights groups are considered as organizations appropriating the language of rights and pursuing a hidden agenda that could jeopardize Turkey's national unity and security. These organizations 'working under the name of promoters of human rights' use human rights 'as a smokescreen to destroy the Republic and its unitary and indivisible character' (Interviewee 8). The contention that the Human Rights Association is biased and defends the rights and freedoms of Kurds and even in some cases terrorists, but not those of murdered Turkish soldiers and their families, is widespread among Kemalist/nationalist Turkish CoSOs. In the same vein, 'Peace Mothers should be named as PKK Mothers and should be deported as they are pursuing separatist acts' (Interviewee 6). It should be noted however that on the Kurdish front we did not come across such a securitized and demonized conception of establishment CoSOs during our interviews. A common assumption among Kurdish organizations is that Turkish nationalist CoSOs are often used and manipulated by state authorities to behave and react in a certain manner (Interviewee 4). We also observed that both establishment and anti-establishment CoSOs are willing to cooperate with like-minded organizations. This cooperation develops by supporting each others' activities, i.e. demonstrations, public petitions, making joint declarations and sharing experience and know-how.

Finally, in relation to the involvement of external actors and their impact on the political opportunity structure in the Kurdish issue, we have mainly looked at how securitizing CoSOs tend to perceive the EU's involvement in the issue. It should be stated that both establishment and anti-establishment CoSOs, though to varying degrees, adopt a similar sceptical and critical line towards the EU and its involvement in the Kurdish question, while also acknowledging the positive aspects of EU-led democratizing reforms in Turkey. For nationalist Turkish CoSOs, the EU's policy in the Kurdish question is 'very selective and characterized by double standards' and hypocrisy (Interviewees 2 and 7). As a 'union of imperial states', the EU's role in the Kurdish question is defined as 'concocting a grand and elaborate project of splitting up Turkey to establish its control over oil and water resources in this region' (Interviewee 8). One might note that Kurdish CoSOs, too, do not hide their disillusionment with the EU. According to them, the EU, which 'adopt[s] the same line as the Turkish state' (Interviewee 5) has almost missed the opportunity of being a catalyst for the solution of the Kurdish question. Yet other Kurdish organizations such as Yakay-Der, Göç-Der and the Human Rights Association are more optimistic about Turkey's EU integration, mentioning the positive role of EU-led reforms to democratize Turkey and open a space for dialogue between Turkish and Kurdish peoples (Interviewees 1, 3, and 20). All human rights activists we interviewed suggested that in parallel to the deterioration of EU-Turkey relations there has been a decrease in human rights standards and a sharp increase in human rights violations, which cripples their effectiveness and ability to influence policy (Interviewees 20, 3, 12 and 15).

Holding Civil Society

i. Type of Actors and Identities

CoSOs exerting a holding impact on the Kurdish question include a wide variety of actors with diverse backgrounds. To present a systematic and clear picture of holding actors and actions, we classify them into three categories according to their structural organization and the way they have become involved in the Kurdish question. The first group includes predominantly the Kurdish Women's Centre (KAMER) in Diyarbakır and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV),

both of which are issue-specific CoSOs with a non-securitizing impact, and the Istanbul Bar Association which addresses the technical and legal aspects of law-making and implementation in the field of human rights. The second cluster includes CoSOs with an international background: the Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HCA) and two actors which form part of international funding or activist networks: the Open Society Institute (OSI) and Amnesty International. The third group is constituted by The Common Platform of Human Rights (IHOP), Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre, and *Vakit Geldi* (Time Has Come), all of which act as networking and/or capacity building agents for human rights organizations or activists.

Holding CoSOs across these three groups all embrace a predominantly civic identity with the exception of two CoSOs with multicultural identities. Starting with the latter, the Istanbul Bar Association and *Vakit Geldi* have different organizational structures, mandates and strategies. *Vakit Geldi* operates as a bi-communal activist network in-the-making composed by Turkish and Kurdish women motivated by the fear that 'the Kurdish conflict may become a communal conflict rather than a conflict between the state and the Kurdish nationalist movement' (Interviewee 9). Being an elitist network, it brings together women from different walks of life (business, media, activists, researchers, arts) and different political ideologies to disavow violence and air publicly their views on a peaceful settlement to the Kurdish issue. Rather than seeking an absolute consensus, *Vakit Geldi* aims to create a forum for dialogue, to find the lowest common denominator and share experiences among its participants. The Istanbul Bar Association instead is a professional organization working on the technical and legal aspects of human rights through the Human Rights Centre and is legally liable for its actions. Contrary to other NGOs and activists, it does not pursue protest campaigns or demonstrations, but rather reacts to legal arrangements and amendments by issuing press releases on its website. The Centre for Human Rights, through its three sub-commissions, monitors the overall functioning of the state apparatus with respect to human rights, and decides which action and reaction to pursue in consultation with the Bar Association. The Centre does not handle the Kurdish issue directly, but rather focuses on the general human rights legislation in Turkey affecting, *inter alia*, the Kurds.

The other CoSOs with a holding impact on the Kurdish question embrace a civic identity and are thus characterized by their egalitarian and inclusive outlook. Beginning with the first group composed by issue-specific CoSOs, KAMER is a notable example since it has adopted a more neutral and universal human rights language than most other Kurdish CoSOs and has created alliances between Kurdish and Turkish groups, particularly on women-related issues, i.e. honour crimes (Interviewee 26). By working on women's rights and collaborating with state authorities when necessary, KAMER has adopted a civic agenda and has broken away from the prevalent image that Kurdish organizations are exclusively interested in the defence of Kurdish rights in alliance with the Kurdish nationalist movement. As one interviewee suggested, KAMER and other Kurdish women organizations 'are trying to distance themselves from the Kurdish movement, voice democratic demands and identity claims within the context of citizenship rights. They do not base these claims on the demands for an autonomous Kurdish state' (Interviewee 16). The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey includes technical experts and consultants to provide medical and psychological rehabilitation to victims of torture, and reports on human rights violations in Turkey. These facts are then brought to the fore through legal and advocacy campaigns by the Human Rights Association discussed above. Laying particular emphasis on civic rights, the human Right Foundation advocates a non-violent solution to the Kurdish question and vocally condemns violence on both sides of the conflict.

Turning to international organizations and networks, the Open Society Institute is an international foundation aiming to support democratic reforms, though not those directly related to the Kurdish issue, through research, advocacy and funding. Its specific issue-areas include education, women's rights, reforming the justice system, youth, and hate-speech watch (Interviewee 13). Despite its holistic approach to human rights and its civic outlook, its role in the Kurdish question is limited for reasons that will be elaborated below. Amnesty International operates in

Turkey through its office in Istanbul and takes up human rights issues in general by mobilizing public pressure and exerting influence on political actors. It avoids directly tackling the Kurdish issue, works on the legal dimension of human rights and aims to raise public awareness through specific campaigns (Interviewee 14), e.g., violence against women and disarmament. The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly has been operational in Turkey since 1993 as a registered association. As in the case of other international organizations, HCA does not defend the rights of the Kurdish community in particular, although it does advocate the recognition of Kurdish minority rights. Its outlook on the issue has shifted from conceiving the Kurdish question as one of democracy and development to one with a distinctly cultural dimension (Interviewee 25).

The last group of holding CoSOs with a civic identity includes the Common Platform of Human Rights (IHOP) and Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre. The former is a relatively new network of human rights organizations which was formally established in 2005. It brings together Amnesty International, the Human Rights Association, the Human Rights Foundation, Mazlum-Der and the Helsinki Citizens Assembly to better coordinate their activities on human rights, and enhance their impact and visibility (Interviewee 15). Opting not to work directly on the Kurdish question, IHOP works towards non-violence and peace through specific projects, e.g. those on discrimination and freedom of expression. IHOP also aims at liaising between local and international NGOs and raising the capacity of its members to influence public policy (Interviewee 15). By institutionalizing relations between these major human rights organizations, IHOP has also served as a forum of socialization helping to moderate and de-securitize the discourse of the most outspoken of five: the IHD. The NGO Training and Research Centre based in Bilgi University is a capacity building platform targeting rights-based Turkish and Kurdish NGOs which operate in different regions throughout Turkey. Its activities entail training NGOs through on-site or distance programmes in organizational skills, project management and fund-raising. It also serves as a platform to facilitate the sharing of experiences and joint projects among participant NGOs.

ii. Frameworks of Action

Turkish, Kurdish and international CoSOs exerting a holding impact on the Kurdish question operate in a distinctively conflict resolution mode. As in the case of other conflict resolution CoSOs, they depart from an organic view of human rights and propagate non-coercive means based on dialogue and problem-solving (Marchetti and Tocci 2007). Hence, for them, a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish question and ameliorating human rights standards in Turkey are closely intermingled. As one might notice in the table below, several organizations have been duplicated in the holding and peace-building sections. This is because these groups exert different impacts on the conflict depending on their specific actions. This section elaborates on actions which induce a holding impact on the Kurdish question.

Defining these CoSOs as holding ones does not mean that they do not exert a positive or negative impact on the Kurdish question. By non-securitizing the conflict environment, they may help de-securitize it in the long run and hence prepare the ground for peace-building efforts. Their holding actions might also give way to new securitizing moves and to a renewed period of escalation. The framework of action of holding CoSOs is driven by conflict resolution, with the exception of Turkey's Human Rights Foundation, which works in a conflict transformation mode (in tandem with the IHD). We will divide holding CoSOs operating in a conflict resolution manner roughly into two groups. The first prefers to work on the most acute symptoms or on non-confrontational aspects of the Kurdish question. These CoSOs, which tend to be issue-specific ones, include KAMER, *Vakit Geldi* and Turkey's Human Rights Foundation (TIHV). The second group works on general human rights and democratization issues rather than tailoring their actions

specifically to the Kurdish issue. This group, which is dominated by international non-governmental organizations and networks such as the Open Society Institute, Amnesty International and the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, also includes the Istanbul Bar Association, the Common Platform of Human Rights (IHOP), and Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre.

The Women's Centre (KAMER), spearheaded by Nebahat Akkoç, a Kurdish human rights activist, started its activities in 1994 and enlarged to include twenty three cities and towns in southeastern Turkey. It was founded to respond to the imminent need of providing medical, psychological and legal support to women in the southeastern region who became victims of violence regardless of its perpetrators. The association exclusively aims at alleviating women's problems, i.e. by opening crèches and women shelters for victims of violence or likely victims of honour killings. KAMER has contributed to the non-securitization of the Kurdish question in two ways. First, it has de-coupled itself from the Kurdish movement and vocally declared that 'any patriarchal political movement and nationalism oppresses women. Kurds needed an emancipatory movement based on gender equality' (Interviewee 16). In this vein, it has espoused the strategy of working with community leaders, state authorities, the police force and gendarmerie to realize its objectives and enhance its impact. A similar strategy has been employed by the Women Centre in Van, where suicide rates among Kurdish women are among the highest and honour killings are remarkably high. The Women Centre established a wide network of volunteers, experts, local authorities and funding bodies to fight violence against women, provide rehabilitation and shelter, and train women in the region on specific issues such as childcare and the rights of patients. Second, KAMER has created a strong collaborative network of Turkish and Kurdish associations to address the symptomatic problems of women particularly in rural areas. One example includes the project conducted jointly by KAMER, KAGİDER (Association for Women Entrepreneurs), KEDEV (Foundation for Supporting Women's Handcraft) and KADAV (Solidarity with Women Fund) with the aim of providing financial support to uneducated and unemployed women through cooperatives and workshops and encourage women entrepreneurs in the southeastern region.

Vakit Geldi, another bi-communal network of women, serves a non-securitizing function in the conflict. It differs significantly from the other CoSOs covered here since it is a loose network of women which opted not to organize itself as an association and refused to set out principles of what a solution to the Kurdish question should entail in so far as this would alienate some members. Instead, this initiative aims at raising public awareness on the violent aspects of the Kurdish question and hence bring certain human rights violations on to the political agenda (Interviewee 9) thanks to the relatively good access some of its members enjoy with the media, business and political worlds. One example of their activities is their work and campaign on landmines planted in the southeastern region which killed 289 civilians between 1993 and 2003 according to official figures. This campaign is relatively non-confrontational given that landmines pose an explicit threat to the lives of civilians, mostly children. Turkey ratified the Mine Ban Treaty in 2004 and announced in late 2007 a mine action plan to meet its 2014 deadline for the clearance of antipersonnel mines. This commitment opened up an opportunity for NGOs to be involved in de-mining. The Platform for a Mine-Free Turkey was initiated by several prominent civil society organizations and was supported by more than fifty organizations, NGOs and trade unions.

Turkey's Human Rights Foundation (TIHV) is the third issue-specific CoSO which works on torture. It provides medical and psychological support to victims of torture regardless of their ethnic origin, publishing two annual reports, one on the statistical documentation of torture and the other on the general situation of human rights in Turkey. It also issues press releases denouncing human rights violations. TIHV operates in a conflict-transformation framework of action since it addresses a specific aspect of human rights through the help of experts, lawyers and psychiatrists and aims to amass the necessary public and political support to establish new legal frameworks to ensure the respect of human rights, especially the freedom from torture. Its research work is critical also the campaigns and activities of the Human Rights Association.

Our second category of holding CoSOs which prefer to work on human rights in general operate in a conflict resolution mode. The Open Society Institute, for instance, supports efforts to introduce and implement democratizing reforms in Turkey's EU accession process through research, funding and advocacy, but not in a manner which is directly related to the Kurdish issue (Interviewee 13). Likewise, Amnesty International focuses more on the legal dimension and avoids mentioning explicitly the Kurdish question. Its other activities include campaigning for the abolition of the article 301, working on torture by serving as a transit organization, i.e. connecting victims to lawyers, and issuing press releases to raise awareness. Due to its international background, it avoids mass events and hence remains less visible in the media and public sphere (Interviewee 14). The Helsinki Citizens Assembly instead has opted to create a space for dialogue between different groups and has never adopted a position on the Kurdish question. As in the case of TIHV, its particular focus has been on torture and it has aimed at mapping torture in Turkey. While doing this, however, it avoids using a securitizing language and does not focus on a particular sub-set of victims, i.e. Kurds; it also portrays state officials, i.e. the police and judges, as potential protectors of human rights (Interviewee 11). The Istanbul Bar Association, by mandate, works mainly on the legal aspects of human rights. It gives opinions on the compatibility of draft laws with fundamental human rights as enshrined in the constitution and international agreements ratified by Turkey (Interviewee 17). The Bar Association also monitors the compatibility of practices with existing laws.

Finally, IHOP and Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre serve as networking and capacity building agents. IHOP has built a platform not only for its member organizations but also for other human rights activists from different sectors, e.g. from the media and universities in order to share know-how and conduct common projects with regard to human rights (Interviewee 15). Although it does not handle the Kurdish question directly, its projects and campaigns on ethnic and religious discrimination in Turkey and the much-criticized articles of the penal Code and Anti-Terrorism Law exert an indirect yet significant effect on the Kurdish question. Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre provides training, seminars, and legal consultancy to improve the capacity and visibility of NGOs. In order to reach out to as many NGOs as possible, it has developed face-to-face and distance learning courses and programmes on issues such as 'the general history of civil society, developing strategies, organizational skills, volunteerism, project management, human rights and law, project submission to the EU and fundraising' (Interviewee 16). The Centre works collaboratively with the Human Rights Law Centre in Bilgi University to give legal consultancy to NGOs and works towards enhancing collaboration between NGOs at national as well as international levels.

iii. Political Opportunity Structure

In our interviews with members of holding CoSOs, two tragic events alongside the unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK came to the fore as critical time-contingent factors shaping the political opportunity structure for these organizations: the twin earthquakes in 1999 and the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist and editor of the newspaper *Agos* Hrant Dink in January 2007. It is widely accepted among practitioners and experts of Turkish civil society that the two devastating earthquakes in August and November 1999 marked a watershed in civil society activism in Turkey. Soon after these earthquakes,[8] exposing 'fissures in the edifice of the Turkish

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[8] The series of earthquakes which caused more than 60,000 casualties were a complete disaster for Turkish society. The national and local governments were subjected to widespread and scathing criticism for their failure to rescue victims, supply relief and manage the crisis. Civil society organisations, however, were more efficient and quicker to respond to the disaster.

state' (Kubicek 2001 34), there was an upsurge of interest in civil activism, which was shared by almost all sectors of society. Civil society came to be blessed particularly by the liberal intelligentsia as a legitimate vehicle through which the strong state tradition could be eroded and even totally overwhelmed in Turkey. However, this optimism soon eclipsed by the failure of these NGOs 'to sustain their level of political mobilization or come together to spearhead a push for sweeping reforms' (ibid.). Nevertheless, these earthquakes injected a vital lease of life in Turkish civil society, projecting it as an indispensable actor in such a critical moment for the state and society. Our interviewees from holding CoSOs and academia stressed the importance of the momentum for Turkish civil society generated by the twin earthquakes and the subsequent work, experience and know-how sharing with international civil society (Interviewees 9, 11, 25, 26).

As the second crucial time factor, the assassination of the highly admired journalist Hrant Dink influenced civil activism in Turkey in a complicated manner. On the one hand, it triggered a strong wave of reaction against nationalist tendencies which translated into the mass mobilization and activism on the part of CoSOs with a holding and peace-building impact on the Kurdish question (Interviewees 11 and 14). On the other hand, the assassination heavily contributed to the polarization of society between the reform/liberal-minded and assimilationist/securitizing camps. However overall the balance tilted in favour of the latter. The slogan used by the protestors of Dink's assassination "we are all Armenians" created a nationalist backlash ("we are all Mehmets"), which had much greater visibility in the media (Interviewee 14). Another time contingent factor was the unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK, which led to a period of calm between 1999-2004, where the volume of trade between southeast Turkey and northern Iraq increased rapidly (Interviewee 21). The period of ceasefire and calm which overlapped with the EU reform process opened new spaces 'for new CoSOs and allowed existing ones to operate in a different kind of environment' (Interviewee 24). Yet, as our interviewee from IHOP argued, 'this opportunity was used neither by Kurds nor by the state in Turkey. The state could have behaved in a different manner and could have taken bold steps to persuade society that democratic openings and peaceful steps would not divide the country' (Interviewee 15).

The domestic political environment for holding CoSOs instead appears to be neither too challenging nor extremely favourable. Relations with the state organs are rather distant and are characterized neither by pressure nor incentives. An exception to this are Kurdish women's associations, which keep a critical distance from the state while cooperating with specific local and national officials, an issue to which we will return in the next section. Apart from the Istanbul Bar Association and *Vakit Geldi*, the CoSOs in this category have strong relations especially with like-minded organizations open to dialogue and exchange. The Istanbul Bar Association, instead stated it had almost no relations with other CoSOs working in the field of human rights due to its different legal status and identity.[9] Apart from the Bar Association, KAMER, TIHV, HCA, OSI and Amnesty International are viewed with scepticism and mistrust by the establishment and nationalist CoSOs. They are perceived either as identical to pro-Kurdish associations (TIHV and KAMER) or as pawns of external actors (OSI and Amnesty International). Even if marginalization or misperception by the media is not as acute as in the case of anti-establishment/Kurdish CoSOs, holding CoSOs are not totally satisfied with the media's attitude towards them. According to our interviewee from Amnesty International, for instance, 'the media just focuses on the sensationalist cases rather than on the technicalities of article 301 and the debates and court cases around it.'

Unlike securitizing CoSOs, organizations with a holding impact generally adopt a more positive, albeit still critical, outlook on democratizing reforms and Turkey's EU integration. They converge on the assumption that EU-required legal and constitutional amendments have widened

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[9] This is also attributable to the Kemalist ideology of the recent board of directors of the bar association, which is sceptical about human rights organizations. During the term in office of the previous directors, e.g. Yücel Sayman, there existed more cooperative links and better relations with human rights NGOs.

the political space in favour of civil society and the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question. Yet alongside the typical and oft-cited problem of implementing these reforms, 'some gains from this reform process were even lost through some recent amendments' (Interviewee 12) such as in the case of the Anti-Terrorism Law (2006) and the Law on the Duties and Authority of the Police (2007) (Interviewees 15 and 17). In particular TIHV and IHOP expressed pessimistic views as regards to the impact of EU-reforms on the Kurdish question and human rights in Turkey, which are often defined within the confines of the 'red zone of the state' (Interviewee 15). There still exists a strong resistance against these reforms from some sectors of the bureaucratic apparatus and the militarist structure and mentality 'which is not limited to the army' but is also observable in a myriad of other official institutions, i.e. RTÜK, the Higher Education Board (YÖK) and the judicial system. A prevalent view is in fact that 'EU reforms were conducted to the extent that this military structure has allowed them' (Interviewee 15); a view also shared by anti-establishment securitizing Kurdish CoSOs (Interviewee 20).

A number of holding CoSOs also draw attention to the need for the EU to develop a more gentle and fair attitude towards Turkey (Interviewees 13, 14 and 17). EU scepticism which is triggered by the perception that 'the EU will never allow Turkey in' coupled with rising nationalism have hampered the effectiveness of holding CoSOs with strong international links, i.e. Amnesty International, OSI and HCA. The strengthening of reactionary approaches towards European institutions and other external actors has also discredited these organizations, a factor crippling their capacity to influence the human rights situation in general and the Kurdish question in particular. Most of the holding CoSOs do not benefit from EU funds either due to the inappropriateness of their legal status (i.e. the Bar Association and *Vakit Geldi*) or because of their links with other international bodies (i.e., Amnesty International and IHOP). Yet, especially TIHV and KAMER in cooperation with other Kurdish women associations are enthusiastic and successful in gaining EU financial support. Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre instead has received funds from member state embassies (Interviewee 16).

De-securitizing/Peace-building Civil Society

i. Type of actors and identities

This final group of CoSOs is identified as de-securitizing or peacebuilding as they contribute to reconciling diverse subject positions and desecuritizing the conflict environment. De-securitizing CoSOs are diverse in their actions, structure and political opportunity structures, yet all converge on the idea that the Kurdish question can only be solved through non-coercive means, dialogue and democratization in Turkey. They espouse a neutral and universal language of human rights and serve to dismantle the prevalent image that human rights activists and NGOs aim to advocate exclusively the rights of the Kurdish community and pursue a separatist agenda. Peacebuilding CoSOs involved in the Kurdish question fall under two categories. The first group includes Turkish and Kurdish associations which adopt a civic identity and agenda. Among these we find first KAMER (Women Centre) and the Turkey's Human Rights Foundation (TIHV), which we have also included in the section on holding CoSOs. We also add here some of the activities of the Human Rights Association (IHD), discussed in previous sections as well. Second, we include the Social Democracy Foundation (SODEV), a foundation dedicated to promoting the principles of social democracy, which acts as a platform for discussion and consensus on key social and political issues in Turkey. Third, *Açık Radyo*, an independent, Istanbul-based radio station which began broadcasting in 1995 and has been run by presenters on a voluntary basis since then. Aiming to promote fundamental human rights and multiculturalism, it broadcasts on a wide range of issues to

support peace and dialogue. Fourth, *Barışa Rock*, a rock festival which started in 2000 targeting high school and college students. Connecting itself to the global anti-war movement, it aims to promote the principles of peace, freedom, equality and solidarity and disavows nationalism, racism and war. Although it is not affiliated with any political grouping and has not taken a particular position on the Kurdish question, it aims to sensitize youth to politics through discussion with politicians, activists and intellectuals.

Turning to the peacebuilding CoSOs with a multicultural identity, Mazlum-Der emerges as one of most long-established NGOs (founded in 1991) working to promote human rights in Turkey. At the time of its establishment, human rights activism was dominated by IHD, which can be defined as a leftist organization. Mazlum-Der, however, is a religiously inclined association, which aims to bring the demands of other groups on to the political agenda, e.g., the headscarf issue. Its scope and remit however are not limited to the human rights of religiously oriented groups. Rather, it functions as a 'full-scale human rights watch organization in Turkey covering issues ranging from the headscarf to discrimination against Armenians and other non-Muslims, as well as Kurds in Turkey, women's issues, disappeared people, suspicious deaths, and human rights violations in prisons' (Kadıoğlu 2005: 35). *Vakit Geldi*, which has also been examined in the section on holding CoSOs, operates as a bi-communal network with a multi-cultural identity among peacebuilding CoSOs. Finally, Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism (*Irkçılığa ve Milliyetçliğe DurDe*) is a network of human rights activists which was formed after Dink's assassination as a reaction against racism and nationalism in Turkey. It opted not to register as an association to avoid hierarchical relations and to function as a flexible and comprehensive network of campaigners and activists (Interviewee 22).

CoSOs with a civic identity operate at the inclusive and egalitarian nexus and put primary emphasis on civil, political and socio-economic rights, rather than identity-related rights, such as culture or religion. This has been the case particularly for KAMER, which frames its demands in the language of individual rights and thus distances itself from organizations which claim collective rights for Kurds. The all-embracing language of civic CoSOs serves to desecuritize the language of human rights by enlarging it to cover whole sectors of society. It also serves to diversify the profile of organizations working on human rights beyond those motivated by a specific ideology or promoting the exclusive rights of one community. *Açık Radyo* and *Barışa Rock*, for instance, are not human rights associations, but promote a non-nationalist agenda and contribute to the debates on peace, minority rights and non-violence without any ethnic connotations. Some peacebuilding CoSOs, however, do not avoid speaking explicitly on the Kurdish question and on the link between the Kurdish issue and the general standard of human rights and democracy in Turkey. According to TIHV, for instance, the Kurdish issue represents the primary problem in the sphere of human rights in the country. 'Steps towards democratization can be taken only through the resolution of the Kurdish problem. The Kurdish question, due to war conditions, is the area where the most acute human rights violations can be observed. For the solution of the problem, the democratic demands of Kurds should be recognized and taken into account by the state so as to institutionalize a just and viable solution. This can be done only through democratic means and dialogue' (Interviewee 12). SODEV is another example of CoSOs that contribute to the desecuritization of the Kurdish question by opening a space for dialogue between Turkish and Kurdish actors and in particular voicing positions which are not associated with either the state establishment or the Kurdish nationalist cause. By maintaining close contacts and continuous dialogue with actors of the Kurdish movement and Kurdish intellectuals while at the same time targeting organized groups with diverse backgrounds and ideologies – i.e. Mazlum-Der and Atatürkist Thought Association – SODEV aims to mediate and reconcile different subject positions.

In the case of de-securitizing CoSOs with a multi-cultural identity, individual and collective rights are given equal attention. Mazlum-Der, for instance, attributes two reasons to the persistence of the Kurdish problem: 'the fact that democratic culture has not yet been internalized in Turkey' and that Kurds are denied cultural, linguistic and educational rights (Interviewee 23). It points out

that the escalation of the conflict is made possible through the actions of both parties and that the problem can only be solved through the spread of a democratic culture and legal means. The position of Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism on the Kurdish question is less explicit. It aims at fighting any discriminatory or racist attitude against any minority group, i.e. Armenians and Kurds, which are seen as the most vulnerable groups. This network of activists was initiated after the murder of Hrant Dink and its priority campaign has been the abolishment of Article 301, which is believed to be directly related to his assassination. The increasing number and diversity of NGOs and networks speaking out on the Kurdish question serves to de-securitize the sphere of human and minority rights in Turkey and breaks the monopoly of a limited number of NGOs which have been vocal on the Kurdish question and have received the mistrust and scathing criticisms of establishment organizations. A relevant example is the efforts of *Vakit Geldi* to publicize peace statements signed by Turkish and Kurdish women with the aim of calling for the commitment to non-violence.

ii. Frameworks of action

When examining de-securitizing CoSOs, roughly two distinct patterns of action can be distinguished: conflict resolution and conflict transformation. CoSOs belonging to the conflict resolution category include SODEV, TIHV, Açık Radyo and *Vakit Geldi*. CoSOs operating in a conflict transformation mode are KAMER, Mazlum-Der, Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism, *Barışa Rock* and, especially in more recent years, IHD. Typically, these de-securitizing/peacebuilding CoSOs are active in protecting or enhancing human rights in general and emphasizing the need to build an entrenched framework of human rights. For them, the respect of individual and collective rights, democratizing Turkish domestic polity, permanent peace and non-violence are inextricably tied.

De-securitizing CoSOs operating in a conflict resolution mode endorse non-coercive and non-violent means for resolving the Kurdish question and the involvement of NGO and grassroots activities. To this end, TIHV supports demonstrations and declarations by other human rights organizations and issues press releases. It also reacts on current political events by contacting local authorities and victims of human rights violations (Interviewee 12). The human rights reports and data compiled by the activists and experts of the foundation are made available to all human rights organizations and public authorities. TIHV contributed discursively to the de-securitization of the Kurdish question by calling upon both the Turkish state and the PKK to give up arms during the most violent phases of the conflict. TIHV's partner, the IHD, instead pursues legal actions to pressurize the government and advocates the establishment of new legal frameworks to secure the respect for Kurdish individual and collective rights. This has included providing legal assistance to victims of torture, forced migration, and monitoring governmental actions in broadcasting, education in Kurdish and freedom of expression. This CoSO lays particular emphasis on fighting the widespread militarist tendency in society since militarism is believed to be among the structural underpinnings of the Kurdish question (Interviewee 20).

SODEV pursues actions to establish dialogue and consensus between different groups ranging from associations and trade unions to political parties. Rather than acting on a reactionary basis, it aims to mould public opinion with the help of its over 200 members (Interviewee 19), publications and education, i.e. running a Social Democracy School in cooperation with Bilgi University. SODEV helps to rearticulate interests and identities of actors 'in a way as to minimize the role of the military and militarist culture' (Interviewee 19) and socializes human rights NGOs by organizing a yearly four-week discussion and dialogue platform gathering 40-50 NGOs on a specific human rights theme. *Vakit Geldi* operates instead at elite level and aims at disseminating the peace statement signed by 122 women from business, art, academia, etc. who air their views

publicly and call for permanent peace in view of escalating violence. The public statement was largely covered by the mainstream media and was later opened to other women 'who wanted to add their voice to the peace choir' (Interviewee 9). Finally, *Açık Radyo*, as an alternative, independent radio station which also enjoys connections with the mainstream media, presents the subtext of political events in the form of political satire. It thus aspires to create a space for dialogue and occupies a space between the pro and anti-establishment groups by voicing different readings of events (Interviewee 14).

De-securitizing CoSOs with a conflict transformation framework of action operate both at the discursive and practical levels. At the discursive level, they strive to rephrase the language of human rights and hence alter the framework in which debates on the resolution of the Kurdish question, human rights and minority rights take place in Turkey. At the practical level, they impact upon Turkey's human rights agenda and the Kurdish question through concrete actions. Mazlum-Der, for instance, carries out a wide-range set of actions. It documents existing human rights violations in Turkey by preparing annual and biannual reports, reacts daily to human rights violations through press releases, and advises MPs on laws relating to human rights. It also conducts lobbying activities to encourage the government and parliament 'to elevate human rights in Turkey to universal standards' and opens local human rights courses to raise awareness targeting university students. The de-securitizing move of KAMER instead has been to create an explicit link between language rights and the elimination of violence against women. According to the report written in 2005 by the parliamentary commission investigating honour killings in Turkey, 48 per cent of women in the southeastern region are illiterate and the majority of them speak Kurdish only. Nebahat Akkoç from KAMER proposed several recommendations to the Commission in order to address these linguistic problems, especially given that the less educated women are the ones subject to most pressures from their families. These proposals included Kurdish broadcasting programmes on state television to advise women on their rights and reaching out to Kurdish women through education and training in the Kurdish language.

The last two CoSOs with a peacebuilding agenda operate in a different mode and through a different strategy. Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism started as a network of activists to eradicate racism soon after the murder of Hrant Dink in order to advocate freedom of expression. It acts though press releases against all kinds of discrimination and nationalism, organizes demonstrations, follows court cases, especially the trials on Dink's murder, and holds public petitions to increase its constituency and impact. *Barışa Rock* aims to politicize youth through its three-day music festival, which also includes screening documentaries, films and political stands and discussion points where politicians, intellectuals and activists are invited to speak and debate political issues. Though not directly linked to the Kurdish issue or any political ideology, it aspires to become a platform against nationalism, racism and war (Interviewee 14) and is strongly tied to the global coalition against war.

iii. Political Opportunity Structure

The two time contingent factors shaping the political opportunity structure for holding CoSOs were emphasized also in our interviewees with de-securitizing CoSOs, namely the assassination of Hrant Dink and the twin earthquakes in 1999. For instance, Dink's murder literally became a turning point for Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism since this initiative was founded soon after this tragic event. To our interviewee from this initiative, the assassination became 'a litmus test' showing 'the level of racism in Turkey' (Interviewee 22). The increase of reactionary Turkish nationalism and racism appear as factors both encouraging peacebuilding CoSOs to become more visible and also reducing their effectiveness (Interviewee 14). The CoSOs with a de-securitizing impact, while admitting that the 1999 earthquakes generated a momentum for civil activism in Turkey, confess

that this momentum has already been lost (Interviewee 19), a point made by the bulk of holding CoSOs as well.

As a crucial domestic political factor influencing the impact of de-securitizing CoSOs, Mazlum-Der drew attention to the current AKP government's very selective approach vis-à-vis civil society. 'The government generally prefers to consult professional unions, businessmen associations and in some cases trade unions. However, it does not generally ask real civil society [grassroots] organizations about their opinions. For instance, while negotiating article 301, they did not ask for the opinion of any human rights organizations' (Interviewee 23). As acknowledged by many CoSOs, the government is more receptive to like-minded or business-oriented NGOs.

When examining the relations of holding and peace-building CoSOs with the state and other civil society groups, the unique case of Kurdish women associations deserves further analysis since they have sought to maintain equal distance from both the state and the Kurdish nationalist movement. While Kurdish CoSOs with fuelling impacts often tend to perceive civil society 'as a sphere/platform against which they can counter the state' (Interviewee 16), which is understood as a homogenous structure and the only responsible actor for violence, these Kurdish women associations perceive civil society as a sphere for societal transformation and do not hesitate to cooperate with national and local officials when they deem it necessary in order to ameliorate the imminent problems of women (Interviewee 16). Hence, these organizations, i.e. KAMER, *Gökkuşağı* and the Women Centre in Van 'are regarded as *bêtes noires* by other organizations' (Interviewee 16), which are instead close to the Kurdish movement. In fact these Kurdish women associations are vocal in criticizing the discriminatory and oppressive policies of the state but also the patriarchal structure of the Kurdish movement. For them, there is an urgent need for an emancipatory Kurdish movement, which should be based on gender equality and the eradication of violence (Akkoç 2007 and Interviewee 16). Kurdish women associations have also cooperated with Turkish and even Kemalist women associations 'to change some articles of Turkish Penal Code and Turkish Civic Code' which 'created some sort of socialization for women coming from different backgrounds' (Interviewee 16). However, one should note that while these organizations are developing autonomous structures unlike some Kurdish organizations acting in parallel with the Kurdish movement, they have not totally broken links to this movement. 'otherwise, they cannot survive. While women's activism has changed the Kurdish movement, the Kurdish movement also helped women to better organize themselves' (Interviewee 16). It is fair to conclude that KAMER and others are fighting to improve women's rights and standards of living both at the local and national levels without using a securitizing or exclusionary language, and by managing carefully balanced relations with both the state and the Kurdish movement.

It can be suggested that the escalation of armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army and the successive bomb blasts in large cities in Turkey such as Diyarbakır and Ankara causing civilian casualties have made it difficult for de-securitizing CoSOs to talk about peace and dialogue (Interviewee 9). As one interviewee stated, speaking out about peace and dialogue came to be viewed as a hidden way to militate in favour of separatism by large sectors of society. It is a factor crippling the legitimacy and credibility of peacebuilding CoSOs. Add to this the increasing tide of nationalisms, both Turkish and Kurdish, which serves to fuel differences and the 'growing rift between Turkish and Kurdish peoples' (Interviewee 19). Indicative of rising Turkish nationalism is the fact that initiatives and organizations such as *Açık Radyo, Barışa Rock* and Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism all stated that they received fierce email criticisms, threats and, in the case of Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism, physical attacks by nationalist circles.

A common thread across de-securitizing CoSOs is that the EU-induced reform process which culminated in 2002-2003 further improved human rights legislation in Turkey and empowered civil activism in this field. The effects of these reforms 'which already began to reverse' as in the case of recent amendments on the duties and authority of the police (Interviewee 23) did not penetrate at grassroots level (Interviewee 19). Even if Turkish-EU relations are badly-managed, Turkey's European integration 'could contribute to the peaceful solution of the Kurdish

problem and problems related to secularism' (Interviewee 19), a view also voiced by other de-securitizing CoSOs. The bulk of CoSOs we have placed in this category do not benefit from EU funds either due to the inadequacy of their legal status, i.e. *Açık Radyo*, *Barışa Rock* and Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism, or due to some organizational reasons, e.g. Mazlum-Der. Mazlum-Der submitted two projects to the EU, one on women refugees and the other on education of religious functionaries on human rights in 2005 and 2006. However, the board of directors of the association decided not to proceed with the application because doing so was deemed as 'weaken[ing] the contact and intimacy between the association and its members. It was also due to the fact that both society in Turkey and our members have misleading stereotypes about the EU' (Interviewee 23). KAMER and other Kurdish women associations instead are active recipients of EU funds. They are also among the strongest proponents of Turkey's integration with the EU. As one interviewee suggested, 'the EU is not a mere financial source for them. It also serves as a channel to voice their demands, i.e. through European Women Lobby and European Parliament' (Interviewee 16).

3. Integrated Analysis of Civil Society and Conflict Dynamics

a. Conflict Society Identities, Views on Human Rights and Peacemaking Impact

The analysis above reveals some expected and several less intuitive conclusions. Beginning with conflict fuelling actors and actions, when predominantly Turkish/establishment organizations have upheld a strongly civic or assimilationist approach to the Kurdish question – prioritizing individual rights and denying the existence of a Kurdish collectivity legitimately demanding collective rights – they have tended to fuel the Kurdish question. This is because these organizations, operating within the securitized space delineated by the Turkish state, consciously or otherwise have fed the dominant state discourse on the Kurdish question and human rights, i.e., a discourse that lies at the heart of the problem. By insisting exclusively on individual rights and state security while dismissing collective or cultural rights as unnecessary at best or threatening at worst, these organizations have failed to alter and at times have exacerbated the underlying causes of the Kurdish problem. Hence, for example, Turkey's mainstream media, has more often than not acted as a spokesman of the dominant state discourse, espousing civic or assimilationist attitudes regarding the Kurdish question. This is principally in view of the commercial – rather than directly political – logic driving the major media holdings (e.g., the Doğan holding) and their ensuing interest in colluding with the state (Alpay 2007). Likewise, some professional associations (e.g., *Türkiye Kamu-Sen*) or staunchly Kemalist organizations (e.g., the Association for Atatürkist Thought, the Ankara Association of Martyrs' Families or the Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Families) have focused exclusively on the human rights of one side (e.g., the Martyrs' associations) and adamantly denied the collective dimension of the Kurdish question.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Kurdish or pro-Kurdish associations, which have vocally espoused a predominantly nationalist or even multicultural agenda focusing exclusively on Kurdish rights, have had an equally fuelling impact. This is because they have contributed to the securitization of the conflict in two ways. They have either done so directly by failing to distance themselves from the PKK and its separatist agenda or indirectly by advocating exclusively Kurdish collective rights and thus raising fears of a hidden separatist agenda. Hence, paradoxically perhaps, even organizations which have adamantly pursued a conflict resolution or transformation agenda, such as the Human Rights Association (IHD), the Peace Mothers Association (*Barış Anneleri*), Göç-Der, Yakay-Der or the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre (*Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi*) may have inadvertently fuelled the conflict by heightening suspicions and feeding securitization.

Turning to holding impacts, the vast majority of organizations and actions in this category have a distinctly civic identity which often entails a conflict resolution framework of action. Yet these organizations, either in view of their mandate or because of their position on the Kurdish question either opt not to tackle the issue head-on, or do so by focusing on largely non-controversial issues. Hence for example some associations have opted to work on "non-confrontational" problems related to the Kurdish question such as land-mines. The landmine problem can be considered relatively uncontroversial in so far as it has been allegedly generated by both the PKK and the village guards. More typically, holding actions have tended to work on human rights in general, rather than being specifically tailored to the Kurdish question. Examples include the work on women rights by Kurdish organizations such as KAMER, *Şahmaran, Gökkuşağı*, KEDEV's offices in the southeast or the Women Centre in Van; on torture by international or Turkish groups such as the Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HCA) or the Human Rights Foundation (TIHV); on wider political reform issues by international NGOs or domestic professional associations such as the Open Society Institute (OSI) or the Istanbul Bar Association; or on general human rights issues by networks such as the Common Platform (IHOP) and capacity building groups such as Bilgi University's NGO Training and Research Centre. As argued above, by defining these actions or organizations as "holding", by no means we suggest they do not have a positive impact on Turkey. On the contrary, particularly in the long-run, activities which are "non-confrontational" or are linked to the general democratic quality of Turkey's political life can prove instrumental to fostering a fruitful environment for a solution to the Kurdish question. This notwithstanding, we define these actions as holding in so far as they do not immediately contribute to the securitization or desecuritization of the Kurdish question precisely because they opt to work around its margins.

Finally moving to peace-building, we find the opposite picture than the one in the fuelling category. Organizations and actions in this category tend to be of three different kinds. All three, share the function of desecuritizing the language of human rights by presenting human rights activism not as a cover to pursue the specific rights of one community (e.g., Kurdish rights), but rather the rights of all of Turkey's citizens. First we find Kurdish or international organizations espousing a civic agenda. Kurdish women organizations such as KAMER, by working on women rights have sent important signals to the Turkish state and society by cooperating with state institutions (e.g., the police) while opposing elements within traditional Kurdish society that legitimize honour crimes. By doing so, KAMER has, intentionally or otherwise, begun to shed the prevalent Turkish perception that all Kurdish organizations are exclusively interested in Kurdish rights, secessionism and the PKK. In turn, these organizations, including also the Diyarbakır Bar Association, the Diyarbakır Chambers of Commerce or Diyarbakır Medical Association have opened a space – albeit limited – for Turkish-Kurdish dialogue and reconciliation. By pursuing a civic rights agenda and cooperating with the Turkish state or civil society, these predominantly Kurdish organizations are beginning to diversify the highly securitized image in the country of a monolithic and threatening Kurdish cause.

Second, in the peace-building category we find predominantly Turkish organizations which do not shy away from adopting a multicultural agenda, openly speaking on Kurdish rights (as well as the rights of other communities or religions) as well as on individual human rights. Examples include TIHV, which through its civic rights image and by advocating a non-violent solution to the Kurdish question (and vocally condemning violence on both sides) has been accepted by Turkish and international organizations, working on a common human rights platform with them (IHOP). We find the religiously inclined Mazlum-Der, which has worked on discrimination against Armenians, Kurds, torture and disappearances as well as the headscarf issue (Kadıoğlu 2005) or intellectuals such as Baskın Oran, who has openly spoken out on minority rights issues. Likewise we find smaller Turkish anti-nationalist groups and initiatives such as the Barışa Rock festival or the "Say Stop to Violence". By speaking out on collective (as well as individual) rights, these Turkish CoSOs help desecuritize the conflict context by gradually dismantling the widely perceived view that advocating collective or cultural rights is simply a devious strategy to militate in favour of

secession. In other words, by appropriating the language of collective, cultural or minority rights, these groups, which are less likely to be viewed with suspicion by the Turkish state than Kurdish-only organizations, contribute to the desecuritization of the minority rights debate in the country.

Third, in the peace-building category we find organizations, networks or platforms which refrain from adopting a specific position on the Kurdish question but which are multi-cultural in nature and provide a space for dialogue and debate between Turks and Kurds. A prime example of this is *Vakit Geldi*'s initiative to publish the peace statements of Turkish and Kurdish women, espousing different views and solutions to the Kurdish question and united solely by the commitment to non-violence. We also find organizations such as SODEV or Açık Radyo, which are open to a variety of views espousing a non-nationalist agenda in the case of the latter, or the principles of social democracy in the case of the former. These organizations contribute to the desecuritization of the Kurdish question by opening a space for dialogue between Turkish and Kurdish actors and in particular voicing positions which are not associated with either the state establishment or the Kurdish nationalist cause.

b. Conflict Society Strategies, Political Opportunity Structure and the Effectiveness of Impact

When assessing the effectiveness of civil society in Turkey's Kurdish question, little light is shed by a *prima facie* analysis of CoSOs and their actions. The activities pursued by civil society largely reflect the type of organizations (e.g., NGOs, foundations, professional associations, universities etc) and no traceable path can be drawn between the nature of the activities and their fuelling, holding or peace-building impact. Less still can a link be made between the identity of the organization and the effectiveness of its actions. By contrast, the analysis becomes far more revealing when we assess the effectiveness of different organizations/actions alongside an examination of the political opportunity structure in which they operate. Which activities and organizations are helped and which are hindered by the different actors and factors constituting Turkey's political opportunity structure? In particular what is the relationship between the identity of a CoSO and the political opportunity structure in which it operates? Which POS factors helped or hindered civic/multicultural/assimilationist/racist organizations and at which points in time?

The political opportunity structure in Turkey influencing the effectiveness of civil society action can be largely sub-divided into three broad factors. A last factor, discussed in the next section is the European Union and the process of Turkey's EU accession.

Relations with state institutions and the media

A first key determinant of effectiveness is the relationship between the type of organization/activity on the one hand, and state institutions and the mainstream media on the other. Here the most evident point to make is that CoSOs which are close to or accepted by the state tend to be the ones espousing "establishment" views, largely in line with Kemalist thought. These organizations tend to display a mix between civic and assimilationist identities. This includes the major professional associations (TOBB, TÜSIAD, TÜRK-IŞ). It also includes smaller organizations such as *Türkiye Kamu-Sen*, the Association for Atatürkist Thought and Martyrs Associations, which declare they either face no hindrance from or are politically supported by the state. These organizations also benefit from the coverage of the mainstream media, which enhances the public impact and resonance of their activities. Because of state support and media coverage, their actions may initially appear as being "more effective" in their fuelling capacity. However upon closer inspection

this effectiveness is merely a result of their role in reproducing the dominant securitizing discourse of the state.

On the anti-establishment end of the spectrum we find a mirror situation. Organizations which are widely perceived as being close to the Kurdish nationalist cause, and tend to be multicultural or even racist in nature, often provide fertile ground and concrete examples to legitimize the securitizing approach of the state. Because of this they are often subject to state repression and ostracism. Organizations such as IHD, *Barış Anneleri*, Göç-Der, Yakay-Der or the *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi* all lament state suspicion, repression and little or no media coverage. If and when their actions are covered by the mainstream media they are portrayed in a highly negative light and associated with the PKK. This may initially suggest a rather "ineffective" fuelling impact. However, precisely because of their repression, the effectiveness of these organizations as threatening and thus securitizing entities is greater than first meets the eye. These organizations and their non-relations with the state and media have a similarly fuelling impact on the conflict than their Turkish "adversaries".

Turning instead to holding or peace-building organizations, whose identities are a mix of multicultural and civic, relations with the state and mainstream media are far more nuanced. On a whole, these organizations and their activities receive little support yet little hindrance from the state, and this drastically reduces their holding or peace-building impacts. The only organizations which declared their cooperation with state institutions are KAMER and the HCA. Yet the reasons for this cooperation are connected to the specific nature of their activities and projects. In the case of the former, cooperation with Turkish police forces is a *sine qua non* in the attempt to eradicate honour crimes. In the case of the latter, an effective mapping of torture necessitates detailed information on the actors, actions and networks involved in torture; information which hinges upon trust and cooperation with state institutions. Holding and peace-building activities also tend to enjoy little coverage from the mainstream media. This is either because the work of organizations such as Amnesty, HCA, the Istanbul Bar Association, Mazlum-Der or TIHV are viewed as too "technical" or because these organizations' criticisms of the state may be judged as a step too far by the mainstream media holdings.

The interconnectedness of civil society

A second key factor shaping the political opportunity structure in which CoSOs operate is the interconnectedness of the civil society sphere in Turkey. To the extent that organizations are aware of each other, work together and are able to strategize about the most effective division of labour between them in the pursuit of similar objectives, the effectiveness of their actions is enhanced. If instead the civil society scene is weak and fragmented, activities are duplicated while others not undertaken, and strategizing is embryonic or absent, the fuelling, holding or peace-building impact of CoSOs is curtailed. Here the first general point to make is that the activities of a truly independent civil society in Turkey, in the post-1980 coup period, are relatively recent.[10] Because of the tight grip and overbearing presence of the father state particularly in the post-1980 period, a genuine civil society in Turkey has struggled to emerge. It is only since the turn of the century, with the gradual relaxation of the political environment that civil society groups began mushrooming. Yet the quantitative growth of CoSOs has not mirrored their qualitative improvement and thus effectiveness (STGM 2007). Generally speaking, the civil society dimension in Turkey is still embryonic and suffers from significant fragmentation and compartmentalization.

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[10] In the 1960s and 70s, particularly trade unions and student associations were powerful and extremely active in Turkey. Yet associational life was severely repressed following the 1980 military coup and took time to recover.

This notwithstanding, a few steps forward are being made. Civic or multicultural human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, IHD, TIHV, Mazlum-Der and the HCA have recently established a Common Platform (IHOP) to better coordinate their activities and objectives on human rights. This initiative has also raised the contacts and networks between local and international civil society organizations, allowing for a transfer of know-how and increased professionalism within local CoSOs and inducing local "anti-establishment" groups to modulate their human rights language in a less securitizing fashion. Networks such as *Vakit Geldi* instead has opened the space for cooperation between them. For example it has promoted cooperation between the Kurdish KAMER and the Turkish Women Entrepreneurs Association (KAGİDER) to produce a documentary about honour crimes. Finally, capacity building organizations such as the Bilgi University NGO Training Centre, or foundations such as OSI have opened contacts between groups, raising the scope for joint projects and activities. These networking activities typically include organizations with a holding or peace-building rather than fuelling impact. However cooperation and networking typically takes place between larger organizations, at the expense of smaller groups, be these peace-building (e.g., Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism) or fuelling ones (e.g., *Barış Anneleri*, Göç-Der, Yakay-der or the *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi*). Smaller organizations sharing similar political orientations such as *Barış Anneleri*, Göç-Der and Yakay-Der on the Kurdish side or the Istanbul Association for Solidarity and Aid to Martyrs' Mothers, the Association of Mothers of Police Martyrs or the Association of Martyrs' Families on the "establishment" side, have on occasions worked together. But their work has not been integrated into that of the more mainstream human rights organizations.

Time contingent factors

A third and final set of factors affecting the political opportunity structure in Turkey are time contingent ones. Specific events or trends in the country have in some instances favoured the growth, development and effectiveness of civil society. This has generally had a desecuritizing impact on the Kurdish question by generating views that have provided credible alternatives to the monolithic and mutually interlocking stories presented by the Turkish state and the PKK. There are three principal time contingent factors that have aided the growth of civil society in Turkey over the last decade. Chronologically, the first was the 1999 earthquake in Turkey. The August 1999 earthquake revealed in full force the weakness of the Turkish state, which unable to effectively step-in in such an emergency situation to provide adequate relief. In the absence of the state, domestic civil society filled the void, aided financially and practically by international donor agencies and humanitarian NGOs. The second earthquake in November 1999 instead caught the Turkish state marginally better prepared, giving rise to an effective cooperative effort between the governmental and non-governmental spheres in Turkey. The devastating earthquakes of 1999 thus injected a vital lease of life in Turkish civil society, projecting it as an indispensable actor in such a critical moment for the state and society.

The second key factor, influencing the growth of Kurdish civil society and the emergence of genuinely multicultural or civic Kurdish organizations, was the PKK's declaration of ceasefire following the capture of its leader Öcalan in August 1999. The capture of Öcalan and the ensuing unilateral ceasefire marked a break from the decades of large-scale violence in the southeast, featuring the destruction of villages, the evacuation of civilians, mystery killings and widespread torture. It thus opened the way to a period a relative peace and quiet allowing for a modicum of socio-economic development, which post 2003 accelerated with the growing economic ties between southeast Turkey and northern Iraq. Although the PKK retained significant influence over pro-Kurdish political parties and civil society, since 1999 new and independent Kurdish CoSOs, which clearly distanced themselves from the PKK have come to the fore and become increasingly vocal

(Kirişçi 2007). Interestingly for example, in 2006 over thirty Kurdish CoSOs came together, following the rioting in Diyarbakır at the instigation of the PKK, and made a public declaration "against terrorism and the use of violence".

Third, beginning in late 2001 Turkish authorities undertook fundamental constitutional and legal reforms, which allowed for a freer environment in which all Turkish and Kurdish civil society actors could flourish. In view of the reform process, civil society organizations in Turkey working on "hot" political subjects no longer face the same kind of direct state pressure and intimidation which occurred in previous decades, including police incursions, imprisonment or shutdowns. As such, although the reforms have been rife with pitfalls, inconsistencies and problems of implementation, they did open up a space for dialogue and action on hitherto untouchable political issues. In October 2001 in fact, parliament adopted 34 constitutional amendments, followed by seven 'harmonization packages' passed between 2001 and 2003, a further set of constitutional amendments in May 2004 and an accompanying eighth package in June 2004. The government also established mechanisms to ensure reform implementation. These included human rights boards in major towns and cities to handle complaints; a Reform Monitoring Group to monitor compliance and overcome bureaucratic inertia; a parliamentary Human Rights Investigation Committee, and a Human Rights Presidency entrusted with raising awareness.

The principal area of democratic change was in the sphere of individual rights. Most relevant to the sphere of civil society, freedom of expression was enhanced. The amendments of Articles 26 and 28 of the Constitution removed restrictions on the use of 'any language prohibited by law' in the expression and dissemination of thought. The harmonization packages amended the Anti-Terrorism Law (Articles 7 and 8) and introduced a new Penal Code. Collectively, these reforms reduced the criminalization of opinions allegedly threatening territorial integrity, manipulating ethnic, social or religious differences, or supporting terrorism. However, the amendments left untouched restrictions attached to the exercise of these rights for the purposes of safeguarding 'the indivisible integrity of the state' (Article 301 of the Penal Code). In turn, at the level of implementation, there has been a strong tendency within the judiciary either to rely on provisions left untouched in the Constitution or use the amended laws to restrict the freedom of expression. Although most of these prosecutions have resulted in acquittals, cases continue to be brought forward at an alarming pace.

Freedom of association was also strengthened, with an effective overhaul of the Law on Associations in 2004, which also opened the space for associations that seek to serve Kurdish citizens. The fourth harmonization package enabled associations to use any language in their non-official correspondence. However, the Law retained its restrictive character particularly vis-à-vis associations advocating Kurdish rights. In addition, a March 2005 regulation stated that associations that promote a particular cultural or religious identity cannot be legally registered. Indeed the Kurdish Democracy Forum and the association Kürt-Der were closed because of their advocacy of Kurdish language and culture, while the teachers union *Eğitim Sen* was called upon to revise its statute. The freedom of assembly has also been strengthened by amending the Law on Public Meetings and Demonstration Marches. However, the Law continues to grant governors broad authority to postpone meetings on the grounds of a widely construed concept of national security.

Finally, the liberal and reformist wing of Turkish civil society received a new albeit dramatic push for action following the tragic assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist and editor of the newspaper *Agos* Hrant Dink in 2007. Dink, a highly respected and admired intellectual amongst liberal democrats in Turkey, was renown for his advocacy of human and minority rights in Turkey and peaceful reconciliation between Turks and Armenians. Dink was prosecuted three times under Article 301 for denigrating Turkishness and was repeatedly threatened by Turkish nationalist groups. He was assassinated in January 2007 by a 17-year old Turkish nationalist in Istanbul. Dink's assassination, shocked and shook the foundations of the liberal and reformist segment of Turkey's civil society, that viewed Dink's murder as a litmus test of the fragility of Turkey's democratization, and the danger that all reformist forces in the country still faced. As several

interviewees noted, if such a crime was committed against Dink, a figure so highly admired, respected and loved, then what did this say about the state of Turkey's democratization? Dink's cold-blooded murder indeed injected a new impetus in Turkey's civil society activism, with the emergence of anti-nationalist groups such as Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism and a reinvigorated momentum in the work of more established organizations such as HCA, Amnesty and OSI. All of these organizations insisted on the need to maintain the momentum generated by Dink's assassination, with the organization of a mass demonstration in Istanbul in January 2008 on the first anniversary of his death.

Alas, not all time contingent factors have had a positive peace-building impact on the activities of Turkish and Kurdish civil society groups. Other events, particularly since 2004 have had a debilitating impact on holding and peacebuilding CoSOs, while heightening the effectiveness of fuelling/securitizing ones. Overall, these events have exacerbated the climate of securitization in the country, lending legitimacy to the actions of fuelling CoSOs while narrowing the scope for manoeuvere of holding or desecuritizing ones. First, there has been an alarming rise of nationalism that has swept across Turkey, which came to the fore with the public outrage at the burning of a Turkish flag during a March 2005 demonstration in Mersin and the widespread popular support for nationalistic novels and movies. An evident manifestation of rising nationalism was the counter demonstration held following Dink's assassination, in which in response to the banners held during Dink's funeral declaring "we are all Armenians", demonstrators chanted "we are all Mehmets". Several interviewees belonging to liberal-leftist CoSOs (e.g., Açık Radyo, Barışa Rock, Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism) indeed noted a resurgence in nationalist reactions to their work since 2004-5, including expressions of protest as well as outright threats from nationalist groups. The reasons for this rise in nationalism are the growing insecurities stemming from the war in Iraq since 2003 and in particular the prospects for a federated state of Northern Iraq including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, the stubbornly high unemployment rates and adjustment costs of IMF and EU-inspired structural reforms (Sak 2005) and, as we shall see below, Europe's increasing tendency to give Turkey's EU-bid the cold shoulder.

Second, in June 2004 the PKK declared the end of its unilateral ceasefire, opening the way to a renewed period of violence in the southeast and in Turkey's major urban centres. The decision was driven by several factors, including the fading prospects of Öcalan's release, the loosening grip over the Kurdish national movement and the opportunities presented by the 2003 war in Iraq. Compared to the 1980s and 90s, the PKK is far weaker in terms of structure, motivation and manpower. In the words of one interviewee: 'the PKK has become a giant that feeds off its feet and is in survival mode' (Interviewee 25). Yet this has not made the organization less dangerous in the eyes of the Turkish state and public. In fact, rather than focusing on rural insurgency, the post 2004 PKK has targeted urban, economic and tourist targets, particularly in the summer of 2005 and again in the summer and fall of 2007. As in the 1980s and 1990s, the Turkish establishment responded with force, reframed the Kurdish question national security terms and this re-empowered the 'deep state' (*derin devlet*) in the country. Linked to this, tensions rose to new heights in November 2005 with the bombing of a Kurdish bookstore in the southeastern town of Şemdinli by members of the Turkish gendarmerie intelligence. A wave of violence then swept across the southeast and the Kurdish-populated suburbs of Istanbul in the spring of 2006 and again in the spring and summer of 2007. In turn, the region witnessed renewed militarization with the deployment of Turkish military units along the Iraqi border, the reinstatement of roadblocks and checkpoints and an incursion in northern Iraq in both October 2007 and again in February 2008. The Turkish parliament also passed a new Law for the Fight against Terrorism in June 2006, which curtails some of the progress made in the reform packages, including, *inter alia*, the temporary banning of publications without a formal hearing. The overall effect of this resecuritization of the Kurdish question has, predictably, seriously curtailed the voices of alternative and liberal-minded Turkish and Kurdish CoSOs with a potentially holding or peace-building impact.

Thirdly and largely as a consequence of the previous two factors, since 2005 Turkey's democratic reform momentum has faded and there has been a new and worrying wave of prosecutions limiting the freedom of expression. A notable cause of this has been the establishment of the Great Union of Jurists (*Büyük Hukukçular Birliği*) by Kemal Kerinçsiz, which has made active use of the illiberal Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code to prosecute activists and intellectuals, including the renowned cases of Orhan Pamuk, Hrant Dink and Elif Şafak. Especially after the Şemdinli affair, the first AKP government significantly slowed down on reforms, in part also to ease its increasingly tense relations with the military over its alleged Islamist agenda. Following the July 2007 elections in which the AKP reemerged with an even stronger mandate compared to the 2002 elections and the resolution of the presidential debacle, high hopes were placed on a renewed phase of democratization, with a heated debate over the prospects of a new Constitution. Yet by the spring of 2008, the prospects for a new constitution were shelved, with full-blown attention devoted to the headscarf question, tackled, alas, as a self-standing issue rather than as part of a much broader push for democratic reform. This lull and risk of reversal in Turkey's reform process casts a long shadow over the prospects of civil society development in the country.

4. The EU and Conflict Society in Turkey

A final factor critically shaping the political opportunity structure for civil society action in Turkey is the EU and the turbulent process of Turkey's EU accession. The EU and the accession process has had a direct and indirect an impact on the conflict-human rights-civil society nexus in Turkey. In terms of direct influence, the EU's impact on Turkish and Kurdish civil society has been circumscribed. EU funding to civil society in Turkey has risen, since 1999 and deployed partly through the programme "Supporting Civil Society Development and Dialogue", implemented by the Civil Society Development Centre since 2002 and partly through the Turkish Secretariat General for EU Affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ABGS).

Despite this, the vast majority of interviewees belonging to CoSOs across the fuelling, holding and peace-building spectrum declared not to have benefited from EU funding and contacts. Fuelling organizations such as Göç-Der and *Türkiye Kamu-Sen* applied for EU funding, but all their project proposals were rejected. Smaller holding and peace-building organizations such as such as *Vakit Geldi*, *Açık Radyo*, *Barışa Rock* or Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism either have not applied for EU funding (e.g., because of lack of legal status) or have been denied funds (e.g., in view of the complexity of EU tenders requiring a high level of project training and expertise). Funding tends to be directed to the "usual suspects", namely relatively large and well-resourced liberal research centres and NGOs in major urban centres. Indeed an oft-mentioned complaint raised by smaller Kurdish NGOs in the southeast is that although the EU declaredly attaches importance to the resolution of Turkey's Kurdish question and encourages civil society activism on this question, the sheer difficulty of applying for EU funds by small and under-resourced organizations in the southeast implies that EU monies are often directed to the larger Turkish CoSOs typically based in Istanbul or Ankara. To work around this problem the EU, and in particular the Commission delegation in Ankara has at times made the participation and partnership with southeast-based organizations a prerequisite of the project tenders. Yet rather than giving rise to veritable partnerships and constructive processes of knowledge and skill transfer, these projects merely display a token presence of southeastern organizations while the bulk of the work is carried out by Western-based Turkish NGOs.

The indirect effect of the EU process has been far more visible, both in positive and negative ways. Indeed the vast majority of interviewed CoSOs had clear views on the EU and the way it affected their work. On the positive side, many holding and peace-building organizations highlighted the positive impact the EU's accession process had in kick-starting Turkey's reform process. The 1999 recognition of Turkey's candidacy without the accompanying opening of

accession negotiations in view of Turkey's non-fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria gave the Commission free hand in monitoring progress and advancing recommendations in its annual Progress Reports and Accession Partnership documents to Turkey. The EU also adapted its financial assistance to Turkey, redirecting aid to provide more explicit support for Turkey's reforms. As a result Turkey's constitutional amendments and legal harmonization packages – featuring the abolition of the death penalty, the right to broadcast and teach in languages other than Turkish, the liberalization of the freedoms of speech, association and assembly, and the recognition of religious minorities' property rights – were passed with the explicit intent of fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. The reform momentum accelerated especially in the 2002-4 period when the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 concluded that it would determine whether and when to open negotiations with Turkey in December 2004. The approaching deadline for the opening of negotiations in those years set the target and the timeline for the new AKP government to accelerate the reform momentum. Its success, briefly documented in the previous section, led the December 2004 European Council to open accession talks with Turkey on the grounds of its "sufficient" fulfillment of the political criteria.

The positive momentum generated by the EU process also had a specific spin on civil society in Turkey. On the one hand, EU calls for democratization had a legitimizing impact on reform-minded CoSOs. Not only did these organizations gain an "external ally" in their calls for democracy and human rights, but the EU, by increasingly interacting with these groups to obtain non-governmental information on the state of democracy in Turkey, had an important domestic empowerment effect on these organizations (Çelik and Rumelili 2006). Indeed before the EU process was set in motion, civil society organizations such as Amnesty and HCA had already attempted to raise their domestic standing by intensifying their contacts with the European Parliament and the Council of Europe (Dağı 2001). On the other hand, the EU process shifted the activities of some CoSOs from having potentially fuelling to holding or peace-building impacts. With the rising prospects of EU accession post-1999, influential establishment professional associations (e.g., TÜSIAD) or research centres (e.g. IKV or TESEV) began supporting democratic reform in Turkey far more vocally than in the past, precisely because of the link between EU accession and democratization. This of course did not hold true to the same extent for all establishment groups, with the more staunchly Kemalist ones (e.g., TOBB, TISK or TÜRK-IŞ) paying little more than lip-service to the reform and EU accession processes (Diez, Agnantopoulos and Kaliber 2005).

Yet while liberal-minded CoSOs applauded the EU's impetus for Turkey's democratic reform at the turn of the century, all interviewees, irrespective of their political persuasions, were highly critical of the turn taken by the EU in the post 2004 period. Civil society skepticism of the EU has manifested itself in two forms. First, following the opening of accession talks, the EU's attention on democracy and human rights reforms in Turkey diminished, to the dismay of many domestic human rights activists. Although the EU has continued to pay attention to the political transformation of the country through, the bulk of EU attention shifted to the nuts and bolts of the *acquis communitaire*. Second, in the aftermath of the decision to open accession talks, a new wave of Turkey-skepticism came to the fore. In particular, the French decision to hold a referendum on Turkey's EU entry and its criminalization of denial of the Armenian genocide, the EU's constitutional crisis and so-called "enlargement fatigue", the dispute over Turkey's recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, French President Sarkozy's adamant rejection of Turkey's membership all cast dark shadows over Turkey's EU future. Worst still, Turkey's 2005 Negotiations Framework suggested the possibility of permanent derogations in key areas such as free movement of persons, structural funds and agriculture; in December 2006 the European Council decided to suspend negotiations on eight chapters of the *acquis* in view of Turkey's refusal to open its ports to Greek Cypriot vessels; and in June 2007 France refused to open the chapter on monetary union on the grounds that it implied too strongly Turkey's eventual EU membership. While not necessarily prejudging Turkey's ultimate EU membership, this series of setbacks have diluted Turkey's reform

incentives and reawakened the Sèvres syndrome. This has lent credibility to nationalist and conservative CoSOs arguing that whatever Turkey says and does the EU will never allow Turkey into its club, while seriously undermining the message and standing of pro-EU civil society organizations, which have tended to have a holding or peacebuilding impact on the Kurdish question.

Interviewees

Ilhan Bal (1): Göç Edenler Dayanışma ve Kültür Derneği (Solidarity and Culture Association of Immigrants)

Hanefi Bostan (2): Turkiye Kamu Çalışanları Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Unions of Public Employees of Turkey)

Hüsnü Öndül (3): İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association)

Latife Buğday and Cemile Akgün (4): Barış Anneleri (Peace Mothers)

Hüseyin Ilden (5): Mezopotamya Kültür Derneği (Mesopotamia Cultural Centre)

Pakize Alp Akbaba (6): Istanbul Şehit Anaları Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği (Istanbul Solidarity and Aid Association for Martyrs' Mothers)

Hamit Köse (7) Ankara Şehit Aileleri Derneği (Ankara Association of Martyrs' Families).

Ali Ercan (8) Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (Association for Atatürkist Thought)

Ayşe Çavdar (9) Vakit Geldi (Time Has Come)

Nebahat Akkoç (10) Kadın Merkezi (Women's Centre)

Emel Kurma (11) Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly)

Hürriyet Şener (12) Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı (Human Rights Foundation of Turkey)

Hakan Altınay (13) Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation

Avi Haligua (14) Amnesty International, Açık Radyo (Open Radio), BarışaRock (Rock for Peace Festival).

Feray Salman (15) İnsan Hakları Ortak Platformu (Common Platform for Human Rights)

Laden Yurttagüler (16) İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi STK Eğitim ve Araştırma Birimi (Istanbul Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Centre)

İlker Mutlu (17) İstanbul Barosu İnsan Hakları Merkezi (Human Rights Centre at İstanbul Bar Association).

Cemal Bektaş (18) Yakınlarını Kaybedenler Derneği (Aid and Solidarity Association for the Relatives of Disappeared People)

Erol Kızılelma (19) Sosyal Demokrasi Vakfı (Social Democracy Foundation)

Eren Keskin (20) İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association)

Şahin Alpay (21): Columnist, daily *Zaman*

Cengiz Algan (22): Irkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe DurDe! (Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism)

Emrullah Beytar (23): İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar İçin Dayanışma Derneği (Organisation of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People)

Kemal Kirişçi (24): Academic, Boğaziçi University

Taciser Belge (25): Human rights and peace activist

E. Fuat Keyman (26): Academic, Koç University.

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