Our Power Campaign. n.d. *Our Power Campaign: Communities United for a Just Transition.* http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/campaign/.

Pandey, Shubhanga. 2016. "The Next Nepali Revolution." *Jacobin*, January 3. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/nepal-liberal-constitution-maoists-protests-monarchy/.

People's Food Co-op. n.d. "People's History." http://www.peoples.coop/cooperative-ownership/cooperative-history-the-co-op-difference-1.

Ramos, Valeriano. 1982. "The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism." *Theoretical Review*, no. 27. https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/1982301.htm.

Roseberry-Polier, Alison. 2011. "Haitians Overthrow Regime, 1984–1986." *Global Non-violent Action Database*, April 24. http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/haitians-overthrow-regime-1984-1986.

Schaefer, Ward. 2010. "The Tragic Case of the Scott Sisters." *Jackson Free Press*, November 3. http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2010/nov/03/the-tragic-case-of-the-scott-sisters/.

Sison, Jose Maria. 2006. "It Was a Convergence of Various Forces." *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 26. https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2479&dat=20060224&id=FFg1AAAAIBAJ&sjid=jiUMAAAAIBAJ&pg=1930,4044246.

Smith, Micah. 2015. "The Scott Sisters." *Jackson Free Press*, August 7. http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2015/aug/07/scott-sisters/.

Source Watch. n.d. "Mississippi and Fracking." http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Mississippi_and_fracking.

Trotsky, Leon. (1964). *The Age of Permanent Revolution: A Trotsky Anthology.* Edited by Isaac Deutscher. New York: Dell. https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/transprogram.pdf.

United States Census Bureau. n.d.a. "Quick Facts: Jackson City, Mississippi." https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/jacksoncitymississippi/PST045216.

United States Census Bureau. n.d.b. "Quick Facts: Mississippi." https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MS.

CHAPTER 6

The Radical Democracy of the People's Democratic Party

Transforming the Turkish State

Erdem Yörük

There is a dynamic new political force in Turkey, but it is built on centuries of struggle. The radical left party Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP), or the People's Democratic Party, shook the Turkish establishment when, in the elections of June 2015, it won 13% of the vote, achieved 81 seats in parliament, and prevented the authoritarian ruling party from winning a majority government. This signals the largest radical left political movement in Turkish history. The HDP is a union of Kurds, socialists, and the new social movements. It is part of the wave of new left parties in the Mediterranean, which includes Syriza and Podemos. But the HDP is also unique. It is extremely rare that an ethnic minority becomes the political leader of the radical left across an entire country. Indeed, the HDP emerged when the Kurdish political movement fundamentally changed its strategy. Most Kurds now think that the Kurdish question cannot be solved by struggling for a separate Kurdish state. Rather, the prevailing strategy among Kurds is radically transforming the state of Turkey toward decentralization, democratization, and anti-capitalism. To achieve this project of "democratic autonomy," Kurds have allied with socialists, feminists, LGBTQ people, youth, environmentalists, and other religious and ethnic minorities. In general, the HDP aims to radically transform the state, empower social movements, and bring a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish conflict. Although it has become the third largest party in parliament, the HDP has maintained its radical-democratic party structure and its transformative political agenda.

In the three years since its formation, the HDP has won wide support from working class Kurds and the Turkish middle classes through its vision of conviviality based on the universal values of democracy, solidarity, and human rights. The cochairperson Selahattin Demirtaş, a young and popular figure among Kurds as well as left-wing and liberal Turks alike, described this project for a New Life in his 2014 election speech:

A New Life will grow through the participation of the excluded and those voices against ethnic, religious, sexual and class discrimination, which have not been heard up to now. The New Life means, in place of the imposition of uniformity, an equal and voluntary union of our differences. Peoples' assemblies will ensure the direct participation of the people in running the state. The solution of the Kurdish problem is an inseparable part of the democratisation of Turkey. As we bring the problem toward solution, Turkey will become more democratic. Our democratic nation is made up of Turks, Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, Greeks, Ezidis, Suryanis, Keldanis, Arabs, Circassians, Laz, Pomaks, and Romanies. We need a non-sexist, ecological, democratic constitution that reflects Turkey's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, religiously diverse and multi-identity reality. (HDP 2014a)

In this chapter I will examine the HDP as a party, and, in particular, how the self-organizing of women within the party and movement is evidence of its democratic and representative structures and processes. I will also describe the HDP's policies and practices with regard to its democratization of the state. In particular, I will focus on social assistance programs as a terrain of battle between the Kurdish movement and the governing Islamist party, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), or the Justice and Development Party. At stake is the support of Kurdish workers. Finally, after explaining key events that have contributed to the HDP's success—the Battle of Kobanê, the AKP's withdrawal from peace negotiations, and the experiments with radical democracy in Rojava and the Occupy Gezi protests—I will assess the future prospects of the HDP.

The History of Kurdish Resistance in Turkey before the Formation of the HDP

The Kurdish people are an ethnic group with significant populations in southeastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq, northeastern Syria, and in northwestern Iran where they are the majority. The Kurds constitute 18% of Turkey's current population. Since the foundation of the republic in 1923, there has been an intermittent Kurdish nationalist movement. This struggle has led to many armed insurgencies, the strongest of which is also the most recent. In the early 1980s, the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK), or the Kurdistan Worker's Party, launched a Kurdish uprising against the Turkish state (White 2002). The PKK's original goal was to create an independent, socialist, Kurdish state in Kurdistan, which comprises the aforementioned geographical regions. By the late 1980s, the PKK had gained mass support from Kurds, who were mostly peasants at that time.

In 1987, the Turkish government responded to the growing level of rural grassroots activity in the Kurdish region by declaring Emergency State Rule and establishing the Special Governorship of Emergency Rule, which would be effective until 2002. The Turkish state also initiated a policy of large-scale internal displacement.

During the 1990s, Turkish military forces evacuated and burned more than three thousand villages in the Kurdish regions. During the 1990s, 2.3 million Kurds (23% of the Kurdish population and 4.8% of Turkey's population), mostly peasants, were forced to migrate, first to the cities in the Kurdish region and then to the western parts of the country (Yörük 2012; Yükseker and Kurban 2009). This is one of the largest internal displacement operations in the world since the 1980s, comparable in size to those in Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Colombia.

Hundreds of thousands of these displaced Kurds left their villages and arable land and moved into big cities in the eastern and western regions. They survived extremely unfavorable conditions in the economic and spatial peripheries of these cities by relying on kin and community networks. Displaced Kurds without professional qualifications became a cheap labor source and a major part of the informal labor market in Istanbul. The globally competitive sectors of the Turkish economy—textiles and apparels, construction, shipbuilding, and electrical equipment production—depend largely on subcontracting chains based on the informal proletariat that crowded the slum areas of big cities in the 1990s. The combination of ongoing war and rapid urbanization has changed the ethnic composition of the working class in Turkey by proletarianizing the Kurdish population and Kurdicizing the growing informal proletariat (Yörük 2012).

Since the 1990s, the informal proletarians of the slums, especially the Kurdish poor, have become the center of grassroots politics in Turkey. Indeed, the urban Kurds have radicalized. Clashes between protesters and police have become constant features of the metropolises in the Kurdish and western regions. The ethnic threat to the Turkish regime has also been translated into electoral competition. These demographic changes coincide with a shift of strategies, both within the PKK and among the broader Kurdish political movement. After the mid-1990s, the strategy shifted away from armed, separatist struggle. Initially, the strategy became attaining the cultural and identity rights that had been fiercely denied by the Turkish state since its founding. By the 2000s, the main demand of the Kurdish movement became decentralizing state power and establishing regional governments in a system called democratic autonomy. This remains the strategy to this day. It combines tactics of transforming, decomposing, and decentralizing different parts of the state, while also empowering society by creating institutions of direct democracy in all four parts of Kurdistan, including in Turkey (Gürer 2015; Küçük and Özselçuk 2015, 2016).

This does not mean that the Kurdish political movement has replaced a revolutionary strategy with a reformist one. It is true that the movement has shifted away from establishing an independent socialist Kurdistan, opting instead to remain within Turkey, struggle to democratize the state, and make the country livable for Kurds, other ethnic and cultural minorities, and the working classes. Nevertheless, this is based in the conviction that a future Kurdish state could be as prone to social hierarchy and discrimination as is the current Turkish state. Therefore, the Kurdish political movement now argues that transforming the state and, in the long-term,

liquidating the power of the central state is as revolutionary, if not more so, as founding a new Kurdish state. In other words, the Kurdish movement materializes the act of revolution by radically democratizing the state in such a way that a decisive transformation of social relations becomes possible.

Starting in the 1990s, the Kurdish movement in Turkey has been organized through illegal and legal wings. Since the legal wing was born out of the illegal one, the Kurdish movement is more akin to, and was to some extent inspired by, the relation between Euskadi Ta Askatasun and Herri Batasuna in Spain, and is less like the relation between the Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland. This dual structure enables the movement to gain broader legitimacy both domestically and internationally as well as to mobilize the civil and parliamentary forces that can accelerate political, legal, and administrative achievements. The legal and illegal wings of the Kurdish movement, together with hundreds of NGOs, youth and women's organizations, and diasporic political organizations in most European countries, are now able to mobilize Kurds for frequent urban uprisings as well as for electoral support. Since the 1990s, a number of Kurdish political parties have been founded for these purposes, but each of them has been outlawed by the Supreme Court. From this turbulent history of movement and party politics, the HDP arose.

THE FORMATION OF THE HDP: ITS PROCESS AND GOALS

When the Kurdish movement's central objective became the constitution of extensive democratic rights, it decided to ally strategically with all other social movements and groups that struggle for democratization in the country, including socialists, the labor movement, feminists, LGBTQ people, environmentalists, other ethnic and religious minorities, and youth organizations. Positioning itself within the socialist tradition, the Kurdish political movement has developed the radical left structures, both ideological and organizational, to accommodate such a wide spectrum of allies.

The 2007 elections saw the earliest attempts to establish an electoral alliance of democratic, anti-capitalist forces in Turkey. Its electoral platform, "One Thousand Candidates," brought together the Kurdish party of the period, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), several socialist organizations and parties, feminists, and environmentalists. The alliance performed well, sending twenty-two deputies to the parliament. Before the 2011 general elections, the BDP established the Democracy and Freedom Bloc, an electoral alliance with twenty socialist parties and movement groups. These organizations included the Labor Party (EMEP), Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), Socialist Democracy Party (SDP), Socialist Solidarity Platform (SODAP), Socialist Re-Construction Party (SKYP), and the Green and Left Future (YSG). In the general election, the Bloc successfully surpassed the 10% threshold and sent thirty-six deputies to the parliament.

In October of 2011, the Bloc expanded this cooperation to include labor- and rights-based civil society organizations, such as women's, LGBTQ, and environmental movements; trade unions; representatives of various religious minorities; and more socialist parties. Together, they established the People's Democratic Congress

(HDK) with the participation of 820 delegates from eighty-one provinces. The HDK is organized in a bottom-up manner, originating from local neighborhood assemblies that aim at direct action and grassroots radical democracy. In 2012, this expansive coalition, featuring thirty-five parties and organizations, founded a new political party, the HDP. It garnered support from both Kurds and non-Kurdish groups to a degree unprecedented for previous pro-Kurdish parties.

This party was initially conceived as a party of a social movement. The pair of organizations—the grassroots congress, the HDK, and its electoral representative, the HDP—would unite different social movements on a common political ground: radical democracy. In the original plan, the HDK was deemed the more fundamental organization. The HDP would only be mobilized during elections. In other words, the initial priority was the grassroots organizing of the HDK, the *real basis*, rather than the party politics of the HDP, the *superstructure*. Nevertheless, many activists and leaders in both the HDK and the HDP now admit that this original objective has failed to a large extent. The HDP has superseded the HDK in terms of both organization and influence. This is in part a result of the penetration of conventional politics, but it is also due to the high frequency of elections in Turkey during 2013–15. This raised the weight and urgency of electoral politics relative to grassroots organizing. This has in turn caused tension within the organizations. While some activists in both the HDK and the HDP continue to believe that the grassroots organizing of the HDK should have priority over elections, others argue that the electoral politics of the HDP is more fundamental because we need to transform the state.

There are two reasons why I believe we should reprioritize the HDK. First, from an electoral perspective, many observe that the long-standing popular support for the governing AKP largely stems from its broad grassroots organizing campaigns. These activities, which focus on poor neighborhoods, range from providing formal and informal social safety nets to developing clientelist networks. This is a crucial feature of the AKP's strategy to construct hegemony. This consolidates its political rule with a societal leadership that attempts to win the active consent of the governed population, including the Kurdish poor and working classes. Therefore, since the HDP is the only party that has the intention and the capacity to compete with the AKP in working class neighborhoods, we should prioritize the daily grassroots organizing of material life, for which the HDK is an ideal structure. With this, we can continue to build a counterhegemony that can rival the power of the AKP. The second reason why we should reprioritize the HDK is that, from a more long-term perspective, the revolutionary transformation of society and the state requires the reorganization of daily life in an anti-systemic and anti-capitalist manner.

This tension between the movements and the party has exacerbated another long-standing one. It has been difficult to form a shared identity among HDP members because the participant organizations are hesitant to liquidate their organizations by folding them into the HDP. Nevertheless, with successive electoral achievements, the level of unity in the party has increased. Consequently, the concerns over these tensions have diminished.

The HDP has many parallels with what is sometimes called *left regroupment* in other countries, such as the Workers' Party in Brazil, Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, and Left Unity in the United Kingdom. Although much different in scale, the HDP most resembles the Worker's Party and Left Unity. These parties "regroup" not only radical left organizations but also a more heterogeneous alliance of left-wing opposition groups struggling for issues like the autonomy of religious and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ rights, environmentalism, and feminism. The HDP is nonetheless unique. It is quite rare that a minority ethnic movement takes the leading role in the radical left of a country. Nevertheless, the Kurdish political movement developed the strategy of constructing counterhegemony in Turkey. Consequently, this ethnic minority now occupies the central position within a wide spectrum of political allies by uniting, coordinating, and, in a sense, leading them.

Other groups are drawn to the HDP because of the way in which the Kurdish movement carefully positions itself in the radical left. The non-Kurdish socialist left sees the HDP as a way to escape what has been its marginal position since the violent military coup in 1980 and the ensuing neoliberal disenchantment. The new social movements support the HDP because the Kurdish movement has adopted a tone that is pluralistic and anti-capitalist. Furthermore, the HDP leaves ample room for these movements to develop autonomously while they participate in decision-making processes.

The HDP, which broadly defines itself as "an anti-capitalist party of freedom and equality," is pro-peace, pro-labor, pro-self-government, pro-gender-equality, and pro-green (HDP 2014b). The HDP's organizational structure is representative of the heterogeneity of the party's components and commitments. At each administrative level—the chairpersons, central executive committee, party assembly, provincial assemblies, and local branches—members are elected in a process that ensures representation of each political organization. Although the Kurdish component is the strongest one in terms of party organization and mass support (85% of HDP voters are Kurdish [KONDA 2015]), this is not represented proportionally in party organs. Rather, each participating organization has an equal number of representatives. In other words, every member organization, no matter how big or small, has the same number of representatives as every other group. These groups affiliate with the party as organizations, but there is an ongoing debate within the party about whether or not individual membership should be retained.

Kurdish members occasionally resent this. Even though they are the major base of support for the party, they cede certain powers to other participating groups. Nevertheless, the leadership role that the Kurdish movement has adopted in the construction of this counterhegemonic coalition provides the Kurdish political leaders with the tools to convince the resentful Kurds of the value of pluralism and internationalism. This is due in part to the Kurdish political movement redefining the problem from a national question to a radical democratic transformation of the state and society in the greater Middle East. Consequently, the tension between the proponents of narrow Kurdish interests and of the broader societal coalition initially escalated, but it then diminished as the HDP project achieved successes. The

leaders of the Kurdish movement strive to convince the Kurdish party members and the broader constituency that their emancipation will only come with the radical democratization of the country. This requires a strategic coalition with all of those who suffer from different aspects of the prevailing anti-democratic establishment. A consensus has been established to a large extent within and around the party.

For example, the HDP is known for the strength of women's self-organizing within the party. The party has a policy of equal representation for women across all of its branches. More importantly, women organize separately at each level—the branches, commissions, and committees—ensuring that party policies and decisions do not undermine feminist principles and reconstitute patriarchy. The HDP's commitment to gender equality is unprecedented for a major political party in Turkey, where, historically, gender oppression pervades almost every cultural, political, and economic realm. Domestic violence and hate crimes against women are prevalent, women are absent in most critical government offices, and there is a significant wage gap. Until very recently, the percentage of female members in the parliament remained lower than 5%. In the June 2015 elections, however, when 40% of the HDP's elected deputies were women, the percentage of total female deputies rose to a record high of 17.6% ("Mecliste Kadın" 2015). This was also due to the feminist pressure that the HDP applied to other parties. The HDP also embraces the struggle of LGBTQ people: "To us, the discrimination against the LGBTQ individuals is no different than a form of racism. We raise the voice of the LGBTQ individuals against hate crimes, xenophobia, murders and violence against the LGBTQ community" (HDP 2014b).

The unprecedented and indispensable power of women and LGBTQ people in the HDP, and the constant emphasis of gender and sexual emancipation within and outside of the party, are the outcomes of the history of women's empowerment in the Kurdish movement. As Çağlayan (2012) notes,

> The left-wing and secular characteristics of the Kurdish movement facilitated women's participation in the movement and that women's participation affected both the importance of gender equality within the ideological and political discourse of the Kurdish movement and within its organizational structure. . . . Within the ideological discourse of the Kurdish movement, Kurdish women do not come to the fore as carriers and transmitters of the authentic essence of Kurdish culture. On the contrary, they are invited to leave their homes and become active participants. In this sense, they are not "wives and children" to be protected by the male members of the nation. They are invited to work alongside men to protect the homeland and construct the new society.

This has translated into a significant part of the feminist movement actively participating in the HDP.

The HDP's primary political objective remains, however, resolving the protracted Kurdish conflict. This not only includes the right to education in one's native language and the constitutional recognition of equal citizenship. The HDP is

most innovative in its strategy for democratic autonomy. For the HDP, the root of the Kurdish problem in Turkey is its centralized, anti-democratic state structure. The elected central government has control over most political and bureaucratic practices, even at local levels. For example, it appoints governors to all local administrations. Mayors are elected, but their range of activities is limited by a lack of control over police as well as judicial and administrative processes. Historically, the republic has imposed a severe assimilation into Turkish nationalism, which denies the existence and freedom of local ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities. Nevertheless, the dominant paradigm within the Kurdish movement is that this assimilationism is a central and indispensable feature of all nation-states. Therefore, a struggle to establish a separate Kurdish state would eventually fall into the same trap of homogenizing cultural and ethnic differences. This is the underlying reason why the Kurdish political movement has replaced the separatist strategy with the struggle to democratize Turkey.

This struggle for democratic autonomy is not simply a demand for decentralized administrative governance; rather, it "proceeds from the ontological premise that there is not only a diversity of peoples but also differences within groups of people, in every locality, and it raises the question of how each group should govern itself in relation to such diversity" (Küçük and Özselçuk 2016, 189). The Kurdish political movement in Turkey also asserts that, since these dynamics are valid in most of the ethnically and religiously heterogeneous nation-states in the Middle East, the strategy of democratic autonomy is the best solution to decades-long conflicts and wars. The ultimate political proposal that the Kurds offer for the larger Middle East is loosening national borders and democratically uniting ethnic and religious communities in an anti-capitalist political economy.

In 2015, the Democratic Society Congress—an umbrella organization of the legal Kurdish NGOs and parties, including the HDP—declared its platform for democratic autonomy. I present here a representative sample of its policies:

1. Democratic autonomous regions shall be established in the entire country according to cultural, geographic, and economic proximities.
2. All of these regions shall be governed by democratically elected assemblies and self-governance organs elected from these assemblies. They shall be structured on the principles of a new democratic constitution. The popular will of people's assemblies shall be represented in the national parliament.
3. In these autonomous regions, central government shall not have any authority over locally elected representatives.
4. In these autonomous regions, there shall be direct participation in decision-making and supervision processes by neighborhood, village, women, and youth assemblies, various religious and ethnic communities, and civil society organizations.
5. All administrative levels and decision-making processes shall have equal representation of women. On the basis of their own needs, women shall establish independent assemblies and councils. All decisions relating to women shall be considered in women's assemblies. The free and autonomous organizations of women shall be recognized at all administrative levels. The same applies for youth organizations.
6. Education, healthcare, and judicial functions shall be organized, executed, and supervised in and by local and regional autonomous administrations. These functions shall be executed in all native languages in addition to Turkish. All native languages shall be made official languages.
7. Administration of budgets shall be transferred to autonomous regional governments and some of the taxes shall be collected by these governments. The central government shall take measures to remove regional inequalities.
8. Local public security units shall be officially responsible for local security under the administration of the autonomous regional administrations. ("DTK'dan" 2015; my translation)

The Kurdish movement has major achievements in this project for democratic autonomy. Neighborhood assemblies (*mahalle meclisleri*) have been established in all of the cities in the Kurdish region, including the large metropolitan centers of provinces like Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Van. In these assemblies, residents come together to discuss a wide range of issues, from quotidian processes of the neighborhood to broader political dynamics. Through representatives, these assemblies are linked to city councils that are directly connected to municipalities. As such, residents make decisions on neighborhood affairs that the municipalities are expected to follow. In many small cities, most government functions, including courts, schools, and even defense, are administered in and by local assemblies. It is reported that in these towns, applications to courthouses have significantly decreased because residents are choosing to resolve internal conflicts through people's courts.

In addition, many small rural cooperatives are being built with the support of municipalities (Diyarbakır Municipality 2013). The goal is establishing a network of production and consumption cooperatives that are run through grassroots democracy. Thus, the Kurdish movement for democratic autonomy aims at "building an anti-monopolist, egalitarian and solidarity-based economic system in which everyone is the laborer of her work, female labor participation is privileged, [and] the main objective is not profit but use-value" ("Demokratik Toplum Kongresi" 2010; my translation). It is no coincidence that these small towns have been the site of recent warfare between Turkish security forces and the PKK, because these de facto forms of self-governance are a primary challenge to the centralized power of the Turkish state.

The HDP does not demand democratic autonomy only for Kurds. Currently, it is attempting to build similar grassroots organizations in the western parts of Turkey. The party is calling on neighborhood residents to form their own assemblies and cooperatives and to elect their own representatives. The HDP strives for the "socialization of politics," which "refers to the patient and continual process of

decomposing state power and its bureaucratic centralization by way of instituting diverse and discontinuous organizations of self-governance from the bottom up, thus, redistributing sovereignty to local formations" (Küçük and Özselçuk 2016, 190). In the longer term, the HDP proposes decentralizing political power throughout the country by restructuring sovereignty according to radical democratic principles. In this new administrative system, the entire country would be composed of around twenty autonomous regions in which the local governments are elected by representatives from local people's assemblies.

A Case Study: Social Services as a Terrain of Battle

Over the last decade in Turkey there has been a significant expansion of social assistance programs for the poor, including means-tested social assistance, free health-care programs, conditional cash transfers, food stamps, housing, education, and disability aid (Yörük 2012, 2014). As part of the Turkish state's counterinsurgency strategy, these programs have increasingly and disproportionally targeted the Kurds. This confirms Piven and Cloward's (1971) classic thesis: public welfare is driven by social unrest rather than social need. In times of social turmoil, poor relief expands in order to control the disorderly. When social unrest subsides, however, poor relief contracts. The Kurdish movement has responded to this strategy by developing its own forms of social assistance. This has turned the entire field of social policy in Turkey into a battlefield.

The AKP's social assistance strategy attempts to address both the class and ethnic dimensions of the Kurdish question. With regard to its class aspects, the AKP uses populism when it combines the provision of services with a heavy anti-elitist rhetoric against the secularist bourgeoisie. As for the ethnic dimensions of the Kurdish question, the AKP offers inclusion on the basis of "Islamic solidarity" by distributing economic rent through diffuse clientelistic networks. A growing economy created the conditions for this strategy (Yörük and Günay 2017). If there was growing support for the AKP, then, it is not because Kurds were increasingly conservative or Islamist at the expense of their Kurdishness. On the contrary, many Kurds felt that they could comfortably experience their Kurdish ethnicity under Islamic solidarity while their class position was strengthened through the material networks of the AKP. Poverty-alleviation programs for the Kurds are on the rise even though such programs are not a focal point of the state's explicit discourse on the Kurdish conflict. Indeed, the AKP clandestinely channels social assistance programs to Kurds without officially instituting a positive discrimination policy. For example, controlling for all possible intervening socioeconomic variables, Kurds are almost twice as likely as non-Kurds to receive free health-care cards. This is true not only in the Kurdish region but also for those Kurds in the urban centers of western Turkey. Furthermore, internally displaced Kurds are twice as likely as other Kurds to benefit from free health-care cards (Yörük 2012).

These extensive social assistance programs might appear to contradict the global trend toward neoliberal cuts to public services. In fact, these trends are complementary, because the Turkish state has replaced regional economic development

projects with a new strategy to target individual Kurds (Yörük and Özsoy 2013). Social assistance is given not simply where the people become poor, but where the poor become politicized (Yörük 2012). Ultimately, the Turkish state deliberately deploys social assistance to contain the Kurds by co-opting them into a large clientelist network.

Despite this strategy, the AKP's response to rising Kurdish power has been fluctuating and ambivalent. The AKP gained significant consent and support from Kurds by occasionally using discourses and policies that were described as the "Kurdish overture" and the "peace process." This included public television broadcasting in Kurdish and legalizing teaching of the Kurdish language. Nevertheless, the AKP also launched a period of repression in the mid-2000s, including police operations targeting the Kurdish parties. Despite the cease-fire with the PKK, in the decade after September 11, 2001, Turkey alone prosecuted a third of all terrorism convictions globally, 12,897 (Mendoza 2011). Since these figures were compiled, the number of prosecutions has increased because of the recent government crackdowns. With regard to the provision of public services, the AKP uses the withdrawal of social assistance to punish the radical political activism of Kurds. After the 2009 municipal elections, it was reported that in many Kurdish provinces, including Mus, Diyarbakir, Tunceli, and Van, the government took away the free health-care cards of poor people who voted for the Kurdish party. In Van province, the police administration gave negative reports for the social assistance applications of many Kurdish families who voted for the DTP. In 2008, the government of Adana, a big city where thousands of internally displaced Kurds live in slums, declared that it would withdraw social assistance benefits and free health-care services for families whose children took part in street protests ("Eylemci çocukların ailelerine yeşil kart cezası" 2008). Therefore, social assistance has also become an instrument of political sanction against the Kurds who support the Kurdish political movement.

In the context of these fluctuations, Kurdish popular support for pro-Kurdish parties continued to expand over the 2000s. This is due in part to the Kurdish movement's countermove in the field of social policy: establishing heterodox social assistance programs. This not only combats the AKP's paternalist regulating of the Kurdish poor through social assistance policies. It also mitigates the effects of the AKP's targeted withdrawal of these benefits as a form of punishment. Consequently, social assistance provision has transformed into another battleground for the political struggle between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement. The HDP runs more than a hundred municipalities in the Kurdish region. They became the epicenter of reaching out to the Kurdish poor. This strategy included the formation of NGOs that deliver services and benefits. For example, the HDP-run municipality of Diyarbakır, the largest city in the Kurdish regions, worked with Kurdish civil society organizations to establish Sarmaşık Association, a local NGO that provides poor Kurds with, among other things, food, cash, and clothing.

The Turkish state attempts to make invisible the ethno-political aspects of Kurdish poverty by forcing poor Kurds to choose being poor over being Kurdish in order to be eligible for social assistance. Conversely, the HDP emphasizes the

Kurdishness of poverty by pointing to the intersections of class and ethnicity in the deliberate impoverishment of Kurdistan. In a personal interview, the director of Sarmaşık told me that the association presents an alternative to the existing systems of social assistance in Turkey by activating the political agency of the Kurdish poor rather than pacifying it:

> We designed this project in order to satisfy basic needs of the people without humiliating them, as opposed to those existing poor relief systems of the government that pacify the people, make them dependent and disconnected from the economy. We told the people that we are not philanthropists. Their poverty stems from the insufficiency of the institutions and organizations of the region. I see that families have adopted our perspective. They started seeing what they get as a right. Some of them even wanted to stop receiving social assistance when they were better off.

Similarly, other Kurdish municipalities established "education support houses." They provide educational activities for poor Kurdish children and prepare them for competitive national exams for placement in Turkish universities. The Turkish state responded to this countermove with a familiar mix of cultivating consent and imposing coercion. It has not only increased the level of government-led social programs but has also criminalized and outlawed Kurdish-led programs.

In general, the Kurdish movement's approach to social policy reflects its overall strategy of transforming the state and empowering society. The Kurdish-led municipalities and NGOs strive to alleviate poverty without promoting clientelism or paternalism. This is quite difficult given the very nature of social assistance programs. The Kurdish movement not only removes the stigma attached to social assistance, but promotes social assistance as a general right that the Kurdish poor rightfully attain by having paid the price of struggle.

The Elections of June 2015

The HDP achieved major gains in the national elections of June, 2015. It won 13.12% of the votes, which was enough to end the long-standing majority-party rule of the AKP. Since the AKP was reduced to minority rule status, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan could not realize his long-term dream of consolidating his power by changing the constitution towards a presidential system.

The HDP's electoral success is also the historical peak of any pro-Kurdish party or radical left party in Turkey. Previous pro-Kurdish parties had participated in elections since the early 1990s, but their vote shares remained at 4%–6%. In the June 2015 elections, however, the HDP not only became the AKP's main political rival in the Kurdish region and in metropolitan working class neighborhoods, but also the first pro-Kurdish party in Turkey to garner the majority of Kurdish votes. The party increased its votes from 2.3 to 3.2 million in the Kurdish region, but the most unexpected increases came from the western metropolises of Turkey. From the 2011 to

the 2015 general elections, western votes for the HDP increased from 530,000 to 2.8 million. In Istanbul, where 18.5% of the votes were cast, the HDP increased its total from 400,000 (6.58%) to 1 million (12.14%). While it took the AKP the entirety of the 2000s to gradually consolidate the Kurdish votes that had gone to competing center-right and radical Islamist parties in the 1990s, the HDP has absorbed this Kurdish support much more rapidly.

As I will show, there are two general reasons for the HDP's success in June. First, the AKP is suffering from an intensifying legitimacy crisis among Kurds, in particular, because of the Battle of Kobanê and the end of the peace process with the PKK. Second, there is growing support among both Kurds and non-Kurds for the HDP's vision of radical democracy, especially because of the practical demonstrations of radical democracy in the autonomous region of Rojava and the Occupy Gezi protests. We will look at each of these events in turn.

In October 2014, the Islamic State (ISIS) laid siege to the city of Kobanê. This Kurdish city is located in the canton of Rojava, which is in northern Syria and western Kurdistan. The siege sparked the Battle of Kobanê, which, as the Kurds describe it, is a war of existence for Kurds in Syria. The resistance was led by the Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG), or the People's Protection Units, and the Yekîneyên Parastina Jin (YPJ), or the Women's Protection Units. They are the armed wings of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the larger Kurdish political movement that is affiliated with the PKK. Although the city of Kobanê was devastated, the resistance eventually defeated ISIS in all of Rojava. The resistance became very popular globally. This is not only because it was the first successful attempt to halt the expansion of the Islamic State. It is also due to the centrality and autonomy of women in the resistance, which appealed to the progressive international public.

This global popularity contributed in turn to the popularity of the Kurdish political movement within Turkey. A significant part of the YPG forces fighting ISIS were from the Kurdish region of Turkey, to which hundreds of dead guerillas were returned for their funerals. This brought the mood of Rojava back to Turkey. Meanwhile, President Erdoğan dismissed the resistance and stated publically that "Kobanê is about to fall." Thus, there arose among the Kurdish populace the perception that the AKP government gave at least tacit support to the jihadist organizations like ISIS during the Syrian war. Consequently, the Kurdish vote rate for the AKP declined from one-half to one-fifth during the eight months following the battle (KONDA 2015).

The other crucial event in the AKP's declining support among Kurds is the end of the peace process. In March 2015, three months before the elections, Erdoğan observed that Kurdish peace negotiations between the Turkish state and the PKK, which had begun in early 2013, had declining support among the broader Turkish population. Reacting to this, Erdoğan called for an end to the peace process. He even refused to acknowledge the existence of a Kurdish problem, an echo of the notorious 1990s. Indeed, this exacerbated tensions stemming from the Roboskî massacre on December 28, 2011, when thirty-four of a party of thirty-eight smugglers—most

of them children—were killed by Turkish F-16 fighter jets, a reminder of the violent history of the Turkish nation-state for the Kurds (Günay 2013). The AKP's reluctance to take action against the responsible military officers multiplied the effects of the massacre and undermined the AKP's credibility among Kurds. Thus, when the AKP unexpectedly ended the peace process, they lost many of the Kurdish voters who had supported them for precisely this reason.

The other critical factor in the changing voting behavior of metropolitan Kurds is that the HDP's egalitarian vision for radical democracy is more inclusive than Turkish nationalism or even Islamic solidarity. Metropolitan Kurds who increasingly feel that they are "less equal" members of Islamic solidarity or "second-class Muslims" have found inspiration in the diverse segments of the society represented by the HDP's candidates. As the party cochairperson Selahattin Demirtaş explained to *The New York Times,*

> HDP is a progressive coalition of Turks, Kurds, socialists, democratic Islamists, liberals and minorities dedicated to democratic reforms, gender equality, diversity and Kurdish rights. We ran on a party list that included people from Turkey's many ethnic groups, including Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Assyrians and Yazidis—from all walks of life. I am a co-chairman of the party because every possible political unit, from municipal governments to local chapters, is led by a one man-one woman partnership. Our party was founded to provide common ground for all of the people of Turkey who want to see more democracy. (Demirtaş 2016)

Two major events significantly contributed to the expanding credibility of this project for radical democracy.

First, the cantons in Rojava were formed according to similar principles. Rojava is an autonomous region in northern Syria and western Kurdistan. It declared its autonomy in January 2014 amid the Syrian civil war. It is a secular, multiethnic polity in which Arabs, Assyrians, and other ethnic and religious groups have the equal right to participate in its government and administration. Its constitution is based on *democratic confederalism,* which emphasizes democratic socialism, ecological sustainability, and gender equality. For example, Küçük and Özselçuk (2016) report that,

> in the Jazira region, the largest and most resource rich of the three cantons of Rojava, autonomous organizations include women's houses (malê jin) where the resolution of issues related to women, such as harassment, rape, early marriage, and polygamy, are addressed by women. "Peace committees" are another autonomous organization where the resolution of almost all cases is decided by consent of the "defendant" and the "plaintiff" and in accordance with general principles agreed upon in Rojava's charter, thereby rendering state courts non-functional. (190)

This project for radical democracy promotes anti-monopolistic, consensus-based, direct democracy founded on local citizens' assemblies. Remarkably, the people of Rojava have been able to achieve all of this despite the devastation wrought by the Syrian conflict. The Rojava experience, from which the HDP has drawn inspiration in its own policies and practices, has convinced the Kurdish popular classes that radical democracy is feasible and plausible.

The second major factor contributing to the legitimacy of radical democracy was the Occupy Gezi movement. In June 2013, environmental activists protested the demolition of a small city park in central Istanbul where a shopping mall was scheduled to be built. Istanbul has an incredibly high population density and there is very little public space, especially green space. This situation has become even worse under the authoritarian neoliberalism of the AKP, because these scarce public spaces are being privatized. That is why what initially appeared to be simply another protest became a symbol of general social trends and galvanized widespread support. The police repression of these protests sparked a country-wide uprising that lasted more than a month and radically and irreversibly transformed the social and political dynamics in the country. The progressive intellectuals and parts of the Turkish upper-middle classes that were politicized during and after this uprising welcomed the HDP because the Occupy Gezi movement was a microcosm of what had been proposed by the HDP's radical democracy project.

The Gezi protests were not a sudden outburst. They were part of a larger protest cycle in which the level of grassroots political activity had already escalated during the year preceding June 2013, if not earlier. This protest cycle arose in response to the AKP regime becoming more openly authoritarian and socially conservative as it increased its control of daily life. Attacks on organized labor intensified through privatization, subcontracting, and direct political repression. Drafted legislation limited women's rights, including tightening the law on abortion—legal in Turkey since the 1980s—and informing women's families about their pregnancies. Between 2002 and 2009, honor killings of women increased fourteenfold, which coincided with rising violence against transgender people. The AKP also introduced stricter regulation of the sale of alcohol. Widespread disappointment with the mainstream opposition parties drove a radicalized secularist constituency toward militant street activism as the only remaining way of challenging the AKP.

The Gezi protests were not the movement of any particular social class, be it the "proletariat" or the "new middle class." All social classes had near-proportional representation among Gezi protesters and supporters. The new middle classes and the bourgeoisie had slightly higher representation among the protesters compared to their presence in the society, but they were not the majority among Gezi protesters. On the contrary, most of the Gezi protesters and supporters came from proletarian backgrounds. What made the Gezi protests unique was not their class characteristics, but their political and cultural orientations (Yörük and Yüksel 2014). Metropolitan Kurds used to be afraid of being marginalized and criminalized as a result of a possible identification with pro-Kurdish parties, which was seen as an

act of "terror" before the public gaze. The Gezi protests politicized the previously apolitical urban masses and normalized the idea of radical politics for hundreds of thousands of people. Many of these Gezi supporters joined the ranks of the HDP constituency. This further contributed to the legitimacy of the HDP for the broader public and eased the risks of supporting the HDP for the metropolitan Kurds.

CONCLUSION: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE HDP

The situation in Turkey is changing more rapidly than I am able to write about it. Since the summer of 2015, the ruling elite has moved rapidly towards an authoritarian crackdown on journalists, academics, and the political opposition, including elected members of the HDP. In November 2015, new national elections were held after the parties in the parliament failed to form a coalition government. The elections took place after an extended period of political turmoil and escalated armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state. This was sparked on July 20, 2015, when a suicide bomber killed thirty-four university students and injured over one hundred in the Kurdish town of Suruç on the border of Turkey and Syria. Between the June and November elections, 925 people were killed. Most were PKK members, but 169 civilians also died. Security operations also detained around 3,600 people. In the November elections, votes for the AKP, which had radically declined to 40.9% in the June elections, increased back to 49.5%. The AKP gained half of the votes because, following the military campaign against the PKK, they received new support from nationalist Turkish voters in place of the Kurdish voters they had lost. The armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army will likely continue until a settlement is reached in Syria.

The AKP's repression intensified after the failed coup in July 2016. During a surreal night straight out of a Hollywood movie, a junta in the army—they were later understood to be part of the Fethullah Gülen community (Cemaat)—attempted to violently overthrow the government. They bombed the Parliament Building and the Bosporus Bridge, and killed over 200 civilians that took to the streets to defend the government. The Erdoğan administration survived this serious challenge to its power in part because it nonetheless maintains widespread support, although the extent to which this was a factor in halting the coup is still debated. The government declared a state of emergency, arrested one-third of the army generals, and laid off around fifty thousand public employees. This was not only to punish the coup attempt, but was also a strategy to remove Cemaat members from the state bureaucracy.

Academics also face increasing state repression. More than 2,000 of them, the Academics for Peace, signed a petition, "We Will Not Be a Party to This Crime," against the violence in the Kurdish regions. As a result, many academics have been fired and some have been imprisoned. The intellectuals who supported the closed-down Kurdish daily *Özgür Gündem* and the editor-in-chief and columnists of the oldest daily in Turkey, the left-wing *Cumhuriyet*, have been locked up. This crackdown is widely regarded as more severe than the one following the violent military coup in 1980.

Erdoğan also used the attempted coup as pretext to purge the political opposition, and not only the Fethullah Gülen supporters. Following the June 2015 elections, the Turkish state, including the old nationalist military elite and the new elite of AKP leaders, had already begun a repressive crackdown against the HDP. In the autumn of 2016, however, the government went even further, imprisoning the cochairpersons of HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, eight other HDP deputies, the leader of the HDK, and several HDP mayors. Meanwhile, the thirty-four municipalities governed by the Kurdish movement have been put under the control of government-appointed officers. Hundreds of left-wing and Kurdish NGOs have been closed, including the aforementioned Sarmaşık and education support houses. At the time of writing (June 2017), the leaders and deputies of HDP are still in prison.

The authoritarian crack-down had managed to pacify the opposition movements until the constitutional referendum campaign that marked the first quarter of 2017. This referendum voted on an amendment in the constitution which would transform the government structure from a parliamentary system to a presidential system. The failed coup gave Erdoğan the opportunity that he missed in the June 2015 elections to enact this system. However, despite the Emergency State Rule and ensuing authoritarianism, the grassroots No campaign helped to wake the political opposition from a long sleep. When the bill was proposed, the government was expecting a landslide victory that would facilitate and legitimize further authoritarianism. Nevertheless, the referendum resulted in a close margin (a 51% yes vote) showing that Erdoğan is not as powerful as is often imagined. Furthermore, allegations of electoral fraud have become widespread, further undermining the legitimacy of Erdoğan and the new presidential system.

The authoritarian repression of the HDP has not harmed its popularity. According to recent polls, the HDP has managed to keep the levels of support it won in the November elections. The movement derives its power not only from the democratic struggle within Turkey, which has been severely undermined recently. It also springs from the success of the radical democracy of the broader Kurdish movement in the Middle East. It has recently made significant gains in Syria and Iraq and has won wide international acclaim. Nevertheless, until there is an end to the war between the PKK and the Turkish military forces, the criminalization of HDP is likely to continue.

The HDP's long-term prospects depend more on the feasibility of its foundational project than the liberty of its leadership. Its project for democratic autonomy and conviviality is a form of internationalism or transnationalism that is overtly at odds with emerging global trends. Although the imaginary of the end of the nation-state gained prominence throughout the world and across diverse political movements in recent decades, we are now witnessing a dramatic revival of nationalist protectionism in its economic, cultural, and military forms. This is true not only in the Middle East, but around the globe, perhaps most notably in the victories of Trump and Brexit in the United States and United Kingdom. This struggle between nationalism and internationalism could fragment the Kurdish movement as well.

Many Kurds now feel that the substantial reshuffling of the Middle East creates the possibility for an independent Kurdistan. Nevertheless, many Kurds maintain the conviction that the nation-state was never the remedy for oppressed peoples. With this emancipatory transnationalism, the Kurds can be an example for the rest of the Middle East, and indeed the world. Thus, the HDP's contribution to the broader project for radical democracy continues and develops the promise held by the socialist internationals and the alter-globalization movements. Ultimately, it is a struggle to transcend the regime of nation-states altogether.

REFERENCES

Çağlayan, Handan. 2012. "From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in Post-1980 Turkey." *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 14. http://ejts.revues.org/4657.

Demirtaş, Selahattin. 2016. "Free Speech Isn't the Only Casualty of Erdogan's Repression." *New York Times*, April 13. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/14/opinion/free-speech-isnt-the-onlycasualty-of-erdogans-repression.html.

"Demokratik Toplum Kongresi bileşenlerince hazırlanmış olan, demokratik özerk Kürdistan modelinin taslak sunumu." 2010. *Bianet*, December 20. http://bianet.org/files/doc_files/000/000/179/original/demokratik%C3%B6zerklik.htm.

Diyarbakır Municipality. 2013. "Liceli çiftçiler kooperatifleşiyor." http://www.milliyet.com.tr/liceli-ciftciler-kooperatiflesiyor-diyarbakir-yerelhaber-1390717/.

"DTK'dan 'öz yönetim' deklarasyonu." 2015. *Al Jazeera Turk*, December 27. http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/dtkdan-oz-yonetim-deklarasyonu.

"Eylemci çocukların ailelerine yeşil kart cezası." 2008. *Radikal*, October 29. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/eylemci_cocuklarin_ailelerine_yesil_kart_cezasi-905725/.

Günay, Onur. 2013. "Toward a Critique of Non-violence." *Dialectical Anthropology* 37:171–82.

Gürer, Çetin. 2015. "Aktörün Perspektifinden Demokratik Özerkliğe Bakmak: Kürt Siyasal Hareketinin Demokratik Özerklik Yaklaşımı." *Mülkiye Dergisi* 39:57–92.

HDP. 2014a. "Call for a New Life." People's Democratic Party website. https://hdpenglish.wordpress.com/call-for-a-new-life/.

HDP. 2014b. "Who Are We?" People's Democratic Party website. https://hdpenglish.wordpress.com/about/.

KONDA. 2015. "Analysis of 7 June Elections (7 Haziran Sandık ve Seçmen Analizi)." http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/KONDA_7HaziranSandıkveSeçmenAnaliziRaporu.pdf.

Küçük, Bülent, and Ceren Özselçuk. 2015. "The Question of Democratic Citizenship in Turkey: Two Social Imaginaries." In *Postcolonial Matters: Tra gesti politici e scritture poetiche*, edited by A. Cianelli and B. Ferrara, 57–76. Naples: L'Orientale University Press.

———. 2016. "The Rojava Experience: Possibilities and Challenges of Building a Democratic Life." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115:184–96.

"Mecliste Kadın Oranı Yüzde 23 Arttı, 37 İlde Kadın Vekil Yok." 2015. *Bianet*, June 8. http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/165197-mecliste-kadin-orani-yuzde-23-artti-37-ilde-kadin-vekil-yok.

Mendoza, Martha. 2011. "Terrorist Convictions Reach 35,000." *Independent*, September 4. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/terrorist-convictions-reach-35000-2349036.html.

Piven, Francis Fox, and Richard A. Cloward. 1971. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. New York: Pantheon.

White, Jenny B. 2002. *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Yörük, Erdem. 2012. "Welfare Provision as Political Containment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey." *Politics and Society* 40:517–47.

———. 2014. "The Long Summer of Turkey: The Gezi Uprising and Its Historical Roots." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113:419–26.

Yörük, Erdem, and Onur Günay. 2017. "Islamist Movements and Ethnic Politics." Unpublished manuscript.

Yörük, Erdem, and Hi yar Özsoy. 2013. "Shifting Forms of Turkish State Paternalism toward the Kurds: Social Assistance as 'Benevolent' Control." *Dialectical Anthropology* 37:153–58.

Yörük, Erdem, and Murat Yüksel. 2014. "Class and Politics in Turkey's Gezi Protests." *New Left Review* 89:103–23.

Yükseker, H. Deniz, and Dilek Kurban. 2009. *Permanent Solution to Internal Displacement: An Assessment of the Van Action Plan for IDPs*. Istanbul: TESEV.