

Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925): The Controversy between Nationalist & Religious Motivations

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ABSTRACT: Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 is a complex issue in the history of the Kurdish issue, and nationalism studies. It was a large-scale rebellion of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey. The New regime i.e. the Republic, regarded the rebellion as a threat to the foundation of the new regime. Internal and external dynamics interact vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue, and influence the political agenda and Turkey's local and foreign policies. This paper, analytical in nature, adopts a qualitative methodology. The argument is whether the rebellion triggered because of political (nationalism) or religious dynamics. The religious perspective argued that the rebellion was a reaction to the collapse of the Caliphate, and the Kemalist reforms, on the other hand, the nationalist perspective explained the effect of Kurdish nationalism on the rebellion, and the aspiration to establish a free independent Kurdish state -an aspiration that jeopardizes Turkey's territorial integrity. Hence, the paper approaches the controversy between the nationalist and religious motivations of the rebellion. Britain, in quest of pursuing geopolitical interests in the region, supported Sheikh Said rebellion. Although the Kurdish national movement revived Kurdish nationalism in Turkey during this period, the rebellion of 1925 helped, unintentionally, the state consolidate Turkish nationalism.

KEYWORDS-Assimilation Policy, Kurdish Issue, Nationalism, New Regime, Sheikh Said Rebellion.

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I INTRODUCTION

Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 is considered the first large-scale rebellion against the newly proclaimed Republican regime founded in 1923 (Çoban & Yerlikaya, 2016). The rebellion, a reviving event of the 'Kurdish question' in Turkey, illustrates the possibility of a 'symbiotic' relationship between religion and nationalism (Olson, 1989). The rebellion started initially in Diyarbakır, Muş, Elazığ and Erzincan, and spread to Dersim, Mardin, Urfa, Siirt, Bitlis, Van, Hakkari and Erzurum.

The controversy of this rebellion pivots on whether it was led by religious or nationalist motivations. Different perspectives compete to define and give remedies (Houston, 2001, p. 95). The Islamic perspective is explained by the anger Kurdish people felt after the collapse of the Caliphate (3 March 1924), while the nationalist perspective claims that the Kurds wanted an independent state. This paper first explores the Kurdish issue, provides a background of the rebellion, and following that, it approaches its drives from the lenses of nationalism and religion, and the state policy in the aftermath of the rebellion.

II THE KURDISH ISSUE

Houston (2001) argues that different actors and institutions, depending on their modus operandi values, have different understanding of the Kurdish issue. This issue is multi-dimensional and therefore implies different policy approaches. The Kurdish issue, as expressed in the state discourse, was constituted in the "re-inscribing" and "problematizing" of three elements: first, Islam i.e. 'reactionary' politics to abolishing the Caliphate, second, tradition i.e. tribal resistance, and third, the periphery i.e. regional underdevelopment (Houston, 2001, p. 103). These components formed to a certain extent a 'constructed' Kurdish identity in people's minds over time.

According to Arakon (2014), the Kurdish societal structure was archaic and conservative, thus incompatible with the modern state. The new Republic [as discussed below] pursued radical reforms of the old system and assimilation policies. Ahmad (1993) writes: "Turkey was made in the image of the Kemalist elites whose primary aim was to reach the contemporary level of civilization by creating an independent nation-state, fostering industry and constructing a secular and modern national identity" (p. 31). On this account, the purpose of Atatürk's reforms was to "achieve unity and modernization by mobilizing people in Anatolia behind a territorial and civic-determined national identity" (Casier & Jongerden, 2011, p. 87).

III SHEIKH SAID REBELLION (FEBRUARY 1925): BACKGROUND

Before the Republic's formation in 1923, the Ottoman Caliphate united all people under the banner of Islam. Under the Ottoman rule, "ethnic and cultural diversities thrived by adopting a policy of recognition and toleration for other cultures" (Kucukcan, 2003, p. 481). The abolition of the Caliphate meant "loosening the important religious ties between the Muslim communities of the Kurds and the Turks" (Kastoryano, 2013, p. 145). Likewise, the abolition caused anger among the Islamists who strongly rejected the new state system based on the Western doctrines of republicanism, nationalism, and secularism. Under Atatürk's Republic, Islam was restricted to the private sphere. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, viewed the separation of religion and politics as "a prerequisite to opening the doors to Western values" (Kucukcan, 2003, p. 486). On this account, Islam, which served as a 'social glue' among diverse Muslim ethnicities, was replaced with secular Turkish nationalism in order to form a monolithic identity i.e. 'Turkishness' (Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2014).

The state-building process adopted by Atatürk is characterized by the following six fundamentals: (1) Republicanism; (2) Populism; (3) Secularism, (4) Reformism (Revolutionism); (5) Nationalism; (6) Statism (Ahmad, 1993). According to Ahmad (1993): "The meaning of 'Revolutionism/Reformism' was disputed in the Party [Republican People's Party], the moderates interpreting it as reformism, the radicals as revolutionism" (p. 63). These six principles launched the ideology of Kemalism. On 5 February 1937, these fundamentals were incorporated into the Constitution (Article 2) (Ahmad, 1993, p. 64). The 'radicals' considered these principles duplication of the Western principles in the Turkish milieu, and a painful rupture with the Ottoman heritage.

Accordingly, ethnic identification and frictions prepared the ground for the 1925's rebellion. The rebellion, led by the Azadi (the Kurdish Independent Society), began February 1925 in the Piran village, and was spread to Diyarbakır, Bingöl and Elazığ (Liquisearch 2016). According to Arakon (2014): "This was the first Kurdish revolt of the young Republic and, as Kurds 'did not exist' anymore, those who resisted the new regime were not presented as Kurds with an ethno-political cause, but as tribes and bandits who were threatened by the extent of modern state's power in the region" (p. 146).

It was reported that about 15000 fighters, from Zaza and Kurmanj, participated in the rebellion against more than 50,000 Turkish forces (Olson, 1989). According to Çoban & Yerlikaya (2016), Sheikh Said was a Sunni Kurdish leader. He was both an ardent Kurdish nationalist and a devout believer (Olson, 1989). Sheikh Said asked the Alevi Kurds' for support but they rejected to revolt against the Republican government as they thought they would be 'better off' in the secular regime, consequently, he decided to go with the Sunni Kurds (Olson, 1989). According to Saeed (2014), Sheikh Said received support from the Kurds living in the rural areas. On 23 February 1925, the government declared a one-month-long state of emergency in the rebellion territories (Özoğlu, 2009). The Turkish authorities crushed the rebellion with continual aerial bombardments and a massive concentration of forces (van Bruinessen, 1992). On 29 June 1925, Sheikh Said and the rebel leaders were hanged. The judges of two *istiklal mahkemesi* (Independence Courts), in compliance with *Takrir-i Sükun* (Law on the Maintenance Order, enacted on 4 March 1925), decided the death penalty for 47 insurgents with Sheikh Said (Özoğlu, 2009; Kastoryano, 2013; Çoban & Yerlikaya, 2016). According to Kastoryano (2013), the regime manipulated the rebellion to invoke a state of exception based on the need to preserve the new regime (p. 145). In addition, as part of the state policies on internal displacement, the government decided to displace and resettle Kurds who joined the 1925 rebellion to western Turkey. According to 'Law 1204', titled 'Law concerning persons being moved from the East to the West' (*Resmi Gazete 1927*), 1500 persons and 80 families were displacement (Casier & Jongerden, 2011). Gunes and Zeydanlioglu (2014) argue that the policy of displacement and resettlement aimed to "weaken their social cohesion" (p. 10). The government closed down all the nationwide offices belonging to the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) [the opposition party to the Republican regime], yet, the Party's members continued to vote as a block in parliament. Nevertheless, the Party ceased operation on 3 June 1925, based on a decree signed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha (the President), İsmet Pasha (the Prime Minister), and six other ministers of the government (Özoğlu, 2009). According to the decree:

"...a number of persons holding official functions within the Progressive Republican Party in the İstanbul area have used the principle of respect for religious opinions and beliefs, included in the party's program, as a means to deceive public opinion and to stimulate religious incitement... Official representatives of the Progressive Republican Party have used the principle of respect for religious ideas and beliefs, included in the party program, as a means to gain support for the propaganda of reactionaries who pretend to save the country from atheists and that this has led to many serious incidents during the manifestations of the latest [Sheikh Said] insurrection. [...] Under these circumstances, it is impossible to allow a movement aimed at the use of religion for political purposes to exist" (Özoğlu, 2009, p. 206). The opponents claimed that the PRP was "manipulating religion for the purpose of gaining political power and registering members based on the claim that their party respected religion while the government party did not" (Özoğlu, 2009, p. 200). However, the decision was considered as a contradiction to the new regime's desire for democracy.

Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925, as this paper argues, is being approached from two perspectives. From the lens of the religious aspect, the rebellion is viewed as polarization between the Islamists and the Secularists in the new state order, while the nationalist aspect sees the rebellion as polarization between the ‘Turkishness’ and the ‘Kurdishness’ in Turkey, and a fight for separatism.

IV SHEIKH SAID REBELLION: FROM THE LENS OF NATIONALIST MOTIVATIONS

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds were promised to have their own state alongside the other nations in the region. However, that promise failed to materialize (Saeed, 2014, p. 29). The Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) foresaw the founding of a new state called ‘Kurdistan’ (Article 64), and the Kurds saw a possibility of ‘self-determination’ (Petrucciano, 2014). However, the Treaty was a failure *vis-à-vis* the Kurdish vision, and eventually caused further burden on the Ottoman State. The status quo during the 1920s has left the Kurds with no political status.

It is contended that the nationalist perspective is fueled by both rising Kurdish nationalism and feeling of ‘threat’ by the new Republic after signing Lausanne Treaty (24 July 1923), where the issue of Mosul between Turkey and Britain persisted. Following the League of Nations’ proposal, the people of the region (mainly Kurds) voted to belong to Turkey because of the common history and culture. However, Britain, in order to pursue its strategic interests in the region, supported the rebellion by making the Kurds its potential allies. It supplied weapons to defeat Turkey in Mosul. During the early days of the rebellion, Sheikh Said received weapons from British factories (Akyol, 2006). It [Britain] has also used the League as an ‘instrument’ of its foreign policy (Olson, 1989). The French High Commissioner in Baghdad sent a report to Paris stating: “Sheikh Said aimed to establish a Kurdish State under the British mandate since 1918, and the Kurdish rebellion could not have exploded at a better time for the British. The rebellion will prove to the commission investigating the Turkish claims on Mosul that Turks are unable to establish peace even among Kurds living in their country” (Akyol, 2006, pp. 62-63).

According to the Kurdish nationalism thesis, the real objective of Sheikh Said was to establish a Kurdish State (Çoban & Yerlikaya, 2016). The rebellion symbolized the Kurdish struggle for an independent state (Özoğlu, 2009). It is worth mentioning that an independent state does not mean that the Kurds wanted to separate from Turkey. According to Beşikçi (n.d), the most important aim of a democratic autonomy is living with the Turks in a ‘common homeland’ i.e. Turkey.

Olson (2000) believes that the rebellion of 1925 helped the state consolidate Turkish nationalism, and depress Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. According to him: “The country used air power primarily to secure control of eastern Turkey and to crush Kurdish nationalism” (p. 92). Sheikh Said rebellion was a large military operation because the Kurds were the “largest, most nationalist, and most rebellious minority population in the newly proclaimed Republic” (Olson, 2000, p. 74). The Kurdish nationalist cause was exploited by the powerful actors, within and outside the region, for manipulation and *Realpolitik* purposes (Olson, 1989). Furthermore, the rebellion supported the state’s persuasive nationalist discourse.

Although the work of Olson (1989) states that Kurds nationalism and religion became intertwined, he believes that Sheikh Said led a nationalist rebellion with a religious mobilization and cover. Hence, the nationalist motivations prevailed in the rebellion, and were more significant than the religious factors. Nevertheless, and in order to lead an effective uprising, the Azadi attached a religious character. The dissemination of the Kurdish national identity and ideas was achievable because of the Sheikh’s position among the masses, and his strong resistance to the secularism associated with the Young Turks (*Jeunes Turcs*) and the Kemalist reforms. Likewise, Bozarslan (1986) sees that the nationalist factors in the rebellion outstripped the religious ones. Nevertheless, they do not hide the religious characters. Van Bruinessen (1992) believes that the main aim of Sheikh Said and the Azadi nationalists was the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. To him, the rebellion is neither a purely religious nor a purely nationalist one, but a synthesis of both factors (van Bruinessen 1992).

Bayrak (2013) builds his argument about the nationalist character of Sheikh Said Rebellion based on the following:

- 1) Many evidences support the thesis that the rebellion was influenced by Kurdish nationalism factors;
- 2) There was a strong agreement between Sheikh Abdulkader, one of the main Kurdish nationalist leaders, and Sheikh Said, and religious motivations did influence, to some extent, the decision-making;
- 3) Religious speech was a means to motivate people. Religion was a cover ‘*perde*’ rather than an end to reach the goal ‘*amaç*’ of independence;
- 4) The rebellion aimed to improve the situation of the Kurds in an independent Kurdistan.

V SHEIKH SAID REBELLION: FROM THE LENS OF RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS

In order to mislead his captors, Sheikh Said stated that the rebellion was lead by religious motivations (Olsun, 2000). On 14 February 1925, Sheikh Said issued a Fatwa stating that he was the representative of the

Caliph and of Islam. Declaring himself as a Mujahid, he assumed full leadership of the rebellion (Olson, 1989). Mumcu and Kalafat (1992) argue that Sheikh Said rebellion was an Islamist reactionary movement. Mumcu (1992) describes the rebellion as an Islamist rebellion. According to Kalafat (1992): “[the rebellion] a backward looking, anti-democratic, anti-Republican, theocratic, anti-Atatürk, anti-revolutionary movement, that wanted to reestablish the Sultanate and the Caliphate”(p. 321). On this account, the new regime treated the rebellion as a religious revolt to justify its reforms and actions against the conventional place of Islam in the society (Saeed, 2014).

The dilemma between the religious and the political paradigms during this period has structured a positivist attitude vis-à-vis state ideology. The new system of governance and the Western legal order adopted created an imbalance between modern Turkey and the old regime. While the modernists called for a radical modernization project, the conservatives still defended a sociopolitical regime based on *Shariah* (Islamic rule of law). Çoban and Yerlikaya (2016) highlight the major state’s measures following the secularization project. These included, among others:

- The total abolition of the Caliphate (3rd March 1924) [Dark day for the Ummah];
- The abolition of the office of *Seyhülislam* (Islamic ruler) and the religious hierarchy;
- The closing and confiscation of the dervish lodges, meeting places and monasteries, and the outlawing of their rituals and meetings;
- The closing of the *Shariah* Courts and *Medrese* (religious institutions and schools);
- The establishment of the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs) in 1924 (Article 136 of the Constitution), and the government’s total control of *Evkaf* (endowments);
- The endorsement of *Takrir-i Sükun* (Law on the Maintenance of Order) and *istiklal mahkemesi* (independence tribunals) in the southeast and the rest of Turkey, to suppress opposition.
- The adoption of the European civil, commercial and penal codes. The Swiss Civil Code was adopted as a substitute for *Seriat Kanunu* (Canonical Law) and the Italian Penal Code instead of the penal code;
- The adoption of *Türk Medeni Kanunu* (Turkish Civil Code) in 1926. The code ended Islamic polygamy, gave equal rights to women in divorce, custody and inheritance, and introduced civil marriage.
- The replacement of *Hicri* (Islamic) and solar calendars by the Western one, and the Arabic alphabets by the Latin ones;
- In 1932, *adan* (the call for Muslim Prayer) changed from Arabic to Turkish, and three years later, Sunday was declared as the weekly day-off, instead of Friday.
- The outlawing and discouragement of the traditional and religious clothing ‘*kifayet inkilabi*’ (dress revolution); e.g. *fez* (Ottoman hat) for men, the veil for women, and grab for the local religious leaders.
- The institution of National societies to study Turkish history (1931) and Turkish language (1932).
- The creation of *Halk odalari* (People’s Rooms) (1939-1950) in the villages and provincial towns, to instill ‘republican modernity’ through arts and education.

The Kurds were divided in response to the abolition of the Caliphate, and the proclamation of the Republic. While the Alevi Kurds from the Lolan and Khormek tribes were in favor of a secular Republic, and fought the insurgents in support to the government, the Kurdish nationalist party *Azadi* (Freedom Society) led by Sheikh Said rebelled (Ali, 1992; Kastoryano, 2013; Çoban & Yerlikaya, 2016). Thus, the nation building process i.e. the transition from an Islamic-based system to a Western-oriented secular regime and the radical reforms that followed, was met with strong resistance. Likewise, the thesis of assimilation was rejected by the ‘minorities’ as it neglected the rights of pluralism and diversity inside the new Republic. This rebellion was a serious attempt for Kurdish people to revive the Islamic Caliphate System (Çoban & Yerlikaya, 2016). The religious motivation vis-à-vis the rebellion shown that the loyalty to the state became exclusively the source of political legitimacy (Kucukcan, 2003). Thus, the new regime acquired political legitimacy on the basis of a ‘national identity’. Çoban and Yerlikaya (2016) assert: “... the transition to the secular order facilitated with the abolition of the Caliphate, the exploitation of religion was denied against revolutions, the government had the opportunity to follow a more independent foreign policy... concept of National Sovereignty had been strengthened... the power of the Ottoman legacy and loyalty had gone” (p.5).

To sum up, Islam has profound roots in the Turkish society despite the sweeping change in the country. It is one if not the major identity reference in Turkey, and it continues to be an effective social reality of the Turkish society (Kucukcan, 2003).

VI THE STATE’S REACTION IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE REBELLION

After the defeat of Sheikh Said, İsmet İnönü, Turkey’s second president, made the following speech (April 1925): “We are frankly [...] nationalists and nationalism is our only factor of cohesion... Our duty is to Turkify non-Turks in the Turkish homeland no matter what happens. We will annihilate those elements that oppose Turks and Turkism. What we are looking for in those who are to serve the country is above all that they

are Turkish and Turkist” (Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2014, p. 8).

After the crushing of the Dersim rebellion in 1938, Atatürk gave a speech announcing the following: “We have not allowed and will not allow any possibility that might create an obstacle able to prevent our nation from achieving the highest level of civilization and happiness that it merits” (Olson, 2000, p. 94).

There was an implicit reference to the rebellion(s) led by the ‘anti-Kemalists’ who opposed the ‘republican model’. The state used its political legitimacy and smart power to crash the rebellious forces. Likewise, it adopted a political discourse based in essence on Turkish nationalism. Kurdish nationalism was portrayed as anti-republicanism and anti-nationalism.

VII THE REPUBLICAN REGIME AND THE ASSIMILATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and abolishing the Caliphate system, the new emerging Turkish Republic encountered political and socio-economic issues. To integrate the Turkish society, the government pursued a top-down assimilation policy towards ‘ethnic minorities’ (Gunes, 2012). According to Arakon (2014), there are three elements to understand the assimilation policy implemented towards the Kurds during this period:

1. The fragmentation of the millet system: The Ottomans embraced the legacy of ‘the millet system’ to consolidate the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious aspects of the local society. Despite peoples’ religious confessions or ethnic roots, they all belonged to the same community. According to Kucukcan (2003): “The millet system has been an important administrative apparatus to nurture and sustain the multicultural and multi-religious nature of society throughout Ottoman history” (p. 482). This system guaranteed privileges of the religious communities, and virtual autonomy in cultural and educational affairs (Ahmad, 1993). Under the millet system “each religious community maintained its own courts, judges, and legal principles for the use of coreligionists” (Kucukcan, 2003, p. 475). Thus, the system integrated these communities into the Ottoman administrative, economic and political system (Kucukcan, 2003). The fall of the Ottoman Empire raised fears among the national leaders of societal fragmentation, rising nationalism and demands of different groups. Oran (1997) states: “The rapid fragmentation and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire instilled fear in the founders of the Turkish Republic that different groups would demand further fragmentation, leaving no land for the “Turkish” people.”(p.491).

2. Rising nationalism: In the interwar period, nationalism rose in the emerging nation-state system. Nationalism spread in European countries such as Spain, Italy, and Germany, in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The Republic felt that the spread of nationalism among the Kurdish population would enforce fragmentation and separatism from the state.

The Republican state, based on popular sovereignty, adopted an exclusionary behavior towards the Kurds. Houston (2001) asserts: “The state has often treated those Kurds living within its sovereign domain as a fifth column needing to be closely supervised for recidivist separatist tendencies” (p. 99).

When the Caliphate was abolished, the government passed a decree to ban any Kurdish school, association and publication (Houston, 2001). Although the state authorities argued that this ban is part of the assimilation policy, and supported it by the ethnographic and linguistic thesis stating that “the Kurds are Turkish anyway”, and “the integration into the larger community of Turks” (Houston, 2001). The Kurds saw the ban as a threat to their Kurdish identity. Eventually, in the 1980s, the Kurdish identity was revived, and became ‘card’ in the hand of local and foreign actors to pressure the Turkish government in recognizing the Kurds’ cultural rights. In that regard, rising nationalism ‘politicized’ the Kurdish identity.

3. Turkification: *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (The Committee of Union and Progress) pursued “Turkification” policies (assimilation of non-Turks) as part of the country’s homogenization. These policies promoted the Turkish identity for the nation building. They placed exclusive emphasis on the Turkish population homogeneity and culture. The emerging cultural identity denied the right to cultural difference, and on the acceptance of the Turkish cultural identity. Symbols and slogans of Turkish nationalism were disseminated in schools, learning to speak Turkish language among the Kurds was encouraged, names and surnames were Turkified (the Surname Law of 1934), etc. (Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2014).

Assimilation was an imposed policy on minorities including the Kurds, and Turkification compromised every aspect of life, from education to the economy. According to Arakon (2014): “Turning Kurds into Turks was portrayed as a civilizing mission to eradicate tribalism and feudalism. Between 1925 and 1938, tens of thousands of Kurds and Aevis were deported to Western Turkey” (p.147). Nevertheless, the assimilation policy could not effectively contain the Kurdish search for recognition in the new regime (Aragon, 2014). Gunes & Zeydanlioglu (2014) state that the Turkification policy, although it assimilated millions of Kurds into the mainstream Turkish society, it caused the politicization and radicalization of millions in defense of their political,

linguistic and cultural rights. According to Gunes (2012), the modernization and assimilation policies the state pursued from the 1920s and 1930s onwards brought the Kurds into conflict with the authorities. The Turkification policies led the Kurdish elites to establish new Kurdish nationalist newspapers, societies, and committees after World War I. The Kurdish demands for the recognition of their national and cultural rights were unachievable though.

On the other hand, *RefahPartisi* (Welfare Party) and Turgut Özal's policies of integration supported a unified Turkey, and stressed on the Islamic identity. Nevertheless, the military rule challenged the political will. For instance, when Necmettin Erbakan expressed his will to go into direct negotiations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) -listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union and the United States-, the military revoked and vetoed his decision. To sum up, the Kurdish issue remains a perpetual aspect of Turkey's politics (Gunes, 2012), and a challenge to the future of Turkey (Lesser, 1997).

VIII. CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 remains a debatable issue in the history of modern Turkey. Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925, according to Olson (1989), left a legacy of 'bitterness, mistrust and suspicion'. The Kurdish struggle is framed as a matter of security and resistance. Although the pre-Republic period was marked by an overt acceptance of the Kurdish ethnicity, and an inclusive approach to 'politics of recognition' of the Kurds' political and cultural rights, the 'politics of reforms' replaced the 'politics of recognition' following the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The literature reviewed in this paper and narratives about the rebellion's motivations fall in two perspectives. While the religious perspective argued that the rebellion was a reaction to the collapse of the Caliphate, and the Kemalist reforms, the nationalist perspective reflected the effect of Kurdish nationalism on the rebellion, and the aspiration to establish a free independent Kurdish state -an aspiration that jeopardizes Turkey's territorial integrity. The rebellion opens up discussions on the state's policy towards the Kurdish issue, and to what extent it impacts the internal and foreign policies of Turkey. Besides, local players such as the PKK's call for an 'independent Kurdish state within Turkey' (BBC, 2016), the regional dynamics i.e. Kurdistan which brought political, legal, and psychological power to the Kurds of the region, and international actors (the Kurdish lobby) imply divergence and fragmentation by 'politicizing' the Kurdish identity and causing social disorder in the country. Accordingly, any policy engagement and national consensus with respect to this issue should be pursued to maintain Turkey's national stability and territorial integrity.

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