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Existence and Self-Defence are Two Sides of the Same Coin

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to cure the affected areas. Externally, when an individual is attacked at the street, a pair of hands will provide protection. The strength of a defence mechanism lies on the extent to which they have been made use of.

Internal or external threats that a human faces as an individual are different from those posed on a social, cultural, or a national group of which they are a member. As individual they might be attacked by internal virus or a mugger on the street, yet as members of a national group they are likely to come under cultural, economic or armed attack. Depending on the form of attack, they will promote a protecting mechanism with which to deal with the attacks and maintain their particular way of life.

As a separate nation that have experienced multiple cases of mass-killing at the hands of states that have hitherto been in control of its territory, the Kurds need a strong defence system to prevent future tragedies. As the Kurds will remain under the threat of both cultural and military attacks, they need both cultural and military mechanisms with which to preserve their existence as a separate people.

torians. It was in 1905, for example, that G.A. Hobson argued: is there anyone who really believes that any of the European states, or any great power, can embark on a great war if the House of Rothschild or any of its branches did not concede to it?

The fact is that the World Wars unfolded without the permission of the House of Rothschild, and the Jews had suffered the most. Worst of all, because during the early development of the European states, the Jewish companies, including the House of Rothschild, provided them with extensive amount of loans, this yearned them the lasting enmity of those who came into a conflict with their state. As one Jewish political philosopher, Hana Arendt, reminds us; any class of society whose interests the state did not represent, had automatically became anti-Jews, because the Jews were seen as the representative of the state. It took the Jews a Holocaust to understand the significant of military affairs and the establishment of a power army. Is not it stunning that a repeated pattern of mass-killing in Kurdistan has not made certain Kurdish circles understand the existence of a powerful army to preserve themselves as a separate national entity?

Conclusion

This paper argued that existence and self-preservation are two sides of the same coin. No entity without a viable preservation mechanism can continue its existence. The form of defence, moreover, depends on the type of offence. When you are attacked physically, for example, you may need to defend yourself physically first.

An organism such as human body is equipped with an effective system of defence, acting both internally and externally. Internally, when the body is attacked by a specific virus, its defence mechanism automatically spawns the related anti-virus

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pher, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), who after Abraham the Prophet is the most renowned figure in Jewish history, was so critical of them for their lack of attention to military affairs and institutions. He argued that Jewish misery stemmed not from their committing of sin, as the then dominant Jewish view held, but lied in their lack of military mobilisation and the formation of an army. According to Maimonides, instead of studying the art of war, the Jews of ancient times busied themselves with the science of astronomy. But when the Roman army attacked their country and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D, their science of astronomy failed to provide them with protection.

What is of particular notice about Maimonides's philosophy is the type of Messiah he believed had the power to liberate the Jews. In stark contrast to the dominant traditional Jewish view of the Tura, which prophesied the liberation of the Jews via a spiritual and peaceful Messiah, the Maimonides's Messiah was a formidable military commander who would liberate the Jews through the force of arms.

Apparently as it is, 700 years before the Holocaust, Maimonides warned the Jews of the danger of not forming a potent army, and tried to make them understand the value of military organisation. His warning, however, went largely unheeded. Because until the formation of the First Congress of Zionism in 1897, and the creation of the military organisation of Haganah in 1920, the Jews had not made a serious attempt at political and military mobilisation. In fact, during the same period that these activities were underway by a circle of Jewish activists, the vast majority of the Jewish population believed their financial resources would secure them. Much in the same way that they invested all their energy in astronomy in ancient times, in the modern time they believed that Jewish companies such as the House of Rothschild, which had dominated the whole of Europe, would secure them. In fact, the domination of the European political and economic structures by the House of Rothschild was so extensive that it misled some credible his-

tween the Real-IRA with the Continuity-IRA, which in 1986 broke away from the Provisional-IRA.

It is good to note that from the very beginning of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, there was a widespread pessimism regarding the workability of the negotiated settlement and of the “consociational democracy” implemented thereafter. Arend Lijphart, the main theorist of consociationalism, had long argued that this model of political accommodation would not suit Northern Ireland. The last two decades have so far proved this pessimism wrong. One of the main reasons for the apparent success of consociational democracy in this country was the constructive role played by both the EU and the US. Taking this into consideration, what I want to make clear is this: If, despite operating inside a European country and having the benefit of both the EU and the US for facilitation, the IRA did not disarm itself, why should the PKK do, when it operates in the Middle East, and lack support from any international organisation—let alone the EU and the US who have explicitly sided with Turkey?

The Turkish state’s call for the demobilisation and disarmament of the PKK may not come as a surprise, as it has long been a sworn-enemy of the Kurds; an enemy that has done all it could to prevent the Kurds from gaining any form of political status. But what has been perplexing is the call among certain Kurdish circles to rid their nation of the defence-mechanism the PKK has struggled to fashion, costing it the lives of thousands of Kurdistan’s patriotic. More baffling is that, for whatever reason, certain leaders among the Kurdish movement have toyed with the dangerous idea of disarmament.

I believe that the history of the Jewish people offers a good lesson for those circles who fail to take the military issue seriously. A brief survey of Jewish chronicle tells us that throughout their history, perhaps until the late nineteenth century, they did not take the military issue seriously. A Jewish philoso-

Self-defence or self-preservation has often been reduced to its militaristic dimension. Although the latter tops the list in the hierarchy of status attached to self-defence, it would, however, be too simplistic to overlook its other dimensions. This paper examines four major dimensions of self-defence: natural, cultural, economic, and militaristic ones. The core of my argument is that wherever there is an offence, there will be a defence mechanism, whose method depends principally on the mode of offence. A human body, for example, which is infected by a certain virus, will produce a new group of anti-viruses, or reactivate the passive ones, as a way to shield the whole system from possible collapse. When individuals come together to merge into a national category, they may apply the same sort of logic to preserve the parameters that define them as such. When they are culturally subjugated, for instance, they are most likely to generate a set of cultural devices with which to shield their particularities. Threats on their economic sources, moreover, they may respond through protective financial mechanism. Above and beyond, as I will show in the final section of this paper, when they come under militaristic invasion, they will respond militarily, as long as they have the capacity.

Natural defence

Having an inquisitive look at our surrounding one cannot but notice a uniform system of defence inherent in almost every single alive entity, ranging from our body to our domestic animals all the way down to our planet. To begin with, let us take a look at our planet. Located somewhere in the Milky Galaxy, the Earth has from the very outset been exposed to existential threat, stemming from a motley of gigantic meteoroids. Had it not for the sake of the Ozone Layer, which had shielded the Earth by diverting these titanic objects, it is not

very clear how our planet could have preserved itself. The cooling of the Earth resulted in the extinction of the whole species of the dinosaurs and prepared the ground for the emergence of human beings. Ever since then, the Ozone Layer has shielded human beings from the solar radiation. In the absence of this “Cocoon”, or “Security Bubble” around our planet, a consensus amongst the scientists suggests that humans might not have made it to the modern time, as their body’s defence mechanism is not strong enough to endure the solar radiation. With the Ozone Layer’s depletion, in the past few decades, you do not need to be a rocket scientist to appreciate how the exhaustion of an entity’s defence-mechanism signifies the beginning of a road that would inevitably lead to its ultimate demise.

The same principle applies to all individual entities living inside the “mother” Earth. This is not an unfamiliar observation for most of us, seeing the ways in which animals defend themselves once attacked. Nor does this precept applies exclusively to “wild” animals, in whose case the boundaries between defence and offence is not very clear, putting our argument at the risk of sliding into the Darwinian theory. But it covers the whole array of domestic animals including pets such as cat and dog. Cats are sometimes regarded as “faithless”, because they respond to any sources of attack even if they come from their owners who have feed them all their life. Even though dogs are perceived as “faithful” for not responding to attack from their owner, yet, in many cases, they are kept to provide protection to the boundary the dog belongs to, which is the owner home.

The tendency for self-preservation does certainly apply to Aristotelian “political animals”: human beings. The human body is a complicated organ equipped with an elaborate system of self-preservation, tasked to shield the whole body from both inside and outside threat. In the case of an outside attack, when the skin is sliced by a knife, for instance, the body mobilises the cells around the incision spot to heal the wound as soon as possible. In the case of an inside threat,

beings would, one day, reach a state of perfection whereby they will no longer need arms to settle disputes, I strongly oppose the idea of the PKK’s disarmament.

If the African National Congress (ANC) did not disarm itself, why should the PKK do? In South Africa, quite to the contrary, it was the country’s army, SADF (the South African Defence Force) which demobilised half of its soldiers, and integrated the remaining with ANC guerrillas to form a new national army: The South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which officially inaugurated in 2004. It is interesting to note that while the SADF had the command of 82,706 personnel in 1994, it was in control of only 37,233 strong when it joined ANC guerrillas, which means the demobilisation of more than half of its soldiers. A similar pattern of army demobilisation, instead of guerrilla’s, occurred in the El Salvadorian Peace Process of 1994, whereby the remaining 30,000 soldiers, of the army of 63,000, merged with the militants of FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Army) to form a new national army as opposed to the previous partisan one.

The case of Provisional-IRA in the Northern Ireland Peace Process is of particular notice to our discussion. Even though the IRA with all its branches have been operating inside a European country, they have not totally disarmed itself. According to the conventional narrative, when the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was struck between the British government and the Provisional-IRA, those who opposed the deal broke away from the organisation and formed a new party: The Real-IRA. Yet a first-hand acquaintance with the organisation membership reveals the fact that this contention was made for external consumption only. In fact, the aging or decapitated members of the Provisional-IRA who were no longer fit for military affairs, led by Jerry Addams and Martin McGuinness, entered the power-sharing administration in Belfast city, and the rest held on to their arms, while changing the prefix from “Provisional” to “Real”. Moreover, there have been numerous of a merge be-

declared its eight unilateral ceasefire and withdrew its forces from Turkey to northern-Iraq. Even though the PKK fulfilled its parts in the process, the Turkish government was adamant on his call for the disarmament of the PKK.

This issue of disarmament is an existential matter for a people who have witnessed a repeated sequence of mass-killings, including a few cases of genocide, accompanied by a sustained campaign of ethnocide carried against them by four violent Middle Eastern states. To preserve themselves as a separate social entity the Kurds need to have their own defence mechanism. As this paper argues, the defence mechanism depends on the type of offence an entity might be exposed to. One type of offence the Kurds have always suffered extensively from has been of military assault. This has promoted some scholars to make the case for the rights of Kurds to self-determination. For example, the Turkish sociologist, Ismail Beşikçi, argues that the Kurdish people should practise their right to self-determination, as the Arabs, the Persians, and the Turks will never govern them justly. “They rule them and will always rule them through chemical and biological warfare, poisonous gasses, oppression, and tyranny”. Arguing on a similar line of analysis, a well-known American political philosopher, Allen Buchanan, believes:

One of the strongest arguments for recognizing an independent Kurdish state... is that only this status, with the control over territory it includes, will ensure the survival of this group in the face of genocidal threats from Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

Our subject matter is not the issue of self-determination or any form of self-governance the Kurds might aspire to form, but the defence mechanism without which the Kurds might not be able to maintain their existence as a separate national entity. As long as the Kurds remain under the threat of guns, they will need guns with which to defend themselves. As long as, following Michel Foucault, I am utterly suspicious of the Kantian thesis of “perpetual peace”, according to which human

furthermore, the self-preservation mechanism acts in a similar way. For example, when a virus penetrates inside the body, whose source may be internal or external, the self-defence mechanism produces anti-virus to shield the affected areas. However, as individual, humans may only be exposed to threats that target their individuality, but when they come to form a collective entity, their list of threat will certainly increase, to whose analysis I turn now.

Cultural subjugation

Cultural subjugation or assimilation is among the range of threats to which a social category can be subjected. Depending on its capacity to mobilise its individual components, and the extent to which they can engage in communicative action, any collectivity can generate its unique form of cultural resistance. The Kurdish experience represents a unique case study with which to measure the depth of cultural subjugation a national group has faced, and the extent of cultural resistance, among others, it can generate. Kurdish history tells us that the occupying states of Kurdistan have applied both soft and harsh methods to wipe out Kurdish identity and culture. While the Iranian state, for example, has applied a soft strategy for a gradual elimination of Kurdish identity, the Turkish state has, on the other hand, resorted to some of the most violent strategies. The lack of scope for a closer analysis of the treatment the occupying states of Kurdistan have meted out to the Kurdish population, limits my analysis to that of the Turkish state.

Not long after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Kemalists prohibited the very use of the Kurdish language, while only 3% of the Kurds could speak Turkish. To force the use of Turkish, they initiated successive waves of forceful “Speak Turkish Campaign”, which included the posting of myriad of signs on the public places, and the publication of numer-

ous articles on various papers, urging the Kurds to speak Turkish only. Those who dared to violate the rule were either put to prison or subject to overt terrorisation. One of these cases occurred when the Turkish militaries cut out the tongue of a 75-year-old man who spoke Kurdish. This is reminiscent of the Spain of Inquisition Era, during which the government cut the tongue of those gypsies who spoke their own language.

Parts of the Kemalists' cultural invasion were the inscription on various Kurdish geographic locations of Atatürk's racist remarks such as, "How happy is the one who says I am a Turk" (ne mutlu Türküm diyene), "One Turk equals the whole world" (bir Türk dünyaya bedeldir), and "One language, one people, one flag" (tek dil, tek halk, tek bayrak). Visible from three to ten kilometres, these slogans have continued to be ubiquitously demonstrated on every single school, barrack, and many public places. Turkey's Nobel-prize winner, Yaşar Kemal, who paid a visit to Kurdistan in 1951, observed that upon his arrival he found out that the whole Kurdish geographic landscapes were so happy to be Turkish.

Colemêrg's mountaintop with the Turkish flag and the slogan:

"Ne mutlu Türküm diyene."

The Turkification of geographic names constituted another tenet of this cultural invasion. From the First World War onwards, the Turkish government embarked on a process of changing the names of places such as provinces, cities, villages, and mountains to Turkish. As part of this, they foisted on Kurdish places, Turkish names including those of the leading Turkish generals who were responsible for large-scale massacre in Kurdistan. By 1968, they Turkified 75% of place names in provinces such as Bidlîs, Sêrt, Mûş, Colemêrg, and Wan, while not leaving a single place with Kurdish name in municipalities such as Mêrdin.

Moreover, the Surname Law of 1934 enforced the adoption of Turkish surname in order to "protect the population" from

A number of observers have also argued that the oppressive Turkish political system with its classical approach of equating the Kurds with "mountain Turks" was the underlying cause of this breakthrough. The state's harsh repression of the Kurdish population with its political and cultural organisations, which assumed a new dimension in the aftermath of the military coup of 1980, convinced the PKK's leadership that electoral politics would stand no chance of bringing about any measure of tangible change.

Consequently, the PKK's sustained armed campaign forced the Turkish government to change its attitudes towards the Kurds. It was in 1991 that Turkish President, Turgut Özal, broke the "taboo" and acknowledged the existence of the "Kurdish reality", which resulted in the lifting of the ban on the public use of Kurdish and on the celebration of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year's Day. He went even further by toying with the idea of a federal model for Turkey. But it was his following statement they shocked many:

The name of the USA does not invoke an ethnic identity. Jews, Latinos, Muslims... [too] live here. If the name of Turkey had been "Anatolia" rather than Turkey, it would have been more appropriate. Then the Turks, Kurds and every other ethnic group could [comfortably] say, "I am Anatolian".

This development was a watershed in the history of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, since previously any Kurd who had even voiced their aspirations was severely punished, often ending up on the gallows as a "traitor" or a "terrorist".

As the PKK grew in strength and extended its organisational networks globally, the Turkish government had to retreat from its previous position, initiating a number of reforms, which started from 2002 onwards. More importantly, it began in 2009 to engage in a series of secret negotiations with the PKK's leadership in Europe, which culminated in what became known the "Oslo Peace Process". Subsequently, on 21 March 2013, the Newroz of 2713 with the Kurdish Calendar, the PKK

Armed resistance

According to John Locke, one of the “founding fathers” of Western political system, the people came out of the “state of nature” and created a political entity, the State, with the purpose of providing them with security. When the State fails to fulfil its duty towards its people and instead inflicts suffering on the population it is designed to protect, it loses legitimacy to rule them. The people should, on the other hand, take matters into their own hands and set up a new political entity. Locke’s ideas inspired the English Revolution of 1688, as well as the American War of Independence of 1778. In fact, this Lockian argument had been enshrined in the American Constitution. On the other hand, Locke’s philosophy has inspired numerous philosophers and political activists of diverse backgrounds. Among them is the modern Italian political philosopher, Vittorio Bufacchi, who argues that when the state fails to fulfil its duty towards its population, this is not only the latter’s right but also its duty to rise up against the state. Arguing on a similar line of analysis, a Turkish sociologist, İsmail Beşikçi, argues that those who put up with a tyrannical rule and fail to rise up against it, are wounded in their heart.

The PKK’s armed attack in 1984 was a direct response to the Turkish state oppression in Kurdistan. According to Beşikçi, the early recruits of the PKK were the children of those Kurds, who were raised in the 1960s on the myths of the “Great Turks”, only to see Turkish commandos parading their grandfathers and fathers around the villages “naked with strings tied to their genitals”. As one pundit commented on the PKK’s first armed attack:

[P]erhaps it is more accurate to say not that violence re-emerged, but that a one-sided war, the Turkish army against the Kurdish population, had a new dimension. For the first time in 45 years, Kurdish rebels were shooting back. (Emphasis added).

“foreign names”, which seemed “disgusting or ridiculous”. According to this, not only did the Turkish government prohibit the use of Kurdish names, particularly those ending with “o”, it also forced many Kurds to adopt names which literally meant “Turk”, for instance, Öztürk, meaning “pure Turk”.

Bent on the elimination of Kurdish identity, the Turkish state had from the very outset made a good use of systematic education. Before the emergence of the PKK in the 1970s, the government would commission as proselytisers of Turkishness all teachers it sent off to Kurdistan. Among their major task was to disseminate the state’s official discourse and to inculcate on their students Turkish identity. For that reason, they obliged Kurdish students to speak Turkish at all times, even if they did not know a single Turkish word, meting out severe punishment to those who violated the rule. Until 2013, moreover, all Kurdish students had to observe at the beginning of every school day the morning oath, which included the salutation of the Turkish flag, and the recitation of the following:

I am a Turk, honest and hardworking. My principle is to protect the younger, to respect the elder, to love my homeland and my nation more than myself. My ideal is to rise, to progress. O Great Atatürk! On the path that you have paved, I swear to walk incessantly toward the aims that you have set. My existence shall be dedicated to the Turkish existence. How happy is the one who says, I am a Turk!

Owing to this, many Kurdish youth have regarded the educational institutions as the sites where the Turkish state holds a monopoly on the production of knowledge, with which to promote the fetishisation of Turkish culture as the only civic one, while condescending that of Kurdish as relics of the past. The Turkish History Thesis and the Sun-Language Theory represent two cases of this spurious dichotomous representation of the two. For example, the “Thesis” argued that the Turks constituted the roots of all ethnic groups in the world, respon-

sible for the invention of ancient civilisations including those of China, India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Sumer, Persia, Anatolia, Greece, and Italy. On the other hand, it maintained that the Kurds were “mountain Turks” in need of an urgent “civilisation”. Moreover, the “Theory” argued that the origins of all languages in the world, including Latin and the Slavic languages, were to be found in Turkish, as the Central Asia—the Turkish original homeland—was the birthplace of all civilisations and languages. On the other hand, it empathetically claimed that the Kurdish language was nothing but a rogue “dialect”, composed of a mix of old Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and Armenian.

Enshrined in official historiographical institutions, both “Theses” have been developed by authors of diverse backgrounds. As they have constituted the major corpus of the literature for education, they have had an enormous impact on the population particularly on the youth, who believe that Kurdishness is the source of rusticity and backwardness, while Turkishness symbolises progress, civilisation and advancement. The Turkish language, for example, signifies urbanity and suaveness, while the Kurdish language stands for incivility, vulgarity and insolence. But if all languages are constructed by the same letters of the same alphabet, with no intrinsic disparity, what is it really that makes one language urbane, while the other rustic? For example, the Kurdish name of “Ako” is composed of three letters: A + K + O, with which the Turks have composed so many words such as So, when the exact letters combined by the Kurds into a name is all that is rustic, while the source of pride when they are framed by the Turks? More noticeably, what does differentiate the Turkish word of “alan”, which means “region”, from the same word of “alan”, which means “flags” when composed by the Kurd, and a male Kurdish name when it comes with the capital “Alan”. The question here is not so much about the actual objects such as the letters, as the way of doing things by different subjects: whatever you do epitomises all that is backward, yet whatever

produces camel and goat, both of which spawn no more than one offspring.

It is good for the Kurds to know that some Arab countries do not heed much of the Islamic prohibitionist decrees. For example, one of the most profitable goods of Algeria has been its wine. It is not hidden from European wine consumers that Algerian wine is amongst the nicest they can find in the market. I do not know anything about the Algerian habit of wine drinking, yet their exportation of wine to the West means their violation of some of the laws they claim to be applied universally. But if they have excluded the application of their own religious decrees to their country when it is in their national interest, it does not make sense for the Kurds to act otherwise. Furthermore, given the fact that Kurdistan produces the finest vine, its wine can also be included, along with pork, to the list of goods it can produce, at least for export, in order to flourish its economy.

It goes without saying that while Islam does not allow Kurdish farmers to produce neither pork nor wine, it, on the other hand, obliges the Kurds, among other Muslim populations, to invest in Mecca Pilgrimage, at least once during their life time. Drawing a wide range of Muslims from all over the world, the Pilgrimage has been a viable source of capital for Saudi’s successive governments. To the extent that Arab’s economic policy has helped their country, it has damaged the Kurdish economy. I have personally seen families in Kurdistan who did not pay for their children’s college fees, yet they invested the budget for the Haji Pilgrimage; I have personally seen families who allocated to the Pilgrimage the money they had saved for the purchase of a refrigerator, with the consequence of enduring the heat of Kurdistan with the lack of cold water.

in modern times, certain areas in Kurdistan produce pig in profusion. And what is unique to this animal, as opposed to cow or goat, is that at each time that they bear, they spawn a few piglets, ranging from 7 to 12.

Islam's prohibition of pork in the seventh century, almost 4,200 years later, constituted a direct attack on Kurdistan's economic life. Giving the fact that this animal needs a special environment to flourish, which do not exist in Saudi Arabia and other desert countries, its proscription has not harmed Arab's economy. As a matter of fact, it has been of great benefit to it, because the ban eliminated the possibility of importing pork into the country, extracting its assets outwards, which would have benefited the economy of pork producing countries, such as Kurdistan.

I make the case that future Kurdistan's economy cannot be considered national, if it excludes the production and exportation of pork. I do not mean that, in the same way that the Islamic army imposed on the Kurds its way of life through the force of sword, Kurdistan's administration should impose its specific economic outlook, as I strongly oppose to any type of imposition—let alone through the use of force. By the way, the production of a good is an issue, while its consumption is quite another. This native animal can be produced in Kurdistan and exported abroad, yet its consumption can be left for individuals to choose. There is always a market for pork and other related food production, which Kurdistan economy can supply in abundance. On the other hand, by providing employment to a good proportion of workers, it would help to boost the Kurdish economic life. Why should Kurds turn their back on a productive animal they domesticated 4,200 years before the advent of Islam, and had been among their major diet, because, for some reasons, the Arabs prohibited its consumption? In fact, some have argued that Prophet Mohammad's intention was inspired by a protectionist economic policy; to prevent the outflow of assets from Saudi Arabia. The latter is a desert country which

I happened to undertake, on the contrary, stands for progress, civilisation, and urbanity. The most irony of this is the way in which Turkey has resorted to extreme forms of state violence to impose the use of the word “alan”, when it means region, as opposed to when it connotes flags, or a male name—not to speak of the “scientific” finding of the Sun-language Theory to the effect that if Turkish is the mother of all languages, what is the reason for the murder of its offspring.

The Turkish state, however, has to some extent succeeded in making a good proportion of the Kurdish population believe that the Turkish language and culture is the only way to civility. It is not hard to observe the amount of pleasure and joy that some Kurds express when they speak Turkish, all the hitherto cultural resistance organised by the Kurdish national movement notwithstanding. It was back in 1995 that the Kurdish movement established a satellite TV channel, rendering the Kurds the first stateless nation in the world in possession of a national station. Initially broadcasting in the major Kurdish dialects such as Kurmancî, Soranî, and Zazakî, Med-TV was a revolutionary development in modern Kurdish history for various reasons, all of which we cannot survey in this paper.

Most importantly, Med-TV launched a virtual campaign of the erosion of Turkish state sovereignty over the Kurdish population it has sought to Turkify. For example, while Turkey had for many decades banned the public use of Kurdish, Med-TV provided millions of its viewers around the globe with regular bulletins of news in Kurdish, rounds of Kurdish music, and even myriad of movies dubbed into Kurdish. Above and beyond, it offered education in Kurdish. For instance, Roj Baş Mamosta (Hello Teacher) was a programme that consisted of a classroom setting, where a teacher instructed children in Kurdish. It is well evidenced that Med-TV and its successor stations have done a great deal to promote the Kurdish language. The speakers of Kurmancî, for example, have perceptibly increased

in the past few decades. All this progress, however, does not exclude the possibility of putting much more work to be done in the field of the Kurdish language, particularly of its Kurmançî dialect, as it is still under constant threat of losing its functional values as did the Gaelic in Ireland.

The Kurdish language, along the Kurdish territory, constitute two major “objective” components of Kurdish nationhood. The latter’s “subjective” attributes are a shared history prevalent among the Kurdish communities, a widespread sense of Kurdishness permeating the Kurdish population that has solidified over the past centuries, the existence of a political demand for national self-determination that has continued to agitate for the past centuries, and a separate lunisolar calendar, which on 21 March 2017 it will be 01/01/2717. Between the two “objective” criteria, nonetheless, I argue that the Kurdish language is of much more significance, as it is the only feature which the Kurdish people at large do not share with “others”. They share their territory with a number of minority groups such as Arabs, Armenians, and Assyrians. Likewise, they share their ancient religion, Zoroastrianism, with the Persians. And finally, they have Islam in common with the Arabs, the Turks, and the Persians. Not only does the Kurdish language draw a sharp boundary between the two categories of “Kurds” and “non-Kurds”, but it has also tied the Kurdish population in Kurdistan with the Kurdish diasporic communities, with whom they do not share their territory.

I think the Turkish state has well understood the centrality of the Kurdish language in the construction and preservation of Kurdish identity; perhaps much better than the Kurds themselves. Why should a Kurdish deputy, Leyla Zana, receive 15 years’ imprisonment for adding one single sentence in Kurdish into her first parliamentary oath: “I take this oath for the brotherhood of the Turkish and Kurdish peoples”. To the extent the Turkish state persist on the dilution of the functional value, as opposed to the symbolic worth, of the Kurdish language, the

Kurdish movement should mobilise all its sources to promote the practical use of the most important attributes of Kurdishness. To do this, it has to first tackle the sense of pride in the speaking of Turkish, as well as the sense of shame in the use of Kurdish. It should make the Kurds understand that there is no difference between the word “alan” when it comes to mean region, with the same word when it stands for flags.

When the Kurdish movement can bring about a radical transformation in the situation of Kurdish women, spectacularly propelling them into the forefront of international feminist movement, I have no doubt that it can give a substantial boost to its already starting campaign of the revitalisation of the Kurdish language. In fact, this is time for the Kurdish movement to put the same amount of emphasis on the promotion of the Kurdish language it did on the issue of women.

Economic protection

There is a consensus among archaeologists that Upper Mesopotamia, or Kurdistan, has been the locus of the Neolithic Revolution, as part of which human beings abandoned, for the first time in history, their earlier form of nomadic life based on hunting-gathering economy to establish a novel kind of society predicated on agriculture and food-production economy. Cermo, a village in the valley of Çemçemal town in South Kurdistan, is probably one of those places where the Zagros highlanders cultivated in 10,000 B.C. different forms of wheat and barley. Furthermore, while they seem to have domesticated sheep and goats at around 7,500 B.C. their taming of cows and pigs took place approximately at 3,500 B.C. Therefore, an animal such pig not only has long been indigenous to Kurdistan, but its abundance seems to have significantly contributed to Kurdistan’s economic life. Even