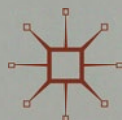




The PKK-Kurdistan Workers' Party's Regional Politics

*During and After
the Cold War*

ALI BALCI



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For Elif Nur and Zeynep Erva

PREFACE

My wife, Elif Nur, spent almost ten months in İnce, a village of Adıyaman, Turkey, as a primary school teacher. In one of my visits to her during the winter of 2012, we took a bus from Kahta, a district in Adıyaman, to Siverek, a district in Şanlıurfa. Although we were planning to catch another bus in Siverek to go to Diyarbakir, it was too late to find a public transport. Fortunately, a group of young people waiting at the bus terminal offered to take a taxi together so that it would cost less. We were now seven people including the driver in the taxi for a one-hour trip. Our conversation about the Kurdish issue turned a heated discussion between two local passengers. One of them was an ardent critic of the PKK and accused the PKK of killing innocent Kurdish people including his uncle. The other one was a vehement supporter of the PKK and tried to convince the first guy about the fact that the PKK killed ordinary Kurdish people in order to emancipate the Kurdish society from colonialism and those killed were just tools of colonial oppression over the Kurds. He often referred to US imperialism in his attempt to explain how this colonial oppression worked in Kurdistan. As a reader of poststructural analysis of foreign policy, his references to US imperialism as part of his strategy to convince his main interlocutor and other passengers in the taxi drew my close interest.

For a couple of years, this conversation haunted my mind occasionally since I am academically interested in how foreign policy practices are constitutive when it comes to identity and power relations. I was trying to understand the role of foreign policy discourses and practices in the power struggle between the ruling Justice and Development Party, a conservative

and religious-friendly party, and traditional secular institutions in Turkey such as the military and Republican People's Party. When I came back to Manchester, UK, where I was doing research as part of my postdoc project, I started to read about the perception of Kurdish political actors toward the European Union (EU) in order to understand how Kurdish political movement in Turkey used the EU in challenging the hegemonic state power and in mobilizing their supporters. Although this short-lived reading bore fruit as an article published by *Ethnicities* in 2003, my other studies on Turkish foreign policy interrupted my interrogation of the contemporary Kurdish nationalism in Turkey as a case for my theoretical questions such as what is the role of narratives on world politics in the construction of counter-identities.

Finally, the Title 2219 Postdoctoral Fellowship provided by TÜBİTAK (*Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu*, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) created an opportunity for me to think and write about these theoretical questions with a special focus on the contemporary Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Therefore, first of all I would like to express my gratitude to TÜBİTAK. I am also grateful to Sakarya University's Bilimsel Araştırma Projeler Koordinatörlüğü (Scientific Research Projects Unit) for six months' funding that gave me opportunity to read deeply in the field of poststructural theory. Since most of the book was written in the Butler Library of Columbia University in 2015, I would like to thank the library staff for their help in finding books and primary documents. Throughout my study, Ibn-i Haldun Library of the Middle East Institute at Sakarya University was like a home for me.

I have benefited from comments and suggestions of many scholars, colleagues, and friends. Although it is impossible to credit them all, I want to particularly acknowledge Tuncay Kardeş, who read the manuscript and provided invaluable feedback. I have also benefited from comments and suggestions from Murat Yeşiltaş, Nicholas Onuf, Ayşe Selcan Özdemirci, Rümeyşa Köktaş, Kemal İnat, Burhanettin Duran, and Berkan Öğür. I also owe thanks to two anonymous reviewers of Palgrave Macmillan for their useful suggestions. At Palgrave Macmillan New York, I benefited from Alisa Pulver's professional spirit. And most of all, thanks to İbrahim Efe, not only for his invaluable support, advice, and final reading but also for his friendship.

Finally, my deepest gratitude is for my parents, Fatma and Basri, for a lifetime of love and pride in my academic achievements.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
	<i>Beyond Repression and Resistance</i>	8
	<i>Reading the PKK Through Texts</i>	13
	<i>The Organization of the Book</i>	17
	<i>Notes</i>	19
2	Identity, Hegemony, and Imagining World Politics	27
	<i>Meaning, Identity, and Subject</i>	31
	<i>Writing the World into Exclusion</i>	37
	<i>Writing the World into Resistance</i>	43
	<i>Notes</i>	49
3	Imagining the Kurdish Nation	57
	<i>The Play of Difference</i>	65
	<i>Writing the Kurdish Self</i>	68
	<i>Writing Threats and Others</i>	72
	<i>Notes</i>	76
4	Writing the USA as Imperial Power	85
	<i>The Rise of “Kurdistan as Colony” Discourse</i>	88
	<i>Turkey as Subserving of US Imperialism</i>	92
	<i>Responsibility in Resistance Against Imperialism</i>	98
	<i>Notes</i>	103

5	Writing the Soviet Union as Comrade	111
	<i>The Kurds Embrace Socialism as Resistance</i>	113
	<i>The PKK's Imagination of the Soviet Socialism</i>	118
	<i>A Friend on the Wrong Track</i>	122
	<i>Notes</i>	127
6	The Collapse of the Soviet Union as Dislocation	133
	<i>The Soviet Union Redefined</i>	136
	<i>Marxist-Leninist Ideology Redefined</i>	141
	<i>Understanding the Transformation of the PKK</i>	146
	<i>Notes</i>	151
7	Re-writing the USA After the Cold War	157
	<i>The Prophecy Comes True: The Gulf War</i>	160
	<i>The Rise of "Human Rights" Discourse</i>	164
	<i>US Imperialism Revisited</i>	168
	<i>Notes</i>	174
8	Conclusion	179
	<i>Notes</i>	184
	Bibliography	185
	Index	205

Introduction

Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (Kurdistan’s Workers Party; abbreviated as PKK) is an armed ethnic movement and its guerilla war against the Turkish state since 1984 left more than 40,000 deaths behind. When the PKK was established in the late 1970s, its founding leaders declared US imperialism as the main enemy and the Soviet Union as the natural ally. Moreover, the founding documents of the PKK allocated many pages to the description of the imperial system led by the USA and the revolutionary socialist system led by the Soviet Union. Apart from these founding documents, later publications such as monthly journals, bulletins, books, and party documents are full of comments and analyses about world politics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the PKK continued to speak about world politics much more than it did during the founding years and the 1980s. These official representations of world politics became solidified as common sense and they often echoed in public outcries of the PKK supporters both in Turkey and Europe. Alas, contemporary scholars of foreign policy analysis paid almost no attention to these documents and other statements of the PKK on world politics. The contemporary Kurdish nationalism led by the PKK in Turkey is no exception. Far too little attention has been paid to “foreign policies” of ethnic dissident movements all around the world.

Is it possible to speak about “foreign policies” of ethnic dissident movements especially when considering that they have no characteristics

of modern sovereign states such as territory, border, and recognition? If it is, how can we study their policies toward and imaginations of the outside world? Traditional schools of International Relations (IR) such as Realism and Liberalism do not provide any answer to these questions since they accept the state as the only actor in making and practicing foreign policy. Similarly, neither Marxism nor the English School nor even Constructivism deals with dissident movements when foreign policy is considered, mostly because they focus on hegemonic class or resulting identity within a state as makers of foreign policy. Only critical theories such as Feminism, Poststructuralism, and Postcolonialism take resistant, dissident, or alternative movements seriously and provide a space for the study of their “foreign policy” performances. This is so mostly because these critical theories do not approach foreign policy performances as outcomes of political rivalries, bargains, or agreements. Rather, for these theories, foreign policy performances are discursive apparatus in hegemonic relations, in the production of political subjectivities, and in resistance against hegemonic state power.

If foreign policy is a discursive strategy in the construction, consolidation, destruction, and reconstruction of the existing power relations and if it is constitutive in the formation of political subjectivities, then not only hegemonic state powers but also dissident movements, be they ethnic or religious, in any given state can resort to foreign policy practices in their struggle for power and the construction of alternative subjectivities. This opens the field of foreign policy analysis to the study of dissident ethnic movements that have no “official” relations with other states or movements such as trade, agreements, alliances, mutual visits, and cooperation. For example, the PKK had no official relations with the USA in the 1980s, but on the other hand its political discourse was full of references to the USA and the latter’s policies in the Middle East. Therefore, understanding “foreign policy” as tangible practices of “sovereign” states toward other states inevitably leaves a wide range of narratives the PKK produced about world politics untouched. Again the PKK is no exception. This is the case when all other ethnic movements around the world are considered.

This book, therefore, is an attempt to discuss a theoretical framework to study dissident ethnic movements’ imagination of world politics with a special focus on the PKK as a case study. By doing this, it draws mostly on the works of poststructural, feminist, and postcolonial theories. While poststructuralism mainly focuses on the relation between identity construction and power relations, feminist and postcolonial theories are quite fruitful

in terms of theoretical concepts and approaches developed from the resistance of women against male domination and of colonized peoples against their colonizers. Instead of taking the armed PKK movement as a pure resistant, this book approaches the contemporary Kurdish nationalism led by the PKK as a counter-hegemonic narrative that entails the emergence of a new kind of identity and sense of belonging, through which the PKK has been able to exercise its power. As the concept “counter-hegemonic resistance” clearly implies, dissident ethnic movements are not only a challenge to the existing hegemonic power, but they also produce an alternative closed society based on different ethnic imagination. At this point, the main research question of the book can be formulated as follows.

The Research Question How is the domestic domain of the post-1980 Kurdish political subjects who might willingly submit to the law and violence of Kurdish political institutions constituted, bounded, and set apart from the Turkish state so that this domestic domain may be taken to provide the unproblematic ground on which all discourses of legitimization refer?¹

However, addressing the question how a domestic society of separate Kurdish political subjects is “enframed, inscribed, and fixed in its content so that it may be understood, not as an arbitrary representation in itself, but as an originary source of truth and meaning that” Kurdish political institutions can be claimed to represent² requires an insurmountable work. For example, the representation of women in the PKK’s texts played a significant role in the production of a separate Kurdish political identity. Similarly, hundreds of pages were allocated to alternative historiography of the Kurds in order to create and legitimize the emerging closed society of separate Kurdish political subjects. Instead of looking at all aspects of identity construction, the main focus of this book will be the discourse of the PKK on world politics. Therefore, this book is an attempt to understand the role of the PKK’s narratives on world politics in the emergence of the PKK as an authoritative actor, and in the production of the post-1980 Kurdish political subjectivity. As the book shall try to show, it is those narratives of world politics in PKK texts that rendered the PKK a responsible and authoritative “sovereign” for the post-1980 Kurdish political subjects in a particular way. Then, the main hypothesis of the book can be formulated as follows.

Hypothesis I The PKK’s discourse on world politics played a significant role in the constitution of a distinct Kurdish political subject who primarily takes

the Kurdish nationalist institutions as legitimate sovereign presence instead of the Turkish state.

What is the post-1980 Kurdish political identity/subject? Although concepts such as Kurdish political society, Kurdish national identity, and Kurdish political subject will often be used interchangeably throughout the book, the post-1980 Kurdish national identity simply refers to the identity of Kurdish subjects who came into existence through the PKK's ideological, political, and military struggle against the Turkish state. This does not mean that the PKK is the only creator of this Kurdish political subject; rather it means that the PKK functioned as an institutional/discursive anchor in the emergence of the post-1980 Kurdish nationalist subjectivity. As I use the term, then, the post-1980 Kurdish political subject simply means those who, willingly or unwillingly, allow the PKK as an institutional power to play across their bodies and souls, which produces the new truths on being Kurdish. Therefore, neither does the post-1980 Kurdish political subject directly refer to those who speak Kurdish³ nor is the post-1980 Kurdish national identity an all-encompassing category for all Kurdish-origin people in Turkey.⁴ Rather, it particularly refers to a very strict category of identity for the Kurds.

This definition of the post-1980 Kurdish national identity attributes a “productive” role to the PKK, which is supposedly a violent terrorist organization. It is true that material power and brute violence of the PKK over people are very real and very much out there.⁵ However, what is critical for the purpose of this book is “to grasp the nature of the normative [namely discursive] filter through which” the PKK's material violence must pass and how and why this violence is “transformed by this passage”.⁶ That means the PKK did not exert violence simply against the Turkish state, rather it used violence against the Turkish state in terms of nationalist pretexts, which already constituted the alterity between the Turkish state and Kurdish nationalism.⁷ The question in this book, therefore, is not whether material violence and terrorism existed but how the solidification of Kurdish nationalism occurred through writing the PKK's armed struggle into world politics. The reduction of power only to its physical and violent dimensions overlooks “a productive power that constitutes the very meanings and social relations it regulates”.⁸ Hence, the key concern of this book is to understand the role of discourse on world politics within the PKK texts in the production of the post-1980 Kurdish national subjectivity.

Again, it is true that the armed struggle of the PKK weakened Turkish political institutions and traditional Kurdish structures, fixing meanings for the Kurds in a different way,⁹ which resulted in the emergence of the post-1980 Kurdish political identity and subjectivity. However, without writing this armed struggle into counter-hegemonic language, the post-1980 Kurdish political identity would not be possible. Moreover, it is this textuality that retrospectively produced meanings vital for the new Kurdish political subjectivity. Then, this book is a study of this textuality with a special focus on the representation of world politics by the PKK. Unlike the representation of women, history, and other domestic issues, the inscription of world politics played a different but significant role in the PKK's strategy to destroy the meanings imposed by the Turkish state, and traditional Kurdish forces and to replace them with a new one. The representation of world politics functioned as a second layer under which the representation of other individual and domestic issues were normalized and naturalized. Therefore, studying the first layer in order to understand emerging alternative Kurdish subjectivities is deficient without the study of the second layer. However, it is important to emphasize that this does not give a privileged role to discourses on world politics in the construction of the new Kurdish political subjectivity. Rather, representations of world politics have their own specificity in the more general field of exercising power and inscribing identity, which brings us to the second hypothesis of the book.

Hypothesis II Through the inscription of world politics, particular meanings were produced/normalized and attached to various subjects, which located the PKK as the rightful interpreter and judge of Kurdishness.

Before everything else (for example, armed violence), the PKK appeared as a movement representing the world *differently* in the second half of the 1970s. In a political environment dominated by the Cold War mentality, one of the core binary categories under which several other categories are subsumed was the capitalism/socialism opposition. Therefore, during the Cold War, many dissident ethnic movements in the capitalist countries embraced socialism in their struggle against the hegemonic state discourse and similarly the hegemonic state power in these countries used socialism as a label to marginalize and silence these dissident movements. This was not limited to domestic politics; both, hegemonic states and dissident ethnic movements used external references to normalize, consolidate, and

reconsolidate their positions against each other. The PKK was no exception. In one of its report on the struggle against the Turkish state, the PKK declared that armed struggle could be successful “in the extent to which a healthy and dialectical relationship is established between domestic struggle and foreign struggle”. It went on to argue, “If we want to cultivate a successful struggle against fascism in Turkey, we have to find external allies against its own allies”.¹⁰ As a corollary of this reasoning, it condemned American imperialism as the main supporter of the Turkish state and embraced relations with the Soviet Union as an antidote to the imperial system composed of the USA and its collaborators.¹¹ This Manichean representation of the world between the USA and the Soviet Union deeply shaped the character of the PKK and its counter-hegemonic resistance against the Turkish state.

The end of the Cold War, therefore, resulted in a sea change in the discourse of the PKK on world politics. As part of this change, the PKK’s ideology evolved from the national independence struggle in the 1980s to a demand for democratic autonomy in the 1990s and later decades. If nations or national identities are but narratives,¹² the dramatic changes in historical conditions those narratives refer to after the end of the Cold War could not pass by without any trace on the contemporary Kurdish nationalism. Put differently, it was the “temporality of representation” produced by “a tribe of interpreters” under different historical conditions¹³ that forced the post-1980 Kurdish nationalism to change. For this reason, the effect of the end of the Cold War on the post-1980 Kurdish political identity deserves a detailed study. Moreover, studying this effect proves the fact that the post-1980 Kurdish political identity is not based on an *a priori* cause but an arbitrary and interpretative violence over things including world politics by “a tribe of interpreters”. Therefore, one of the main priorities of this book is to show the role of the end of the Cold War and its representation by the PKK in the change of the Kurdish nationalist movement from national independence struggle in the 1980s to a demand for democratic autonomy in the 1990s and later decades. This brief description of the PKK’s changing imaginations of world politics demands another hypothesis.

Hypothesis III The end of the Cold War produced dramatic changes in the PKK’s discourse on world politics, which significantly reconstituted the post-1980 Kurdish national identity.

At this point, it is important to underline that the interpretation of world politics is not an independent act of a pre-given PKK as a free and ahistorical sovereign actor. Since representations of world politics in the PKK's texts "precede, constrain, and exceed the performer [the PKK] and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice'",¹⁴ the PKK comes to be and appears stable subject through contextualized practices. This is a radical departure from the Cartesian description of the PKK, according to which the PKK as an independent self/actor produced a particular stance against the world. Unlike this Cartesian understanding of the PKK, this book argues that it was the representations of the USA's policies in the Middle East and the Soviet Union's practices supporting socialist movements in the region that fixed/constructed the meaning/identity of the PKK. As David Campbell aptly puts, foreign policy is not the external orientation of pre-established entities with fixed identities; it rather needs to be understood as a practice/statement disciplining "the ambiguity of global life in ways that help to secure always fragile identities".¹⁵ In other words, the inscription of an act as a danger/threat (or safety/peace) is not the result of the thing attached neither to this act nor to its interpreter but the outcome of political imaginations aiming to fix "secure identities". Therefore, the PKK, for example, had to reinterpret the Soviet Union and the USA in the post-Cold War period when it was impossible to refer to the Soviet Union as the natural ally in the war against the Turkish state.

However, it must be also underlined that the speaking subjects of Kurdish nationalist community are not mere products of the discursive machinery; they are also actors taking role in the conduct of this machinery. They are, on the one hand, the product of discourse because the discursive machinery working over the people "clears and delimits the space of domestic politics" wherein Kurdish nationalist subjects can "secure their dominance" over others and the Kurdish nationalism can "establish its hegemony".¹⁶ They are, on the other hand, actors because the discursive machinery works only through their bodies (particular clothing style, festivals, self-immolations, etc.) and their speakings. When they speak and do, they both mark their own identity in relation to other speaking/doing actors, and naturalize the hegemonic discourse through which acts/statements are experienced as "true" and "necessary". Therefore, those subjects not only share an abiding commitment to the Kurdish nationalist community but also defend/construct the domestic Kurdish community as a source of every legitimation. Those subjects also poised to defend the Kurdish nationalist

community against any kind of domestic alternative discourses and transfer them beyond the Kurdish space. As a result, those Kurdish subjects' "every practice is disposed to the reproduction"¹⁷ of the Kurdish nationalist community, its borders, and its domestic and foreign enemies.

BEYOND REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

The existing literature regarding the Kurdish nationalism in Turkey largely agrees upon the fact that contemporary Kurdish nationalism is the result of a repression.¹⁸ According to this scholarly agreement, the Turkish nationalism and its policy of subordination toward the Kurds ranging from assimilation to the prohibition of Kurdish identity markers resulted in the emergence and spread of the Kurdish nationalism.¹⁹ Since "the repression of Kurdish cultural and political identity spurred considerable resentment in Kurdish provinces", the Kurds repeatedly revolted to emancipate themselves from repression at the hands of the Turkish state.²⁰ Put differently, the Kurdish nationalism "in Turkey *stems from the repression* of the Kurdish people, whom the Turkish government has denied all legal possibility of representing *their interests*".²¹ This resistance-oriented approach simply proposes that in a society where cultural and political identities are dominated and controlled by Turkish nationalism, *a priori* Kurdish interests emerge as the main motive for resistance against the existing hegemonic order. While this view is not without merit, it simply overlooks the ways in which the PKK rose to hegemonic position representing the Kurds and "their" interests.

This book is an attempt to go beyond a resistance-oriented approach. It is true that foreign policy practices of the Turkish state contributed in the subordination of the Kurds into the Turkish identity. For example, Turkey's official relations with Iraq, Syria, and Iran, before anything else, made the border dividing Kurdish-speaking people appear normal, and inscribed the Kurds into Turkish citizenship. Again, it is also true that Kurds resisted against this artificial border through maps showing the distinct Kurdish geography, smuggling, and hit-and-run guerilla attacks. However, these two ways of reading the Kurdish issue in Turkey overlooks the power nesting in the PKK's resistance against the Turkish state and traditional Kurdish institutions. For example, the representation of the border dividing Kurds as a colonial artifact not only targets the legitimacy of the existing states, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, but it also produces new Kurdish subjects, which retrospectively legitimized the PKK's regula-

tory hegemony. Put differently, the imagination of world politics in a resistant way undertakes a significant role in the production of new Kurdish political subjects denying the existing border and demanding a national territory. Therefore, taking resistance as a “diagnostic of power”²² unveils two faces of the PKK’s representation of world politics: its transformative effect on Kurds, and its exclusionary function toward traditional and alternative Kurdish subjects/institutions.

Neither a subordination-oriented approach (the Kurds were suppressed by the Turkish state)²³ nor a resistance-oriented approach (the Kurds defended their own interests against assimilationist policies of the Turkish state) provides a comprehensive answer²⁴ to the following questions: How did the PKK rise to a hegemonic position representing the Kurds’ “true interests”? And how did the post-1980 Kurdish political subject come to be? This, however, does not mean the abandonment of any critique toward practices of the Turkish state subordinating the Kurds.²⁵ Rather, what I argue here is that the analysis of assimilationist practices of the Turkish state does not say so much about the emergence and constitution of the post-1980 Kurdish political identity as looking at transformative effect and exclusionary practices of the PKK. For example, arguing that assimilationist policies of the Turkish state aiming “to create a secular nation-state resulted in the construction of Kurdish ethno-nationalism”²⁶ deprives the PKK of any role in the production of Kurdish nationalist subjects. Therefore, a subordination-oriented approach fails to interrogate how the PKK performatively contributed²⁷ in the production of the post-1980 Kurdish political subjects. On the other hand, the resistance-oriented approach attributes *a priori* agency role to the Kurds (the notion of intrinsically constituted Kurdish identity) and, therefore, like subordination-oriented approach, walks into the trap of ignoring how the PKK inscribed the Kurds into a new closed Kurdish national society.²⁸

In fine, studying the genealogy of the PKK statements is more instructive than looking at the Turkish state’s policies in understanding the post-1980 Kurdish political identity. How the state’s policies were interpreted in a specific way instead of others was/is related to the interpretative violence²⁹ the PKK exerted on infinite possibilities of the meaning. While looking at policies of the Turkish state provides an understanding of official state identity in Turkey or the construction of specific Turkish subjectivities, understanding the post-1980 Kurdish political identity demands a look at the stylized repetition of statements out of and against the discourse of the Turkish state. It is true that the PKK emerged in a context the Turkish

state's exclusionary practices made possible, but important point here is that the PKK was not an inevitable or logical outcome of this context. Put differently, it was the PKK's interpretative violence that made some certain statements repeatable, which made the post-1980 Kurdish political identity possible. Without studying the PKK's interpretative violence excluding other possibilities of identity, the "political context" alone does not say anything about the post-1980 Kurdish political identity. Therefore, this book adopts "the notion of a performative that creates its own grounds" developed by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler.³⁰ According to this idea, the context is always there but "it becomes a context only when the speech act intervenes within it". Actor or its speech act "transforms the context it enters, even though in retrospect that context seems to have been there already as the ground of the speech act's efficacy".³¹

Discourses accompanied by practices in the 1980s and 1990s created a disciplinary society in which the PKK is able to speak in the name of the Kurds and disciplinary technology through which Kurds are rendered into specific subject positions. In other words, the PKK as a resistant ethnic movement not only resisted the power/knowledge of the Turkish state but also staked out a space for differentiation in the constitution of an autonomous Kurdish political identity.³² The PKK was an institutional and discursive power to the extent that it empowered a particular identity and excluded alternative modes of identity for the Kurds. This is the point where "resistors are doing more than simply opposing domination, more than simply producing a virtually mechanical re-action".³³ Therefore, arguing that the PKK empowered the "subaltern" Kurds who were subordinated by the Turkish state for a long time is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it is impossible to know whether the desire of the subaltern Kurds was the identity imposed by the PKK. On the contrary, what is clear in the genealogy of the PKK statements is the fact that the Kurds were inscribed into the post-1980 political identity through the work of power relations. Secondly, we know the subaltern Kurds through the lenses of either the PKK texts or the Turkish state's texts. Another source of knowing subaltern Kurds is texts left by traditional Kurdish institutions, tribal or religious. Since studying what the subaltern Kurds wanted out of political discourses is impossible,³⁴ the subaltern Kurds as a category can only be included in this book as a method.

It is the inclusion of "the subaltern Kurds" in this book as method that makes the following argument possible: The PKK did not "empower the subaltern"³⁵ Kurds, rather it inscribed them into a particular Kurdish

national identity. For example, an unnamed Kurdish villager told representatives from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: “We will lose either way... we don’t like the Turkish soldiers and we fear the PKK... both sides kill our people and burn our towns... you tell me which I should support.”³⁶ This statement of an unnamed villager clearly shows that there is no Kurdish identity ready to be utilized against the Turkish state by the PKK. Put differently, the PKK’s struggle did not recover or reinvigorate “the Kurdish identity” degraded and denied by the Turkish state. Rather, the PKK had to transform the subaltern Kurds into new subjects not only for a better resistance against the hegemonic Turkish state but concomitantly also for rendering itself as “true” representative of the Kurds. To use James C. Scott’s words with some minor changes, “the breaking of the norms and values of a dominant ideology”, be it the ideology of the Turkish state or that of traditional Kurdish institutions, “is typically the work of the bearers of a new mode of” ideology and power and not of subordinated Kurdish peasants.³⁷

Therefore, it was not the subordination of ordinary Kurds by the Turkish state but the frame of this subordination that made the PKK hegemonic and an existential threat to the hegemony of the Turkish state over the Kurds.³⁸ This is what Gellner calls “the basic deception” of nationalism:

Nationalism usually conquers in the name of a putative folk culture. Its symbolism is drawn from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasants, of the *Volk*, the *narod*. There is a certain element of truth in the nationalist self-presentation when the *narod* or *Volk* is ruled by officials of another, an alien high culture, whose oppression must be resisted first by a cultural revival or reaffirmation, and eventually by a war of national liberation. If the nationalism prospers it eliminates the alien high culture, but it does not then replace it by the old local low culture; it revives, or invents, a local high (literate, specialist-transmitted) culture of its own, though admittedly one which will have some links with the earlier folk styles and dialects.³⁹

Barkey and Fuller are right when they claim that the exposition of the Kurds to “reinvigorated Kurdish political and cultural activities” awakened them to the contemporary Kurdish nationalism. But they are wrong when they assume “quiet Kurds” awaiting some political and cultural practices to reawake.⁴⁰ If we assume a pre-given “Kurdish nationalist sentiment experienced an awakening”,⁴¹ then it becomes possible to find examples of Kurdish nationalism even in the sixteenth century long before the French Revolution.⁴² Similarly, those who underline physical and social violence

exerted by the Turkish state over the Kurds as a warning, which awakened the Kurds to their ahistorical national self, again assume an essential Kurdish identity. Either way, the main problem of the “awakening” notion is to assume that the subaltern Kurds were awaiting a bell-ringing to be awakened to their self-consciousness. However, to use Gellner’s words again, the Kurdish nationalism, like all other nationalisms, “is not the awakening of” the Kurdish nation to self-consciousness; it rather invented Kurdish nation or the Kurdish self, where it does not exist.⁴³ Therefore, the imagination of the “Kurdish nation” in danger⁴⁴ rather than an ahistorical Kurdish national identity waiting to be awakened was the main impulse that “awakened” the Kurds to the contemporary Kurdish nationalism. For this very reason, facing the reality, which is the possibility of being killed in the guerilla warfare against the Turkish Armed Forces, is the only escape from the terrifying reality of imagination in which the Kurds are robbed of everything.⁴⁵

At this point, the inclusion of subaltern Kurds into this book not as subjects but as a methodological tool illustrates the arbitrary character of the post-1980 Kurdish political identity. Instead of treating the post-1980 Kurdish political identity as “a reactivated sense of identity and nationalism”,⁴⁶ this book focuses on how *a doubly articulated dominance*⁴⁷ over the Kurds produced a national subject position of the Kurds in the 1980s and 1990s. The dominance over the Kurds in these two decades was exercised not only by the Turkish state but also by the Kurdish nationalist elite mobilizing around the PKK. In other words, the insertion of Kurdish individuals into subject position during these two decades was made possible through the exercise of these two powers. Although many academic studies deal with the role of the first power, the Turkish state, in the formation of the post-1980 Kurdish political identity, the role of the PKK in the formation of this new identity is just a recent interest among the students of Kurdish nationalism. As much the Turkish state’s suppression of any public expression and demands about Kurdishness⁴⁸ as, the PKK’s interpretative violence on infinite possibilities against the Turkish state’s repressions played a role in the construction of the post-1980 Kurdish political identity. Without the analysis of how the PKK imposed a limit on the meaning of being Kurdish, and rendered the Kurdish individuals into specific subject positions, it is impossible to understand the post-1980 Kurdish political subjectivity in Turkey.

Since the authority of the Turkish state over the Kurds in Turkey was realized through state apparatus and hegemonic discourse, academic

scholars easily grasped and detailed the role of Turkish state's repression in the reconstruction of the Kurdish identity. On the other hand, "sovereign governmental authority" of the Kurdish nationalist elite mobilizing around the PKK was "no more than aspects of an unrealized project, an aspiration yet to be fulfilled, a dream" during the founding years and the 1980s.⁴⁹ Therefore, only when Kurdish "governmental" institutions such as civil society organizations, Kurdish parties, and Kurdish municipalities became highly apparent in the 1990s did scholars start to shed light on the role of these nationalist elite or nationalist institutions in the construction of the new Kurdish political subjects. Few of them, however, were able to escape from the "romance of resistance",⁵⁰ a reading of the Kurdish resistance as an emancipatory human spirit in its refusal to be dominated by the Turkish state, and able to grasp the production of new Kurdish subjects through subjection to new center of power, namely Kurdish nationalist discourse.⁵¹ As a result, since the subject, the post-1980 Kurdish political subject here, only exists on the condition that it accepts the laws of the symbolic order,⁵² the nationalist discourse regulated by the PKK, framing the issue as a matter of freedom is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it assumes an autonomous Kurdish subject free from the exercise of power relations and underestimates the productive role of the discourse regulated by the PKK. Secondly, it normalizes and justifies the resulting post-1980 Kurdish political identity as true and real identity for the Kurds.

READING THE PKK THROUGH TEXTS

This book is a study of recurring statements about world politics in the PKK's texts. Since the social texts of the PKK are not the reduction of real life in the world to the page of a book⁵³ but the products of a specific discourse, the "regularity of statements" in those texts is central in understanding the formation of counter-hegemonic political identity regulated by the PKK. It is important to study recurring statements within "a set of texts by different people presumed to be authorized speakers/writers of a dominant discourse",⁵⁴ because it is the study of reiteration and regularity within texts that shows the hegemonic discourse regulating the emergence of statements.⁵⁵ Put differently, if writing is an act produced in the intellectual and imaginary territory,⁵⁶ studying the PKK's texts with a special focus on stylized reiterations within these texts can provide us the large political identity/concern imposed by the PKK. However, reading texts, images, and records is to read representations of the "reality", such as the