

**Identity, Interest, and Politics:  
The Rise of Kurdish Associational Activism and the Contestation of  
the State in Turkey**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In the de facto Kurdish capital of Diyarbakır, hundreds of thousands of people gathered in late March to celebrate the traditional Kurdish spring. This year's celebration, however, was different than previous ones, as Kurdish guerilla leader Abdullah Öcalan's call was read to the mass: it was a historic call to end the armed struggle, which lasted for three decades and cost the lives of some 40,000 people. Signaling the peak of negotiations between the Turkish government and the Kurdish movement for a peace deal, the call takes place against the background of a decade of transition. This decade, as well as the ongoing process of peace building, has highlighted the roles interest associations may play in political life. The dissertation investigates the rise of Kurdish interest associations from Diyarbakır as politically salient actors vis-à-vis the contestation of the state in this transitional decade.

The transitional process started when the armed conflict between the Turkish army and the Kurdish guerilla organization PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kürdistan* – Kurdistan Workers Party) came to a halt in 1999, albeit to re-start in 2004 at a lower density. Again in 1999, Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate country by the European Union, who has begun pressing Turkish governments to carry out reforms for the resolution of the Kurdish issue as well as democratization of the political system. This process has opened up a space for interest associations in Diyarbakır. They were increasingly addressed by international delegates as political representatives of Kurds. Two major political actors contesting over the Kurdish population and the Turkish state – the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) government and the PKK-led Kurdish movement – also gradually began taking these associations into consideration and attempted to articulate them to their political projects. The associations, hence, engaged in various activities appearing as third actors who try to moderate the conflict, press for reforms, and provide alternative channels for articulating grievances and demands, in addition to pursuing their business as usual. In other words, as civil society organizations, they were to play a role in conflict resolution and democratic consolidation.

However, there have been constraints to play such a role because of dynamics not only outside of but also within the associational site, as associational leaders at times experienced conflicts among themselves and took part in opposing political coalitions. This dissertation, on the other hand, investigates the rise of Kurdish associational activism from a different yet

not unrelated angle: the role of associational leadership in a strongly polarized and uncertain environment can be better understood in terms of struggles for hegemony between alternative models of political integration and social order. The AKP government and the Kurdish movement attempt to achieve hegemony by, *inter alia*, articulating and mobilizing Kurdish groups with variable appeals to economic interests and collective identity. Providing a link between individuals and political actors, Kurdish interest associations have turned into both a major actor and a site of this contestation, where the cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics play out themselves in diverse ways. The dissertation explores these diverse ways with a detailed analysis of three associational sites for business, professional, and labor communities in Diyarbakır, against the background of changing political, economic and institutional environments in the country. The empirical analysis helps explain the variation in associational behavior as well as its consequences. Overall, it explores what roles associational leaderships may play in political life vis-à-vis the contestation of the state, considering their activities to forge coalitions among themselves and with political actors against the background of the above-mentioned cross-pressures as potential sources of cleavage.

Before proceeding to the conceptual framework, let me give more details about the process which led to the rise of associational activism in Diyarbakır, as well as the context and content of this activism. Diyarbakır is a province in southeastern Turkey with a population over one million. It has been the historical center of the predominantly Kurdish-populated region, as well as of the Kurdish movement which developed in the 1970s. Kurds, comprising about some 15 to 20 per cent of the country's population as the largest minority group, have been deprived of cultural-linguistic rights and subjected to periodic state oppression as a result of an authoritarian process of nation-building throughout the 20th Century. As political channels were either closed or unresponsive to pro-Kurdish actors, the armed struggle given by the PKK in the post-1980 period developed as 'politics by another means.' The conflict reached its peak in the 1990s and came to a halt in 1999 (albeit to restart in 2004 at a lower density) when the PKK's leader Öcalan was captured by foreign intelligence services and handed to Turkey to be imprisoned to date. Coupled with other dynamics, this event triggered a complicated process of efforts for conflict resolution and democratization.

The European Union has been a significant actor in this process with its annual progress reports, which evaluate the institutional setting and governmental performance of Turkey as to whether it met the political and economic criteria for membership. As human rights violations

and anti-democratic institutions were among the major political concerns raised in these reports, the Kurdish issue obtained a special significance in the EU accession process. Its significance further increased in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led war on Iraq, as the PKK ended its ceasefire, being encouraged by the increasing autonomy of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq. Faced with challenges both within the country and in European and Middle Eastern fronts, the Turkish governments have been revising the Kurdish policy and implementing some reforms.

The AKP came to power in 2002 and has been ruling the government since then. As a newly-established party with roots in political Islam, the AKP undertook significant initiatives to achieve legitimacy and to consolidate its power, which was threatened by military and civilian bureaucratic elites who made appeals to secularist concerns (see Ch. 3). Parallel to this contestation of the state, the government initially speeded up the EU reform process, while also making steps with regard to the Kurdish issue. It introduced some cultural-linguistic rights for Kurds, as well as more general political reforms. Prime Minister Erdoğan made several visits to Diyarbakır promising a solution the Kurdish issue via democratization. The state officials conducted periodical secret talks with the PKK, while the legal representatives of the Kurdish movement, specifically the pro-Kurdish political parties, were being faced with political repression via party closures and imprisonment. Against this background, the government, as well as the mainstream media, has started paying more attention to interest associations in Diyarbakır since 2005: associations were depicted as an alternative actor, more legitimate and less radical than the Kurdish movement. However, they were to act in a highly uncertain and turbulent political environment, as the configuration of power has been changing at the national, local and regional levels. More specifically, they were faced with a somewhat dynamic set of opportunities and constraints presented by the AKP government and the Kurdish movement, as well as by the respective peak associations – these range from access to new resources to intimidation.

The associations, at least some of them, had been already engaged in human rights activism and addressed by foreign delegates in this respect. Yet, as they started enjoying a hitherto unseen public visibility and governmental support via official meetings, they increased their political activities, in addition to pursuing their business as usual. Activities have been as diverse as the following: making press releases; organizing demonstrations; negotiating with political actors at the local and the national level; taking part in philanthropic activities by political actors, and so on. In doing so, associational leaders called for an end to the conflict,

made pro-Kurdish rights-claims, pressed for political reforms, and tried moderating the two political forces in their contestation. However, they also had conflicts among themselves, as manifested in their participation in opposing coalitions with each political rival at times of important political events such as the constitutional referendum and elections, as well as one-to-one relations of interest intermediation.

As outlined in the theoretical framework below and elaborated in the empirical analysis, collective identity politics can present an integrative force enabling encompassing coalitions within the ethnic group. Interest politics, on the other hand, can have divisive effects within the group, serving narrow coalitions, and integrative effects across the groups, conducive to national coalitions. These two tendencies roughly correspond to the hegemonic projects of the Kurdish movement and the AKP government, respectively. While no single model of integration or a line of social division could reign, the associations negotiated diverse compromises with the political actors. Some of them could turn the situation to an advantage and some ended up relatively disadvantaged.

The dissertation analyzes the activities by three types of interest associations: first, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the compulsory business association; second, the Bar and Medical Associations as the compulsory professional associations; and third, the labor unions in the municipality sector as the de facto compulsory labor organizations. I focus on both political activism and associational behavior related to interest representation. I examine how cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics, emanating from both political interlocutors and memberships, play out themselves in diverse ways and influence the process of coalition formation and articulation of social groups. This examination will help explore what roles associational leadership may play in political life vis-à-vis the contestation of the state.

## **1.1 Studying associational politics**

Interest associations may play a role in maintaining social order and political integration, beyond the representation of narrowly-defined special interests. This idea was first developed by Emile Durkheim in relation with the processes of capitalist development and later elaborated by the corporatism literature in political science in its analysis of organized interests. Although associations have been receiving less attention in advanced industrial countries in the neoliberal period, these actors can still play important roles in the politics of,

at least, late industrializing countries. In this section, I highlight theoretical approaches to the place of associations in political life, first outlining the Durkheimian tradition and second elaborating on the role of associational leadership in the ‘political articulation’ of social groups vis-à-vis the contestation of the state. Third, I outline the theoretical approach for the empirical study of associational behavior. This discussion hence provides a conceptual framework to understand the Kurdish associational activism in contemporary Turkey.

### *The role of interest associations in state-society relations*

In his preface for the second edition of the *Division of Labor in Society*, Emile Durkheim (1933: 1-31) elaborates on the role of occupational groups in contemporary societies. We can summarize his ideas as a dual role of economic regulation and socio-political integration. According to Durkheim, increasing specialization in economic life brings about a social need for cohesion and regularity. This situation may lead to anomie, unless a system of rules is instituted and the pursuit of self-interest is restrained. Since the state’s capability weakens as differentiation accelerates; it is the occupational group or corporation who can serve this function: it is close enough to the site of economic activities and well-informed about the needs and functioning of a specific industry as its organized actors. The occupational group can exert a moral discipline over individuals, by containing egoism, regulating relations among them and with the public, and supporting shared interests. It provides a spirit of solidarity as well as a ‘source of life’ for its members, since it also offers activities for leisure time and charity. Its function, hence, may go beyond the regulation of economic life and link to the need for social order and political integration:

A nation can be maintained only if, between the State and the individual, there is intercalated a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life. We have just shown how occupational groups are suited to fill this role (Durkheim 1933: 28).

Durkheim is interested in ‘the problem of . . . what holds societies together’ (Parsons quoted in Tilly 1978: 16), a problem which is also very relevant to the situations of intrastate conflict. In Durkheim’s time, it appears significant as a result of the processes of capitalist development. In this vein, as the market extends from the local to the national and international scales, Durkheim argues that occupational associations also should enlarge to include all the members of the occupation over a territory. He sees these associations as an

important basis of political organization, as opposed to territorial divisions, for he thinks that ‘the provincial spirit has disappeared never to return; the patriotism of the parish has become an archaism that cannot be restored at will’ (Durkheim 1933: 24-28). This seems like wishful thinking though, considering the ongoing significance of territorial divisions, and as I argue below, what type of social divisions provides the basis of political organization is an outcome of political and social activity; hence, contingent. Here, it is important to note Durkheim’s emphasis on the role of associations in the political representation of social interests.

Political roles played by these organized actors connect to Durkheim’s theory of democracy. They mediate individuals and the state, by providing a channel for communication and regulation. Hence, they may work against two opposing tendencies: on the one hand, they protect individuals from being ‘tyrannized’ by the state. This is why occupational associations should enjoy autonomy from the state to play the buffer role in a fashion similar to the liberal theories of civil society (Cohen/Arato 1997). On the other hand, they protect the state from getting ‘absorbed’ by individuals. Hence, they provide some administrative stability against changes in popular opinion, as the state does more than expressing the ideas held in society. However, Durkheim accepts that occupational associations are not a kind of remedy for everything, and his theory is more about how social institutions would function under appropriate conditions (see Durkheim 1933: 1-31; Durkheim 1992: 98-109; Giddens 1996: 1-31).

Throughout the 20th Century, functionally-based associations have shown a great variety in practice and theory. The post-war settlement in Europe depicted a model most similar to what was envisaged by Durkheim (see Streeck/Schmitter 1985). It aimed to reconcile the capitalist economy with mass politics through the incorporation of worker collectivism and the institution of collective bargaining. This led to a compromise among the government, business and organized labor ‘in which social and political integration were purchased by the provision of material benefits rather than enforced by coercive state authority’ (Streeck/Kenworthy 2005: 447). The corporatism literature that rose in the 1970s was to study such roles played by organized interests in the politics of industrial societies. Works examined different forms of organized interest representation across and within countries, focusing on topics such as organizational structure, concertation, private-interest government, as well as impact on economic performance.<sup>1</sup> As the neo-liberal policies have brought about significant

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<sup>1</sup> See the literature reviews by Streeck (2006); Streeck/Kenworthy (2005).

changes in economic life, however, the corporatist literature started declining in the West by the 1990s.

The environment of interest politics has changed since then.<sup>2</sup> Yet, some of the notions of the corporatism literature still appear useful for the study of this environment, in addition to the Durkheimian emphasis on the political roles of intermediary organizations. As detailed in Chapter 4, most of the interest associations under scrutiny (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bar and Medical Associations) have a corporatist organizational structure. Here I follow Philippe Schmitter's seminal work for the definition of corporatism:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support (Schmitter 1974: 93-94).

The possession of such organizational structure has played an important role in the rise and nature of activism by these associations, as I show throughout the dissertation. Especially properties such as compulsory membership, monopoly of representation, internal electoral processes and the public status provide the associations with a larger constituency, greater capacity and social legitimacy, as well as a better access to some political channels. These advantages gain significance against the background of an environment of voluntary associations, where there are more explicit and established coalitions between associations and political parties. In compulsory associations, on the other hand, competition takes place internally among different factions, and associations appear either relatively neutral or conjecturally aligned.<sup>3</sup> It is this corporatist structure what brings together the pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics. Associational leaders, then, have to

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<sup>2</sup> For an evaluation of changing organized interests in the advanced industrial context, see Schmitter (2008). Historically, Turkey's system of interest representation has depicted important differences than the Western models underlying the corporatism literature. This is also why it keeps – or even increases – its political significance in the neoliberal period, unlike in the West. For a historical overview of the Turkish system, see Ch. 4.

<sup>3</sup> There are also other reasons for why particularly these compulsory associations are significant and selected for investigation, see the next section for sampling.

intermediate these sometimes-conflicting pressures and reach a compromise, whereas voluntary associations could accommodate the situation thanks to fragmentation.

Yet, voluntary associations also have an important place in this study. In the empirical analysis, I refer to a number of voluntary business associations as complementary partners of Diyarbakır's Chamber. Moreover, I focus on labor unions organized in the municipality sector, although their situation is more ambiguous with regard to the definition of voluntary association possessing a de facto corporatist structure, as I clarify it in the next section. In addition to the empirical sample, there are institutional-reform proposals for turning the corporatist environment of interest representation into a pluralist environment of voluntary associations. This is important for understanding the contested nature of interest politics in contemporary Turkey, especially with regard to the AKP government's failure to control the environment as it wished (see Ch. 4). As to what I mean by pluralism, it

can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, nonhierarchically ordered and self-determined (as to type or scope of interest) categories which are not specially licensed, recognized, subsidized, created or otherwise controlled in leadership selection or interest articulation by the state and which do not exercise a monopoly of representational activity within their respective categories (Schmitter 1974: 96).

As the interest associations in Diyarbakır have arisen as third actors, the rival political actors – the ruling party AKP and the Kurdish movement – started taking these associations into consideration and attempted to mobilize them in their struggle for hegemony. While advocating associations as one basis of political representation, Durkheim did not elaborate on political parties or social movements, let alone their interaction with associations. Yet, we see a useful approach in the corporatism literature to the interrelations among these different sites.

Schmitter elaborates the notion of modern democracy as a combination of 'partial regimes' rather than as a single regime. Partial regimes are institutionalized sites for the political representation of social groups. Major examples include political parties, social movements, and interest associations. The boundaries between these regimes can be vague and changeable. They may grow together: many political parties and interest associations have their origins in social movements. They may also compete against each other to attain power and to influence policy. Thereby, they may represent diverse 'interests' and 'passions'



corresponding to cleavages in society (Schmitter 1992; Schmitter 2008). One of them may become more powerful thanks to constraints on the representational function of another one, as it has been partly the case with the rise of Kurdish associations vis-à-vis pro-Kurdish parties. This analytical distinction will help us disaggregate the political environment in which the Kurdish associations are embedded. It will help consider how each site relates to each other, while we are looking at the efforts for coalition formation within the associational site, as well as in its interaction with the other sites. Yet, the roles played by these partial regimes and their interrelations become all the more contested in transitional contexts (Schmitter 1992).

### *Associational leadership vis-à-vis the contestation of the state*

The question of what holds society together has been central also to the experiences of nation-state building. Similar to Durkheim's ideas, an established network of civil society was proposed as one of the reasons for a successful integration of ethnically diverse societies (Wimmer 2004). What roles, then, may interest associations play in a context where the nation-state is already being contested? The literature on intrastate conflicts pays a great attention to economic factors with regard to the likelihood and nature of conflicts; however, studies of interest associations in such situations are rare.<sup>4</sup> One major study comparing the roles played by different types of civil society organizations in conflict situations suggests that interest associations can be more effective for building trust and cooperation as they are based on social and civic ties that cut across ethnic groups (Varshney 2003). This role can be less effective, however, when there is a geographical concentration of ethnic groups, as in the Kurdish case. Hence, the Kurdish interest associations are based on both 'social-civic' and ethnic ties. Yet, the relations of local associations with their respective peak associations, which do cut across ethnic groups, are important in this regard and the tensions that can be seen between the two levels beg attention (see Ch. 4 and Part II).

On the other hand, I would like to focus rather on the roles played by interest associations in struggles for hegemony. I use the notion of hegemony in a loose version of the Gramscian

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<sup>4</sup> In relation with economic factors, the literature emphasizes the impact of natural resources and individual economic motivations (Collier/Hoeffler 2004), inequalities across social groups in society (Stewart 2009; Cederman/Gleditsch/Weidmann 2010), and regional uneven development (Horowitz 1985; Østby/Nordås/Rød 2009). Many works in the literature are driven by a dichotomy of 'grievance or greed' for causes of individual and/or collective participation in civil wars. This framing sounds similar to my discussion of cross-pressures of interest and identity politics; however, unlike my discussion, works usually focus on inter-group divisions, rather than intra-group divisions, and may miss the fact that motives such as grievances, as well as divisions, are socially constructed and 'might be redefined by hegemonic projects' (Tuğal 2009: 269, fn. 7).

tradition: political domination based on not merely force but consent, under the leadership of a ruling group, who articulates certain ideas and interests in society as ‘common sense,’ i.e. ‘a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships’ (Williams 1976: 145; Gramsci 1971). Consent does not mean a passive compliance though, but can be ‘informed, partial and strategic,’ while the ruling group also may sacrifice its interests to a degree (Wimmer 2008: 998; Scott 1985; Thompson 1967).

We can argue that associations play a role in struggles for building hegemony by taking part in not only the political representation but also the ‘political articulation’ (De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009) of social groups. In this vein, the Durkheimian approach also underlines the role of associations in giving individuals ‘stable identities and conceptions of interests’ (Schmitter 2008: 208).<sup>5</sup> This is what differentiates the corporatist notion of ‘interest intermediation’ from the pluralist notion of ‘interest representation’: associational leaders are charged with ‘aggregation and transformation of diverse special interests into more broadly defined common, *adjusted* interests.’ They are, in other words, ‘active producers instead of mere purveyors of collective interests’ (Streeck/Kenworthy 2005: 450, emphasis original).

The relation of such efforts of ‘political articulation’ to the struggles for hegemony is that they may serve ‘naturaliz(ing) class, ethnic, and racial formations as a basis of social division by integrating disparate interests and identities into coherent sociopolitical blocs’ (De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009: 194-195). In their discussion on the conception of political articulation, De Leon et al. emphasize the role of political parties in the formation of social cleavages, as opposed to the classical approach which assumes cleavages a priori to party politics (Rokkan/Lipset 1990). Their emphasis also appears opposed to the ‘groupism’ tendency to treat ethnic groups ‘as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed’ regarding them ‘internally homogeneous and externally bounded’ (Brubaker 2002: 164), whereas ethnic boundaries are the result of ‘classificatory and political struggles’ in society (Wimmer 2008).

In this respect, I aim to explore the conditions under which particular lines of cleavage gain relative salience and provide the basis of political coalitions. The roles played by interest associations in this process can be understood in relation with other partial regimes – that is, political parties and social movements – as they also engage in similar activities of political

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<sup>5</sup> In this regard, the Durkheimian approach is similar to the non-liberal approaches to civil society, such as Gramscian and Foucaultian ones (see Hardt 1995), if we bracket Durkheim’s more optimistic take on it and underline its productive aspects.

articulation (see De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009; Buğra/Savaşkan 2012; Tuğal 2009). However, each of them rests on different types of constituency (functional, territorial, or an intersection of both), ‘which impose a different logic of competition and cooperation’ (Schmitter 1992: 431). It is their interaction shaped by such logics that contributes to the relative political salience of particular cleavages (cf. Greif/Laitin 2004; Wimmer 2008).

In the Kurdish case, first of all, the partial regimes of political parties and social movements have been characterized with a special situation: the contestation between the Turkish government ruled by the AKP and the Kurdish movement led by the PKK (and pro-Kurdish parties) has constituted a situation of ‘dual power’ in the Kurdish region. This situation implies two rival claims to sovereignty, accompanied with the co-existence of competing institutions and sources of legitimacy (Tilly 1978). I elaborate on this situation in Chapter 2, as it is more an outcome of the growing power of the Kurdish movement in the region. Here, let’s note that the Kurdish associational site, as well as the province of Diyarbakır, appears in this situation as a ‘contested zone’ in which control is contested and limited sovereignty is exercised (Kalyvas 2006).

Against this background, salient cleavages, as well as political coalitions, were attempted to be (re)constituted along two major axes: economic interests and collective identity.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly framed his party’s contestation with the Kurdish movement in elections in a dichotomy of ‘service versus identity politics.’ Erdoğan accused the municipalities run by the pro-Kurdish party of doing identity politics while ignoring social needs for which Erdoğan’s party AKP promised to provide services. He also accused the PKK of being against the economic development of the region as the government claimed to realize. The accusation at the Kurdish movement at times included even religious perversion and ‘necrophilia.’<sup>7</sup> The AKP, in other words, hailed to ‘interests’ to counteract ‘passions;’ i.e. a conception of legitimate benevolent motives versus illegitimate, even perverse motives (Hirschman 1997). This has something to do with the modernization approach,<sup>8</sup> which has underlined the Turkish state’s understanding of the Kurdish issue. The

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<sup>6</sup> I do not take interest and identity as exogenous variables; they are endogenous. The Durkheimian approach and the corporatism literature underline the endogeneity of interests. As to ethnicity as a collective identity, I agree with the idea that ‘cleavage structures are . . . endogenous to societies but exogenous to any individual member of that society’ (Greif/Laitin 2004: 645). Therefore, in the present study, I investigate collective-identity politics, rather than an essentialist conception of identity, as a category of analysis (cf. Brubaker/Cooper 2000).

<sup>7</sup> The first is related to the secular (and at times anti-religious) approach of the Kurdish movement and the latter to the movement’s efforts to make the government accept responsibility for an incident in which Turkish jets fired at a group of Kurdish smugglers near the border, killing 34 civilians (see Ch. 3).

<sup>8</sup> For the modernization theory in this line, see the seminal work by Lipset (1963).

Kurdish uprising was often seen as an outcome of the regional underdevelopment, while it was thought that economic development would produce positive social changes, hence, a solution (see Yeğen 2003). The rise of Kurdish interest associations as political actors is also partly connected to this approach; they enjoy legitimacy thanks to their economic roles and provide an integrative network across ethnic groups and between the individuals and the state, as in the Durkheimian approach. Yet, in its rivalry with the Kurdish movement, the AKP had to use discursive and non-discursive strategies with regard to both interests and passions (see Ch. 3 and Part II).

The Kurdish movement, on the other hand, emphasized ‘passions’ over ‘interests’ by engaging in collective identity politics. By highlighting the shared ethnic identity and articulating common demands and passions (grievances, ideals, commitments, etc.), it tried to integrate Kurds under its leadership. It accused the AKP of trying to ‘divide’ Kurds and attempted to build encompassing coalitions for both electoral and associational politics, with efforts to ‘downplay differences’ between Kurdish groups in ideas and interests (cf. McAdam/Tarrow/Tilly 2008). In addition, the movement draws on a moral economy which has emerged in the Kurdish region thanks to the growing power of the movement and the conflict situation. This moral economy is based on ‘patriotism’ and political ‘sacrifice’ as sources of legitimacy. It promotes certain conceptions of mutual rights and obligations. Accordingly, passions may influence and outweigh calculations of interests, and the legitimacy of each type of motive appears to be the reverse of the AKP’s rival model. As explored in the empirical chapters, the moral economy provides bonds for intragroup solidarity, as well as norms of conduct between the movement leaders and the locals. In other words, it outlines an alternative model of political integration.<sup>9</sup> However, it has become more contested as a result of economic and political changes in the last decade, while the Kurdish movement also had to use discursive and non-discursive strategies with regard to both passions and interests, in its rivalry with the AKP (see Ch. 2 and Part II).

The cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics can be best observed in the environment of interest associations. The pressures play out themselves in diverse ways

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<sup>9</sup> The term moral economy originally belongs to E. P. Thompson. In his study of bread riots in the 18th C. England, Thompson refers to an economic environment where material calculations are outweighed by moral obligations and considerations of legitimacy (Thompson 1971). The term has had different interpretations since his seminal work and can be linked to similar approaches to the study of the economy as embedded in social relations (see Booth 1994). I use the concept in a loose sense here and see it as a political normative order and as a by-product of the contestation of the state. This is similar to Salzman’s (2010) use of the concept in relation to the processes of state formation. Also see Ch. 2 on this.

within and among associations. They may appear in harmony or lead to conflicts depending on circumstances and definitions. However, to act as political actors, associational groups require ‘a minimal degree of internal cohesion, a sense of solidarity in spite of existing internal divisions, and legitimate leadership strong enough to impose discipline and individual sacrifice on their members’ (Schmitter/Streeck 1999: 11). Given the political polarization and the precarious situation of Kurdish citizens, associational leaders also need to frame their claims in accordance with the ‘public interest’ and other sources of legitimacy. Then, the questions how these problems are solved and how political mobilization becomes possible seem important. Answers to these questions will help understanding whether the mentioned pressures attain relative salience as a basis of social division and coalition and whether the associations are successful as political actors (Schmitter/Streeck 1999).

In the literature, interest heterogeneity is seen to be a major problem for collective action (Olson 1982: 17-35). It makes it difficult for actors to find a common ground and to agree on the need for and nature of action. However, it is argued that collective identity and political-moral commitments may mitigate such problems (Offe/Wiesenthal 1980; Rueschemeyer 2009: 168-82; Buğra 2002a). Considering the inter-associational action and coalition formation in the Kurdish case, we see a similar trajectory: collective identity politics has an integrative force enabling intra-group encompassing coalitions in pursuit of common concerns. Interest politics, on the other hand, can have divisive effects within the group, underlying narrow coalitions, and integrative effects across the groups conducive to national coalitions and political integration in a Durkheimian fashion (cf. Buğra 2002a; Yashar 2005). These two trajectories roughly correspond to the hegemonic projects of the Kurdish movement and the AKP government, respectively. However, the interest associations are not mere instruments for the political actors to manipulate social groups; they have an agency, with a special logic of action.

### ***Analyzing associational behavior***

Studying something inherently ambiguous such as collective action (Rueschemeyer 2009: 179) is a difficult task, especially in a context of highly polarized and uncertain political environment. Schmitter/Streeck (1999) offer a useful theoretical framework for the study of associational behavior.<sup>10</sup> The authors identify two environments which affect the dynamics of

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<sup>10</sup> There are, of course, several approaches to the study of collective action, most notably the social movement literature (for a classical work, see Tilly 1978; for a contemporary overview, see Della Porta/Diani 2006; Johnston 2011). In the present analysis, I prefer to focus on the literature on organized interests and the political

intermediary organizations and are governed by different logics: the membership environment (the social group from which they draw their members) and the influence environment (the collective actors in relation to which they represent their members). These environments are governed by different logics.

Interaction between an interest association and its constituency is shaped by factors such as the following: the members' perceptions of interests, demands, willingness to comply with decisions made on their behalf; the means available to the association for controlling its members; and the collective benefits and inducements the association offers. These constitute the 'logic of membership.' As to the interaction between an interest association and its interlocutors, it is governed by factors such as the association's demands; the support it has to offer; the compromises it is willing and able to negotiate; the constraints and opportunities presented by the relevant political institutions; and the concessions offered to the association. These constitute the association's 'logic of influence.' In its classical form, these variables are used to explain the organizational properties of interest associations such as structure and outputs (Schmitter/Streeck 1999; Streeck/Kenworthy 2005).

In my empirical analysis of associational behavior, I loosely draw on this approach to adapt it to the questions of the study. I focus on three levels: associational properties and leadership; dynamics in the membership environment; and contemporary political activism. Although there are some overlaps among them, the first two levels are thought to provide insights into the dynamics of the third one, which comprises the major concern of the study: manifestations of the cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics, as well as dynamics of coalition formation. This, in other words, relates to the influence environment, but I refer to that also in the first part with regard to associational properties and leadership. This analytical division helps deal with the complex involvements of the other partial regimes (represented by the AKP and the Kurdish movement) in the environments of both influence and membership.

Associational leaders appear to be significant actors in the present study. Their leadership talents and individual choices gain a special importance because of the transitional context characterized by high uncertainty (Collier 2006b: 6; Schmitter 1992). Leaders play significant roles in articulating claims, managing internal cohesion, leading (inter)associational

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articulation approach outlined above. It still touches on common themes though, such as framing, opportunities, and mobilization.

mobilization, and negotiating with political actors. They may experience difficulty to reconcile demands from the membership and influence environments. They may also pursue their personal interests such as career advancement, improving personal networks and increasing public visibility. In this respect, leaders are faced with special opportunities and constraints as a result of the contestation of the state along the two poles of the AKP government and the Kurdish movement (cf. Buğra/Savaşkan 2012). The empirical analysis examines the variation among associations concerning the configurations of these special circumstances and regular factors such as structural conditions and institutional settings, in relation with the research questions.

The potential contribution of the dissertation is twofold: first, the analysis will strengthen the English literature on organized interests by focusing on associational leadership in a context where the nation-state is contested. The literature paid attention to supranational challenges to the nation-state as a result of globalization and regionalization (see Streeck/Crouch 2006; Streeck/Schmitter 1991). However, subnational challenges to the nation-state and their effects on organized interests, and vice versa, appear to be underanalyzed.<sup>11</sup> The topic, on the other hand, seems important in relation with not only the ethnic conflict in Turkey and elsewhere, but also the Islamist mobilization in the Middle East. Interest associations have provided important channels for Islamist movements in countries such as Turkey and Egypt since the 1990s, while affiliate parties were to rule national governments in the 2000s.<sup>12</sup> A study of interactions among different sites for the political representation-articulation of social groups can contribute to the understanding of gradual political change and shifting salience of cleavages, as well as the role of associational leadership in these processes.

Second, the dissertation introduces a new dimension to the literatures on organized interests and the Kurdish issue in Turkey, by examining their intersection. There are several works which examine civil society organizations in relation with the Kurdish issue (Dorrnsoro/Watts 2013; Gambetti 2009; Çelik 2006). Yet, interest associations (be them local or peak) are rarely studied in this regard.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, the dissertation might be useful for policy advocacy: the recent steps by the Turkish government and the PKK to

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<sup>11</sup> Works on transitions from authoritarianism and democratic consolidation are relevant for such a focus, though. For example, see Schmitter (1992); Schmitter (1995); Collier (2006a); Schneider (2004). The study by Buğra/Savaşkan (2012) on the organized interests in Turkey with regard to political polarization is also relevant.

<sup>12</sup> On Turkey, see Ch. 4. On Egypt, see Wickham (1997); Bayat (1998); Fahmy (1999). For a broader view of the role of civil society in the Islamist quest for political change and power, see Berman (2003).

<sup>13</sup> For exceptional works, which albeit have a limited scope, see Yüksel (2011); Bora (2002) and for a journalistic work, see Diken (2001). For an overview of interest associations in Turkey, see Ch. 4.

negotiate a peace deal have highlighted the need for mechanisms of intermediation, for which the government has approached civil society actors, while the PKK emphasizes the development of a democratic civil society as a requirement of a solution. A study of how interest organizations acted in the transitional period, as well as how they were differently influenced, can offer insights and cautions for the peace process under way.

## **1.2 Methodology**

Conducting empirical research on politics and actors at the meso level in a situation of transition from conflict can be a challenging task for methodological and ethical reasons (Wood 2006). In this section, I first clarify the selection of sample associations within the case. I then elaborate on the methods for data collection. This latter part also mentions some ethical questions.

### ***Sampling***

Diyarbakır has been the center of the associational activism, thanks to its political importance. The city has a vibrant civil society with numerous organizations working in areas ranging from human rights to poverty alleviation. However, interest associations – and especially those with corporatist structure - have been the major actors of the activism. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bar Association and, to some degree, the Medical Association led the activities, also often accompanied by voluntary business associations. They formed encompassing and narrow coalitions of civil society organizations mostly only from Diyarbakır, but sometimes also from either all the Kurdish region or from the rest of the country depending on the nature of activities.

The reason why corporatist associations have taken the leader position appears to be linked to their organizational properties such as compulsory membership, representational monopoly, internal elections and public status. As mentioned before, these properties provide a larger membership, greater capacity and more legitimacy, compared with the environment of voluntary associations which is fragmented and polarized. Also, compulsory associations appear important for politics at the local and national levels, as the oldest associations linking individuals to the political authorities. In this vein, the AKP attempted to influence corporatist associations around the country; hence, their significance has increased in the last decade in political struggles (Ch. 4). Also, the Kurdish associations were addressed by foreign delegates as the local representatives of Kurds in visits to Diyarbakır.



There is also the nature of the Kurdish issue that gives advantages to certain associations and makes them more vocal. First, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is significant because the Kurdish issue has an economic dimension. This dimension is both an objective one, as the region suffers from regional underdevelopment and devastating effects of the armed conflict, and a subjective one, as the Turkish state historically framed the problem in economic terms supporting the idea that economic development would bring an end to the insurgency. Second, the Bar Association is significant because the Kurdish issue has an important legal dimension. This has, on the one hand, to do with human rights violations that targeted Kurdish citizens and turned legal profession into a form of activism at times. On the other hand, many of the rights-claims require legal reforms, such as the right to education in Kurdish language, as well as the re-writing of constitution against the assimilationist approach. Third, the Medical Association appears less important than the previous two but more important than the rest of compulsory associations because there is also a healthcare dimension. This includes both the demand for healthcare services in Kurdish language, but also the low supply of physicians in the region, due to the reluctance for working there, and the policy sanctions to deal with the problem. There are also other factors contributing to the political activism of these associations, such as organizational traditions (see Ch. 4 and Part II).

Therefore, my selection of these three compulsory associations results from their higher political visibility in the process. I mention also voluntary business associations in relation with the Chamber's activities. Hence, a set of business associations and another set of professional associations. I decided to add labor unions so that I can observe the interplays of economic interests and collective identity politics among different social groups. Labor unions too engaged in various activities in the process; however, they were not much visible in the mainstream media. This has to do with the lower legitimacy and strict constraints facing the unions. There is also the fragmentation of the environment, which decreases the power of organized labor. Legally, unions are pluralist associations based on voluntary membership and competitive structures. However, the unions organized in the municipal sector usually show *de facto* corporatist properties with regard to membership and representation (see Ch. 4). This means there is only one union organized in a given municipality for civil servants and one for workers. I focus on the municipal sector of Diyarbakır city, where there is only one union for civil servants and two unions competing for the workers of different municipal governments. The *de facto* corporatist properties of these labor unions make them more comparable with the compulsory business and professional associations.

### *Data collection*

I conducted research to collect data for the analysis of associational behavior according to the theoretical framework in the previous section. The data concerns associational activities related to both political activism and interest representation and focuses on the dynamics in the environments of membership and influence, as well as organizational properties and leaders. With such a wide scope, it refers to factors both at the macro level, such as the rivalry between the political parties or liberalization processes, and at the micro level, such as the individual activities of associational leaders. Yet, these factors come together at the meso level of associational politics, forming the dynamics of collective action.

Accordingly, I used archival and ethnographic methods. First, I conducted research about policy developments and institutional settings relevant for each associational group, as well as the Kurdish issue. This research also extends to the other partial regimes as represented by the Kurdish movement and the AKP. It has a historical perspective considering the importance of the contestations' cumulative history and institutional legacies (especially associational traditions). I benefited from both primary and secondary resources. Primary resources include data as diverse as legislation; official statistics; associations' assembly proceedings and magazines; party programs and documents; writings by the guerilla leader; and judicial indictments. This material help analyze the associational behavior within its historical and contemporary environment of membership and influence. Second, I surveyed the media coverage of activities by the associations. I examined a number of national and local dailies focusing on key events and periods in the last decade. The availability of online archives enabled searches based on keywords (e.g. the names of associations and leaders). This material help identify the patterns in associational activities, as well as the process-tracing of important events.

Third, I carried out a fieldwork in Diyarbakır and the national capital Ankara to complement the data about associational activities and interrelations with their membership and interlocutors. I did multiple fieldtrips between March and September 2011, spending a total of three months in Diyarbakır and one month in Ankara. I conducted 78 interviews with persons such as the following: past and present representatives from the interest associations (mostly local but also peak level); associational members; politicians of the major political parties (the AKP and the pro-Kurdish party BDP); municipal administrators; and experts of several governmental and non-governmental organizations in Diyarbakır concerning poverty alleviation and economic development. The interviews were scheduled and semi-structured;

they included both experts and informants. They lasted between 20 minutes and 3 hours, the majority of them taking an average of 60 minutes. The reason for the variation has to do with either the nature of the inquiry (e.g. shorter with experts) or the availability of the interviewee (e.g. shorter with politicians). Majority of the interviews directly relate to the associations under scrutiny. However, since my research has been exploratory, I visited more associations than I scrutinize here: for instance, I made interviews also with unionists organized in the sectors of healthcare and education, visiting organizations in both Diyarbakır and Ankara. Because of the reasons explained in the section on sampling, I selected and analyzed only the associations which are most important and comparable. Finally, I had the chance to have informal and spontaneous conversations with several locals, while I was living in Diyarbakır. I kept a diary for these daily encounters and observations, which contributed to my general understanding of the topic.

During the year of my fieldwork, judicial investigations were still taking place into Kurdish civil society organizations, amongst others, for alleged links to the PKK (see Ch. 2).<sup>14</sup> As the wiretap evidence of phone calls and conversations held in office spaces were used in these investigations, I did not record any of my interviews but take notes manually to make my interviewees feel safer and to avoid a risk of harm. I keep my interviewees anonymous in the dissertation, unless they have been the leaders of associations or political organizations. The reason for this exception is that the great public visibility of leaders makes it difficult to keep them anonymous, as I often refer to their press speeches and other publicized activities.

### **1.3 Organization of the dissertation**

Following the introduction, the dissertation is divided into two parts, each consisting of three chapters, and closed with the concluding discussion. Part I investigates the co-evolution three partial regimes for the political representation of social groups: social movements, political parties, and organized interests. Part II investigates the selected three types of associations in Diyarbakır. Considering the specificities of the Kurdish case, Part I is organized in three chapters focusing on the major actors: the Kurdish movement, the AKP government, and the organized interests. It aims to give background information for the analysis of the associations in Diyarbakır vis-à-vis the contestation of the state. Hence, the focus is on the national level. I

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<sup>14</sup> The compulsory associations under scrutiny were not influenced from these investigations; however, the municipal governments and the labor unions organized in the municipal sector did.

trace the historical development of each organized actor, contemporary dynamics within each site, as well as interrelations among the actors, in relation with the questions of the study.

Chapter 2 traces back the development of the Kurdish movement since the late 1960s. First, it outlines the founding and the program of the PKK as the illegal component of the movement; the armed conflict in the post-1980 period between the PKK and the Turkish army; and its devastating social and political consequences. Second, it outlines the emergence of the pro-Kurdish political parties as the legal component of the movement, as well as their rise to the municipal government in the Kurdish region and entry to the national parliament as representatives of Kurds. It gives examples of the efforts the parties made for the political articulation of Kurdish groups, while the constraints on their representational function were to enlarge the space for the associations. The third section elaborates on the situation of dual power in the Kurdish region as a result of the rising power of the Kurdish movement. In this respect, I elaborate on the alternative claims to sovereignty, as well as the moral economy at the local level providing an integrative framework, with important manifestations in the associational environment.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the rise of the AKP to the power and its approach to the Kurdish issue. First, I outline the party's roots in political Islam which goes back to the late 1960s, roughly pointing at continuity and change in party politics in general and relationship to the Kurdish electorate in particular. Second, I elaborate on the AKP governments in the last decade pointing at the political reforms partly triggered by the EU accession process, economic developments, and the party's confrontation with the bureaucratic elites. These two sections provide background information for readers unfamiliar with contemporary politics in Turkey, which has been highly turbulent and had a significant impact on Kurdish politics. The third section focuses on the government's approach to the Kurdish issue, using some primary resources. I outline major practices targeting Kurds, from political reforms to repression; articulation attempts along the rhetorical lines of material interests and collective identity; and socio-economic policies. The AKP's increasing concern for asserting its power over Diyarbakır, as well as Kurdish interest associations, can be observed through these policies.

Chapter 4 traces back the development of interest associations in Turkey. First, I outline the historical origins of the associations at the peak level, as well as the contemporary legal setting. Second, I show the diverse paths of politicization the associations took since the late 1960s. These two sections provide background information on the institutional framework and legacies, which are important for understanding contemporary associational behavior at

local and national levels. Compulsory associations are underanalyzed in Turkey, while they are currently faced with significant reform proposals; therefore, the sections provide original data and observations. Third, I focus on associational politics in the AKP period. I identify patterns of political interaction between the government and the associations, pointing at the major lines of cleavage. Political trends at the peak level are important for the local level not only because of their possible impacts on affiliate associations but also it helps depicting the peculiarity of associational politics in a contested zone. Finally, I provide a broad view of the rise of Kurdish associational activism and proceed to Part II for its empirical analysis.

Part II provides an in-depth analysis of the three associational sites for business, professional and labor communities in Diyarbakır. The chapters aim to explore the dynamics of collective action and coalition formation at the associational level vis-à-vis the cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics stemming from both memberships and political interlocutors, that is, mainly the AKP and the Kurdish movement.

Chapter 5 examines the politicization of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the post-2005 process. I outline major factors for the associational politics: first, I give background information about the leadership and organizational properties such as the associational tradition and the access to new resources. Second, I elaborate on the major dynamics in the membership environment such as the recent economic progress and the presence of a moral economy as well as political insecurity. Third, I examine associational activism in relation with the major political actors. I show the diverse bases of encompassing and narrow coalitions, with a focus on how business leaders played a leading role in this process actively contributing to the categorical division of Kurds. I show also how the business leaders pursued a balanced approach, even strategically manipulating the dual power situation and eventually increasing their bargaining power and public visibility, as well as getting their economic conditions improved.

Chapter 6 examines the increasing politicization of the Bar and Medical Associations in the recent period. I outline similar factors that are important for the associational behavior: first, I give background information about the leadership and organizational properties such as the associational traditions and the access to new resources or lack thereof. Second, I elaborate on major dynamics in the membership environments, such as professional activism, liberalization processes, and politically-induced opportunities and constraints. Third, I examine associational activism in relation with the major political actors. I discuss the diverse bases of encompassing and narrow coalitions the associations participated in. I show how the Bar

usually pursued a balanced approach and became a leading actor in activism, and how the Medical Association, on the other hand, engaged in an alternative coalition with the unions in support of the Kurdish movement, but has not been successful in achieving public visibility.

Chapter 7 examines the activities by the labor unions organized in the municipality sector of the city. First, I give background information about the changing environment of the municipal sector and unionism as a result of the election of pro-Kurdish parties to local office, as well as the AKP government's counter-activities, in addition to identification of some organizational properties. Second, I elaborate on the major dynamics in the membership environment, pointing at the consequences of liberalization process and the armed conflict, as well as recent political pressures. Third, I examine the interaction between the unions and the political actors, looking at both political activities and interest representation activities such as collective bargaining. These activities depict a compromise between the unions and the municipal governments, underlining the salience of collective-identity politics. I discuss how this compromise is an outcome of the dynamics mentioned in previous sections, as well as its implications for the bargaining power of the unions. I also show that the unions' efforts for an alternative coalition were overshadowed by the business-led coalition.

Chapter 8 provides a concluding discussion for the dissertation, synthesizing the findings of the empirical analysis in Part II against the background of the theoretical discussion and the wider historical and political context. First, I re-examine the contestation of the state with a focus on the strategies by the AKP government and the Kurdish movement for the political articulation of social groups. I explain the processes that opened up the space for Kurdish interest associations in Diyarbakır to play a politically salient role in this contestation. Second, I elaborate on how the associations form coalitions with diverse forms and scope, as well as their role in the re-definition of social divisions. I also highlight the different compromises reached for associational groups and briefly comment on the ongoing process in relation with the Kurdish associational activism.

**PART I: COEVOLUTION OF THREE PARTIAL REGIMES:  
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND  
ORGANIZED INTERESTS**

## **Chapter 2: The Kurdish movement**

The Kurdish issue has a long history, having its origins in the transition from the empire to the nation state. In its efforts for building a nation, the Turkish state denied the physical existence of a Kurdish ethnicity, subjecting Kurds to assimilative and oppressive practices. Kurds resisted these practices in various ways, most important of which has been embodied in the Kurdish movement. This chapter focuses on the development of the Kurdish movement since the late 1960s. It aims to provide a historical background and examine the contemporary Kurdish politics, as they relate to the associational politics.

First, I focus on the rise of the PKK as the illegal component of the movement and the armed conflict it had with the Turkish army in the post-1980 period. I highlight some turning points such as the 1980 *coup* and the capture of the PKK's leader in 1999, as well as devastating consequences of the events. Second, I examine the emergence of the pro-Kurdish political parties as the legal component of the movement, paying attention to political demands and participation in electoral politics. Despite being faced with severe constraints, they could come to the power at the municipal level in the Kurdish region as well as enter the national parliament as representatives of Kurds. In this respect, I elaborate on their efforts to articulate Kurdish groups, in their contestation with the AKP government. The third section investigates the situation of dual power in the Kurdish region, pointing at the movement's efforts to assert authority through the creation of alternative institutions and sources of legitimacy. This is complemented by an overview of the moral economy that provides bonds among co-ethnics for solidarity, as well as norms between the Kurdish ruling elites and the ruled. The chapter ends with a brief summary of conclusions.

### **2.1 Emergence of the PKK and the intermittent armed conflict**

The Kurdish movement in contemporary Turkey is comprised of a number of illegal and legal components, each with a history of its own. This section focuses on the major illegal component, that is, the PKK. I point first at the rise of the left in Turkey in the 1960s and its incorporation of some Kurds. I go on with an overview of the emergence of the PKK and its program, and then I draw attention to the *coup d'état* of 1980 and the armed conflict which started in 1984, as both has had devastating social consequences as well as vital political impact. The capture of the guerilla leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 marked another turning point, bringing about a rupture to the conflict and a revision in the PKK's program at a time



when the legal wing of the movement started to have a growing role. Yet, the outbreak of clashes in 2004, after a long period of ceasefire, was to increase uncertainty again.

### ***Incorporation of Kurds by the left movement***

Parallel to the worldwide developments in the 1960s, student movements and the left were also on the rise in Turkey. For the first time in the republican history, a legal socialist party was established: the Labor Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi – TİP*), which won seats in the national parliament in the 1965 elections and paid attention to issues such as the underdevelopment of the Kurdish-populated regions. The decade also witnessed the translation of the classical Marxist literature on ‘the national question’ into Turkish as well as a discussion on ‘the eastern question’ in left-leaning journals. These were helpful in the incorporation of some Kurds to the leftist movement. University students and professionals played an important role among these Kurdish activists, thanks to the migration from rural to urban and eastern to western areas as well as to increasing enrollment in higher education. Several mass meetings were organized toward the end of the decade by left-leaning groups in Kurdish provinces such as Diyarbakır, and a network of cultural associations (Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Associations – *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*, DDKO) was established. However, leading activists were arrested and trials took place in 1970, resulting in imprisonments and closure of the associations. Demands in this period, on the other hand, were generally moderate, aiming for the economic development of the Kurdish region<sup>15</sup> and introduction of cultural rights such as the use of Kurdish language in education and publishing, against the background of legal prohibitions (van Bruinessen 2006: 57-59; McDowall 1997: 395-417).

A military intervention in 1971 brought about a rupture in political life and a severe oppression on the left. This included a ban on the TİP, on the grounds of one of its declarations which recognized Kurds as a separate people and as having been subjected to a long history of repressive and assimilative policies (Şener 2008). Yet, radical left groups were to proliferate rapidly, following the restoration in 1973. The new decade was marked by unstable coalition governments, societal polarization along left-right lines, and homicidal clashes toward the end of the decade among ideological and sectarian groups. The decade,

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<sup>15</sup> The Kurdish region refers to the eastern and southeastern Turkey which is predominantly Kurdish populated. According to unofficial calculations, the Kurdish population today comprises 62 per cent of the region and concentrated in higher ratios in certain provinces. The estimated ratio of Kurds to total population in Diyarbakır is 72.78 per cent for 1990 and 64.1 per cent for 2011 (Yeğen 2011; Mutlu 1996). Note that these are compiled from different sources and there have been immigration waves in the region, as described below.

which was to be ended by another military intervention, witnessed also the expansion and radicalization of Kurdish political groupings. A dozen of illegal Kurdish organizations, mostly left-leaning, was founded. Debates included ideas on the colonization of Kurdistan by four countries (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria), establishment of an independent and united Kurdistan, class domination within the Kurdish region, and collaboration between local ruling classes and central governments as well as a critique of Kemalism, the founding ideology of the republican Turkey (van Bruinessen 2005: 337-355; Bozarslan 2003). As the atmosphere became more radical, violence appeared to be a means both for some of the Kurdish organizations and radical groupings in the country, irrespective of whether they were leftist or rightist (Kürkçü 2008).

### ***The PKK: initial program and targets***

Among these organizations which opted for armed struggle was the PKK. Its establishment was declared in 1978 in a village of Diyarbakır, under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan. Öcalan had studied at Ankara University and was a sympathizer of the revolutionary youth movement. He was imprisoned for seven months in 1971 because of participating in an illegal protest in the university against the killing of Turkish revolutionaries by the state forces (Özcan 2006: 88-92). In its first program, the PKK defined Kurdistan as a colony and national liberation as its goal. The revolution would be a national and democratic one while socialism was a long-term goal. It recognized the youth, working classes and poor peasants as its social base. All patriotic social segments would join this bloc to achieve the revolution. Deciding on armed struggle as the major means of struggle, targets were declared as Turkish colonialism, imperialist powers behind it, and its native feudal collaborators within Kurdistan (Özcan 2006: 98-103; Bozarslan 2003). Parallel to the course of the conflict and changing political context, the program and conceptual framework were to be altered in following decades.

Attacks in the first two years targeted mostly local landlords and tribal chiefs (*aşiret* aghas). They targeted also rival leftist groups, be them Kurdish or Turkish. For attacks on the local gentry, the PKK employed selective violence, by making a distinction of ‘collaborators’ and ‘patriots’ – a distinction which still has a use in contemporary Kurdish politics – and trying to draw tribes to its side while exploiting the conflicts among them. The significance of tribes stemmed from the agrarian structure. Land distribution was rather uneven in the Kurdish region, characterized by sharecropping-like arrangements, in contrast to the rest of the country where small to medium sized enterprises have dominated agriculture (Pamuk 2009: 388-389). Thereby, the PKK was able to gradually increase support and recruit from the rural and urban

poor, by directing its violence mostly at the rich on behalf of the former (Romano 2006: 74; van Bruinessen 2005: 361-364). The targeted rich, however, comprised of mostly the rural than the urban while the PKK was to receive support from some of the latter, voluntarily or by force.

### ***The 1980 coup and the changing political setting***

In September 12th of 1980, the Turkish military made another but this time harsher intervention in civilian politics. All the political parties existed before the *coup* were banned and their leaders were imprisoned. Bans targeted also labor unions and non-governmental organizations while detainments included more than half a million individuals. Many were to end up in imprisonment and forty-nine in capital punishment (Öktem 2011: 58-66). A military junta ruled the country for the next years until the transition to civilian regime took place in the end of 1983. The junta regime carried out fundamental reforms concerning the political and economic structure of the country, the most important of which was the new constitution of 1982. The constitution, which is still in force with some amendments, has considerably restricted the freedom of speech and association, and outlawed political struggle based upon class, race, sect, or language, while sticking to the ideology of Kemalism. Subsequent legislative arrangements introduced a 10 per cent electoral threshold of national vote<sup>16</sup> and aimed to repress Kurdish identity, by prohibiting the use of Kurdish language and changing the names of places from Kurdish to Turkish (McDowall 1997: 424-425).

Kurds were not exempt from the great confinement, either. Around 81,000 Kurds were detained in the first two years of the *coup* while 1,790 suspected PKK members were captured, including several members of the central committee (McDowall 1997: 414, 420). At this time the Diyarbakır military prison became the most notorious site for systematic torture against Kurdish prisoners. While torture was a practice employed nation-wide in police detention and prisons irrespective of ethnicity, the torture in Diyarbakır appears to have been more brutal and targeted also the Kurdish identity (e.g. punishing the use of the Kurdish language, forcing individuals to declare themselves as Turkish and to sing national anthems, etc.). Prisoners, on the other hand, engaged in various forms of resistance, such as riots, hunger strikes, suicides, and self-immolation. The torture at Diyarbakır prison and other prisons in the region which occupies an important place in the collective memory of Kurds

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<sup>16</sup> The electoral system is based on proportional representation.

has been widely interpreted as an important factor for the popularization and radicalization of the Kurdish movement (Öktem 2011; Zeydanlıoğlu 2009).

Another important consequence of the *coup* was the internationalization of the Kurdish movement. Many Kurds sought asylum in Europe, gradually forming a large diaspora which provided increasing visibility and financial resources for the movement. More importantly, the PKK partly moved out of the country and re-located from one country to another, such as Syria and Lebanon (Marcus 2009). The PKK finally settled in its camps in mountains of northern Iraq, not far from the Turkish border. This journey made the PKK – and the Kurdish issue – embedded in the dynamic context of the Middle East and the regional *realpolitik*, which has included also other international actors such as the USA. Actors trying to take advantage of tensions within and across countries, shifting coalitions and changing political circumstances have increased uncertainty, which is still a huge problem in the region as far as the Kurdish issue is concerned (Barkey 1996).<sup>17</sup>

### ***The armed conflict and its devastation***

In August of 1984, the PKK launched a series of attacks on Turkish military forces in the Kurdish region, marking the start of an armed conflict between the two forces which was to go on until 1999. The conflict in the end cost the lives of some 40,000 people, including troops, guerillas, and civilians. The PKK's targets comprised of mostly soldiers and village guards. In addition to 'collaborators,' a number of individuals that were former or current members of the organization was targeted as 'traitors' because of dissent or competition (Marcus 2009; Bozarslan 2001). Thereby, the use of strategically selective violence would help influence behavior, in order to induce collaboration and deter defection (Kalyvas 2006). It should be noted, however, that not all the news of violence that were attributed to the PKK were necessarily done by the PKK (van Bruinessen 1995). While disinformation contributed to uncertainty, the PKK, David McDowall argues, has created a climate of ambivalent feelings among ordinary Kurds: some feared it, others loathed it, and increasingly many admired it (1997: 421).

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<sup>17</sup> As an example for the regional effect, one can think of the impact of the Gulf War in 1991 and the war on Iraq in 2003 for northern Iraqi Kurds in obtaining an autonomous status (Kurdistan regional government) and in their leaders' changing relationship with the PKK and Turkey. While the changing status of northern Iraq provided an opportunity to the PKK to establish bases there deeper than before, it was also to increase the nationalist urge for Kurds in Turkey (White 2000: 165; Yeğen 2006: 23).

The Turkish government took a variety of measures to counter the Kurdish contenders, in addition to the military campaign. One is the village guardianship: the armament of villagers in the region to form a paramilitary force against the PKK (Balta 2007). While these created a group of people with vested interests in the conflict, the guardianship system enabled certain aghas to exploit this power against the vulnerable. In addition, the Emergency Rule was declared in 1987 for eight Kurdish provinces, including Diyarbakır, and a governor-general was appointed over them. The governor-general had extensive powers, such as the evacuation of villages and deportation of population ‘if this was deemed necessary.’ It appears that this was thought enormously ‘necessary’ during the course of the war, with a classification of places as ‘neutral,’ ‘pro-state’ and ‘pro-terrorist-organization’ (Yükseker 2008a: 149). Hundreds of villages and several thousands of pasturages were evacuated, leading to the internal displacement of over a million Kurds.<sup>18</sup> Some also migrated by themselves, having been caught in the crossfire of the conflict. The process of internal displacement was at times accompanied by ‘burning of houses and possessions, killing of livestock and destruction of crops and orchards’ (Jongerden 2004/2005: 68) and led to devastating socio-economic consequences for the victims, who migrated to the urban areas of Kurdish provinces including Diyarbakır or to big provinces in the rest of the country (Yükseker 2008b; Kalkınma-Merkezi 2010; Yılmaz 2008; Doğan/Yılmaz 2011).

Human rights violations targeted civilians, including politicians, human-rights activists, unionists, journalists, sympathizers and alleged sponsors such as several businessmen. The violations took various forms: arbitrary arrests, torture in detention, threats, forced disappearances and murders by unknown perpetrators. Oppressive activities in this so-called ‘dirty war’ were carried out by security forces as well as non-state bodies supported by the state (Bozarıslan 2001). In addition, the Anti-Terror Law of 1991, which is still in force with amendments, provided a legal framework for oppressing non-violent dissent such as demonstrations and publications, with allegations of separatist propaganda and membership in terrorist organizations (McDowall 1997). The fact that calling the region as Kurdistan was until recently seen as an offense might give an idea about the severity of limitations on the freedom of expression.

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<sup>18</sup> Different numbers are stated by official bodies, national and international non-governmental organizations: official statistics indicate 350,000 persons whereas NGOs estimate 3 million (see Kurban et al. 2008: 74-75; EC 2004: 51).

These experiences contributed to the popularization of the PKK. According to Doğu Ergil, the number of guerillas reached to 20,000 at the height of armed struggle while active supporters numbered 500,000 and sympathizers about one million and a half. The PKK, however, got militarily weaker toward the end of the 1990s, and the number of guerillas in following decade was to be around 9,000, allocated between Turkey and northern Iraq (Ergil 2007: 348). From 1990 onwards, increasing support for the PKK and rising demands and grievances became more visible in diverse forms of protests that took place in urban areas and involved civilian Kurds: rallies, celebrations of Kurdish New Year (*Newroz*), shop-closure protests, school boycotts, and uprisings, some of which accompanied the public funerals of guerillas or followed the murder of important civilian figures (Güneş 2012: 110-111). Brutal intervention by Turkish security forces was common though. Such forms of protests still continue today; however, the context has changed quite a lot since 1999.

### ***The capture of Öcalan and the ongoing state of limbo***

In 1999, Abdullah Öcalan was captured by foreign intelligence services in Kenya, where he arrived after several international stops seeking asylum, and he was handed over to the Turkish state. Öcalan's capture caused outrage among Kurds, leading to protests within and outside Turkey. Öcalan was first sentenced to capital punishment; however, following the reforms carried out for Turkey's candidacy for the EU membership, he ended up with a life sentence in 2002 and has been held in a prison island in the Marmara Sea since then. Turkey was accepted as a candidate for EU membership in 1999. The acceptance started a process of reforms and the solution to the Kurdish issue appeared as an important condition for the membership. Thereby, this provided an opportunity for the movement to press for its claims also as a road to EU membership, which it has supported so far. Mesut Yılmaz, a former prime minister, also interpreted the emerging situation in a similar way, stating that 'the road to the EU passes through Diyarbakır' (*Milliyet*, 17/12/1999).

The 1990s had witnessed three short-lived attempts of unilateral ceasefire by the PKK; however, Öcalan's calls after his capture for a 'peaceful solution' via negotiations brought about a longer ceasefire, until the year of 2004, when armed clashes gradually re-emerged, and continued until 2013, yet in a lower density than the past. This interval period was accompanied by some degree of normalization in the region in both political and socio-economic terms and witnessed reform initiatives by the AKP government, raising hopes. The re-start of clashes and inconsistent political moves, however, added to the climate of uncertainty, leading to worries whether there will be a return to the 1990s.

Öcalan engaged in negotiations with the Turkish state and continued his leadership in prison, by articulating ideas in his defense and in irregular weekly meetings with his lawyers, who circulated the notes to pro-Kurdish dailies and publishers.<sup>19</sup> These texts altogether brought about a revision in the PKK's program. Some of these alterations were already hinted in the past, at times of negotiation with the state and against the background of changing (inter)national context. In the course of the conflict, for instance, the goal of a united Kurdistan and the rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism were less pronounced, possibly as a result of, respectively, conflict-prone competitive relations with Kurdish groups in other parts of greater Kurdistan and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc (Özcan 2006: 104-109).

The post-1999 rhetoric might have stressed democracy more than ever: Öcalan elaborated on a 'democratic solution to the Kurdish issue,' developing concepts such as 'democratic republic' and 'democratic confederalism.' While the former relate to a re-definition of constitutional principles of Turkey, guaranteeing linguistic and cultural rights of Kurds, the latter concerns a loose union of Kurdish communities of the Middle East, on the basis of participatory mechanisms from below (Öcalan 2001: 169-175; Öcalan 2005). Another concept to follow was 'democratic nation' by which Öcalan proposed a re-configuration of territorial authority, to give Kurds the right to local self-government. Thereby, the goal of independence was quitted, at least officially, and Öcalan emphasized a 'stateless solution' within the existing nation-states. He criticized the approach the PKK had in the 1970s when it understood self-determination in a Leninist sense, in the form of a state creation, and instead he now acknowledged that it was possible through other means too (Öcalan 2004: 306-335).<sup>20</sup> It is hard to know Öcalan's calculations behind the programmatic revision; however, one can guess that it offered him a stronger position as he had less maneuver space in the next context.

In a parallel fashion, pro-Kurdish party politics have focused on, *inter alia*, the demand for 'democratic autonomy,' in a similar content with Öcalan's proposals. The definition and details of this concept have varied by time and within group; yet, the idea is roughly about political decentralization through either creation of regional units across the country with

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<sup>19</sup> Prison notes have been controlled by Turkish officials and edited by the Kurdish movement before publication. As for negotiations, they were kept somewhat secret, except Öcalan's remarks to the public and recently leaked news about meetings in Oslo between representatives from the Turkish government and the PKK.

<sup>20</sup> Öcalan's relevant statements refer to and reflect some influence of classical anarchists and modern figures who emphasize self-management, horizontal organization of society, and creation of alternative institutions within an established system. Names include Kropotkin, Proudhon, Mooray Bookchin, Noam Chomsky, and Antonio Negri. For a list of his prison library, see the essay in *Express* journal (Anonymous 2009).

autonomous powers, or devolution of such powers only to the Kurdish region. In the meantime, another political project appears to have emerged underground: the KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan* – Union of Communities in Kurdistan). The KCK was described as a ‘parallel state’ by Prime Minister Erdoğan (*Radikal*, 07/11/2011) and has provided the ground for the mass arrests that took place since 2009. According to its founding contract, or its ‘constitution’ in the words of some, it consists of legislative, executive, judiciary, and security organs as well as participatory mechanisms in Kurdish communities. The reception and implications of this initiative are mentioned below; however, let’s add that the contract supports principles elaborated by Öcalan in the post-1999 process such as the stateless solution, participatory democracy, confederalism, and a system of economy which is not based on profit maximization.<sup>21</sup> It touches also on linguistic and cultural concerns – concerns which were strongly voiced in the 2000s (KCK 2005; also see a relevant indictment, TC 2010: 1/56-70).

As the unilateral ceasefire was to end in the summer of 2004, Öcalan declared the transition from position of a ‘passive defense’ to that of an ‘active defense’ unless a bilateral ceasefire was declared. Hence, armed clashes started once again and increased up to 2013, accompanied with shorter breaks for calls and negotiations. Demonstrations and unrest followed in urban areas. One vital event took place in Diyarbakır in March 2006: following the public funeral of some guerillas killed in armed clashes, riots took place in the city for several days and spread to other provinces in the region. Clashes between demonstrators and Turkish security forces resulted in the killing of ten civilians, half of whom were under the age of 18 (İHD 2006). One important aspect of the event is the fact that young demonstrators also damaged several bank and shop windows and this was interpreted by some locals in terms of class tension.<sup>22</sup>

Demonstrations in which children played a leading role became widespread in the following years. At total, thousands of children ended up with detentions and imprisonments because of

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<sup>21</sup> Although the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and symbols in the flag were abandoned, Öcalan maintained a somewhat critical view of capitalism and called the pro-Kurdish political parties to cooperate with left-wing parties for electoral politics. It is probably not mistaken to claim that the rank and file of the PKK tends to support socialism.

<sup>22</sup> This event spontaneously came up in a few interviews I made in Diyarbakır. While those who brought up the example interpreted it also as a reaction of the urban poor against the rich (hence, an intra-group tension), others argued that the attacks were not against wealth, but targeted either symbols of the state or those who did not participate in shop-closure protests. Demonstrations usually head to the city center which is relatively developed. The city appears highly unequal in terms of income distribution, with spatial segregation along slums, gated communities, and middle-income neighborhoods.



participation in demonstrations and throwing stones at security forces. The criminal treatment of children received widespread reaction from the public though, forcing the government to make some legislative arrangements in 2010. Moreover, several public attempts of lynching took place against Kurdish civilians in places which received immigration, by the middle of the decade (Gambetti 2007). These events that increased tensions and worries, however, have been accompanied by a process of intermittent reforms and debates in the political arena which included pro-Kurdish political parties as important actors.

## **2.2 Enter Pro-Kurdish political parties**

Pro-Kurdish political parties comprise the most important legal component of the Kurdish movement. In this section, I first mention major electoral trends in the period before the pro-Kurdish parties emerged in the early 1990s and then focus on the experiences of these parties within the limits of the post-1980s legal and political setting. A turning point which deserves attention is the success a pro-Kurdish party showed in the 1999 local elections and started ruling a number of municipalities in the Kurdish region since then. This success was to be followed by the entrance to the national parliament in 2007 and 2011 standing as independent candidates, in spite of ongoing legal obstacles and rivalry with the AKP government. The section details major demands, as well as opportunities and constraints that the pro-Kurdish parties have been faced with.

### ***Kurds and electoral politics before the 1990s***

As mentioned before, the left-wing Labor Party of Turkey had been successful in its short life to attract Kurds; however, with a premature organizational structure, it received only about 3 per cent of votes in the region for the general elections in the 1960s (Alış 2009: 128). The majority of Kurdish votes before the 1980s were distributed among the mainstream political parties. Social structure of the region was influential in this. By the year 1965, the rural population was 65 per cent both nationwide and in Diyarbakır (see Table 2.1). Parties would have clientelist relations with aghas, shaykhs (religious leaders), and other local elites who could control electoral behavior.<sup>23</sup> Thereby, two strong mainstream parties in the region were the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - CHP) at center left and the Justice

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<sup>23</sup> Thanks to the processes of urbanization in the region especially since the 1980s, the direct influence of traditional elites on electoral behavior appears to have gradually decreased. In the city of Diyarbakır, I heard only about the Ensarioğlu family as a voting bloc of some 2,000 persons. Galip Ensarioğlu, the ex-president of the Chamber, is the contemporary deputy from this family for the AKP. For more information, see Ch. 5.

Party (*Adalet Partisi*) at center right (McDowall 1997: 395-417). ‘Without necessarily representing themselves as radicals, Kurdish nationalists participated, for long decades, in the political game’ (Bozarslan 1996: 146).

Table 2.1 Population in Diyarbakır

Year	Urban	Rural	Total
1965	162,467	313,449	475,916
1985	472,055	462,450	934,505
2000	817,692	545,016	1,362,708
2011	1,132,351	438,592	1,570,943

Source: TÜİK<sup>24</sup>

With the rise of the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement and hence political Islam, another important political actor emerged (see Ch. 3). Its representative party in the 1970s, the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* - MSP), attracted Kurds, receiving about 18 per cent of votes in Diyarbakır for general elections. The party was closed down, like other parties, by the military intervention in 1980. Yet, successor parties were established and Kurdish votes were divided again among a number of mainstream parties and an unconventional party, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* - RP), the new representative for the National Outlook. The Welfare Party obtained a similar ratio of Kurdish votes in general elections, except in 1991 when it made an electoral alliance with a far-right party. The party gradually increased its power nationwide and also came to the power at the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality in 1994. While the Welfare Party could not go on its political career, getting closed down by the Constitutional Court after an indirect military intervention in 1997 against the coalition government of which it was a part, its tradition was to go on to some extent. The AKP has a share in this tradition; however, it got beyond it, as can be seen

<sup>24</sup> Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu* - TÜİK). All TÜİK data used in the dissertation was compiled from its online database at <http://www.tuik.gov.tr>. Access dates 10.07.2012-01.09.2012.

in the electoral results for Diyarbakır (see Table 2.2).<sup>25</sup> Yet, electoral politics was to change significantly with the emergence of a tradition of pro-Kurdish political parties.

Table 2.2 Parties rooted in political Islam and Diyarbakır in general elections (% of votes)

	1973	1977	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2002	2007	2011
MSP	18.5	17.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RP	-	-	-	24.5	12	18.8	-	-	-	-
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.6	-	-	-
SP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5	2.3	1.3
AKP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	40.9	32.2

Source: TÜİK

### ***Between the parliament and the prison: First pro-Kurdish political parties***

In the late 1980s, some Kurds engaged in politics within the Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*), the post-*coup* successor of the Republican People's Party until it integrated with the latter in 1995. Yet, nationalist 'outbidding' by mainstream parties was to pose troubles for Kurds in a context of increasing tension (cf. Horowitz 1985: 357). The Kurdish issue has been frequently abused among and sometimes within these parties to accuse each other of supporting 'terrorism' and leading to the fragmentation of the country. Claims for Kurdish political and cultural rights were risky in such a context. Accordingly, the SHP expelled its several Kurdish deputies and party members in 1989 for their pro-Kurdish activities. Several others resigned following this event (Ölmez 1995).

These events led to the founding of first legal pro-Kurdish political party in 1990: People's Labor Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi* - HEP). The HEP set out as a left party, explicitly

<sup>25</sup> It was not only the Welfare Party who used religious themes, but also the Turkish governments and the Hizballah (an underground Kurdish Islamist group which emerged in the post-1980 period and was reputedly supported by the state). They used these themes in their propaganda against the PKK, depicting it as composed of infidels. Thereby, the PKK at times found itself in need of revising its critical approach to religion and appealed to some religious themes to counter this challenge. Accordingly, it supported the formation of a number of groups organizing 'patriotic' imams and religious men (Çalmuk 2001; van Bruinessen 1999). Similar contests around religious themes took place also in the 2000s as mentioned below.

committed to find a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue and to support Kurdish culture and language. The party formed an electoral alliance with the SHP in the 1991 general elections and sent its 22 deputies to the parliament. However, a major crisis emerged in the parliament because of the deputies' use of accessories with Kurdish national colors (yellow-red-green) and one deputy's (Leyla Zana) additional statement in Kurdish about the fraternity of Turks and Kurds following her oath which was spontaneously protested by the rest of the parliament (Ölmez 1995).

The HEP was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1993, on the grounds of alleged separatism; a faith which was shared by several other pro-Kurdish parties founded later to replace one another. These parties included the Democratic Party (*Demokrasi Partisi*, 1993-1994), the People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* – HADEP, 1994-2003), the Democratic People's Party (*Demokratik Halk Partisi* – DEHAP, 1997-2005),<sup>26</sup> and the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* – DTP, 2005-2009). Today the tradition is upheld by the Peace and Democracy Party (*Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi* – BDP, 2008).<sup>27</sup> During the course of the 1990s, HADEP and DEHAP took part in two general elections. They obtained high rates of votes in Kurdish provinces, for instance, above 40 per cent in Diyarbakır; however, they got about 4 per cent nationwide and could not send deputies to the parliament because of the 10 per cent national threshold introduced after the 1980 *coup* (see Tables 3 and 4). Obstacles facing the pro-Kurdish parties were not restricted to electoral thresholds and closure files; party members were also faced with a variety of oppressive measures common to the 1990s: arbitrary detention, imprisonment, bombing attacks to party headquarters, dismissal from the parliament, bans to stand as a candidate in elections, forced disappearances and murders by unknown perpetrators under the Emergency Rule (Ölmez 1995; Demir 2005; Watts 2010).

Table 2.3 Pro-Kurdish parties in general elections (%)

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<sup>26</sup> The DEHAP faced a closure trial, but before it was finalized the party dissolved itself to go on working within the latter pro-Kurdish party.

<sup>27</sup> There have been also pro-Kurdish parties outside of the 'PKK-led' Kurdish movement; however, their electoral base has been very limited. Today, they consist of the Party for Rights and Freedoms (*Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi* – HAKPAR, 2002) and the Participatory Democracy Party (*Katılımcı Demokrasi Partisi* – KADEP, 2006). They collaborated, to varying degrees, with the major pro-Kurdish party, BDP, in general elections of 2011. By using 'pro-Kurdish parties' within the text, I refer to the parties that followed one another and formed a continuous tradition as the major pro-Kurdish party.

	1995	1999	2002	2007	2011
HADEP	4.2	4.7	-	-	-
DEHAP	-	-	6.2	-	-
DTP-led bloc	-	-	-	3.8	-
BDP-led bloc	-	-	-	-	5.8

*Source: TÜİK and Yeğen (2011).*

Table 2.4 Pro-Kurdish Parties and Diyarbakır in general elections (%)

	1995	1999	2002	2007	2011
HADEP	46.3	45.9	-	-	-
DEHAP	-	-	56.1	-	-
DTP	-	-	-	42.7	-
BDP	-	-	-	-	58.2

*Source: TÜİK and Yeğen (2011).*

The parties have been usually successful to bring together Kurdish politicians from different social backgrounds, including figures who were traditionally-oriented elites and already integrated to mainstream parties; university-educated professionals such as lawyers; businesspeople, and many non-elite others who were brought by the movement activism. Claims concerned major issues such a general amnesty, recognition of Kurdish identity and cultural rights, education in mother language, changes in the electoral system, and an end to the Emergency Rule. Although the pro-Kurdish parties were not merely a legal flank of the PKK, Hamit Bozarslan (1996) argues that they could not develop independent policies, as their space of action was restricted under the dominance of the PKK within the movement; they instead proposed to become a mediator between the Turkish authorities and the guerillas. Even so, the Kurdish activism and events of the period made an impact on other political

actors: for instance, Kurdish politicians from mainstream parties tried to distinguish themselves from the state policies that targeted the region, in order to not lose electoral support (Bozarslan 1996). Major political actors also made some steps: during the presidency of Turgut Özal, the Kurdish language was legally allowed to be spoken in non-official situations. Other leaders such as Süleyman Demirel would not go further but state that Turkey recognized the ‘Kurdish reality’ (McDowall 1997). One facet of the Kurdish reality was to become crystallized in the local office.

### ***Victory at local elections***

Although the 10 per cent threshold closed the channels of parliamentary politics for the pro-Kurdish parties, until the recent resort to independent candidacy, the HADEP could win the control of municipal offices in the 1999 local elections in most of the cities and towns of the Kurdish region, including the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality. However, the party officials, members and a couple of mayors were detained by police and some of them were imprisoned after the elections. Yet, it was difficult to undo the electoral success, and this set the beginning of a Kurdish municipal tradition, which was consolidated in the elections of 2004 and 2009, in spite of rival efforts by the AKP to win Kurdish municipalities, especially that of Diyarbakır (see Table 2.5). Municipal offices opened up a legal space for the movement, to reclaim the Kurdish identity and to provide services in line with its political goals as well as to stand for Kurds. Especially in the city of Diyarbakır, the municipal office welcomed guests from not only the rest of the country but also abroad including the members of the European parliament, diplomats, writers and activists.

Table 2.5 Local elections in Diyarbakır<sup>28</sup> (% of votes)

	1999	2004	2009
Pro-Kurdish parties	40.9	43.4	59.2

<sup>28</sup> Numbers show the votes for provincial councils (*il genel meclisi* –a component of special provincial administrations). Local elections include voting for not only provincial councils but also municipalities, metropolitan municipalities, village and neighborhood councils. The reason for highlighting the votes for provincial councils in within-text tables is the fact that they are known to be better reflecting partisan behavior whereas votes for single municipalities might rest also on personal factors as regards the mayor candidate. Still, vote ratios are pretty similar, so the tables reflect the success in winning both types of seats.

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AKP	-	32.2	30.5
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*Source: TÜİK*

The increasing focus of the movement on language and culture in the post-1999 period has been most visible at the municipal site. Mayors made various efforts to use the Kurdish language in municipal services and written sources such as posters and calendars – efforts which met judicial sanctions. Some carried out, for instance, restoration projects which aimed to emphasize the Kurdish as well as Armenian and non-Muslim chapters of the history of Diyarbakır, in contrast to the homogenizing approach of Turkish historiography. In addition, numerous cultural and educational projects were initiated for inhabitants of the city to increase feelings of belonging and mobilization (Gambetti 2009; Watts 2010). Projects also targeted municipal workers as detailed in Chapter 7.

Other activities too took place, especially in rivalry with the AKP government in the 2000s. The Sarmaşık (ivy) Association was initially founded by the Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality to fight against poverty. This initiative presented itself as an alternative to poverty-alleviation activities vigorously carried out by the AKP. The association was, however, faced with judicial obstacles and had to be closed down, because the decision by the municipality’s assembly to contribute to the association was not seen permissible according to laws.<sup>29</sup> However, it was re-founded in 2007 again in the municipality’s leadership but on the basis of a large board of founders composed of a number of associational leaders, including those of the associations this study examines. As detailed in other sections, the initiative has implications concerning both the nature of power the Kurdish movement exercises in the region and the variation in relationships between associations and the movement.

Since the 1980s, municipalities in Turkey have enjoyed an increasing autonomy, financial resources, and socio-economic power (Erder/İncioğlu 2008; Bayraktar 2007; Buğra/Savaşkan 2010). Nevertheless, the Kurdish municipalities appear to have encountered several obstacles in enjoying these powers. Many municipal officials complained about an ‘economic embargo’ from the national center (Watts 2006). Then Minister of Justice for the AKP government,

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<sup>29</sup> To found an association eligible for municipal contribution, they would need to get the approval of the Cabinet, which would probably not happen.

Mehmet Ali Şahin, validated this before the local elections by stating that the municipalities who fight with or contradict the government cannot get all of their projects approved in Ankara (*Milliyet*, 23/02/2009). Official data also show that the provinces under the AKP dominance had received more EU funds for social projects (see Ch. 3). My fieldwork also shows that an opinion that the provinces which give more electoral support to the AKP have better access to sources is common in Diyarbakır.

Obstacles concern not only the access to resources, but also the creation and redistribution of resources. As mentioned before, poverty-alleviation projects of municipalities run by the pro-Kurdish party were faced with judicial obstacles. In addition, the DİYAR A.Ş., a company founded by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, was subjected to judicial investigation because of alleged links to the PKK and had to be privatized although it has been recently common for non-Kurdish municipalities across the country to establish enterprises for the provision of local services and hence to have additional sources of income. During the 2009 local elections, on the other hand, Prime Minister Erdoğan pointed at bad quality of municipal services in his rallies in Kurdish provinces, especially in Diyarbakır. Erdoğan presented the AKP as a better alternative, providing politics of ‘service.’ A dichotomy of ‘service versus identity’ took place in public debates with regard to the Kurdish issue (also see Ch. 3, §3); however, the AKP ended up with a lower electoral support in the region (see Table 2.5).

Other forms of pressure too targeted mayors, as outlined above with regard to first pro-Kurdish parties. However, in the post-1999 process, especially following the complete end of the Emergency Rule in 2002, there has been a more reliance on judicial measures to deal with the Kurdish movement, while physically violent methods were employed only occasionally, excluding the armed combat (Watts 2010). Mayors and staff of municipalities had their share in investigations, detentions, surveillance, and imprisonments, increasingly following the 2009 local elections when votes for the pro-Kurdish candidates highly increased to the dismay of the AKP. This wave of judicial obstacles constituted the ‘KCK operations’ which targeted the civilian wing of the movement, on the grounds of alleged membership to the PKK’s urban organization KCK and establishment of a ‘parallel state.’

### ***Back in the national parliament***

In the 2007 general elections, the pro-Kurdish party (DTP) led a left-wing bloc of independent candidates and sent 22 deputies to the parliament for the first time since the mid-1990s. In the next general elections of 2011, the BDP-led bloc increased pro-Kurdish votes and obtained a



higher number of deputies, that is, 36 (see Tables 2.3 and 2.6).<sup>30</sup> The major rival has been the AKP whose electoral support rocketed in the region in 2007 while it got lower in 2011, as a result of changes in the political context, as detailed in next chapter. In the meantime, pro-Kurdish deputies voiced opposition in the parliament to the AKP government's policies concerning a variety of topics, especially the Kurdish issue.

Table 2.6 Pro-Kurdish parties and the AKP in general elections (Diyarbakır, % of votes)

	2002	2007	2011
Pro-Kurdish Parties	56,1	42,7	58,2
AKP	16	40,9	32,2

*Source: TÜİK and Yeğen (2011).*

Similar to the ideas developed by Öcalan in the post-1999 process, the programs of the pro-Kurdish parties emphasized goals such as education in mother language, constitutional recognition of the Kurdish identity, legal safeguards for linguistic and cultural rights, women's empowerment, social rights, improvement of uneven regional development, support for Turkey's membership to the EU, lifting of the electoral threshold, and other institutional reforms for democratization (DTP 2005; BDP 2008). Several deputies pointed at Öcalan as the addressee (*muhataf*) for negotiations on the Kurdish issue while acknowledging that the pro-Kurdish parties have the same social base with the PKK. They also rejected the pressures by Prime Minister Erdoğan and parties in the parliament to make them publicly declare the PKK a terrorist organization, as a condition to engage in negotiation. It is a less known topic to what kind of pressures by the PKK pro-Kurdish politicians have been subject; however, they too at times appeared as caught in crossfire, especially when the PKK carried out unexpected attacks such as the one in Reşadiye, in northern Turkey, right before the Constitutional Court was going to give a decision about the closure case against the pro-Kurdish party in 2009.

<sup>30</sup> The cooperation between pro-Kurdish parties and extra-parliamentary left-wing parties dates back to the 1990s. Candidates were run mainly in the Kurdish region and several big provinces such as Istanbul and Mersin, which have a significant amount of Kurdish population. In the end deputies have been mostly Kurdish.

Pro-Kurdish deputies kept making claims with regard to the right to education in mother language, introduction of constitutional safeguards for Kurdish identity, and strengthening of local governments. These formed the minimum common demands through which the pro-Kurdish parties could articulate social groups, including the associational actors, to its political project, as detailed in Part II. Let's note here that the idea of strengthening local governments is advocated in the form of reconfiguration of territorial-administrative organization, according to the proposal of 'democratic autonomy.' This proposal was offered first in a party congress of the DTP in 2007 and has been advocated since then as a political goal. The concept advocates a model to realize above-mentioned goals, with a restructuring of the state. It is argued that the model of nation-state based on centralism disregards cultural differences and leads to various problems. The proposal supports decentralization, with an introduction of new administrative units between the central government and provinces. This way the country would have about 20 regional parliaments, which would represent a number of neighboring provinces and have responsibilities in areas such as education, culture, health, agriculture, and industry. While police and judicial units would be coordinated by the central and regional governments, the central government would be still responsible for foreign affairs, fiscal policy and defense (DTP 2007). If the proposal was not accepted for the whole country, it would be adopted only for the Kurdish region.<sup>31</sup>

The empowerment of local governments has been advocated by various actors in Kurdish politics, including the PKK, associational actors, and NGOs, although with variation in its interpretation and naming. For instance, Öcalan elaborated on the idea of local 'self-defense forces' (ANF, 20/08/2010). The idea was interpreted differently in Diyarbakır; some seeing it as a step for the rehabilitation of current guerillas, and some as a threat to Kurdish opponents of the movement. In addition, there has been also a critical approach to private property and capitalist economy in certain formulations of democratic autonomy. This approach, mostly advocated by Öcalan and PKK circles but also pronounced by some pro-Kurdish deputies, emphasizes the coordinating role of consumer and producer cooperatives, in an alternative economy composed of both private and self-managing public sectors (ANF 2010; Haber-Merkezi 2011; AÖSBA N/A).

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<sup>31</sup> This option was stated by pro-Kurdish politicians and there was one attempt of declaring democratic autonomy in the region in July 2011 which coincided with attacks of the PKK, leading to a division among Kurdish deputies concerning the timing and manner of the declaration. As a result, the declaration was given up.

In 2010, a similar draft was proposed in a workshop on democratic autonomy organized by the Democratic Society Congress (*Demokratik Toplum Kongresi*, DTK – see below §3) in Diyarbakır, advocating an ‘egalitarian solidaristic economy driven by not profit maximization but use value’ (DTK 2010). This economic approach was opposed by some Kurdish actors, especially business representatives who participated in the workshop. Business groups supported strengthening of local governments and decentralization of economic decision-making in a fashion similar to the processes of state rescaling, which have already been underway during the AKP period (see Ch. 3 and 5). Against the background of such conflict of views, the pro-Kurdish parties kept some *ambiguity* on the economic dimension in the proposal as recognized by the DTP’s declaration (2007) and still upheld by the BDP (BDP 2008; also see EDÖB 2011). Despite the controversies in the workshop, ambiguity seems to have made it possible for the pro-Kurdish party to build a coalition of actors with different perspectives and interests, while leaving the project open to future contests (cf. Streeck/Thelen 2005: 26-27; McAdam/Tarrow/Tilly 2008).

Another challenge for the pro-Kurdish parties relates to the AKP’s initiatives concerning the Kurdish issue. During its first term in power the AKP government speeded up the reform process for EU candidacy, as detailed in Chapter 3. Some of these reforms related to linguistic and cultural rights, legally enabling the private teaching of and audiovisual broadcasting in Kurdish. During the second and third terms these reforms were continued by enabling Kurdology institutes in universities, setting up a state TV channel in Kurdish and recently planning Kurdish elective courses at schools. The reform process, however, depicted an irregular nature, interrupted by periods of conflicts on the ground, Turkish nationalist debates in the parliamentary and public spheres, and obstacles to enjoy the rights in practice. The pro-Kurdish parties interpreted the positive steps as advances of the struggle by the movement and responded to the process by advocating full rights (e.g. education in mother language, rather than symbolical steps) and taking direct action to challenge the government, for instance, via the use of Kurdish language in the municipal realm despite judicial sanctions, as mentioned before.

Mobilizing a network of public, private and voluntary actors, the AKP government has engaged in vigorous charity activities across the country. As mentioned before, these activities also targeted the Kurdish region, with a rhetoric which emphasized ‘positive discrimination’ for the region and solidarity with the needy and prioritized a politics of

‘service,’ as opposed to ‘identity politics.’<sup>32</sup> As one response to these attempts, pro-Kurdish politicians often emphasized that the Kurdish issue could not be solved through in-kind assistances, which were symbolized with pasta and coal,<sup>33</sup> and interpreted as making Kurds dependent on social aids by making them first poor and then subjects of assistance.<sup>34</sup> Kurdish politicians instead argued that the real needs of Kurds were peace, recognition of identity and linguistic rights, which could be realized only by a new constitution.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the municipal governments by the pro-Kurdish parties also were to engage in alternative charity activities, as mentioned before.

The 2010 referendum on constitutional amendments by the AKP government, on the other hand, led to calls by the pro-Kurdish party to boycott it, on the grounds that the amendment did not take into account Kurdish demands for a democratic solution via a new constitution. More concrete demands included the following: non-ethnic definition of citizenship in the constitution; pause to military operations; release of detainees of the KCK operations; lowering the electoral threshold; and starting negotiations for a political solution.<sup>36</sup> Some associational actors in Diyarbakır, however, took a different stance and called for voting in favor of the referendum, as discussed in Part II. Here, the AKP’s challenge at Kemalist elites, including military and judicial bureaucracy as well as the ‘deep state,’ appears to have gathered some support from Kurds. To challenge this, pro-Kurdish deputies interpreted the emerging situation as an indicator that the AKP just became ‘the state.’<sup>37</sup>

Civil disobedience has become an important form of protest advocated by the pro-Kurdish politicians during the last few years. One essential topic that has led to the use of this form of protest relates to the religious appeals by the AKP. Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized

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<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, ‘Vatandaş devletin şefkat elini hissetti,’ *Yeni Şafak*, 07/08/2007; ‘Hükümetten kurban bayramında Güneydoğu’ya pozitif ayrımcılık,’ *Sabah*, 21/12/2007; and ‘Cumhurbaşkanı Gül’den doğudaki muhtaçlar için “gönül seferberliği” çağrısı,’ *Zaman*, 13/12/2007.

<sup>33</sup> In a protest against the AKP upon a brutal police intervention to demonstrations in Batman, protesters left pasta, coal and truncheon in front of the AKP’s headquarters, see ‘DTP’lilerden, AKP’ye makarna, kömür ve cop,’ *Milliyet*, 18/02/2008.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Yoksullaştır, yardım et, kendine bağımlı kıl,’ *Özgür Gündem*, 01/04/2008.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Türk: AKP’nin Kürt paketinde makarna var,’ *Radikal*, 12/03/2008; ‘Makarna değil, yeni anayasa,’ *Sabah*, 12/03/2008; ‘Kürtlerin Makarna, Kömür, Televizyona Değil Barışa İhtiyacı Var,’ *Bianet*, 21/03/2008.

<sup>36</sup> See Cengiz Çandar, ‘Kürtler için “Evet”’; boykota “Hayır,”’ *Radikal*, 21/08/2010.

<sup>37</sup> There has been a perceived distinction between the government and the state in Turkish politics, prioritizing the latter as the real ruler behind the curtains. Accordingly, the state was composed of civilian and more importantly military elites, in addition to the conception of ‘deep state’ which relates to state-supported organized crime, as mentioned in next chapter. The claim about the AKP becoming the state was voiced by deputies, for instance, in the May 1 (2011) demonstration in Diyarbakır when I was there for my fieldwork.

several times the religious fraternity of Turks and Kurds and their common history dating back to fights against the crusades, in the leadership of a Kurd, while claiming that the members of the Kurdish movement were not Muslim but Zoroaster and consider Öcalan as a prophet, to discredit the movement among pious Kurds (see also Candaş/Buğra 2010). The movement, on the other hand, mobilized ‘civilian Friday’ sermons so that people would do their weekly collective praying outside of mosques which were claimed to carry out the government’s propaganda. These alternative prayers were headed by ‘patriotic imams.’

Pro-Kurdish parties have encountered similar judicial obstacles, in addition to exclusionary attitudes by the government, mainstream parties, and military bureaucracy. The most vital of these has been the KCK operations, as mentioned before in relation with the municipalities. The operations included recurring mass arrests since 2009 onward of a variety of persons such as party affiliates, mayors, unionists, NGO activists, journalists, lawyers, and so on.<sup>38</sup> The arrests were grounded on the alleged links to the KCK, as a civilian wing of the PKK. Different cases were opened in several provinces within and outside the Kurdish region, with indictments some of which consist of several thousands of pages. Indictments were based on, *inter alia*, wiretap evidence of phone calls and conversations carried out in office spaces, as well as statements by secret witnesses (see, for instance, the indictment for the major trial in Diyarbakir, TC 2010). Thousands of people were taken into custody so far, many ending up in years-long detentions. According to my informants, arrests have been highly arbitrary, also targeting many people who were not really linked to the KCK. This has contributed to grievances also of Kurdish actors who have been relatively distanced to the movement and encouraged associational cooperation with the Kurdish movement on this topic.

### **2.3 The situation of dual power**

Neşe Düzel: Do you feel free to express all of your thoughts, as the leader of the Diyarbakır Bar and as a Kurd?

Mehmet Emin Aktar: Of course, I do not feel free. Because we live in Diyarbakır under conditions of *dual power*. On the one hand, there are constraints presented by

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<sup>38</sup> According to the pro-Kurdish party BDP, professional distribution of some 2000 detainees by 2012 is as the following: 6 members of the parliament (they were elected after taken into custody); 111 members of non-governmental organizations; 38 lawyers; 111 journalists and newspaper distributors; 326 municipal personnel including mayors; 17 members of central executive board of the DTP and the BDP; 52 members of the BDP party assembly; 452 executives of the BDP; 800 members of the BDP; 6 elected heads of neighborhoods; and 28 unionists (*Radikal*, 01/07/2012).

the Kurdish political movement with its armed and non-armed components such as the PKK, the KCK and the BDP. On the other hand, there are constraints of the state. Therefore, most people in Kurdish territory take into account *this situation of dual sovereignty*. ‘I would be excluded by the Kurdish political movement if I made this statement,’ one says. Or he feels the same way with regard to the state and thinks that ‘public prosecutors would file an investigation about me if I made this statement.’<sup>39</sup>

The growing power of the Kurdish movement at both illegal and legal sites has led to a situation of dual power in the Kurdish region. This section elaborates on the manifestations of this situation with a focus on Diyarbakır. First, I point at the emerging claims to sovereignty during the armed conflict of the post-1980s period. This has led to the creation of alternative institutions and sources of legitimacy. Second, a moral economy emerged as a by-product of the dual power situation. This moral economy emphasizes ‘patriotism’ and political ‘sacrifice,’ overriding calculations of self-interest. It helps create bonds for intra-group solidarity, as well as norms of conduct between the movement’s leaders and the locals; hence, it serves political integration (cf. Salzmann 2010).

### *Alternative claims to sovereignty*

Already in 1986, the PKK declared that ‘liberated zones’ were in the making (van Bruinessen 2005: 371). The term meant that the PKK was taking control of the places and asserting itself as the sole authority. As the conflict escalated in the early 1990s, the PKK increased its power in many parts of the Kurdish region (Ölmez 1995: 109; Bozarslan 1996: 147). This process has produced a situation of ‘dual power’ in the region, with two rival claims to sovereignty (cf. Tilly 1978), by the Turkish state and the PKK-led Kurdish movement.<sup>40</sup> A shifting political configuration of space resulted: each power had spatial segments under their control, and there were zones in which control was contested and hence limited sovereignty was exercised (cf. Kalyvas 2006: 88-89; Scott 2009). Contemporary Diyarbakır as a province and its associational site can be thought in these terms, as a ‘contested zone.’

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<sup>39</sup> My translation and my emphasis. See Neşe Düzél’s interview with Mehmet Emin Aktar, ‘Emin Aktar: Kürtler ilk kez Öcalan’ı tartışıyor,’ *Taraf*, 27/12/2010.

<sup>40</sup> Tuğal (2009) also uses the conception of dual power with regard to the growing power of the Islamist movement in municipal governments in Turkey since the 1990s. The Islamist dual power situation at the municipal level was not as strong as the Kurdish one in the regional level; yet, it seems interesting for understanding the situation in the 2000s when the Islamists, albeit in a different guise, came to power at the national level and found themselves in a kind of another dual power situation vis-a-vis the secularist-nationalist elites (see Ch. 3).

The movement's claim to power led to the creation of alternative institutions and sources of legitimacy which were respected by some part of the population despite obstacles by the central government. The PKK undertook state-like functions such as justice ('popular courts'), fiscal policy ('taxation'), welfare (charity for survivors), national symbols (flag and celebration days such as *Newroz*), and military recruitment and security (guerilla forces) (Bozarslan 2003: 864; van Bruinessen 2005: 364).<sup>41</sup> A former PKK commander explains the situation as the following: 'The idea was that whatever the state does, we do, that we should sort of share authority, they operate during the day, and we operate at night . . . So if the state taxes, then we have to tax too' (quoted in Marcus 2007:182).

Two references were recognized legitimate: guerilla leader Abdullah Öcalan and martyrs (Bozarslan 2001). Although the PKK got militarily weaker by the mid-1990s and officially quitted the goal of an independent Kurdish state by 1999, the situation of dual power has persisted. One means of this has been the movement's hold of municipal offices since 1999, an event which opened up new opportunities and institutional mechanisms for asserting alternative power, as mentioned before. In addition, the city headquarters of the pro-Kurdish party appears to be important as well: İrfan Aktan (2010), a well-known journalist from the region, informs that the party's legal commissions play a role in the solution of economic and social disputes in many Kurdish cities and towns while the Turkish state's courts deal only with smuggling and political trials (also see Geerse 2011: 279-320).

Another site has been civil society. In his theoretical writings, Öcalan emphasizes the need to get organized in the 'third domain,' i.e. 'the organization of all elements of civil society according to their own identities and needs *as an alternative to the ruling system*' (Öcalan 2003: 23, emphasis mine). Founded in 2007, the Democratic Society Congress appears to be an example initiative, aiming to bring together and mobilize NGOs and political actors in Diyarbakır within an umbrella platform. The platform involved at times also the associations this study focuses on. Those who are critical of the movement interpret the initiative as an effort of the PKK to standardize and discipline the behavior of actors in civil society.<sup>42</sup> In a similar but more positive manner, Öcalan also stressed the significance of the DTK for articulating common demands and including pro-government-looking associations such as the

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<sup>41</sup> Some of these activities such as 'taxation' are mentioned also in the indictments for the KCK trials and in informal conversations I had in Diyarbakır.

<sup>42</sup> Based on fieldwork.

Bar and the Chamber, *inter alia*, when he commented on daily politics.<sup>43</sup> These can be thought as political articulation efforts.

A more vital step in asserting alternative sovereignty, on the other hand, appears to be the founding of the KCK. According to indictments for the KCK operations and Prime Minister's arguments, the KCK implies a process of state building (see TC 2010). Öcalan, however, depicted his proposals as a part of his 'stateless solution,' i.e. as an alternative within the existing state. He stated that the experience of liberated zones during the conflict had already made them question the state power (Öcalan 2004: 311).<sup>44</sup> Still, the KCK unilaterally suggests a radical re-configuration of sovereignty, although not in a mutually exclusive manner, by a seemingly 'shadow administrative infrastructure,' as mentioned in the first section (cf. Kalyvas 2006: 218-219). Central to the situation of duality, however, is not only claims to political power, but also a moral economy.

### ***Moral economy as an integrative framework***

The PKK has used an ideology of patriotism since its emergence. This helps articulate its members and supporters, i.e. 'interpellating' them as subjects ('patriots') of the national cause to take appropriate action (Althusser 2008; De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009). In more practical terms, it enables to induce cooperation and to deter defection (Kalyvas 2006). A number of categories are employed in this respect: patriots, friends, martyrs, collaborators, and traitors. For instance, those who have cooperative relations with the AKP may be called collaborators, something which creates reputation problems, if not fear, for the persons in question and may yield hostile attitudes even from relatives, according to one of my interviewees. Patriotism therefore provides an important normative framework of legitimacy and integration, which can be observed in both certain practices by the movement actors and everyday practices in the moral economy of Diyarbakır.

The moral economy can be best observed in the conception of sacrifice (*bedel ödemek* – to pay a price/cost). It usually refers to losses such as death and injure in war and sometimes also

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<sup>43</sup> 'Öcalan: Müzakere olmadan çözüm olmaz,' 30/07/2010 dated meeting notes by Öcalan's lawyer. Available online at <http://www.rojacivan.com> Access date is 15/12/2012.

<sup>44</sup> In pragmatic terms, this approach should make it easier for Öcalan to advocate such proposals from his prison while negotiating with the state. In theoretical terms, on the other hand, his orientation in this period show a shift from the earlier Marxist-Leninist approach, which would see dual power as a transitional situation before revolution (Tilly 1978) to an approach which sees it as a model of gradual transformation through the creation of alternative institutions or the capture and change of existing ones. Concerning the latter approach, we know Öcalan and some members of the Kurdish movement read Murray Bookchin who developed similar ideas with an elaboration on confederalism and 'libertarian municipalism' (see Rockefeller 2007).



to imprisonment for political reasons. The person making a political sacrifice ‘obtains a moral superiority over the community, leaving them indebted, a particular kind of moral debt to be paid in the form of a commitment to the ideal for which he/she had died; the Nation’ (Ozsoy 2010: 59). War veterans and survivors, called as the family of worth (*değer ailesi*), gain a special importance in this regard. Sacrifice is taken as an indicator of ‘loyalty to the national cause’ and may make it easier for survivors to access material resources and power as it brings ‘status, value and prestige.’ Ozsoy argues that many of Kurdish politicians and executives are members of martyr or guerilla families (Ozsoy 2010: 78).

However, many survivors are in need of basic survival necessities, let alone political power. They may then enjoy positive discrimination for social aids and employment opportunities provided by the municipalities and the party headquarters. Then, sacrifice appears to be a criterion for defining the ‘deserving poor.’ This is, for instance, the case with the Sarmaşık philanthropic association, which has to set a target group anyway since its resources are limited while poverty rates are quite high in the city (see Table 2.7 and YG 21/Sarmaşık 2007). As mentioned elsewhere, the association is funded by donations from diverse groups and associations in the city, including contributions by municipality workers, according to collective agreements (see Part II). The initiative takes place against the background of vigorous activities for poverty alleviation by the government and allied non-governmental organizations, and uses a rhetoric of ethnic solidarity against the humiliating approach of the rival actors. Considering its funding method and target group, Sarmaşık can be seen as an example of redistribution on the basis of national solidarity. Insurance for war veterans and survivors is an old institution, linked to the legitimacy needs of war-making states. The Turkish state as well has had such arrangements for veterans and survivors of martyrs, as a part of its Anti-Terror Law. Against this background, it appears to be an obligation for the Kurdish movement, but it also might serve it by helping political integration.

Table 2.7 Poverty in Diyarbakır

Daily household expenditure per capita (excluding rent for accommodation)	% of total population
Below \$1	7.5
Below \$2.15	35.2
Below \$4.3	37.3

Political sacrifice and patriotism creates a moral economy of mutual rights and obligations, with a specific source of legitimacy. Having made no sacrifice might have negative implications for one's position in society and politics in such an environment then. During my fieldwork in Diyarbakır, for instance, a local who criticized the mayor for not always acting in conformity with the Kurdish movement added as a supporting argument that he had not made any sacrifice. Another local's statement, in a different context, that 'living here is a sacrifice too' appears to be an effort to counter some consequences of this moral economy.

The moral aspect can be seen in other activities, such as the compromise in collective bargaining in the municipal sector, which includes workers' donations for Sarmaşık and wage moderation, as well as the introduction of social and political entitlements; hiring practices in the municipal sector (see Ch. 7); 'taxation' activities for businesspeople; debates on whether capital can be 'patriotic;' and shop closures as a form of protest (see Ch. 5). Of course, moral commitments are not necessarily the only or major motivation for such behaviors. Furthermore, patriotic appeals can be used by actors other than the movement's leading figures. Examples include lawyers' reluctance to undertake the cases of the PKK defectors and physicians' combination of the themes of patriotic struggle with professional struggles (see Ch. 6). Overall, the moral economy appears to provide bonds for intragroup solidarity, under the hard conditions affecting the Kurdish region, as well as norms of conduct between the movement's leaders and the locals, as a by-product of the dual power situation.

### ***Conclusions***

The Kurdish movement, with its legal and illegal components, has developed partly because the political channels of the Turkish nation-state were either closed or unresponsive to pro-Kurdish demands, in addition to its periodical oppressive practices. Thereby, the movement engaged in armed struggle as 'politics by other means' and created alternative spaces of politics. This has led to a situation of dual power in the Kurdish region, with the creation of alternative state-like institutions and sources of legitimacy. Yet, the political landscape changed tremendously in the transitional period of the 2000s: the capture of the guerilla leader brought a pause to the conflict to restart later a lower intensity; Turkey's EU candidacy set in motion a process of reforms increasing hopes; and the AKP's rise to the government brought

about fundamental changes in the system as well as a major rival to the Kurdish movement. While uncertainty increased even more, new channels were getting opened for Kurdish politics. Pro-Kurdish political parties first began to rule municipalities in the Kurdish region and then entered the national parliament standing as independent candidates. These provided the movement with new opportunities for increasing its power and mobilizing Kurds. However, Kurdish politicians also were faced with severe constraints on their representational function. As the AKP government and the Kurdish movement contested for hegemony over the Kurdish population, Diyarbakır turned into a contested zone. The rise of the interest associations was to come partly as a result of this contestation.

The Kurdish movement engaged in various efforts to integrate Kurds under its leadership. The most important of these has been the articulation of common demands along which Kurdish groups come together in an encompassing coalition. Organized and individual Kurdish actors make diverse rights claims. However, the pro-Kurdish parties played a leading role in articulating a set of common demands by highlighting the shared collective identity: the right to education in mother language, constitutional safeguards for the recognition of Kurdish identity, and strengthening of local governments. In addition to political campaigning, local platforms such as the Democratic Society Congress of the Kurdish movement which brings together civil society organizations and the movement's actors in Diyarbakır have been helpful in negotiations for formulating the common demands. Kurdish actors have different ideas and interests with regard to these demands, as seen in the two opposing approaches to the economic dimension of decentralization demands. However, the pro-Kurdish parties kept a degree of *ambiguity* in framing such demands in order to obscure conflicting differences and, hence, to form a political coalition of groups with disparate interests. While ambiguity leaves proposals open to future contests, it can also be argued that internal struggles are delayed this way (cf. Streeck/Thelen 2005: 26-27; McAdam/Tarrow/Tilly 2008). On the other hand, the ambiguity kept in the party programs was not enough to avoid clashes with local business actors and, hence, the instability of coalitions (see Ch. 5).

In addition, the dual power situation and the moral economy seen in the Kurdish region also help integrate Kurds under the leadership of the Kurdish movement. The roles they play in the economic life and the involvement of economic actors in local affairs also can be observed in the associational environment under scrutiny. The moral economy underlines 'patriotism' and political 'sacrifice' as sources of legitimacy. It underlines certain conceptions of mutual rights and obligations. Accordingly, calculations of interests can be outweighed by 'passions.' This

normative order provides bonds for intragroup solidarity: this can be seen in the financing method and target groups of Sarmaşık philanthropy association. As further explored in Part II, the moral economy may lead to diverse compromises for different social groups. Also, it has become more contested as a result of economic and political changes in the last decade, with impacts on associational politics.

## **Chapter 3: The AKP government**

The AKP is a new party, founded in 2001 and elected to the government in 2002. However, it has roots in political Islam, which has developed since the late 1960s and had troubles with the Turkish state opposing its secularist orientation and experiencing party closures in turn. When it first came to the power, the AKP claimed to differ from the Islamist tradition, depicting itself as a European-oriented conservative democratic party; however, it too has problematic relations with secularist-nationalist bureaucratic elites in the military and the judiciary. In its three terms, the AKP government struggled to consolidate its power against two major challengers: first, secularist-nationalist forces within and outside the bureaucracy and, second, the PKK-led Kurdish movement. Both struggles, however, were complemented by or even advanced through a process of reforms; hence, enabling the government to depict it as a matter of democratization. The AKP's increasing concern for asserting its power over Diyarbakır, as well as Kurdish interest associations, can be understood only in relation with this process of struggles for hegemony. The chapter gives an overview of the AKP rule in the last decade from this perspective.

First section draws attention to the party's roots in political Islam, with an account of the rise of the latter since the late 1960s. This historical background provides an understanding of continuity and change in party politics in general and relationship to the Kurdish electorate in particular. Second section glances at the three terms of the AKP rule. The section elaborates on the party's rise to power in the aftermath of the 2001 financial crisis; political and economic reforms and initiatives as partly triggered by the EU candidacy process; and the confrontation with the bureaucratic elites, which ended up with the AKP's victory. Third section focuses on the government's approach to the Kurdish issue. I outline major practices targeting Kurds, from political reforms to repression; political articulation attempts along the rhetorical lines of material interests and collective identity; and socio-economic policies. The chapter ends with conclusions.

### **3.1 Roots in political Islam**

The leading cadre of the AKP has its roots in political Islam. This background appears important for understanding the party politics through continuity and change. It can help understanding also the electoral support the AKP has received across the country and within the Kurdish region, albeit in higher rates than the past representatives of the tradition had.

This section sheds light on the AKP's roots in political Islam, with an elaboration on the emergence of the latter in the late 1960s, its short-lived power and reception among Kurds during the 1990s and later retreat towards the end of the decade, which has led to the emergence of a conservative-liberal party line, embodied in the AKP but still troubled with the political regime.

### ***Emergence of Islamist political parties***

The late 1960s witnessed not only the rise of the left movement, but also the emergence of a significant movement of political Islam: the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*). The movement brought together a number of successive political parties, associations, charitable foundations as well as actors from religious orders. It stood against the rigid understanding of *laïcité* by the Kemalist regime. The first representative party, the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*, 1970), emphasized an identity based on the Ottoman-Islamic heritage against westernization and supported industrialization. Necmettin Erbakan, the movement's leader and party chairperson until the late 1990s, was first elected in 1968 as the president of the national union of chambers of commerce. Yet, he was not ratified for the position by the ministry, because of the opposition by chambers of Istanbul and Izmir, which represented big enterprises. The MNP, on the other hand, supported small to medium size enterprises, whom it described as discriminated, against the background of political-economic privileges enjoyed by big enterprises (Sarıbay 2005). The party was closed down by the constitutional court, after the military intervention in 1971, on the grounds that it threatened the secular regime.

The movement was represented by a new party in the 1970s: the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – MSP). The MSP received a noteworthy electoral support and took part in almost all the coalitional governments of the decade. The support it received from the Kurdish region, including Diyarbakır, was way above the support at national level (see Tables 2.2 and 3.1). One reason for this seems to be the party's emphasis on religious values. The party had links to religious groups and Sufi spiritual orders such as the Naqshbandi order which were strong among pious Kurds and had integrated to the system through mainstream politics (Yavuz 2005: 279-286; Tan 2011: 461-463). This party too was closed down, as a result of the *coup* in 1980. A whole different context was going to accompany the successor party.

Table 3.1 General elections and parties linked to the National Outlook (% of votes)

	1973	1977	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2002	2007	2011
MSP	8.6	11.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RP	-	-	-	7.2	16.9	21.4	-	-	-	-
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.4	-	-	-
SP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5	2.3	1.3
AKP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34.3	46.6	49.8

Source: TÜİK

The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed the rise of Islamic movements and revolutionary changes in the Middle East region. Turkey also experienced an increasing visibility of Islam in political, economic and cultural realms. The Welfare Party gradually enlarged its social base across the country, as the new Islamist party (Gülalp 2001). It showed a significant success first in the 1994 municipal elections, winning about one-third of votes, and then came out as the first party in the 1995 general elections. The municipal success included important metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Diyarbakır. This experience provided the party with an organizational base for the mobilization of associations, local businessmen and other societal actors, which enabled, *inter alia*, the organization of vigorous charity activities (White 2002: 178-211). Municipal services appeared so better than former times that the municipal offices are still held by the heirs of this movement in Istanbul and Ankara, whereas Diyarbakır was lost to the Kurdish movement. The parliamentary experience, on the other hand, turned out to be brief and problematical. The party formed a coalition government in 1996; however, following year, the party leader and Prime Minister Erbakan had to resign, because of an indirect intervention by the military, with the support of certain media, business and union circles. In 1998, the constitutional court closed down the Welfare Party for threatening the secular regime and banned the decades-long leader Erbakan from political activity. Bans were enforced also with regard to the place of religion in public sphere, such as prohibiting the use of headscarves in universities. The headscarf issue was to become symbolical for grievances articulated by Islamists.

The Welfare Party voiced a rhetoric of victimhood, based on the idea of oppression and discrimination of Muslims throughout the Republican process of modernization (Buğra

2002b). It criticized *laïcité* and the state's cooperative relations with the West and Israel. It advocated instead building political and economic relations with Muslim countries. Another central theme of the party's discourse was concerning the economy. The post-1980 era underwent economic liberalization and led to new forms of poverty and wealth (Buğra 2002b; Buğra 2007). In a vacuum left by the retreat of the Left which was severely oppressed by the 1980 *coup*, the Welfare Party undertook to address issues of economic injustice (White 2002: 123-129). By its proposal of a 'just order,' it aimed to articulate diverse social segments, including the urban poor and the so-called 'Anatolian tigers' – newly rising provincial entrepreneurs which were neglected by the policy makers until the 1980s. The proposal suggested an alternative model of market economy on the basis of certain Islamic principles, emphasizing 'reciprocal obligations of trust, loyalty and solidarity that bind the community of believers' and therefore enabling an encompassing coalition of social groups with diverse interests (Buğra 2002b: 129).

The Welfare Party received a considerable amount of support also from the Kurdish region (see Table 2.2). According to Altan Tan, a former member of the party and current deputy for the bloc led by the pro-Kurdish party, pious Kurds then looked for an alternative against both the state's oppressive and assimilative approach and the secular leftist Kurds led by the PKK and pro-Kurdish parties (2011: 465). In such a context, the Welfare Party used rhetoric of Islamic fraternity, in addition to networks of religious orders. The party appeared independent from the state's policies toward the Kurdish region, it itself being critical of the Kemalist establishment, and hence assumed no responsibility for the historical misdeed against Kurds (Bozarslan 1996: 145-146). However, the party pursued a pragmatic approach, to accommodate both pro-Turkish and pro-Kurdish constituencies at different localities. The electoral alliance it formed with a Turkish far-right party in 1991 led to a significant decrease in Kurdish votes. In the same year, Tayyip Erdoğan as the party's provincial chairman for Istanbul led the preparation of a significant report on the Kurdish issue, which involved Kurdish party members. The report acknowledged the state's oppressive and assimilative policies and advocated the recognition of linguistic-cultural rights for Kurds (Çakır 1994: 151-155). However, Erbakan's approach in the following period was inconsistent: he both promised rights for Kurds and supported preemptive security measures to fight terror, in addition to pointing at the importance of 'affection' by the state personnel (Çakır 1994: 150-160; Çalmuk 2001).

### ***The founding of the AKP: retreat of political Islam?***



The Welfare Party took its closure decision to the European Court of Human Rights, despite its former anti-Western discourse. Olivier Roy interprets this as one indicator of post-Islamism. By the concept of post-Islamism, Roy argues that Islamic movements in the region have integrated to the political system and shifted away from Islamism toward conservatism and nationalism since the late 1990s. He links this trend to the participation in the political game.<sup>45</sup> Resulting pragmatism re-replaces Islamists along the center right (Roy 2004). In a similar vein, the closure of the Welfare Party led to two new parties: the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* - SP) upholds the tradition but received extremely low rates of vote (see Table 3.1). The AKP, on the other hand, was formed in 2001 by reformists under the leadership of Tayyip Erdoğan – the former mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. The AKP has depicted this newly evolved approach characterized with cultural conservatism, economic liberalism, and, gradually, political nationalism.<sup>46</sup> Its electoral support was to be higher than that of previous Islamist parties.

The experiences of political Islam yielded significant resources and lessons though: a tradition of municipal rule; networks of NGOs, businessmen and pious communities mobilized for charity and political-economic reasons; articulation of grievances along conceptions of discrimination and victimhood; pragmatism concerning the Kurdish issue, and the understanding of the need to deal with concerns and threats of the secularist regime (Gülalp 2001; Öniş 1997). Former anti-western attitudes were replaced by a realization of the opportunities Western actors such as the EU could provide. The discourse of an alternative economy on the basis of Islamic principles also withered away and left its place to the initial efforts to convince the secular elites that ‘money has no religion, no faith, no ideology’ (Buğra 2002b: 135), in addition to the increasing integration to the market economy (Tuğal 2009).

Up to the 2000s, the parties of political Islam had already built up a considerable social base across the country and within the Kurdish region. They employed a discourse of Islamic fraternity and religious networks to articulate Kurds under their leadership. Their anti-systemic stance helped them look not responsible for the state’s oppressive policies, but as an alternative option. The AKP also benefited from such moves, clearly delineating itself away

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<sup>45</sup> On post-Islamism see also Bayat (2007). For an alternative account of the transformation of political Islam in Turkey from a hegemony perspective, see Tuğal (2009).

<sup>46</sup> As political predecessors, Erdoğan refers to two political leaders in the center-right tradition: Adnan Menderes from 1940s-1950s and Turgut Özal from the post-1980s. As to Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the National Outlook tradition, he was to publicly criticize the AKP on several occasions before his death in 2011.

from the 'state tradition' and appealing to a set of marginalized concerns, such as the religious. Yet, the AKP's electoral support has been way higher than those of the previous parties in question (see Tables 2.2 and 3.1). The historical overview helps understanding the fact that the higher support for the AKP governments, particularly by the Kurdish voters, has a lot to do with the contemporary context, rather than merely religious identity or old promises.

### **3.2 Three terms in power: opportunities, reforms, and challenges**

The AKP has depicted an unprecedented success in Turkish history, ruling the national government on its own for successive three terms, with an increasing electoral support. The party's rise to power shows the significance of timing; yet, its preservation and consolidation of power relates to more than that. This section provides a detailed account of the AKP government, starting from its rise to power in the aftermath of the 2011 financial crisis. Afterwards, the attention is paid to major opportunities and their use by the government, focusing on political reforms and the economic environment that have been partly shaped by the EU candidacy process. Various efforts also aimed to consolidate the party's power in state and societal realms, targeting two major rivals: Kemalist bureaucratic elites and the Kurdish movement. The second section concludes with an elaboration on the former, whereas the third section details the latter.

#### ***The 2001 financial crisis and the AKP's rise to power***

Turkey in the 1990s had witnessed a series of economic crises, accompanied with high rates of public debt, inflation and interest. Governments undertook stabilization programs by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), furthering the liberalization of economy. Income distribution deteriorated and corruption was seen as a major political problem in this process. A most severe financial crisis took place in early 2001, caused by successive speculations and immense outflows of capital. This brought about the dramatic devaluation of Turkish lira (by about two-thirds against the US dollar), massive layoffs, bankruptcies of small and medium sized enterprises, and a sharp decline in *per capita* income. Another program was undertaken by the three-party coalition government, with loans from the IMF, to achieve fiscal discipline and structural reforms (Pamuk 2008; Keyman/Öniş 2007). The country did not witness violent protests, as in similar crises in other countries such as Argentina or Greece; but, a significant popular response came one year after the crisis: in the general elections of November 2002,

all parties of the previous parliament remained below the 10 per cent threshold and therefore could not enter the parliament. Three of these decades-old parties even appear to have gone into the dustbin of history. Only two outsider parties, however, came in the parliament: the AKP and the CHP (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Parties in the parliament since 2002 (% of votes)

	2002	2007	2011
AKP	34.3	46.6	49.8
CHP	19.4	20.9	26
MHP	(8.4)*	14.3	13
Pro-Kurdish Party	(6.2)*	3.8**	5.8**

*Source: TÜİK and Yeğen (2011).*

\* *Given for comparison; parties did not win seats because of 10 % threshold.*

\*\* *Parties could win seats, thanks to standing as independent candidates.*

Let's start with the second. The CHP is an old player back in the game: it is the first political party of the republican Turkey, representing the Kemalist tradition. It could not enter the parliament in previous elections because of the threshold.<sup>47</sup> Since 2002, it has comprised the main opposition party in the parliament, although other parties also gradually gained seats in the parliament. The CHP voiced mostly secularist and nationalist concerns against the AKP government. The party as led by Deniz Baykal contributed to a politics of 'outbidding' in which political leaders, including those from the far-right Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – MHP) and gradually the AKP, competed against each other in making nationalist claims and, hence, in a manner against pro-Kurdish politics (cf. Horowitz 1985: 357). However, there have been significant changes in intra-party politics and political leadership since 2010. As Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has become the new leader, the CHP started stressing its old social-democratic stance, with appeals on issues such as corruption and social justice and with a more moderate rhetoric on the Kurdish issue than before. However, this

<sup>47</sup> All mainstream parties in Turkey have been subscribed to the Kemalist ideology in one way or another; therefore, the fact that the CHP was outside the parliament in previous term does not mean that Kemalists were outside.

shift has been an inconsistent one. Coupled with its historical identity, the CHP's overall performance during the last decade was not helpful to win the support of Kurds; thus, leaving the competition for Kurdish votes mainly to the pro-Kurdish party and the AKP.<sup>48</sup>

In some regards, the AKP is a new player in the game. Against the background of secularist suspicions and threats, the AKP defined itself as a party supporting 'conservative democracy' and committed to political and economic reforms, with a pro-Western and pro-globalization approach. Thereby, it was welcomed by western countries such as the USA, as a model of 'moderate Islam' for the Middle East in the aftermath of September 11 (Tuğal 2007). However, the AKP's rhetoric and policy approaches have not remained the same, but depicted important changes and swings in its three terms as a result of changing political context and the need to accommodate diverse groups in its constituency. Especially first three years were marked with reforms which appeared progressive as regards democratization. But the party has gradually embraced a more nationalist and less pluralist approach. An increasingly authoritarian tone has been used against political opposition while the depiction of Prime Minister Erdoğan as a charismatic leader figure has become stronger. The party's claims of advancing democracy have not stopped though, as the confrontation with Kemalist elites and the initiatives about the Kurdish issue continued in following years. Before elaborating on the party's confrontations with these two challengers, let's focus on two processes which were inherited from the previous government and provided the AKP with important opportunities to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the established elites, as well as its electoral support across the country and among Kurds: the political-reform process triggered by the EU process and the post-crisis economic performance.

### *Political reforms on the road to the EU*

In December 1999, after a long time of wait, Turkey was accepted as a candidate for EU membership. To be a member it had to conform to the conditions prescribed by the Copenhagen criteria. The criteria require political conditions such as stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, rights for and protection of minorities; economic conditions such as the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with market forces within the union; and legal conditions such as the acceptance of the *acquis communautaire*. To start accession negotiations, the political criterion must be satisfied. The

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<sup>48</sup> Following the changes in the party politics, I asked many of my informants in Diyarbakır also about potentials of the 'new' CHP for the Kurdish issue; however, the majority of them did not seem optimistic, depicting a problem of trust. The electoral results of 2011 also indicate this general lack of support.

three-party coalition government then launched a process of reforms. This process was soon undertaken by the AKP government, who carried out a more comprehensive set of reforms mostly during its first term in power. The AKP was to enjoy the fruits of the accession process in forms varying from financial aid to political legitimacy in its struggles for hegemony against two challengers – the bureaucratic elites and the Kurdish movement.

Political reforms were usually linked to the 1982 Constitution and other legislative arrangements of the post-*coup* period. The coalition government implemented a set of constitutional amendments and reform packages between 2001 and 2002, with regard to the political-legal system and human rights, *inter alia*. Among these, the lifting of capital punishment might be the politically most important and timely one since it took place after Öcalan's capture in 1999. Another reform aimed to enable radio/TV broadcasting in languages other than Turkish – hence, Kurdish. Initiatives concerned also the freedom of expression in laws; civil-military relations; and the reform of the judicial system as well as measures against torture. In addition to these, the same period also witnessed the start for gradual lifting of the Emergency Rule in Kurdish provinces.<sup>49</sup> However, the reforms had certain limitations and their implementation was another problem. The succeeding government was to undertake this unfinished process.

After coming to power in late 2002, the AKP government initiated a set of six reform packages, and all except one of them were legislated in its first two years. These initiatives concerned different facets of the state and society: institutional power of the military was undermined, especially through restructuring of the National Security Council, which had enabled the military to exert influence over civilian politics (see the sub-section after next). State Security Courts, which had formed an exceptional framework of criminal adjudication and were heavily used for terror suspects, political and 'thought criminals,' were abolished in 2004.<sup>50</sup> In a similar vein, the Penal Code was first amended and then replaced with a new one in 2005. Coupled with the constitutional amendments, these steps were claimed to improve the freedom of expression and fair trial despite the inclusion of contradictory articles.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> To reconstruct the reform period, I use the regular reports (also known as progress reports) by the European Commission, which provide assessments of reforms and political-economic situation of the country, with regard to the (pre)accession process. The reports are annually published since 1998 and the latest one was released in 2012, by the time of writing this dissertation. For the above-mentioned reforms, see the 2002 report (EC 2002).

<sup>50</sup> State Security Courts were first introduced in 1973, as special courts responsible for 'crimes against the state security.' They were headed by military judges until 1999. For more details, see İnanıcı (2011b).

<sup>51</sup> Article 301 of the Penal code, which includes 'insulting Turkishness' as a crime, is illustrative for the regressive aspects of the reform. For more details, see the sub-section after next.

Another important reform concerned the public administration, through restructuring of the state and devolution of power to local governments. Further legislative arrangements took place concerning publishing, broadcasting and private teaching in Kurdish language. Numerous other arrangements were carried out for the harmonization of the legislation with the *acquis communautaire*, concerning political parties, foundations, social policies, the Civil Law, and so on (EC, (European Commission) 2003; EC 2004; EC 2005).

As a result, the European Council decided to start accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005. Negotiations still go on, however, in a much slower fashion than the beginning, as there have been disagreements on certain political issues such as the Cyprus problem, as well as a decline in interest. The AKP government has continued with legislative initiatives, though. One recent significant initiative was the 2010 Constitutional Referendum which led to the further polarization of society and brought about significant changes, *inter alia*, in the judiciary to the disadvantage of Kemalist bureaucratic elites (see the sub-section after next). Another significant initiative was related to the Kurdish issue leading, for instance, to the introduction of a state channel in Kurdish and allowing the establishment of Kurdish institutes at universities.

The EU candidacy process provided the AKP with an important opportunity to legitimize itself and to consolidate its position. The party's initial pro-European stance and commitment to political reforms worked against some worries about its Islamist roots and increased the hopes for democratization (see Insel 2003). Furthermore, the reform of certain institutions was to strengthen the party against the military and civilian Kemalist elites, who had an antagonistic approach to the AKP. Aware of the threat to their position, Kemalist elites, hence, maintained an ambiguous stance concerning the EU process and attempted to obstruct several legislative initiatives through appeal to the Constitutional Court, presidential vetoes, etc. (Cizre 2008; Gülen 2009).<sup>52</sup>

One should also note that reforms did not automatically translate to practice and some of them meant new institutions functioning in old ways. An example for the problems in implementation is that despite the legal reforms on broadcasting in Kurdish language, the initiatives by Kurds for broadcasting met judicial blockage. As to the old-wine-in-new-bottle

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<sup>52</sup> Note that the veto behavior appears to be fuelled by not only concerns about the balance of power, but also political differences in the understanding of relations among the state, society and economy. For the latter cause, one may think of the vetoed law which suggested the private provision of education through public finance (Gülen 2009).

problem, reforms in the judiciary have been exemplary: the replacement of State Security Courts by specially-authorized heavy criminal courts has served politically quite the same purpose. According to a Kurdish lawyer interviewee, things got even worse than the 1990s as regards the right to fair trial. This situation was supported by the new Code of Criminal Procedure in 2004 and the amendment of the Anti-Terror Law in 2006. Coupled with specially-authorized prosecutors and the highly mobilized policing apparatus, the new exceptional criminal-adjudication framework has enabled the increasing repression of political dissent.<sup>53</sup> I will come back to the political effect of reforms in the sections below on the confrontation with the bureaucracy and the Kurdish movement. But before that, let's focus on the political-economic environment which has also hosted important changes and appears to be crucial for both electoral and associational politics.

### ***Political economy of the AKP period***

The 2001 financial crisis was a significant opportunity contributing to the AKP's rise to power. The post-crisis economic performance, on the other hand, appears to be significant for the party's repeated success in subsequent elections. Before the AKP rule, the coalition government had invited Kemal Derviş, a top-level bureaucrat at the World Bank, to become the minister of economy and to handle the crises. Derviş launched a program based on fiscal discipline and budget surpluses and initiated some structural reforms (Pamuk 2008). The process involved the IMF and the EU as powerful actors pushing for further reforms and continued under the AKP rule (Keyman/Öniş 2007: 131-158). In its first term, the AKP aimed to eliminate legal and institutional obstacles to foreign direct investment and has been successful in increasing these investments (see Table 3.3). Following this was a massive wave of privatization. Privatization has been already on the policy agenda since the 1980s, but depicted a slow progress before because of political resistance; however, this resistance has been pretty much marginalized in the AKP period (Öniş 2011).

The economy experienced a remarkable recovery in the AKP period (see Table 3.3). There has been a sustained economic growth, only to be interrupted by the international financial crisis in 2008. The GDP *per capita* increased from \$3,492 in 2002 to \$10,067 in 2010. Annual inflation declined to 8 per cent, against the background of previous decade which witnessed levels above 60 per cent. Indeed, single-digit levels were not seen in three decades. Interest

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<sup>53</sup> For detailed accounts of such changes in the judiciary and their political implications, see the collection by İnanıcı (2011c).

rates and the debt burden also declined significantly (Pamuk 2008). In a similar vein, the government came to a point not to sign any other agreement with the IMF. All these were publicized by the AKP as signs of economic strength and national autonomy, in line with the new assertive foreign policy approach (Öniş 2012). One major negative feature of the period, however, has been the situation of unemployment, which has been steadily on the rise since 2001 (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 The macroeconomic performance (%), 2001-2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
GDP Growth	-5.6	6.1	5.2	9.3	8.4	6.8	4.6	0.6	-4.8	9.0
Inflation (CPI)	54.2	45.1	25.3	8.5	8.1	9.5	8.7	10.4	6.2	8.5
Unemployment Rate	8.3	10.3	10.4	10.2	10.5	10.2	10.2	10.9	14.0	11.8
Foreign Direct Investment (billion \$)	3.3	0.5	0.6	1.0	8.1	16.9	18.3	14.7	6.1	6.2
Current Account Deficit/GDP	1.9	-0.2	-2.4	-3.6	-4.6	-6.0	-5.9	-5.6	-2.1	-6.3

Source: IMF<sup>54</sup> and State Planning Organization<sup>55</sup>

The government has used a variety of (re)distributive mechanisms which too helped enlarge its electoral base. One important target group has been small and medium sized enterprises. This group had been historically ignored by the state's economic policies until the 1990s (see Buğra 1998: 523-524). However, in the AKP period, the enterprises increasingly benefited from incentives, ranging from monetary supports with and without the condition of paying back to loan-interest supports up to 100 per cent (KOSGEB 2011). Supports took the form of both universal programs and specific programs which targeted the Kurdish-populated southeastern region and particularly Diyarbakır (see §3 below and Ch. 5). By 2011, the total

<sup>54</sup> See the April 2012 edition of the World Economic Outlook Database; available at <http://www.imf.org>. Access date is 15/09/2012.

<sup>55</sup> *Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*. See Economic and Social Indicators; database is available at <http://www.dpt.gov.tr>. Access date is 15/09/2012.



number of supported enterprises was 655,000 while it was only 4,000 in 2002, and the maximum limit for credits increased to 100,000 TL from 5,000 TL in the same time span (AK-Parti 2012: 48).

In addition to the above-mentioned waves of privatization and supports, there has been a variety of other opportunities for capital accumulation. An example is the private-sector collaboration with the state in large infrastructural investments such as the construction of roads thanks to ongoing urbanization. Public-private partnerships also increased in the AKP period, such as in healthcare, social assistance and social housing sectors. Public tenders for contracts, on the other hand, contributed to particularistic relations between the state and businesspeople (Buğra/Savaşkan 2012). These entrepreneurial activities have taken place in a context of state rescaling, which led to devolution of power and responsibilities to municipalities and other local state bodies such as special provincial administrations and agencies of regional development. This process was to encourage local entrepreneurs to play a more active role in policy making as well as in political alignments (Bayırbağ 2010; Buğra/Savaşkan 2012). As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 5, Kurdish business actors support this type of decentralization, with a stronger role for themselves, as opposed to the radical interpretation of ‘democratic autonomy’ proposal, which is relatively critical of market economy.

Through its policies of investment and service provision, the AKP government could hit two birds with one stone: while supporting business circles – especially those close to the government and the allied pious communities – Prime Minister Erdoğan also publicized the benefits of such initiatives for whole society. For instance, one recurrent theme of electoral campaigns has been the construction of ‘double roads’ across the country. Another broader theme related to social policies. The AKP government intensively used social policy measures in realms such as healthcare and poverty alleviation.

The healthcare sector witnessed significant changes in two dimensions: changes in one dimension benefited healthcare providers thanks to the increase in public-private partnerships and, hence, in the private provision of publicly-financed healthcare services. However, attempts at preventing physicians’ concurrent employment at both public and private sectors faced significant opposition and could not get finalized (see also Ch. 4 and 6). Changes in the other dimension benefited healthcare users: the government first improved the benefits of the Green Card (a means-tested healthcare program), which covered about 14 per cent of total population and 40 per cent of the Kurdish region (Günel 2008). Then, it introduced a system

of universal healthcare financed by compulsory premiums on behalf of citizens earning above the poverty line. Before the reform, the public healthcare system was a part of the multi-fragmented corporatist social-security system in which separate insurance schemes were established for different occupational groups and significant variation existed in norms and benefits (Buğra/Keyder 2006). Thanks to the reforms, however, patients gained improved access to a variety of public and private services (Günel 2008).

The government has rigorously engaged in poverty-alleviation activities, using a range of formal and informal measures. As mentioned before, the legacy of Islamist parties regarding the municipal rule included charity activities which benefited from cooperation with pious communities and local businesspeople. The municipalities run by the AKP have continued with this tradition. In addition, the government made great use of the General Directorate of Social Cooperation and Solidarity (*Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü – SYDGM*), an umbrella organization covering over 900 local foundations to provide means-tested social aid to the poor. The aid has been given usually in kind and sometimes in cash. Its amount increased during pre-electoral periods; for instance, it increased three times before the 2009 local elections (Buğra/Candaş 2011: 528, fn. 35). On top of these, the distribution of school books free of charge and the expansion of conditional cash transfers<sup>56</sup> appear also important for the popularity of the government’s social policies, as well as for decreasing poverty rates suggested by official statistics (see Table 3.4). Note that numerous foundations have also engaged in poverty-alleviation activities, either in direct cooperation with the government or on their own, leading rival actors to engage in similar activities (see the last section).

Table 3.4 Poverty rates (% of total population)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Food poverty	1.35	1.29	1.29	0.87	0.74	0.48	0.54	0.48
Complete poverty (food+nonfood)	26.96	28.12	25.60	20.50	17.81	17.79	17.11	18.08

<sup>56</sup> The program of conditional cash transfers was introduced initially in cooperation with the World Bank after the 2001 crisis. It provides social assistance to the poorest 6 per cent of the population conditional on the improved use of basic health and education services. For more details, see Kılıç (2010: 173).

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Below \$1 <i>per capita</i> per day	0.20	0.01	0.02	0.01	-	-	-	-
Below \$2.15 <i>per capita</i> per day	3.04	2.39	2.49	1.55	1.41	0.52	0.47	0.22
Below \$4.3 <i>per capita</i> per day	30.30	23.75	20.89	16.36	13.33	8.41	6.83	4.35

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*Source: TÜİK*

### ***From confrontation with the bureaucracy to its capture?***

As mentioned before, the parties of political Islam had troubles with the Kemalist bureaucracy under the guise of secularism issue. Kemalist elites constituted important segments of the state such as the military, the judiciary, and other higher ranks of civilian bureaucracy. In the post-1980 period, Kemalist elites defined Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish separatism as the major threats to the regime and derived their legitimacy from their ‘guardianship’ against these threats. As manifested in its historical interventions to parliamentary politics, the military had been the leading actor of them.

The AKP too was faced with challenges by the military and the judiciary in its first two terms in power. During the first three years, the confrontation took place on the site of reforms for EU accession. As mentioned before, one set of the reforms concerned the composition and role of the National Security Council – an institutional channel of the military for exerting power over political life including the government.<sup>57</sup> The council was restructured to be headed by a civilian person and to function as an advisory body. In addition, military representatives in some supreme boards were removed and the competence of military courts was narrowed. Despite this challenge to its power, the military tried to continue exerting power over politics through informal channels (EC 2004: 15; EC 2005: 138).

From 2005 to 2007, tensions increased between the government and the anti-government forces, and the country found itself within a political turmoil. Events such as the re-start of clashes with the PKK, the increasing autonomy of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq, and somewhat conciliatory approach of the AKP government as regards Cyprus and Kurdish issues contributed to the increase in secularist-nationalist reactions to which the

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<sup>57</sup> For detailed accounts of the military’s place in Turkish politics, see the collection by İnsel/Bayramoğlu (2004).

government responded by ‘backslide into an undemocratic discourse’ (Cizre 2008: 155). Military commanders continued publicly expressing their opinions on domestic and foreign policy issues in a manner critical of the government, media and some non-governmental organizations (EC 2006; EC 2007; EC 2008). Illegal activities by security forces took place in the Kurdish region, but a trial was hindered thanks to efforts by the military and higher echelons of the judiciary.<sup>58</sup> Prominent journalists and writers were sued by nationalist public prosecutors and charged by courts for insulting ‘Turkishness,’ thanks to the notorious Article 301 of the Penal Code the AKP government put into force in 2005. Series of violent attacks across the country targeted civilian Kurds (Gambetti 2007) as well as representatives of non-Muslim minorities.

However, the control over the state apparatus started to change hands from 2007 onwards while political instability continued. One triggering event was the presidential elections in April 2007. The AKP nominated its then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül as the new president. The candidacy of Gül drew strong opposition from Kemalists: the constitutional court interfered to the parliamentary voting process and the military warned by issuing a memorandum expressing concern as regards the weakening of secularism. A series of anti-government rallies also took place in major cities. As a solution, the AKP government rearranged the upcoming general elections to an earlier date. In July 2007, it came up again as the first party increasing its votes by 12 per cent (see Table 3.2), and Gül became the new president to have a future of highly cooperative relationship with the government thanks to the voting in the new parliament. In July 2008, another significant attempt against the AKP failed too: the Constitutional Court dismissed the application by chief public prosecutor for the closure of the party on the grounds that it had become ‘a focal point of anti-secular activities.’<sup>59</sup> While the AKP had appeared (and depicted itself) to be the ‘victim’ in this process, the electoral result in 2007 was interpreted as a sign of widespread support for the party against the military. Motivated by the popular support, the AKP increased its counter-

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<sup>58</sup> A bookstore was bombed in Şemdinli (southeastern Turkey) in 2005, leading to the death of one person. The local court found two gendarmerie officers and one PKK defector, who now became an informer, responsible for the bombing. The then Land Forces Commander publicly expressed his support for the accused and later the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors dismissed in April 2006 the prosecutor who had included accusations against high-ranking commanders in the indictment concerning the bombing (EC 2007). The case was finalized only in 2012, by the imprisonment of the three initially accused (*Bianet*, 11/01/2012).

<sup>59</sup> For details on these judicial processes, see Bali (2012). Bali’s take is a typical example of the Turkish liberal approach that interprets the process simply as a Kemalist resistance to democratization efforts by the AKP, rather than struggles for power.

attacks, under the banner of ‘democratization,’ which depicted a revanchist approach as well as a quest for the consolidation of power.

An investigation started in 2007 into the *Ergenekon*, an allegedly criminal network composed of far-nationalist Kemalists and embodying a part of the ‘deep state.’ The investigation has led to the waves of mass arrests of retired generals, lawyers, journalists, academics, representatives from NGOs and even from compulsory associations such as the Ankara Chamber of Commerce (Grigoriadis/Özer 2010). The indictment accuses them of forming a terrorist organization and attempting to overthrow the government. Other investigations followed this, such as the Revolutionary Quarters (2010), which (apparently) targets the Left, and the Sledgehammer case (2010), which targets military officers (of whom many on active duty) for charges of alleged *coup* plans dating back to 2003.

The 2010 Constitutional Referendum also was depicted by the AKP government as a step to further its struggle for ‘democratization’ and against the ‘military guardianship’ as it used a discourse of victimhood for not only the pious but the common people. The constitutional amendment was actually a package of quite diverse articles; yet, the government emphasized those such as the removal of immunity recognized to the generals of the 1980 coup.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, the referendum was held on September 12, the date when the junta constitution was put in a referendum in 1982, and resulted in approval of amendments by 57 per cent (see Table 3.5). The process was accompanied by an increasing polarization in society, where four responses were advocated: yes, ‘not enough but yes,’ no, and boycott<sup>61</sup> – the last one being supported by the Kurdish movement.

Table 3.5 Constitutional referendum results (% of population), 2010

	Participation rate	Yes	No
Turkey	73.71	57.88	42.12
Diyarbakır	34.80	93.92	6.08

<sup>60</sup> Other articles concerned the restructuring of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, restructuring of the Constitutional Court, the recognition of collective bargaining rights for public sector unions, the closure of political parties (making it more difficult), and so on. So far, the first one proved to be the most influential amendment in practice as mentioned below.

<sup>61</sup> Conformity with the call to boycott prevailed in Hakkari, which is a stronghold of the Kurdish movement (the participation rate was only 9 per cent), whereas it was partly observed in Diyarbakır, a fact which again shows the contested nature of the province.

*Source: Supreme Board of Elections*<sup>62</sup>

The military's resistance ended with the resignation (in the form of early retirement) of several generals and colonels, including the Chief of the General Staff and commanders of three forces in July 2011 (see Gürsoy 2012). The overall process of reforms and investigations was applauded by the AKP and pro-government social circles for ending military guardianship and instituting 'advanced democracy.' However, in truth, the AKP used these cases and the KCK case (see Ch. 2 and next section below) as opportunities to strengthen its own position and to discredit opponents of the government by accusing them of being either participants in or supporters of *coup* plots and 'terrorist' organizations. Demonstrators, including university students and Kurdish children, were treated alike (see HRW 2010). Thousands across the country have been kept in prolonged pre-trial detentions; several thousands of pages were included in indictments for major trials based on, *inter alia*, wiretap evidence, unreliable digital documents, and secret witnesses; and violations of the right to a fair trial have been abundant.<sup>63</sup> Turkey came up as the number one country in a global survey, as regards terror convictions around the world since September 11 attacks in New York (*Bianet*, 06/09/2011).

The AKP came to override not only the military, but also the judiciary. As mentioned above, the judiciary was an important mechanism through which the Kemalist establishment could pursue a struggle against the government and dissidents in society. Yet, by taking control of the judiciary, the AKP too started using the judiciary against its opponents. How could this become possible? As mentioned in a previous sub-section, the legal reforms of 2004-2006 were influential in the restructuring of the judicial system to the advantage of the government: the new Penal Code and the amendments to the Anti-Terror Law provided broad ambiguous definitions for terrorism and political crime. Specially-authorized heavy criminal courts and specially-authorized prosecutors possessed important prerogatives and appeared as the major actors of political investigations, in addition to the police force. The 2010 referendum completed this portrayal by restructuring the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors who is responsible for the nomination and promotion of its members. In addition to the institutional re-dressing, there is a widely-held assumption that the judiciary and the police

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<sup>62</sup> *Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*. Data available at <http://www.ysk.gov.tr>. Access date is 01/10/2012.

<sup>63</sup> For analyses on problematic aspects of these processes from a legal perspective, see İnanıcı (2011a), Kanar (2011), and Cimmen (2011).

have been infiltrated by members of the Gülen community,<sup>64</sup> and targets of the investigations are selected accordingly (TESEV 2012; Ertekin 2011).<sup>65</sup> Such a politically unstable and uncertain environment has influenced also the government's approach to the Kurdish issue, as well as Kurdish actors' political behavior over time.

### **3.3 Approach to the Kurdish issue**

In its three terms in power, the AKP has paid a specific attention to the Kurdish issue. Despite swings in the party's approach, the period witnessed several reform initiatives, which appear historically significant for the recognition of Kurds by the state. This section provides an account of the AKP government's policies and rhetoric as regards the Kurdish issue. I first outline the political steps: the first years in power brought about positive steps such as EU reforms and visits to Diyarbakır for negotiation with organized actors. However, things started getting more complicated especially in the second term, thanks to simultaneous processes of reform initiatives and mass incarceration. Second, I briefly discuss the AKP's rhetorical efforts to articulate Kurds. These efforts include references to specific sources of identity and solidarity, the party's anti-systemic claims, and interest. Finally, I point at socio-economic policies targeting the Kurdish region in general and Diyarbakır in particular.

#### ***From progressive reforms to mass incarceration***

The AKP depicted a strong pro-EU stance in its especially first three years, as mentioned before. This stance appears to be one of the major reasons for the Kurdish support to the AKP, as the party increased its votes in the 2004 local elections and the 2007 general elections (see Tables 2.2. and 2.5).<sup>66</sup> The Kurdish movement too advocated the idea of EU membership, for its potential effect for the democratization of the country and for the legitimatization of Kurdish rights claims. Coupled with the PKK's ceasefire until summer 2004, the reform process brought about a normalization of life in the region as well as some important

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<sup>64</sup> The community has been collaborating with the AKP government. However, when the AKP succeeded in pacifying the secularist-nationalist challenge, the cracks started to appear between the Gülen community and high-rank party officials. For an account of the changing relationship, see Ruşen Çakır's interviews with Ali Bayramoğlu (*Vatan*, 22/02/2012 and 23/02/2012).

<sup>65</sup> For instance, Ahmet Şık, a journalist who wrote a book about this issue, was detained on charges of being part of the Ergenekon network while his book draft was destroyed by the police force before it could be published.

<sup>66</sup> Note that the tables present data for either whole country or only the province of Diyarbakır. The same trend also is seen in the Kurdish region (which has an unequal distribution of Kurdish population among provinces): there is a sharp increase in the AKP's rate of votes in the 2007 general elections whereas it significantly declines in the 2009 local elections. It increases again in the 2011 general elections but cannot reach to the level of 2007 (see Yeğen 2011). Also note that different logics apply to voting behavior in local and general elections.

initiatives for the legal recognition of linguistic-cultural rights to Kurds, despite problems in implementation. The gradual lifting of the emergency rule in Kurdish provinces was finalized in the AKP period, by its lifting in Diyarbakır in November 2002. Next year, further legislative initiatives took place to enable radio/TV broadcasting in Kurdish and to open private courses for the teaching of Kurdish. Some amendments were realized to permit parents to name their children in Kurdish. *Newroz* celebrations were authorized (EC 2004), and the first *legal* demonstration took place in Diyarbakır after twenty-four years (*Radikal*, 22/06/2003). In 2004, a new law introduced a compensation mechanism for those who suffered material damages under the emergency rule in the region (see Ch. 6 for more on this). Other reforms that took place in the period also appear to be relevant for the Kurdish electoral approach to the AKP government; i.e. those targeting civil-military relations and the State Security Courts. Significant legal restrictions and judicial prosecution were seen in practice especially in the initial phases of the introduction of linguistic-cultural rights; however, there has been such a visible degree of normalization and rise of hopes in the region that the electoral support for the AKP increased, to the disadvantage of the pro-Kurdish party, in the 2004 local elections.

Although the EU reform process was to slow down, the AKP went on with some initiatives to articulate Kurds to its political project in competition against the Kurdish movement. In August 2005, Prime Minister Erdoğan made his first visit to Diyarbakır. During this visit, Erdoğan gave a speech in front of a mass where he said that the ‘Kurdish question’ is a problem of the whole nation, including him, and promised to further democratization for all citizens, while he acknowledged that the state had made mistakes in the past (*Bianet*, 12/08/2005). This step was made against a background of a number of events: intermittent clashes with the PKK; increasing nationalist reactions from the military and the opposition party;<sup>67</sup> calls by a group of important public figures (including representatives from interest associations) for a solution to the Kurdish issue;<sup>68</sup> and a special interest paid by European Union representatives to the Kurdish issue in relation with Turkey’s candidacy. Thereby, the

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<sup>67</sup> Earlier that year, the tearing of the Turkish flag by two children during *Newroz* celebrations in Mersin led to an official release by the army forces in which the event was described, in a threatening manner, as a betrayal of ‘pseudo-citizens’ (*Milliyet*, 23/03/2005). Furthermore, Deniz Baykal, the chairperson of the main opposition party CHP, maintained a critical approach to the government’s initiatives, arguing that the issue could not be solved by negotiation and democratization (*Bianet*, 19/08/2005).

<sup>68</sup> Before Erdoğan’s visit to Diyarbakır, about 150 intellectuals, journalists, and (former) leaders from organized groups (including Istanbul’s Medical Association, the Bar Association, and the KESK) made a press statement, asking the PKK to lay down weapons and the AKP to take initiatives for a democratic solution to the issue (*Bianet*, 15/06/2005). A number of them, headed by Gençay Gürsoy, also had a meeting with Prime Minister Erdoğan concerning this call, before Erdoğan’s visit to the city (*Bianet*, 10/08/2005; see also Ch. 4).



year 2005 marked the beginning of two important ongoing trends.<sup>69</sup> First, the AKP has started oscillating between pro-Kurdish reformist and Turkish nationalist positions, in order to manage its heterogeneous social base and to deal with political rivals. Second, associations from the Kurdish region have started to become more visible as political actors, especially following Erdoğan's visit to Diyarbakır. Not only visits by high-level political figures continued, but also activism by associational leaders has increased since then.

Starting with 2007, the AKP engaged in cross-border operations into Iraq to fight the PKK. Cross-border operations is not unique to the AKP period; however, what is unique is that the AKP began to develop good relations with both Iraqi central government and the Kurdistan regional government in northern Iraq, as opposed to the past foreign-policy approach strictly against the emergence of a Kurdish autonomous formation in Iraq. This was going to lead to a cooperative relationship among the actors as regards the PKK, in addition to the strengthening of their economic ties (see Barkey 2011). The AKP increased its votes from the Kurdish region in the 2007 general elections; however, the situation got more complicated in following years: the urban realm hosted protests by Kurdish citizens against the government's policies towards Kurds and particularly Abdullah Öcalan's prison conditions. Protests met excessive use of force by the security forces. Furthermore, prosecution and incarceration of demonstrators, including children, under terrorism laws started to increase by 2008 (HRW 2010).

In 2009, the two-sided approach got stronger: on the one hand, the KCK operations started in April right after the local elections. On the other hand, the AKP soon started to talk about a 'democratic opening' project as a solution to the Kurdish issue. The KCK operations, as mentioned before, has resulted in ongoing waves of mass arrests of several thousands of people at total, for alleged membership in or collaboration with the PKK's urban wing, the KCK (see also Ch. 2). Targets have included locally elected representatives (including mayors), party officials, activists, members of NGOs, unionists, lawyers, students, and so on. Majority of them has ended up with prosecution, prolonged pretrial detention, and/or conviction. The AKP government has given its support to the process, as Prime Minister Erdoğan repeated the claim of indictments that the KCK is an attempt by the PKK to build a 'parallel state' (TC 2010: 1/56-70; *Radikal*, 07/11/2011).

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<sup>69</sup> This year appears to be significant in other regards too, such as the changes in the EU process, rise in confrontations between the judiciary and the government (as mentioned in previous section), and rise in the attention the Gülen community has paid to the Kurdish issue (Tan 2011: 460).

As to the ‘democratic opening,’ the AKP kept some ambiguity about the content of this project. However, general idea was to take further initiatives as regards democratization, the recognition of Kurdish identity and regional economic concerns. Already in the beginning of the year, the public broadcaster TRT launched an all-day Kurdish-language channel, and the Prime Minister spoke a few words in Kurdish at the launching ceremony. During the ‘opening,’ a regulation was introduced to lift obstacles to all-day broadcasting by private TV channels. Initiatives were taken to enable the establishment of Kurdish language institutes at universities. Original names of some places were restored. Allocation of additional sources was also declared for socio-economic development of the Kurdish region (see next subsection). The government initially depicted the process as to be ‘participatory,’ by having consultations with representatives of organized groups (see Ch. 4 and Part II) and other public figures. In recent two terms in the parliament, the AKP usually rejected to negotiate with the pro-Kurdish party unless it would declare the PKK as a terrorist organization; however, parallel to the opening, some negotiations took place both with representatives from the pro-Kurdish party and with Abdullah Öcalan behind the curtains. In October 2009, during another short period of ceasefire by the PKK, a number of former guerillas entered the country from Iraq as a ‘peace group,’ upon the call by Öcalan and approval signals by the government.

The peace group was let free by the security forces at their entry. However, passionate welcoming by masses in Diyarbakır led to Turkish nationalist reactions in the political arena. Prosecution of members of the group was to follow this later (*Radikal*, 17/02/2010). The unexpected course of the event should have added to the trust problem. Other events in the process also changed the course of the ‘opening.’ The pro-Kurdish party DTP was closed down by the Constitutional Court in December 2009. The AKP has re-named the project of ‘democratic opening’ by ‘national unity and fraternity’ (see, for instance, AK-Parti 2010). The party’s nationalist rhetoric has increased since then: this has been symbolized in the motto of ‘one nation, one state, one flag’ often used by Prime Minister Erdoğan. He at times added ‘one language’ or ‘one religion’ against the demands by the Kurdish movement for autonomy and bilingualism and for underlying religious unity; however, Erdoğan would later argue that it was a misunderstanding when he received criticisms (*Bianet*, 27/12/2010). Keeping such ambiguity has been instrumental for the AKP in its quest for building a coalition of groups with diverse interests and commitments.

During the 2011 elections, the pro-Kurdish party met legal obstacles in running its candidates (see Çakır 2011) and the Prime Minister declared that there is not a Kurdish issue in Turkey

anymore, but a PKK issue (*Bianet*, 15/07/2011). Advocates' demands for meeting with Abdullah Öcalan were not responded for about a year. In November 2011, Prime Minister apologized on behalf of the state for its massacre in the Kurdish-Alevi dominated province Tunceli (Dersim) in 1937, while pointing at the CHP as the ruler of the period (*Milliyet*, 11/10/2012). Thereby, the AKP government claimed to be separate and challenging an authoritarian state tradition. However, in December 2011, Turkish jets fired at a group of smugglers in Uludere (Roboskî), near the Turkish-Iraqi border, killing 34 civilians, and the government accepted no responsibility, arguing that the strike was based on information that they could be PKK guerillas. Between the swings in rhetoric and conflict, uncertainty has prevailed.

### *Appeals to identity and interest: unite, or divide and rule?*

The simultaneous process of confrontation with the Kemalist elites and reform initiatives concerning the Kurdish issue helped the AKP not assume any responsibility for the state's historical mistreatment of Kurds. Rather, the AKP deployed a populist rhetoric, as if it stood for (majority of) the nation against the elites (within and around the state). The party has relied also on specific strategies to articulate Kurds to its political project. In the first term of the AKP rule, discussions took place in the public sphere on a supra-identity, with references to geographical belonging, constitutional bonds, and religion. Among these the AKP made repeated references to Islam as a shared historical identity and a source of solidarity (Candaş/Buğra 2010). Initially, the rhetoric on religion appeared as an instrument of unifying different ethnic groups within the country. However, especially as the policy against the Kurdish movement became harsher, the rhetoric developed into an instrument of dividing Kurds among themselves. On several occasions, Prime Minister Erdoğan accused the movement members of being Zoroastrian (read as perverse) and considering Abdullah Öcalan as a prophet while Erdoğan made his regular references to the glorious Islamic history shared with pious Kurds and traced back to the times of fights against the Crusades.<sup>70</sup> Hence, Erdoğan differentiated between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' passions.

The religious repertoire, however, was not the only instrument of the AKP in its approach to Kurds. Parallel to the post-Islamism literature mentioned before, the AKP also emphasized democratization and economic development. To fight the Kurdish movement, the AKP attempted to categorize Kurds into 'good' versus 'bad' ones, especially since the entry of

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<sup>70</sup> See, for instance, Erdoğan's speech at electoral rally in June 2011 in Diyarbakır (Erdoğan 2011).

Kurdish politicians into the parliament in 2007.<sup>71</sup> ‘Good Kurds’ were to be those who opposed the armed struggle and supported the policies of democratization and development (read as those who supported the AKP). ‘Bad Kurds,’ on the other hand, were to be those who supported ‘terrorism,’ or even were ‘terrorists’ themselves, and were disturbed by the development of the region (read as followers of the Kurdish movement).<sup>72</sup> Remember that there have been waves of mass incarceration under terrorism laws especially since 2008, targeting members and supporters of the Kurdish movement. The AKP leaders also usually resisted meeting the members of the pro-Kurdish parties unless they declared that they recognize the PKK as a terrorist organization. The mainstream media also played a role in the formation of such categorizations, also thanks to the process when Kurdish associational actors and intellectuals have become highly visible as third actors. While these actors made frequent press statements and gave interviews as regards the Kurdish issue and, sometimes, other national topics such as the referendum (see Part II), a notion of ‘white Kurds’ emerged in the Turkish media: this usually meant the idea of a rising Kurdish middle class who is ‘moderate’ in political terms. The AKP’s efforts to eliminate the Kurdish movement from the contestation to undertake the leadership of Kurds, *inter alia*, helped indeed the rise of these actors, particularly from the associational site.

Although what was subsumed under the theme of democratization included also initiatives for the introduction of linguistic-cultural rights and the recognition of Kurdish ethnic identity, the Prime Minister came up with another dichotomy during the 2009 local elections: ‘identity’ versus ‘service.’ As mentioned in Chapter 2, Erdoğan pointed at allegedly bad quality of municipal services in Kurdish localities run by the pro-Kurdish party. While Erdoğan presented the AKP as a better alternative focused on politics of ‘service,’ he accused the pro-Kurdish party of doing ‘identity politics.’ The AKP’s appeals to interest under the garb of service relate, in practice, not only to its general economic performance, as mentioned in previous section, but also to specific policies targeting Kurdish provinces.

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<sup>71</sup> The dichotomy was often openly but critically used in public debates, by journalists and pro-Kurdish politicians. For instance, see the columns by Ece Temelkuran, ‘Açılım ve Kadınlar’ (*Milliyet*, 18/10/2009); Oral Çalışlar, ‘İyi Kürt, kötü Kürt’ (*Radikal*, 24/09/2010); Cengiz Çandar, ‘İyi Kürtler’in Nevruz’u, kötü Kürtler’in Newroz’u’ (*Radikal*, 20/03/2012), and the statement by the Member of Parliament Sebahat Tuncel ‘Başbakan’ın İyi Kürdü’ (*Milliyet*, 21/02/2011).

<sup>72</sup> The argument regarding development policies relates to the assumption that the Kurdish issue is an outcome of the regional underdevelopment and that the PKK benefits from this situation for recruitment. Following lines by Prime Minister Erdoğan summarizes his usual rhetoric pretty well: ‘Do you know what the terror says? “Why do you come and invest in Muş, Van, Hakkari, and Diyarbakır? Why do you raise the life standards here?” The terrorist organization and terrorists are disturbed by this. The investments will continue, out of spite. Life standards of my people will increase. There will be more advanced democracy, out of spite’ (*Milliyet*, 25/10/2008, my translation).

### *Socio-economic policies for ‘positive discrimination’*

Regional disparities have been a persistent problem during the Republican period. While industrialization was concentrated in the west of the country, the Kurdish-populated eastern and southeastern regions have been characterized by underdevelopment and poverty, lacking in public services and infrastructure, and less successful as regards the commercialization of agriculture. The post-1980 era contributed to disparities because of the armed conflict and the deterioration of the terms of trade against agriculture (Pamuk 2008). Historically, the problem of regional underdevelopment was depicted as one major reason for the Kurdish issue and Turkish governments promised to take measures against it (Yeğen 2003; Sönmez 1992). The AKP too promised ‘positive discrimination’ for the Kurdish region and found an economic environment conducive to this promise, thanks to the recovery from the 2001 crisis at national level and from the 1990s’ armed conflict at regional level. According to official statistics, public investments increased under the AKP rule in regional provinces such as Diyarbakır, Mardin and Urfa (see KB 2012: v-vi). Many of these investments have been concentrated in agricultural sector and became possible largely through the decades-old South-East Anatolia Project (*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi – GAP*). As a regional development project, the GAP originally focused on agricultural and energy sectors, but gradually integrated also other sectors such as transportation, health, education, and infrastructure (Çarkoğlu/Eder 2005). In the AKP era, the GAP’s share in total public investments increased from 5.9 % in 2002 to 14.2 % in 2010, speeding up by 2008 (GAP-BKİB 2010: 5).

There were other governmental initiatives targeting the regional economy. Province-specific incentives for private-sector investments, another old mechanism, were also offered by the AKP, although studies suggest that they do not have any positive impact for investments in the region (TESEV/UNDP 2006: 19). Another mechanism has been the targeting of small and medium sized enterprises by the ministerial agency KOSGEB, which provides monetary supports with and without the condition of paying back and loan interest supports. In addition to programs with nationwide coverage, the mechanism included special loan-support programs for the southeastern region<sup>73</sup> and for Diyarbakır in particular. Diyarbakır was promoted as a ‘center of attraction’ from 2009 onwards. In this vein, a project was initiated including, *inter alia*, loan interest supports up to 100 per cent, for the period of 2009-2010

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<sup>73</sup> In 2010, southeastern Turkey was the second region as regards the allocation of loan interest supports, with 20.6 % of the total. Its share of loan supports amounted to 30 million Turkish Liras and created a loan volume of 208 million Turkish Liras in the region (KOSGEB 2010: 38).

(KOSGEB 2010).<sup>74</sup> Note that this coincided with the 2009 local elections when the AKP put its major goal as to win over Diyarbakır, which was called by pro-Kurdish politicians as the ‘fortress.’ Furthermore, the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry was an important channel for access to these supports while its president later became an MP from the AKP (see Ch. 5).

Social policy has been another important realm, where the AKP developed policies with significant impact on the Kurdish region. As outlined in the previous section, the government took some initiatives which improved access to and quality of healthcare services across the country. One initiative was to re-introduce mandatory professional service for physicians (2005), aiming to increase the number of physicians in the Kurdish region, where the number has been below the national average. Another initiative was to expand the benefits of the Green Card, which is a means-tested health care program. By 2008, the program covered 40 per cent of population in the Kurdish region while it was only 14 per cent for the whole country (Günel 2008).<sup>75</sup> However, it should also be noted that such means-tested programs can lead to problems in practice as regards the definition of ‘deserving poor.’ According to a field study, there were many complaints in the regional provinces that those who had a family member convicted or searched for a political crime were not granted the card (TESEV/UNDP 2006: 126). A more publicized example is the approach of the Adana governor to Kurdish child demonstrators in 2008: the governor stated that it was not acceptable for children to participate in a protest organized by supporters of ‘terrorism’ while their families benefited from social aids by the state; therefore, he would cancel the entitlements of these families (*Radikal*, 29/10/2008). Note the parallelism between this policy approach and the poverty-alleviation activities by the Kurdish movement, which too emphasize loyalty as criteria of deserving, albeit under different conditions (see Ch. 2).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> From the start of the project in 2009 until the end of 2010, 2,449 enterprises applied in Diyarbakır and 2,008 of them benefited from the loan-interest support program, which cost 8.2 million Turkish Liras to KOSGEB and created a loan volume of 58 million Turkish Liras, see (KOSGEB 2010: 46). Thereby, Diyarbakır came the second province in 2010 across the country, as regards allocation of loan-interest supports, with a share of 7.9 % of the total amount, whereas the number one province Istanbul had a share of 12.8 % (KOSGEB 2010: 35).

<sup>75</sup> In Diyarbakır, 37.9 per cent of the population used the Green Card in 2009 (Karacadağ 2011: 86).

<sup>76</sup> A historical trend is that Turkish governments promised economic measures for the region conditional on Kurds’ giving up support for the PKK; hence, a policy of carrot and stick. The positive discrimination policy of the Kurdish movement, on the other hand, targets those, who are (likely to be) subjected to negative discrimination by Turkish political authorities; hence, a compensation for the double disadvantaged position. Yet, there is a similarity in the requirement/goal of loyalty.

There are also other social assistance programs, which were vigorously used in the AKP period. As mentioned in the previous section, the state agency SYDGM has been an important institutional mechanism. Its foundations across the country provide aids, mostly in kind, as regards healthcare, education, food, coal, vocational training, income-generating activities, and so on. With regard to the regional distribution of total transfers by the directorate, the shares of eastern and southeastern regions have depicted an important increase since 2008: they received the largest shares, while their combined share amounted to some 44 per cent of the total transfers between 2008 and 2011.<sup>77</sup> Conditional cash transfers are also included in total transfers by the directorate and largely enjoyed by eastern and southeastern regions whose combined shares amounted to approximately 67 per cent of the total conditional cash transfers between 2003 and 2011. As to the distribution of transfers among provinces in the Kurdish region, Diyarbakır's share has been among the top (SYDGM 2007; SYDGM 2008; SYDGM 2009; SYDGM 2010; SYDGM 2011; SYGM 2012).

Pious communities linked to the AKP, such as the Gülen community,<sup>78</sup> have also been active in the realm of poverty alleviation. The Gülen community paid a special attention to the Kurdish region by mobilizing its philanthropic associations and business associations, and its activities were openly praised by the government members.<sup>79</sup> Especially following the 2007 general elections, the AKP's electoral success was interpreted as an effect of such poverty-alleviation activities that not only the other political parties started to make more claims as regards social-policy matters, but also other organized actors joined the contest in provision.<sup>80</sup> The Kurdish movement led the establishment of Sarmaşık philanthropic association as an alternative to the pro-government activities and as a form of intragroup solidarity; however, it was faced with judicial obstacles (see Ch. 2 and Part II).

While the AKP introduced some policies targeting the Kurdish region, the Kurdish movement claimed that the municipalities run by the pro-Kurdish party and the linked associations

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<sup>77</sup> The total transfers amounted to 1.3 billion Turkish liras in 2008 and 1.8 billion Turkish liras in 2011.

<sup>78</sup> The Gülen community consists of followers of the cleric Fethullah Gülen. It has been active mainly in realms of education, media, and charity within and outside the country. The community has had quite a different political outlook, as opposed to the strands of political Islam mentioned above, in that it has had a more Turkish nationalist, pro-state, and pro-USA stance. In the 2000s, it became more active in the political and economic realms, as mentioned below. For information on the formation of the community, see Yavuz (2005: 242-278).

<sup>79</sup> See, for instance, the statement by the then Minister of Education: 'Çelik: Kimse Yok Mu'nun Güneydoğu atağına şapka çıkarıyorum,' *Zaman*, 23/12/2007.

<sup>80</sup> In Diyarbakır, this contestation is exemplified by the following non-governmental organizations: *Sarmaşık* by the Kurdish movement, *Mustazaaf-Der* by the Hizballah circles, local branch of the nation-wide *Kimse Yok Mu* by the Gülen community, and *Gönül Köprüsü* by local pro-AKP circles. Kemalists had also their associations active in the region, if not in Diyarbakır, most notable one being *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği* (ÇYDD).

encountered negative discrimination when it came to allocation of governmental sources. The then Minister of Justice for the AKP government, Mehmet Ali Şahin, validated this claim before the 2009 local elections apparently to influence electoral behavior: he stated that the municipalities who fight with or contradict the government cannot get all their projects approved in Ankara (*Milliyet*, 23/02/2009). In addition to the examples of the Sarmaşık Association and the DİYAR A.Ş. Company which faced judicial obstacles, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the allocation of EU and governmental funds provide some insights to the situation. The official data supports the claim that the provinces under the AKP rule had received more EU funds for social projects. Projects are carried out by a number of local organizations such as municipalities, chambers, universities, local state offices, associations, cooperatives, etc. The variation in access exists across the country and within the region as well as among organizations of different political alignment. For instance, Van comes up as the number one province as regards accepted contracts, and received funds more than double of what Diyarbakır received. Van's population is two thirds of Diyarbakır which has a more vibrant civil society; however, Van gave more electoral support to the AKP (albeit with a decline in 2011, see Table 3.6).<sup>81</sup> During my fieldwork, I could see that the provinces which give more electoral support to the AKP have better access to resources was a common opinion.

Another claim by the Kurdish movement concerns a within-province differentiation in the allocation of resources on the basis of partisanship. Data is not available as regards allocation of social aids, except the above mentioned remarks on the Green Card program; however, the distribution of funds for social projects in Diyarbakır by the SODES, which is another targeting program coordinated by governorships mainly for the eastern and southeastern regions, show a supporting trend whereby several pro-government local associations appear among the beneficiaries while almost no association visibly aligned with the Kurdish movement does.<sup>82</sup> Variation in relations between the government and associations are, of course, more complicated than this, as Part II investigates.

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<sup>81</sup> EU funds are the mechanisms of financial assistance of the EU to candidate and potential candidate countries. The importance of this example relates to the variation in allocation patterns for different beneficiary targets: the previously mentioned resources targeted ordinary individuals and economic enterprises; so it makes sense that Diyarbakır usually comes up as the first because of its political significance and large population. However, the EU project funds target organized groups and local governmental bodies (their monetary effect is mainly on these organizations). For the allocations of funds, see the database of the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (*Merkezi Finans ve İhale Birimi*). <http://www.mfib.gov.tr/>. Access date is 09.08.2012.

<sup>82</sup> This argument is based on the data by SODES for 2008-2011 on the distribution of funds according to provinces and organizations. The majority of beneficiaries are the local agencies of the state. See



## *Conclusions*

The AKP has been the culmination of historical challenges by political Islam to the Turkish state. The period under the AKP rule has been characterized with significant political reforms, economic improvement, social polarization, and extreme uncertainty. The party's stance evolved from an initially conservative-liberal approach to an increasingly nationalist-authoritarian one. Yet, the government employed a rhetoric of democratization and economic development to legitimize its fight against the major challengers at two fronts: secularist-nationalist bureaucratic elites and the Kurdish movement. Such a general way of framing the issues helped the AKP maintain an encompassing coalition of social groups with diverse interests and identities. Increasingly, however, its rhetoric oscillated between pro-Kurdish reformist and Turkish nationalist positions to appease these diverse groups and to compete with its political rivals (both the pro-Kurdish party and the other Turkish nationalist parties). In this respect, the AKP leaders too made use of *ambiguity* in framing issues and formulating policies, as they made promises to solve the Kurdish issue but without proposing clear projects (e.g. the 'democratic opening' in its changing names and unclear content) and denied making some political statements when they received reaction (the nationalist motto with and without 'one language'). In its struggle against political opponents, the government leaders engaged in constructing social divisions along general lines such as supporters and opponents of democratization, accusing the party's opponents of supporting either *coup* plots (referring to secularist nationalists) or terrorism (referring to Kurds).

The AKP's efforts to articulate Kurds to its political project showed a great variety. The government took numerous initiatives through discursive strategies, political reforms and repression, and socio-economic policies. On the discursive level, appeals were made to the shared identity of Islam. This was first to be a common ground, a 'supra-identity,' for the different ethnic groups in the country. However, it was later used to depict a division within the Kurdish group in the form of the 'pious' versus the 'perverse.' The members-supporters of the Kurdish movement were depicted to be the latter. This effort led to a broader categorization of Kurds which could be observed in the discourses of the AKP, the mainstream media and even some associational leaders (see Ch. 5): its vulgar formulation is 'good Kurds' versus 'bad Kurds.' The claim is that the former corresponds to those who

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<http://www.sodes.gov.tr> Access date is 03/01/2013. The exception for the Kurdish movement is the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, which received funds for three projects, among the total 182 projects accepted by SODES. For more information, see Ch. 5, §1.

support democratic means and the latter to those who support violent means or even ‘terrorism.’ This was complemented by the definition of the AKP doing ‘service’ politics in the sense of working for economic development and satisfaction of social needs and of the pro-Kurdish party doing ‘identity politics’ in the sense of pursuing illegitimate, dangerous passions. Thereby, the AKP tried to ‘disarticulate’ segments of Kurds articulated by the Kurdish movement and ‘rearticulate’ them to its political project (cf. De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009: 210).

In this respect, the AKP employed various economic and social policy measures at both national and regional levels, claiming to offer ‘positive discrimination’ for the Kurdish region because of its underdevelopment. In this respect, special programs also were developed for Diyarbakır and it was prioritized in the distribution of some governmental resources, as the AKP aimed to win over the province in elections because of its symbolical importance summarized in its calling as the ‘fortress’ by the Kurdish movement. These policy measures contributed to the improvement of the local economy in Diyarbakır, with diverse implications for the associational groups under scrutiny (see Part II). They complemented the rhetoric on ‘interest versus identity,’ by presenting concrete economic incentives and pressures.

The reform process triggered by EU candidacy process increased the support for the AKP, not only for its components with regard to the linguistic-cultural rights for Kurds, but also its implications for the general democratization of the country. Even if the latter goal became dubious at times, the AKP’s confrontation with the Kemalist elites contributed to the support, helping the AKP claim to differ from the oppressive state tradition. Yet, the AKP also deployed oppressive measures against the Kurdish movement, including the pro-Kurdish parties and the municipalities they run. As the pro-Kurdish politicians were faced with serious constraints and not recognized as the representatives of Kurds, the process helped opening up the space for interest associations in Diyarbakır. In its rivalry against the Kurdish movement, the AKP turned its face to these associations as the ‘third actor’ starting with the year 2005. Whether or not it could articulate them to its political project in the following process is the subject of the next Part; but before that, let’s have an overview of the national environment of organized interests in Turkey.

## **Chapter 4: Organized interests**

Organized interests form another important ‘partial regime’ for the political representation of social groups in Turkey. Although historically they have been pretty much under the influence of other two regimes (political parties and social movements), it is hard to ignore the peculiar dynamics of this site. Both the institutional setting for interest representation and historical political coalitions appear to be highly significant for the contemporary Kurdish associational activism: they present certain opportunities and constraints for the AKP government and the Kurdish movement, as well as local associational actors, in their quest for influencing this activism. Yet, contemporary politics also matter, and one aspect of this relates to developments that influence social groups represented by associations on the basis of their class or professional positions. Therefore, it is informative to look also at contemporary relationships between the AKP government and peak associations, parallel to important policy matters. This chapter, hence, provides a background for the study of associational activism in Diyarbakır, by highlighting historical legacies, institutional setting, main lines of cleavage among peak associations, and major policy developments concerning social groups represented by associations. It provides also an overview of historical processes that opened up the space for Kurdish associational activism.

First section outlines the origins of interest associations and the changing legal framework as regards issues such as structure and status vis-à-vis the state. The focus is on the peak associations which represent businesspeople, professionals (lawyers and physicians) and labor. The second section elaborates on diverse associational experiences of politicization. It gives a broad overview from the late 1960s onwards, highlighting both political coalitions in general and approaches to the Kurdish issue in particular. The third section focuses on the associational environment during the AKP period. It points at the diverse patterns of interaction between the government and associations; associations’ take on the Kurdish issue; and the processes that opened up the space for Kurdish associational activism. The chapter ends with conclusions, to proceed with Part II, which focuses on the Kurdish associational activism at the intersection of the local and the national.

### **4.1 Historical origins and contemporary legal setting**

Although interest associations share a number of similar aspects, their origins date back to different moments in history, and legal frameworks vary by time and by association. To trace

back these diverse histories, the section is organized around three types of associations that the dissertation investigates with regard to the Kurdish issue. First, I give the account for business associations. The focus is on compulsory business associations, that is, the chambers of commerce and industry; yet I also mention the rise of voluntary business associations. Second, I give an account for professional associations, focusing on the bar and medical associations. Finally, I elaborate on labor unionism. Overall, interest associations follow a similar historical trend in their relationship to the state: there is a transition from the authoritarian period to a period of relative autonomy (mainly the post-1960s), which was interrupted by the 1980 coup, but generally characterized by corporatist (compulsory associations) and pluralist elements (voluntary business associations and unions). Contemporary trends display efforts both to increase political influence over the associational environment and to liberalize it through legal changes.

### ***Business associations***

With roots in the traditional guild system, the chambers of commerce and industry emerged during the Empire period, in the late 19th century. The chambers then served mostly an advisory-mediating role, between the state and merchants, and were based on voluntary membership (Koraltürk 2002: 27-38; Toprak 1994b). They increased in number and changed in properties in the following century. Founders of the Republic (1923) supported a corporatist ideology, influenced from the interpretation of Durkheimian ideas by Ziya Gökalp, a theorist of Turkish nationalism. Accordingly, Kemalist elites asserted that classes did not exist in Turkish society and society was instead composed of interdependent occupational groups (Parla/Davison 2004). As chambers had played a role also in the Turkification of the economy in the Young Turk era (Koraltürk 2002: 65-83), they appeared as important instruments for the state.

Inspired from European examples, the 1925 law attributed chambers the legal status of ‘public corporate bodies’ and placed them under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Commerce. As membership became compulsory, chambers had to regulate members and carry out the duties prescribed by laws and official bodies (Öncü 1980; Toprak 1994b). In 1943, the jurisdiction of the ministry over chambers further increased: the ministry could establish or dissolve chambers and appoint their secretary generals. Chambers’ council members were elected in two rounds while half of the second voters was decided by the ministry (Koraltürk 2002; Bora

2002).<sup>83</sup> Hence, the single-party period which lasted until 1946 shaped the interest regime in a fashion similar to ‘state corporatism.’<sup>84</sup>

Yet, there was a shift in the political regime toward multi-party politics and in economic policies toward liberalization from 1950 onwards, and this brought about some changes for chambers too. By the 1950 law<sup>85</sup> a peak association was established: the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği* – TOBB). The law had been in force until 2004, albeit with several amendments. It attributed to the union a public status and an advisory-mediating role to be played before government, in addition to interest representation. Furthermore, chambers gained relative autonomy from the ministry, with regard to the election of their executive bodies and administration.

Political changes in following decades brought along some amendments in the legal framework, and the prerogatives of chambers shifted according to the model of economic development (see Öncü 1980; Heper 1991). Yet, chambers have preserved their corporatist structure up to now. Note that the effects of the 1980 *coup* were seen also at the site of organized interests. The 1982 Constitution aimed to depoliticize interest associations and restrict their autonomy which had been expanded by the 1961 Constitution. The constitution banned compulsory interest associations from engaging in political activities and taking joint action with political parties, labor unions and voluntary associations. These external actors were not allowed to nominate candidates or engage in propaganda for and against candidates for the bodies of compulsory associations. Also, decree-laws increased the ‘tutelary powers’<sup>86</sup> of relevant ministries over compulsory associations (Özbudun 1991: 49). The bans did not always translate into practice though, and the constitution was amended in 1995<sup>87</sup> to lift the bans on political activities and joint action, while keeping the ban on the nomination of

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<sup>83</sup> This arrangement was justified by the view that ‘the crises-ridden years we have been going through made it apparent that there is an absence in Turkey of professional morality and discipline on the part of businessmen and industrialists. . . [to] induce them to function with a view to general interest’ (quoted in Heper 1991: 15).

<sup>84</sup> For an elaboration on the subtypes of corporatist interest representation, see Schmitter (1974). As to the case of Turkey, Robert Bianchi too defines the interest regime of the single-party period as one of ‘limited state corporatism’ whereas the following multi-party period as swinging between pluralism and corporatism (1984: 138-146). For alternative approaches, see Heper (1991) and Buğra (1994), who argue for one dominant pattern of interest group politics, with a discussion on the nature of state intervention to economy, and see Makal (2002) for a discussion on the single-party period.

<sup>85</sup> Law by No: 5590, dated 08/03/1950.

<sup>86</sup> ‘The organs, decisions, contracts, budgets, and by-laws of local and functionally decentralized agencies are controlled *a posteriori* by central authorities explicitly designated by law, such as ministers, Council of Ministers, Council of State, governors and sub-governors, in a manner which is known as “administrative tutelage”’ (quoted in Özbudun 1991: 48, emphasis original).

<sup>87</sup> Amendment Law by No: 4121, dated 23/07/1995.

candidates by political parties. As Part II shows, however, there is still a de facto involvement by political parties.

Back to the law for chambers, the AKP government replaced the 1950 law with a new one in 2004,<sup>88</sup> in addition to enacting subsequent by-laws and amendments. The new legal framework does not bring any radical change. Yet, as seen in the past too, the government carried out some arrangements, with the purpose of influencing associational elections. For instance, it is no more allowed for the leaders of chambers and TOBB to serve more than two terms, without giving a break. Another important change is that the elected members of associations (both local and peak) are required to resign only if they become a member of the national parliament or a mayor, while it is now possible for them to be, at the same time, a member of a party organ or a municipal council.<sup>89</sup> It has, therefore, become legally possible for party members to get to executive positions in chambers and their union.

Two different trends are seen in the 2000s: on the one hand, there is the goal of increasing political influence by the government over associations. On the other hand, there is the goal of challenging the power of compulsory business associations originating from their corporatist structure, as seen in the draft law aiming to divide them into different sectors,<sup>90</sup> albeit opposed by the union of chambers.<sup>91</sup> A more radical change in this vein is suggested in the proposals by the Presidential Board of Supervision and liberal NGOs to turn the system of corporatist interest representation into a pluralist one by ending the principles of compulsory membership, representational monopoly, and public status (DDK 2009; LDT 2012).<sup>92</sup> The significance of these different trends can be best understood by considering the government's aim to build hegemony, neoliberal state restructuring, and the political challenge historically presented by compulsory associations, as outlined in next sections.

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<sup>88</sup> Law by No: 5174, dated 18/05/2004.

<sup>89</sup> The amendment law was initiated jointly by some members of the parliament on the tickets of the AKP and the CHP. See Law by No: 5290, dated 03/02/2005. See also the parliamentary minutes (TBMM 2005) and the newspaper coverage, 'Oda'larda siyasetin önu açıldı: AKP, TOBB'u tabandan kuşatacak,' *Hürriyet*, 01/03/2005.

<sup>90</sup> See the draft law by No: 1/601, dated 23/03/2012, named 'Finansal Kiralama, Faktoring ve Finansman Şirketleri Kanunu Tasarısı.'

<sup>91</sup> 'TOBB, üç ayrı birlik kurulmasına karşı çıktı,' *Dünya*, 27/05/2012.

<sup>92</sup> A pro-government national newspaper covered the report for three successive days, highlighting themes such as the alleged anti-democratic structure, high fees for membership, and politicization in opposition to the government. See 'Örgütlerin yapısı kazancın kapısı,' *Yeni Şafak*, 11/01/2010; 'Siyaset bulaştı haksızlık boy aştı,' *Yeni Şafak*, 12/01/2010; and 'Sivil toplum baronları' *Yeni Şafak*, 13/01/2010.

Also note that pluralism has not been absent in the realm of business associations. Corporatist realm of interest representation was historically dominated by commercial interests, as opposed to industrial interests, and by small chambers, as opposed to large chambers located in a few metropolitan centers (Öncü 1980; Bianchi 1984). Against the background of existing channels for state-business relations and the socio-political instability in the post-1960 Turkey (Buğra 1994), largest industrialists founded their own voluntary association in 1971: the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (*Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği* – TÜSİAD). Several other voluntary business associations were founded since then, and they became important actors since the late 1970s (Buğra 1994: 237). TÜSİAD continued to be the top association among them until recent times, bringing together big businessmen who were historically supported by the state, and maintained a secular European-oriented outlook (Buğra 1998). Two other peak associations which are significant for contemporary political-economic environment signify the rise of political Islam and of provincial small and medium sized enterprises in the post-1980 period: first, the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (*Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği* – MÜSİAD) was founded in 1990, with links to political Islam (see also Buğra 1998). Second, the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (*Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu* – TUSKON) was founded in 2005, with links to the Gülen Movement (see Buğra/Savaşkan 2012). Voluntary business associations have significance also at the local level in the Kurdish region, as elaborated in Chapter 5; but, let's continue with other types of interest associations.

### ***Professional associations***

The formation of modern professional groups dates back to the 19th century Ottoman Empire. Several legislative arrangements were initiated by the state to standardize and regulate professionals such as lawyers and physicians, while leading also to the emergence of earlier forms of professional associations (Toprak 1994a; Özman 2000; Rasimoğlu 2012). However, the development of modern professional associations was to occur mainly in the Republican period, with inspiration from European examples (Toprak 1994a: 60).

The 1924 law introduced the contemporary bar associations and made membership compulsory. By 1938, bar associations gained the legal status of 'public corporate bodies'; their duties were specified as regards the regulation of professionals while the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice over associations was increased. In this period, the profession was defined with regard to the purpose of providing public service (Toprak 1994a; DDK 2009:

161, 677). A law enacted in 1969 was to provide a new legal framework that is still in force, albeit with amendments.<sup>93</sup> This law narrowed the powers of the ministry over bar associations and led to the establishment of the peak association: the Union of Bar Associations of Turkey (*Türkiye Barolar Birliği* – TBB). Its duties have included the representation of professional interests, as well as advisory role for the relevant ministry and official bodies on legal issues.

Medical associations were introduced by the 1928 law. This law made membership compulsory and brought associations under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health. Their duties were defined as regards the regulation of professionals (TTB 2012b; DDK 2009: 478-479). By 1953, medical associations were to be regulated by a new law, which is still in force, albeit with amendments.<sup>94</sup> This law formed a peak association: the Union of Turkish Medical Associations (*Türk Tabipleri Birliği* – TTB). The union was attributed the status of public corporate body and the duty of pursuing professional rights and interests, in harmony with public interests. This latter duty was to be removed in the AKP period.<sup>95</sup>

The legal status of professional associations was strengthened by the 1961 Constitution, with the recognition of autonomy as regards the election of their bodies and administration. The 1982 Constitution, however, aimed to restrict this autonomy and banned associations from engaging in political activities, as happened with chambers. Professional associations were prohibited to take joint action with political parties, labor unions and voluntary associations. Also these external actors were not allowed to nominate candidates or engage in propaganda for and against candidates for the bodies of professional associations. Furthermore, membership ceased to be compulsory for those who were employed in public corporations, to undermine the power of associations. By decree-laws, Ministries of Justice and Health enjoyed increasing tutelary powers over respective associations (Özbudun 1991). Yet, the constitutional amendments of 1995 lifted the bans on political activities and joint action with external actors. As for the 2000s, amendments to the 1969 law for TBB between 2001 and 2005 improved the social rights of lawyers and expanded the income sources of bar associations (Özok 2009). However, a decree law<sup>96</sup> was to give additional authority to the

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<sup>93</sup> Law by No: 1136, dated 19/03/1969.

<sup>94</sup> Law by No: 6023, dated 23/01/1953.

<sup>95</sup> The amendment that took place under the AKP rule in 2011 lifted the duty to develop and practice the profession for public and individual benefits (see the amended Article 1). The TTB interpreted this amendment as another step for privatization of healthcare services (TTB 2012c).

<sup>96</sup> *Kanun hükmünde kararname*, No: 663, dated 11/10/2011.



Ministry of Health by establishing a board of health professionals and reducing professional autonomy (Anonymous 2012).

The 2009 reform proposal by the Presidential Council of Supervision for turning the corporatist system of interest associations into a pluralist one applies also to professional associations (DDK 2009).<sup>97</sup> Note that there are currently no special labor unions for these two professional groups. Only the physicians employed in the public sector can become members of unions for the public health sector since the 1990s (see Ülgen 2006). Unionism, on the other hand, is quite a diverse environment.

### ***Labor unions***

Organized labor activities too can be traced back to the late Ottoman period. However, these initiatives were very limited, against the background of existing political regime and a vastly agrarian society (Makal 1997; Mahiroğulları 2005). In the Republican period, labor unions – as organizations based on class – were not allowed under the single-party regime. The transition to multi-party regime, however, provided the background for a law in 1947 which, for the first time, enabled the establishment of labor unions. Still, unions were banned from engaging in strikes and political activities, including relationships with political parties (Mahiroğulları 2005; Çelik, Aziz 2010), and they were not allowed to act against national interests (Akkaya 2003: 834). Labor unions could be formed on the basis of work branch and workplace. Accordingly, many unions were formed in industrial cities (Mahiroğulları 2005: 78-84), and the first union confederation was established in 1952: Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – Türk-İş*). Türk-İş enabled the centralization of labor unions, under the influence of the state (Cizre 1991; Çelik, Aziz 2010), and it has become one of the most important actors of the union scene since then.

The 1961 constitution and following laws changed the nature of the union regime. The right to collective bargaining and strike was recognized. It became a constitutional right to form labor unions, to become or not to become a member, and to freely choose among unions. Hence, the legal framework introduced a pluralistic environment for unionism. While the

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<sup>97</sup> For a (critical) response by professional associations, see the report by the union of engineers and architects (TMMOB 2011) and for ongoing efforts in this line, see ‘AKP, yeni yasayla TMMOB’u parçalamak istiyor’ *Bianet*, 20/11/2012. Indeed, the governmental efforts are two-sided, as in the case of TOBB: there is also the intention of changing the electoral system (by turning it into proportional representation) for professional associations to challenge their current executive boards. The reason for this can be understood by looking at the associational traditions and contemporary opposition elaborated in next sections. For reform intentions, see ‘Hükümet yasa çıkararak meslek odalarındaki seçimlere de el atıyor,’ *Radikal*, 05/04/2008.

constitution did not include a ban on political activities, the 1963 law on labor unions banned unions from forming organizational links with political parties (Özbudun 1991: 51).

Parallel to the political polarization in the country during the late 1960s and 1970s, the union scene witnessed fragmentation into competing confederations, each with close relations to different political parties (Cizre 1991). Two of these confederations are still important: the Confederation of Revolutionary Labor Unions (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – DİSK*) was formed in 1967 and located on the left of political spectrum. The Confederation of Just Labor Unions (*Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – Hak-İş*) was formed in 1976 and identified with political Islam. Against ‘union inflation’ (quoted in Cizre 1991: 57), a representational threshold for labor unions was enacted in 1970. However, the major hit came by the 1980 coup.

The 1982 Constitution brought similar restrictions for labor unions, as for compulsory interest associations: unions were banned from engaging in political activities; taking joint action with political parties, compulsory and voluntary associations; and receiving support from or giving support to political parties. New laws in 1983 on labor unions,<sup>98</sup> collective bargaining and strikes<sup>99</sup> further limited the right to strike and doubled the threshold requirement for a union to have the right to conduct collective bargaining: therefore, a union must 1) represent at least 10 per cent of the total work force in its work branch and 2) have as its members at least the absolute majority of the work force in the enterprise(s) where collective agreement is pursued. Especially the latter requirement supports a de facto monopoly of representation by one union in a workplace. The political bans were removed from the constitution in 1995, as happened with compulsory associations.<sup>100</sup> The legal framework persisted until recently, that is, late 2012 when the AKP government enacted a new law on labor unions and collective bargaining, which discourages unionization in small enterprises.

Before this last enactment, a significant change that took place in the 2000s related to unionism in the public sector: although it was not officially regulated before, unions were being formed, thanks to the legal void, since 1990 (KESK 2010; Üzüm 2011). By 2001, a new law allowed the formation of labor unions in the public sector, however, without recognizing

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<sup>98</sup> Law by No: 2821, dated 05/05/1983.

<sup>99</sup> Law by No: 2822, dated 05/05/1983.

<sup>100</sup> For more details on the relevant legislation up to the 2000s, see Mahiroğulları (2005). The 1995 amendments, which seem favorable to organized interest politics, are seen as linked to Turkey’s entry to the European Customs Unions and quest for EU membership (Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009).

the right to strike and collective bargaining.<sup>101</sup> The right to conduct collective bargaining was recognized only by the 2010 referendum (see Ch. 3). Today, there are three major confederations in this sector, all formed in the 1990s: the Confederation for the Public Labor Unions (*Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – KESK) on the left of political spectrum; the Confederation for the Public Employees Unions (*Türkiye Kamu Çalışanları Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – Türkiye Kamu-Sen) on the right, and the Confederation for Public Servants’ Labor Unions (*Memur Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – Memur-Sen) for political Islam (for an overview of peak associations, see Table 1). While the latter two have larger memberships nationwide, the first one is a more significant actor in Diyarbakır, as detailed in Chapter 7. This has to do with the political traditions of associations.

Table 4.1 Major peak associations

	Status/Sector	Association	Date founded	Membership (approx.)
Business	Compulsory	TOBB	1950	365 chambers and stock exchanges
	Voluntary	TÜSİAD	1971	600 members
		MÜSİAD	1990	3,300 members
		TUSKON	2005	14,844 members
Professionals	Compulsory	TTB	1953	65 associations
		TBB	1969	78 bars
Labor	Private sector	TÜRK-İŞ	1952	35 unions
		DİSK	1967	18 unions
		HAK-İŞ	1976	8 unions
	Public sector	KAMU-SEN	1992	12 unions
		MEMUR-SEN	1995	11 unions
		KESK	1995	11 unions

Source: DDK (2009); ÇSGB (2009) and organizational websites.

<sup>101</sup> Law by No: 4688, dated 25/06/2001.

## **4.2 Diverse paths to politicization**

Thanks to changes in the legal and societal arenas, associational environment got larger, fragmented and politicized in the post-1960s. Although the environment would experience difficulties as a result of the 1980 coup, political identities were to be maintained. This section aims to shed light on the diverse political traditions contemporary peak associations belong to, by focusing on major patterns of politicization from the late 1960s until the AKP period. It also mentions associational approaches to the Kurdish issue, since associations became more active as political actors for the definition of and solution to the issue in the 1990s, as a result of war conditions.<sup>102</sup> The section is organized as the previous one, focusing on each associational group separately: business, professionals, and labor.

### ***Business and mainstream politics***

As mentioned before, the period of 1960s and 1970s are important for the rise of social movements and political polarization in Turkey. Interest associations, including chambers, got politicized too. The union of chambers was usually on good terms with governments and allied with the center-right Justice Party, who had been in power for several times in the period. Presidents of chambers enjoyed top positions in the provincial organizations of this party (Bianchi 1984: 251). The union also voiced a nationalist, anti-communist discourse, against the rising leftist movement. In turn, it appeared as an important spot for right-wing politics (Bora 2002).

The place of chambers in the economic realm, however, was a more complicated issue. The private-sector development historically showed a large reliance on state-provided opportunities (Buğra 1994). In such an environment, chambers played a role mainly in the implementation of policies, rather than formulation (Kalaycıoğlu 1991). Under the import-substituting industrialization of the post-1960 period, for instance, they were assigned the role of administering the distribution of import licenses and foreign exchanges, in cooperation with ministries. This provided chambers with ‘precarious’ privileges that governments could manipulate to influence them (Öncü 1980; Kalaycıoğlu 1991; Bianchi 1984; Heper 1991).

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<sup>102</sup> It appears that the associational realm had interacted with the Kurdish movement and had to take into account the special situation of the Kurdish region in the previous period; however, there is not any work focusing on this topic. For hints concerning the relations among the left, professional associations and labor unions in the region, see the memoirs of Tarık Ziya Ekinci (Ekinci 2010), as well as the historical analyses of the Kurdish movement by van Bruinessen (2005), Marcus (2009) and Romano (2006). Romano (2006) argues that the Kurdish political groupings in the 1970s (see Ch. 2) made use of such existing networks provided by interest associations for mobilization.

Apart from such privileges, however, chambers do not appear to have played a significant role in the pursuit of interests; rather, business people usually bypassed their association and sought particularistic and clientelistic relations with the political authority (Buğra 1994; Heper 1991). As Buğra shows, demands were framed with reference to national objectives, because of the problem of ‘social legitimacy of business activity’ and political uncertainty. ‘Business community has been extremely cautious not to appear as a class in pursuit of its sectional interests’ (Buğra 1994: 31).

While the economy got an export-oriented look from the 1980s onwards, the place of chambers in political life seems to have remained similar. The union of chambers usually had good relationships with governments, who were pro-business, by adopting an advisory role, while the center-right parties competed for influence over it (Bora 2002). However, especially by the late 1970s, voluntary associations appeared as competitors to the union of chambers. As the big business became less dependent on the state, it also has become more vocal in raising criticisms against government policies, as seen with TÜSİAD (Buğra 1994). As mentioned in the previous section, TÜSİAD represents the large business that was historically backed or even created by the state. Yet, according to Buğra, this meant an unequal partnership with the state, to the disadvantage business people who were expected to act according to the rules of the game as defined by the state (Buğra 1998: 526). Against this background, ‘rather than forming a forum to promote short-term economic interests of the business community, (TÜSİAD) constituted the expression of a desire to contribute to the creation of a social environment in which the legitimacy of business activity was assured’ (Buğra 1994: 139). TÜSİAD has had a secular outlook and supported a European model of development (Buğra 1998; Öniş/Türem 2001).

MÜSİAD, on the other hand, used a ‘language of social disadvantage’ similar to that of the National Outlook movement and partly to the AKP, to articulate provincial small and medium sized entrepreneurs historically ignored by the state. The association relied on religious references and networks (Buğra 2002b). MÜSİAD then stood for what was called ‘Islamic capital.’ However, following the secularist threats in the political environment (see Ch. 3) and the increasing incorporation of the association’s members to the market, there was a shift from the discourse on merits of Islamic solidarity and norms, to statements on uselessness of talking about the ‘religious faith of capital’ (Buğra 1998: 534; also see Tuğal 2009). As shown in Chapter 5, similar debates are seen in the Kurdish case, as regards to the ‘patriotic’ identity of capital.

As for the approach of business associations to the Kurdish issue, the union of chambers embraced the state's take on the issue, by adopting the nationalist discourse on national unity and the 'terror problem' (Bora 2002). However, by the mid-1990s the union of chambers and largest business actors issued reports on the Kurdish issue, calling for a solution as well as emphasizing economic measures for the regional underdevelopment and recognition of Kurdish identity.<sup>103</sup> Their attempts are interpreted on the grounds of economic actors' need for stability and discontent with huge war costs, which were, at the time, a matter of concern also for the IMF, who demanded from the Turkish government to reduce its public spending as a condition of loan agreements (Bozarslan 1996: 149-150; Ergil 2006).

On the other hand, the army also tried to influence business behaviour with regard to the issue, with its briefings on the PKK and its 'abuse' of notions such as human rights, democratization and political solution (Cemal 2003: 284-286). Later in the process, NGOs also were to be accused by military bureaucrats of such 'abuse.' Note that the 1990s were a decade of NGOization in Turkey, with an increase in number of organizations and in 'civil society talk' (Navaro-Yashin 1998). In this regard, the union of chambers claimed to be the most powerful 'civil society organization' in the country, in spite of its public status (Bora 2002: 307). The rhetoric on civil society was to be used also in the following decade, as a source of legitimacy, by interest associations.

### ***Professionals and left-leaning activism***

By the mid-1960s and especially in the 1970s, professional associations got politicized along the lines of the rising left. The peak association for engineers and architects appears to be the leading actor in this period; yet, the bar and medical associations also played diverse roles (Bora 2002). The union of medical associations held the view that professional problems and social problems could not be separated. The union would get more active in the 1970s, as polarization increased in society. Claims were made about topics such as healthcare,

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<sup>103</sup> First, TOBB sponsored the 1995-dated report *The Eastern Question* by academic Doğu Ergil, calling for the recognition of ethnic identity and improving regional development. However, the report became a controversial topic among TOBB's executive members, as well as the political arena at large (*Milliyet*, 17/08/1995). The then president of TOBB Yalım Erez emphasized, in a speech in the same year, the economic dimension of the issue while ignoring or even denying the ethnical dimension (see Erez (1995) 2011). Note that Erez acted as the president of TOBB between 1990 and 1995, and became the minister of commerce and industry right after. Second, one of the most important businessmen in the country, Sakıp Sabancı sponsored the preparation of a report which emphasized again economic measures for regional development, in addition to references to the Basque model for administration. Third, TÜSİAD prepared reports in 1997 and 1999, emphasizing the issues of identity, constitutional recognition and democratization (Yayman 2011: 407-410, 421-425; Bayer/Öniş 2010: 186-187).

unionization, human rights, and left-right clashes, while engaging in joint actions with other left-leaning associations, political parties and labor unions (Bora 2002; TTB 2012b; TTB 2008a; Soyer 2005).

According to Bora, bar associations and their union were slower in this process: left-leaning lawyers became an important force mainly in the 1970s, defining the profession in terms of advocacy for freedom and justice (Bora 2002). Note that legal profession gained a special significance thanks to political trials targeting politicians, unionists, and activists (see Köktürk 2001; İnanıcı 2008).<sup>104</sup> In the associational realm, leaders supported human rights with reference to international agreements, and the ‘rule of law’ became the motto of the union.<sup>105</sup> Toward the end of the decade, some executives and activists from both associations would be the victim of increasing political violence (Bora 2002).

Restrictive legal arrangements by the 1980 *coup*, mentioned previously, aimed to prevent such politicization. Selective repression was to accompany this: some executives from both associations were detained, and activities of the union of medical associations were suspended for a few years (Bora 2002). Yet, the return of the union of medical associations was to be even more powerful. The union organized several mass demonstrations in the late 1980s and 1990s, with regard to the working conditions of physicians, which deteriorated especially in the public sector (TTB 2012b; Soyer 2005). Positioned still on the left, the union also opposed privatization and engaged in human-rights activism. Press statements and other activities were carried out, as regards topics such as torture, prisoners’ health situation, forced immigration, and the Kurdish issue (Soyer 1996). Note that some of these topics concerned physicians in not only political-ethical, but also professional terms; e.g. physicians could be required to prepare reports on torture claims under guardianship of and as desired by the police.

The union of bar associations, on the other hand, became less politically active in the post-1980 period, with its left-leaning approach gradually fading away (Bora 2002). It expressed concerns about human-rights violations and associations’ autonomy from the ministry of justice, while defining itself as a ‘pressure group’ (TBB 1994; TBB 1989). In line with the main cleavages of the new period, the union emphasized its secularist, Kemalist identity that

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<sup>104</sup> The distinction between ‘political defense’ and ‘legal defense’ in courts by lawyers appears to be important for this period (see Köktürk 2001). It is still an issue, as can be seen in Kurdish trials, and making the boundaries between the profession and politics even more blurred.

<sup>105</sup> See the speeches by Faruk Erem, who acted as the president of the union of bar associations in the 1970s (TBB 2001: 425-508).

kept it close to the Republican People's Party (Bora 2002). Executives of the union were usually members of the party too.

Although peak associations have depicted political identities, several factions existed across and within local associations, leading to the formation of political groups, especially in large provinces, which compete against each other by supporting separate lists of candidates in elections for associational boards (see İnanıcı 2008; Soyer 2005). These factions usually project the nation-wide political cleavages (left–right, secularist–conservative, Turkish nationalist–pro-Kurdish). Yet, one general source of contention among memberships has been seen in the opposition to the politicization of associations and support for, instead, a focus on professional issues (İnanıcı 2008; Soyer 2005). This can be sometimes a way of expressing discontent with the nature of political activism in question.

In this vein, the Kurdish issue has been an important divisive issue in the associational environment. The union of medical associations played an active role, supporting a peaceful democratic solution to the issue, in addition to drawing attention to human-rights violations. It pointed also at several health-related issues by its reports or in its congress declarations: issues concerned the health consequences of war conditions and internal displacement; language barrier between physicians and patients; and safety of physicians employed in the region (Ertem/Ceylan/Özcan 1996; TTB 2000a; Bora 2002; TTB 2008a).

The union and some local affiliates engaged in joint action with other left-leaning associations and labor unions, leading to the formation of platforms for labor and democracy, the latter of which appears to have been an important example for joint associational action in the Kurdish region (see Çelik, Abdullah 2010). In addition, leading figures from medical and bar associations took part in the formation of NGOs in the domain of human-rights advocacy (TTB 2008a; Bora 2002; TTB 2000b). Such political activism, however, led to accusations within the associational environment, about being a supporter of the PKK (Soyer 2005; İnanıcı 2008), and to reactions by official authorities in the form of exiles for public-sector employees, as in the case of physicians, and in the form of hostile attitudes in professional encounters, as in the case of lawyers (Soyer 2005; Soyer 1996; TTB 2000b; Bora 2002). These were to be encountered more often in the Kurdish region.

The union of bar associations, however, did not play an active role as regards the Kurdish issue (Bora 2002). Its rhetoric was similar to that of the state, emphasizing the 'unitary' structure of the country and expressing support for the armed forces in its war on 'terror.' Yet,



we also see that associational leaders criticized human-rights violations – such as torture in police detention and murders by unknown perpetrators – and called for respect for the ethno-cultural difference, including the use of (Kurdish) language in everyday life.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, following the reports by business associations and slowing-down of the armed conflict, the union of bar associations too prepared a report on the Kurdish issue in 1999. In addition to the concerns raised before, the report called for economic measures for the development of the region and constitutional-legal reforms with a re-definition of citizenship on the basis of the ‘supra-identity’ of Turkish citizenship (TBB 1999a).<sup>107</sup> The union of bar associations was to keep its distanced approach to the Kurdish issue also in most of the 2000s. Before proceeding to the contemporary period, let’s have a look also at the historical patterns in the labor union environment.

### *Different colors of unionism*

As political polarization increased across the country from the late 1960s onwards, the labor union scene was to experience fragmentary competition. Up to then, Türk-İş had enjoyed a de facto monopoly of representation as the only existing confederation of unions. It also enjoyed access to decision-making processes by occupying seats in several official commissions. This made the confederation appear as a seeker of ‘corporatist privilege’ though, while it promised to be ‘above party politics’ pursuing a pragmatic approach. Some of its top officials, however, were to enter the parliament on the tickets of diverse political parties, while political parties exerted influence on the confederation (Bianchi 1984; Sakallıoğlu-Cizre 1992; Çelik, Aziz 2010).

Against this background, DİSK was formed as a rival confederation by splinter unions from Türk-İş. Criticizing, *inter alia*, the co-optation of Türk-İş by governments (Çelik, Aziz 2010: 519), DİSK engaged in unionism along confrontational left-wing lines. Its membership expanded in the 1970s, coupled with an increasing activism and influence. The confederation

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<sup>106</sup> See the speeches by Önder Sav in general-assembly meetings (TBB 1993: 16-17; TBB 1995b: 17) and speeches by both Sav and Eralp Özgen for the beginning of annual judiciary terms (TBB 1991; TBB 1995a; TBB 1996a; TBB 1998). It is interesting to see that Önder Sav had a relatively moderate approach in the 1990s, as compared to his approach in the 2000s while serving as a member of the parliament on the tickets of the Republican People’s Party.

<sup>107</sup> In general-assembly meetings the idea to have a proposal on the Kurdish issue was supported by some delegates on this ground, that is, to not let business associations be the only voice on the issue or determining the outcome on their own (TBB 1999c: 99). Yet, the union of bar associations appears to have been pretty slow in acting on the issue as the decision to prepare the report in question was first given in a meeting between the union’s executive board and the associational presidents from the Kurdish region in Batman in October 1997, two years before the report was publicized (see TBB 1999b: 273-276; TBB 1999a: 1).

then had alliances with the Republican People's Party, who adopted a social-democratic stance. As a result of competition and changing political environment in the country, Türk-İş had to revise its organizational strategies too, while some of its members adopted a social-democratic approach or left Türk-İş to join DİSK (Bianchi 1984; Sakallıoğlu-Cizre 1992). At the peak level, Türk-İş often used Turkish-nationalist references in its rhetoric (Akkaya 2003).

In such an environment, Hak-İş aimed to mobilize a pious membership, starting in the late 1970s, with links to the political parties of the National Outlook movement (see Ch. 3). The confederation defined its main goal as to 'instill a moral and virtuous outlook in workers,' and its program was very similar to that of the National Salvation Party of the 1970s (Duran/Yıldırım 2005: 231). Hak-İş emphasized harmony, rather than conflict, between the interests of workers and employers, by emphasizing the common bond of religion. References to religion were used also in competition with other unions (Buğra 2002a). The confederation was to expand its membership mainly in the post-1980s, which brought along a new political-economic and institutional environment (Duran/Yıldırım 2005).

The biggest impact of the 1980 *coup* was on labor unionism, compared to other interest associations. In addition to the newly enacted legal constraints mentioned in the previous section, unions were faced with serious political pressures. The activities of confederations were suspended at the time of *coup*, except Türk-İş who gave an open support to the military intervention (Cizre 1991).<sup>108</sup> Hak-İş resumed its activities soon after; DİSK, however, could do so only in 1992. DİSK's leaders were put on trial, with charges asking for death penalty in some cases (Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009).

Union activism was to revive mainly by the late 1980s; however, unions experienced decline in membership and loss of power, compared to the pre-1980s. The public sector, on the other hand, was to witness unionization activities in the 1990s. Unions were organized in public sectors such as municipality, healthcare, and education. Similar to the private sector, three confederations were formed along the political lines of left (KESK), right (Kamu-Sen), and religious conservatism (Memur-Sen). Several mass demonstrations and strikes were organized throughout the decade. Some were joint actions with other associations, as mentioned before as regard the platforms (Üzüm 2011). Political authorities initially called union activities in the public sector illegal and attempted to suppress unionists. Especially in the Kurdish region,

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<sup>108</sup> These three confederations maintained their broad political outlook in the post-1980 period. As for their relationship to political parties, see Mahiroğulları (2005: 405-417).

unionists were faced with severe problems under the Emergency Rule, including union closures, investigations, exiles, and forced disappearances ending up with murders by unknown perpetrators (Ülgen 2006; Çelik, Abdullah 2010; Üzüm 2011). These appear to have targeted mainly the members of KESK, which has been a significant actor in the Kurdish union scene.

KESK has been quite vocal about the Kurdish issue, calling for an end to the armed conflict and supporting democratization. Its affiliate unions were to make more specific rights claims, such as the union for the education sector demanding education in Kurdish language or the union for the healthcare sector drawing attention to the language barrier between some physicians and patients in the Kurdish region (Üzüm 2011). As a result, KESK has been accused by rival unions of supporting the PKK – read as ‘terrorism’ (İdemen 2009; Çelik, Abdullah 2010).

Therefore, other confederations depicted a different approach to the Kurdish issue. Still having a nationalist perspective in the post-1980 period, Türk-İş voiced concerns about the ‘division’ of the country (Akkaya 2003). In 1993, however, the confederation prepared a report advocating the recognition of the Kurdish ethno-cultural identity and implementation of economic measures for regional development, in addition to pointing at human-rights violations (Yayman 2011: 404-405). Yet, in 1995, one of its affiliates prepared a report, following the reports by business associations, and prioritized the economic dimension of the issue, while criticizing the proposals of constitutional and administrative reform (Yayman 2011: 410-412). Hence, the associational behavior showed some swings depending on the political context. Hak-İş too prepared a report in 1996, advocating socio-economic measures and better teaching of Turkish language in the region. Furthermore, it made arguments similar to those of the Welfare Party in the 1990s and of Prime Minister Erdoğan in the 2000s (see Ch. 3): the report defined the Kurdish issue as a problem of whole country and pointed at the state’s mistakes (Yayman 2011: 417-419). As the AKP paid a special attention to the Kurdish issue, by mobilizing different actors in society, interest associations were to be involved in this process too, one way or another.

### **4.3 Associational politics in the AKP period**

Interest associations have developed their political identities over a span of decades. Their relationship to the AKP government has been driven partly by these identities. However, there

have been also novel issues leading to cooperation and conflict between them. This section elaborates on the nature of state-association relations in the AKP period, by focusing on major political and associational issues. It also mentions the approach of associations to the Kurdish issue as re-configured by the contemporary context. The first three sub-sections focus on these aims, organized along associational groups. The final sub-section points at the rise of Kurdish associational activism against this background and links to Part II, which focuses on the activism in Diyarbakır.

### ***Variation in the business environment***

As detailed in Chapter 3, economy recovered a great deal in the AKP period from the 2001 financial crisis. While economic stability and sustained growth marked this period, new opportunities were provided by the state for private economic actors. Therefore, business circles have been fine with the government's economic policies in general. However, the environment of organized interest representation has shown a variety of relations with the government, ranging from cooperative to conflict-prone.

Rifat Hisarcıkıođlu, the leader of the union of chambers TOBB during the AKP period, usually gave support to the economic policies and called for further commitment to budgetary discipline, privatization and structural reforms (see TOBB/Bozkurt 2011; TOBB 2008; TOBB 2012). The AKP leaders such as Prime Minister Erdoğan regularly took part in the general assemblies of TOBB, as a sign of support. Yet, tensions also appeared between the two. For instance, the Prime Minister asked TOBB members to increase their employment capacity against the problem of increasing rates of unemployment, triggered by the 2008 global financial crisis. Having been attributed a responsibility on such an immediate social problem, Hisarcıkıođlu (2011b) reacted somewhat negative.

Furthermore, Hisarcıkıođlu sometimes complained about the politically-vulnerable situation of businesspeople, as observed in 'unjust' tax penalties (TOBB/Bozkurt 2011: 807) and argued that it was a form of punishment for those criticizing the government (quoted in TBMM 2010: 91, also see *Vatan*, 03/05/2010). Indeed, the tax-evasion charge against the biggest media group Dođan Holding in 2009 is an example of this. Maybe in relation with this precariousness, a national daily claimed that Hisarcıkıođlu was involved in the Sledgehammer *coup* plot (*Taraf*, 22/01/2010); however, he denied it and faced no judicial

problem afterwards.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, TOBB gave support to the government on several political issues. For instance, it acted in support of the highly-contested constitutional referendum in 2010, although somewhat pushed by the Prime Minister to do so.<sup>110</sup>

The referendum was a good instance to observe the government-business relations also in the realm of voluntary associations. Business associations such as TUSKON and MÜSİAD gave a firm support to the referendum.<sup>111</sup> Sharing religiously conservative outlooks and a claim to represent the ‘formerly discriminated’ provincial small and medium sized enterprises, the relations among these associations and the government have been usually very good. Members of these associations enjoyed access to the new state-provided resources. Some of them became members of the parliament on the tickets of the AKP (Duran/Yıldırım 2005) and some grew their business greatly, thanks to particularistic relations with the political authority (Buğra/Savaşkan 2010; Buğra/Savaşkan 2012).

TÜSİAD has, on the other hand, had a conflict-prone relationship with the government, especially after the general and presidential elections of 2007. In the previous period, TÜSİAD was supportive of the government’s economic policies, with a commitment to IMF programs and EU candidacy process. However, the AKP government’s commitment to both of them gradually disappeared, as opposed to the wishes of TÜSİAD (Keyman/Öniş 2007: 197-202; Öniş 2012). Tensions appeared between the two also on several other political issues, ranging from presidential candidacy to secularism (Bayer/Öniş 2010). A most significant tension appeared with regard to the constitutional referendum: Prime Minister Erdoğan said that ‘whoever takes no side gets eliminated’ when he criticized TÜSİAD for not publicly stating its choice about the upcoming referendum (*Radikal*, 18/08/2010). This can be seen as another indicator of somewhat politically-insecure situation of businesspeople in the AKP period.

As for the Kurdish issue, TÜSİAD again voiced concerns, more independently from and sometimes critical of the government. It advocated improving Kurdish linguistic-cultural rights, strengthening local governments, and decreasing the electoral threshold, alongside its

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<sup>109</sup> See ‘Hisarcıkloğlu: Darbe yapmayı vatana ihanet kabul ederim,’ *Radikal*, 22/01/2010. In addition, the then leader of Ankara Chamber of Commerce, Sinan Aygün also faced allegations of links to the criminal network Ergenekon (see Ch. 3). Aygün was not convicted and later became a member of the parliament on the tickets of the Republican People’s Party in 2011.

<sup>110</sup> See ‘TOBB Başkanı Hisarcıkloğlu da referanduma destek verdi,’ *Zaman*, 17/08/2010, ‘Referandumda kim ne diyor?’ *Sabah*, 03/09/2010, and ‘Taraf olmayan bertaraf olmasın,’ *Radikal*, 18/08/2010.

<sup>111</sup> See ‘MÜSİAD’dan referandum bildirisi,’ *Hürriyet*, 19/08/2010 and ‘TUSKON: Türkiye’nin hızına ayak uyduracak bir anayasa için evet diyoruz,’ *Zaman*, 08/08/2010.

proposals for constitutional reform and in harmony with the demands by Kurdish organized actors (see TÜSİAD 2006; TÜSİAD 2011). Furthermore, its leaders had meetings with, *inter alia*, pro-Kurdish parties and the mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, in a manner supporting pro-Kurdish politicians against the AKP government, given the latter's recurrent resistance to meet these political representatives (see *Radikal*, 29/07/2009, 27/10/2010, and 12/01/2011).

Other business associations, however, were not this vocal about the Kurdish issue, and when they got vocal, they emphasized mostly the economic approach as a solution to the issue.<sup>112</sup> In this vein, TUSKON members also were involved in charity activities in the Kurdish region, organized by Gülen-movement-affiliated Kimse Yok Mu association (*Zaman*, 02/01/2007, see also Ch.3). Such charity activities functioned in a way supportive of and supported by the AKP government. On the political front, business associations (TOBB, TUSKON, and MÜSİAD) expressed their support for the government's 'democratic opening' in 2009 in their meetings with the cabinet members,<sup>113</sup> but it was not an active involvement in the process, which did not last long either (see Ch. 3). Some other interest associations were more vocal about the Kurdish issue though.

### ***Professionals in opposition***

The relations between professional associations and the AKP government mostly have been tense, albeit for different reasons. The union of bar associations, TBB, maintained its political tradition until recent times. Özdemir Özok served as its leader from 2001 up to 2010. Under the leadership of Özok, also a member of the Republican People's Party, TBB depicted a critical approach to the government in a secularist-nationalist line. In his speeches for the general assemblies of the union and annual judiciary terms, which were attended by top-level politicians such as the President, Özok frequently voiced concerns about secularism (TBB 2003; TBB 2006b; TBB 2008), challenges by the European Union to the state's take on issues deemed politically sensitive<sup>114</sup> (TBB 2003; TBB 2009), the presidential elections in 2007 and

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<sup>112</sup> See the speeches by TOBB's leader Hisarcıklioğlu (Hisarcıklioğlu 2003; Hisarcıklioğlu 2011a) and MÜSİAD's report in 2008 (Yayman 2011: 442-444).

<sup>113</sup> See 'Açılım turunda umut, destek ve hazır raporlar,' *Radikal*, 14/08/2009; 'MÜSİAD da "demokratik açılım"a destek verdi,' *Zaman*, 18/08/2009; and 'TUSKON Başkanı Meral: Kürt açılımını destekliyoruz,' *Zaman*, 11/08/2009.

<sup>114</sup> These relate to Cyprus, Armenian genocide, Kurdish issue, secularism, and the military's place in politics.

the Ergenekon trial (TBB 2009).<sup>115</sup> Note that in this period some bar associations put pressures, with the tacit approval of the union, on female lawyers wearing headscarves. Criticisms also were raised concerning legal changes in the judicial system, such as the new Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes mentioned in Chapter 3 (TBB 2006b). On the other hand, Özok (2009) made a highly favorable assessment of another set of legal changes which took place between 2001 and 2005, in consultation with bar representatives, and improved the social rights of lawyers and revenue sources of bar associations.

As to TBB's approach to the Kurdish issue, the union adopted the discourse which emphasizes the security dimension and unitary structure of the state (i.e. 'terrorism' and 'separatism'). It also expressed suspicions toward pro-Kurdish politics even in the legal realm, with references to the views of military bureaucrats (TBB 2006c). Furthermore, the lawyers of guerilla leader Öcalan were legally warned by TBB for making press statements that allegedly aimed to mobilize the PKK (*Radikal*, 07/09/2003). This event gains its significance from the fact that lawyers have been important actors in mediating Öcalan's views about contemporary politics to the public since he was put into prison in 1999 (see Ch. 2 and 6). What is more revealing is Özok's response to some 33 pro-Kurdish mayors from the region, including Osman Baydemir of Diyarbakır, who visited him to ask for support against human-rights violations and unlawful practices: Özok said that he would not cooperate with them as long as they were governed by İmralı (prison) – read as Öcalan (TBB 2006a: 114).

In a similar vein, pro-Kurdish representatives from the region had problems with the union from time to time. For instance, Sezgin Tanrıkulu, a former leader of the Diyarbakır Bar, complained about the non-cooperative behavior of the union towards the bar and concerning human-rights violations that targeted Kurds and religious minorities in the country. Tanrıkulu received in turn negative reactions in general assemblies (TBB 2005: 75; TBB 2007-96, 145-146). With the so-called democratic opening in 2009, on the other hand, Özok was to express his support in his meeting with the Minister of Internal Affairs (*Bianet*, 14/08/2009), while a

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<sup>115</sup> As mentioned in the previous section, there have been different political groups within and across bar associations, leading to different political alignments at the provincial level. As the largest and publicly more visible bar association, the Istanbul Bar has been more vocal about other politically-contested issues, such as the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials, in a fashion critical of the trials in themselves. A number of bar associations supported the demonstration by the Istanbul Bar against the government's efforts to influence the judiciary, through wiretapping calls by judges (*Bianet*, 18/11/2009).

group of bar associations expressed their support by a joint press statement in Diyarbakır (*Bianet*, 18/01/2010).<sup>116</sup>

In 2010, Vedat Ahsen Coşar, formerly leader of the Ankara Bar, was elected as the leader of TBB. To date, Coşar has represented a political stance quite different than the associational history. During my interviews in Ankara, I was told that he was elected thanks to the coalition of pro-AKP lawyers and Kurdish lawyers against pro-CHP and Kemalist candidates.<sup>117</sup> Coşar depicted a liberal-democratic stance, adopting a more tolerant approach to the headscarf issue while also criticizing the drawbacks of Ergenekon and KCK trials with regard to the right to fair trial, e.g. long-lasting pre-trial detentions and trials functioning like *de facto* punishment (TBB 2010a; TBB 2011b).<sup>118</sup> He participated as an observer in major branches of both trials (Silivri and Diyarbakır), as well as the Hrant Dink trial (TBB 2011a). He supported the demand for defense in mother (Kurdish) language (*Milliyet*, 23/02/2011). Coşar attended also a commemorative event organized by the Diyarbakır Bar about the old infamous Diyarbakır Prison and made a speech, naming the prison as a shame on the state (TBB 2010b). He also voiced concerns about the 2010 referendum, in terms of both content and procedure (TBB 2010a).

As to the union for medical associations, TTB has maintained its historical democratic-left identity in the AKP period, as served by successive leaders all from the same political group.<sup>119</sup> It depicted such a strong and broad-scope opposition to the government that then Minister of Health Recep Akdağ argued that TTB acted like an opposition party, undertaking the responsibility of main opposition party in the parliament who was not good at that (TBMM 2006: 504). TTB became so active partly because the government carried out a program of massive reforms as regards healthcare and medical profession over the decade.

TTB opposed most of these reforms by issuing critical reports, campaigning, and protests, sometimes in joint action with left-leaning peak associations of labor (KESK and DİSK) and

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<sup>116</sup> The Kurdish issue has been divisive among provincial bar associations. Associations dominated by Turkish nationalists, maintained a negative approach to the issue. For instance, the Istanbul Bar legally warned two lawyers of Öcalan for making propaganda of the PKK (see ‘Baro’dan iki avukata “mahkeme kararına parallel” uyarı,’ *Bianet*, 05/07/2011; see also Ch. 6).

<sup>117</sup> My interview with Lawyer 1, Ankara, 22/09/2011.

<sup>118</sup> The KCK operations targeted also the lawyers of Öcalan and this led to a press statement in Istanbul by a few hundreds of lawyers from different bar associations for professional support, with an offer to undertake their defense work (*Bianet*, 10/02/2012; see also Ch. 6).

<sup>119</sup> *Etkin Demokratik TTB Grubu*. For more information on factions and elections within TTB, see (Soyer 2005). Note that the duration of leadership is two years for TTB while it is four years for TOBB and TBB.



of other professionals (TMMOB – for engineers and architects). Reforms were about the social-security and healthcare system; re-introduction of compulsory service for physicians, which in practice require employment mostly in the Kurdish region which lacks medical staff;<sup>120</sup> and a law that aimed to prevent physicians' concurrent employment at public and private sectors, but was recently annulled by the Constitutional Court. Furthermore, other opposed initiatives related to the introduction of performance criteria for physicians, public-private partnerships in the health sector, and changes in the university-hospital system. TTB interpreted these reforms in terms of privatization of health services and expansion of the market.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, the sector for private hospitals has received a special support in the AKP period and significantly enlarged. This has been the situation in Diyarbakır too.

TTB raised concerns also about other issues such as the violent police intervention in social protests; called voting against the 2010 referendum for its lack of steps for democratization (*Bianet*, 15/08/2010); and gave support to trade-union protests (TTB 2010; TTB 2012c). The union had tense relations especially with the Minister of Health, who threatened TTB by closing it down (see TTB 2010: 184). The decree law adopted later gave additional authority to the Ministry by establishing a board of health professionals. This was criticized by TTB for reducing professional autonomy (Anonymous 2012). Leaders also have been in a somewhat politically insecure situation because of their oppositional stance.<sup>122</sup>

As to the Kurdish issue, TTB was very vocal about ongoing problems. It made investigation visits and prepared reports on the situation of children in Diyarbakır prisons, the mass graves newly found in the region and the Uludere-Roboskî incident (see Ch. 3, §3), in addition to many press statements criticizing anti-democratic practices (TTB 2009; TTB 2011; TTB 2012a). Furthermore, Gençay Gürsoy,<sup>123</sup> who was soon to become the leader of TTB, was the spokesperson for the group who had a meeting in 2005 with Prime Minister Erdoğan to demand a solution to the Kurdish issue (*Bianet*, 10/08/2005). This group stood for a larger group of, *inter alia*, intellectuals, journalists, and (former) representatives from interest

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<sup>120</sup> This practice was seen between 1981 and 2003, but lifted for a while until it was reintroduced in 2005. See Law by No: 5371, dated 21/06/2005.

<sup>121</sup> For details on the actions taken by TTB and its evaluation of policies in question, see its reports (TTB 2006; TTB 2008b; TTB 2010; TTB 2012c). For academic analysis of reforms, see the collection by Keyder et al. (2007) and Agartan (2012).

<sup>122</sup> Gençay Gürsoy was taken into custody, after he criticized the intervention to May 1 demo in 2008, albeit officially for different reasons, see Ali Bayramoğlu, 'Gençay Gürsoy Olayı...', *Yeni Şafak*, 06/05/2008.

<sup>123</sup> He was at the time the leader of Istanbul Medical Association and later became the leader of TBB for the period of 2006-2010. Note that Gençay Gürsoy was involved in the Labor Party of Turkey (see Ch. 2) in the past.

associations,<sup>124</sup> who made a press statement asking the PKK to lay down weapons (after the end of another unilateral ceasefire) and the AKP government to take initiatives for a solution (*Bianet*, 15/06/2005). It was after these events that Erdoğan made his first visit to Diyarbakır and made a speech that gave the start for his Kurdish initiative and that Diyarbakır's interest associations became more visible in the process.

### ***Unionism between cooptation and confrontation***

The scene of organized labor in the AKP period has been similar to that of organized business: it has been characterized by a significant variation in political alignments and their consequences. As it can be guessed from the historical account, the confederations linked to political Islam (Hak-İş and Memur-Sen) have been quite cooperative with the AKP government. For instance, they campaigned for voting in favor of the 2010 referendum for its democratization potential while other confederations either advocated against the referendum (KESK, DİSK, Türk-İş) or kept their choice ambiguous (Kamu-Sen).<sup>125</sup> The former two confederations were more cooperative with the government also about labor issues. The then leader of Hak-İş, Salim Uslu was even elected as a member of the parliament on the tickets of the AKP in the 2011 elections, and memberships of both confederations could enjoy certain incentives, thanks to the fierce competition by affiliate unions to increase the number of their members.<sup>126</sup> Of course, incentives for some meant constraints for others in this competition.

Parallel to global trends, the labor union environment in Turkey has been characterized with a decline in union density and a loss of power in the post-1980 period. Connected to this was the transition from Fordist to flexible mode of production, which changed the nature of employment, increasing the share of temporary and informal jobs (Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009). The AKP government's policies have contributed to this outcome in diverse ways. For instance, temporary jobs in the public sector increased in this period, while the government and the allied unions made promises of turning these jobs into permanent positions to enlarge their social base. This was visible especially in the electoral period of 2011.

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<sup>124</sup> They included Istanbul's Bar and Medical Associations as well as KESK.

<sup>125</sup> See the media coverage by *Sabah*, 21/07/2010; *Hürriyet*, 07/08/2010; *Bianet*, 31/08/2010.

<sup>126</sup> I heard about these in my interviews in Ankara and Diyarbakır, but it can also be observed in the media coverage of electoral periods. Incentives concern either the employment relationship (for instance, the promises of promotion and permanent positions for those on temporary contracts) or privileged treatment in government-controlled businesses, such as housing opportunities by the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ).

Privatization activities also gained speed under the AKP rule. Öniş (2011) argues that this became possible thanks to the weakening of anti-privatization coalition of the previous decade. Yet, the privatization of TEKEL (a state enterprise for tobacco products and alcoholic drinks) and the poor labor standards offered to the employees in its aftermath led to a massive union resistance in 2009-2010, in the form of strikes and protests. The AKP government, on the other hand, was not open to strikes, not allowing other strike attempts by unions affiliated to Türk-İş on the grounds that they were contrary to national interests (Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009). Still, numerous protests were organized in the period by unions, sometimes in cooperation with professional associations, and responded by violent police intervention (see, for instance, Üzümlü 2011).

KESK has been subjected to more political pressures, compared to other confederations.<sup>127</sup> With a strong organization in the Kurdish region, KESK made official decisions to be proactive about the Kurdish issue (Üzümlü 2011: 493) and participated in press statements, with other left-leaning peak associations, to raise concerns about political events. Its affiliated unions in the sectors of education, healthcare and municipal services formulated rights claims concerning the use of Kurdish language in their respective sectors. As a result, they were faced with judicial problems. For instance, a closure case was filed (and failed) against the teachers' union Eğitim-Sen on the grounds that its statute had a clause calling for education in mother language. The clause was interpreted as in contradiction with the constitution and the case was brought to the court, under the influence of the general staff of the army (*Bianet*, 06/06/2004; *Sabah*, 27/10/2005). Problems such as investigations and exiles mentioned in the previous section were seen in this period too.

During my interviews in Ankara I heard that the pro-Kurdish approach of KESK and its affiliates has still been used by rival unions to accuse them of supporting the PKK, in their competition at the provincial level. This seems interesting, considering not only as a reflection of Turkish nationalism on the labor union scene, but also its implications for the fact that Kurds form the most vulnerable group in the labor market across the country.<sup>128</sup> In this vein,

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<sup>127</sup> The other confederations were usually not active about the Kurdish issue. By the 2009 democratic opening, then Minister Atalay had meetings with Türk-İş, Hak-İş, DİSK, Kamu-Sen, and Memur-Sen, and they expressed support for the government's initiative (*Bianet*, 14/08/2009 and 21/08/2009; *Milliyet*, 18/08/2009). Note that DİSK is an exception among them, as it was more active, taking part in joint actions with KESK and TTB, including press statements about the Kurdish issue.

<sup>128</sup> The vulnerability results from various factors such as stigmatization, social exclusion, and other socio-economic effects of the war and forced migration (see Adaman/Keyder 2006; Kurban et al. 2008). According to a research, the share of informal workers in the urban area is almost double more for Kurds (BETAM 2009). Discrimination of and attacks on Kurdish workers are also seen, as can be observed from the media.

it is important to note that similar allegations were held also by employers against some unionists (affiliated to DİSK) in Tuzla shipyard, Istanbul, where employees included also Kurds and worked under unsafe conditions that led to the frequent cases of death by work accidents (Tuzla-Araştırma-Grubu 2009).

Last but not least, KESK, its affiliated unions and memberships also have been affected by KCK operations since 2009: several police raids took place in their offices across the country; many executive members were detained, even including the leader of KESK; and some were arrested to be tried for allegations of membership in an outlawed organization.<sup>129</sup> Operations took place also in Diyarbakır, targeting voluntary associations and municipalities (see Ch. 7).

### *The rise of Kurdish associational activism*

‘EU delegates invariably want to go to Diyarbakır whenever they come to Turkey. I am disturbed by this. Diyarbakır has become the third city after Istanbul and Ankara. These visits do not happen because of Diyarbakır’s economic, touristic or other accomplishments. This is completely political . . . I tell my friends from the EU . . . if you prepare reports about the country on the basis of lists of orders you received (there) we will not accept those reports,’  
Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (*Milliyet*, 25/12/2004)

Compulsory interest associations are organized in a hierarchical order and peak associations have been more important. Yet, the local associations of significant provinces such as Istanbul and Ankara also have had somewhat autonomous identities that made them publicly visible and politically influential at the national level. The rise of associational activism in Diyarbakır in the 2000s was to add a new center to this associational map of political representation.

Kurdish associational activism is not a new phenomenon. During the 1990s, provincial bar and medical associations, labor unions organized in the public sector, and especially human-rights organizations were active in the region, trying to find solutions and attract outsiders’ attention to human-rights violations and other regional problems within the context of armed conflict and the Emergency Rule. In Diyarbakır, such associations formed the Diyarbakır Democracy Platform, which organized activities such as press statements. However, associational actors were faced with serious obstacles such as judicial investigations, employment exiles, imprisonments, threats, and murders by unknown perpetrators. At a time

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<sup>129</sup> For the media coverage of events, see *Bianet*, 28/05/2009, 27/09/2011, and 13/01/2012.

when both Turkish governments and the mainstream media were focused on a war on ‘terrorism,’ there were not many opportunities for Kurdish associations to be publicly visible at the national level to draw attention to the human cost of the war.

Following the pause to the armed conflict in 1999, there was a gradual lifting of the Emergency Rule and a reform process for EU candidacy, which helped the normalization of life in the region and the ‘resurgence of civil society’ (cf. Schmitter 1992).<sup>130</sup> EU delegates played a special role with their visits to Diyarbakır where they would meet associational leaders, *inter alia*, to have information about the situation of the Kurdish region. These visits in turn influenced the EU pressure on Turkish governments to find a solution to the Kurdish issue, as well as to democratize political institutions, as noted in Prime Minister Erdoğan’s speech quoted above. In 2005, however, the Prime Minister made his first visit to Diyarbakır, which was influential in opening up the space for Kurdish interest associations.<sup>131</sup>

In Diyarbakır, Erdoğan gave a public speech and said that the ‘Kurdish question’ is a problem of whole nation, including him, and promised to further democratization for all citizens, while he acknowledged that the state had made mistakes in the past (*Bianet*, 12/08/2005). This step was made against the background of the re-start of clashes with the PKK after the end of another unilateral ceasefire; increasing nationalist reactions by the army and the opposition party (see Ch. 3); and the calls by a group of important public figures, including representatives from interest associations, located in the west, for a solution to the Kurdish issue as mentioned above. Following Erdoğan’s visit, a number of compulsory and voluntary associations in Diyarbakır made a joint press statement, read by Şahismail Bedirhanoğlu, the leader of business association GÜNSİAD (see Ch. 5) welcoming Erdoğan’s speech.<sup>132</sup>

Since then Kurdish associations particularly from Diyarbakır have become more visible as political actors in activities such as the following: making collective or individual press

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<sup>130</sup> The Emergency Rule was lifted in Diyarbakır in 31th November 2012. According to a national daily, the first legally-permitted demonstration took place in the following year (*Radikal*, 22/06/2003).

<sup>131</sup> From a broad perspective, a number of historical processes appear to have opened the space for associations: the most important of these seems to be the political processes I mention in the text above. However, there are also other important factors: first, the ‘contention’s cumulative history’ (cf. Tilly cited in Kriesi 2004) – exemplified above with the experience of the 1990s and the Democracy Platform, but there is also the Kurdish movement’s history, outlined in Ch. 2. Second, there are socio-economic processes. I mean, for instance, the processes that led to the increase in professionalization in the region (e.g. urbanization and the improvement of educational opportunities). In the past, the number of physicians was so limited that there was a regional Medical Association rather than a provincial one. The number of lawyers also greatly increased during the recent decades. Furthermore, there is the improvement of commerce, which increased the number of voluntary business associations and hence new links to national associations (see Part II).

<sup>132</sup> See ‘Diyarbakırlı sivillerden Erdoğan’a destek,’ *Radikal*, 20/08/2005.

statements; having occasional meetings with high-level politicians (such as the Prime Minister, the President, the Chief of the General Staff); appearing on TV channels; giving interviews for national dailies; organizing demonstrations; engaging in charity activities; and some leaders pursuing political career. There have been cases where hundreds of associations from the Kurdish region made joint press statements; however, it was mostly Diyarbakır's associations that came to the front as the third actor in a game of two – that is, the contestation between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement.

The AKP and the mainstream media played an important role in drawing attention to these associations and making a portrayal of 'civil society' as an alternative to the Kurdish movement. A categorization of 'good Kurds' versus 'bad Kurds' was to accompany this (see Ch. 3). The AKP's aim in supporting associational groups appears to challenge the power of the Kurdish movement in the region. However, associations did not always act in harmony with the AKP and there were moments of conflict. On the other hand, when they acted in harmony with the government, they received negative reaction from the Kurdish movement. Yet, the latter too came to recognize the associations as political actors and increase its activities with them, as once Abdullah Öcalan warned the movement actors to take into account the associations and bring them together under the local platform of the Kurdish movement, the DTK (see Ch. 2). Hence, Diyarbakır's associations arose not only as important political actors, but also as sites of contestation between the two political forces, as elaborated in Part II.

Interestingly, it was the interest associations, especially the compulsory ones that received the most attention in this process. The reason for this appears to be related to the corporatist structure: the properties such as compulsory membership, monopoly of representation, internal electoral processes and the public status that opens up some channels provide associations with a larger membership, greater capacity and credibility. This gains significance against the background of an environment of voluntary associations where each political force has ally associations, as publicly known. In compulsory associations, on the other hand, competition takes place internally among different factions and associations appear relatively neutral or conjecturally aligned.

There is also the content of the Kurdish issue that gives political advantages to certain associations. Hence, the Bar Association appears significant as the Kurdish issue has an important legal dimension. Accordingly, its leaders frequently raised concerns about legal problems. Or the Chamber of Commerce and Industry appears significant as the Kurdish issue

has an important economic dimension, although the Chamber does not speak only about the economic dimension. Hence, another interesting point: the Bar and Medical Associations were more vocal than the Chamber in the pre-2005 period; yet, the Chamber and voluntary business associations became highly active after 2005, becoming the leading actors of associational activism and gaining political advantages, as discussed in Part II. This part will also consider the relevance of peak-associational history for dynamics at the local associational level, as well as the importance of relations between the two levels in terms of political integration.

Table 4.2 Selected interest associations in Diyarbakır

	Status	Association	Peak association	Date founded	Membership (approx..)
Business	Compulsory	Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry	TOBB	1907	19,660 firms
		Voluntary	GÜNSİAD	TÜRKONFED <sup>133</sup>	1992
		DİSİAD	TÜRKONFED	1996	100
		DİĞİAD	TUSKON	1993	315
		MÜSİAD	MÜSİAD	1997	41
		DİYAD	-	2008	35
Professionals	Compulsory	Diyarbakır Medical Association	TTB	N/A	1,130 physicians
		Diyarbakır Bar Association	TBB	1927	610 lawyers
Labor	Voluntary /Municipal Sector	Belediye-İş	TÜRK-İŞ	N/A	1,200 workers
		Genel-İş	DİSK	2010	1,600
		Tüm-Bel-Sen	KESK	N/A	1,100 civil servants

*Source: fieldwork, see also Part II.*

<sup>133</sup> TÜRKONFED (*Türk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu* – Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation) was founded in 2004, in relation with TÜSİAD, as an alternative to other peak associations organized in Anatolia such as TUSKON and MÜSİAD (see Buğra/Savaşkan 2012).

## *Conclusions*

Organized interest representation in Turkey has been characterized with both corporatist and pluralist elements. Compulsory associations could enjoy some power that came from their corporatist properties such as the monopoly of representation and access to political channels; however, they have been subjected to legal constraints and political threats from time to time. Voluntary interest associations such as labor unions, on the other hand, have been characterized by political polarization, loss of power and a more precarious situation before the political authority since the 1980s. Interest associations have developed distinct political traditions over time, evolving in interaction with social movements and political parties. The lines of cleavage between associations have reflected the diversity of political life and society, along the axes of left–right, secularist–conservative, and pro-Kurdish–Turkish nationalist. In the post-1980 period, the latter two of these axes have become politically more salient thanks to the contestation of the state along these lines. With the AKP period, the associational environment has also witnessed a broader polarization in relation with the approach to the government. Thereby, interest associations of diverse traditions and interests could act in harmony at times of significant political events, forming competing blocs.

Interest associations are still important in political life. In this respect, the AKP period has depicted two alternative approaches: first, the government has tried to influence and articulate interest associations under its leadership using strategies such as intimidation, social networks, clientelism, and legal arrangements which change internal mechanisms of associations such as electoral procedures. Second, reform proposals have been developed to turn the corporatist environment of interest representation into a pluralist one, by ending the monopoly of representation at the first place, so that the power that comes by being united can be challenged. These diverse trends constitute an important source of uncertainty for interest associations.

The challenges posed by interest associations come from not merely the representation of specific group interests, but their engagement in wider socio-political issues. In this vein, associations also attempted to take part in the definition of the Kurdish issue since the 1990s, sometimes in competition with each other. Yet, this was not a matter of serious engagement, outside the Kurdish region. Within the region, on the other hand, there were severe problems facing political activists. It is in the 2000s that a set of processes opened up the space for



Kurdish associations, especially those in Diyarbakır, for political activism. This was going to add a new important center to the (associational) map of political representation across the country.

**PART II: DIYARBAKIR'S ASSOCIATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AT  
THE INTERSECTION OF THE LOCAL AND THE NATIONAL**

## **Chapter 5: Business associations**

Founded in 1907, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is one of the oldest and largest associations in Diyarbakır, serving as the compulsory association for local economic actors. While the Chamber was not politically very active in the pre-AKP period, compared to other associations, it started playing a leading role in associational activism in the post-2005 period. This chapter examines the politicization of the Chamber in the recent process. It aims to explore the roles it played in coalition formation among associations and with the political actors. This exploration highlights how particular divisions achieved relative salience as a result of the associational leaders' interaction with their memberships and their political interlocutors. The cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics provide the trajectory to trace these interactions.

First section gives an overview of associational leadership and properties. The section provides brief background about the Chamber's leadership in the 1990s and then focuses on the AKP period. Leaders' access to new resources is also underlined in this section. Second, I highlight two major dynamics in the Chamber's membership environment that the leadership needs to take into account: one relates to the improvement of the local economy in the 2000s, thanks to political normalization and new economic conditions within the country as well as the Middle East region. The other relates to the nature of the Kurdish business environment as characterized by a moral economy and political insecurity, which present opportunities and constraints for economic actors. Third, I discuss associational activism. I point at how the Chamber's leaders, as well as the leaders of major voluntary business associations as its partners, acted in observance of the balance of power. There were, however, also times of conflict, especially with the Kurdish movement, because of strategic and economic reasons. I analyze two major examples: the 2010 constitutional referendum and the decentralization proposals. Still, the business associations ended up advantaged, adapting their behavior and influencing the dual-power contestation. The chapter concludes with a general analysis.

### **5.1 Associational leadership and properties**

Elected leaders have been the major actors of the associational activism. A focus on leadership also makes it easier to observe continuity and change in associational politics. With such a focus, this section first gives a glimpse of the Chamber in the 1990s to better understand its changing role and significance in the following period. It then gives an

overview of leaderships in the AKP period. It shows that the Chamber started to make political claims increasingly since 2005 and outlines the leaders' political perspectives and interactions as background information. Finally, the section outlines associational properties such as the number of members, as well as the access to new resources and channels in the recent period, as the latter increase the power of the Chamber, while linking its membership and its political interlocutors that the other two sections elaborate on.

### ***A brief historical background***

The armed conflict increased the politicization of associations in Diyarbakır in the 1990s. However, this was a limited experience under the conditions of the Emergency Rule (see Ch. 2). In this period, the Chamber appears to have played a secondary role, compared with other actors such as human rights organizations, labor unions, the bar and medical associations, who tried to draw public attention to a variety of politically-induced problems especially those concerning human rights. The leaders of the Chamber, on the other hand, appeared on the national media mostly in relation with economic demands and problems of the region.

A survey<sup>134</sup> of the national daily *Milliyet* throughout the 1990s supports this impression, which was proposed by some of my interviewees, who could observe the Chamber back then. The Chamber had two leaders for the most of the decade: Felat Cemiloğlu and Şirin Yiğit. Longtime leader Cemiloğlu is exceptional: he belonged to one of the most influential families of the province. He was detained and tortured in 1982 in the infamous Diyarbakır prison (see Ch. 2) for later-disproved allegations of helping the PKK.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, Cemiloğlu could be seen in the media about matters other than the economy, as he brought the torture issue to the public, while standing as a candidate for the 1989 municipal elections and occupying a seat in the central executive board of the TOBB. The Chamber under his leadership prepared a few publications, including a report in 1994 on the state's regional development project, which called for a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue (*Milliyet*, 23/12/1994). But this was all: his successor Şirin Yiğit, as well as the leaders of newly emerging voluntary business associations, focused on economic issues.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> I made a keyword-based search (i.e. the names of the association and its leaders) in the online archive of the daily.

<sup>135</sup> My interview with Şeyhmus Diken, Diyarbakır, 28/06/2011. Also see Cemal (2003: 15-34).

<sup>136</sup> As to the Kurdish issue, Yiğit once talked about a 'terror lobby' which did not want peace in the region and underlined the significance of the army's determination to fight them. See 'Terör lobisine karşı gözler askerde,' *Milliyet*, 16/04/1997.

In this respect, GÜNSİAD,<sup>137</sup> founded in 1992 as the first local business association, was pretty active in the decade through its press statements and lobbying, having meetings with high-level political figures including foreign delegates. With a concentration on economic problems and demands, it also took the Kurdish issue merely on economic terms:

The economy is the antibiotics for bringing back those who go up to mountains and preventing others from going up there. You shall provide food and job. If (the person) had a home, job and food, and could look after his family, who would go up to mountains, leaving his warm bed? Why would he go for dying or killing when there is (the option of) living? Of course, except a few fanatics.<sup>138</sup>

But, of course, one should not forget that this statement was made under the hard conditions of the 1990s, detailed in Part I and below in Section 2. Still, it is a good example to compare with the approach of Kurdish organized business in the new political environment of the 2000s.

### *Associational leadership in the AKP period*

In the AKP period, the Chamber was led by four leaders up to the year 2012: Kutbettin Arzu, Mehmet Kaya, Galip Ensarioğlu, and Remzi Can. First three of these leaders had been politically quite active while the last one, who became the leader in the second half of 2011, was pretty much invisible in the media. Political activism by these leaders is detailed below in the third section, but some general notes on significant leaders, particularly Arzu and Ensarioğlu, and associational electoral processes will help understanding this activism, as well as the shifting coalitions that underline it.

In the changing context of the country, the leadership by Kutbettin Arzu exemplified also the changing role and increasing significance of the Chamber. An architect by education, Arzu took part in lobbying visits to EU countries organized by Diyarbakır Mayor Osman Baydemir to support Turkey's candidacy (*Radikal*, 07/12/2004). He also developed relationships with commercial chambers in Iraqi Kurdistan and took part in fair organizations for the two

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<sup>137</sup> The Southeast Association for Industrialists and Businessmen (*Güneydoğu Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği – GÜNSİAD*) was founded in Diyarbakır as a regional peak association, but initially focused on Diyarbakır. It became a member of the national peak association TÜRKONFED. GÜNSİAD was involved in the latter's foundation, alongside organized business actors such as TÜSİAD (see *Milliyet*, 18/10/1997 and Ch. 4).

<sup>138</sup> My translation. Its then-leader Vasfi Akyıl quoted by Güneri Cıvaoğlu, *Milliyet*, 02/03/1999.

localities.<sup>139</sup> Such activities and the ethno-linguistic bond between these localities appear to have given the Chamber an advantage at a time when Turkey aimed to increase its economic relations with Iraq in the aftermath of the 2003 war: so, for instance, when Iraqi President Talabani made visits to Turkey, the TOBB invited Kutbettin Arzu to take part in the meetings.

Following Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Diyarbakır in 2005 (see Ch. 3), the Chamber's leader could enjoy more media attention. Kutbettin Arzu made several press statements, individually or in cooperation with other associations, to express support for Erdoğan's initiative promising a solution to the Kurdish issue through democratization. More importantly, Arzu called the PKK to lay down arms unconditionally, as the PKK was considering to have another temporary ceasefire at the time (*Milliyet*, 21/08/2005). Of course, he did not ignore the economic dimension, asking the political authority for 'positive discrimination' of the region in the form of economic incentives (*Milliyet*, 18/08/2005). However, Arzu talked also about the other dimensions. In a newspaper interview in 2006, Arzu defined the Kurdish issue from a broader perspective, than seen in the previous decade, in harmony with the political context:

The region has economic, political, social and cultural problems . . . I do not want to reduce it to a single dimension such as the Kurdish issue or the Turkish issue. The issue belongs to Turkey. It is an issue of not only the region and Diyarbakır, or just Kurds. Because it is Turkey who suffers its outcomes when there is no democratization and when there is no environment of peace and trust.<sup>140</sup>

In this interview, Arzu also supported the government's 'slow but important' initiatives, such as those related to linguistic rights for private education and broadcasting (see Ch. 3), and interpreted them as signs of intention for a democratic solution. He added that it used to be difficult even to use the word Kurd in the past. Upon a skeptical question that contrasted his optimistic take on the government's policy with the clashes that recently took place in Diyarbakır between local protesters and the police following the public funeral of PKK guerrillas (see Ch. 2), Arzu made an important distinction: 'there are not only those who support a solution to this issue through peace and democracy, but also those who support a

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<sup>139</sup> My interview with Kutbettin Arzu, Ankara, 27/09/2011. Similar activities across the border were pursued also by the succeeding leader Mehmet Kaya. However, Kaya said that he had some difficulties in getting support from the TOBB in some of these pursuits. My interview with Mehmet Kaya, Diyarbakır, 26/03/2011.

<sup>140</sup> My translation. See Mehmet Aslanoğlu's interview with Kutbettin Arzu, 'Hiçbir şart altında OHAL istemiyoruz,' *Evrensel*, 07/04/2006.

solution through violence. They are the activities of those who support violence.’<sup>141</sup> Indeed, this distinction was to accompany the media depiction of rising associational actors in comparison to the Kurdish movement, and it also seems to be the rationale behind the AKP government’s support to these actors.

In 2007, Kutbettin Arzu was elected a member of the parliament on the tickets of the AKP and, in the following term, appointed as the deputy minister for agriculture. At the Chamber, Arzu was succeeded by Mehmet Kaya. Kaya, a pharmacist, had acted as the vice chair under Arzu’s leadership. During his term of two years, he maintained a similar political approach, but also did not avoid raising concerns about some policies or problems related to regional development and reforms for pro-Kurdish rights.<sup>142</sup> I will not go into details of his leadership since it does not present a noteworthy change for associational politics. I will instead focus on the next leader who came to power in 2009 and played a somewhat different yet significant political role during his two-year term: Galip Ensarioğlu.

Galip Ensarioğlu has an important background. He belongs to a locally influential large family, known with the same surname.<sup>143</sup> A number of old family members served as local party officials and members of parliament for a center-right tradition of political parties from the 1950s up to the 1990s.<sup>144</sup> Ensarioğlu, a businessman involved in various commercial branches such as contracting for building construction, also served as the leader of the Diyarbakır party quarters of the True Path Party since the 1990s up to the 2000s. Note that the True Path Party was a center-right party and ruled national governments that were very violent in dealing with the armed conflict in the 1990s (see Ch. 2).

Ensarioğlu, on the other hand, collaborated with the pro-Kurdish party<sup>145</sup> when he stood as a candidate for the Chamber’s leadership in 2009, against his rival Mehmet Kaya, who was

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<sup>141</sup> My translation. In *Evrensel*, 07/04/2006.

<sup>142</sup> For the raised concerns, see ‘Güneydoğu: Paket bizi uçuracak,’ *Taraf*, 29/05/2008 and ‘GAP’ın bir ayağı hâlâ total,’ *Taraf*, 12/08/2008.

<sup>143</sup> While in Diyarbakır, I heard familial backgrounds sometimes mentioned, in relation with certain local figures such as Ensarioğlu. However, in my interviews with experts and businessmen, I was told that families (especially large families as *aşiret*) do not have a significant place in the urban economy and politics. My interviews with Vahap Coşkun, Diyarbakır, 25/03/2011; Celalettin Birtane, Diyarbakır, 04/05/2011; and Şeyhmus Diken, Diyarbakır, 28/06/2011.

<sup>144</sup> The tradition includes the successive parties of Democrat Party, Justice Party and True Path Party. For information on the political involvement of family members, see Yavuz Donat, ‘DYP’nin lokomotifi Şeyh Ensarioğlu,’ *Sabah*, 01/06/2007.

<sup>145</sup> This collaboration was often mentioned in my interviews in Diyarbakır. Ensarioğlu put it as having received support from various circles including the pro-Kurdish party. My interview with Galip Ensarioğlu, Ankara, 23/09/2011.

supported by the pro-AKP circles.<sup>146</sup> Ensarioğlu won this race; yet, conflicts emerged between him and the pro-Kurdish party especially when Ensarioğlu led a joint press statement to call for voting in favor of the referendum, despite the boycott call by the party (see Ch. 2 and §3 below). Here, two things appear interesting: first, the example indicates the active involvement of the Kurdish movement in the internal politics of associations. According to Kutbettin Arzu, the movement was not interested in the Chamber in the 1990s, but it got interested in the 2000s when it realized the significance of the Chamber; thereby, it tried to influence electoral processes of both the Chamber and professional associations.<sup>147</sup> The efforts appear to have increased as a result of the rise of associational activism since 2005, somewhat under the influence of the AKP government. With the movement's involvement, associations turned into a significant site of contestation.

Second, the nature of coalitions at the associational level seems pretty interesting. Ensarioğlu appears as an important associational leader in the period because of taking such a strong political position explicitly in opposition to the Kurdish movement in the referendum process. However, despite occasional problems, Ensarioğlu pursued a balanced approach to both the AKP government and the Kurdish movement. He took part in activities in harmony with each actor, and sometimes he took steps against the wishes of each actor. He was supportive of the government's 'democratic opening' in 2009. He was supportive also of pro-Kurdish common demands that the Kurdish movement articulated to bring together Kurdish organized actors under its leadership (see Ch. 2). Other examples for Ensarioğlu's strategic leadership are discussed in the third section. Here let's note also that Ensarioğlu occupied an important position at the TOBB, by becoming the head of the national council of chambers of commerce, a position which should have given him some advantage. He also took part in the TOBB's visits to Iraqi Kurdistan, an apparently intermediary role played previously also by Kutbettin Arzu.<sup>148</sup> In the 2011 elections, Ensarioğlu too became a member of the parliament on the tickets of the AKP.<sup>149</sup> Following him, Recep Can became the new leader. Although Can has not been that active, as mentioned before, he is known to be a pro-BDP figure, and Ensarioğlu stated in my interview with him that he supported Can's candidacy.<sup>150</sup> Considering

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<sup>146</sup> I heard about the mentioned support for Kaya in several interviews.

<sup>147</sup> My interview with Kutbettin Arzu, Ankara, 27/09/2011.

<sup>148</sup> My interview with Galip Ensarioğlu, Ankara, 23/09/2011.

<sup>149</sup> This is not an uncommon path for associational leaders: in the same elections, 14 chamber leaders from around the country stood as candidates and 8 of them became members of the parliament (*Hürriyet*, 13/06/2011).

<sup>150</sup> My interview with Galip Ensarioğlu, Ankara, 23/09/2011.



Ensarioğlu's shifting relations with the Kurdish movement as well as the AKP, coalitional dynamics at the local level appear to be quite fluid and ambiguous than those at the national level.

Finally, note that the number of voluntary business associations increased since the late 1990s (see Table 4.2) as well as their political activism since 2005. Among these associations, GÜNSİAD and DİSİAD<sup>151</sup> have been most visible in the mainstream media, also having close relations with the Chamber especially under Ensarioğlu's leadership. Like Ensarioğlu, they too usually pursued a balanced approach to the two rival political actors, while other business associations tended to align more with one side.<sup>152</sup> Still, voluntary business associations played a secondary role, while the Chamber has been the leading actor for business groups and usually even for local interest associations in general.

### ***Increasing resources and improving capacity***

The Chamber is one of the largest organizations in the province, alongside the governorship and the metropolitan municipality. By the year 2009, it has 19,661 firms as members, most of which engage in commerce while industrialists are a minority (DDK 2009: 23).<sup>153</sup> An expert of the Chamber told me that the Chamber is Diyarbakır's biggest 'NGO' with regard to the projects undertaken. Projects cover a variety of topics such as vocational training for provincial residents, research on the informal employment, training and consulting services for members, and so on. Some projects are carried out by the Chamber alone, and some are in cooperation with other organizations.<sup>154</sup> Funds are provided partly by international organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations Development

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<sup>151</sup> DİSİAD stands for *Diyarbakır Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği* – Industrialists and Businessmen Association of Diyarbakır. It was founded in 1996, as a provincial business association, linked to GÜNSİAD, which is a peak association for the southeastern region, as mentioned above.

<sup>152</sup> Three associations appear important: DİGİAD (*Diyarbakır Girişimci İşadamları Derneği* – Diyarbakır Association for Entrepreneurial Businessmen) is a member of TUSKON, a peak association linked to the Gülen community. MÜSİAD is the local branch of the peak association with the same name (see Ch. 4), with historical links to political Islam. DİYAD (*Diyarbakır İşadamları Yapı Derneği* – Diyarbakır Construction Association for Businessmen) is a local association for construction firms and at least its leader by 2011 has a background in the Kurdish movement, as a past local executive for a pro-Kurdish party, and acted in a line supportive of the party's boycott call in referendum process, criticizing the chamber's contrary position (see next section).

<sup>153</sup> Only about 7,000 of these members were told to be active members though. My interview with Expert 1, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 04/04/2011.

<sup>154</sup> Partners include voluntary business associations such as GÜNSİAD and DİSİAD, as well as the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and the governorship.

Programme.<sup>155</sup> Note that EU funds appear to be the most important source of funding, as a phenomenon of mainly the 2000s. Most of these funds are allocated through the Central Finance and Contracts Unit in Ankara (see Ch. 3) and the Chamber staff expressed no experience of problem in accessing these funds, unlike the municipalities in the city.

Funds are provided also by the state bodies at the local level such as the regional Karacadağ Development Agency and also, to a less extent, the ministerial program of SODES.<sup>156</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3, several local associations which have usually been on good terms with the government, including the Chamber, are among the beneficiaries of SODES, while almost no association visibly aligned with the Kurdish movement appears among the beneficiaries.<sup>157</sup> As to the regional development agency, it deserves more attention. Development agencies provide a new channel for organized business for influencing decision making processes and resource allocation at the local level.<sup>158</sup> Agencies were founded across the country since 2006, following Turkey's 2003 Accession Partnership for EU candidacy (EC, (European Council) 2003; cf. Brenner 1999). They appear as attempts for restructuring the central planning agency of the developmentalist period, on the basis of new principles such as 'good governance.' Accordingly, regional development agencies include the leaders of chambers of commerce and industry in their executive board, in addition to governors, mayors and the chairs of provincial councils. Voluntary associations such as business

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<sup>155</sup> Based on the data obtained from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for the period 2006-2010, email communication, 07/06/2011 and my interview with Expert 1, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 04/04/2011.

<sup>156</sup> Based on the data obtained from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for the period 2006-2010, email communication, 07/06/2011; Karacadağ Development Agency, for the period 2009-2011, my interview with Expert 2 in the agency, Diyarbakır, and email communication, both in 07/06/2011; and SODES (*Sosyal Destek Programı* – Program for Social Support), online data for the period 2008-2011 at <http://www.sodes.gov.tr/> Access date is 03/01/2013.

<sup>157</sup> This argument is based on the online data by SODES for the period 2008-2011 about the distribution of funds, according to provinces and organizations. See [http://www.sodes.gov.tr](http://www.sodes.gov.tr/) Access date is 03/01/2013. The exception for the Kurdish movement is the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, which received funds for three projects, among the total 182 projects accepted by SODES. As to associations which have had a more or less pro-government stance and received funds, examples include Kimse Yok Mu (charity organization), Diyarbakır Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı (cultural organization), KAMER (women's organization), MÜSİAD, DİĞİAD, DOĞÜNSİFED (all three are business associations), DESOB (compulsory association for craftsmen and artisans), and the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Kimse Yok Mu, Diyarbakır Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı, and DİĞİAD appear to be close to the Gülen Movement. MÜSİAD has had good relations with the AKP government at the national level, as mentioned in Chapter 4. The rest are local associations who occupied a somewhat in-between position, but leaned towards the government at important political moments. Due to the scope of the dissertation, I focus only on the chamber among them. The expert I talked to in the chamber, however, stated a relative difficulty in receiving funds from SODES (my interview with Expert 1, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 04/04/2011). Public organizations – such as the local units of ministries and the police force – form the majority among the beneficiaries of SODES funds.

<sup>158</sup> The agency provides monetary and technical support mostly for firms, but also for organizations such as interest associations, municipalities and the state bodies at the local level for development of the economy and touristic infrastructure.

associations also take place in the organization as ‘representatives’ from civil society. In this regard, Karacadağ Development Agency<sup>159</sup> is responsible for both Diyarbakır and the neighbor province Urfa. The significance of the agency for our case is that the Chamber leadership and other important business actors support this model of economic development, as a part of the state rescaling process, against the alternative decentralization model of ‘democratic autonomy’ by the Kurdish movement, as mentioned in Chapter 2 and further discussed below in the 3rd section.

The amount of funds provided by each organization or for each project does not matter here. What matters is that they indicate the Chamber’s access to new resources<sup>160</sup> and improving capacity in the recent period, a phenomenon which shows the Chamber to be more advantaged than other interest associations under scrutiny. Thereby, the Chamber appears to be also an important channel for its members to access funds for projects and investment. It hosts an information center concerning the EU since the late 1990s and helps members about various sources of funding. For instance, the ministerial agency KOSGEB’s incentives for small and medium sized enterprises, detailed in Chapter 3, were mostly channeled by the Chamber, especially during the years 2009-2010.<sup>161</sup> In addition to national programs, KOSGEB introduced special loan-support programs for Diyarbakır. Diyarbakır was promoted as a ‘center of attraction’ from 2009 onwards: in this vein, a project was initiated including, *inter alia*, loan interest supports up to 100 per cent, for the period of 2009-2010 (KOSGEB 2010).<sup>162</sup> Note that this coincided with the 2009 local elections when the AKP defined its major goal as to win over Diyarbakır, which was called by the Kurdish movement as the ‘fortress.’ It coincided also with Galip Ensarioğlu’s leadership. In an essay for the Chamber’s periodical, Ensarioğlu (2009) noted that it was the first time that the enterprises of Diyarbakır could benefit from credits in such an intense volume. This opportunity gains its significance

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<sup>159</sup> It was founded in 2008 and became functional towards the end of 2009. My interview with Expert 2, Karacadağ Development Agency, Diyarbakır, 07/06/2011.

<sup>160</sup> In Fall 2010, Galip Ensarioğlu (2010) wrote for the chamber’s periodical that the total budget of then ongoing five projects undertaken by the chamber was approximately 2.5 million Turkish Liras ( about 1.25 million Euros at the time). Of course, the total number of projects throughout the decade is much more; the approximate number given by an expert was thirty. My interview with Expert 1, DTSO, Diyarbakır, 04/04/2011.

<sup>161</sup> This is not an official requirement and the chamber is told to have no significant economic interest in acting as an intermediary between enterprises and KOSGEB; therefore, the intermediary role seems rather political. My interview with Expert 3, KOSGEB, Diyarbakır, 10/05/2011.

<sup>162</sup> From the start of the project in 2009 until the end of 2010, 2,449 enterprises applied in Diyarbakır and 2,008 of them benefited from the loan-interest support program, which cost 8.2 million Turkish Liras to KOSGEB and created a loan volume of 58 million Turkish Liras, see KOSGEB (2010: 46). Thereby, Diyarbakır came up as the second province in 2010 across the country, as regards allocation of loan-interest supports, with a share of 7.9 per cent of the total amount (KOSGEB 2010: 35).

against the background of the difficulty entrepreneurs have had in accessing credits from banks in recent decades because of the high-risk environment. This difficulty was repeatedly mentioned in my interviews in Diyarbakır. While there had been such constraints for economic actors, recent years witnessed a noteworthy improvement of the economy, in addition to access to new resources (mediated) by the Chamber.

## **5.2 Dynamics in the membership environment**

The membership environment is important for understanding associational politics. It is not only that leaders have to take into account dynamics in this environment, but also that the latter reflects well politically-induced opportunities and constraints. In this section, I mention two major characteristics of the Chamber's membership environment: first, the local economy considerably improved in the recent period. This became possible thanks to political normalization and new economic conditions within the country as well as the Middle East region. Second, the moral economy has its reflections in the business environment too. This moral economy may require economic actors to prioritize political-moral commitments over economic interest. However, this is a contested issue too and the dual power situation causes a significant degree of uncertainty and insecurity for Kurdish businesspeople. I give contemporary examples to depict the political sources of precariousness in the Kurdish business environment, which are important for associational politics.

### ***Improvement of the local economy in the 2000s***

In 1927, Diyarbakır came up as the 3rd in a ranking of the country's provinces with regard to economic development. This fact, which was expressed by a number of my interviewees, stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary situation of uneven regional development, which is to the disadvantage of the Kurdish region. In 2003, for instance, Diyarbakır came up as the 63rd among 81 provinces (DPT 2003). My interviewees from the business community gave sophisticated accounts of this underdevelopment: the state's historical neglect of the region was mentioned often. Even some saw the underdevelopment as an intended consequence of the state's policies to manage the Kurdish population and dissent. In a similar vein, policies concerning regional development and investment incentives were criticized in that they were seen, if not dysfunctional, to be designed according to the needs of the West. Changes in the demographic structure were also mentioned. For instance, the negative impact of the loss of

Armenian population in the first half of the 20th century was mentioned, as they had an important place in commerce and traditional crafts.<sup>163</sup>

An important role was attributed to the armed conflict of the 1990s. Here, a number of factors was emphasized: the negative impact of insecurity on investment decisions was the most mentioned problem. Also mentioned were capital outflow, forced migration, the dissolution of agrarian structure and loss of skills in the process of migration from the rural to the urban.<sup>164</sup> These have led to a severe situation of poverty (see Table 2.7 and YG 21/Sarmaşık 2007) and unemployment in Diyarbakır while its urban population almost doubled in the course of last two decades (see Table 2.1). The official statistics claim that the unemployment rate is 13.5 per cent for the year 2010<sup>165</sup>, whereas representatives from local associations suggest that the real rate is between 45 and 60 per cent.

However, the local economy has considerably improved in the 2000s, compared with the previous decade. One factor beyond this improvement is the growth of the construction sector. The increasing population of Diyarbakır supported the sector for construction of buildings. In the 2000s, the number of construction firms nearly tripled (Yüksel 2011: 450). Building projects are carried out by local contractors, either privately or in cooperation with the mass housing development administration TOKİ<sup>166</sup> through public procurement and/or with municipalities in case of urban transformation projects. Here, the nature of urban development is revealing. While the local economy improved in the 2000s, social inequality appears to be still a huge problem: slums are plenty in the old city Suriçi and the Bağlar Municipality, especially thanks to the forced migration of the previous decade, while gated communities develop within and around the new municipality of Kayapınar, depicting a city of contrasts (Bağlı/Binici 2005; Yüksel 2011).

Overall, the service sector plays a significant role in the local economy while industry has a limited share. In this vein, the distributorships of western companies are important as they connect local businesspeople to the national market while the expansion of this market

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<sup>163</sup> In relation with this and for an account of the provincial economy, see (Beysanoğlu 1962: 93-94), Keyder (2009), Dağ/Göktürk (1993).

<sup>164</sup> On the forced migration and Diyarbakır, see the reports by TMMOB (1998) and Kalkınma-Merkezi (2010), as well as Yüksek (2008a; 2008b).

<sup>165</sup> TÜİK data. Available at [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr). Access date is 14/01/2013.

<sup>166</sup> TOKİ is a state organization. It has played an important role in urban development in the last decade and functioned in dual way: the TOKİ provides services for social housing and works on the basis of public-private partnerships contributing to the creation of 'a new group of state-created businesspeople.' See Buğra/Savaşkan (2012).

appears to have speeded up in the 2000s. At the production site, the sectors of mining (especially marble), agro-based food and textiles are important (Karacadağ 2011). These connect to the export activities of Diyarbakır, which depict a remarkable increase in recent years and, hence, a good indicator of improvement of the local economy. From 2001 to 2011, the total exports of Diyarbakır increased approximately 21 times whereas it increased only about 4 times for the whole country.<sup>167</sup>

In the aftermath of the 2003 US-led war on Iraq, Turkey's relations with Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in its northern parts started to change. In the previous decade, Turkey had somewhat tense relations with Iraqi political authorities: Turkey carried out, *inter alia*, cross-border operations to attack the PKK camps and opposed the development of an autonomous Kurdish regime in the North. In the post-war period, however, political relations have improved between the two countries, symbolized in reciprocal visits by top-level political figures especially since 2007 (see Barkey 2011). Moreover, economic transactions re-started: Turkey's exports to Iraq increased year by year since 2003, rising to more than \$8 billion in 2011. Turkish companies made investments in Iraq, notably in infrastructure and construction sectors. These were to be followed by recent efforts to import oil from northern Iraq by constructing a new pipeline. In this vein, the Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan Nechirvan Barzani defined the nature of this partnership primarily in economic terms in an interview, when he was reminded about Turkey's historical opposition to an independent Kurdistan (Newton-Small 2012). Yet, it does have something to do with politics. Barzani himself emphasizes in the same interview the 'land locked' situation of Iraqi Kurdistan and the lack of support by regional countries for an independent Kurdistan. The United States also played a role in the improvement of relations between two countries, especially since 2007, while gradually moving out of Iraq (see Altunışık 2009). To date, this rapprochement appears to have ambiguous implications for the Kurdish movement in Turkey, and it should be noted that the AKP government's Kurdish initiative developed against such a background of changing regional politics.

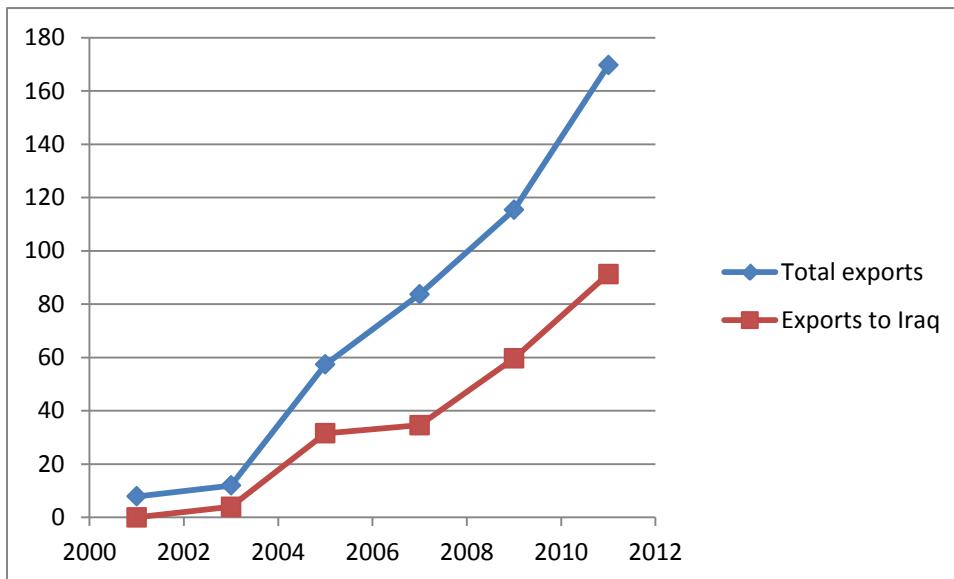
Diyarbakır has enjoyed only a small share in this trade: in 2011, Diyarbakır's share of total exports to Iraq was only about 1 per cent. My interviewees from the business community explained this with the underdevelopment of production in the province. One former leader of the Chamber also argued that businesspeople from the west (of Turkey) were favored by the

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<sup>167</sup> In monetary terms (US dollars). Export values are based on TÜİK data. Available online at [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr). Access date is 14/01/2013.

TOBB in its activities for the formation of economic ties, an argument which was rejected by other past leaders of the Chamber.<sup>168</sup> Yet, even though the share in the country's total exports is small, it came to comprise half of the total exports of Diyarbakır in 2011 (see Figure 5.1). In addition to export activities, there are also investments by Diyarbakır's businesspeople in northern Iraq such as in the construction sector and in the service sector via franchising contracts with Turkish companies.

Figure 5.1 Export activities of Diyarbakır in the 2000s (\$ millions)



Source: TÜİK

While my interviewees emphasized common ethnic and linguistic bonds as advantages for developing economic ties with Iraqi Kurdistan, the portrayal depicts a growing and somewhat interdependent network among the Turkish national market (both entrepreneurs and professionals), Kurdish entrepreneurs in southeastern Turkey and the Iraqi market where Turkey's Kurdish entrepreneurs have the potential to act as intermediaries. This view is supported by the above-mentioned intermediary role played by the Chamber's leaders in the

<sup>168</sup> Activities such as group visits to Iraq are organized by the TOBB's Foreign Economic Relations Board (*Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu – DEİK*). The argument concerning differential treatment was made by Mehmet Kaya and rejected by Galip Ensarioğlu (my interviews with Mehmet Kaya, Diyarbakır, 26/03/2011 and Galip Ensarioğlu, Ankara, 23/09/2011). Also note the similarity of this perception of discrimination to that of MÜSİAD – the business association linked to the political Islam (see Ch. 4 and Buğra 1998).

TOBB's meetings with Iraqi Kurdish figures. Such an interdependent and growing market contributes to a kind of integration.<sup>169</sup> Yet, political environment matters a lot.

### *From moral economy to political insecurity*

As it is the case elsewhere, opportunities for capital accumulation depict a political nature in Diyarbakır too. During my fieldwork, I heard a few rumors about who got contracts, say, from the TOKİ on the basis of political ties or who got public lands controlled by the central treasury department on the basis of favoritism, as well as remarks about the significance of the metropolitan municipality for zoning permits. These were sometimes accompanied by categorization of businesspeople as AKP supporters, patriots or supporters of the pro-Kurdish party. However, it is not a random case that businesspersons of different political alignments cooperate in economic activities. For instance, I was told that Galip Ensarioğlu – the previous leader of the Chamber and currently an MP for the AKP – engaged in some economic activities in cooperation with Altan Tan – currently an MP for the pro-Kurdish party BDP.

In this vein, Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Osman Baydemir emphasized in my interview with him that capital has no religion, nationality or political ideology, and that capital has no patriotism.<sup>170</sup> Baydemir made this argument when I was asking him about a procurement activity by the municipality contracted to a businessman who is known in the city for his contracts with the Turkish army.<sup>171</sup> I had got this information from one of my informants, who interpreted the contract in question as a strategic act to observe local balances of power. Concerning such contracts, however, Baydemir emphasized the legal framework of public procurement processes, which underline principles of economic efficiency. In another words, whoever offers a low price gets the job. Yet, Baydemir's response revealed that it was not uncommon for him to receive criticisms about political identity of businesspeople with which the municipality has works.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Kurdish columnist Orhan Miroğlu notes the integration effect of the fact that Kurdish businesspeople work in Iraq in cooperation with Turkish engineers and workers. See Ezgi Başaran's interview with Orhan Miroğlu, 'Kürt burjuva PKK'yı ne tam olumlar ne reddeder,' *Radikal*, 05/12/2011.

<sup>170</sup> My interview with Osman Baydemir, Metropolitan Municipality, Diyarbakır. 16/06/2011.

<sup>171</sup> I had an interview also with the businessman; however, he denied having done business with the municipality although his company's name is seen in some issues of the municipality's bulletin which the contract is about. My interview with Businessperson 1, Diyarbakır, 13/06/2011.

<sup>172</sup> Mayor Baydemir appears to have been under great pressure in the recent process, as the KCK operations, *inter alia*, targeted municipalities run by the pro-Kurdish party (see Ch. 2 and 3). However, Baydemir was not detained, unlike many other mayors, a situation which drew more attention to him. One could guess that he had



Note the similarity to the debates seen in Islamist circles, outlined in Chapter 4. In the 1990s, a discourse on the merits of religious solidarity and norms as well as the category of Islamic capital was seen in these circles. Accordingly, the business association MÜSIAD employed ‘a cultural frame of reference where Islam significantly contributes to the establishment of a shared understanding concerning business ethics, corporate responsibility, and commonality of interest’ (Buğra 1998: 529). However, following the secularist threats in the political environment (see Ch. 3) and the increasing incorporation of the membership of political Islam to the market economy, there was a shift to a discourse on the uselessness of talking about the ‘religious faith of capital’ (Buğra 1998: 534; also see Tuğal 2009). The Kurdish debate about whether capital can be patriotic sounds similar in this regard and it relates to the duality between the logics of capitalist business environment and the Kurdish movement, which has strong left-leaning components.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, ‘patriot’ is a conception used by the Kurdish movement to refer to its supporters. Its use in the economic realm appears to be connected to the moral economy (see Ch. 2). This moral economy emphasizes patriotism and sacrifice as sources of legitimacy. It contributes to the creation of bonds for intra-group solidarity, under the given difficult socio-economic conditions, as well as norms of conduct between the ruler and the ruled. However, it seems more contested at the entrepreneurial level, than in other sectors (see Ch. 6 and 7), especially in the recent period, which witnessed a degree of political normalization and economic improvement. Mayor Baydemir’s statement can be thought in this respect.

There are several manifestations of this moral economy. First, there is the shop closure as a form of protest. This form of protest was frequently employed in the 1990s, especially at times of public funerals for PKK guerillas. It is a good example of how economic interest could be overridden by political-moral commitments and interests of society at large. The accounts given by locals during my fieldwork usually emphasize how it was voluntary then. It could be spontaneous or coordinated by the movement activists. A shop owner told me even that the police too encouraged some shop owners to join the closure protest so that the police would not bother with possible attacks on open shops. In the 2000s, however, things started getting more complicated. As the conflict ground to a halt until mid-2004, the shop closure was not on the agenda. However, it came to be practiced again, with the restart of clashes and rising casualties in the following period. Prime Minister Erdoğan was also occasionally

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to take into account such constraints of the dual power contestation, in addition to concerns about the municipality’s budget and the legal framework of public procurement for municipal transactions.

protested by shop closures when he made visits to Kurdish provinces. Erdoğan criticized the protest, accusing the PKK of forcing shop owners to act so.<sup>173</sup> The Diyarbakır Chamber and other local associations for business and small tradesmen also opposed this form of protest on the grounds of its negative economic impact. Hence, once a form of protest under war conditions, it became a more complicated issue, as shop owners became subjected to diverse pressures by the government and the movement.

Second, there is the so-called taxation by the PKK of Kurdish civilians. In her account of the PKK in the 1990s, Aliza Marcus explains the importance of this activity in that it served not only to finance operations by guerillas but also to assert authority. ‘Some people wanted to give, others certainly felt forced, but overall, quite a few probably figured that at least it made sense to help the rebels, who were fighting for Kurdish rights, rather than the state, which was intent on repressing Kurdish identity’ (Marcus 2007: 182). Marcus lists companies, municipal authorities and the wealthy as the targets of regular taxation, and notes that Diyarbakır province yielded about one million dollars annually in tax revenue.<sup>174</sup> She argues that even public companies which worked in the region paid to avoid possible attacks by the PKK on the work-site (2007: 183). The claim is that taxation activities still go on. During my fieldwork, I heard supporting (but somewhat ambiguous) views from a few of my interviewees from the business community. The indictments for KCK operations (see Ch. 2 and 3) also hold this claim.<sup>175</sup>

Such an environment presents serious constraints for businesspeople. To act as desired by the movement might lead to an accusation by the Turkish government of supporting ‘terrorism.’ Not to act so might lead to an accusation by the Kurdish movement of not supporting national interests. In this vein, Kurdish businesspeople were faced with a serious danger in the 1990s. In 1993, the then Prime Minister Tansu Çiller claimed that businesspeople paid ‘racket’ to the PKK and that they would drain the monetary resources of the PKK (*Milliyet*, 05/11/1993). Afterwards, a number of Kurdish businesspeople became victims of murders by unidentified perpetrators – murders which are in truth known as carried out by counter-guerilla forces

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<sup>173</sup> For instance, see ‘Erdoğan: Kepenk kapatılmadı, kapattırıldı,’ *Radikal*, 21/05/2011.

<sup>174</sup> The involvement of the PKK in the economic realm appears more complicated than this. Marcus argues that the PKK rebels played a role when local companies were bidding on a state contract for work in the region: ‘The PKK sometimes warned contractors off projects to build police stations or pave roads that Turkish troops used. They also fixed bids for a fee that might run 30 percent of the contract. Assuring that a certain contractor received the contract was done by warning rival bidders to drop out of the bidding or, more commonly, telling them to submit a bid that was too high to win’ (Marcus 2007: 183).

<sup>175</sup> See, for instance, the indictment for the major trial in Diyarbakır (TC 2010), as well as the media coverage, ‘PKK’nın tehdit dolu devrim vergisi!’ *Milliyet*, 21/11/2011.

under the guidance of the state (see Ch. 2 and Gunter 2011: 120-121). Furthermore, 250 businesspeople were taken into custody in 1996 with allegations of helping the PKK (*Milliyet*, 04/08/1996). Such an insecure environment contributed to the flight of capital to the western parts of the country (see Yüksel 2011).

Businesspeople can still be vulnerable to the state, as mentioned in Chapter 4. This vulnerability appears to be felt more strongly by Kurdish businesspeople. One of my interviewees described their situation as the following: if the AKP government punishes the Doğan Holding (one of the largest in the country) with a tax-evasion case, it can easily label someone from here as a traitor, in case he aligns with the pro-Kurdish party BDP or the Republican People's Party. Indeed, two events that have taken place recently appear to be supportive of this perception: first, the KCK operations also targeted the DİYAR AŞ, a company which was initially founded by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality in 2005 and then privatized because of judicial obstacles (see Ch. 2). The company was accused of transferring money to the PKK by its bidding of contracts with municipalities.<sup>176</sup> Second, the AKP government prepared in early 2011 a draft law which was enacted at the time of writing and aims to fight 'financing of terrorism' by freezing the assets of suspect persons and organizations, as well as imprisonment in case of conviction.<sup>177</sup> Kurdish businesspeople likened this law initiative to the policies of the 1990s and interpreted its aim as to intimidate Kurdish businesspeople.<sup>178</sup>

The government is not the only source of insecurity for Kurdish businesspeople though. The attack by the PKK in Diyarbakır at the marble mining plant of Kurdish businessman Raif Türk is important. Machinery and a building were set on fire by PKK members, in addition to writing 'boycott' on the walls (*Radikal*, 16/09/2010). The event took place in September 2010, right before the Constitutional Referendum. The newspaper coverage presented it as a punishment for Raif Türk's participation in the call by business associations to vote for the referendum, despite the boycott call by the pro-Kurdish party BDP (see below). Note that Türk was at the time the leader of the business association DISIAD. Mayor Osman Baydemir, representing the BDP and told to be friends with Türk, criticized this attack, emphasizing both

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<sup>176</sup> My interview with an executive board member of DİYAR AŞ, Diyarbakır, 22/06/2011.

<sup>177</sup> Law by No: 6415, dated 07/02/2013.

<sup>178</sup> See, respectively, the comments by Şah İsmail Bedirhanoglu in 'Kürt işadamlarına Çiller yöntemi,' *Taraf*, 01/02/2012 and by Altan Tan in 'Erdoğan Kürt işadamlarının ölüm fermanını veren Çiller'in yaptıklarını deniyor.' Online post at <http://www.facebook.com/AltanTanSayfasi>. Access date 31/01/2012.

the freedom of expression and the significance of security for investments in the province (*Bianet*, 17/09/2010).

However, reasons for the attack seem ambiguous, as other businessmen involved in the referendum call received reaction too, but not physical attacks. This draws attention to another issue: according to what I heard from some of my interviewees and locals in Diyarbakır, those who operate mining plants may be asked by the PKK for contribution. In my interview with him, Raif Türk also mentioned problems with peasants over mining plants, despite the fact that he had a license from the state.<sup>179</sup> Previously, there was also an attack on another marble plant (*Milliyet*, 12/06/2007). In addition to such uncertainty, oppositional political activities and unconformity with regard to expectations are among the major sources of insecurity for Kurdish businesspeople. The portrayal shows Kurdish businesspeople as thorn between the state and the PKK, a view which was expressed by some of my interviewees too and which affects associational strategies.

### **5.3 Contemporary political activism**

Since 2005, the Chamber has played a leading role in associational activism in Diyarbakır and in the region at large. It took part in various activities, which brought together associations of different types for joint action for democratic demands. However, it also occasionally led narrow groups for oppositional politics, a leadership which caused conflicts sometimes among associations of Diyarbakır and sometimes between the Chamber and political actors of the dual power contestation. This section discusses activism by the Chamber. I first give an overview of the Chamber's activism in the recent period that usually took into account the balance of power, by acting as a moderating third actor, while advocating a set of pro-Kurdish demands. I then highlight two major examples which led the Chamber to align more with the AKP government and to confront the Kurdish movement: different approaches to the constitutional referendum and the economic dimension of decentralization proposals.

#### ***Maneuvering between dual power***

Activism by the Chamber's leaders, along with other associational leaders, mostly took into account the balance of power. The business leaders engaged in efforts to moderate conflicts between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement, while taking part in separate

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<sup>179</sup> My interview with Raif Türk, Diyarbakır, 24/03/2011.

projects of each political actor. Yet, there were also times of conflicts and increasing alignment with one side. The highly turbulent political conjecture caused these oscillations in the associational activism and increased uncertainty, if not insecurity. Still, the leaders could stay consistent in advocating a set of pro-Kurdish demands in common such as the right to education in mother language, constitutional re-definition of citizenship, and the strengthening of local governments (see Ch. 2).

As mentioned before, Prime Minister Erdoğan's initiatives since 2005 provided associations with important opportunities. The Chamber's leaders supported these initiatives, be them political or economic. They also called for an end to violence by both sides, especially in times of increasing clashes or ending of unilateral ceasefire by the PKK. While they tried to keep a 'neutral' appearance, their appearance usually looked more supportive of the government (see the next sub-section). However, this changed when the pro-Kurdish parties and activists were under increasing repression. In these times the Chamber took part in joint statements, which were more of a critical content. These, for instance, included opposition to the closure case against the pro-Kurdish party DTP in 2009 (see Ch. 2; *Bianet*, 08/12/2009). A stronger criticism was concerning the KCK operations that have started in the same year and continued to date, resulting in the detainment of thousands of Kurdish activists including elected local politicians (see Ch. 2 and 3). This led to calls by associational leaders for an end to the operations and the release of politician detainees, as well as calls to the government for having negotiations with the pro-Kurdish party. These calls were also suggested the inclusion of guerilla leader Öcalan in negotiations for peace (see, for instance, *Bianet*, 24/07/2009; *Bianet*, 11/01/2010; *Radikal*, 17/10/2011; *Taraf*, 21/11/2011).

The leaders' involvement in diverse projects and activities carried out by the rival political forces provides interesting examples for observing this balanced strategy. For instance, as a result of associational status, the Chamber's leader Ensarioğlu occupied a position in the executive board of the Karacadağ Development Agency, which is led by the Governor of Diyarbakir. He also had cooperative relations with the KOSGEB, another state organization at the local level (see first section above). In a more voluntary and symbolical manner, Ensarioğlu, along with Şah İsmail Bedirhanoglu from GÜNSİAD and Raif Türk from DİSİAD, has occupied a seat in the board of trustees for the Diyarbakir Foundation for Culture and Arts (*Diyarbakir Kültür Sanat Vakfi*). Founded in 2008, the foundation is led by the poet Bejan Matur and known to be close to the Gülen community and the AKP circles. The Chamber and business associations also were favored over other associations such as the

Bar and the Medical Association when it came to meetings with the Chief of the General Staff in 2008 (*Bianet*, 05/09/2008).

On the other hand, business leaders participated in activities also in cooperation with the Kurdish movement. Ensarioğlu, along with Bedirhanoğlu, attended meetings of the Democratic Society Congress, one of which was on the proposal of democratic autonomy as detailed below. A businessperson interviewee suggested that the business leaders would not participate in such a platform in the past. In 2009, moreover, these business leaders were involved in the organization committee for a demonstration in Diyarbakır named ‘Yes to Peace with Dignity.’ The committee included also some other associational leaders (see Ch. 6 and 7), while the demonstration gave the impression of an initiative by the Kurdish movement. Because of slogans and talks made in the demonstration, the committee members were put on trial according to the Anti-Terror Law and convicted of making propaganda for the PKK (*Taraf*, 22/12/2010). It is no doubt that the goal of these business leaders was not such propaganda.

An even more interesting example is the case of Sarmaşık philanthropic association (see Ch. 2 and Ch. 3). Faced with judicial obstacles posed by the national center, Sarmaşık was re-founded in 2007 in the municipality’s leadership but on the basis of a large board of founders, which is composed of a number of associational leaders including the then Chamber’s leader Kutbettin Arzu as well as the leaders of voluntary business associations such as Şah İsmail Bedirhanoğlu, Raif Türk, Celalettin Birtane (DİYAD), and Ahmet Öcal (MÜSİAD).<sup>180</sup> I got the impression that the purpose was to prevent another judicial blockage thanks to the heterogeneity of the board that makes it look more than a mere affiliate of the Kurdish movement. Yet, it also seems as a by-product of the moral economy, a form of national redistribution, considering the finance method of the association, as well as the socio-political environment it has been situated in.<sup>181</sup> Sarmaşık has been financed by monthly contributions from associations and labor unions, in addition to individual donations. The Chamber has contributed too.

However, some business leaders who have been involved in Sarmaşık’s founding board expressed views against social-aid activities in my interviews, making arguments such as that social aids make people lazy. Moreover, at least one of them has not financially contributed to

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<sup>180</sup> See the list of board of founders at <http://www.sarmasik.org/detay/102/> Access date is 15/01/2013.

<sup>181</sup> By this I mean both the severe poverty in the province (mentioned in previous section) and the rigorous poverty-alleviation activities carried out by the AKP and the Gülen community (see Ch. 3).

the association either. This supports my view that the purpose for some associational actors in such dual engagements is to observe the balance of power.<sup>182</sup> It also shows that business leaders have increased their bargaining power in the recent process. It is because their support appears important for the movement to have some immunity from the obstacles posed by the state bodies and maybe also by the mainstream media. Increasing associational activism and the support it has received at the national level have a role in this situation. And the fact that some business leaders do not donate indicate a privileged partnership for them.

Nevertheless, the Chamber's leadership, as well as other major business leaderships, gives an impression of not only engagement in strategic activism but also experience of political change: leaders had to take into account demands from and sometimes intimidation by different actors in the new political environment, actors such as the AKP government and the Kurdish movement, as well as other associations. Hence, they adapted themselves to the changing environment. Their increasing significance has also an influence on the dual power contestation. The AKP government was active in supporting business associations as alternative Kurdish actors; however, the latter opposed its policies at times. The Kurdish movement, on the other hand, also had to change its approach to associations. Öcalan and the PKK circles often criticized associational leaders for 'collaborating' with the government; yet, they also gradually increased their efforts to integrate associational actors to their political project (Democratic Society Congress has been one means) and to influence the site (internal electoral politics has been one means).<sup>183</sup> Moreover, the debates about de-linking business activities and patriotic commitments also can be seen as the loosening of the moral economy for business actors.

### ***Support for the constitutional referendum: aligning with the AKP***

In August 2010, Galip Ensarioğlu read out a joint press statement, in the company of representatives of fourteen interest associations, which stand for small to large entrepreneurs of any kind in Diyarbakır. The statement was about their decision to vote in favor of the 2010 constitutional referendum (see Ch. 3). Ensarioğlu noted that they did not find the amendment

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<sup>182</sup> The term 'balance' was used by a few businessmen I interviewed with regard to political activities by Diyarbakır's business actors in general.

<sup>183</sup> For instance, Öcalan once referred to criticisms by Diyarbakır's NGOs about his 'guardianship' and called them, particularly the Diyarbakır Chamber, to suggest their proposals. He also noted that they should take place within the Democratic Society Congress. See 'Öcalan: demokratik ulus inşası yapıyoruz,' 11/12/2010 dated meeting notes taken by Öcalan's lawyers. Available online at <http://www.rojaciwan.com> Access date is 15/12/2012. Concerns were also raised by other pro-Kurdish actors about the rise of Kurdish 'middle classes.'

sufficient but still important for the following reasons: the amended articles were more democratic than the existing versions; the amendment had a symbolical importance for enabling the trial of the 1980 *coup* practitioners; and it had the potential to lead to a process of fundamental change.<sup>184</sup>

This event occurred against the background of a highly polarized environment in the country (see Ch. 3). The pro-Kurdish party BDP had been calling for boycotting of the referendum on the grounds that the amendment did not take into account Kurdish demands for a democratic solution to the issue via a new constitution (see Ch. 2). The AKP government, on the other hand, had been pressuring social actors including interest associations to publicly express their choice (see Ch. 4). In this vein, the Minister of Internal Affairs also paid a visit to Diyarbakır and had meetings with certain associational leaders to campaign for the referendum (*Firat News*, 06/08/2010). In such an environment, the joint statement became the most significant event in which the Chamber took a stance openly in support of the government and in opposition to the Kurdish movement in such a striking manner.

Actors from the Kurdish movement responded negatively to this initiative by business representatives. The co-chair of the pro-Kurdish party Selahattin Demirtaş stated that business representatives did not represent all of Diyarbakır and that to act as if it was so was ‘immoral.’ Demirtaş interpreted the initiative as a political move in that representatives were, he argued, in contact with the AKP while some were expecting to become a member of the parliament. He added that they declared their preference urgently because of the AKP’s pressures on business groups to do so (*Milliyet*, 23/08/2010; *Birgün*, 24/08/2010). The PKK’s leader Abdullah Öcalan interpreted the event similarly: he argued that the associational leaders had an agreement with the state, with the hope of gaining a role in case the PKK was eliminated.<sup>185</sup>

Selahattin Demirtaş also argued that members of the associations in question would boycott the referendum. However, among the Kurdish business community, it was mainly Celalettin Birtane, who opposed the joint press statement by a counter press statement. Birtane was at

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<sup>184</sup> See *Bianet*, 19/08/2010. Associations include, *inter alia*, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Stock Exchanges, the Chamber of Tradesmen and Craftsmen, the Chamber of Pharmacists, the Chamber of Agriculture, GÜNSİAD, DİSİAD, DİĞİAD, and MÜSİAD. Some are compulsory associations and others are voluntary.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Öcalan demokratik özerkliğin esaslarını açıkladı,’ 20/08/2010 dated meeting notes taken by Öcalan’s lawyers. Available online at <http://www.rojaciwan.com> Access date is 15/12/2012.



the time the leader of DİYAD<sup>186</sup> as well as a member of the Chamber. He also has a background in the Kurdish movement: he used to be the leader of the pro-Kurdish party DEHAP's headquarters in Diyarbakır as well as an executive of an affiliate union of the KESK.<sup>187</sup> By his press statement, Birtane criticized the business representatives for not consulting their members before making such a statement and for publicly declaring preferences about the referendum, while he did not declare his own preference (*Evrensel*, 26/08/2010).

The media's take on this emerging conflict was revealing. *Firat News*, a major pro-PKK news website, claimed that Galip Ensarioğlu had economic interests in supporting the referendum. The given example was a construction contract signed between Ensarioğlu and Diyarbakır's Dicle University through public procurement by the Special Provincial Administration. Its value was stated as almost four million Turkish Liras (*Firat News*, 11/09/2010). Ensarioğlu rejected this interpretation, adding that he got the contract despite the efforts by the governorship to cancel it (*Sabah*, 04/10/2010).

The mainstream media, on the other hand, pointed at the 'emerging bourgeois' in the Kurdish region as a political alternative to the pro-Kurdish party BDP. This depiction was made with a supportive tone, based on interviews with business representatives. In one of them, Şah İsmail Bedirhanoglu stated that 'feudal relations of production are turning into a capitalist mode of production in the region' and that 'a new bourgeois class is in the making' (quoted in *Milliyet*, 25/08/2010). He also expressed his opposition to violence as a means of rights struggle, adding that democratic channels should be used instead. In an interview right after the referendum, Bedirhanoglu stated that 'the Kurdish society is not homogenous. The political movement in the region should show tolerance to this' (quoted in *Milliyet*, 13/09/2010). Bedirhanoglu has been the leader of GÜNSİAD and become one of the most visible public figures (or 'opinion leaders,' as called in the associational site) in the recent process.

The Chamber's leader at the time, Galip Ensarioğlu, also emphasized the importance of peace for development, noting that the fourteen associations, which made the joint statement, represented the business community of Diyarbakır, which provided employment to some two hundred thousands of people. Moreover, he countered the BDP's criticism of their joint

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<sup>186</sup> *Diyarbakır İşadamları Yapı Derneği* – Construction Association of Diyarbakır Businessmen. It is a small business association founded in 2008 for entrepreneurs working in the construction sector.

<sup>187</sup> My interview with Celalettin Birtane, Diyarbakır, 04/05/2011. For information on DEHAP and KESK, see respectively Chapters 2 and 4.

statement by questioning that they were recognized as representatives of Diyarbakır when it was in accordance with the BDP's interests, but not recognized so when it was not in accordance (*Yeni Şafak*, 24/08/2010; *Milliyet*, 25/08/2010). While this questioning points at the fluid character of both coalitions and claims, the events contributed to the depiction of a Kurdish 'civil society'<sup>188</sup> in favor of peace and using democratic political channels. This was juxtaposed with the Kurdish movement, some components of which have been involved in armed struggle. The vulgar version of this depiction has been the binary of 'good Kurds' versus 'bad Kurds' outlined in Chapter 3. The mainstream media and the AKP government had a role in producing this outcome; but the Kurdish business representatives also volunteered in asserting themselves as a third actor in such guise.

In the end, the participation rate for the referendum in Diyarbakır was 34 per cent, and the 93 per cent of the participants voted in favor of the referendum. Note that the participation rate was 73 per cent nationwide whereas it was only about 1 per cent in Hakkari, a stronghold of the Kurdish movement (see Table 3. 5).

### ***Decentralization via 'democratic autonomy' or state rescaling?***

Again in 2010, on the 18th and 19th of December, the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) organized a workshop in Diyarbakır to discuss the proposal of 'democratic autonomy.' Participants included diverse actors such as, *inter alia*, pro-Kurdish politicians, associational leaders, academics, and journalists. The workshop resulted in harsh reactions and controversies. Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that he would not let a 'surgery' done on the country (*Yeni Şafak*, 27/12/2010). The National Security Council, gathered under the leadership of President Abdullah Gül, emphasized the principles of 'one flag, one nation, one state,' rejecting any challenges to them (*Milliyet*, 29/12/2010). While the state actors reacted to the political components of the proposal such as the advocacy for bilingualism, Kurdish business leaders reacted most vehemently to its economic dimension. In addition to the 2010 constitutional referendum, this was the second major event in which Kurdish business leaders opposed a political proposal by the Kurdish movement.

The proposal of democratic autonomy has been on the agenda of the Kurdish movement since 2007. It reflects the influence of ideas Abdullah Öcalan developed in the post-1999 period, as regards the reconfiguration of territorial-administrative organization to enable a democratic

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<sup>188</sup> Associational leaders often spoke of themselves as 'civil society organization' while making press statements.

solution to the Kurdish issue (see Ch. 2). The pro-Kurdish parties DTP and BDP advocated the proposal as a part of their party programs (DTP 2007; BDP 2008). It was then a proposal for decentralization, through the creation of regional administrative units between the central government and provinces. There would be some twenty regional parliaments, each representing a number of neighboring cities and having powers in areas such as education, culture, healthcare, and the economy. Regional parliaments would be formed in a way similar to existing provincial councils on the basis of elections (Dicle 2009). However, the 2010 DTK workshop included a new proposal for debate, in addition to this old one. And it was this new proposal which caused the controversy.

The contested proposal advocated an alternative model of economic development. This model encouraged an ‘egalitarian solidaristic economy, driven by not profit maximization but use value’ (DTK 2010). More specific ideas included the coordinating role of consumer and producer cooperatives, as well as a mixed economy, composed of both private and self-managing public sectors.<sup>189</sup> It was this approach critical of the market economy that triggered criticisms by business leaders. The Chamber’s leader Galip Ensarioğlu stated to the press that people who have never run a shop in their life were proposing an economic model for Kurdistan (*Yeni Şafak*, 28/12/2010). He said that he did not find it realistic to give up the competitive model while the world was a single market. He also argued that democratic autonomy was not a major demand for Kurds (*Taraf*, 25/12/2012).

Ensarioğlu advocated instead another model for strengthening local governments. He described the AKP government’s initiatives in this regard (see Ch. 3), by pointing at the fact that special provincial administrations got stronger thanks to new powers to manage public procurements and investments based on resources allocated by the center. He also mentioned the establishment of development agencies and the AKP government’s reform proposal for local governments, a proposal which he claimed was postponed because the Kurdish movement started advocating a similar model. This was the model of democratic autonomy which was developed in 2007 by the pro-Kurdish politician Hatip Dicle and adopted by pro-Kurdish parties as described above. Ensarioğlu spoke positive about this model.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> These ideas are not seen in the DTK’s (2010) written proposal, but were discussed in the workshop according to the account of Galip Ensarioğlu. See ‘Kürtlerin asıl talebi özerklik değil,’ *Taraf*, 25/12/2010. The ideas are also developed in a variety of pro-Kurdish movement publications (Haber-Merkezi 2011; AÖSBA N/A; Sönmez 2011; Çelik 2011).

<sup>190</sup> See ‘Kürtlerin asıl talebi özerklik değil,’ *Taraf*, 25/12/2010 and my interview with Galip Ensarioğlu, Ankara, 23/09/2011.

The GÜNSİAD's leader Şah İsmail Bedirhaoğlu also was invited to the workshop and he expressed similar concerns in my interview with him: he described the 2010 DTK's proposal as aiming a 'classless society' and proposing 'self-defense forces' which disturbed some local groups. As mentioned in Chapter 2, self-defense forces, for the decentralization of public security, are seen by some Kurds as a threat to the opponents of the Kurdish movement. Bedirhaoğlu, on the other hand, supported the liberal model of decentralization. He specified that it was special provincial administrations not municipalities which were to be strengthened.<sup>191</sup>

The model advocated by business leaders relates to the ongoing process of 'state rescaling' in Turkey (see Bayırbağ 2010; cf. Brenner 1999). This process was somewhat triggered by the AKP government's reform process for EU candidacy, as it included in its 2003 Accession Partnership document the objective to set up regional branches at NUTS 2 level (EC, (European Council) 2003). However, the reform process was impeded in certain respects by the bureaucratic elites and the then President Sezer due to concerns about the unitary structure of the country. The process witnessed the devolution of powers from the national government to special provincial administrations and its units at the local level. Special provincial administrations have provincial councils as decision-making bodies, constituted by local elections. Furthermore, development agencies were founded as mentioned above. They reflect better the new governance model, including, *inter alia*, leaders of chambers of commerce and industry in their executive board, in addition to the involvement of the leaders of voluntary business associations in advisory councils. Therefore, the model has the potential to increase the power of businesspeople at the local level, in contrast to the DTK's model.

In late December, however, after the responses by the state actors and businesspeople, a demonstration took place in Diyarbakır in support of the proposal of democratic autonomy. National newspapers highlighted a big placard from this demonstration: it said that 'Kurdish people wants democratic autonomy, rather than becoming collaborators of the AKP, like Galip Ensarioğlu and Emin Aktar are' (*Milliyet*, 29/12/2010). There was a signature of the People's Initiative of Amed (the antique name of Diyarbakır), and behind the placard were the PKK flags held by other demonstrators, as commonly seen in pro-Kurdish protests. As to why

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<sup>191</sup> My interview with Şah İsmail Bedirhanoglu, Diyarbakır, 24/03/2011. It seems that these two businessmen reflect the general approach of Kurdish organized business. However, there is an exception. Similar to the divergence in the referendum debate, the DIYAD's leader Celalettin Birtane expressed different views, in support of the contested model, by emphasizing social justice and participatory mechanisms for the workplace and politics. My interview with Celalettin Birtane, Diyarbakır, 04/05/2011.

these two names were targeted, Ensarioğlu and the then Bar's leader Aktar (see Ch. 6) were the major associational leaders who appeared a lot in the national media gradually under a pro-AKP guise thanks to their oppositional approach to some political proposals by the Kurdish movement: this approach concerned the boycott call against the 2010 referendum, in addition to the model of democratic autonomy.

Against the background of different proposals and diverse responses, the pro-Kurdish party BDP maintained the proposal as it was prepared in 2007. Hence, the party has kept some ambiguity with regard to the economic dimension of the proposed model. Ambiguity helps form a coalition of actors with different ideas and interests. There might have been some opposition to the DTK's model, but the ambiguous model as still held by the BDP provides a major model of decentralization to date, a model which accommodates other common demands such as linguistic rights. Thereby, Kurdish actors can be still a part of this somewhat flexible coalition under the demand for strengthening of local governments, while ambiguity leaves the proposal open to future contests (cf. Streeck/Thelen 2005: 26-27).

### ***Conclusions***

Despite being a latecomer in terms of politicization, the Chamber, accompanied with the voluntary business associations, played a leading role in Kurdish associational activism. It regularly took part in *encompassing coalitions* formed by the associations on an ad hoc basis since 2005. The concern about the conflict situation – efforts to moderate the dual power contestation and press for peace – provided the common ground. In this respect, the attention paid by the AKP, top state figures and the mainstream media helped achieve this third actor status, opening up the space for associational activism and favoring business associations in particular as the representatives from civil society. However, the associations also gradually acted in harmony to make pro-Kurdish rights claims. The minimum common demands – such as the right to education in mother language, constitutional safeguards for recognition, and strengthening of local governments – provided the basis for this coalition. The Kurdish movement played a role in articulating these common demands, by highlighting the shared collective identity and keeping some *ambiguity* about the demands to downplay the differences of interests and ideas among groups (cf. McAdam/Tarrow/Tilly 2008).

However, the Chamber, coupled with the business leaders, also formed *narrow coalitions* at times of significant political events in the country. These led to conflicts both among associations and between the business leaders and the Kurdish movement. The major example

is the 2010 Constitutional Referendum for which the business leaders (as well as the Bar Association) supported the referendum in favor of the AKP government and against the boycott calls by the Kurdish movement. This appears to be a significant strategic decision which increased the power of the business leaders. With their discourses and activism, business leaders played a role in the *categorical division* of Kurds: first, they voiced it as the ‘supporters of violent methods’ versus the ‘supporters of a peaceful solution.’ Second, especially following the referendum debates, the division took also an economic basis: they depicted themselves as the ‘emerging bourgeois,’ who favored ‘democratic channels’ over ‘violence.’ The vulgar version of this was the category of ‘white Kurds’ used in the mainstream media (also see Ch. 3).

Indeed, the business alignment with the government appears to have an economic dimension: the period under the AKP rule provided new opportunities for capital accumulation. The Chamber gained access to new resources for itself as well as for its members, in addition to opportunities for its leaders for political career advancement. Political normalization in the Kurdish region, compared to the 1990s, contributed to the economic improvement of Diyarbakır, helping its integration with the national and, to a degree, international markets. The emerging market in Kurdish northern Iraq provided an opportunity and increased hopes for Kurdish economic actors to use their ethnic-linguistic capital in their relations with both Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish economic actors.

On the other hand, as the debates on the democratic economy proposal show, Kurdish business actors’ views conflict with the Kurdish movement with regard to the model of economic development and decentralization each one advocates. Moreover, the pro-market model supported by business actors is akin to the initiatives by the AKP government. Although the pro-Kurdish parties kept ambiguity in party programs with regard to the economic dimension of the proposal to obscure the differences of ideas and interests (as the radical not-pro-market version comes from the PKK circles), they could not avoid the clashes. And there is the more general trend that the moral economy becomes more contested, as seen in the resistance to shop closure protests.

One could suggest that the conflict of interests push business leaders toward the AKP government. However, business leaders usually pursued a balanced approach, strategically manipulating the dual power situation despite the constraints it presented: they took part in shifting flexible coalitions and cooperated with each power in political and/or local projects (cf. Scott 2009: 60). In this respect, there has been a *compromise* between business leaders

and the Kurdish movement: the former started publicly voicing pro-Kurdish demands and occasionally collaborated with the movement (e.g. Sarmaşık), while the latter, especially at the municipal level, started loosening the moral-economy obligations for business actors ('capital has no patriotism,' or the business members who do not donate to Sarmaşık). Overall, the Chamber and the business leaders enjoyed high public visibility and legitimacy, increasing their bargaining power in the process.

## **Chapter 6: Professional associations**

The Bar and Medical Associations had been active already in the 1990s, with efforts to draw attention and to find solutions to severe problems relevant to their associational focus under the Emergency Rule. Thanks to the changing political environment, these associations became more politicized in the 2000s, making claims in a scope broader than their professional field. However, the nature of this politicization as well as its consequences has showed a significant variety between the two associations. This chapter examines the activities by these compulsory professional associations in the transitional period. It aims to explore the roles associational leaders played in coalition formation and understand the divergence by looking at their interactions with memberships and political interlocutors. The cross-pressures of economic-professional interests and collective identity politics provide the trajectory to trace these interactions.

First, I give an overview of associational leadership and properties. I start with a brief historical background of the 1990s and then go on with the AKP period. I also underline differences in the access to resources and changes in some associational properties such as the size of memberships. Second, I highlight some major dynamics in the membership environments of the two associations. This section gives an idea about the major opportunities and constraints facing professionals as a result of political and economic processes, also giving examples of the interplay between professional interests and political-moral commitments. Third, I examine the patterns of interaction between each association and the political actors. I first focus on the Bar's leading yet somewhat unstable position in associational activism. Then I point at the activities by the Medical Association, which appeared more consistent but also more oppositional. The chapter concludes with major points.

### **6.1 Associational leadership and properties**

This section first gives a glimpse of the Bar and Medical Associations in the 1990s with a focus on the leadership level to better understand the associations' changing role and significance. It then gives an overview of the AKP period. It points at diverse trends seen in the associational site, as the Bar became more significant and contested since 2005 while the Medical Association kept a lower profile in political activism as mediated by the mainstream media. These trends also give a general view of political alignment of leaders. Finally, the



section mentions some associational properties such as the size of memberships, access to new resources, as well as the nature of relations with respective peak associations in the recent period, as they link leadership to both its membership and political interlocutors that the other two sections elaborate on.

### ***A brief historical background***

As mentioned before, the armed conflict made associations of Diyarbakır more vocal in the 1990s. This was especially the case for the Bar and Medical Associations, as they were influenced in diverse ways from human rights violations common under the Emergency Rule (see Ch. 2). Many civilian Kurds were subjected to arbitrary arrests, torture in police detention, forced disappearances, village evacuations, and murders by unknown perpetrators. Associational members also were influenced in the work environment: defense lawyers were put under pressure, when they undertook political cases, through detention and investigations on the grounds of alleged membership to illegal organizations. And physicians were required to prepare reports on torture claims as desired by the police, or would be faced with pressures through, *inter alia*, exile if they were employed in the public sector. Several professionals also were murdered by unknown perpetrators.<sup>192</sup> In such an environment, it was inevitable for associational leaders not to engage in some sort of activism.

Diyarbakır was a special place for Kurdish rights struggle in the legal arena thanks to the fact that the Bar Association was then a regional association and there were the branches of major human rights associations in the city.<sup>193</sup> The Bar's leaders engaged in various activities against human rights violations and pressures on their members: they made press statements, tried to mobilize the peak association TBB (mostly unsuccessful), prepared reports, and had meetings with foreign delegates and the state officials.<sup>194</sup> Yet, the Bar's executives were also faced with difficulties, at times threatened by the officials, taken into custody, put on trial and

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<sup>192</sup> See the speeches by the Diyarbakır Bar's delegates for the general assemblies of TBB (TBB 1995b: 91-97; TBB 1996b: 50-53; TBB 1999c: 80-85) and a petition by the TBB (1999c: 248). Also see (Bora 2002; İnanıcı 2008: 182-183; Muller 1996: 187-191; Çelik, Abdullah 2010; van Bruinessen 1996).

<sup>193</sup> These included mainly the Human Rights Association (*İnsan Hakları Derneği* – İHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (*Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı* – TİHV). The Diyarbakır branch of İHD was founded in 1988 and chaired in the 1990s by Osman Baydemir, the current Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and in the 2000s by Selahattin Demirtaş, the current co-chairperson for the pro-Kurdish party BDP. İHD was one of the major targets of political pressure. The Diyarbakır branch of TİHV was founded in 1998 and chaired by Sezgin Tanrıkulu, later leader of the Bar Association. See Diken (2001: 143-160).

<sup>194</sup> See the speeches by Diyarbakır delegates in the assembly meetings of the TBB mentioned above. Also my interviews with past leaders, Mustafa Özer, Diyarbakır, 24/06/2011 and Fethi Gümü, Diyarbakır, 01/10/2011.

even experienced assassination attempts because of such activities.<sup>195</sup> Nevertheless, the Bar and legal professionals appeared as increasingly important actors. Leading lawyers occupied multiple positions in associations and started taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights, where they were often ruled against Turkey. Considering the centrality of legal problems to the Kurdish issue, lawyers appeared to be important candidates for party politics.

The Medical Association was too a regional association at the time, while Diyarbakır has been a center for healthcare in the region. The association was making efforts to fight human rights violations, although it was not an actor as central as the Bar was. Similarly, the association's leaders made press statements, prepared reports, held meetings with the state officials and foreign delegates, while having cooperative relations with the peak association TTB as well as other associations in the province such as labor unions. Leaders raised concerns about the officials' interference to forensic medicine reports, torture, hunger strikes in prisons, and forced migration. They also pointed at difficulties in conducting professional duty, such as linguistic barriers between physicians and patients.<sup>196</sup> However, the executives of the Medical Association, as well as unionists in the healthcare sector, also were subjected to political repression at times through exiles, investigations, plots, and murder by unknown perpetrators (Çelik, Abdullah 2010).

In such an environment, lawyers appeared to be in a less unsafe position as they worked mostly in the private sector and had the guard of legal knowledge, as opposed to physicians, who worked mostly in the public sector then. The changing political and economic environment from the late 1990s onwards, however, was to have important impact on professional environments and associations.

### ***Associational leadership in the AKP period***

In the AKP period, the professional associations have become more active in the political arena, making claims with a broader scope than that of professional fields. They also turned into contested sites; this has been particularly the case with the Bar. The Bar had two different leaders in this period up to 2012: Sezgin Tanrıku and Mehmet Emin Aktar. Political activism by these figures is detailed below in the third section, but some general notes on

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<sup>195</sup> My interview with Mustafa Özer, Diyarbakır, 24/06/2011. See also the interviews by Neşe Düzel (*Radikal*, 19/02/2001) and Ertuğrul Mavioğlu (2006: 117-127).

<sup>196</sup> See Soyer (1996); Bora (2002); my interviews with past leaders, Mahmut Ortakaya, Diyarbakır, 23/06/2011; Seyfettin Kızıllan, Diyarbakır, 22/06/2011; and Necdet İpekyüz, Diyarbakır, 28/06/2011.

associational leadership and electoral processes<sup>197</sup> will help understanding this activism, as well as coalitions that come out of it.

Since the late 1980s, Sezgin Tanrikulu occupied various positions in the Bar's executive boards and administration, as well as the chair of the local branches of human rights organizations. He was a publicly known person, undertaking the cases of important Kurdish political figures, and having meetings with foreign politicians including the US then-President Bill Clinton in his visit to Turkey in 1999. However, he too was taken into custody a few times on political grounds. Tanrikulu served as the leader of the Bar for three terms between 2002 and 2008. Under his leadership, the Bar continued to draw attention to human rights violations and became more active in politics. As Tanrikulu kept the Bar's political tradition, clashes occurred between him and the Prime Minister as detailed below. However, these experiences paved the way for his political career: he became a member of the parliament on the tickets of the Republican People's Party (CHP) in the 2011 elections. At a time Kurdish politics were divided into two poles represented by the AKP and the Kurdish movement, Tanrikulu's choice pointed out an alternative option, as well as efforts within the CHP to revise its approach to the Kurdish issue.

Tanrikulu was succeeded by Mehmet Emin Aktar, who served two terms until 2012. Before this, Aktar too occupied various positions in the Bar throughout the 1990s in executive boards and administration. Aktar pursued a strategy somewhat different than that of Tanrikulu and similar to that of Ensarioğlu from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (see Ch. 5): he usually pursued a balanced approach towards the dual power. Yet, there were also some oscillations in the political positions he took, as detailed below. According to rumors, Aktar wanted to run as a candidate on the tickets of the AKP in the 2011 general elections, after his support for the 2010 referendum, however, he was not accepted.<sup>198</sup> He did not run as a candidate for the Bar leadership again.

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<sup>197</sup> Elections take place once in two years to assign leaders and the members of executive boards as well as delegates for peak associations. Members gather in general assemblies and vote for or against candidates. In bar associations, both leaders and members of the executive board are elected directly by general assembly. In medical associations, general assembly elects the members of the executive board, which elects the leader. The number of seats of the board varies among associations as well as according to the size of respective membership. Currently, the Bar's executive board has ten members, whereas it is seven for the Medical Association. The election of the board also varies in practice. In Diyarbakır, members vote for individual candidates, hence proportional representation, as demanded by the law, whereas the *de facto* practice in, say, the Istanbul Bar is that members mostly vote for bloc-lists of candidates, hence, majoritarian representation. As to the Diyarbakır Medical Association, there is mostly a single list.

<sup>198</sup> Rumors are, of course, not reliable, as they may emerge to de-legitimize actors. Yet I should note that I heard this rumor within both the AKP (including a local official) and the pro-Kurdish circles.

According to some of my interviewees, Aktar was supported by Sezgin Tanrıkulu in associational elections against his rivals. Candidates rely on intra-associational networks on the basis of personal and political ties. However, these networks are loose and re-made in each term. There can also be interference by external actors. For instance, I was told by a past leader, who is close to the Kurdish movement, that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as leading businesspeople, tried to influence the 2010 elections by convincing some lawyers to vote for Aktar against his rival who was told to be supported by the pro-Kurdish party BDP.<sup>199</sup> His rival was Tahir Elçi, who apparently received votes mostly from the supporters of the BDP,<sup>200</sup> whereas Aktar received votes mainly from two other groups: one is the so-called liberals (read as those who are critical of the Kurdish movement) and the other is the pious (also known as Islamists, some of whom support the AKP).<sup>201</sup> Halit Advan is a lawyer from the latter group; he occupied seats in executive boards under Aktar's leadership until he became the chairperson of the AKP's Diyarbakır headquarters. In my interview with him, Advan told me that pious lawyers became influential in the Bar's elections since the mid-2000s, but they supported Tanrıkulu and Aktar, rather than running their own candidate, and occupied a few seats in executive boards. Such diversity within the boards should be affecting the decision-making process, making it relatively difficult for leaders.<sup>202</sup>

Hence, the 2000s witnessed increasing competition within the Bar Association. In the 1990s, there used to be mostly a single candidate for leadership or, in a few cases, two candidates. However, the number increased in the following decade, alternating between two and four. This was followed by the formation of a group by pious lawyers in the 2012 elections. This group proposed a candidate for leadership and a list of candidates for the executive board<sup>203</sup> in a fashion similar to the bars in big provinces such as Istanbul and Ankara. This appears to be an outcome of both increasing diversity within membership, as it enlarged in numbers, and

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<sup>199</sup> In this vein, I was told by the Chamber's past leader Kutbettin Arzu that they had supported pro-democratic forces in the Bar, implying an effort against the Kurdish movement.

<sup>200</sup> A few lawyers of different political commitments told me that some lawyers who describe themselves as 'patriot' and support the BDP would be reluctant about the control of the Bar management by the BDP; hence, electoral behavior might be different within the association than party politics.

<sup>201</sup> A member of the executive board told me that pious lawyers comprises one third of votes, while the rest is equally divided between liberals and supporters of the BDP (also known as patriots).

<sup>202</sup> My interview with Halit Advan, Diyarbakır, 23/06/2011.

<sup>203</sup> Hence, the coalition of the pious and the liberals was divided into two candidates, while Tahir Elçi won the race thanks to the support of the BDP circles (*Haber Diyarbakır*, 03/11/2012 and *Bianet*, 05/11/2012).

the Bar's increasing political significance. The high rates of participation in associational elections also support this.<sup>204</sup>

The Medical Association portrays quite a different picture. In the 1990s there used to be mostly a single candidate for leadership and this continued in the 2000s, remaining to be a less contested area, also characterized with low participation by members in elections.<sup>205</sup> On the other hand, while the Bar was led by two leaders in the AKP period up to 2012, it was five for the Medical Association.<sup>206</sup> The reason is probably because leadership offers lower returns for physicians: physicians usually work in hospitals in the public and private sectors, unlike lawyers, who are usually self-employed and, hence, more flexible time wise. For physicians working in the public sector, there is also the risk of exile, as a punishment by political authorities.

The Medical Association also has been less visible in the national media than the Bar and the Chamber. Its leaders made press statements, individually or in joint action with other associations. Statements touched upon sometimes political issues, sometimes professional issues. Yet, the association appeared usually as a secondary element in joint actions seen in the post-2005 associational activism, which was led more by business leaders and the Bar. The leaders of the Medical Association read out joint press statements once in a while, in addition to less appearance in TV programs or interviews for mainstream newspapers. Hence, there is also less focus on its individual leaders in this overview.

One reason for the lower visibility is the fact that the association does not occupy a strategic position as it does not appear central to the definition of the Kurdish issue in professional terms, i.e. healthcare concerns have received less attention than, say, human rights violations or regional underdevelopment about which the Bar and the Chamber are concerned by definition. This has been the case despite the fact that the Medical Association was involved in activities concerning healthcare services in Kurdish language. Another reason seems to be the political stance of recent leaders of the Medical Association vis-à-vis the dual power contestation. The Medical Association too became politically more active in the 2000s, thanks

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<sup>204</sup> The participation rate varies between 80 and 90 per cent (see DDK 2009: 708; also my calculations based on the media coverage).

<sup>205</sup> One past leader of the Diyarbakır Medical Association told me that the participation rate was only about 10 per cent.

<sup>206</sup> Leaders in the AKP period up to 2012 included Necdet İpekyüz, İlhan Diken, Adem Avcıkıran, Selçuk Mızraklı, and Şemsettin Koç. I had interviews with İpekyüz (Diyarbakır, 28/06/2011) and Koç (Diyarbakır, 24/03/2011).

to the changing environment; however, this politicization evolved in a direction that recently came to be openly supportive of the pro-Kurdish party and in opposition to the AKP government. Associational properties and dynamics in the membership environment contributed to such a political alignment.

### *Increasing membership, varying effects*

Over the last two decades, university enrollment has increased across the country helped by the processes of urbanization and the rising number of universities. The faculties of law and medicine became more accessible, as they also were established at Diyarbakır's Dicle University. Thereby, the memberships of the associations have grown. In the 1990s, the two associations were organized at a regional level; the 2000s witnessed the establishment of separate provincial associations. Yet, even after the fragmentation, Diyarbakır's Bar and Medical Associations came to possess much larger memberships (see Table 4.2, as well as Muller 1996; Diken 2001; DDK 2009).

The growth of membership increased the diversity within the associations. This has been more visible and influential in the Bar, as described above with regard to the increasing competition in electoral processes. The Medical Association, on the other hand, found itself in a different situation. One past leader told me that physicians got interested in the association in the 1990s as they benefited from its support for the hard conditions they were working under. However, as the situation improved in the 2000s, physicians lost their interest in the association, as manifested in low electoral-participation rates. Also, it is not only the number of physicians that has increased, but also the number of private hospitals, a fact which contributed to the improvement of work conditions and income levels for physicians (see next section). Hence, the changes have not contributed much to the internal competition.

Material sources enjoyed by the associations also improved in the 2000s, especially for the Bar. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the legal changes in the beginning of the decade increased income sources of the bars. In the case of Diyarbakır Bar, there have been also projects as sources of income. Projects rely mostly on European Union funds, which have improved mainly in the 2000s.<sup>207</sup> The Diyarbakır Medical Association, on the other hand, seems to have not enjoyed an increase in its already limited sources of income. Also, the access of both

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<sup>207</sup> Based on my interviews with past leaders.

associations to sources appear to be much poorer than, for instance, that of the Chamber for Commerce and Industry.<sup>208</sup>

Before proceeding to the next section, let's also note the variation in relations between the associations and their respective peak associations. The Diyarbakır Bar has had difficult relations with the TBB from the 1990s until the 2010 changes in the leadership. The Bar's delegates and leaders had difficulty in having the TBB cooperating with them against problems related to the Kurdish issue. For instance, Sezgin Tanrikulu complained about the non-cooperative behavior of the TBB with regard to human rights violations targeting Kurds. Tanrikulu sometimes received in turn very negative reactions from Turkish nationalists in general assemblies (TBB 2005: 75; TBB 2007-96, 145-146). These problems with the TBB management have to do with the political tradition that prevailed in the latter, until the current leader Coşar who has proved to be pro-Kurdish and collaborative (see Ch. 4).<sup>209</sup> For instance, he engaged in supportive activities against the judicially problematic aspects of the KCK operations with regard to the right to fair trial (e.g. long-lasting pre-trial detentions and trials functioning like *de facto* punishment). He also supported the demand for defense in Kurdish language (*Milliyet*, 23/02/2011) and attended a commemorative event organized by the Diyarbakır Bar about the old infamous Diyarbakır Prison (see Ch. 2), naming the prison as a shame on the state (TBB 2010b).

The Medical Association, on the other hand, has had good relations with the peak association TTB from the 1990s up to now. As detailed in Chapter 4, the TTB management has been led by a group which is pro-Kurdish and left-leaning. It has had some delegates from Diyarbakır in its executive boards and cooperated with the Diyarbakır Medical Association, with regard to issues ranging from above-mentioned problems facing associational leaders in the 1990s to the demand for healthcare services in Kurdish language in the 2000s (see TTB 2000b: 49-53; TTB 2010-128; TTB 2012c: 31-52). Add to this the discontent common among physicians across the country concerning some policy initiatives of the AKP government in the healthcare sector (see below next sections and Ch. 3).

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<sup>208</sup> In 2007, the Bar's income was 531 thousand Turkish liras and its expenditure less than the half. The Medical Association had 87 thousands as income and almost the same as expenditure (DDK 2009: 508, 738).

<sup>209</sup> With the so-called democratic opening in 2009, on the other hand, the then leader of TBB Özdemir Özok was to express support in a meeting with the Minister of Internal Affairs, while a group of bar associations expressed support by a joint press statement in Diyarbakır (*Bianet*, 14/08/2009 and 18/01/2010). Note that the Kurdish issue has been very divisive among provincial bar associations, as associations dominated by Turkish nationalists maintained a negative approach to the issue. For instance, the Istanbul Bar legally warned member lawyers who worked with Abdullah Öcalan, as detailed in next section.

## **6.2 Dynamics in the membership environment**

Membership environment is important to understand associational politics. Properties of this environment influence electoral processes with regard to how competitive the elections will be and who will be elected as a leader. Its dynamics are also taken into account by leaders in their articulation of demands, as well as in their interaction with political interlocutors. In this section, I describe the membership environments of the associations. First, I illustrate how lawyers have been faced with state-induced constraints, as well as political-moral commitments linked to the Kurdish issue. Second, I point at the liberalization process in the healthcare sector with regard to its effects on physicians; yet, the Kurdish issue has an impact on this sector as well, making some experiences peculiar.

### *Legal advocacy between profession and activism*

Lawyers have been working in the Kurdish region under conditions that are pretty much different than those in the rest of the country. They were faced with serious difficulties especially in the 1990s, as mentioned in the beginning. Yet, lawyers emerged as important actors in Kurdish politics. This is partly because the legal dimension of the Kurdish issue has been important. There is also the fact that they had a relatively protective shield of legal knowledge against political repression made them stronger. Thanks to this, lawyers have had an important place in oppositional politics in general.<sup>210</sup> These also motivated some of the young generation to study law. A Kurdish lawyer who studied law in the early 2000s told me that every family in the region needed one lawyer since every family would have one member taken into custody and have problems with land property, etc.

In the 2000s, the situation for lawyers got better; yet, constraints have not completely disappeared, especially for lawyers who were involved in cases that had political aspects. For instance, a court case was launched in 2003 against four lawyers in Diyarbakır, including Sezgin Tanrikulu, the then leader of the Bar, for allegedly abusing their legal responsibility in compensation cases of villagers. Compensation was sought for losses suffered by villagers because of forced evacuation and burning of their villages in the 1990s. The lawyers were not convicted in the end (*Bianet*, 24/12/2003). Kurdish lawyers would take such cases for compensation of losses as well as human rights violations by going first to national courts and then to the European Court of Human Rights, which mostly ruled against Turkey by

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<sup>210</sup> I was told about this also by a left-leaning lawyer concerning left-wing parties, in addition to pro-Kurdish ones.



sentencing it to pay fines. This is how the AKP government enacted a law in 2004 for the compensation for material damages suffered by individuals under the Emergency Rule in the Kurdish region. I will come back to this law below (see also Ch. 3); but, here let's underline that pressures faced by lawyers had to do with the challenges they posed to the political regime.

Another significant role played by some Kurdish lawyers was in relation with the defense of imprisoned guerilla leader Öcalan. For instance, Öcalan's lawyers were legally warned by the peak association TBB in 2003 for making press statements that allegedly aimed to mobilize the PKK (*Radikal*, 07/09/2003). The TBB under Özok's leadership then embraced the security approach to the Kurdish issue, i.e. taking it as a problem of 'terrorism' (see Ch. 4). Lawyers were playing important roles, as they mediated Öcalan's views of contemporary politics to the public since he was put into prison in 1999.<sup>211</sup> Some lawyers also took part in protests. For instance, a group of lawyers referred to Öcalan as 'Mister Öcalan' in their official petitions to have a meeting with him and thereby got themselves investigated for 'praising the terrorist organization' (*Firat News*, 15/07/2008). The use of this specific word 'Mister' had been a reason for the trial and conviction of many Kurdish activists until a high court recently ruled against one conviction on the grounds of the right to freedom of speech (*Radikal*, 21/05/2012).

Another source of confrontation between Kurdish lawyers and the political regime emerged as a result of KCK operations. As mentioned in Part I, the operations started in 2009, targeting first the elected local representatives of the pro-Kurdish party and then activists, unionists, journalists, etc., leading to the gradual detention of some thousands of people. Operations and trials took place across the country, the major one concerning Diyarbakır. They have been highly controversial though: their goal appeared to be suppressing the Kurdish movement, rather than judicial grounds: for instance, targets were often held in pre-trial detention more than a year. Trials were carried out by specially-authorized heavy criminal courts which are pretty problematical in legal terms (see Ch. 3, §2). Long-due indictments turned out to be highly dubious concerning accusations and evidence (see İnanıcı 2011c; Aktar 2012; Kozağaçlı 2012). The request by defendants for defending themselves in Kurdish language

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<sup>211</sup> These included lawyers from Diyarbakır as well as other parts of the country. Also note that some lawyers, who were registered at the Istanbul Bar Association and among the lawyers of Öcalan, were faced with constraints posed by both the courts and the Bar. They were put on trial following accusations by the Chief of the General Staff because of their press statements on Öcalan and hence allegedly making propaganda for the PKK. The Istanbul Bar also made a legal warning for the lawyers for the same reason. Note that repeated warnings may lead to banning of members from practicing the profession (*Bianet*, 05/07/2011).

was rejected and defendants were taken to trials in groups, making individualized defense difficult. Defendants did not attend some trials as a protest, and so on, so forth.

While some three hundreds of lawyers undertook the defense role for the major case in Diyarbakır because of its symbolical importance for including elected representatives, lawyers boycotted some trials of this case as a protest to above mentioned problems. The Diyarbakır Bar joined the protest by resisting sending new lawyers to the trials. As a result, both actors were to be faced with judicial complaints. Repeated problems, on the other hand, led the to increase of professional solidarity, as the peak association TBB, some other bar associations and lawyers from the rest of the country expressed support for Kurdish lawyers and the Diyarbakır Bar. Leaders of some bar associations and the TBB also attended trials in Diyarbakır (*Bianet*, 10/08/2011). However, difficulties facing Kurdish lawyers reached a peak level when lawyers of Abdullah Öcalan were included among targets of the KCK operations: more than 30 lawyers have been detained since late 2011 and put on trial on the grounds of roles they allegedly played to enable communication between Öcalan and the PKK (see the indictment TC 2012). This serves not only to deprive defendants from the right to have a lawyer, but also to intimidate lawyers so that they will not take political cases. The latter effect has already been felt, according to the Bar's leader (*Radikal*, 13/06/2012).

In addition to the constraints induced by the state, political-moral commitments also seem significant. Political cases have had a significant share in overall cases in Diyarbakır and targeted mostly members or supporters of the Kurdish movement. But the concept of supporter is in its loosest sense here: for instance, there was a period thousands of children who participated in urban demonstrations were taken into custody *en masse* and put on trial according to the Anti-Terror Law.<sup>212</sup> Considering also the compensation cases for losses under the Emergency Rule, majority of lawyers in Diyarbakır have dealt with cases that have a political aspect.

In such a politicized and insecure environment, political-moral commitments may have an important influence on conducting professional duty. In this regard, a common practice has emerged in the legal market not to take the cases of PKK defectors (also known as confessors – *itirafçı*), who provide Turkish security forces with insider information about the organization. Yet, lawyers might fail sometimes in reconciling their professional interests

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<sup>212</sup> Detentions were concentrated between approximately 2008 and 2010 and public reaction led the government to amend the Anti-Terror Law in 2010 (see Chapters 2 and 3).

with social expectations. I heard a few statements, while doing my fieldwork, about how it was difficult to mobilize lawyers for political causes apart from highly symbolical cases such as KCK trials. For instance, I once met a few children, who just came out of prison where they were held in detention because of their participation in pro-Kurdish demonstrations – they are the once so-called stone-throwing children (see Ch. 2). One of them told that they had wanted to get out of the cell and throw stones also at their lawyers. This was because of the lack of attention. When I asked some of my informants, I was told that the attention could be lacking because lawyers had either too many cases to properly take care of or not enough motivation when they performed it voluntarily, mobilized by the pro-Kurdish party or NGOs.

Such clashes of professional interest and political commitment lead to legitimacy problem for lawyers, which may in turn appear as a constraint. I heard from a few of my informants, including young lawyers, arguing that lawyers got ‘rich from the war’ (*savaş zenginleri*). Examples were mostly about the compensation cases. As mentioned before, these cases seek compensation for losses suffered by Kurdish villagers because of forced evacuation and burning of villages in the 1990s. Lawyers used to take these cases first to national courts, which would usually rule against plaintiffs, and then to the European Court of Human Rights, which would usually rule against Turkey by sentencing it to pay fines. The AKP government enacted the 2004 law<sup>213</sup> to manage such complaints by its own rules, allowing compensation for material damages suffered by individuals under the Emergency Rule in the Kurdish region.

Applications have been made in the following years, with highest numbers coming from Diyarbakır (Yükseker 2008a). Applicants as well as their lawyers had various problems in the process of application to the damage assessment commissions, which consisted of state officials trying to avoid recognizing losses or to undervalue them.<sup>214</sup> However, another problem relevant for our discussion concerned relations between lawyers and applicants. I was told a few times about this lawyer from Diyarbakır who gave his customer fake money, instead of the compensation money given by the state (also see *Hürriyet*, 01/05/2010). This appears to be an exceptional case; yet, less severe forms of abusive behavior and conflict of

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<sup>213</sup> Law No: 5233, dated 17/07/2004. The official title uses ‘compensation of losses due to terrorism and the fight against terrorism.’

<sup>214</sup> See the evaluation by Yüksekler (2008a) focusing on Diyarbakır, as well as my interview with Mehmet Emin Aktar (Diyarbakır, 25/03/2011).

interests were seen at times.<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, a number of lawyers are told to have made ‘fortunes,’ and many others made some good money thanks to these cases; hence, the expression of ‘rich from the war’ above.<sup>216</sup> On the other hand, lawyers too suffer from uneven regional development in that they can be charging lower fees for mundane cases like divorce than in western parts of the country.<sup>217</sup>

### ***Politics and liberalization in the healthcare sector***

Kurdish physicians also have been working under conditions that are pretty much different than those in the rest of the country, being subjected to most serious politically-induced constraints in the 1990s. Yet, these also meant that physicians mattered as professional actors. In the 2000s, the situation for physicians also got better. Still, constraints have not completely disappeared, as political instruments can still be used for those working in the public sector. For instance, the city’s Dicle University and its Faculty of Medicine witnessed important changes in the AKP period, especially since 2008 when the President Abdullah Gül appointed as the new rector Prof. Ayşegül Jale Saraç, who had run as a candidate in the 2007 general elections on the tickets of the AKP. Since then, it is argued that pious groups<sup>218</sup> became more influential at the university, including the Faculty of Medicine, while some employees were subjected to increasing pressures concerning, *inter alia*, tenure, project supports, and administrative positions. In this vein, at least 40 academics and a number of physicians resigned from the university hospital, starting to work at the public hospital. The situation led

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<sup>215</sup> These may include higher-than-usual rates of commissions taken by lawyers from plaintiffs; lawyers’ preference for quick results through the commission over filing cases in courts for an indefinite process in case the commission undervalues the losses; lack of attention to the specificities of individual cases if a lawyer deals with too many applications ; and searches by lawyers to find potential applicants (based on my fieldwork as well as Yüksekler 2008a; Kurban 2008).

<sup>216</sup> Fortunes were possible thanks to the concentration of applications in the hands of some lawyers (Kurban 2008). Note that some lawyers from Diyarbakır took cases also from other Kurdish provinces. NGOs, as well as personal and familial networks, appear to be important in the distribution of applications. According to an EU progress report, a total of 2 billion Turkish liras was paid to applicants by 2010 (EC 2010). This appears to be a significant source of revenue for lawyers considering that the rate of commission charged by lawyers may vary between 10 and 25 per cent, in addition to the uneven distribution of applications. Accordingly, I was told by an outsider lawyer in Ankara that the profitable situation led to conflicts also among some competing lawyers in Diyarbakır.

<sup>217</sup> My interviews with Mehmet Emin Aktar (Diyarbakır, 25/03/2011) and Meral Danış Beştaş (Diyarbakır, 28/04/2011).

<sup>218</sup> I was told by a few informants that different pious communities existed at the university: e.g. Gülen, Menzil and Yeni Asya communities (the second linked to the Nur order and the third to the Naqshbandi order; for brief background information on pious orders, the AKP and Kurdish electorate, see Ch. 3).

to associational efforts for involvement in the university's affairs as an external democratic pressure, as elaborated in third section below.<sup>219</sup>

The AKP government's reform initiatives for healthcare also raised concerns among physicians. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the initiatives included the re-introduction of compulsory service for physicians, which in practice require employment mostly in the Kurdish region for its lack of medical staff; the introduction of performance criteria for physicians; and a law that aimed to prevent physicians' concurrent employment in public and private sectors, which was recently annulled by the Constitutional Court. Especially the latter initiative has been a huge concern for physicians across the country. A concern more specific to Diyarbakır, on the other hand, has been the closure of several public hospitals in the city in the recent years.<sup>220</sup> My interviewees from different political positions in the healthcare sector – including members of the government-friendly union for the healthcare sector, Sağlık-Sen (Memur-Sen affiliate) – expressed discontent with these policies. The discontent appears to contribute, even if partly, to the fact that the Medical Association has been run by a leadership which opposes the AKP government's relevant policies, in addition to a supportive approach to the Kurdish movement.

As mentioned before, liberalization in the healthcare sector also improved the situation for physicians. The number of private hospitals has been on the rise in Diyarbakır over the last decade, similar to the rest of the country. However, the shortage of physician supply in Diyarbakır, as well as the reluctance of physicians to work in the region, leads to higher salaries, even higher than those in the western parts of the country.<sup>221</sup> The improvement of work conditions was interpreted by a previous associational leader as one reason behind the indifference of the membership to the electoral processes within the Medical Association.

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<sup>219</sup> See Dicle Üniversitesi İzleme Komisyonu, 'Dicle Üniversitesi'nde neler oluyor?' *Radikal*, 13/06/2010; 'Dicle Üniversitesi Rektörü Saraç'a Tepki,' *Milliyet*, 30/06/2009 and 'YÖK Dekanı Görevden Aldı,' *Radikal*, 25/02/2010. It is told that healthcare personnel can be subjected to pressures also to transfer their membership to the Memur-Sen affiliate union in the sector. In some cases, the transfer of membership can be voluntary for the purpose of career advancement. Yet, note that physicians are not very active in the union scene; hence, the situation seems to concern other employees in the healthcare sector.

<sup>220</sup> The hospital for chest diseases and the SSK hospital were closed down (SSK hospitals – previously a part of the social insurance scheme for workers - were integrated to the Ministry of Health all around the country as a result of the 2006 Social Security Reform; however, while they were usually turned into public hospitals elsewhere, Diyarbakır's hospital was closed down). The state hospital was first planned for moving out of the city, but this was canceled because of local opposition; it was then integrated to the research-and-education hospital.

<sup>221</sup> I heard salaries can go up to 60,000 Turkish liras a month and even more in case of surgeons of shortage branches.

Yet, private hospitals are not politics-free. Some hospitals have a local reputation as being close to political parties. This happens especially in relation with the owners of hospitals whereas employed physicians can be diverse in terms of political identity. For instance, the owner of a hospital which was told to be supportive of the AKP wanted to run as a candidate in the 2011 general elections on its tickets. Another hospital was told to be close to the pro-Kurdish party: ‘patriotic’ physicians were told to be plenty among its employees while the party and the local municipalities could send some of the supporters to this hospital for medical treatment if deemed necessary. Here, events that took place at the hospital in summer 2011 while I was in the city appear interesting for observing the ambiguous interplays of professional interest and collective identity politics.

Firat News, a major online news portal supportive of the Kurdish movement, covered the layoff of a number of employees of this hospital, including physicians, right after the 2011 general elections. With a reference to one of the Medical Association’s executives, the layoff was depicted as a political event: the employees in question were Kurdish ‘patriots,’ speaking Kurdish with patients, and the layoff was triggered by the discontent of the hospital management concerning this situation, as well as the discontent of AKP circles concerning the election results in Diyarbakır. It was further claimed that the hospital was linked to Galip Ensarioğlu, the previous leader of the Chamber and a new MP from the AKP (see Ch. 5; *Firat News*, 18/06/2011). However, soon the referred executive of the Association denied having made a comment about the political link, while the Association made a press statement in front of the hospital criticizing the layoff in terms of labor standards.<sup>222</sup> Following this, I ran into a manager of the hospital by chance: he too rejected the political comments and instead depicted the layoff in managerial terms, adding the ongoing presence of ‘patriotic’ physicians as a supportive argument. Hence, what at first seemed to me like an intersection of professional and ethno-political disadvantages turned out to be a case in which there might be an appeal to identity politics to mobilize support for labor struggle. However, there is too much ambiguity about the event, as some physicians later I talked to support the claim that the layoff was somewhat politically motivated against some patriotic employees. The case indicates the complexity of local politics and the professional life embedded in it. Associational leaders need to take into account these dynamics, in addition to national politics.

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<sup>222</sup> I was present at the press statement (Diyarbakır, 20/06/2011). See also ‘Amed’de işten atılanlara destek’ *Özgür Gündem*, 21/06/2011, ‘Hastanedeki İşten Çıkarmalar Protesto Edildi’ *Bianet*, 21/06/2011, and ‘Alman Hastanesi İddasına Tekzip.’ Available online at <http://www.diyarbakirhaber.gen.tr/haber-1809-Alman-Hastanesi-Iddasina-Tekzip.html>

### **6.3 Contemporary political activism**

The Bar and Medical Associations have become gradually more politicized in the new political environment of the 2000s. Both associations took part in joint activities that have intensified since 2005 to make pro-Kurdish rights claims and moderate the dual power contestation. The Bar has occupied a strategic location in this new environment, since laws and the judiciary system are important for the Kurdish issue. Hence, it appeared as a leading actor, in addition to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and business leaders. The Medical Association, on the other hand, appeared less in the mainstream media although it sometimes took a leading role too, albeit from an alternative perspective. This section focuses on political activism by these associations. First, I give major examples of the Bar's shifting alignments, which depict it sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict with each political actor – the AKP government and the Kurdish movement. Second, I give major examples of activism by the Medical Association, which depicts it gradually siding with one of these political actors, that is, the Kurdish movement.

#### ***The bar association between confrontation and cooperation***

In the AKP period, the Bar Association has been increasingly vocal concerning problems within and outside the legal arena. Sezgin Tanrıkulu, the Bar's leader between 2002 and 2008, was a strong leader figure and took action either as an individual leader or in cooperation with other associations. Under his leadership the Bar made press statements and publicized reports concerning issues such as the following: proposals for general amnesty; problems seen in fight against torture and trials of accused officials; limits of the government's legislative arrangements for enabling broadcasting in Kurdish language; politicization of the judiciary and its failure to bring justice to cases of organized crime targeting Kurds as well as negative effects of new legislations in criminal law on the right to free speech. Tanrıkulu himself also was faced with judicial investigations because he had calendars published for the Bar in both Turkish and Kurdish languages.<sup>223</sup> Hence, the Bar either pointed at problems under the AKP rule or called the government for taking action.

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<sup>223</sup> See Chapter 3 for a broad overview of mentioned events and the following for the press statements: 'Baro başkanlarından genel af tasarısı,' *Bianet*, 30/06/2003; 'Diyarbakır Barosu'ndan "işkence raporu"' *Hürriyet*, 13/09/2004; 'Baro dil yönetmeliğini yargıya taşıyor,' *Bianet*, 26/01/2004; 'Tanrıkulu yargı bağımsızlığı darmadağın,' *Bianet*, 20/08/2004; 'Tanrıkulu: Sorun ideolojik bağımsızlık,' *Bianet*, 07/09/2005; 'Erdoğan'ın mesajı siyasi iaredeye dönüşmeli,' *Bianet*, 10/08/2005.

Tanrıkulu was not totally critical of the AKP government. The Bar was included among Diyarbakır's associations which made press statements supporting Prime Minister Erdoğan's 2005 visit to Diyarbakır. Erdoğan gave a public speech there, acknowledging the mistakes historically done by the state with regard to the Kurdish issue and promising a solution through democratization. In this respect, Tanrıkulu admitted the accomplishments of the government on some reforms, while also emphasizing their limits and existing problems. He also supported the trial of Ergenekon – the organized crime network connected to the state and responsible for, *inter alia*, extrajudicial killings carried out in the Kurdish region under the Emergency Rule.<sup>224</sup>

Tanrıkulu's assertive leadership, however, was to bring him in open confrontation with Prime Minister Erdoğan. In April 2008, representatives from 15 associations of Diyarbakır visited Erdoğan in Ankara. The group included the leader of the Bar, in addition to those of the Chamber, the Medical Association, and voluntary business associations. They presented a report to the Prime Minister concerning political and economic measures for the Kurdish issue. In the meeting, Tanrıkulu emphasized that governments mostly prioritized economic measures over political measures. He also underlined the joint demands for education and public services in Kurdish language. As Erdoğan reacted negatively accusing him of making propaganda and lying, Tanrıkulu left the meeting.<sup>225</sup>

Same year, Erdoğan made another visit to Diyarbakır where he had a meeting with associational representatives. However, the Bar Association, as well as the Medical Association and the Human Rights Association, did not participate in the meeting despite the official invitation, while business associations were present. This signaled the emerging *cleavage* among associations as well as *different treatment* by the political authorities. Hence, the associations which boycotted Erdoğan and were more assertive in making pro-Kurdish claims were not invited to the meeting then-Chief of the General Staff Başbuğ had with local representatives in his visit to Diyarbakır in the same year. Business associations, on the other hand, were again present. In the meeting, Başbuğ underlined economic measures against poverty and recruitment by the PKK. He also pointed at the 'duties' of associations in the fight against terror in relation with their organizational field, as well as the need for

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<sup>224</sup> See 'Diyarbakır Barosu Başkanı Tanrıkulu'nun PKK'ye silah bırakırma formülü,' *Rizgari*, 04/05/2006 and 'Sezgin Tanrıkulu: "Kürtler Ergenekon'a tarafsız kalamaz,"' *Taraf*, 21/07/2008.

<sup>225</sup> See 'Diyarbakır Anlattı, Ankara Dinledi, Erdoğan Yine Duymak İstemedi,' *Bianet*, 09/04/2008 and 'Diyarbakır Barosu'ndan Erdoğan'a cevap,' *Hürriyet*, 12/04/2008.



coordination between the army and associations. Some other meetings held by Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül also prioritized business representatives.<sup>226</sup>

Mehmet Emin Aktar, the successor of Tanrıkulu, pursued a somewhat different political approach during his leadership between 2008 and 2012. This period witnessed the change in the balance of power at the national level more evidently, as it evolved to the advantage of the AKP against secularist-nationalist bureaucratic elites (see Ch. 3). The AKP government, on the other hand, pursued ambiguous policies concerning the Kurdish issue: it continued with initiatives with a claim to solve the issue but also strengthened its Turkish nationalist rhetoric, summarized in Prime Minister Erdoğan's variable motto of 'one nation, one state, one flag (and one language).' Add the fact that the Kurdish movement came under increasing repression in this period through judiciary means. While the Bar under Aktar's leadership kept its historical mission of addressing problems in the legal arena, it took different positions vis-à-vis the AKP government and the Kurdish movement within this changing political context. Its interactions with the two political actors depicted shifting coalitions. Let's consider examples for two trends.

Aktar expressed support for the AKP government's 2009 'democratic opening,' as many organized actors within the Kurdish region and across the country did (see Ch. 3 and 4). By the opening, the government promised to take further initiatives as regards democratization, recognition of the Kurdish identity and regional economic problems, as a solution to the Kurdish issue. The government members also engaged in negotiations with organized actors in the country to generate public support. In this respect, Aktar pointed at what could be done in the short run for an improved use of Kurdish language in daily life and broadcasting, as well as the need to pause military operations by each side. He emphasized the demand for education in Kurdish language but as a goal for the mid/long run. He also took part in several joint press statements with associations from Diyarbakır, as well as bar associations from across the country, to promote a process of reform and negotiations as a part of the government's opening claim (*Bianet*, 30/07/2009 and 18/01/2010). The Diyarbakır Bar under Aktar's leadership also arranged several workshops and publicized proposals for legal and constitutional reforms (see Diyarbakır-Barosu-Başkanlığı 2009; Diyarbakır-Barosu-Başkanlığı 2012; *Diyarın sesi*, 19/11/2011).

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<sup>226</sup> See 'Başbuğ Diyarbakır'da konuştu; seçtiği STK'lerden destek istedi,' *Bianet*, 05/09/2008 and '"Başbuğ Siyasetin Her Alanına Müdahale Etmek Niyetinde,' *Bianet*, 05/09/2008.

In the last years, the constitution has been one of the major sources of controversy in Turkey. The 2010 Constitutional Referendum led to serious polarization and disagreements across the country as well as among Kurdish organized actors. The AKP government depicted the amendments as a step to further democratization and against the military guardianship. It was actually a package of quite diverse articles; yet, the government emphasized those such as the removal of immunity previously recognized to the generals of the 1980 *coup*, which had prepared the constitution in question (see Ch. 3). As described in previous chapter, Kurdish business actors called for voting in favor of the referendum, as opposed to the boycott call by the Kurdish movement for its neglect of pro-Kurdish demands. Aktar too joined the former coalition by publicly stating his support for the amendments. He argued that the 1982 Constitution should change completely and even if the amendments were not enough they still targeted an important part of the constitution (*Sabah*, 11/07/2010; see also Ch. 3 on the amendments).

Aktar's increasingly pro-AKP appearance, however, led to reactions from the Kurdish movement. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aktar was targeted in a mass demonstration that took place in Diyarbakır in 2010 in support of the proposal of democratic autonomy. National newspapers highlighted a big placard from this demonstration: it said that 'Kurdish people wants democratic autonomy, rather than becoming collaborators of the AKP, like Galip Ensarioğlu and Emin Aktar are' (*Milliyet*, 29/12/2010).<sup>227</sup> As mentioned above, there were also rumors that he wanted to run as a candidate for the 2011 general elections on the tickets of the AKP. In the end, he did not. And he got increasingly engaged in activities critical of the AKP government and supportive of the Kurdish movement.

Aktar was already raising some concerns about political and judiciary events throughout his leadership. He criticized the closure of the pro-Kurdish party DTP, as well as the detention of Kurdish local politicians and activists in KCK operations, for closing legal political channels and risking opening up the space for violent methods. He also argued that there was a violation of human rights and laws in the way detentions occurred. Accordingly, he was involved in joint press statements by Diyarbakır's associations, including all the other local interest associations examined here, to call for the release of Kurdish politicians and human rights activists.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> The indictment concerning the lawyers detained in the KCK operations also claims that the PKK's leader Öcalan threatened Mehmet Emin Aktar (see TC 2012).

<sup>228</sup> See *Bianet*, 15/04/2009, 12/12/2009, 24/12/2009, 28/12/2009 and 11/01/2010.

However, Aktar's critical tone got stronger from 2011 onwards. Two interconnected factors seem influential in this: first, the government has not done much in the legal arena as regards its democratic opening but rather increased its nationalist rhetoric, as also argued by Aktar in an interview (*Taraf*, 06/06/2011; also see Ch. 3). Second, the repression of the Kurdish movement increased. KCK operations have been going on, as several police raids took place in different cities, leading to the detention of thousands at total. As mentioned before, serious problems followed: long pre-trial detentions, problematical indictments and courts' rejection of the demand to make defense in Kurdish language, something that further postponed defenses. Furthermore, right before the 2011 general elections, the Supreme Board of Elections attempted to prevent some pro-Kurdish candidates from running in elections, contributing to tensions, while the Kurdish movement had been engaging in civil disobedience in Diyarbakır to protest the KCK operations and to press for pro-Kurdish demands (*Bianet*, 23/03/2011).

In political terms, Aktar interpreted the events in the judiciary-police realm as an intervention to Kurds' right to engage in legal politics, describing the KCK as an effort of the PKK for legalization. In professional terms, he pointed at unlawful measures and the violation of the right to fair trial. The Bar also joined the protests concerning the KCK trials in Diyarbakır: as mentioned in previous section, defendants did not attend some trials in 2011 as a protest since their request for defending themselves in Kurdish language was rejected and they were taken to trials in groups, making individualized defense difficult. This was followed by lawyers' boycotting of trials. As the court asked the Bar to appoint new lawyers instead, the Bar resisted this request as a protest to the violation of defendants' right to fair trial, as well as violation of the law. As a result, the Bar was faced with judicial complaints. However, problems facing Kurdish lawyers reached a peak level when lawyers of Abdullah Öcalan were included among the targets of KCK operations in late 2011: more than 30 lawyers have been detained since then and put on trial on the grounds of roles they allegedly played to enable communication between Öcalan and the PKK. The Diyarbakır Bar's leader Aktar and lawyers, as well as leaders from the peak association and other provincial bar associations, protested the detention of lawyers.<sup>229</sup>

The most severe hit came with the Uludere-Roboskî incident in December 2011: Turkish jets fired at a group of smugglers near the Turkish-Iraqi border, leading to the killing of 34

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<sup>229</sup> See, for instance, *Taraf*, 27/12/2010 and 06/06/2011; *Bianet*, 12/07/2011 and 10/08/2011; *Radikal*, 04/08/2011, 25/11/2011, 07/12/2011; *Firat News*, 23/11/2011.

civilians, some under age, and the government accepted no responsibility arguing that the strike was based on information that they could be PKK guerillas (see Ch. 3). Bar associations from the Kurdish region, including the Diyarbakır Bar, prepared reports and argued that there was strong evidence that the bombing was intentional (see Diyarbakır-Barosu-Başkanlığı 2012: 666-674).

Against the background of a history of extrajudicial killings and bombing of villages by Turkish security forces and the resistance of the AKP government to accept responsibility, the Roboskî incident marked an important point in the process in that even Kurds supporting the AKP started to get critical.<sup>230</sup> Halit Advan, a previous executive member of the Diyarbakır Bar and then-chairperson of the AKP's headquarters for Diyarbakır, stated to a national daily that pious Kurds voted more for the pro-Kurdish party rather than the AKP because of the history of the state violence against Kurds. Note that Prime Minister Erdoğan often accused the Kurdish movement's members of being religiously 'perverse,' while trying to articulate Kurds to its constituency under a theme of religious fraternity. In his statement, Advan also referred to the Roboskî incident emphasizing the need to find who is responsible for the massacre, while criticizing judicial bureaucrats' approach to Kurdish language in their handling of KCK trials. As these drew the reaction of Prime Minister Erdoğan, Advan resigned.<sup>231</sup>

Finally, note that the leaders of the Diyarbakır Bar supported common pro-Kurdish demands such as the right to education in Kurdish language and devolution of power to local governments. The Bar also took part in the founding platform for Sarmaşık, in addition to giving away some donation. Although both leaders in the recent period appear to be somewhat distanced to the Kurdish movement, they gave support to the movement in case of unlawful and unfair treatment of its members.

### ***Professional and political discontent of the medical association***

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<sup>230</sup> The KCK operations were a previous trigger for this, see Neşe Düzél's interview with Mehmet Emin Aktar, 'Emin Aktar: Kürtler ilk kez Öcalan'ı tartışıyor,' *Taraf*, 27/12/2010.

<sup>231</sup> See *Taraf*, 30/11/2012; *Radikal*, 06/12/2012; *Birgün*, 16/12/2012. There are other indicators for the loss of trust for the AKP government among pious Kurds. A Kurdish journalist, who wrote for the pro-government daily *Yeni Şafak*, also lost his job since he criticized the AKP government because of its resistance to apologize for the incident. In an interview done by Ruşen Çakır, Akel points at a *rising cleavage between pious Kurds and pious Turks* (see 'Söyleşi: Türk ve Kürt İslamcılarının yolları hızla ayrılıyor - Ali Akel,' *Vatan*, 30/11/2012). In this regard, the Mazlum-Der, a human rights association led by the pious, also increasingly criticized the government with regard to its Kurdish policy as well as other anti-democratic policies. See, for instance, Neşe Düzél's interview with the Mazlum-Der leader, 'Faruk Ünsal: KCK'lıları Karadeniz'e gönderiyorlar,' *Taraf*, 23/01/2012.

In the AKP period, the Medical Association too has been increasingly vocal concerning problems within and outside the professional field. As mentioned before, the leader turnover at the association has been higher while its leaders were not as visible as the leaders of the Bar and business associations in the national media. This does not mean that the Medical Association was less active than them but it has not occupied a strategic location. This appears to do with, on the one hand, the less significance the medical field has in the definition of the Kurdish issue, as opposed to the legal and the economic fields the other associations are concerned with. There is, on the other hand, the Medical Association's approach to the government, which came to be more openly critical by the time.

The association was involved in numerous joint initiatives taken in cooperation with the other associations for pro-Kurdish common demands and concerns, as described before. In addition to this, we see two axes of activism by the association. One, the Medical Association raised concerns about professional issues facing its membership and patients. This happened to a degree more than, say, the engagement of the Bar Association for its own membership. Two, the Medical Association took steps concerning major political events such as elections and the 2010 referendum in a way supportive of the Kurdish movement and in opposition to the AKP government.

Professional concerns related to dynamics at both national and local levels. As outlined before, the AKP government's policies concerning the healthcare sector received opposition from physicians as well as the peak association TTB (see §2 above, Ch. 3 and 4). Diyarbakır's Medical Association also expressed discontent and organized several protests against, *inter alia*, the reform of social security system; the legislation attempt to prevent physicians' concurrent employment in public and private sectors; the introduction of performance criteria for physicians; and some other legal arrangements concerning re-appointments in the public sector.<sup>232</sup>

As to local topics which caused discontent, the closure of several public hospitals in the last decade was mentioned in previous section. In addition, the association led a platform which was founded in 2009 to observe changing political dynamics at Diyarbakır's Dicle University and its consequences for employees including those in the Faculty of Medicine as well as the university hospital. In 2008, President Abdullah Gül appointed as rector Prof. Ayşe Jale

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<sup>232</sup> See, for instance, 'Doktorlar: başımıza çuval geçirmeyin,' *Radikal*, 31/01/2007; 'Diyarbakır Tabipler Odası yürüyüşü,' *Diyarın sesi*, 15/03/2009; 'Sağlıkçılar Diyarbakır'da mitinge hazırlanıyor,' *Diyarbakır Haber*, 22/02/2011. The last legal arrangement about the public sector re-appointments is the so-called *torba yasa*.

Saraç, who had run as a candidate for the 2007 national elections on the tickets of the AKP. What seemed problematic to some locals was not only her appointment despite the lower votes she got in the nomination elections within the university but also the events that took place in the university under her rule. Several employees of the university experienced difficulties concerning, *inter alia*, tenure and administrative issues, and at least 40 academics and physicians resigned from their jobs. Pious groups, on the other hand, are told to have become stronger in the university (see §2 above).

The platform argued that the new university management tried to send some of the existing academics away from the university and hired new academics on the basis of ‘ideological criteria.’ A press release by the platform interpreted the situation as the following: ‘in the previous period, it was enough to be committed to Kemalist principles as a criterion; in the new period, the only criterion is to have organic links to certain (pious) communities.’ This criticism, hence, also concerned the democratization problem as regard the AKP rule and its recent grip of the Board of Higher Education: ‘the problem is that this anti-democratic institution (the Board) shaped by the September 12 (*coup d’état*) mentality is preserved as it is. However, it seems like what the AKP government saw as a problem was not this institution itself, but rather with which ideology it was controlled.’<sup>233</sup>

In addition to the Medical Association, the platform included local associations such as the Bar and the KESK-affiliate unions for healthcare and education sectors. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry also was involved in the very beginning but its leader later avoided attendance in activities such as attempts to meet the rector. According to a former executive of the Medical Association I talked to, the Chamber’s leader acted so because of the platform’s anti-government appearance, whereas the then leader Ensarioğlu was increasingly aligning with the government to become an MP on its tickets later (see Ch. 5). However, such an appearance and potential conflicts that would come with it did not scare the Medical Association away from taking a leading role in the platform.

The Medical Association also engaged in activities concerning patients and the general population. From the earlier times, it made efforts to find solutions against the language barrier between physicians and patients and demanded healthcare services in Kurdish

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<sup>233</sup> My translation. For the release, see Dicle Üniversitesi İzleme Komisyonu, ‘Dicle Üniversitesi’nde neler oluyor?’ *Radikal*, 13/06/2010. Also see ‘Dicle Üniversitesi Rektörü Saraç’a Tepki,’ *Milliyet*, 30/06/2009. An elaboration on the Board of Higher Education is beyond the scope this discussion; as it is referred in this this example, it is just an example of the growing power of the AKP government and the aligned religious communities to replace Kemalist elites, as described in Chapter 3.

language. As the political environment became more conducive to debates about the Kurdish issue, the association organized medical conferences and published a guide for learning the medical history of patients in Kurdish language by 2009, with a support from the peak association TTB.<sup>234</sup> In a similar vein, the Medical Association also was involved in committees with the Bar and human rights organizations to prepare expert reports on politically significant incidents that victimized Kurdish civilians.<sup>235</sup> In other words, the Medical Association has kept its engagement in human rights activism.

As to party politics and the Kurdish issue, the leader of the Medical Association welcomed the AKP government's initiative in 2005, as the other associations did (*Bianet*, 09/08/2005 and 19/08/2005). On other occasions as well, the leaders of the Medical Association made supportive statements for the AKP government's initiatives such as the 2009 democratic opening as well as President Abdullah Gül's visit to Diyarbakır in 2010, seeing them as potential steps to take action for a solution (*Zaman*, 07/11/2009; *Radikal*, 30/12/2010). They took part in joint press statements to decrease political tensions by, say, calling an end to armed conflicts and calling the MPs of the pro-Kurdish party DTP to give up on the idea of leaving the national parliament as a protest when the party was closed by the Constitutional Court in 2009 (*Radikal*, 10/10/2007, 16/12/2009, and 21/07/2010, see also Ch. 2).

However, as the AKP government oscillated between initiatives for a solution to the Kurdish issue and repressive measures on the Kurdish movement (see Ch. 3), the Medical Association came to be more distanced to the government. As the Bar Association's leader Tanrıku was responded aggressively by Prime Minister Erdoğan in a meeting in 2008 (see above), the then leader of Medical Association Selçuk Mızraklı followed Tanrıku and did not participate in Erdoğan's next meeting with associational representatives in Diyarbakır in the same year although they were invited. This was interpreted in the media as a boycott (*Taraf*, 22/10/2008). On the other hand, the same associational leaders were not invited to a meeting the Chief of General Staff had in Diyarbakır with local actors such as business leaders (*Radikal*, 06/09/2008).

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<sup>234</sup> The then Minister of Health Recep Akdağ also stated that they might find a mechanism to employ Kurdish-speaking personnel in areas where Turkish is not widely spoken (*Bianet*, 22/05/2009) and the Diyarbakır Medical Association responded with an offer of help on this. For the Medical Association's mentioned efforts, see *Radikal*, 07/12/2002 and 03/11/2003 for the earlier period and *Radikal*, 21/03/2009; *Bianet*, 23/10/2009; *Hürriyet*, 15/10/2010 for the recent period, as well as the Kurdish guide by Bülül/Bülül/Avcıkiran (2011).

<sup>235</sup> See, for instance, the press coverage 'Ceylan keşke batıda, ağaçta kalan kedi olsaydı,' *Radikal*, 04/10/2009; 'Taş atan çocuklar konusunda çarpıcı rapor,' *Radikal*, 22/07/2011.

In an interview right after Erdoğan's visit in 2008, Selçuk Mızraklı expressed his disappointment about the AKP government.<sup>236</sup> He said that he did not find the government sincere in his approach to the Kurdish issue and interpreted its 'maneuvers' as aiming to increase its political prestige. He also explained the Kurdish electorate's support for the AKP in the 2007 general elections as a reaction to the conflicts the AKP government had with Kemalist bureaucratic elites in which the AKP appeared as 'dissident' (see Ch. 3). He also added the strong Turkish-nationalist approaches of other political parties against the Kurdish issue. However, Mızraklı argued that the government came to reconcile with Kemalist elites following the trial process for the Şemdinli incident.<sup>237</sup> Note that things turned out to be quite different though, as the AKP government and its allies waged a war against the bureaucratic elites. While the political instability pursued, the associational leaders kept raising their concerns and criticizing the government for events such as the persecution of children demonstrators according to the Anti-Terror Law, as well as KCK operations.<sup>238</sup>

The Medical Association gave open support for the Kurdish movement on major political events. The leaders supported the electoral left-wing blocs, which included largely the candidates of the pro-Kurdish parties in the 2009 local elections and the 2011 general elections.<sup>239</sup> The then leader of the Association Şemsettin Koç explained his support to the bloc in 2011 with the need for democratization. He stated that the process was denying the right to speak, to have a defense in courts (giving the example of KCK trials) and to give healthcare services in mother language. Koç also had supported the call of the Kurdish movement to boycott the 2010 referendum, advocating a completely new democratic constitution instead.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> See the interview by Şahin Artan and Yusuf Sami Solmaz, 'Yanlış Hesap Diyarbakır'dan Döner,' reproduced in *Bianet*, 11/11/2008.

<sup>237</sup> As described also in Chapter 3, a bookstore was bombed in Şemdinli (southeastern Turkey) in 2005, leading to one death. The local court found two gendarmerie officers and one PKK defector who now became an informer responsible for the bombing. The Land Forces Commander of the time publicly expressed his support for the accused and later the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors dismissed the prosecutor who had included accusations against high-ranking commanders in the indictment concerning the bombing (EC 2007).

<sup>238</sup> For the events, see Chapter 3 and for the press coverage of the Association's take on the events, see 'Güneydoğu'da sivil toplum harekete geçti,' *Radikal*, 16/12/2009; 'Güneydoğulu doktorlar iktidarı ikiyüzlülükle suçladı,' *Radikal*, 06/06/2010; 'Diyarbakır'ın ihtiyacı propaganda değil, barış taahhüdü,' *Bianet*, 02/09/2010; and 'Diyarbakır'da KCK tutuklularının serbest bırakılması istendi,' *Firatnews*, 04/12/2011.

<sup>239</sup> See 'Diyarbakır'da 32 kurumdan DTP'ye açık destek,' *Firatnews*, 11/03/2009 and 'Amed'de sendikalar Emek Bloğu'nu destekliyor,' *Diyarbakır Haber*, 28/05/2011. Also see Chapter 2 on the elections.

<sup>240</sup> See 'Referandumu Boykot Çağrısının Tam Metni ve İmzacılar,' *Bianet*, 30/07/2010.



Indeed, these initiatives indicated a bloc alternative to the one led by the business associations and the Bar outlined previously: these were joint initiatives the Medical Association had with left-wing organizations at the local level including the labor union affiliates of the KESK and the DİSK. Note that respective peak associations also cooperate closely, as mentioned in Chapter 4. These efforts for campaigning in support of the Kurdish movement, however, received less attention from the mainstream media, in contrast to the efforts of the Bar and the business associations in favor of, say, the referendum.

Overall, the Medical Association's leaders in the recent period supported pro-Kurdish demands in common, such as the right to education in Kurdish language, constitutional reforms, and strengthening of local governments. The association also was involved in the founding platform for the Sarmaşık philanthropic association, supporting it with a contribution (see Ch. 2 and 4 on the association). However, such pro-Kurdish movement activities have been risky for associational leadership, as seen in the trial of a previous leader Selçuk Mızraklı. Mızraklı was involved in the organization committee for a demonstration that took place in Diyarbakır in 2009, with the slogan 'Yes to Peace with Dignity.' The committee included also other associational leaders such as business and union leaders (see Ch. 5 and 7). Because of slogans made by demonstrators, the committee members were put on trial under the Anti-Terror Law and convicted of making propaganda for the PKK.

### *Conclusions*

As the Bar and Medical Associations increased their political activities in the post-2005, they cooperated with other interest associations, taking part in encompassing coalitions. These were grounded on the basis of common concerns about the conflict situation, as well as pro-Kurdish common demands. The Bar Association occupied a strategic location thanks to the centrality of legal issues to the definition and practice of the Kurdish issue. Hence, its leaders became prominent public figures, frequently appearing in the media and usually pursuing a balanced approach vis-à-vis the dual power contestation, giving support to both the Kurdish movement and the AKP government on special occasions, while also having tensions with each from time to time. In this regard, the Bar's strategy appeared somewhat similar to that of the Chamber. The Bar also joined the business leaders in a narrow coalition to support the government for the 2010 referendum. Yet, it was to get farther away from the government and closer to the Kurdish movement with the changing political context. As the Bar played an important role in the associational activism, it turned into a contested site in which the AKP and the Kurdish movement competed for influencing the associational electoral processes as

well as leaderships, hence, contributing to the shifts in alignment. On the other hand, activism by the Bar and lawyers played an important role in pressing for pro-Kurdish rights claims in the legal arena, such as the right to have defense in Kurdish language in courts, a demand articulated by the Kurdish movement.

The Medical Association regularly took part in joint associational activities; however, it appeared as a relatively secondary actor. It also had less visibility in the mainstream media. This should be partly because healthcare issues are not as central to the Kurdish issue as legal issues are. Another reason, however, seems to be the association's opposition to the government on two fronts: the first one concerns the government's policy initiatives concerning the healthcare sector, especially with regard to the working conditions of physicians, whom were discontented as a result. The second concerns political issues: although associational leaders supported the government's promises to bring a solution to the Kurdish issue, disappointments were increasingly expressed by the time, leading to the open support to the pro-Kurdish parties in last two elections as well as support for the boycott call on the 2010 referendum. In this vein, the association acted in cooperation with the labor unions from the municipal sector and other left-wing associations, forming a bloc alternative to the business-led coalition. This, however, did not receive much attention from the national media, unlike its counterpart. In the end, the Medical Association did not turn into a contested site unlike the Bar Association or the Chamber and took a more coherent political stance over the time.

## **Chapter 7: Labor unions**

Labor unions which are organized in the municipal sector were already active in political struggles in the 1990s. However, the following decade put them under completely different conditions. Their comrades from the 1990s became their employers, as the pro-Kurdish parties started ruling the municipal governments in the region. However, they were to rule under strict pressures by the AKP government, who tried hard to win Kurdish municipalities in Diyarbakır with appeals to, *inter alia*, ‘service’ politics (promising economic development and better municipal services), as opposed to the Kurdish movement’s ‘identity politics.’ Against this background, the unions took part in various political activities, playing roles in the formation of diverse coalitions vis-à-vis the contestation of the state. They also engaged in activities of interest representation, carrying out collective bargaining under extraordinary conditions. This chapter examines the activities by the labor unions, looking at how they dealt with the cross-pressures of economic interests and collective-identity politics.

First, I give an overview of the associational environment. I start with a brief historical background of unionism in the city and then describe the changing environment of the municipal sector as a result of the repeated election of pro-Kurdish parties, as well as the AKP government’s counter-activities. I also specify the unions currently organized in the sector, outlining some organizational properties, as well as constraints they are faced with. Second, I elaborate on the major dynamics in the membership environment. Here, I remind the reader the consequences of liberalization processes and the armed conflict for the local labor force. In addition, I point at the political pressures that targeted municipal employees especially via KCK operations. Third, I examine the patterns of interaction between the unions and the political actors. I first take into account the processes of collective bargaining, which reflect the impact of dynamics mentioned in the first two sections, arriving at a compromise. I then elaborate on political activism by the unionists and their memberships, which oscillated between intragroup encompassing coalitions and alternative narrow coalitions in cooperation with the Kurdish movement. I conclude with a general analysis.

### **7.1 Unionism in the municipality sector**

This section gives background information to understand contemporary unionism in Diyarbakır’s municipal sector. I first mention how unionists were faced with political repression in the post-1980 period and then give an overview of the 2000s, focusing on two

major dynamics relevant for union activities: the repeated election of pro-Kurdish political parties to municipal office in the Kurdish region since 1999 and the challenges posed by the AKP against these municipalities. Finally, I specify the unions under scrutiny, providing details about formal and informal rules underlining their structure and *modus operandi*.

### ***A brief historical background***

The armed conflict in the 1990s made labor unions in Diyarbakır more political as well. Unions formed the Democracy Platform, along with the Bar and Medical Associations, to raise concerns about human rights violations and make democratic claims. They would prepare reports on politically significant incidents and make press releases or participate in demonstrations (Diken 2001: 167-173). However, they were faced with various difficulties. For instance, when unionists, including those from the municipal sector, decided to participate in a demonstration for peace, alongside the pro-Kurdish party of the time HADEP, they were taken into custody by the police on the grounds that it was allegedly organized by the PKK (*Milliyet*, 01/09/1997). It seems like political repression targeted union representatives and members more often than, say, business and professional associations examined in the previous chapters, while repression took diverse forms such as detentions, judicial investigations, difficulties in promotion, exiles to other provinces, and extrajudicial killings.

The 1990s also witnessed unionization efforts in the public sector. As detailed in Chapter 4, unions were being formed in the public sector since 1990 thanks to the legal void, although they were not officially recognized until 2001 (KESK 2010; Üzümlü 2011). In Diyarbakır, it was the affiliate unions of the left-leaning confederation KESK that have been more active and successful in efforts for the organization of public employees, especially in the sectors of healthcare, education and municipal services. However, union representatives and members were subjected to severe political repression, while unions were faced with judicial difficulties, including closure threats (Diken 2001: 176-180; Çelik, Abdullah 2010).<sup>241</sup>

The municipal governments in the city were run by the Islamist Welfare Party (see Ch. 3) between 1994 and 1999. The Workers' Union for Municipalities and General Services in Turkey (*Türkiye Belediyeler ve Genel Hizmetler İşçileri Sendikası* – Belediye-İş) has been the leading actor among workers' unions in the sector until it recently lost some of its membership to the Union for General Services Workers of Turkey (*Türkiye Genel Hizmetler*

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<sup>241</sup> Also based on my interviews with past and present local representatives of KESK-affiliated unions such as Tüm-Bel-Sen (municipality sector), SES (healthcare sector), and Eğitim-Sen (education sector) in Diyarbakır.

*İşçileri Sendikası – Genel-İş*).<sup>242</sup> As for civil servants, the Union for Laborers of All Municipal and Local Administrative Services (*Tüm Belediye ve Yerel Yönetim Hizmetleri Emekçileri Sendikası – Tüm-Bel-Sen*) has been gradually central to their organization. I will come back to these unions below, but here let's note that the 1990s witnessed occasional tensions between the unions and the municipal governments, especially concerning the payment of wages (*Milliyet*, 14/02/1996 and 31/12/1997). Union representatives, on the other hand, have had common political concerns and taken joint actions within the Democratic Platform mentioned above, despite their competition with each other and affiliation with confederations of diverse ideologies at the national level (that is, TÜRK-İŞ and DİSK/KESK, see the subsection after). Local conditions, namely, the Kurdish issue, have not only led competing union actors in Diyarbakır to converge to some degree, but also required peak associations to 'tolerate' divergences between the local and the central if they wanted to get organized in the region. On the other hand, the election of pro-Kurdish parties to municipal government would change the configuration of power and make the political alignment of local labor unions more complicated.

### ***Changing municipal environment in the 2000s***

In the 1999 municipal elections, the pro-Kurdish party HADEP won 37 offices in eastern and southeastern regions, including municipalities in Diyarbakır city. This event set the beginning of the Kurdish local rule, which was consolidated in the elections of 2004 and 2009 in spite of challenges by the AKP (see Table 2.5). Against the background of exclusion from parliamentary politics till 2007, municipal offices opened up a legal space for the Kurdish movement to reclaim Kurdish identity and to stand for Kurds. For instance, foreign representatives from the EU and Western countries visited Diyarbakır increasingly from 1999 onward to meet, *inter alia*, municipal officials and to learn about the situation of the Kurdish region. Annual progress reports by the European Commission concerning Turkey's candidacy process showed influences of these meetings (see Ch. 3 and Watts 2010). Furthermore, pro-Kurdish mayors have engaged in some political activities and provided some municipal services in line with the political goals of the Kurdish movement. These aimed, *inter alia*, to enable the use of Kurdish language in the public sphere; highlight ethnic identity and local

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<sup>242</sup> Genel-İş's branch in Diyarbakır was founded in 2010. The union also had been active in the city before, although it had to freeze its activities between 1980 and 1992 as a result of the 1980 *coup* (for more information, see the subsection after). Note that unions have to acquire a certain number of members in order to be eligible to open a branch in a city. Until they achieve the required size of membership, they may have a representative office instead.

history (Gambetti 2009; Watts 2010); promote different social norms, as well as intra-group solidarity (e.g. Sarmaşık philanthropy association, see §3 below and Ch. 2).

In this regard, the local rule by pro-Kurdish political parties has contributed to the emerging situation of dual power, as outlined in Chapter 2. It played a role in the political representation of Kurds and paved the way for the proposal of ‘democratic autonomy’ in the 2000s, as pro-Kurdish mayors claimed an alternative model of local government, which was more participatory and responsive to local needs (BDP N/A; also see Ch. 2). Furthermore, the repeated election to the local office indicated social support for the Kurdish movement. Note that local elections in Turkey are usually thought to follow a different logic than that of national elections, as factors such as popularity of individual candidates for mayorship and concerns about the quality of municipal services may override partisanship. However, it has been the opposite in the Kurdish context to date: political commitments appear to be more important than the quality of municipal services.<sup>243</sup> This has been so against the background of Prime Minister Erdoğan’s repeated emphases on ‘service’ over ‘identity’ to win Diyarbakır in local elections. For instance, during his visit to Diyarbakır in 2008, Erdoğan stated that ‘infrastructure does not improve by engaging in identity politics,’ drawing attention to uncollected garbage in streets, as he often did when he visited Kurdish provinces (*Radikal*, 21/10/2008; see also Ch. 3).

Erdoğan’s efforts were to fail in winning the local elections in Diyarbakır but contribute to the symbolical importance of Kurdish local rule. On the road to the 2009 local elections, Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality, Osman Baydemir, defined Diyarbakır as ‘the fortress’ which was ‘not to fall down’ (*Milliyet*, 03/09/2007). On another occasion, the Mayor said: ‘if the municipality succeeds, it means the BDP can succeed politically. In order for the BDP to succeed politically, Osman Baydemir needs to succeed. On the day we lose municipalities they will say “the Kurdish issue is over”’ (*Milliyet*, 30/04/2012). Hence, occupying such an important position since 2004 and being a charismatic leader, Mayor Baydemir also came to

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<sup>243</sup> This is based on my observations in Diyarbakır. Many locals I talked to found the municipal services lacking; some said that they were better than in the past, but also noted that they could be better. In a similar vein, one local who is supportive of the AKP government even told me that the province would be in a better situation if the Kurdish movement was not acting ‘like that.’ I also heard some locals supportive of the Kurdish movement contrasting the situation of Diyarbakır with neighbor province Urfa which has given a larger electoral support to the AKP in national elections and quickly developed in the recent years according to locals. Note this is a perception of locals, not necessarily an actual causality.

be a significant figure in the national political arena.<sup>244</sup> Yet, Baydemir, as well as other pro-Kurdish mayors, was to be faced with various difficulties in running the municipalities.

The municipal environment has been changing nationwide. Since the 1980s, municipalities have enjoyed an increasing autonomy, financial resources, and socio-economic powers (Erder/İncioğlu 2008; Bayraktar 2007; Buğra/Savaşkan 2010). Nevertheless, pro-Kurdish municipalities have encountered several obstacles to enjoy these new powers. Municipal officials complained about ‘negative discrimination’ by the government, concerning the allocation of resources (*Milliyet*, 03/09/2007, see also Watts 2006). The AKP government’s then Minister of Justice, Mehmet Ali Şahin, validated this claim before the 2009 local elections apparently to influence electoral behavior: Şahin said that municipalities who fight with or contradict the government cannot have all of their projects approved in Ankara (*Milliyet*, 23/02/2009). Official statistics also show that provinces under the AKP rule received more from the centrally-allocated EU funds for social projects, as elaborated in Chapter 3.

Obstacles concern not only the access to resources, but also the creation and redistribution of resources. The poverty-alleviation projects of municipalities run by the pro-Kurdish party were faced with judicial obstacles, while other municipalities, especially those of the AKP, have been playing a significant role in this arena (see Ch. 2 and 3). For instance, the Sarmaşık Association had been founded by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality to fight poverty. It appeared as an alternative to the relevant activities by the AKP circles, which seemed both demeaning and aiming to influence electoral behavior, whereas Sarmaşık emphasized a more respectful approach as well as intra-group solidarity.<sup>245</sup> However, Sarmaşık was closed by a court decision and had to be re-founded later by a platform of local associational actors, including labor unions, again under the leadership of the municipality. In addition, the DİYAR A.Ş., a company founded by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, had to be

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<sup>244</sup> Note that municipal rules tend to be centered on mayors. This is especially the case with Metropolitan Municipalities, which enjoy a hierarchical relationship with district municipalities, and the mayors of Metropolitan Municipalities occupy a dominant role in this relationship (see Erder/İncioğlu 2008). In Diyarbakır, as both the Metropolitan Municipality and the four municipalities in the city are ruled by the members of the pro-Kurdish party, they appear to have harmonious relations and, as I was told, have regular frequent meetings for the coordination of municipal affairs. Back to Osman Baydemir, as he mentioned in Chapter 5 he is a lawyer by profession and used to be the president of the Human Rights Association before getting elected for mayorship. He has also a background of religious education, occasionally using religious references in his speeches.

<sup>245</sup> Former poverty-alleviation activities were found demeaning because they mostly focused on a limited range of in-kind aids on an irregular and badly-organized manner, sometimes leading to crowds throng to the allocation scene. Alternatively, Sarmaşık uses food-banks so that aid recipients go and pick up whatever they need using their stamps. As to the promotion of intra-group solidarity, it stems from both the rhetoric and the financing method based on donations from various segments of local society (see below and Ch. 2).

privatized although it has been recently common for municipalities across the country to establish enterprises for the provision of local services and, hence, to have additional sources of income.<sup>246</sup> The company has been subjected to judicial investigation because of alleged links to the PKK in the process of KCK operations (see Ch. 3).

Hence, there have been more direct pressures too. Since the 1999 local elections, mayors and staff of municipalities run by pro-Kurdish parties have been subjected to periodic judicial investigations and detentions. ‘Investigations and charges were largely based on three main types of alleged violation: misuse of office; . . . violations of the political party laws concerning Kurdish language use; and aiding, encouraging or belonging to the PKK’ (Watts 2010: 115). These pressures increased following the 2009 local elections. Recurring mass arrests occurred under the label of KCK operations, which targeted the civilian wing of the Kurdish movement on the grounds of alleged membership to the PKK’s urban organization KCK and establishment of a ‘parallel state’ (see Ch. 2 and 3). Thousands of people were taken into custody, many ending up with long pre-trial detentions. These people included, *inter alia*, the members of the pro-Kurdish party, mayors, unionists, NGO activists, journalists, and lawyers. By 2012, the number of detained municipal personnel was 326, including at least 10 elected mayors (*Radikal*, 01/07/2012). In Diyarbakır city, the current Mayor of Kayapınar Municipality has been held in detention in this process, leading to regular protests by the municipality employees in support of him, as mentioned in §3 below. The Mayor of Sur Municipality was also initially detained but then released conditionally because of his health problems, while the Mayor of Metropolitan Municipality, Osman Baydemir, has been faced with investigations and trials but not taken into detention.

Major allegations about the municipal staff concern acting under directions by and transfer of money to the PKK. Note that indictments, which appear highly speculative, are based on, *inter alia*, wiretap evidence of phone calls and conversations carried out in office spaces, as well as statements by secret witnesses (see, for instance, the indictment for the major trial in Diyarbakır, TC 2010). According to my informants and locals, arrests have been highly arbitrary, targeting also many people who were not actually linked to the KCK.

Major constraints facing municipal administrators, hence, were caused by the Turkish political and judicial authorities. However, note that there might be also some constraints

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<sup>246</sup> Decisions such as the establishment of a company by a municipality require the approval of the Cabinet; hence, the AKP government.



stemming from the Kurdish movement itself. The pro-Kurdish party BDP lays out particular principles for its affiliate municipalities to follow, as other parties probably do, and has a ‘commission on ecology and local administrations’ for this purpose (see, for instance, BDP N/A). This commission has also been targeted by KCK operations, with an allegation of ruling the municipalities as an extension of the PKK (see the indictment for Diyarbakır's major KCK trial, TC 2010). In this vein, for instance, KCK indictments claimed that Mayor Baydemir was being criticized by figures from the Kurdish movement for not acting in coordination and even for taking a leading position. The mainstream media also covered relevant events in a way as if there were cracks within the movement. While Baydemir kept ruling the municipality in spite of expectations that he would resign after being harshly criticized by Abdullah Öcalan (see *Bianet*, 23/11/2010), these events might have contributed to the view that the AKP government wanted to ‘divide’ Kurds, a view I heard also from union representatives in the municipal sector. These hard conditions were to influence union activities as well.

### *Associational properties*

In the 2000s, three unions have been active in the five municipalities of Diyarbakır city:<sup>247</sup> Genel-İş and Belediye-İş for workers<sup>248</sup> and Tüm-Bel-Sen for civil servants<sup>249</sup> (see Table 4.2). Genel-İş and Tüm-Bel-Sen have been members of the left-leaning peak associations DİSK and KESK, respectively, and both peak associations have had pro-Kurdish approaches. Belediye-İş, on the other hand, has been a member of the peak association Türk-İş, which has had a historically somewhat ambiguous identity. Türk-İş has been located usually on the center-right of political spectrum and not very responsive to pro-Kurdish demands, embracing the state’s take on the issue framed in terms of concerns about the ‘division’ of the country in

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<sup>247</sup> Since the 1990s, Diyarbakır city has been composed of Metropolitan Municipality, Yenişehir, Sur, Bağlar and Kayapınar municipalities.

<sup>248</sup> Genel-İş, founded in 1962, was an affiliate of the labor union confederation Türk-İş until 1976 and then transferred to DİSK (Sezgin 2006); as the then major union in the work branch, it played an important role in union activism in the country in the pre-1980 period (Bianchi 1984: 241-243), while it had to freeze its activities until 1992 following the 1980 *coup*. Belediye-İş, on the other hand, has its roots in a union which was established in 1975 and affiliated to Türk-İş; it uses its current name since 1983 (see Sezgin 2006). In addition to Genel-İş and Belediye-İş, there is also Hizmet-İş as the third most important union in the work branch nationwide. Hizmet-İş is a member of the Hak-İş confederation, which uses religious references (see Ch. 4) and has had good relations with the AKP government. However, Hizmet-İş has not been an important actor in Diyarbakır city in the last decade because of the Kurdish movement’s hold of local office. Note that workers are employed usually for municipal services such as parks, road maintenance and collection of garbage, although one can also see white-collar employees employed in a worker status.

<sup>249</sup> Tüm-Bel-Sen is a relatively new union, mainly an outcome of rising public sector unionism in the 1990s, under the umbrella of civil servants’ confederation KESK. Note that affiliate unions of KESK enjoyed easiness in the Kurdish region with regard to unionization (see Üzümlü 2011).

the post-1980 period (see Ch. 4). Yet, Belediye-İş in Diyarbakır has been embedded in local dynamics, as the historical background above mentioned. It has had a pro-Kurdish stance and been ruled by a single leader in the post-1980 period – someone who had been a victim of the notorious Diyarbakır prison. In this regard, the relations of local unionists with their respective peak association have been less cooperative for Belediye-İş, in contrast to Genel-İş and Tüm-Bel-Sen.<sup>250</sup>

In each municipality, there has been one union organized for workers and one for civil servants; hence, a *de facto* monopoly of representation. This is because of the legal rule that a union should have as its members at least the absolute majority of the work force in the enterprise where collective agreement is pursued. Furthermore, unions should represent at least 10 per cent of the total work force in the work branch they are organized in. Note that unionization has been much stronger in the municipal branch.<sup>251</sup> In some cases, membership can be even *de facto* compulsory. Municipal employers may play a role in this: I was told by a few employees from the municipal sector in Diyarbakır that the management encouraged them to become a member of the union in question after they were hired. The pro-Kurdish party BDP's booklet concerning local administrations also underline the goal of encouraging the unionization of employees (BDP N/A: 84).<sup>252</sup> Against this background, members may move collectively from one union to another union, following a change in the municipal rule or the emergence of conflicts between union leaders and mayors (as happens elsewhere in the country, see Akkaya 2001). This was seen in the 2000s with the transfer of some municipalities, such as the Metropolitan Municipality, from Belediye-İş to Genel-İş. Such possibilities might undermine the bargaining power of union leaders.

However, as detailed in the third section below, contemporary activities by these unions are quite similar in political nature and they collaborate with each other despite differences in the associational traditions of peak associations they are affiliated with. On the other hand, the special circumstances of a particular municipality can be more important for the variation in activities. Hence, my analysis of labor unions in the municipality sector does not highlight

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<sup>250</sup> Based on my interviews with unions representatives in Diyarbakır (2011).

<sup>251</sup> The work branch concerning workers is called general works (*genel işler*). Majority of the branch is composed of workers of municipalities, while the branch also concerns workers such as doorkeepers. For more information on worker's unionism in this branch, see Akkaya (2001).

<sup>252</sup> Labor unions, who are on good terms with the AKP, also act in a similar way in sites where they can get organized. In Diyarbakır, I was told about such activities in healthcare and education sectors: for instance, managers in public hospitals or schools tend to be pro-AKP and encourage employees to be members of aligned labor union.

leadership, unlike my analysis of other interest associations in previous chapters. The union leaders have not appeared as significant actors in the mainstream media either. This might be related to the fact that labor unions in general have experienced a significant decline in their political influence and social legitimacy in the aftermath of the 1980 *coup* and following liberalization processes (Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009; also see Ch. 4).

Nevertheless, note that there are some associational differences between labor unions for workers and civil servants in general: union representatives tend to be more professionalized in the former type of labor union than the latter, receiving salaries and serving for longer periods. According to the regulations of the labor unions under scrutiny, there are no limits for re-election to the leadership position in workers' union, while it is only two terms for civil servants' union; hence, leaders can be more significant in the former (e.g. Belediye-İş has the same leader for the last two decades).<sup>253</sup> Also, the material sources tend to be higher in the former.<sup>254</sup>

In addition, the representatives of public sector unions can occupy more precarious positions, considering the (threat of) difficulties in promotion, exile to other provinces, investigations, and so on. For the routine type of political pressures confronting union representatives, we can remember the example of what happened to the organization committee for a peace demonstration that took place in Diyarbakır in 2009: the committee was composed of leaders of diverse political positions from business and professional associations, including also the then leader of Tüm-Bel-Sen; however, because of some slogans made by demonstrators, the committee members were put on trial according to the Anti-Terror Law and convicted of making propaganda for the PKK (also see Ch. 5 and 6). There have been also the KCK operations, as mentioned in previous chapters and below, leading to the detention and trial of union representatives and members from, *inter alia*, the municipal sector of Diyarbakır. In addition to such judicial constraints, dynamics in the membership environment also negatively influences the power of unions in Diyarbakır.

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<sup>253</sup> Leaders serve 3 years for each term in the labor union for civil servants (and not more than two consecutive terms) and 4 years in the labor union for workers. My interview with a representative of Tüm-Bel-Sen, Diyarbakır, 31/03/2011.

<sup>254</sup> Based on my interview with a representative of Tüm-Bel-Sen (Diyarbakır, 31/03/2011).

## **7.2 Dynamics in the membership environment**

Dynamics in the membership environment of labor unions are important for understanding the political interaction of union leaderships with the municipal government run by pro-Kurdish parties, as well as with the AKP government. Here in this section, I point at major dynamics concerning the labor force in Diyarbakır in general and in the municipal sector in particular. These relate to the socio-economic consequences of the armed conflict for the city, as well as the liberalization processes influencing the whole country. Hence, certain social problems, which do not reveal themselves much in the associational environments of business and professionals but are important for politics at both local and national levels, are better observed in relation with the municipal environment. Finally, I also draw attention to recent political pressures on the labor force.

### ***Between the armed conflict and liberalization***

As detailed in Chapters 2 and 5, Diyarbakır, as well the Kurdish region at large, has been suffering from uneven development compared to the rest of the country. The armed conflict of the 1990s has exacerbated this situation. Insecurity led to capital outflow, which negatively affected the local economy. More than one million people in the region were forced to migrate, having their property destroyed by security forces. This process was accompanied by the dissolution of agrarian structure and migrants experienced a loss of skills when they came to the urban areas. The migration occurred not only from the rural to the urban areas, but also from the east to other directions: many Kurds migrated to large cities in western and coastal parts of the country. As I argued in Chapter 4, Kurds came to form the most vulnerable group in the labor market across the country.<sup>255</sup>

The city of Diyarbakır also received many of these migrants from its rural parts, as well as neighbor provinces.<sup>256</sup> The process has led to mass poverty (see Table 2.7 and YG 21/Sarmaşık 2007) and unemployment, while the urban population almost doubled in the course of the last two decades (see Table 2.1). Official statistics claim that the unemployment

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<sup>255</sup> The vulnerability results from various factors such as stigmatization, social exclusion, and other socio-economic effects of the war and forced migration (see Adaman/Keyder 2006; Kurban et al. 2008). A good indicator of this vulnerability is seen in the informal sector: according to a research, the share of informal workers in the urban areas is almost twice higher for Kurds (BETAM 2009). Discrimination of and attacks on Kurdish workers are also seen (for resources, see Ch. 4).

<sup>256</sup> On the forced migration and Diyarbakır, see the reports by TMMOB (1998) and Kalkınma-Merkezi (2010), as well as Yüksekler (2008a; 2008b).

rate in Diyarbakır is 13.5 per cent for the year of 2010,<sup>257</sup> whereas representatives from local associations suggest that the real rate is between 45 and 60 per cent. Hence, the difficult conditions for majority of Kurds both within and outside Diyarbakır have contributed to pressures felt by the labor force as well as unions in the municipal sector; I will come back to this in the next section in relation with collective bargaining.

There is also the process of liberalization that influences the labor force across the country, in a fashion similar to worldwide trends. The increasing flexibilization of employment appears to be vital here: temporary forms of employment have been becoming more common in the public sector, in addition to practices of subcontracting and outsourcing. These trends, affecting both employees and unions, have been significant also in the municipal sector (see Buğra/Adaman/İnsel 2005; Buğra/Savaşkan 2010; Kadirbeyoğlu/Sümer 2012). While experiencing difficulties posed by the national center, as mentioned in the previous section, municipalities in Diyarbakır have not been excluded from this process.

In my interview with him, Mayor Baydemir stated that they have engaged in service procurement for some 8 years now, instead of hiring new permanent staff. He justified this preference in two respects: 1) it is more efficient as the municipality can hire four subcontracted workers with the price a permanent employee would cost (when social security contributions and the like considered) and 2) it is helpful against the problem of severe unemployment in the city.<sup>258</sup> There is also a political reason: decisions on permanent employment mean dependence on the central government; however, pro-Kurdish mayors complained about difficulties caused by the center in this regard.<sup>259</sup> Municipalities, on the other hand, have more control on the forms of temporary employment (limited contracts and subcontracting). According to Nicole Watts, the municipal control over employment expanded opportunities for the Kurdish movement to engage in 'patronage' politics; hence, sympathizers of the movement can be hired (Watts 2010: 80). While such particularistic practices of staffing can be seen in any municipality across the country, they gain a special significance in relation with the dynamics of the Kurdish movement.

In this respect, hiring practices can be, to some extent, embedded in the moral economy (see Ch. 2). Consider the criteria for hiring (as well as for eligibility to social aids): some locals

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<sup>257</sup> TÜİK data. Available at [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr). Access date is 14/01/2013.

<sup>258</sup> My interview with Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, Diyarbakır, 16/06/2011.

<sup>259</sup> See, for instance, the interview with the Mayor of Sur Municipality, Abdullah Demirbaş, 'Demirbaş: BDP'li belediyeler yeni bir soluk getirdi,' *Firat News*, 27/01/2013. I also heard similar comments during my fieldwork.

argue that there can be some positive discrimination for the so-called families of worth, i.e. war veterans and survivors on the pro-Kurdish side.<sup>260</sup> Hence, political commitment may provide a basis for legitimacy and reciprocity, also influencing expectations from the hired staff. My impression was that such a policy appeared fair to some locals, as opposed to the municipal approaches seen in the 1990s, which were described to me as corrupt, involving even bribing to get a permanent position. New hiring practices, as well as the labor market structure, also may influence union activities, as elaborated in the next section.

Finally, let's note that the AKP government's policy initiatives since 2010 concerning the 'extra' employees of municipalities have caused discontent among employees who are on a permanent contract. These initiatives officially aim to transfer the unrequired employees of municipalities nationwide to other public organizations such as the provincial branches of the Ministry of Education and the police. However, concerns have been raised by labor unions and professional associations across the country: the policy was seen as a form of exile for employees and there has been so much uncertainty about who exactly will leave and what status they will get in their new positions, as there has been a risk of losing the job security and social rights of permanent contracts.<sup>261</sup> I heard similar concerns in Diyarbakır during my fieldwork too. Also, it turned out that the municipalities in Diyarbakır city had difficulties to get all of their extra employees to transfer to public organizations, as only a smaller number was accepted by the authorities. This situation was interpreted by local actors as one of discrimination, while municipal and union representatives were united in their reaction to the governmental approach (*Firat News*, 02/11/2011).

### ***Political pressures on the labor force***

As mentioned before, the labor movement in Turkey has been faced with a hostile political environment in the post-1980 period (see also Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009). As the left-leaning and pro-Kurdish labor unions have been the major targets of this hostility, their representatives and members in Diyarbakır and in the Kurdish region at large also have been affected from it. These pressures have increased with the KCK operations, which started in 2009 (see Ch. 2 and 3). As detailed before, KCK operations have been based on allegations of links to the PKK and led to detentions and prosecution of thousands of people from different sites such as, *inter alia*, municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, lawyers,

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<sup>260</sup> This may include also relatives of prisoners as well as prison releases.

<sup>261</sup> See, for instance, a bulletin of Genel-İş: *Emek*, 117, December 2010-January/February 2011.

and labor unions. Among labor unions, those which have appeared as more supportive of the Kurdish movement and mostly organized in the public sector (i.e. SES in healthcare, Egitim-Sen in education, and Tüm-Bel-Sen and Genel-İş in municipal services) were more affected.

Police raids to labor unions and municipalities have resulted in the detention of many union representatives and members. According to the pro-Kurdish party BDP, the number of unionists that have been held in detention for trial was 28 by mid-2012 (*Radikal*, 01/07/2012). However, many more people<sup>262</sup> were taken into custody to be released conditionally and put on trial during the last few years. Unions in this process, like other organized actors, have been under surveillance via wiretapping and covert listening of office spaces from outside, while collected material was used as evidence in indictments. Furthermore, attendance in activities such as demonstrations (hence, visual surveillance) was also used for allegations such as making propaganda for the PKK and such. Hence, the KCK process aimed to suppress the Kurdish opposition via detention and intimidation. However, the labor organizations and their members in Diyarbakır's municipal sector have kept their political engagement, including protests against the pressures on themselves.

### **7.3 Contemporary political activism**

As mentioned before, labor unions were already engaging in human rights activism in the 1990s, in cooperation with the Kurdish movement. However, they have attained a special significance by the repeated election of the pro-Kurdish candidates to the local office since 1999, an event which has led to the emergence of an interesting situation: the labor movement and the Kurdish movement – taken as two analytically separate actors here, but with blurred boundaries in actual life – found themselves in a direct relationship of employee-employer in the municipal sector. In this section, first, I elaborate on the resolution of this challenging situation, with a focus on collective bargaining. Second, labor unions also kept engaged in the contemporary Kurdish associational activism investigated by this dissertation. I will review examples of this activism, which are usually in cooperation with the Kurdish movement and in conflict with the AKP government.

#### ***Unionism in hard times: collective bargaining in Kurdish municipalities***

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<sup>262</sup> Based on my impression from the media coverage, the total number of targets should be at least hundreds of people across the country.

When I asked representatives from the unions and the municipalities about their relations with each other, they usually first referred to their political commonalities. Reminding his past leadership for the human rights association, Mayor Baydemir said that he and the affiliate unions of DİSK and KESK (the ones that also have been organized in the Metropolitan Municipality for the last years) worked together and gave a joint struggle for years. As a result of common political outlook, he argued, there has never been an employer-employee relationship among them. Some of the union representatives that I talked to also said similar things. One representative from Genel-İş referred to the pro-Kurdish party BDP as ‘our party.’ He, however, mentioned how his support to the party is interpreted differently by union members and municipal administrators: workers tell him that it would be the mayor who gives the final decision because the mayor and union representatives are ‘from the same party.’ On the other hand, mayors tell him that ‘we are from the same party, so why do you cause us trouble?’<sup>263</sup>

Yet, unions and municipal governments appear to have come up with a resolution to this tension-prone situation. The processes of collective bargaining are illustrative in this regard. Especially collective agreements<sup>264</sup> signed in the last years show that a compromise is reached between the actors, as well as between diverse concerns: representatives from both sides told me that they tend to have consensus on political-cultural topics (or, in the words of a union representative, ‘democratic-social demands’) and have conflicts on the issues of wage setting and working time.<sup>265</sup>

In relation with the former group of issues that were included in collective agreements, for instance, symbolic dates such as Newroz, Women’s Day and Labor Day were often recognized as day-off and/or brought along bonus payments to employees. Here, especially Newroz has a political significance: it is the traditional Kurdish New Year taking place in late March and originally for welcoming spring. In the post-1980 period, it has been an important day for the mobilization of Kurds, as well as the expression of pro-Kurdish demands and symbols. However, the political authorities criminalized its public celebration until recent

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<sup>263</sup> My interview with a representative from Genel-İş, Diyarbakır, 30/03/2011.

<sup>264</sup> Collective agreements are usually signed once in two years. Unions for the public sector employees were not officially entitled to conduct collective bargaining until the 2010 Constitutional Referendum (see Ch. 3 and 4); nevertheless, they have been signing agreements since the 1990s, with references to the constitution and international agreements Turkey is bound by. However, collective agreements have been subjected to investigations by the central government and the judiciary. My interview with a representative from Tüm-Bel-Sen, Diyarbakır, 31/03/2011.

<sup>265</sup> There are of course variations based on municipality. Here I present the general view of the municipal sector in Diyarbakır and later specify some collective agreements according to municipality, year and union.



years. In a similar vein, some agreements include articles on the provision of municipal services for employees to learn local languages (namely, Kurdish), positive discrimination for employees with daughters (concerning child allowances in relation with schooling), and sanctions on male workers who engage in domestic violence against their wives. Hence, the articles concern the goals of the Kurdish movement with regard to the recognition of Kurdish identity, as well as gender and labor ideals.<sup>266</sup> As such, the sides of collective bargaining could reach consensus easily, while articles were usually suggested by mayors themselves.<sup>267</sup> Also note that these identity-related articles of collective agreements sometimes become subjected to judicial investigations.

The issues which can cause some conflict between the unions and mayors concern wage setting and working time. Mayors resist accepting the rate of wage increase as demanded by union representatives. Such conflicts are interpreted by some as the reason for the shift from Belediye-İş to Genel-İş in some municipalities in the 2000s, while others see the shift ideological, relating it to the pro-Kurdish approach of DİSK and its affiliate unions of which Genel-İş is one. The issue of wage increase is also covered in the pro-Kurdish party's above-mentioned manual for municipal governments: while the manual emphasizes the need to improve pro-labor approaches in general, it also warns against unions' support for 'most pay for least work' and recommends that unions are asked for making 'sacrifices' (*fedakarlık*) to decrease the wage gap among civil servants, permanent workers, and subcontracted workers (BDP N/A: 82-84). Mayor Baydemir, on the other hand, justified his resistance to higher wage increases with a reference to severe poverty in the city.<sup>268</sup> The problems of limited economic sources of municipalities and high unemployment can also be used as counter-arguments in the processes of collective bargaining. In this vein, a worker told me that some municipal administrators mentioned them the option of subcontracted workers, pointing at the fact that they are less costly and easy to find given the high rate of unemployment.<sup>269</sup> In a

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<sup>266</sup> See the collective agreements signed by Tüm-Bel-Sen with the Metropolitan Municipality (TÜM-BEL-SEN/Diyarbakır-Büyükşehir-Belediyesi 2010) and by Belediye-İş with the Yenişehir Municipality (Sendikası 2009). Also see the coverage of more recent agreements between the Metropolitan Municipality and Genel-İş, ('Diyarbakır'dan örnek toplu iş sözleşmesi,' *Firat News*, 30/04/2012) and between the Kayapınar Municipality and Genel-İş (Kayapınar-Belediyesi 2011: 85).

<sup>267</sup> My interviews with Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality (Diyarbakır, 16/06/2011) and with a union representative (Diyarbakır, 31/06/2011). Also see BDP (N/A) for gender-related articles.

<sup>268</sup> My interview with Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality (Diyarbakır, 16/06/2011).

<sup>269</sup> My interview with a municipal worker, Diyarbakır, 08/06/2011. See also the previous section on subcontracting. Such arguments can be made in other municipalities as well (see Adaman/Buğra/İnsel 2009). On the other, there have been recently some initiatives for conducting collective agreements for subcontracted workers as well, see 'Yenişehir belediyesinde bir ilk,' *Diyarbakır Yeni Gün*, 05/03/2013.

similar vein, conflicts sometimes emerge on the amount of holidays (the total number of days for a year or Saturdays as a day off). Concerning conflicts about this issue, Mayor Baydemir said that there was too much work to be done.

Finally, there is also the issue of contributions<sup>270</sup> to poverty-alleviation associations initiated by the municipalities, the most notable being the Sarmaşık Association (see Ch. 2). Articles are added to the collective agreements signed since 2010 so that workers make a monthly donation of small amount of money to Sarmaşık.<sup>271</sup> As mentioned in previous chapters, Sarmaşık is financed by mostly voluntary donations from associations and individuals, including contributions from the compulsory interest associations analyzed in the previous two chapters. Union members, in this regard, used to donate voluntarily. However, an article on donations was included in agreements as a result of the judicial constraints facing Sarmaşık and as a demand by mayors.<sup>272</sup> This does not seem to have caused serious conflict among the actors though, as aiming solidarity.

Overall, the unions and the municipalities achieved a compromise by which they set wages and working time to a less degree than demanded by the former, yet introduce new political-cultural entitlements for employees. One municipal employee told me that the unions pursue activities more in lines of ‘patriotism’ (read as collective-identity politics) rather than ‘labor ideals.’ He also hesitantly made a similar criticism of the municipality, pointing at the discrepancy between the pro-labor ideology of the Kurdish movement and the erosion of (acquired) social rights, such as the increasing use of subcontracting and the decrease in the number of vacation days. However, he was content with his own salary and would like to see the introduction of further services for language teaching and such, in coherence with the collective agreements. He also added that he did not bother with some things, although he would if he was working at another place, because he felt close to the municipality, in the sense of having things in common. This is also why he does not approve the case when the municipality and the union would not settle on wage increase leading to the involvement of

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<sup>270</sup> Note that it was also claimed in the process of KCK operations that municipal employees made regular contributions to the PKK via municipalities. I did not inquire about the alleged underground of municipalities during my fieldwork, given the highly speculative and risky (for research subjects) nature of the topic.

<sup>271</sup> 10 to 15 Turkish liras (between 4 to 7 euros). Collective agreements signed by Genel-İş and Tüm-Bel-Sen include this article, whereas those by Belediye-İş do not. In municipalities other than the Metropolitan Municipality donations may be targeted at the respective philanthropic association linked to the municipality.

<sup>272</sup> My interviews with Osman Baydemir (Diyarbakır, 16/06/2011) and two representatives from Genel-İş and Tüm-Bel-Sen (Diyarbakır, 30/03/2011 and 31/03/2011). See also the collective agreements with the Metropolitan Municipality signed by Tüm-Bel-Sen (TÜM-BEL-SEN/Diyarbakır-Büyükşehir-Belediyesi 2010) and by Genel-İş (‘Büyükşehir Belediyesi Toplu Sözleşmeyi İmzaladı,’ *Bianet*, 26/05/2010).

the state's arbiter bodies, as happened once during his employment. However, they could have solved it among themselves, he said.<sup>273</sup>

### *Facing the Turkish authorities: rights claims and protests*

The labor unions have been involved in numerous joint initiatives taken in cooperation with the other interest associations for pro-Kurdish common demands and concerns. These initiatives, as illustrated in the previous chapters, attempted to moderate conflicts between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement. They also advocated a set of pro-Kurdish demands such as the right to education in mother language and constitutional safeguards for the recognition of Kurds (see Ch. 2). However, union leaders never appeared in the mainstream media as significant actors of this joint activism, unlike business and professional leaders. Union leaders appeared only in the background in press releases and added their signatures to the lists of associations, but did not read any press statements prepared by the encompassing coalition of associations or get interviewed by mainstream journalists. Moreover, they were not included among the privileged core associations, which top political figures tended to favor in their meetings in Diyarbakır: hence, for instance, union leaders from the municipal sector were not invited to the meeting with the Chief of General Staff in 2008, like the leaders of Bar and Medical Associations and unlike business leaders (see Ch. 5 and 6).<sup>274</sup> This might have to do with not only the political hostility towards labor unions in the post-1980 Turkey, but also the political stance of the unions in Diyarbakır's municipal sector.

Hence, in addition to this type of joint initiatives, which are central to the rise of Kurdish associational activism, we see two other axes of activism by the labor unions, in a fashion quite similar to (and partly in cooperation with) the Medical Association. First, the labor unions took steps concerning major political events such as elections and the referendum in a way supportive of the Kurdish movement and in opposition to the AKP government. These steps were made in cooperation with other left-wing associations, forming an intragroup coalition alternative to that of business associations and the Bar Association as the latter group appeared united in a pro-government fashion in significant political moments. However, they have not received as much media attention as the latter did (see Ch. 5 and

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<sup>273</sup> My interview with an employee of a municipality who is also a member of Genel-İş, Diyarbakır, 27/06/2011.

<sup>274</sup> The relationships with the political authorities also vary among the unions – a union representative told me that DİSK-affiliated unions were left out in meetings organized in the city by the governorship, whereas other unions were invited. My interview with representatives from two unions, Diyarbakır, 30/03/2011 and 31/03/2011.

6).<sup>275</sup> Second, they raised concerns about issues facing their membership environment, particularly municipal mayors and executives, as a result of KCK operations; these appear in line with the collaborative relations in the sector discussed in the previous sub-section.

Before the 2009 local elections, which unfolded as a significant case of fierce contestation between the AKP and the Kurdish movement, the Diyarbakır Democracy Platform made a press statement on behalf of 32 associations, including the labor unions from the municipal sector, to express support for the left-wing electoral bloc, which included the candidates of the pro-Kurdish party in the region. While doing this, the statement criticized the AKP government for a number of things such as the following: the abuse of religion, the support for Turkish nationalist values, and the use of poverty as a control mechanism (*açlıkla terbiye*). It also pointed at the contradiction of the AKP in accusing the pro-Kurdish party of doing ‘identity politics’ because of the latter’s advocacy for constitutional safeguards for the recognition of the Kurdish identity, while the AKP defined the Kurdish-language broadcasting by a public TV channel as a revolution. Furthermore, it was argued that the municipalities on Kurdish territory should not be seen any more as ‘fortresses’ to conquer, with a ‘denial’ approach (note the reference to the debate between Erdoğan and Baydemir mentioned above in the first section).<sup>276</sup>

In the same vein, the leader of Genel-İş made a statement to a local news portal about the 2011 general elections, supporting the left-wing electoral bloc, which included the candidates of the pro-Kurdish party. He stated that their hopes for peace were destroyed by ongoing political and military operations (he means KCK operations by the former), adding that civilians also were being killed and some workers were recently seriously wounded by gas bombs (used by the police against demonstrators). Therefore, he underlined the significance of having representatives from the bloc in the parliament. The union leader also criticized the AKP government for investing in war and argued that the development level of the region was worsening since it came to the power.<sup>277</sup>

Another moment of support for the pro-Kurdish party came in between these elections, in relation with the 2010 Constitutional Referendum. The leaders of Tüm-Bel-Sen and Genel-İş

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<sup>275</sup> The alternative bloc included organized local actors such as the Medical Association, the compulsory associations for engineers and architects (TMMOB-affiliates), the Human Rights Association, as well as labor union affiliates of the KESK and the DİSK, including those organized in the municipal sector.

<sup>276</sup> See ‘Diyarbakır’da 32 kurumdan DTP’ye açık destek,’ *Firatnews*, 11/03/2009.

<sup>277</sup> ‘Amed’de sendikalar Emek Bloğu’nu destekliyor,’ *Diyarbakır Haber*, 28/05/2011. Also see Chapters 2 and 3 on the elections.

(but not of Belediye-İş) took part in a joint statement of public figures from across the country to call for the boycotting of the referendum. Note that the boycott call had been initiated by the Kurdish movement, whereas the leaders of major business associations and the Bar Association in Diyarbakır supported voting in favor of the referendum (see Ch. 2, 5 and 6). The joint statement, on the other hand, advocated a completely new democratic constitution, instead of limited amendments that were put on referendum and polarized the society.<sup>278</sup>

As to the union activities about issues facing the membership environment and employers, these attained increasing significance as a result of KCK operations. As mentioned before, numerous union representatives and members as well as municipal administrators were taken into custody, kept in detention and put on trial as a result of these operations. Kayapınar Municipality is a major example for Diyarbakır's municipal sector. Mayor Zülküf Karatekin has been in years-long detention, after he was taken into custody in the 2009 operation, which targeted en masse specifically pro-Kurdish mayors, the members of municipal assemblies, as well as the provincial executives of the pro-Kurdish party. Against the detention of Kurdish representatives, employees and the leaders of the unions organized in this municipality (that is, Genel-İş and Tüm-Bel-Sen) have been involved in weekly protests, known as Black Thursday and carried out in front of the municipality. Sometimes important figures from the Kurdish movement (e.g. MPs on the tickets of the pro-Kurdish party and Mayor Osman Baydemir) also attended these protests, giving speeches which criticize the operations as well as the AKP government's approach to the Kurdish movement, mostly in relation with conjectural events.<sup>279</sup> Hence, the union activities outside of contractual relations – that is, collective bargaining – also unfolded in ways supportive of the Kurdish movement and the municipal governments run by it and oppositional to the AKP government.

### ***Conclusions***

The labor unions had a special importance in associational politics. They regularly took part in *encompassing coalitions*, including all the other associations, formed in the post-2005 period. These initiatives usually aimed to moderate the conflict and to push for peace and also gradually expressed pro-Kurdish common demands in an environment defined by the dual power contestation. However, the labor unions appeared usually as secondary actors in these coalitions: they signed the joint press statements, but did not, say, attract the attention of the

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<sup>278</sup> 'Referandumu Boykot Çağrısının Tam Metni ve İmzacılar,' *Bianet*, 30/07/2010.

<sup>279</sup> See the website of Kayapınar Municipality for regular reports on protests: [www.diyarbakirkayapinar.bel.tr](http://www.diyarbakirkayapinar.bel.tr)

mainstream media, nor get invited by top state figures to meetings as representatives from Kurdish civil society, unlike the business leaders.

On the other hand, the unions played a leading role in giving shape to a narrow coalition with some other unions and the Medical Association. This appeared as an *alternative narrow coalition* against the business-led one. The support for the Kurdish movement provided the common ground. In other words, the rights-claims and concerns as articulated by the movement were helpful in delineating this division among the associations: the unionists openly supported the pro-Kurdish party's candidates in elections as well as its call for boycotting the 2010 referendum. They also criticized the AKP government's policies, some of which directly affected them – including union members and elected executives of the municipalities – as in KCK operations. This alternative bloc did not receive much attention from the government or the mainstream media though.

The unionists and the municipal executives from the pro-Kurdish parties share a past of joint struggle dating back to the 1990s. Acquiring an employee-employer relationship in the new period could have damaged this alliance; however, the political pressures on the Kurdish movement in general and on the pro-Kurdish municipal governments in particular helped sustain it. Thereby, they could reach a *compromise* in collective bargaining. They had conflicting views about wage setting and work time; these usually were decided to the advantage of the municipal governments. The unionists also agreed to have their members regularly donate to the municipality's philanthropic association *Sarmaşık* in a fashion of national redistribution. Yet, these concessions were traded by the introduction of new political-cultural entitlements with regard to services in the Kurdish language, symbolical days important for the Kurdish movement, gender ideals, and such. Indeed, these entitlements are in line with the Kurdish movement's political and social projects; hence, they are not exactly a concession for the latter. In summary, as a municipal worker told me, the unionists engaged in activities more with the goal of 'patriotism' than the pursuit of material interests. This compromise reduces the salience of economic interests as a basis of social division and underlines instead collective identity and political-moral commitments.

A number of conditions made this compromise possible: first, the dual power contestation. The AKP government put various political and economic pressures on the pro-Kurdish municipal governments. In particular, it targeted Diyarbakır municipalities as if it were a 'fortress' to conquer. The Prime Minister promised socio-economic measures upon its potential electoral victory, against 'identity politics' of the movement. Against this, the pro-

Kurdish mayors asked locals to show solidarity to keep the ‘fortress.’ This was accompanied with appeals to the common cause, in bargaining with the unionists, downplaying the differences in interests. If the unionists were to resist in collective bargaining, it could bring the state’s arbiter bodies into the game, something which both sides would not prefer for political reasons, if not economic reasons.

Second, structural factors also were influential. The armed conflict of the 1990s led to the increase in poverty and unemployment rates in Diyarbakır. These appeared not only a social problem, but a political problem leading the poverty-alleviation activities by the AKP circles, with a goal to use in electoral politics. Against this background, the municipalities did not only initiate alternative charity activities but also asked for active participation and sacrifices from the labor force in processes of collective bargaining. These practices can be thought as a part of the *moral economy*. In addition, the process of liberalization negatively influenced the labor force across the country. Practices of subcontracting and outsourcing, as well as temporary forms of employment, have become widespread in the municipal sector as well. The municipalities in Diyarbakır also followed this trend for both political and economic reasons. The potential choice of service procurement for lowering the labor costs was used as an argument against the demands for wage increase by the unions. While such conditions in political and economic environments decreased the *bargaining power* of the unions, they could still reach a compromise within the framework of the moral economy.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

The Durkheimian approach to the study of interest associations argued that associations can play important roles in the political integration of society by articulating individuals along certain conceptions of identities and interests and linking them to the state. But what if the state is being contested? This dissertation examined the rise of Kurdish interest associations as political actors in Turkey vis-à-vis the struggles between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement for hegemony in the last decade. With an investigation of relations of the associations among themselves and with the rival political actors, it explored the grounds on which the associational actors cooperate and conflict with each other forging diverse forms of coalition. This exploration sheds lights on how political actors attempt to re-define and ‘naturalize’ main lines of social division in society, parallel to their political projects, by ‘integrating disparate identities and interests into coherent sociopolitical blocs’ (De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009: 195).

Specifically, the dissertation examined how the cross-pressures of economic interests and collective identity politics, stemming from the two political interlocutors and the membership environments, played out themselves differently within and among associations. Despite the inherent ambiguity of collective action and complexity of the transitional context, the main findings can be summarized as the following: collective identity politics provide an integrative force enabling encompassing coalitions within the group in pursuit of common concerns. Interest politics, on the other hand, can have divisive effects within the group, supporting narrow coalitions, and some integrative effects across the groups for a national coalition. These two trajectories roughly correspond to the hegemonic projects of the Kurdish movement and the AKP government, respectively, but they may have unexpected consequences.

While no single model of integration or a line of social division could reign in the recent period, the associations negotiated diverse compromises with the political actors as regards their interests, ideals, and status. These compromises show that some of the organized groups, such as business associations, could turn the situation into an advantage and appear as a leading civil society actor in the process, while some others, such as the labor unions, ended up relatively disadvantaged and became less visible in their efforts for pursuing alternative political projects. The empowerment and disempowerment of different social groups in the transitional period, however, might affect the way certain conceptions of interests and collective identities are stabilized as the main lines of social division and sources of political



integration in the process of peace building, by changing the dynamics of negotiation between actors (cf. Wimmer 2008: 1006). This may influence the nature of the state that would be re-settled.

In this conclusion, first, I give a systematic overview of the wide historical and political context within which the Kurdish associational activism took place. I focus on the contestation of the Turkish nation-state, elaborating on the struggles between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement for hegemony. I analyze the strategies of each actor to articulate Kurdish groups under its leadership. Then, I explain how particular processes opened up the space for Kurdish interest associations to play a politically salient role in this contestation. Second, I synthesize the findings of the in-depth analysis of associational behavior against the background of articulation activities by the two political actors. I show on what basis the Kurdish interest associations could come together to form encompassing coalitions. Afterwards, I elaborate on the conflicts and divisions that emerged between associations and in their interaction with the political actors. I point at the formation of competing narrow coalitions, as well as their varying bases and effectiveness. In this respect, I also elaborate on the relations between local and peak associations. These sections discuss the diverse effects of collective identity politics and interest politics for political integration. I conclude with a brief discussion on some compromises reached in the transitional period and the ongoing process of peace talks in relation with the Kurdish associational activism.

## **8.1 Contestation of the state and the rise of Kurdish associations**

In transition from the empire, modern Turkey was established as a secular nation-state. Turkish nationalism and *laïcité* provided the major ideologies for the Kemalist ruling elites in their efforts to regulate state-society relations. However, the secularist-nationalist project was not successful in ensuring the political integration of society in the course of modernization. Political Islam and the Kurdish movement developed as challengers to this nature of the state and provided the sources for the major lines of cleavage in the post-1980s Turkey. Against the background of constraints presented by Kemalist bureaucratic elites, on the one hand, Islamist political parties pushed hard to attain the power and, on the other hand, the Kurdish guerilla organization PKK got involved in a devastating armed conflict with the Turkish army. Yet, a period of transition was to take place in the 2000s, which led to fundamental changes in the configuration of power. In 1999, the armed conflict came to a halt, albeit to restart in 2004 at a lower density, and the pro-Kurdish parties were elected to municipal

governments in the Kurdish region, increasing the movement's power. In the same year, Turkey was recognized as a candidate for EU membership. These events triggered a reform process, albeit inconsistent, for conflict resolution and democratization. The AKP was to undertake this process, which also would help opening up the space for Kurdish interest associations. Let's examine the political articulation efforts by the AKP government and the Kurdish movement and the introduction of Kurdish associations as a new actor vis-à-vis the contestation of the state.

### ***The AKP's strategies for political articulation***

The last decade under the AKP rule has been characterized with significant institutional reforms, economic growth, social polarization, and political instability. Despite having roots in political Islam, the party claimed not to be a follower of the tradition, initially pursuing a conservative-liberal approach and gradually attaining an authoritarian-nationalist approach with Islamic tones. The AKP struggled against two major challengers to consolidate its power: the secularist-nationalist bureaucratic elites and the Kurdish movement. In other words, the state was being contested at two levels. The AKP's confrontation with the bureaucratic elites gradually turned out to its advantage, while its confrontation with the Kurdish movement has been more complicated only recently leading to talks for a peace deal.

The party employed a rhetoric of democratization and economic development to legitimize its struggle against its challengers. Such a general way of framing issues, *inter alia*, helped the AKP forge an encompassing coalition of social groups with disparate identities and interests. However, its rhetoric gradually oscillated between pro-Kurdish reformist and Turkish nationalist tones to appease these diverse groups and to compete with its political rivals. In this respect, the party leaders made some use of ambiguity in framing issues and formulating policy proposals on contested topics. Furthermore, it attempted to re-define the lines of cleavage in the country in a most vague fashion, i.e. as supporters and opponents of democratization: opponents allegedly supported either *coup* plots (referring to secularist nationalists) or 'terrorism' (referring to Kurdish activists).

The AKP used a number of strategies to articulate Kurds to its political project. Numerous initiatives were taken through discursive means; political reforms and repression; and socio-economic policies. On the discursive level, the party leaders engaged in efforts to re-define the categorical divisions in society. First, appeals were made to the shared identity of Islam. This was to be a common ground to integrate different social groups, with an effort to

overcome ethnic identity as a principle of categorization and oppositional politics (cf. Wimmer 2008). However, it was later used to depict a division within the Kurdish group in the form of the 'pious' versus the 'perverse.' The members of the Kurdish movement were depicted to be the latter. This strategy was to be counteracted by the Kurdish movement who also made appeals to religion (a 'patriotic' version of it). Still, there was a general attempt for a categorization of Kurds, which could be observed in discourses of the AKP, the mainstream media and even some associational leaders, into 'good Kurds' versus 'bad Kurds.' The former allegedly supports democratic means and the latter allegedly supports violent means. Note that this distinction is not only an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Kurdish movement, but also a source of intimidation. These efforts concerning social cleavages were complemented by the AKP's self-definition as doing 'service' politics in the sense of working for economic development and satisfaction of social needs. It accused the pro-Kurdish party of doing 'identity politics' in the sense of pursuing illegitimate dangerous 'passions' and the PKK of opposing the development of the Kurdish region. In other words, the AKP made appeals to 'interests' to counteract 'passions.' In doing so, it tried to 'disarticulate' Kurds from the social base of the Kurdish movement and 'rearticulate' them to its own political project (cf. De Leon/Desai/Tuğal 2009).

In this respect, the AKP employed various economic and social policy measures at national and local levels. Social provision tremendously increased thanks to initiatives some of which based on public-private-voluntary partnership. Access to healthcare, economic credits, agricultural subsidies, funds for social projects and other resources highly improved. The Kurdish region benefited from these new opportunities to an important degree, as the AKP engaged in 'positive discrimination' policies because of the region's underdevelopment. In this respect, special programs also were developed for Diyarbakır and it was prioritized in the distribution of some resources nationwide because the AKP aimed to win over the province in elections for its symbolical importance. The Chamber played a role in mediating the access to some of these resources, in addition to benefiting from other resources for itself. Coupled with other dynamics, the local economy in Diyarbakır improved greatly in the AKP period. All of these complemented the rhetoric on 'service versus identity politics' by presenting concrete economic incentives and pressures. The AKP's economic and social policies helped re-shape the state-society relations in the province. They contributed to state penetration and political integration, by dragging Kurdish citizens into the sphere of the state channels-cum-resources. It is plausible to see these policies as one of the reasons for the Kurdish electoral support to the AKP.

The reform process triggered by EU candidacy also increased the support for the AKP, for not only its introduction of linguistic-cultural rights for Kurds, but also its implications for the general democratization of the country. Even if the latter goal became dubious at times, the AKP's confrontation with Kemalist elites contributed to the support, helping the AKP accept no responsibility for the oppressive state tradition. The AKP has increased its activities and made somewhat vague promises for a solution to the Kurdish issue since 2005, reaching a height in 2009 with the so-called 'democratic opening.' However, the government also deployed and supported discriminative and oppressive measures against the Kurdish movement, including the pro-Kurdish parties and the municipalities they run. In its competition against the Kurdish movement, the AKP turned its face to the Kurdish interest associations as a 'third actor.' Before elaborating on the rise of these associations, let's consider the political articulation efforts by the Kurdish movement.

### ***The Kurdish movement's strategies for political articulation***

Over the last decade, the Kurdish movement was faced with important opportunities and constraints, which influenced the nature and effectiveness of its strategies for pursuing pro-Kurdish demands and articulating Kurds under its leadership. Guerilla leader Öcalan developed new projects in his prison, as the PKK quitted its initial goal of independence and engaged in armed struggle in a less dense and intermittent fashion. Two political channels could be used in this period: first, the pro-Kurdish parties increased their power in municipal governments in the Kurdish region, including Diyarbakır. This provided the movement with new opportunities to integrate and mobilize Kurds. Second, the pro-Kurdish parties entered the national parliament standing as independent candidates. This strengthened the legal component of the Kurdish movement, despite the serious tensions in the parliamentary realm coupled with efforts to exclude and repress the pro-Kurdish parties.

In this period, the Kurdish movement found itself in a contestation with the AKP government. This contestation was not merely about the military operations, the government's policies and resistance to Kurdish demands but also about the leadership of Kurds and control over the Kurdish region, Diyarbakır turning into the most contested site. This was an outcome of the situation of dual power developing since the previous decade, but took a new form as the configuration of power changed under the AKP rule. Since the AKP had a confrontation with the state elites and used this to attract the support of Kurds, *inter alia*, under the banner of 'democratization,' the Kurdish movement had to develop new strategies, while claiming that the AKP was becoming the state itself.

The Kurdish movement used a number of strategies to articulate Kurds under its leadership. The PKK's references to guerilla leader Öcalan as a leader cult and martyrs, as well as an ideology of patriotism, targeted the main social base of the movement and they are analyzed in other works. What is more important in terms of our topic is the movement's increasing efforts to integrate Kurdish groups with disparate ideas and interests into an encompassing coalition. Organized and individual Kurdish actors make diverse rights claims and proposals, some of which appear at odds with the PKK and compatible with the AKP, who also is the major rival for Kurdish votes. Against this background, the pro-Kurdish parties played a leading role in articulating a set of common demands by highlighting the shared ethnic identity. These common demands include the right to education in mother language, introduction of constitutional safeguards for the recognition of the Kurdish identity, and strengthening of local governments. The rising activism by Kurdish interest associations had a special role in raising the need to formulate common demands. Interactions and negotiations with these associations and other organized actors via, *inter alia*, local platforms led by the Kurdish movement helped the articulation efforts. Kurdish actors have different ideas and interests with regard to some of these demands, as seen in the two opposing approaches to the economic dimension of decentralization proposals (pro-market and critical approaches). However, the pro-Kurdish parties kept a degree of *ambiguity* in framing such contested topics to obscure the differences among Kurdish groups and, hence, to forge an encompassing coalition. Yet, the ambiguity kept in the party programs was not enough to avoid conflicts with local business actors; hence, the instability of coalitions.

The Kurdish movement employed other strategies to counter the AKP's efforts to disarticulate Kurds from its social base. First, against the government's appeals to religion and depiction of the movement supporters as 'perverse,' the movement actors also used religious themes, showing pious politicians as candidates in elections, mobilizing 'patriotic imams' against the state-controlled mosques, and so on. Second, against the poverty-alleviation activities by the government circles, the movement engaged in alternative forms of charity at the local level, bringing together organized and individual Kurdish actors on the basis of ethnic solidarity. These counter-initiatives help stabilize the group boundaries by undermining the strategic options of the rival actor (cf. Wimmer 2008). On the other hand, those Kurds who appeared in cooperation with the AKP government were at times labeled as 'collaborators' in a fashion of intimidation.

The dual power situation in the Kurdish region also helps the goal of integrating Kurds under the leadership of the Kurdish movement. The movement's claim to power in the region led to the creation of alternative institutions and sources of legitimacy, concerning state-like functions such as justice, fiscal policy, social provision, *inter alia*. In recent years, the movement actors and civil society organizations were to be subjected to disabling investigations for related allegations, leading to the detention of thousands of people. In addition to these claims to power, there is also a moral economy which provides an integrative framework. The moral economy is based on 'patriotism' and political 'sacrifice' as sources of legitimacy. It promotes certain conceptions of mutual rights and obligations, which may influence and outweigh calculations of interests. This normative order provides bonds for intragroup solidarity, as well as norms of conduct between the movement leaders and the locals; i.e. an alternative model of political integration. However, it has become more contested as a result of economic and political changes in the last decade, as also can be observed in associational politics.

### ***Opening up of the space for interest associations***

Kurdish interest associations in Diyarbakır have arisen as a third actor in this contestation of dual power. A number of factors opened up the space for them to play such a politically salient role. First of all, the European Union played a significant role as an external actor. By the early 2000s, EU delegates, as well as others, made visits to Diyarbakır and held meetings with representatives from interest associations, *inter alia*, to have information about the situation of the Kurdish region. The meetings in turn influenced the EU progress reports and pressures on the Turkish governments to democratize its political institutions as well as to solve the Kurdish issue. The Prime Minister Erdoğan initially criticized this connection between the EU and Kurdish civil society; however, he too began to take these associations into account following his first visit to Diyarbakır in 2005.

The EU's attention to Kurdish associations probably stems from a liberal normative understanding of civil society as a pillar of plural democracy. In fact, civil society organizations across the country benefited a lot from the EU accession process. However, the recent process shows that the AKP government began to pay attention to these associations for a different reason: to introduce a new actor to the game to undermine the power of the political rival. Kurdish interest associations would be an alternative to the Kurdish movement, as a civil society with its liberal connotations of being 'democratic' and 'moderate.' Indeed, such properties also were claimed by interest associations throughout their activism. Thereby,

the associations would help the AKP re-define the lines of cleavage, delegitimize the Kurdish movement, and mobilize ‘good Kurds’ to be articulated to its constituency. Such a need to manage the Kurdish issue was on the rise because of the re-start of clashes with the PKK since 2004 and the new regional dynamics in the Middle East in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led war on Iraq, as well as domestic politics.

Why interest associations, especially the corporatist ones? I think one factor is that the significance of corporatist associations in general has increased in the AKP period. Corporatist associations represent important political traditions and may serve as a good basis of political mobilization. They are some of the few organizations with the oldest and uninterrupted institutional histories and large memberships, linking the local and the national levels. Using different strategies, the AKP tried to penetrate to these associations in its quest for hegemony; yet, as it did not always succeed, it also started planning (or threatening) to reform the corporatist environment into a pluralist one. Against this background, Kurdish interest associations had an advantage over other types of associations thanks to their corporatist structure. This structure provides them with a larger and heterogeneous membership, greater capacity and more credibility because of organizational properties such as compulsory membership, representational monopoly, internal elections, membership to hierarchical national bodies, and public status; hence, ideal mechanisms for the political integration of society. In addition, the associations’ relevance to the definition of the Kurdish issue also puts them in a strategic position; for instance, the Bar relates to the legal dimension and the Chamber relates to the economic dimension of the Kurdish issue.

The AKP government, its leaders and bureaucrats interacted with the associations in diverse ways: they held meetings with representatives of the associations; provided the associations with access to new resources for themselves and for their members; used the party networks at local to influence the internal elections of the associations and indirectly supported particular candidates for leadership; and provided opportunities for political career. These, of course, showed a variety among the associations, contributing to different patterns of political interaction between the actors. The Kurdish movement too gradually began to take the associations into account and try to articulate them to its political project despite having a discontent with some of their activities. In a similar fashion, the movement actors held meetings with representatives of the associations especially via local platforms for civil society organizations; used the movement’s network to influence the internal elections of the associations and indirectly supported particular candidates for leadership. Both political actors

at times harshly criticized associational leaders for some of the positions they took. Considering the wider political environment, these may be thought as intimidation, forming an important component of the constraints associational leaders were faced with. In between the dual power contestation and political instability, associational activities showed a great diversity.

## **8.2 Associational role in formation of social divisions and coalitions**

In the 1990s, some of the Kurdish interest associations were already engaging in activities to draw public attention to human rights violations under the Emergency Rule. However, in the next decade, especially after 2005, political activities increased in amount, enlarged in scope and achieved great public visibility, while some associations who were not politically very active before, such as the Chamber and the voluntary business associations, joined the front too. Associations had cooperation and conflicts in their interaction with each other and with the political actors in this transitional period up to 2012. Let's examine the patterns of political interaction, focusing on the processes of coalition formation with regard to its scope and basis.

### ***United by collective identity politics***

The associations could come together in their joint activities and through their individual undertakings, forming encompassing coalitions on a variety of bases. Most of these activities consisted of press statements and negotiations with the political actors, while concerns about the conflict situation provided the common ground: associational actors called for an end to the armed clashes; tried to moderate the dual power contestation and political tensions; and pressed for a solution to the Kurdish issue through democratization. These were in harmony with the initial rise of the associations as supported by the AKP government to include them as a third actor. Despite forming an encompassing coalition within the group, these activities helped the AKP and the mainstream media in their efforts for a categorization of Kurds into 'good' and 'bad' ones. It is because the associations were depicted as a Kurdish 'civil society,' as an alternative to the Kurdish movement, supporting democratic means of political struggle as opposed to violent means. Associational leaders, especially business leaders, made claims about such a distinction as well. This contributed to their legitimacy at the national level, as well as to their strategic capacity.



However, the associations also increasingly acted in coordination to make pro-Kurdish rights claims in their proposals for a solution to the Kurdish issue. The minimum common demands – such as the right to education in mother language, constitutional safeguards for the recognition of the Kurdish identity, and strengthening of local governments – provided the basis for this coalition. As mentioned above, the Kurdish movement played an important role in articulating these common demands, by highlighting the ethnic collective identity and keeping some ambiguity about the content of some demands to obscure the differences in ideas and interests among Kurdish actors.

The associations also articulated pro-Kurdish rights claims, especially concerning the language, with their activities for interest representation and associational responsibility. For instance, the Medical Association advocated the provision of healthcare services in Kurdish language and undertook supportive initiatives toward physicians. The Bar Association advocated the demand for defense in Kurdish language, as articulated by the detained members of the Kurdish movement, and resisted the requests by courts for its appointment of lawyers when the demand was repeatedly rejected and the right to fair trial was violated. The labor unions included clauses in their collective agreements with the municipal governments on the provision of services for employees in Kurdish language. It appears like it was only the Chamber, as well as the voluntary business associations, who did not articulate linguistic demands in their associational site; however, business actors saw it as a strategy for pursuing economic opportunities: they emphasized how Kurdish businesspeople could play an intermediary role between the Turkish economic actors and the market in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq thanks to their ethnic and linguistic commonalities with Iraqi Kurds.

The Kurdish movement brought the associations together for charity activities in a form of intragroup solidarity. The major example for this is the Sarmaşık Association. Sarmaşık was founded by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality as an alternative to the AKP's activities; however, it was closed down because of pressures from the center. It was later re-founded on the basis of a founding platform of associations, municipal actors and local public figures, including the then leaders of the associations under scrutiny. Such an encompassing platform increases its legitimacy against the political threats at the Kurdish movement. Its financing method and target group (mostly the survivors of the armed conflict) give it an appearance of national redistribution and can be thought as a part of the moral economy which provides an integrative normative framework. In addition to individual donors, the associations gave donations to Sarmaşık. Also, recent collective agreements signed between

the labor unions and the municipal governments include clauses on monthly donation from employees.

As the associations acted in cooperation for common concerns and demands, their activities contributed to the political salience of ethnic collective identity as a basis of social division and political coalition. This was not exactly the goal of the AKP government in supporting these associations at the first place. The associational activism added to the pressures to enact reforms with regard to pro-Kurdish demands. The recent legislative arrangements to allow defense in Kurdish language in courts is one example. In this respect, the Kurdish movement played an important role in the re-definition of demands and grievances and in the articulation of Kurdish interest groups along these lines. Yet, the movement was not all successful either.

### ***Divided and/or united by interest politics***

The associational leaders also held conflicting views on a number of significant political events, leading to the formation of narrow coalitions on an ad hoc basis and shifts in political alignment. These pointed at a polarization among associations vis-à-vis the dual power contestation. One bloc was led by the business leaders (sometimes including also the Bar) in a fashion supportive of the AKP government and opposition to the Kurdish movement. This one attracted most of the attention by the mainstream media and political actors. There was also an alternative bloc led by the labor unions and the Medical Association. It was supportive of the Kurdish movement and oppositional to the AKP government; however, it did not achieve visibility in the mainstream media, nor could draw the attention of rival political actors.

The increasing visibility of the business leaders was accompanied by a depiction of another line of division for Kurds: an 'emerging bourgeoisie,' who favored 'democratic channels' over 'violence.' Both press statements by the business leaders and the coverage by the mainstream media contributed to such a categorization effort. This depiction was seen especially during the 2010 referendum. The referendum on the constitutional amendments carried out by the AKP was a highly polarizing issue for the country; some claiming it as a step further toward democratization and others as a step backward, helping the government consolidate its power. The Kurdish movement, on the other hand, called for boycotting the referendum because it did not take into account Kurdish demands for a new constitution which would enable a democratic solution to the Kurdish issue. Against this background, the Chamber's leader and other business leaders publicly expressed their support in favor of the

referendum. Later, the Bar's leader also declared his support. The leaders explained their decision with a reference to the referendum's potential for the democratization of the country. However, one should consider this decision in relation with the political environment at the time, as the AKP put intense pressures on organized interest groups around the country to publicly support the referendum. Hence, the decision seems to be more of a strategic one, increasing the power of the leaders, despite the reaction by the Kurdish movement.

The relations between the business groups and the government also have an economic background, as outlined in the previous section. In addition to the supportive state policies, the local economy has quite improved in the recent decade, further integrating with the national and, to a degree, international markets. Against this background, the conflict of views between the business leaders and the Kurdish movement became more pronounced as seen in their debates on the economic dimension of the decentralization proposal by the movement under the name of 'democratic autonomy.' The proposal supports a model critical of the markets, advocating a mixed economy with the introduction of cooperatives. The business leaders firmly opposed this proposal and support instead a pro-market model of economic decentralization similar to the relevant state restructuring initiatives by the AKP government. As mentioned before, the pro-Kurdish parties kept ambiguity in the party programs with regard to the proposal's economic dimension; nevertheless, these clashes appeared around the same period with the referendum. The differences in ideas and interests seem to be an important reason for the tensions between the two sides, as also seen in business actors' resistance to be bound by the moral economy with its aspects overriding calculations of interest.

The alternative bloc led by the unions and the Medical Association, on the other hand, publicly expressed support for the Kurdish movement's boycott call for the 2010 referendum. They also supported the candidates of the pro-Kurdish parties in local and national elections. In addition, they advocated the proposal of democratic autonomy in general. As the empirical analysis shows, there are many factors contributing to this alignment, ranging from dynamics in the membership environment to associations' political traditions and leadership structures. Yet, the roles played by the dual power contestation have significant effects: the rights claims, concerns, and proposals as articulated by the Kurdish movement helped delineate this division among the associations. Furthermore, the AKP government pursued some policies and supported judicial investigations which led to disadvantage and political repression for these associations and their membership. This was not the case with the business associations,

which were favored in various ways. It became an issue with the Bar mainly when judicial investigations targeted lawyers as well. In this regard, the AKP played a significant role in the division of associations.

The relations between the local associations and their respective peak associations also deserve attention in relation with the question of political integration. While the historical traditions of associations may help the two levels converge on political positions, the peculiarity of the conditions of the Kurdish region and specifically of Diyarbakır as a contested zone leads to different lines of cleavages gain political salience. The national environment of interest associations is very fragmented including both compulsory and voluntary associations. Political polarization in the country had its manifestations in this environment as well. Associations roughly divide between pro-government and anti-government positions. However, there are divisions among themselves as well. For instance, the Union of Bar Associations was ruled by secularist nationalists until recent times. The Union had tensions with not only the government, but also the Diyarbakır Bar because of its secularist and nationalist approaches, respectively. Yet, the Union's leadership was recently undertaken by a liberal person. And the pressures increased on the Diyarbakır Bar and Kurdish lawyers in an unlawful manner, parallel to the judicial investigations targeting the opponents of the government. These led to cooperation between the Diyarbakır Bar and the Union of Bar Associations – and even the Istanbul Bar, which has been ruled by secularist nationalists – on the basis of professional solidarity and concerns about the rule of law. In this respect, the rising activism by the Kurdish interest associations had an integrative effect across the groups.

Cooperative relations have been more common among other associations. The Chamber had very good relations with the peak association TOBB, as its leaders occupied important positions at central bodies and played a special role when TOBB held meetings with Iraqi Kurdish actors. Both actors pursued a balanced strategy when it came to the AKP government. Yet, as the Chamber had to take into account the local dynamics and the dual power contestation, it was more active concerning the Kurdish issue and more enthusiastic in supporting the AKP government on the 2010 referendum, whereas the TOBB was somewhat forced to support the referendum. The Medical Association also had very cooperative relations with the peak association TTB. The latter has been ruled by pro-Kurdish left-leaning groups and incorporated delegates from Diyarbakır into its central executive bodies, engaging in collaborative activities. Both actors opposed the AKP government's policies regarding

healthcare and working conditions of physicians, while advocating demands such as the provision of healthcare services in Kurdish language. It has been quite the same with the labor unions: the Diyarbakır affiliates of the KESK and the DİSK, which are both left-leaning and pro-Kurdish while at odds with the government, had cooperative relations with the peak associations. It is only the local affiliate of the TÜRK-İŞ, which has not been at harmony with the peak association as it is center-right leaning. However, even then it seems like the peak association allows local diversion in case it wants to get organized in that locality. And this has been the case in Diyarbakır.

Cooperative relations between local and peak associations are conducive to the political integration of different ethnic groups. However, this does not necessarily take a form the AKP government would be looking forward to, as these two levels might unite in their opposition to the government. And this has been the case with some of them. This is why the AKP government has developed some reform proposals in recent years to enable influencing the internal elections of corporatist associations and, alternatively, to turn the corporatist organizational structures into pluralist ones so that it can undermine their power which comes by being united. It seems like the quest for hegemony requires integrative and disintegrative forces simultaneously.

### ***Diverse compromises and future prospects***

The relations of the professional associations with the political actors have been relatively indirect and fewer exchanges were involved. Yet, it has been different for the business associations and the labor unions. These associations negotiated diverse compromises with the political actors as regards their (including the memberships) interests, ideals, and status. On the one hand, business leaders usually pursued a balanced approach, strategically manipulating the dual power situation despite the constraints it presented: they took part in shifting flexible coalitions and cooperated with each political power in projects ranging from political to socio-economic and cultural issues. They changed their approach to the Kurdish movement, increasing their collaboration and publicly voicing pro-Kurdish common demands. The Kurdish movement, on the other hand, started taking into account these associations more seriously and loosening the moral-economy obligations for economic actors (at least at the municipal level). Hence, they reached a kind of compromise. Also considering their usually positive interaction with the AKP government, business leaders could turn the situation into an advantage and increased their bargaining power, becoming a leading Kurdish civil society actor.

The labor unions, on the other hand, found themselves in a different situation though. They had to consider a number of constraints: the state-induced pressures on the municipal governments and employees; structural processes concerning the local economy, poverty, and the labor force; and the existence of a moral economy which emphasizes group solidarity over economic interests. As a result, the unions and the municipal governments reached a compromise in collective bargaining: they had conflicting views about wage increase and work time, but these were usually decided to the advantage of the municipal governments. On the other hand, new political and cultural-linguistic entitlements were introduced for union members. As these entitlements are in line with the Kurdish movement's political project, they are less of a concession, though. In the end, the compromise help reduce the salience of economic interests as a basis of social division and underlines, instead, collective identity politics. Considering also the AKP government's approach to these unions and the environment of unionism in general, the labor unions ended up relatively disadvantaged in the process, faced with a decline in their bargaining power and less visibility in the rising Kurdish civil society at a national level.

As this dissertation was being written, the AKP government and the PKK have been negotiating a peace deal, ending the three-decades of armed conflict. Hence, none of the actors could succeed in struggles for hegemony against each other. The ongoing process lacks transparency and is characterized with uncertainty; however, we can say that a solution to the Kurdish issue will not simply bring an end to the contestation of the state, but it also can change the nature of the state profoundly – the hopes are for a democratic change. In his work on organized interests in transitional contexts, Schmitter argues that interest associations, as one partial regime for the political representation of social groups, do not play a major role in determining whether democracy will succeed an authoritarian rule. Rather, 'their (delayed) impact will be significant in determining what type of democracy will eventually be consolidated' (Schmitter 1992: 433). In this respect, the rise of Kurdish associational activism and the introduction of such an important center to the associational map of political representation in Turkey have a great significance. Yet, it seems important also how the empowerment and disempowerment of different social groups in the transitional period may influence the ways certain conceptions of interests and collective identities are stabilized as the main lines of social division and sources of political integration in the upcoming process. This would be influential on the type of democracy a peace deal consolidates.

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# Azer Kılıç

## Birth

2 April 1981, Istanbul.

## Research interests

Political economy, political sociology; social policy, interest associations, intrastate conflicts, EU accession processes; gender, ethnicity, citizenship.

## Education

- 2009-2013 Doktor rerum politicarum, Political Science (*magna cum laude*)  
International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy, a joint school of Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG) and University of Cologne, Cologne
- Dissertation: “Identity, Interest, and Politics: The Rise of Kurdish Associational Activism and the Contestation of the State in Turkey”  
Committee: Wolfgang Streeck (MPIfG, principal advisor), Ayse Bugra (Bogazici University, co-advisor), Martin van Bruinessen (Utrecht University).
- 2006-2013 PhD, History of Modern Turkey  
Boğaziçi University, Istanbul
- Qualification exam passed in 2008. Transferred to MPIfG in October 2009. Joint doctoral degree conferred upon successful thesis defense in Cologne; based on agreement between Bogazici University and University of Cologne.
- 2004-2006 MA, History of Modern Turkey  
Boğaziçi University, Istanbul
- Thesis: ‘Gender and Social Policy in Turkey: Positive Discrimination or a Second-Class Female Citizenship?’  
Committee: Ayse Bugra (advisor), Zafer Toprak, Duygu Koksal.
- 1999-2004 BA, Political Science and International Relations  
Marmara University, Istanbul

## Positions

- 2014-awaiting Postdoctoral Researcher (two years)  
Koc University Social Policy Center, Istanbul
- 2013-ongoing Postdoctoral Researcher (May-December)  
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne
- 2011-2012 Visiting Scholar, Department of Sociology (November-March)  
Columbia University, New York

- 2009-2013 Doctoral Researcher  
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne
- 2007-2009 Research Assistant, Social Policy Forum  
Boğaziçi University, Istanbul
- 2005-2007 Research Assistant, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History  
Boğaziçi University, Istanbul
- 2001-2009 Freelance translator, English to Turkish  
Ithaki and İletişim Publishing Houses, Istanbul

#### Fellowships, Grants, Awards

- 2013 Postdoctoral Research Grant, AXA Research Fund (2 years; 120,000 €).
- 2013 Postdoctoral Fellowship, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (8 months).
- 2009 Doctoral Stipend, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (43 months).
- 2008 Awards from TUBITAK for Encouraging International Publications in Social Sciences (twice; 800 TL).
- 2005 Research Grant for MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University's Social Policy Forum (1000 \$).

#### Professional Service

- 2009 Refereeing for *Journal of European Social Policy* and *Journal of Social Policy*.

#### Publications

##### *Theses*

- 2006 *Gender and Social Policy in Turkey: Positive Discrimination or a Second-Class Female Citizenship?* Boğaziçi University, Istanbul.

##### *Peer-Reviewed Articles*

- 2008 'The Gender Dimension of Social Policy Reform in Turkey: Towards Equal Citizenship?' *Social Policy & Administration*, 42, 5, 487-503.
- 2008 'Continuity and Change in Social Policy Approaches toward Women', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 38, Spring, 135-58.

##### *Book Chapters*

- 2010 'Gender, Family and Children at the Crossroads of Social Policy Reform in Turkey: Alternating between Familialism and Individualism'. In John Gal and Mimi Ajzenstadt (eds.), *Children, Gender and Families in Mediterranean Welfare States*. London, New York: Springer, 165-179.
- 2010 'Sosyal Politika Reformu Çerçevesinde Kadınlar ve Vatandaşlık' [Implications of Social Policy Reform for Women and Citizenship]. In Hülya Durudoğan et al (eds.), *Türkiye'de Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çalışmaları: Eşitsizlikler, Mücadeleler, Kazanımlar* [Gender Studies in Turkey: Inequalities, Struggles, and Advances]. Istanbul: Koç University Press, 337-347.

### *Research Reports*

- 2009 ‘Türkiye’de Çocuk Bakım Hizmetlerinin Yaygınlaştırılmasına Yönelik Bir Öneri: Mahalle Kreşleri’ [A Proposal for Improvement of Childcare Facilities in Turkey: Neighborhood Nurseries], *Boğaziçi University Social Policy Forum Research Report*, 38 pages. Co-authored with Berna Yazıcı and Çağrı Yoltar.

### *Journal Essays*

- 2010 ‘Sosyal Politikada Kadının Yeri’ [Women’s Place in Social Policy], *Feminist Politika*, 6, 23.
- 2008 ‘Toplumsal Cinsiyet Gözüyle Sosyal Politika Reformu’ [Social Policy Reform from a Gender Perspective], *Toplum ve Hekim*, 23, 5, 396-400.
- 2008 ‘Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Yapabilirlik Yaklaşımı ve Sosyal Politika’ [Gender, the Capabilities Approach, and Social Policy], *Amargi*, 8, Spring, 33-35.

### *Commentaries in National Newspapers*

- 2008 ‘Yeşil Kartın Vatandaşlık Rejimi’ [The Citizenship Regime of the Green Card], *Radikal*, 10 November. Co-authored with Osman Savaşkan and Çağrı Yoltar.
- 2003 ‘YÖK ve Öğrenciler’ [YÖK –Higher Education Council– and Students], *Radikal* 2, October 5.

### *Interviews*

- 2009 Interviewed. ‘Kadınların Sosyal Hakları’ [Women’s Social Rights], *BÜ’de Kadın Gündemi*, 16, Spring, 23-29.

### *Book Reviews*

- 2004 Review of *Porto Alegre: Farklı Bir Demokrasi Umudu* [Porto Alegre: Hope for a Different Democracy] by Marion Gret and Yves Sintomer. In *Varlık*, July, 24.

### *Selected Translations*

- 2009 Ayşe Buğra/Kaan Ağartan (eds). *21. Yüzyılda Karl Polanyi'yi Okumak: Bir Siyasi Proje Olarak Piyasa Ekonomisi* [Reading Karl Polanyi for the Twenty-First Century: Market Economy as Political Project. New York: Palgrave, 2007]. Istanbul: İletişim.
- 2004 Marion Gret/Yves Sintomer. *Porto Alegre: Farklı Bir Demokrasi Umudu* [Porto Alegre: Hope for a Different Democracy. Paris: La Découverte, 2002]. Istanbul: İthaki.

### Presentations

- 2012 Presentation. ‘Ethnicity, Class, and Politics: Kurdish Interest Associations in Dual-Power Contestation’. *7th Max Planck Summer Conference on Economy and Society: Politics, Power, and Institutions*. Northwestern University, July 1-3, Chicago.
- 2008 Invited presentation. ‘Women and Citizenship in the Context of Social Security Reform’. *Conference on Gender Studies in Turkey: Inequalities, Struggles, and Advances*, Koç University, November 29-30, Istanbul.
- 2008 Invited lecture. ‘Gender and Social Policy in Turkey’. *13th Fall School for Public*

*Health: Social Policy*, Turkish Union of Medical Associations, October 11-14, Izmir.

- 2008 Invited presentation. ‘Gender, Family and Children at the Crossroads of Social Policy Reform in Turkey: Alternating between Familialism and Individualization’. *International Workshop: Children, Gender and Families in Mediterranean Welfare States*, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, June 1-3, Jerusalem.
- 2007 Presentation. ‘Gender and Social Policy in Turkey: Towards Equal Citizenship?’ *Second International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, University of Granada, July 10-13, Granada.

### Additional Training

- 2010 Barcelona Summer School in International Politics (‘Explaining Ethno-Nationalist Civil Wars’), Institut Barcelona d’Estudis Internacionals, July 5-9, Spain.
- 2010 ECPR Summer School in Methods and Techniques, University of Ljubljana, July 30–August 14, Slovenia.

### IT Skills

MS Office, Endnote, Atlas.ti (basic), Macromedia Dreamweaver & Fireworks (basic).

### Languages

Turkish (native), English (advanced), German (basic), Azeri (family exposure-passive).

### References

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