Why Aren’t Kurds Like the Scots and the Turks Like the Brits?

Moderation and Democracy in the Kurdish Question

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ABSTRACT

By modelling and analysing Turkey’s Kurdish question in light of democratic transition theories, the Scottish Case and recent developments, this article explains the lack of cooperation between the ‘moderate’ Turkish majority and Kurdish actors pursuing peace and European Union membership. It analyses whether there may be more cooperation in the near future and discusses implications for theories of political moderation. A ‘most different case’, Scotland, helps in explaining the Turkish case and in avoiding mono-causal explanations based on cultural stereotypes. Among other factors and unlike the Scottish case, cooperation in the Turkish–Kurdish case is constrained by relations with Iraqi Kurds and the difficulty of identifying the moderates: Kurdish actors moderate in the sense of renouncing violence often make more hard-line political and conceptual claims than violent actors do. Theories need more multi-faceted conceptualizations of moderation. The recent electoral success of the ruling political party and the presence of a Kurdish political party in Parliament may enable more moderate–moderate cooperation in the future. This will occur if potentially moderate actors can distance themselves from violence and choose conceptual and political compromise over coercion, and if Turkey, Iraqi-Kurds and the United States can reach an agreement on cooperation.

Keywords: democratic transition; ethnic conflict; Iraq; Kurds; moderation; Scotland; Turkey

I. Introduction

On the surface, the evolution of Turkey’s Kurdish question is shaped by two types of actors who, for now, can be called ‘hardliners’. They deeply distrust each other and reinforce each other’s perspective with their actions, and believe that violence and intransigence are necessary to promote their fundamental interests. On one side is the militant variant of Kurdish nationalists, in recent decades represented mainly by the PKK (Kurdistan Worker’s Party). Although eager to participate in legal, peaceful politics, they are
convinced that violent rebellion (or the threat thereof in peaceful periods) and the suppression of alternative Kurdish voices are necessary to ‘break’ the country’s strictly unitary and republican character. Their expressed goals have shifted over time from independence to a vague notion of constitutional recognition of Kurds. On the other side is what may be called ‘defensive Turkish nationalism’, most visibly represented by the security forces and judiciary, which enjoys widespread support across the majority society and mainstream political actors (Somér, 2007b). From their perspective, force is necessary to defend the unitary and republican (i.e. ostensibly ethnicity-blind) nature of the state from Kurdish nationalism, and military measures are required to fight the PKK. Any accommodation of Kurdish nationalism would be a display of weakness and encourage further demands, stirring inter-ethnic divisions and threatening territorial integrity.

The military regime of 1980–83 brutally cracked down on any sign of Kurdish nationalism along with other ideologies it deemed ‘divisive’. In 1984, PKK attacks on the state started a violent conflict between the PKK, security forces and the ‘loyalist’ Kurds, which cost the lives of over 30,000 people during the 1990s (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997; Barkey and Fuller, 1998). This environment left little room for more democratic actors and strategies to flourish and cooperate. However, a relatively peaceful period of democratic reforms between 1999 and 2005 could not produce it either. Overall, the contrast with a ‘most different case’, that of the Scots, cannot be more striking. Throughout the twentieth century, the Scots were able to obtain more self-rule and overall welfare than Kurdish nationalists could even dream of through peaceful cooperation with British political actors and institutions (Miller, 1981; McCrone, 2001; Keating, 2005).

This article examines three questions. First, pending the discussion below about what moderation means, why did we not see more cooperation among ‘moderate’ Turkish-majority and Kurdish-minority actors for democratization and a peaceful resolution, even in relatively more peaceful periods? As will be argued, there are potential constituencies for a liberal-democratic solution within both the majority and minority societies. Thus, what explains the absence of actors who mobilize to pursue such a solution by cooperating with each other? Second, what does the answer to the first question tell us about our understanding of political moderation? In particular, how could the moderates be categorized in the Turkish–Kurdish case and how should this affect the way we theorize moderation?

Third, can we expect more moderate–moderate cooperation in the aftermath of the elections in July 2007? The ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) won the elections throughout Turkey, including the Eastern provinces, where ethnic Kurds are concentrated. The AKP is a pro-EU and pro-democracy party rooted in a moderate Islamist ideology and a type of Turkish-Muslim nationalism which may prove to be more liberal and more respectful of ethnic diversity than defensive Turkish nationalism. Its electoral victory gives the AKP, which boasts that more than a fifth of its parliamentarians are ethnic Kurds, a significant mandate to resolve the Kurdish question democratically. The DTP (Democratic Society Party), a Kurdish party with strong linkages with the PKK and its constituency, also entered
Parliament, creating opportunities for dialogue within a legal–political framework.

The article examines these questions by modelling them in light of theories of democratic transition (Rustow, 1970; O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski, 1992; Linz and Stepan, 1996). This helps to rebuild the Turkish–Kurd case as an ‘analytical narrative’, which highlights primarily the structural constraints to cooperation (Bates et al., 1998). To illustrate the nature of these constraints and to highlight other barriers of a conceptual nature which the model cannot capture, the article draws on contrasts with ‘a most different case’: Britain and Scotland. The purpose of this exercise is to clarify concepts in light of a different historical-institutional context and theory-building, not hypothesis-testing (Skocpol and Somers, 1980; Brady and Collier, 2004). It also helps to avoid exaggerating cultural stereotypes and falling prey to simple explanations. Thinking about the lack of moderation in Turkey, one could readily assume, for example, that the problem would simply disappear if ‘Turks were as democratic as the Brits and the Kurds were as socio-economically developed and intellectually enlightened as the Scots’. Undoubtedly, peaceful resolution of this conflict would benefit much from more democratic and pragmatic political values and choices among both Turks and Kurds. However, contrasting the Turkish–Kurdish and Scottish cases in light of the model shows that these cases also differ in terms of important structural bottlenecks, i.e. bottlenecks that undermine moderate–moderate cooperation, possibly also affecting political culture by lending justification to authoritarian values.

There is no simple recipe by which to remove these structural impediments, one of which is the hegemony of institutions such as the Turkish military and bureaucracy, and actors such as the PKK, over alternative voices. Any promise that a reformist government may make to Kurdish actors is not credible, and thus cooperation impossible, unless the government has the power to fulfil these promises despite the military’s opposition (Cizre, 2004). This is one important reason why what we can call moderate–moderate cooperation is so rare. But it is misleading to elevate this factor to the status of primary explanatory factor. While confirming that moderates’ autonomy from hardliners is crucial in order to facilitate moderate–moderate cooperation, the model here suggests that other factors are equally crucial.

A critical factor is how desirable cooperation actually is for the actors involved. Internally, the desirability of cooperation is affected by, among other factors, the demography of society and the political goals of the actors and their constituencies. Externally, the spectre of pan-Kurdish nationalism and relations with the Iraqi Kurds, and Turkey’s ambiguous EU relationship, are essential. Contrasts with the Scottish case help to show how such ‘structural’ constraints complicate cooperation in the Kurdish case. Hence, even if we assume for a moment that we can successfully identify the moderates and the hardliners, reducing hardliners’ power may not by itself enable moderate–moderate cooperation.

To further complicate things, one cannot readily distinguish hardliners from moderates. Moderation theories provide a sensible answer to the question of how societies can manage ethnic, religious or socio-economic
conflicts in order to transition into a more inclusive and more democratic system. Accordingly, the ‘moderates’ on both sides of these conflicts should mobilize and sideline their ‘radicals’ or ‘hardliners’ (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Kalyvas, 2000). The often unintended implication is that external actors who want peace and democracy should support the moderates and facilitate their cooperation (Schwedler, 2006). But who are the moderates? As soon as one applies these theories to practical cases, one realizes that it is very hard to \textit{a priori} identify the moderates. Usually, these are identified \textit{ex post}: moderates are those who successfully cooperated (or negotiated) with their adversaries, and hardliners (or radicals) are those who did not or could not. Prior to cooperation, actors who seem radical on one dimension of moderation may look moderate on another dimension. In such a case, who should cooperate, when and how?

As will be elaborated, this is a major difficulty of the Turkish–Kurdish case. At the end of the article, I discuss a way to conceptualize moderation. Until then, let us temporarily define the moderates simply as non-violent actors who show willingness to cooperate and compromise with actors on the other side of the conflict.\textsuperscript{2}

In the second section I briefly review the Turkish–Kurdish and British–Scottish cases in order to outline their evolution and highlight their differences. In the third section I develop a simple model to examine how moderate–moderate cooperation could occur if it were easy to identify who the moderates and hardliners were. I thus isolate the question of how one can identify the moderates from the question of which structural barriers would prevent cooperation. In the fourth section, I relax this assumption and show that, although it is relatively easy to define the moderates among Scots, Brits and Turkish-majority actors, it is not easy to identify Kurdish moderates. In the concluding section I discuss the extent to which we can expect more cooperation in the new period since the July 2007 elections and summarize the theory and policy implications.

II. The Puzzle: the Kurdish–Turkish and Scottish–British Cases

According to a recent estimate based on a representative survey in September–October 2006, some 10% of the population in Turkey expressly embraces Kurdish ethnicity. But people who have various degrees of Kurdish background reach approximately 15–16% of the total population or some 11.5 million people (Milliyet-Konda, 2007).\textsuperscript{3}

Ethnic Turks and Kurds were joined under the Ottoman state, which in many ways is modern Turkey’s predecessor, in the early sixteenth century when Kurdish chiefdoms of what is now Eastern Anatolia and Northern Iraq pledged their allegiance to the Ottomans (McDowall, 1992; Bruinessen, 2003; Özoglu, 2004). As part of the Muslim \textit{millet} (Ottoman category of religious nation), ethnic Turks and Kurds enjoyed the same privileged status for centuries. The Kurdish question first emerged in the nineteenth century. To modernize and centralize the state, the Ottomans launched a series of reforms legalizing more equal rights for non-Muslims and restricting the
traditional autonomy of Kurdish areas through practices such as conscription and taxation (Olson, 1989; Yavuz, 2001). During the empire’s long decline, first non-Muslim and then Muslim subjects of the empire developed nationalist ideologies. Nationalist mobilization of mainly Christian populations, in particular Armenian nationalism in the East, threatened both Turks and Kurds. Both Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms developed around the beginning of the twentieth century, but with a significant difference. While Turkish nationalism had ethnic and political-territorial variants, Kurdish nationalism was mainly ethnic.

Turkish nationalism mainly sought to save the Ottoman state by establishing a nation-state, or state-nation, centred in Anatolia, where Muslims constituted clear majorities (McCarthy, 2001; Bora, 2002). For this purpose, different variants of Turkish nationalism imagined how, politically and culturally, to unite a multi-ethnic group of people under identity categories such as Ottoman Muslims, Muslims of Turkey or Turkishness. Muslim ethnic Kurds were thought to be part of these nation-building projects, and many Kurdish intellectuals became influential followers of Turkish nationalism. Simultaneously, ethnic-Turkish nationalism developed mainly with inspiration from Turkic (Tatar and Azeri) nationalism which developed in Russia but was less influential (Georgeon, 2006). By contrast, Kurdish nationalism was ethnically particularistic and sought Kurdish autonomy or independence from neighbouring Turks, Arabs and Armenians.

The defeated Ottoman state collapsed at the end of the First World War. In 1920, Kurdish-nationalist Ottoman elites were promised potential Kurdish statehood by the Sèvres Treaty, which partitioned Turkey between the Entente Powers and ethnic Greek, Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish states. However, the Sèvres Treaty became void when Turkish nationalists, joined by traditional Kurdish elites and masses, waged a successful war of liberation against the occupying powers (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 67–118). In 1923, the Lausanne Treaty recognized Turkey as a unitary nation-state. The treaty regarded the Muslims of Turkey as one sovereign nation and established only non-Muslim minority rights, while also stipulating that ethnic-linguistic particularities within the Muslim population would be respected. Turkish nationalists declared the Republic of Turkey soon afterwards, and began to launch a series of republican and secular reforms.

The seeds of modern Turkey’s Kurdish conflict were sown by two developments (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997; Bruinessen, 2003; Bozarslan, 2005; Taşpınar, 2005; Somer, 2007b). First, secular-republican reforms abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate, which were important symbols uniting Kurds and Turks, and declared a new constitution in 1924 which created a centralized state. The constitution subsumed all Muslim ethnic-cultural and regional identities under a secular-territorial definition of Turkishness inclusive of different ‘races and religions’ (Kili and Gözübüyük, 1985: 111). Second, in line with British demands, the Lausanne Treaty separated the former Mosul province of the Ottoman Empire from the rest of Turkey, delegating its status to the League of Nations (Macmillan, 2002). Eventually, a 1926 agreement between Britain, Turkey and Iraq joined this region with the British-mandated Iraq. Thus, a substantial portion of Kurds
who had initially been part of the Turkish state-building and nation-building project became a potential source of Kurdish irredentism.

The republican reforms, which created a centralized state, reflected the founding elites’ suspicions of ethnic diversity in general, which in their perception produced the Ottoman meltdown, as well as their suspicions of British-induced Kurdish separatism. However, their suspicions turned into actual fear when religious Kurds, who resented the secular reforms, and autonomy-minded Kurds, who resented the centralized and non-Kurdish nature of the republic, reacted with a violent rebellion in 1925. A series of other rebellions followed until the late 1930s which the state crushed with harsh military measures (Olson, 1989).

This initial period produced significant long-term results. First, the rebellions helped hardliner state elites to sideline those elites who could have favoured less heavy-handed and more ethnicity friendly approaches vis-à-vis Kurds (while probably also opposing extensive secular reforms). Second, while the elites initially saw ethnic Kurds as natural components of the nation-building, they began to see them as a potential fifth column that should be assimilated at whatever cost (Yeğen, 2007). The state began to deny the existence of Kurds in Turkey and tried to eradicate public signs of Kurdish language and culture. Third, the period deeply divided Kurdish elites. On the one hand, a disgruntled group of Kurdish rebels and their descendants became hardened Kurdish nationalists. On the other, many Kurds who chose to join the majority society could only do so by not expressing their ethnicity, thus becoming traitors in the eyes of Kurdish nationalists.

The transition to democracy in the 1950s enabled local Kurdish elites, mostly traditional landlords, to join and build strong links of patronage with Turkish-majority political parties, which they mainly used for personal benefit. Nevertheless, relative peace, socio-economic development and rural–urban migration created a new group of upwardly mobile Kurds. Inspired by Marxism during the 1960s and 1970s, they developed new Kurdish nationalist views and movements in eastern as well as rapidly growing western cities such as Ankara and Istanbul, first within joint Turkish–Kurdish leftist movements and then independently. One of them was the PKK’s future leader Öcalan, who founded the PKK in the 1970s as a marginal group with a group of Turkish and Kurdish radical leftists. The military takeover in 1980 cracked down on all Kurdish activism, lending credence to the PKK’s claims. In 1984, the PKK launched its first attacks on the government and any Kurds who refused to support the PKK, which turned into a full-scale conflict between the security forces, the PKK and ‘pro-state Kurds’ in the 1990s. The no-fly zone outside the Iraqi state’s control established after the first Gulf War in 1991 allowed the PKK to establish a strong presence there (Barkey, 2005; Park, 2005). The early 1990s also witnessed the collapse of the burgeoning cooperation between moderate Kurdish and Turkish-majority actors under the umbrella of centre–left parties (Somer, 2005). Frustration over restrictions on voicing explicitly Kurdish demands led Kurdish politicians to break away and form a series of explicitly Kurdish parties (Watts, 2006). These parties became increasingly sympathetic to the PKK during the 1990s, drawing their support from
segments of Kurds who sympathized with the PKK’s cause if not with its methods.

In the violent years of the 1990s, it was indeed hard to be moderate in the sense defined above. Kurdish actors who openly rejected violence or ‘cooperated with the state’ risked persecution by the PKK. Turkish-majority actors who cooperated with explicitly Kurdish actors risked being labelled ‘pro-PKK’ or ‘Kurdist’ and persecution by the state. New liberal parties open to Kurdish concerns fared poorly. But moderate–moderate cooperation also remained minimal in the relatively peaceful period of 1999–2005, to which we turn after a brief review of the Scottish case.

The Scottish–British Case

In many ways, the Scottish case represents how Turkey’s Kurdish question could have evolved but did not. With roughly 10% of the total population, Scots form a minority nationality group within Britain, which is similar in size to Kurds in Turkey (McCrone, 2001; Bromley et al., 2006). Scotland traditionally formed Britain’s less developed hinterland, like Turkey’s Kurdish areas. Both are indigenous ethno-national groups having territorially based and distinct cultural-linguistic characteristics on which they can draw, as they did, to develop a national identity. However, the cultural or physical differences of the Scots and the Kurds from the majority British and Turkish populations are such that it has been relatively easy for the members of both groups to assimilate into, and integrate with, the majority society. Those who did so could become part of a larger market and more potent polity. Hence, Adam Smith, a Scot, encouraged his pupils to shed their writing of ‘Scottish’ vocabulary. Ziya Gökalp, an ethnic Kurd, became one of the most prominent ideologues of Turkish nationalism. Nevertheless, both Scots and Kurds maintained ethno-national identities and developed nationalist ideologies with autonomist (sub-state) and secessionist variants. Finally, both the British and the Turkish identities are partially rooted in imperial identities. In each case, the majority society’s psychological approach to minority questions is affected by the memory of ‘loss of empire and importance’.

However, three major qualities immediately distinguish the two cases. First, unlike the Turkish–Kurdish case, the Brits and Scots in modern times have preferred political compromise over the use of force against each other. Thus, the Scottish case is a remarkably peaceful one (Miller, 1981; Nairn, 2001; McCrone, 2001; Keating, 1998, 2005). The Scots shunned violent struggle and pursued their interests politically through cooperation and negotiation with British political actors and institutions. Similarly, the Brits employed gradual accommodation of the Scottish interests rather than their suppression and denial. For example, when the introduction of a single British Education Act in the 1870s led the Scots to charge the British with trying to assimilate them, the British established as a midway solution the Scottish Education Department under the control of Westminster, and, in 1885, the Secretary of State for Scotland (the Scottish Office) in Westminster to address ‘Scottish’ issues. Similarly, although the
British conservatives traditionally opposed Scottish nationalism and demands for autonomy, after 1939 they addressed them by gradually expanding the powers of the Scottish Office with an increasingly autonomous administration in Edinburgh, making it increasingly 'of Scotland' rather than 'about Scotland' (Miller, 1981: 9).

Second, recognition of the Scottish identity has never been an important concern in the Scottish case. Unlike the Kurdish case, where the expression of the Kurdish identity was long suppressed by the state and a major goal of Kurdish nationalism was to prove their distinct identity, Scots never needed nationalism to prove that they were Scots (McCrone, 2001: 165). Contrasting Turkey's republican attempts to impose one 'symmetrical' definition of national identity and citizenship on both the Turkish-majority and Kurdish-minority, Scottish elites were allowed to define Britishness in their own way and be 'Scottish in London, and British gentlemen in Edinburgh and elsewhere in the world' (Colls, 2002: 42–3). This does not mean that identity-related disagreements are absent in the Scottish case. For example, the Scots resent that the English view the British and English identities as largely interchangeable, not recognizing Scottish contributions to the British identity and culture, and that they tend to harbour a 'sense of supremacy over the Scots'. Nevertheless, substantial numbers of Scots hold complementary (Scottish and British) identities (Bromley et al., 2006).

Following centuries of wars, Scots formally joined Britain with the (according to the English) 'ostensibly voluntary and largely peaceful' Act of Union in 1707 (Colls, 2002). The Act made the Scots and the English 'one sovereign people' in terms of constitutional law.8 Rather than merging two equals, the union mostly subsumed the Scottish political institutions under the British, establishing the Parliament in London as the sovereign of both. Nevertheless, Scots maintained their distinct identity and the autonomy of their local-cultural institutions. The Scottish elites maintained control over local institutions such as the Scottish (Presbyterian) Church and jurisdiction in civil affairs. Taking place before the emergence of modern nation-states, this asymmetrical union had the characteristics of traditional state-building (Keating, 1998). In some ways it resembled how Kurdish chiefdoms joined the Ottoman state in the sixteenth century, although Kurdish civil society and political institutions were less developed than those of the Scottish. It also resembles how Kurdish nationalists wish Kurdish difference was maintained during the foundation of modern Turkey.

Third, especially throughout the twentieth century, moderates on both sides made concessions. Scottish moderates shunned violence, militant nationalism and the ideal of independence, although, for example, two million Scots signed a petition for home rule in 1948 (McCrone, 2001: 21). They cooperated with British moderates. Take the example of the Scottish Labour Party (SLP), which was founded in 1892 with a commitment to home rule (McEwen, 2004). It was incorporated within the British Labour Party in 1915 but retained an 'informal autonomy and discretion', thus remaining an explicitly Scottish political actor (Hassan, 2004). The SLP embraced a pragmatic kind of Scottish nationalism and a subtle kind of British nationalism linked to the project of British welfare state and
contingent upon the state’s ability to ‘deliver’ (Keating, 1988: 98; McEwen, 2004: 161–2). Until the 1970s it promoted the idea that Scottish interests would best be addressed at the level of British politics. But it adopted autonomist Scottish nationalism during the 1980s when conservative governments ruled in Westminster and when North Sea oil and the ability to link directly with EU institutions and the global economy increased the political and economic feasibility of Scottish autonomy. It then engineered Scottish autonomy in cooperation with the British Labour Party under Blair. Since the establishment of a Scottish Assembly, it has begun to re-emphasize what holds Britain together. The moderates within the British Labour and Conservative parties engaged the moderate Scottish actors, ensured economic advantages for Scotland and endorsed gradual devolution first in administration and then in legislation, while promoting a more multicultural definition of Britishness with Blair’s Labour. Informal networks between Scottish and British actors within bureaucracy, as well as business and labour organizations, crucially contributed to moderate–moderate cooperation and later to the working of devolution (McCrone, 2001: 21; Keating, 2005).

Clearly, there have also been hardliners on both sides. The Scottish National Party (SNP), a peaceful party founded in 1934 but whose organizational antecedents go back to the First World War, has always defended secession (Lynch, 2002). Similarly, many within the British Labour and Conservative parties have considered that Scottish autonomy would be detrimental to the British identity and institutions and have opposed devolution. The cooperation among ‘moderate’ Scottish and British political actors ensured peace, democracy and economic development, while checking separatism but granting gradual devolution to the Scots (Miller, 1981; Nairn, 2001; McCrone, 2001; Keating, 2005). Historically, the union gave the Scots an empire in the establishment of which they actively participated and from the economic and intellectual fruits of which they greatly benefited. It enabled the English to secure their northern hinterland and focus outward. Scots also shared in the British welfare state. Unlike Turkey’s southeast, one of the country’s least developed regions, per capita income in Scotland in 1996 stood at 98% of the UK average (McCrone, 2001: 76).

In 1999, Scotland got its own assembly and government, with significant authority to tax and rule in areas from energy to education (Keating, 2005). In 2007, the SNP gained a plurality in the Scottish Assembly after almost a century-long marginal existence. Scottish independence is possible now, but it remains unlikely in the foreseeable future because Scottish parties representing two-thirds of the Scottish voters disapprove of it and because of the political-economic advantages of the union. Either way, few foresee violence or drastic political-economic consequences.

The Post-1999 Turkey

Developments at the turn of the twenty-first century led to relative peace and overall democratization, raising hopes that the Kurdish question would
finally embark on a path more comparable to the Scottish case (Somer, 2004). In 1999, the PKK leader Öcalan was captured, tried and received a life sentence, and the PKK declared a ‘ceasefire’ that ended only in June 2004. In 1999, the EU declared Turkey a candidate for membership. These developments began a major period of democratization and reforms in areas ranging from better human rights to reduced military involvement in politics. An earthquake in 1999, to which state institutions responded poorly and financial crises in 2001 and 2002 fragmented the economic–political elite, shattered public confidence in mainstream institutions and made secular-liberal elites more open to reforms. The reforms gained serious momentum in 2002 when the AKP came to power in a single party government, ending a long period of unstable coalition governments, and the EU decided in 2004 to begin accession talks.

The reforms gave Kurds a more tolerant administration and cultural–linguistic rights unprecedented in Turkey, e.g. the rights to broadcasting in Kurdish during limited hours and for Kurdish to be taught in private schools. Combined with the discursive developments in the 1990s, the reforms made the expression of the Kurdish identity and culture no longer an issue (Somer, 2005). The reforms did not create ‘Kurdish’ rights, but ethnic-cultural rights open to all ethnic groups (although no other group was mobilized claiming such rights). Although welcoming peace and reforms, the changes failed to dissipate the feeling of ‘defeat’ and ‘inequality’ among Kurdish nationalists and major segments of the Kurdish population. The AKP did not launch comprehensive policies addressing the Kurdish question in political and socio-economic areas (Yavuz and Özcan, 2006). More importantly, the reforms were not made with the involvement of moderate Kurdish actors. Ethnic Kurds within the AKP might have contributed privately, but no explicitly Kurdish actor, such as the DTP, was consulted. Finally, initiatives taken by intellectuals and civil society actors had little short-term, political consequence.

Violence between the PKK and security forces escalated throughout 2006–2007. This was, significantly, related to the developments in Iraq and will be discussed later. In December 2007, Turkey launched wide-scale aerial bombings of PKK targets in Northern Iraq.

III. Structural Barriers to Cooperation

For several reasons, it is fruitful to examine the Kurdish question in terms of theories of democratic transition, i.e. analyse moderate–moderate cooperation as a major mechanism (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski, 1992; Linz and Stepan, 1996). Discursively, the goal of democratization is embraced by a wide range of Kurdish and Turkish-majority political actors and could form a basis for moderate–moderate cooperation. The Kurdish question forms an area of major democratic deficit preventing the consolidation of democracy because, among other reasons, Turkish-majority actors do not recognize explicitly Kurdish political actors as parties they should ‘listen to’ even if these are legitimately elected.
Furthermore, democratic transition theories highlight causal mechanisms that undermine moderate–moderate cooperation in the Kurdish question. Democratization requires that actors accept the ‘uncertain outcomes’ of democratic processes as long as these result from fair and legal democratic procedures within the framework of a democratically instituted constitution (Przeworski, 1992).\textsuperscript{11} Consolidated democracy is rare precisely because actors must commit themselves to accepting outcomes they may find deeply undesirable or threatening.

This difficulty afflicts the Kurdish case. Democratization may produce outcomes threatening many actors. For example, democratization may require the dissolution of the PKK. Even some Kurds not involved in violence may think, however, that without the threat of violence the majority society may never agree to further Kurdish rights. Kurdish nationalists may also think that under fully democratic and economically favourable conditions ordinary Kurds may vote for Turkish-majority parties that reject many ideals of Kurdish nationalism.

Turkish-majority actors may think that major portions of the Kurdish population may ‘vote for’ demands threatening Turkey’s ‘political and territorial integrity’. Many believe that institutions such as mono-lingual (Turkish) public education, administrative centralization and restrictions of separatist political activity are guarantees of social peace and territorial integrity, especially against Kurdish separatism (Taşpınar, 2005; Somer, 2007b; Yeşen, 2007). While 62\% of the public support the general idea of government assistance to protect ethnic minority traditions, only 42\% support assistance for Kurds (Milliyet-Konda, 2007: 38–49). Since the 1990s, the ‘controlled’ implementation of democracy vis-à-vis the Kurdish question has created new opportunity spaces for Kurdish activism (Watts, 2006). A fully consolidated democracy may further strengthen Kurdish nationalism.

\textit{A Prisoner's Dilemma Model}

Given these uncertainties and lack of trust moderate–moderate cooperation would best be captured by an extensive prisoner’s dilemma game (Cohen, 1994). Figure 1 summarizes it. Readers uninterested in the formal game may skip to its interpretation.

In this particular representation, Turkish-majority moderates move first, but the same logic holds even if Kurdish moderates moved first. The Turkish-majority moderates have a choice between allying and not allying with the Kurdish moderates. If they choose not to ally, both sides receive the payoffs STMM and SKM, which denote the status quo for the Turkish-majority and Kurdish moderates, respectively. The status quo payoffs are the constituency support these actors currently enjoy.

If Turkish-majority actors choose the ‘ally’ strategy, for example by reaching an agreement with the Kurdish moderates to legislate Kurdish rights, then the Kurdish moderates move next. They can choose to cooperate further or to defect for example by joining forces with the Kurdish hardliners and pressing for more radical demands. If they defect, then the game ends with the
Turkish-majority moderates receiving the payoff (0): they lose all credibility in the eyes of their constituency. Kurdish moderates, however, receive the payoff \((a \cdot SKM)\) where \(a > 1\). Their payoff is greater than the status quo because they showed to their constituency that they could deliver more rights.

What happens if Kurdish moderates choose to maintain their alliance with the Turkish-majority moderates? In this case, Kurdish hardliners move next. If they successfully sanction the moderates, e.g. by persuading the Kurdish constituency to no longer support the moderates, the Kurdish moderates lose all their status quo benefits and receive the payoff (0). The Turkish-majority moderates also receive zero because their alliance with the Kurdish moderates ended up strengthening the Kurdish hardliners. If the Kurdish hardliners fail to sanction the Kurdish moderates, however, then the Turkish-majority and Kurdish moderates increase their payoffs to \((b \cdot STMM)\) and \((b \cdot SKM)\), respectively, where \(b > 1\).

What would be the result of this game? If \(a > b\), then the game has only one equilibrium. Kurdish moderates are always better off defecting because \((a \cdot SKM > b \cdot SKM)\). They would always defect. If there is asymmetric information, i.e. Turkish-majority actors do not know the Kurdish actors’ payoffs, the game can end after the Turkish-majority moderates choose ‘ally’ and the Kurdish moderates defect. If the payoffs are known, then the
Turkish moderates do not choose ally in the first place, knowing that the Kurdish counterparts would defect.

If $a < b$, however, then the equilibrium outcome of the game depends on the power of the Kurdish hardliners to sanction the Kurdish moderates. Consider that $(r)$ denotes the probability that the Kurdish hardliners will fail to sanction the moderates. In this case, the Kurdish moderates cooperate if $r > (a / b)$. For example, if the values of $(a)$ and $(b)$ are 2 and 3, respectively, then the Kurdish moderates choose cooperation only if the probability that the hardliners will fail to punish them is greater than $(2/3)$.

The same condition explains whether or not Turkish-majority moderates choose to ally with Kurdish moderates. If $r > (a / b)$, and if this is known, the Turkish-majority moderates know that the Kurdish moderates will choose cooperation. They also know that mutual cooperation would make themselves better off than the status quo, as long as $b > a$. Thus, they choose to ally with Kurdish moderates.

Similarly, if the Kurdish moderates moved first, the outcome would depend on the Turkish-majority hardliners’ ability to sanction the Turkish-majority moderates, and on the extra benefits of cooperation rather than defection.

### The Interpretation of the Game

This result shows that cooperation depends on two factors.

**Domestic Structural Conditions and the Payoffs of Cooperation**

Cooperation is the more likely the greater $(b - a)$, i.e. the more cooperation pays off relative to defection. Which structural conditions affect these ‘payoffs’?

Among Kurds, two factors make ‘hardliner’ strategies such as violence and secession costly and undesirable, and non-violence and political compromise beneficial. First, political–economic and geo-strategic advantages of being part of Turkey increase the payoff of cooperation and reduce the desirability of secessionism. Kurdish intellectual Musa Anter once summarized this by asking why Kurds would ever abandon Istanbul. Second, more than half of ethnic Kurds are scattered across Turkey. Mixed marriages are common, with about one in every four ethnic Kurds related to Turks through intermarriage in their families (Milliyet-Konda, 2007: 18). This makes ‘defection’ risky, as it may induce social and political polarization. Political and, worse, social unmixing between Turks and Kurds is a dreadful prospect (Somers, 2005, 2007b; Yavuz and Özcan, 2006; Yegen, 2007). Consequently, major Kurdish constituencies have a vested interest in pursuing rights through cooperation within Turkey rather than separatism and violence.

On the Turkish-majority side, the main factor making moderate–moderate cooperation desirable is the consequences of the Kurdish conflict. Since 1984, it has cost Turkey thousands of lives, hundreds of billions of dollars of...
military expenditure and lost economic opportunities. It undermines Turkey's democratization, development of human rights, international reputation and EU integration, and contributes to urban poverty and crime (Kurban et al., 2006).

Given these conditions alone, moderation should be desirable for major actors on both sides.

Moderates' Autonomy and the Possibility of Cooperation

Turkish-majority actors fear that moderate Kurdish actors lack a sufficient power base independent of the PKK. They thus fear that any cooperation would break down when Kurdish participants ‘defect’ by supporting the PKK, thus creating the impression that ‘terrorism paid off’ and causing Turkish-majority moderate actors to pay a high political price. Similarly, Kurdish moderates fear that moderate Turkish-majority actors would fail to sustain cooperation in the face of pressures from bureaucratic actors and Turkish ethnic-nationalists.

Democratic transition theories highlight that ‘moderate players must have sufficient autonomy so that they can, over time, conduct strategic as well as tactical negotiations [with their moderate counterparts]’ (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 61). The ability of moderate Kurdish actors to gain autonomous power was hindered by state policies indiscriminately restricting all Kurdish activism, the PKK’s violent efforts to monopolize Kurdish politics and by formation of the radical Kurdish–Islamic Hizbullah (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). Meanwhile, the military’s interference in Turkish politics undermined Turkish mainstream actors’ autonomy (Cizre, 2004).

In the perception of mainstream actors, an example of ‘defection’ by Kurdish actors occurred in August 2005, when Prime Minister Erdoğan made a major overture to Kurds. Earlier that year, in April, during a visit to Norway, Erdoğan had refused to talk about a ‘Kurdish’ question, calling it a ‘fictitious problem’. On 10 August, however, following a meeting in Ankara with a group of Turkish and Kurdish intellectuals, he announced that the ‘Kurdish question’ should be resolved through democratization within a ‘democratic republic’. Two days later, Erdoğan went to Diyarbakır, a stronghold of Kurdish nationalism, where he made an unusually conciliatory speech. He admitted that the state had made mistakes in the past vis-à-vis the Kurdish question. These were words that would please Kurdish moderates, and Erdoğan took significant political risks on behalf of his Turkish-majority constituency by making this overture. However, the event turned out to be an embarrassment for the prime minister because very few people turned up.

Turkish-majority actors considered that the low turnout had been staged by the PKK because it opposed any cooperation not involving the PKK. Local Kurdish actors challenge this perception and blame the AKP’s own mistakes for the low turnout. They argue that Kurdish moderate actors expressed support for Erdoğan before and after his speech. They also claim that the prime minister was facing pressure from hardliners within
In accordance with this interpretation, some authors highlight that compared to his speech two days earlier, his speech in Diyarbakır put less emphasis on democratization *per se* and more on democracy with ‘one state, one nation, and one flag’ (Yavuz and Özcan, 2006: 111).

According to the structural explanation, moderates should find ways to commit themselves credibly to a ‘non-violent, non-separatist’ path on the part of Kurdish actors and to a reformist path on the part Turkish-majority actors. The possibility of this, however, is not dependent solely on domestic structures.

**External Structure 1: Iraq**

The crisis in Iraq directly and indirectly complicates moderate–moderate cooperation within Turkey (Sommer, 2004; Barkey, 2005; Park, 2005). Following the US invasion of Iraq, and the failure to establish peace and stability there, relative peace and democratization vis-à-vis the Kurdish question took a downturn in Turkey. Directly, the war in Iraq led the PKK to find a safe haven and access to weaponry, from where it restarted its hostilities towards Turkish targets.

Indirectly, the war in Iraq raises the suspicion that Iraqi Kurds would eventually seek independence. Iraqi Kurd efforts to bring the multi-ethnic and oil-rich Kirkuk under Kurdish regional government by holding a referendum on the city’s status, to take place in 2008, are seen as evidence of this suspicion (International Crisis Group, 2007). The inclusion of Kirkuk in the Kurdish area would make Kurdish statehood economically viable. In the perception of Turkish-majority actors, this creates the possibility that Kurdish moderate actors may defect by joining forces with pan-Kurdish nationalists in Iraq. One might speculate that Kirkuk could reduce the pay-off for Kurdish moderates in Turkey of cooperation with Turkish-majority moderates; the discovery of North Sea oil contributed to the rising popularity of independence among the Scots in the 1970s (McCrone, 2001; Keating, 2005). Alternatively, they may seek the unification of Iraqi Kurdish areas with Turkey, areas that are not eager to be part of Iraq. Even if such a union occurred by mutual agreement and international support, however, it might require Turkey’s transformation into a federal state and could cause conflict with neighbouring countries. These possibilities strengthen Turkish hardliners.

While Kurdish leader and Iraq’s president Talabani tends to be cautious in dispelling these suspicions, the head of the regional Kurdish government Barzani uses a language feeding Turkish concerns. For example, in an interview with *AlArabiya TV* in April, 2007, Barzani reportedly said that if Turkey interferes with the future status of Kirkuk, then Iraqi Kurds would ‘interfere with’ Diyarbakır.

The fact that Turkish Kurds have across-the-border ethnic brethren with a zeal for independence distinguishes the Kurdish case from cases like Scotland, making the former less tractable.
The weak political support in Europe for Turkey’s accession to the EU also diminishes the possibility of moderate–moderate cooperation. Presently, the accession process can come to nothing even if Turkey fulfils all of its obligations. This would happen if any member country decided to hold a referendum on the question and reject Turkey’s membership. The election of Nicholas Sarkozy, who is expressly against Turkish membership, to the French presidency in 2007 increased this possibility.

The understanding that major portions of the EU public and governments oppose Turkey’s membership for cultural and practical reasons diminishes the public support in Turkey for both EU accession and further democratic reforms. First, it decreases the attractiveness of controversial reforms, as they may not culminate in EU membership, even though democratization is desirable for Turkey in itself. Second, the prospect of EU membership reduces the possibility that Kurds may seek a separate nation-state. For minority nationalisms within member states, EU institutions discourage violence and separatism while endorsing sub-state nationalism short of independence (Keating, 1998, 2005). Third, the expectation of Turkey’s EU membership is one reason some Kurdish nationalists shun separatism (Kesen, 2003). Fourth, the weakness of the EU prospects leads the Turkish public to look for alternative models of development, such as that of Russia that are less democratic but also more independent from the West.

Table 1 summarizes the structural differences between the Kurdish and Scottish cases.

The domestic and external structures that constrain the choice of actors fail to explain some important questions. Why do Turkish-majority actors not cooperate with Kurdish actors such as the KADEP (Participatory Democracy Party) and HAK-PAR (Rights and Liberties Party), which have long renounced violence. Why do Turkish-majority parties not incorporate moderate Kurdish demands within their programmes? Why does the state not support moderate Kurdish actors? As argued before, the structural explanation assumes that moderates are readily identifiable. The next section shows that this does not hold true.

IV. Conceptual Causes of Failure

Cognitive Gaps

A purely structural explanation ignores agency, presuming that the prevailing structural conditions are compatible with only one type of behaviour. It also disregards the fact that structural constraints can be changed through political action. This is tantamount to saying that Martin Luther King made no difference in the evolution of American civil rights because he was a product of the political-economic structures of his time.

One area where potentially moderate actors can facilitate cooperation through wilful action is by trying to bridge the conceptual gaps that exist
between how Turkish-majority and Kurdish-minority actors interpret the goals of cooperation. Although they use similar terms, such as democratization, ‘Kurdish rights’ and unity (or Turkish–Kurdish fraternity), they have different understandings of these terms. This undermines cooperation by making it impossible to coordinate strategies among actors. By contrast, when Scottish and British moderates talk about terms such as devolution and the Scottish region, there is little ambiguity over what these mean, though there may be disagreement over their desirability. Conceptual gaps emerge in four areas, democratization, unity and Turkish and Kurdish identities, and are summarized in Table 2.

For example, Turkish-majority actors believe that democratization does not require changes in fundamental constitutional principles and that

---

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Autonomy from domestic hardliners</th>
<th>Neighbouring ethnic brethren</th>
<th>Socio-economic benefits of cooperation</th>
<th>EU anchor favouring democracy and opposing secession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish moderates</td>
<td>Low (mainly from the PKK)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High but yet insufficiently delivered (and lower with Iraqi-Kurdish statehood including Kirkuk)</td>
<td>Weak because of political-cultural opposition of major EU countries to Turkish membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish-majority</td>
<td>Low (mainly from the military, judiciary and nationalist voters)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Weak because of political opposition of major EU countries to Turkish membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong The UK full member. Scotland is properly represented in UK–EU relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish moderates</td>
<td>High (but lower the stronger Scottish nationalism)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High (but reduced with discovery of North Sea Oil)</td>
<td>Strong The UK full member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British moderates</td>
<td>High (but lower the stronger English nationalism)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>High (but may diminish in the future)</td>
<td>Strong The UK full member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 An independent Scotland would maintain its economic relations with Britain while not receiving welfare transfers from London. English public opinion may also turn against ‘asymmetric devolution’, which gives a say to the Scots in English affairs (because the English do not have a regional government), but not vice versa.
### TABLE 2
Cognitive Gaps between Kurdish and Turkish-Majority Actors and the Scottish Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratization</th>
<th>Unity</th>
<th>Turkish identity</th>
<th>Kurdish identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish-majority actors</td>
<td>More respect and rights for Kurdish identity and culture; lower or no electoral threshold</td>
<td>Unitary state, one sovereign nation. Social-political integration as well as territorial integrity</td>
<td>Mixture of a political-territorial and ethnic identity. Kurds can have complementary identities and the Turkish identity can allow more recognition of Kurdish difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish actors</td>
<td>All of the above plus: recognition of Turkey as bi-national; ‘non-humiliating’ ways to reintegrate people involved in separatism into society</td>
<td>Unitary or federal state where Kurdish sovereignty is recognized. Territorial but not necessarily social-political integration</td>
<td>Ethnic identity. Excludes Kurds. Kurds cannot hold complementary identities. Cannot incorporate Kurdish identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| British actors | Increasing self-rule in Scotland in administration and legislation | Union of two sovereign nations (but more tendency to see the 1707 union as permanent) | Political identity unconsiously seen as overlapping with Englishness. Open to Scots | Geographic-cultural identity with ethnic overtones |
| Scottish actors | Increasing self-rule in Scotland in administration and legislation | Union of two sovereign nations (but less tendency to see the 1707 union as permanent) | Political identity. Inclusive of Scots in principle but biased toward the English | Geographic-cultural identity with ethnic overtones |
separatist violence should be fought with hard measures. Many Kurds feel that a more democratic constitution should explicitly recognize the Kurds. Many also argue that the state and the majority society should ‘empathize’ more with the reasons that led many Kurds, directly or indirectly, to support separatism. They also believe that the state should find non-humiliating ways of reintegrating people involved in separatism into society, and of acknowledging its own mistakes in the creation of the conflict.  

Another major dimension of the cognitive gap is the identity dimension. When talking about the Kurdish and Turkish identities, Kurdish intellectuals and political actors tend to view them as historically continuous ethnic nations. Turkishness is associated with being of Turkic origin and Kurdishness with belonging to an ancient Kurdish ethnicity. Consequently, the two are viewed as mutually exclusive categories that one cannot hold simultaneously. Any suggestion that ethnic Kurds may choose simultaneously to embrace Kurdishness as an ethnic identity and Turkishness as national identity or citizenship is seen as a contradiction in terms. Turkish ethnic-nationalists agree with the ethnic definition of Turkishness and try to ‘prove’ that Kurds also have Turkic origins. Some liberal Turkish intellectuals have also argued that Turkishness is an inherently ethnic category, suggesting that a new national identity, Türkiye’li (being from Turkey), should be promoted instead (Oran, 2004). At times, the AKP government seemed to agree with this view and favour the promotion of common citizenship based in the common Islamic heritage of Turks and Kurds (Yavuz and Özcan, 2006). However, when talking about Turkishness, other Turkish-majority actors have a political-territorial definition in mind and expect Kurds to embrace it as part of their citizenship. The ethnic definition threatens many Turkish-majority actors because it may imply that people who feel Turkish but have non-Turkish ethnic backgrounds, such as Laz, Albanian, Circassian or Bosnian, may not be justified in doing so. The main opposition party CHP (Republican People’s Party) adheres to this view. Kurdish nationalists acknowledge that various non-Turkic ethnic groups readily embrace Turkishness but argue that Kurds should be seen as a separate category altogether. For them, the civic-national definition reminds of policies to assimilate Kurds.

This gap of identity perceptions may be bypassed in two ways. First, political actors may acknowledge that Kurds and Turks have asymmetric, i.e. different, definitions of what it means to be Turkish and avoid imposing their own definition on others. No definition can hold true for everybody. Thus, there may be ways of recognizing the Kurdish identity legally and socially without changing the majority’s self-definition of Turkishness. The British case shows that there can be ‘more than one way of being national, even in the same nation’ (Colls, 2002: 42–3). Second, more research should be done to find to what extent people hold complementary identities; this by allowing respondents to declare multiple identities to differing degrees. Insofar as people hold plural, complementary identities, political actors do not need to see one identity as a threat to another (Somer, 2004). Unfortunately, existing surveys do not fulfil these criteria. As a precursor, a suggestive survey was conducted among randomly selected members of
the DSIAD (Diyarbakır Industrialists and Businessmen Association) in February 2007.\textsuperscript{26} The results, summarized in Table 3, are highly suggestive in that they are representative only of the members of DSIAD, which had 89 registered members at that time. However, the results can inform further studies and are relevant because businessmen could form a major constituency for moderate–moderate cooperation.

The survey asked respondents to rank how much they identified with a list of identities by assigning a score between 0 and 5, with 5 indicating full identification and 0 indicating no identification. As expected, Kurdishness was the primary identity for the overwhelming majority of the DSIAD businessmen (75%, or 12 out of 16 gave a score of 4 or 5 for Kurdishness). Diyarbakır is a predominantly ethnic Kurdish province. However, those who felt primarily Kurdish also identified with categories such as Turkish citizen, Muslim, being from Turkey and Turkish to different degrees. Many respondents rejected exclusive notions of Kurdishness and Turkishness; 33\% gave scores of 2 or more for ‘Turkish’, 42\% gave scores of 2 or more for ‘Turkish citizen’ (Türk vatandaşları). In the Turkish language, the latter category implies more association with Turkishness than the more legal-territorial term of ‘citizen of Turkey’ (Türkiye vatandaşları).

### Three-Dimensional Nature of the Moderate–Hardliner Distinction

In the Scottish case, moderates can be distinguished from hardliners via their political–ideological claims alone because violence is largely absent,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity conception</th>
<th>I Feel Kurdish (Kürt) ≥ 4/5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel Turkish (Türk) ≥ 2</td>
<td>33% (4/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel Turkish (Türk) ≤ 2</td>
<td>67% (8/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a Turkish citizen (Türk vatandaşları) ≥ 2</td>
<td>42% (5/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a Turkish citizen (Türk vatandaşları) ≤ 2</td>
<td>58% (7/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a citizen of Turkey (Türkiye vatandaşı) ≥ 2</td>
<td>92% (11/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a citizen of Turkey (Türkiye vatandaşları) ≤ 2</td>
<td>8% (1/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like someone ‘from Turkey’ (Türkiyeli) ≥ 2</td>
<td>58% (7/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like someone ‘from Turkey’ (Türkiyeli) ≤ 2</td>
<td>42% (5/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a Muslim ≥ 2</td>
<td>75% (9/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a Muslim ≤ 2</td>
<td>25% (3/12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
unlike the Turkish–Kurdish and, for that matter, other British cases, e.g. that of the Irish. Hardliners on the Scottish side could be identified with the SNP, which advocated separatism by contesting elections. The moderates could be identified with those social democrats and conservatives who rejected separatism while focusing on socio-economic issues and pursuing gradual devolution. On the British side, the moderates were social democrats and conservatives who avoided overuse of the central state power and endorsed gradual devolution. On both sides, moderate actors emphasized what unified the British and Scottish: the conservatives emphasized the (British) imperial identity, religion (Protestantism) and the British Crown, while social democrats emphasized social class and the British welfare state (McCrone, 2001).

By contrast, among Kurdish actors, a major dimension distinguishing hardliners from moderates is violence. The PKK represents the hardliners in this dimension. However, Kurdish political actors that can be seen as moderates because they renounce violence can be seen as hardliners in terms of their political claims.

Table 4 summarizes the programmes of three explicitly Kurdish legal political parties, the DTP, KADEP and HAK-PAR, on four issues. If we define moderation in terms of conceptual–ideological distance from Turkish-majority parties, the DTP programme can be described as the most moderate. For example, it highlights the more flexible goal of ‘democratic republic’ rather than federation, and identities such as class, gender and Türkiyelilik. However, the DTP has a close association with the PKK, and, thus, violence.

By comparison with Kurdish actors, one can distinguish Turkish-majority moderates and hardliners in one dimension only: openness to dialogue with moderate Kurdish nationalists. They all endorse the use of legal state violence against the PKK. Thus, the major challenge for Turkish-majority moderates is to bridge the cognitive gap: how to reinvent Turkey’s republican principles so as to accommodate moderate Kurdish claims. For Kurdish actors, the three-dimensional nature of the moderate-hardliner distinction is an additional challenge.

V. Conclusions

Moderate–Moderate Cooperation in the Post-2007 Period

Despite a heated political environment in the spring–summer of 2007, when secularist actors including the military accused the ruling AKP of trying to undermine secularism and of controlling both the presidency and the government, the AKP won a nationwide electoral victory in July 2007. Significantly, it got the most votes in eastern provinces with significant ethnic-Kurdish populations. With fewer votes than that of the former Kurdish party in 2002, the DTP came second and also entered Parliament. Following the elections, the government launched an initiative to write a
### TABLE 4
Kurdish Party Programmes and Policy Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KADEX</th>
<th>HAK-PAR</th>
<th>DTP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The State structure</td>
<td>Demands federation</td>
<td>Federation, though its programme does not mention federation but ‘administrative decentralization and the restructuring of the state and society according to multilingualism and multiculturalism’&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Democratic Republic where Kurdish identity is constitutionally recognized. Emphasis on Turkey which has ‘one state, one flag, territorial integrity’&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity issues</td>
<td>Kurds as ‘a people with right to self determination (which, however, Kurds should not use for independence but for federation).’ No reference to non-Kurdish group identities and rights. Reference to Kurds as a nation</td>
<td>No clear conceptualization in the programme. No reference to non-Kurdish group identities and their rights. No reference to Kurds as a nation</td>
<td>Reference to Kurds as a people but no reference to self-determination. No reference to Kurds as a nation. Emphasis on non-Kurdish group identities such as Chechens, Laz and Alevis, non-ethnic identities such as class and gender, and the multicultural union of Turks, Kurds and other groups in Turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Multilingualism and multiculturalism.

<sup>2</sup> One state, one flag, territorial integrity.
TABLE 4  
(Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KADEF</th>
<th>HAK-PAR</th>
<th>DTP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turkey-wide issues</strong></td>
<td>Kurdish question identified as the 'party's reason to exist' and makes up one fourth of the programme</td>
<td>Emphasis on the claim that the solution to Turkey-wide problems depends on the solution of the Kurdish question. Specific policies on Turkey-wide issues make up less than 40% of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation with moderate actors</strong></td>
<td>No specific reference</td>
<td>No specific reference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 HAK-PAR (2002). See also Özdemir and Yalçın (2007) for an interview with deputy head of HAK-PAR, Reşit Deli.
2 DTP (2005) and Özdemir and Yalçın (2007).
3 DTP (2005), pp. 15–16.
new constitution. This new environment produces significant opportunities for a democratic resolution of the Kurdish question.

The AKP benefited from a new approach to the Kurdish question and the poor performance of its rivals, including the DTP. First, while failing to launch a major, urgently needed, regional development initiative, the government benefited the regional poor through improvements in health care and rural infrastructure.31 Second, the AKP’s actions indicated a less security-oriented government perspective more open to the humane needs of the regional population and more tolerant of ethnic-cultural identity.32 Unlike rival Turkish-majority parties, for example, it resisted major military operations inside Turkey and across the border in Iraq, and focused on peaceful diplomatic venues, despite major public pressures in the face of PKK attacks. Third, the AKP benefited from rising Islamic-conservatism in the region.33 Fourth, with its Kurdish members, the AKP signalled that, unlike the DTP, it might deliver a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish question without sacrificing security and development. Fifth, by publicly challenging the military before winning the elections, the AKP gained significant public prestige and potential autonomy from the military bureaucracy. This, the AKP’s electoral mandate, and the DTP’s presence in Parliament generate major opportunities for moderate–moderate cooperation, with important caveats.

First, though the AKP’s Kurdish MPs are important, moderate–moderate cooperation will have to involve explicitly Kurdish actors. So far, Kurdish AKP members have subsumed their Kurdishness under the primary political identity of Islamic conservatism, at least in public. Since the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1946, Turkish-majority political parties have included numerous members of Kurdish origin, but this has not sufficed to resolve the conflict with Kurdish nationalists and their constituency. The violence in the 1990s has created significant segments among the Kurdish population who directly or indirectly sympathized with the PKK and now view themselves as the conflict’s losers. They support explicitly Kurdish actors such as the DTP.

### TABLE 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total AKP votes</th>
<th>AKP share of votes</th>
<th>AKP # of MPs</th>
<th>Total Kurdish party votes</th>
<th>Kurdish party share of votes</th>
<th>Kurdish party # of MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2002</strong></td>
<td>550,807</td>
<td>20.29%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>936,823</td>
<td>34.51%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2007</strong></td>
<td>1,470,502</td>
<td>49.25%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>898,783</td>
<td>30.10%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As argued, however, among other impediments, a ‘double distrust’ regarding the actual and potential links between the DTP and the PKK, on the one hand, and Turkish–Kurd and Iraqi–Kurd nationalists on the other, undermines cooperation with explicitly Kurdish actors. Cooperation between Turkey, the US and Iraqi Kurds is necessary to ensure the mutual security of Turkey and Iraqi Kurds who need Turkey’s recognition for their political–economic autonomy.34 As of December 2007, the US and Turkey appear to have a new understanding, considering the US support of Turkish operations against the PKK in Iraq, but more trust-building is needed between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. Turkey is a major investor in Northern Iraq, and the fact that more trade and cooperation over the transportation of oil to world markets would help development in the whole region encourages cooperation.35 Domestically, moderate–moderate cooperation would become much more likely if the PKK can be marginalized through a partial amnesty and the inclusion of the DTP in a dialogue in return for the DTP’s finding a way to credibly denounce violence. These steps would ease the ‘prisoner’s dilemma’ and ‘difficulty of identifying the moderates’ discussed above, enabling moderate actors to focus on bridging the ‘cognitive gaps’ separating them, perhaps thereby writing a more democratic constitution.

Finally, the AKP’s autonomy from hardliners is constrained by the secularism discussion and Turkey’s weak EU prospects. Whether or not suspicions over the AKP’s secular credentials are justified, these strengthen the secularist civil and military bureaucracy’s political status for major portions of the public, unless the AKP is checked and balanced by strong secularist political parties (Sommer, 2007a). Therefore, moderate–moderate cooperation may also require that the AKP’s secularist rivals recover from ideological fatigue and develop new democratic perspectives vis-à-vis the questions of secularism and Kurds.

Theoretical Implications

The simple definition of moderation suggested at the beginning, which focused on non-violence and openness to cooperation, is insufficient. The prisoner’s dilemma and three-dimensionality affecting the moderate-hardliner distinction in the Kurdish case suggest that credible moderation requires the satisfaction of three conditions given in Table 6.

First, to credibly denounce violence, moderate actors have to demonstrate that they can act autonomously from violent actors even when they maintain close links and share the same constituency. Second, known structures, such as EU relations and the status of pan-Kurdish nationalism, should indicate that a moderate actor has weak incentives to ‘defect’. Third, a moderate actor should show conceptual flexibility and inventiveness to be able to bridge cognitive gaps. The Scottish and British moderates satisfied all conditions. Kurdish-minority and Turkish-majority actors do not yet fully satisfy any, although they have shown significant progress in recent years.
Notes

I am grateful to Bernard Crick, David Miller, David McCrone, Eberhart Bort, Peride Kaleağası and Michael Keating for comments and to Tarhan Erdem for supply of data. A visiting research position in August–September 2006 at the Institute of Governance, University of Edinburgh, which was made possible by a Fellowship through the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA), greatly helped to develop the argument. The main argument of the article was presented at the 2007 World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, 12–14 April 2007. Osman Şahin provided excellent research assistance.

1. Throughout the article, the expression ‘Turkish-majority actor’ refers to actors who operate with a primarily Turkish or Turkish–Muslim political identity, even if these include both ethnic Turks and Kurds. The term ‘Kurdish-minority actors’ refers to actors who operate with a primarily Kurdish political identity, ‘as Kurds’, and who pursue interests expressed as ‘for Kurds’. Note that this terminological choice emphasizes the importance of cooperation with ‘primarily Kurdish’ political actors, the reasons for which will become clear later. Note also that in the Turkish language, and in legal, social and political usage, the term ‘Türk’ can have ethnically exclusive (meaning a Turkic or turcophone person, as in Azeri or Balkan Turks) and national-inclusive meanings (meaning the people of Turkey or Turkish nationals) depending on context. Socially, the latter category is much less easily ascribed to someone from a non-Muslim minority.

2. The terms ‘moderate’ and ‘hardliner’ are used descriptively, not normatively. The question of whether hardliner–hardliner cooperation is any more likely to bring peaceful reconciliation is not explored here.

3. The original report, questionnaires and some unpublished details were obtained from the Konda Research and Consultancy Company in Istanbul. The study was based on a Turkey-wide, representative sample of 47,958 adult respondents. Estimated population figures were then reached by adding the estimated figures of the non-adult population and by taking into account the higher fertility rates in heavily Kurdish regions. See also Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits (2002). We rely on polls and estimates because, since 1965, Turkish censuses do not include questions on ethnicity.

4. An example is the short-lived YDH (New Democracy Movement), founded by prominent businessmen and intellectuals, which received 0.5% of the vote in 1995.

5. Author’s interview with Professor Bernard Crick, September 2006.

6. Aforementioned interview with Professor Bernard Crick. Some Scots may dispute this interpretation.
8. Among others, the author’s interviews with academics and members of the Scottish Legislature in August–September 2006.
9. The author’s interviews with civil society actors in Diyarbakır, June 2006.
10. E.g. two major conferences on ‘the Kurdish question’ were held in March 2006 and January 2007 in Istanbul and Ankara, in respective order.
11. There may be constitutional and practical limits in democracies. Democracy requires statehood, which requires that democratic actors respect certain fundamental principles, such as the state’s territorial boundaries (see Linz and Stepan, 1996). However, these principles can be changed democratically in the long run.
12. The Kurdish moderates would choose to cooperate if \( r \cdot b \cdot SKM + (1-r) \cdot 0 > a \cdot SKM \), i.e. if \( r > a/b \).
13. With approximately one-and-a-half million, about 10% of people with a Kurdish background live in Istanbul (about 10% of the city’s population), making Istanbul the biggest ‘Kurdish’ city in the world (Milliyet-Konda, 2007).
14. This implies that social barriers before intermarriage are low, especially taking into account that the average ethnic Kurd is poorer than the average ethnic Turk.
15. Since the Hizbullah also targeted PKK supporters during the 1990s, it is thought to have been tolerated, if not used, by the Turkish security forces until a crackdown on the group in 2000.
16. Among others, see ‘Sanal’di, Gerçek Oldu’ (It was Fictitious, Now It is Real), *Milliyet*, 11 August 2005.
17. Among others, see ‘Ne Yazık ki Meydanlar Boştu’ (Too Bad That the Square was Empty), *Milliyet*, 13 August 2005.
18. The author’s interviews with DTP members and civil society actors in Diyarbakır, June 2006.
22. The author’s interviews with civil society members in Diyarbakır, June 2006.
24. In a survey conducted in February 2006 by the Infakto Research Workshop with the help of Istanbul Bilgi University, 70% of the respondents thought that what best defined ‘Turkishness’ was ‘being a Turkish citizen’. Only 11.7% thought that ‘having Turkish parents’ was important. Tempo (2006: 32). Respondents in the aforementioned Milliyet-Konda study believed that the most important prerequisite for Turkish citizenship should be Turkish patriotism (as stated in the questionnaire, ‘to love Turkey’). However, about 46% considered that Turkish ethnicity should be a prerequisite for being a Turkish citizen, which seems to contradict the responses to the previous question (Milliyet-Konda, 2007: 35–6).
25. Aforementioned interview with Elçi.
26. A graduate student administered the survey under the supervision of the author.
27. There have been fringe groups that advocated separatist violence, but violence has been negligible.
28. See also ‘Öcalan: T.C. Vatandaşlığımı Üst Kimlik Olarak Kabul Ediyoruz (We Accept Turkish Citizenship as an Overarching Identity)’, *Milliyet*, 6 December 2005.
29. National censuses in Turkey do not include questions on ethnicity. As an estimate, provinces where the Kurdish party won more than 10% of the vote were used in the calculation.

30. DEHAP, which withdrew in 2004, participated in the DTP’s foundation. As a result of a 10% national electoral threshold because of which the DEHAP could not win any seats in 2002, DTP candidates ran as independents in 2007.


32. Among others, see interview with Kurdish intellectual Altan Tan, Yeni Şafak, 26 November 2007.

33. Among others Neşet Düzel’s interview with former MP Hasim Hasimi, Radikal, 28 August 2006.


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