



# **The Role of Language, Identity and the Media in Conflict Resolution**

Roundtable Meeting, Istanbul, Turkey  
8th November 2014

Democratic  
Progress  
Institute



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Democratic  
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 Istanbul  
Bilgi Üniversitesi  
LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES  
**secbir**  
Center for  
Sociology and Education  
Studies

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# Forewords

## **Foreword by Istanbul Bilgi University's Centre for Sociology and Education Studies**

Founded in November 2010, the Centre for Sociology and Education Studies works on social issues in Turkey ranging from different areas of discrimination (including discrimination based on language and ethnicity) to human rights and social justice. Studies conducted by the Centre include, but are not limited to, providing consultancy to governmental and non-governmental organisations, developing teaching materials on relevant topics, and empowering teachers. The Centre aims to increase information and knowledge sharing between school teachers and academics by acting as a bridge between the two fields. It develops materials on how to deal with concepts such as identity, multilingual education, discrimination, democracy, citizenship, poverty, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity in primary and secondary schools, as well as arranging educational seminars and conducting field research in schools on these issues.

The Centre for Sociology and Education Studies collaborates with different institutions and stakeholders to realise its aims. In this regard, the roundtable meeting on November 8th 2014, organised by the Centre and the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) brought together several national and international academics, experts, journalists and specialised educationalists and provided ground to

reflect on the role of language, identity and the media in conflict resolution. The meeting has been an important contribution to debates on mother-tongue education in the political context of Turkey, where the demand for mother tongue education is fruitlessly discussed in nationalistic terms, mainly in respect of its potential to divide Turkey. We believe that mother-tongue-based multilingual education is not a technical issue which can be reduced to the utilisation of yet another language in education. Rather, it needs to be considered within the context of the reconstruction of a pluralist, socially just and equal society. It is, therefore, crucial to see the issues related to mother-tongue-based multilingual education from the social justice perspective, which calls for an inclusive conception whereby all the languages spoken in the country find place. This, arguably, is the basic prerequisite of equal citizenship. We hereby hope that this report which is the outcome of a roundtable discussion among different stakeholders will contribute to re-imagining alternative education practices.



Kenan Çayır

**Director**

*Centre for Sociology and Education Studies*

## **Foreword by the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI)**

This report details the discussion that took place during the Democratic Progress Institute's roundtable meeting in Istanbul, Turkey on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2014, regarding the role of language, identity and the media in conflict resolution, which took place in partnership with İstanbul Bilgi University. Language and identity are root causes of many conflicts globally, but also play an important role in peace building and democratic advancement at local, national and international levels. This roundtable meeting examined the role of language, media and identity in conflict, the challenges of implementing linguistic diversity, and the politics of language and mother tongue education. We hope that this record of the discussions that took place in Istanbul will encourage further dialogue on the role of language, media and identity in different conflict resolution processes.

DPI aims to create and foster an environment in which different parties share information, ideas, knowledge and concerns connected to the development of democratic solutions and outcomes. Our work supports the development of a pluralistic political arena capable of generating consensus and ownership over work on key issues surrounding democratic solutions at political and local levels.

We focus on providing expertise and practical frameworks to encourage stronger public debates and involvements in promoting peace and democracy building internationally. Within this context

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DPI aims to contribute to the establishment of a structured public dialogue on peace and democratic advancement, as well as to create new and widen existing platforms for discussions on peace and democracy building. In order to achieve this we seek to encourage an environment of inclusive, frank, structured discussions whereby different parties are in the position to openly share knowledge, concerns and suggestions for democracy building and strengthening across multiple levels. Our objective throughout this process is to identify common priorities and develop innovative approaches to participate in and influence the process of finding democratic solutions. DPI also aims to support and strengthen collaboration between academics, civil society and policy-makers through its projects and output.

This report was prepared with the kind assistance of Eugénie McLachlan.



Kerim Yildiz

**Director**

*Democratic Progress Institute*

# Roundtable Meeting: The Role of Language, Identity and the Media in Conflict Resolution

Istanbul, Turkey

8<sup>th</sup> November 2014



## *Participants from the roundtable meeting in front of Bilgi University, İstanbul*

*Neşe Akkerman; Gülçin Auşar; Müge Ayan; Batuhan Aydagül; Önder Bayındır;  
Tahir Baykeşak; Ali Bayramođlu; Nurcan Baysal; Şah İsmail Bedirhanođlu; Raci Bilici;  
İsmail Avcı Bucaklışı; Cansu Camlibel; Necip Çapraz; Kenan Çayır; Tarık Çelenk;  
Zafer Çelik; Didier Chassot; Vahap Çoşkun; Betül Döğun; Esra Elmas; Yılmaz Ensarođlu;  
Fazıl Husnu Erdem; David Harland; İttr Erhart Hrant; Bahar Fırat; Özge Genç;  
Canan Gündüz; Ayhan Işık; Eleanor Johnson; Karın Karakaslı; İdris Kardaş; Nurcan Kaya;  
Gülay Kayacan; Ferhat Kentel; Ohannes Kılıçdađı; Dilara Koçbaş; Joost Lagendijk;  
Bejan Matur; Ronayi Önen; M. İdil Özkan; Nazan Haydari Pakkan; Afık Pamuk;  
Remzi Sanver; Uğur Sevgili; Ceren Sözeri; Tuğba Tekerek; Ned Thomas; Aslı Tunç;  
Kelemet Çiğdem Türk; Aydın Uğur; Catriona Vine; H.E. Brendan Ward; Catherine;  
Kerim Yıldız; Sevtap Yokuş; Sedat Yurtdaş*

## Welcome Address by M. Remzi Sanver<sup>1</sup>



**M. Remzi Sanver:** I would like to welcome you to this roundtable meeting on the role of language, identity and the media in conflict resolution, organised by the Democratic Progress Institute and İstanbul Bilgi University's Centre for Sociology and Educational Studies. We are extremely proud to be hosting such a high level meeting on this very important subject at Bilgi.

Identity undoubtedly plays a very important role in solving problems of language and media. Societies who cannot speak out, and cannot communicate with each other will be creating a world for themselves which is full of fear. We live in a century where the world is getting smaller, and every society and economy interacts with each other, is bound to each other and needs each other. It is very important to create productive platforms to promote reconciliation, dialogue and the exchange of views in such periods. We have witnessed how even the traditional bodies that have existed for a long time are feeling the need for consultations with others.

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<sup>1</sup> *M. Remzi Sanver is the Rector of Bilgi University.*

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As a society, Turkey is constructed of separate compartments. People and institutions that exist side by side live their lives without knowing much about each other's. The Ottoman System was in fact based on a structure that supported society living in distinct categories. Our search for a more transparent, more open and more equal society since the Tanzimat Period (Ottoman Administrative Reform Period) has not been able to wholly remove such a compartmentalised structure. Even the desire to create an ordinary citizen could not create a system that shows clemency to details, differences and authentic identities. Maybe similar problems have been created in the construction of all nation states.

The problem in today's world with the development of information technology is not about being unable to access information but the overload of information instead. There is an explosion of information, and a contamination of information. Gaining the necessary qualities is not enough to overcome this, instead the system to eliminate inequalities has to be created. Another aspect is how the world has grown smaller since the end of the cold war and societies are reacting against authoritarian regimes. There is an eagerness for pluralism, participatory, transparent, accountable and open regimes. Societies in such regimes increasingly consult with each other at different levels. Relationships between the governments and official institutions are not sufficient in this world, in light of the speed of the events taking place. This new area has already been institutionalised under the name of public diplomacy anyway.

Secondly, this matter cannot be handled only through foreign relations; rather it should be handled from a wide perspective and through interdisciplinary methods. Reclaiming the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be produced through in-depth academic research conducted in different sizes. For the

past 20 years, significant progress has been made in this field, and we are trying to keep up with the changing world.

The third thing I would like to mention is basically repeating a reiteration of a determination made a while back: non-state actors, not just states, can play an important role in influencing leaders. For example, Doctors Without Borders has become a more trusted source of information for the public than official government statements. Such organisations that receive international funding can play an extremely important role in international relations. Helsinki Citizen's Assemblies can fit in such scope as well. Therefore international relations has become an area where many different organisations are active now, and some of the UN agencies, independent organisations and universities are also playing an important role in this development.

This is a very timely and valuable meeting and I would like to thank those who organised it, as well as all the participants. I wish every success to this activity and its speakers and welcome you to Bilgi University.



*DPI Director Kerim Yildiz and His Excellency Ambassador Brendan Ward  
of the Irish Embassy in Turkey*

## Introduction by Catriona Vine <sup>2</sup>



*Catriona Vine at the November Roundtable meeting*

**Catriona Vine:** Welcome to you all and thank you on behalf of DPI for attending this roundtable. We have distinguished participants from across Turkey, as well as a number of representatives from the international community. I look forward to a productive meeting and I would specifically like to thank Bilgi University, especially the Rector and the Dean, for their partnership in putting together this roundtable.

Before I go on to talk about the subject of this meeting, I would like to commence by giving a brief overview of Democratic Progress Institute, or DPI. We are based in London, the United Kingdom, and we were established in consultation with group of international experts in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

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<sup>2</sup> *Catriona Vine is the Deputy Director and Director of Programmes at the Democratic Progress Institute and an active barrister. She has practiced criminal, public and human rights law in the UK and internationally, and has extensive experience working with governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organisations.*

We work with a number of countries, one of which is Turkey. Our Turkey programme seeks to ensure democratic measures and the peaceful resolution of conflict. This process involves a combination of research and practical engagement to broaden support and strengthen cooperation between key stakeholders in the conflict, including members of parliament, policy makers and civil society. Our aim is to involve these constituencies in establishing a structured public dialogue on peace and democracy building. Our work incorporates research on a wide range of strategic development topics – freedom of expression and association; cultural and language rights; political participation and representation; gender; access to justice; and transitional justice, including truth commissions, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform.

We aim to create an atmosphere where the different parties and actors are able to meet from Turkey and abroad to draw on comparative studies, as well as analyse various mechanisms that can produce positive results in similar cases. Whilst no two conflicts are the same, and the solution for Turkey will be unique, we work on the premise that it is important to learn from the successes and failures of other countries. We have completed a number of comparative studies involving participants from Turkey, including visits to South Africa, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and future comparative studies will include the Philippines, South Africa, North America, South Asia and Europe. These studies cover the themes that I have already outlined. We have also completed a number of roundtable meetings – both in Turkey and abroad – focusing on the key issues mentioned. Our roundtable meetings are built on the comparative studies. The reports and transcripts of these roundtable meetings and comparative studies are all available on our website, in both English and Turkish.

Turning then to the purpose of this roundtable: the role of language, identity and media in conflict resolution. Questions on language and identity have traditionally been involved in the root causes of many conflicts throughout the world and are invaluable to the case here in Turkey. This roundtable builds on the outcome of the DPI comparative study visit to Wales in January of this year. During the visit, the group, which comprised civil society, academics and government officials from Turkey, explored issues relating to the promotion of Welsh language in Wales and the United Kingdom and examined the structures and systems that have been put in place to help promote the use of the language in everyday life. During the visit, participants agreed that further work by DPI on the issue was necessary, and that a roundtable such as this one should be organised. Through this roundtable we hope to examine the key challenges faced today in relation to implementing linguistic diversity and addressing issues such as language, culture and identity in the context of international observance of the law; the relationship between language, identity, the media and civil society; how can we legitimise and institutionalise minority languages in civil society; the relationship between language, identity and media; and the politics of language and identity and how can these be depoliticised. This roundtable and these subjects are part of a long-term DPI programme on language and identity and the discussions that we have here today will be put in the context of future activities in this area.

I would like to move to this morning's first panel session, and before I introduce our first speaker, I would like to extend the apologies of Sir Kieran Prendergast who unfortunately is not able to be with us today, as he has taken ill and is unable to travel. He sends his apologies. We do, however, have two very distinguished speakers. The first speaker is David Harland, former director of the Europe and Latin American division of

the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, former senior policy adviser to the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs and Political Adviser to the Commander of the UN Protection force and former head of UN Civil Affairs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He is a widely published author on issues of conflict and international relations. He is currently Chief Executive Officer for the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. David will focus on issues of media and identity, specifically looking at the case of the Balkans and drawing on his UN experience there.

## SESSION ONE:

Speaker: David Harland<sup>3</sup>



*David Harland speaking with professor Ned Thomas at the Language Roundtable*

**David Harland:** I will start by saying who I am not, and what I will not speak about. Firstly, I am not Sir Kieran Prendergast, for which I apologise. Sir Kieran has come down with bronchitis, which is regretful as he is the perfect illustration of the point I wish to make today. I am going to make a few well-known arguments about complex identity, and Sir Kieran is a man whose identity cannot be expressed or captured in a single word. When he was the United Kingdom ambassador to Turkey, he was always introduced in Turkish as the English ambassador, and he had to explain continually that he was not actually English. He is in fact a Catholic Irish, but is closer to a Unionist than a Republican. He was born in Scotland, but has no Scottish connection beyond that. He has lived a very complicated identity, with which he is comfortable. He is a great fan of the Democratic Progress Institute.

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<sup>3</sup> *David Harland is the Chief Executive of the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. He is former director of the Europe and Latin American division of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and former senior policy advisor to the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs. He was Political Advisor to the Commander of the UN Protection Force and former head of the UN Civil Affairs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.*

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I would also like to thank the Democratic Progress Institute. Kerim, whom I know in other contexts, has devoted his life to the dignity of the individual, and it is truly a great honour to be here.

What I am not going to talk about is language rights. In fact, I am not going to talk about minority languages at all. What I am going to talk about is identity and political dysfunction, and the role that language plays in that. This applies equally to both majority and minority languages.

I want to make a proposition that is quite widely accepted in some quarters: resilient societies embrace pluralism and complex identities, and it is the absence of these pluralistic and complex identities that creates a brittle society. This has become more problematic in the modern age, due to the rising tide of violence and the great pace of change, which is causing peoples' lines of identity to morph quickly. To support that contention, and to reach my conclusion that the path to disaster or the path to positively embracing pluralism and complex identity is through conscious political support, I would like to give two examples, one extremely negative and one extremely positive. The first of these is Bosnia, which is an example of a country that has entered into downward spiral of hatred and division. The other is Tunisia, which has been confronted with a similar set of issues – not identity politics, but political divisions – and has consciously taken a separate set of decisions that have taken the country in a completely different direction. Both of these cases have something to speak about to the audience in their different ways.

About twenty years ago, I was driving in eastern Bosnia when I came across a cement building in the middle of the field, in a place called Kravica. It had been an agricultural warehouse. One door was knocked down in the cement wall, and I walked through. On all four walls, the floor and

the ceiling, human remains were smeared. The bodies themselves had been removed, leaving only the macabre paintwork. This was a colossal monument to hatred. I walked outside, feeling dazed, and asked an elderly lady what happened here. She replied, “Well, they were Turks.” It transpired that seven hundred people had been forced into this building following the fall of Srebrenica and were killed with grenades and other explosive devices fired through the window. However, this colossal crime and monument to hatred had no emotional resonance with the other community. I spent a further year in the area as part of an investigation and this continued to be apparent to me. This monument has four dimensions, which are highly relevant far beyond Srebrenica and Bosnia. The first is that this demonization of the other Bosnian communities is insane. The second is that it is recent, artificial and deliberately engineered through language. The third is that it is fed by business and political elites who benefit handsomely from the hatred that is spread the media and the active control of vocabulary to describe the political context. Fourth, it is enabled by a cooperative media, particularly television companies.

The insanity was almost clinical. The division of the three Bosnian communities – the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats - does not have a rational dimension. If you brought them together in a room like this, they would not know who was Bosniak, Serb or Croat, but they would know that many of them would kill if encountering the other. When you ask them what it is that they hate about the other communities, it is extremely difficult to get an answer. In a chapter in ‘Civilization and Its Discontents,’ Freud writes about the ‘narcissism of minor differences,’ stating that Balkan people seem to have perfected the art of hating people almost identical to themselves. He assumed that it was a form of self-hatred – nobody in Bosnia is prejudiced against people from Africa or Asia, rather they are prejudiced against people who are indistinguishable

from themselves until their names or religions are revealed. So, the first dimension is that there is an element of absolute irrationality.

The second dimension is that it is recent, artificial and deliberately engineered. All of the communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and therefore most foreign commentators, are now content with the idea that there are three communities, which have been in eternal violent conflict with each other. However, there is no historical evidence for this, and it is completely untrue.

The third proposition is that this hatred is fed by political and business elites who benefit handsomely from it. There are currently two dominant political personalities in Bosnia – Dodik for the Serbs and Izetbegović for the Bosniaks. Each of them requires the other and deliberately delivers a message that frightens the others' community, thereby making the other the only possible electoral alternative. Their messages of hate are absolutely necessary to their own political success. As a result, their interpersonal relations are excellent.

The fourth point that I want to make is that this is enabled by the media, which is a mixture of both entertainment and the delivery of a message of fear. The vehicle for hatred is fear, and these messages of hatred rest on three pillars – vocabulary; the characterisation of the other; and the historical narrative of the country in which they live.

There is no shared vocabulary to discuss the trauma that the country lived through from 1992 to 1995. This is not entirely the Serbs fault, or a unidirectional problem. In Bosniak media, for example, the only words used to characterise the events of 1992 to 1995 is “invasion” or “genocide.” The Serbs, in return, point to how the Bosniaks always refer

to war with the Serbs as an invasion by the Serbs, claiming that the Serbs are foreign. However, the Serbs argue that their community arrived first and that the country's Orthodox Christian community is far older than the Muslim community. Each side has perfected the art of characterising in its vocabulary a narrative that makes a rational discussion about political space impossible. The communities' framing in language of the political disputes does not agree, which does not allow for any reasonable discussion that does not result in abuse or violence. There is no common agreement on very basic questions: Is there a country called Bosnia? Are there people called Bosniaks? (A majority of the population of Bosnia would say that there are no such people as Bosniaks). Can Bosniaks be described as a community in the sense of political discourse? Is there a Bosnian language? What you call the language you speak is very important. According to the constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are three official languages: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. But the communities speak the same language. There are some regional differences and accents, but no linguist would agree that three separate languages are spoken in the country. However, this was written into the constitution at the insistence of the political elite. Without any ground rules about vocabulary and the characterisation of events, it is impossible to have a civil discourse about the political challenges of identity that the country faces.

A more difficult challenge is the narrative of history. Both sides are obsessed with history, and it is constantly mentioned by the media. Both sides also have mirror images of the basic idea that a quiet, stealthy, conspiratorial and deadly plot is being organised within the other community to exterminate them. Each community has a favourite example that they refer to as part of a broader historical story. The Serbs point to World War Two, when the Nazi SS divisions were raised amongst the Bosnian

Muslim communities and exterminated the Serbs. The Bosniaks prefer examples from the 1992 to 1995 conflict. This failure to agree on a common vocabulary, characterisation or any of the ground rules for developing a valid political narrative that can be promulgated in the public space and accepted as fact is a major shortfall.

What we are left with is an insane, artificial, completely constructed and highly manipulated form of identity politics, built essentially on the pillar of language. It is enormously effective and consciously accepted and encouraged by the local leadership.

When I finished travelling, I visited Žepa, a tiny Muslim-majority town in the forest, which was burnt down by the Serbs. The only thing left was a beautiful stone bridge, which was constructed by the Prime Minister of the Ottoman Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Mehmed-paša Sokolović, who was born in this tiny village. Sokolović had deliberately built the bridge as a metaphor of a wider identity. He was born an Orthodox Christian and had risen as a Muslim to extremely high office in the Ottoman Empire, whilst his brothers had remained Orthodox Christians, and he had elevated his brother Makarije Sokolović to be patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The tragedy of Bosnia is that it is the story of a highly complicated, highly elaborate tapestry of identity being deliberately taken apart. The central tool for that is language.

These are conscious choices. I have had long discussions with the current President, Bakir Izetbegović, his father, Alija Izetbegović, and Radovan Karadžić. These are the people who cooperated to overthrow the communist rule and deliberately established these rules of mutual hatred and co-optation of the language so as to keep themselves in power and manipulate their populations on a path of conflict. This has been

extremely successful, and a willing political constituency and political leadership are necessary for the country to go in a different direction.

I have recently come from Tunisia, which has just held its second cycle of post-revolutionary elections. These have produced wonderful results, accepted by everybody. The two major parties – Ennahda and the Congress for the Republic, the former Islamist, and the latter secular – agreed that neither was the majority and that they would work together to form a coalition government and define common goals for the country. This was not a miracle, but the result of a set of very conscious choices taken by the leadership in 2011. Tunisia is not a country that should be at peace. There are active foundations, mainly in the Gulf, supplying large amounts of money for the animation of violent jihadi groups in Tunisia. The motivations of these foundations are clear – either these groups will win and a jihadi entity will be established, or they will lose, proving that democracy is impossible in the Arab world and the only feasible model involves some form of strong rule, such as in Saudi Arabia or Egypt. The dominant Tunisian political parties are succeeding in pushing this back. In 2011, they agreed that language, and how they engage with each other through public discourse, would be the first issue they would resolve. Mr Al-Ghannushi, head of the Ennahda Party, met with then-President Marzouki in a series of secret meetings in which they discussed their common goals, the areas on which they disagree, and the limits they were willing to go to in order to achieve their ends. They decided that the most critical issue was the vocabulary they used to describe the other and explain their opposition to the other to their own constituencies. They reached a series of agreements. Two of these – the G7 and G11 agreement, simply known by how many people signed them – were initially secret, but have now been published. A third agreement, the Charter of Honour, was reached this year. At the heart of this is a conscious political act by the

country's leadership to define the vocabulary they will use, to exchange with each other the characterisations they will make of their differences, and to define the elements of the shared narrative, such as patriotism, on which they are willing to agree. Although they do not agree on many issues, they do agree that if they develop a shared constructive vocabulary, a language which defines a political state, a rational and civil political discourse can take place, even in the context of violent extremism and warfare. This is an inspiring example. The success they have reached, built on an understanding of language used in public space, and particularly the media, has shocked their neighbours. Some actors in Egypt and Libya are frightened by it, as it shows that there is a genuine democratic alternative in the Arab Spring world. In Libya, there is astonishment that a fairly simple agreement on political vocabulary can be built on to create a political marketplace that is civil, non-violent and productive. When I was speaking to the Libyan Islamists in Istanbul last week, I realised that they are reaching for a civility of discourse and comparative vocabulary, which is very similar to that which Democratic Progress Institute has been trying to bring to Turkey and many other countries. Thank you once again to Democratic Progress Institute.



*Keynote speaker David Harland addressing participants in Istanbul*

**Moderator Catriona Vine:** Thank you David, that was very interesting. We covered a number of issues, and I think the key themes that can be drawn from your talk are the importance of vocabulary and language in resolving political disputes; the narrative of history that can overshadow the language used and become an obstacle to peace; and, underlying this all, the complex identities that many of us carry and how we deal with that in relation to any resolution process.

*Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.*

**Participant:** There is currently a resolution process taking place in Turkey. What would you say about the vocabulary of language used in this process, and what research have you done on the matter?

**Participant:** I have a couple of questions on the cases mentioned, but I would also be interested in hearing participants' views on the situation

in Turkey. In regards to Bosnia-Herzegovina, if your argument is that some of these ethnic differences are constructed, to what extent did the Dayton agreement and the institutional framework that followed institutionalise these differences? Are there lessons to be learnt from this about designing a political settlement that includes power sharing but does not institutionalise conflict and tension?

My second question is regarding the role of the political and business elites, with political manipulation by these elites based on peoples' fear of the other and their desire for simplicity in describing identity. Are there other examples of responsible behaviour by the political leadership that rejects such a manipulation of identities?

Finally, I am reminded of the situation in contemporary Western Europe, where there is a rise of nationalism that seems to be based on fear of the other and forced nostalgia – a desire for simple identity and societies that never existed. Do you see parallels between your example and the worrying situation we see with these nationalist movements?

**Participant:** The case of Tunisia, whereby the political parties worked together to form a common discourse, is very interesting. In cases where the political parties do not work together to resolve such conflicts of discourse, what will the role of civil society be in achieving a similar result?

**Speaker David Harland:** I am probably the least qualified person in the room to talk on the subject of language in Turkey. I do know that it is very important to have a shared understanding of the word “terrorist” wherever there has been an organisation or individual generally characterised as such. In Egypt, for example, the term is used very frequently by the media

as a synonym for the Muslim Brotherhood. The irony of this is that the Muslim Brotherhood is not violent. They have used many tools, but they are a consciously and actively non-violent group. All I can say about Turkey is that this is a country where the word “terrorism” is important, and in all cases the issue of de-demonisation is exceptionally important. If the political or media elites make a conscious decision to move towards a rational or less emotional discussion about the grievances and the possible solutions, then selecting a vocabulary that does not emotionally and negatively characterise the other side is important. This is something that the Tunisians agreed on – they agreed on certain characterisations and words that they would consciously avoid.

The second question was on the political settlement in Bosnia, whether the Dayton Agreement institutionalised the artificial identities in a negative way and whether there are lessons to take from that. Absolutely. Retrospectively, the terrible flaw of the Dayton Agreement was that it enshrined in everything the narratives of the commanders of three armies, and their political leadership, who, prior to 1990 and the radicalisation of the war, were relatively minor political figures. These individuals were able to mobilise fighting forces and their communities became radicalised by war, leading to tremendous suffering on all sides. Then, at the moment of greatest radicalisation, the people who had started this war and done their best to make it awful were brought in to shape the constitution. Civil society was never asked about the constitution, no referendum was held and there were no discussions in the parliaments of the various groups. Instead, a group of generals and warlords decided what they wanted. The Serbs are a slightly smaller community than the Bosniaks, so they desired a territory geographically defined as theirs and insisted this be given their name. This was called Republika Srpska – Republic of Serbs. In fact this constituted a territory in which the Serbs

were the minority prior to 1992. However, this was something that the warlords found useful to them. The warlords also wrote a constitution that includes an article stating that the President of the Republika Srpska must be a Serb. The president cannot be someone who does not claim an identity, nor can it be from the community formerly in the majority – a mixture of Bosniaks and Croats. Similarly, the constitution states that in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the President of that entity must be a Bosniak or a Croat. Is there a lesson from this? Yes. Not all peace processes can be inclusive. The first step is to stop the violence - if this cannot be done from the bottom, which is often the case, then you can find a trade off, but this must not be overloaded. There was no obligation in the Dayton Agreement to produce an entire permanent constitution for Bosnia-Herzegovina that expressed the wishes of these three fanatics. They could have instead created a ceasefire in which they established the arrival of I-4 and the constitution of the Office of the High Representative and then called for the process of elaborating the constitution to take place through a long consultative process, like in South Africa. I blame Bosnian political elites – they were abetted, not for evil reasons, but because of stupidity and arrogance by the international community.

In Bosnia, the motivation of fear is the big issue. There is a beautiful short story by the Bosnian inter-war writer Ivo Andric, who writes about a young man leaving the country. He says he is leaving because of the dark, Cain-like plans that are being developed by each community against the other. In the language of whispers and quiet meetings each is plotting revenge against the other two communities for real or imaged past actions. This, above all, drives the hatred – the fear of not doing something in the face of this not easily defined threat by people that I hate but cannot really see how they are different from me. I think that the simplicity has

to do with other factors, including globalisation, but it is a narrative. Are there positive examples? One of DPI's upcoming events for 2015 is on the Philippines. The Chairman of the International Conflict Group has supported the Philippine's peace process since 2009, and there has been very active discussion between the delegations, civil society and the army as to how they will describe each other, how they will represent each other in public and how they will represent themselves. They agreed on some basic issues, such as how the people of southern Philippines would refer to themselves as the Moros. The finding of a non-pejorative term on the part of the army, the government and the majority community, and the active public acceptance by the Moro community that they are Filipino was a very important step.

Finally, in Tunisia, what is role of civil society? It is enormous. What made Tunisia a positive example, which is probably absent from Turkey because it is a successful society doing well in many ways, was a sense in 2011 that the revolution would collapse into violence and disaster. There was a conscious effort to counter this from both the Islamist groups and the secularist groups – who were divided themselves between leftist groups and the old regime. They all feared the imminent collapse of society around them. Although they met in secret, they animated liberal groups in their own constituencies in active debate on what the rules of the game and what was patriotic. In Tunisia it was simultaneously a top down process, among frightened leaders, and bottom up process, with civil society leading toward a more tolerant middle ground.

**Participant:** In terms of the Freud quote, this is a very big problem for the Kurdish people in Turkey – the triggering of the problem of the narcissism of minor differences. How can this problem be overcome?

**Participant:** I understand that David comes from the background of the United Nations, and is a British citizen. The United Nations Security Council has a role to play in establishing peace, but to what extent do you think that the UN is effective in this? Can you suggest alternative ways for establishing peace other than through the United Nations Security Council?

**Participant:** You gave examples from Tunisia and Bosnia and Herzegovina where there are specific attitudes about identity. When we talk about identity, it is not independent from us, but it is often perceived this way. In Tunisia two very important figures came together because of the possibility of a bad situation in the country, but future conflict remains possible. So, self-defence is also present there. It is important to have other methods for peace building. You spoke about Bosnia and Herzegovina at a macro level, but this does not create a solution for people on the street. What would you say about developing a micro solution? In Turkey, we have a resolution process, but after the events in Kobane there will need to be a different solution. I think we are distancing people on the street when providing a solution for the problem.

**Participant:** I have a question about cross-border identities and how these can be addressed in peacemaking. The way you described identities at the beginning of your presentation very much struck a chord with me. I have Turkish roots and I was born and raised in Turkey. I now live in Belgium, and was really surprised to see there are Belgian minority communities that speak German, as well as Turkish people that speak French. In this region, peace efforts that address identity issues can have an impact on peace efforts elsewhere in the region. How will you tackle that from a mediation perspective? How do you address issues so that the peace process will not impact elsewhere?

**Speaker David Harland:** The beauty, or the horror, of the Bosnian case is that it is so perfect in terms of Freud's writings on narcissism. The communities are so identical that even to each other they are identical, expect in their awful hatred. The question is what happens when you ask them exactly what it is that they hate about the other community. To me, this involves narcissism, but in the end it is more due to fear. The fear is very much enabled by this extreme imprecision of language that is used to describe the thing they are afraid of. For example, is there an Islamist threat like the Serbia media claims? If they were required to make a distinction between the terms 'Islamist', 'of Muslim heritage' and 'Bosniak,' the imprecision would go away and, in my experience, the fear would be somewhat assuaged. I have just come back from China, where the Chinese government is demolishing mosques, and it is illegal to make a public display of religion. There, the word terrorism is used to describe any expression of religious faith. Separatism, or 'spliticism,' is used as a label for any expression of Tibet identity, which is characterised as a desire to split up the country. I am sure the narcissism issues exist, but I am more focused on the fear. This fear would be harder for the media to exploit if there was some basic discussion about terms used in public discourse.

On the question on whether the Security Council of the United Nations can help, the broad answer is no. The Security Council has certain useful roles it can play, particularly when dealing with what I call 'second order conflict' - conflicts that do not divide any of the five permanent members of the Security Council who have the power to veto. The Security Council has saved millions of lives through the peacekeeping operations it has deployed to countries like Liberia, Mozambique, Cambodia and El Salvador. However, it is completely useless for any conflict that divides the Security Council, which is now most of them. Secondly, it is very bad

in identity conflicts, because several members of the Security Council have their own identity conflicts and would rather not create a precedent model that could create problems for themselves. There is no reason to expect that the United Nations can play a positive role in the issues in Turkey and its neighbouring states. The United Nations could at least provide some of the normative instruments of human rights, which could form a basis for discussion of how to frame national response on these topics, but this will be very hard.

We live in an age where conflicts are animated from the micro level, thanks to twitter and social media. I follow the conflict in Syria very closely and the role of Facebook is extraordinary. Citizens have a very powerful role in animating opposition to something, the destruction of something, or the overthrowing of something. However, they do not have the answer to these. There is no micro level response that is able to offer constructive and coherent alternatives. These too will have to emerge from society and from social media, but we are far from there. We live in age where the micro is able to destroy, but not yet coherently able to create, and that is going to be a major driver of violence in our world for some time.

Regarding cross-border identities, the horror scenario is that we solve certain problems by the easiest expedient, which is often a redrawing of borders around a relatively homogenous group of people who want to be separate, which then has an inspirational effect on other places where that formula cannot be applied. There is a strong argument that the horror of Bosnia was created by the original decision of Germany to recognise Slovenia and Croatia. Slovenia was a little place of 2 million people, where everyone living inside the border was a Slovenian and spoke Slovenian, and there were no Slovenians living outside the country.

It is a nationalist's dream - the perfect natural state. The then-European Community established the Badinter Committee, which was designed to construct an argument about how states would be recognised in the former Yugoslavia. Problematically, the rules did not make any sense in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is no majority community; instead there are three large communities, none of which form a majority. Everybody knew that were the Badinter Commission applied, and the largest vote won, the other communities would go to war. This fear was only just contained in Yugoslavia, but it began to expand outward. I agree that the spread of nationalism in other parts of Europe, and the possibility that Scotland or Catalonia break off on identitarian lines, will almost inevitably lead us down the road of Bosnia-Herzegovina. One of the obligations of the Turkish media is to not offer the easier solution in most areas, which is to draw a border around a place where a majority community would like to be invented. The last time this happened was in Kosovo, which led to the almost entire destruction of the non-Albanian community within the Roma and Serb communities. I had a meeting with Ban Ki-Moon and President Putin in which Putin pointed out how the EU had first created a set of rules to break up Yugoslavia, then broke their own rules for Kosovo, which was not a separate republic within Yugoslavia so did not qualify for consideration under the Badinter criteria. Putin claimed that if the western countries thought they could break up countries when it did not suit them to keep those countries whole, we must not forget that others can do likewise. This meeting was just before Russia started breaking up Georgia. I am not saying this in defence of Putin. Rather, we should be extremely careful about the excuses that we give for essentially destructive and violent behaviour. If we set rules for the international system, we could at least start by following these ourselves.

## Speaker: Professor Ned Thomas<sup>4</sup>

**Moderator Catriona Vine:** Our next session will look at enabling linguistic pluralism, and our distinguished speaker, Ned Thomas, has made the recognition of minority languages his life's work. He is a native Welsh speaker, but he is not here simply to talk about Wales, rather to talk about European minorities and minority languages generally. He was a board member of the European Bureau for Lesser Known Languages and has formed part of the drafting committee for the Council of Europe's Charter of Regional or Minority Languages and the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. He was President of Welsh PEN and Founder and President of the Mercator Institute for Media, Language and Culture at Aberystwyth University in Wales. He has published widely on the subject, including a recent paper for DPI on the topic of enabling minority languages. The main focus of his talk will be linguistic minorities in the European Union, while taking into account the Council of Europe charters and conventions, which have a wider remit. He will present several examples, including that of the Welsh language, looking at education and media and drawing attention to a number of factors which are changing the linguistic landscape for majorities and minorities alike, such as globalisation, privatisation of domains previous under state ownership and the penetration of world languages.

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<sup>4</sup> *Professor Ned Thomas is the Founder and President of Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture, at the University in Wales, Aberystwyth. He is a Board Member of the European Bureau for Lesser Known Languages and a drafter of the Council of Europe Charter of Regional or Minority Languages and of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. He is the former President of Welsh PEN and the former Director of the University of Wales Press. He was previously a Journalist with Times Newspaper and Editor of the British Government's Anglyia.*

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*Catriona Vine, Deputy Director and Director of Programmes,  
Democratic Progress Institute with Professor Ned Thomas*

**Professor Ned Thomas:** May I start by saying how pleased I am to be here, and to be here under the auspices of DPI who has worked on something I identify with and I find really remarkable. I am also pleased to be here in this university, coming from a university myself. I am not going to express a view on Turkish or Kurdish politics at any stage, because the Welsh are fixated on language to the extent that if I cannot read material in the language concerned, I do not feel I have adequate access. I am very interested to find out things in conversation with you afterwards. I have been working for about thirty years in the area of mainly Western European linguistic minorities at all levels, from individual projects to do with information technology in language, to education and media. I am going to start with a bit of history, then move onto the time when linguistic minorities appeared on public stage of Europe and the European Union, and finally look at certain topics in education and the media.

In Europe in 1857, you can recognise some of the empires in Central and Eastern Europe, and you will recognise the three large centralised nation states – Spain, France and the UK, including Ireland. There is no imagined Italy and no imagined Germany. The western-most states had united on the basis of marriages and early conquests. These were the earliest centralised states, and they had assimilated their minorities to a much greater extent, although not totally. The large rambling empires included large numbers of different peoples. Although Germany and Italy do not exist, the German idea of a nation based on language does exist, and twenty years later Prussia expands and grows into Germany. Interestingly, Switzerland offers a critique of both the centralised nation states, which were trying to be monolingual, and the new language based idea of the state. Switzerland showed that you could have the same language in different states, and also several languages in same state. Today, generalising greatly, one could say that the great majority of the new states that have come into existence have done so on the basis of language, and every time boundaries are redrawn, new majorities and new minorities are created.

In 1850, there were great waves of industrialisation. If you look at the map of France in 1850, the railways have not reached Brittany and the Basque country. These brought the movement of peoples from other places and impacted on the language, but also took a lot of speakers of Briton and Basque to new industrial centres in Paris and the east. That is one kind of penetration of the geographical space of peoples who had been living their lives in the language that they had inherited. In Wales in 1845, there were scarcely any railways, except those leading to the ports, which were to connect the country to Ireland, a military necessity and for communications and trade. However, at that time, apart from a corner in the South East, Wales was a landmass where people were speaking Welsh

and there was not much invasion of space. Another impact on minorities was compulsory, free state education, generally considered a good thing. Prussia was the model, with a regimented German language education. This was followed by Austria-Hungary, which had to cope with several languages. France and the UK had already been building their education system, but they only became compulsory and free in 1880, and these were both monolingual systems - whatever your home language, your education was in French or English. A further penetration cultures faced in the twentieth century was the penetration of the cultural space by media. Radios and newspaper presented news constructed in the capital, radio broadcast was usually in the state language only, and television was developed, mainly after the Second World War. In Wales, some radio was in Welsh, with a very small regional amount permitted on the BBC in the 1930s. However, a Welsh television channel was only established in the 1980s. These are all examples of the pressures on minority languages.

Linguistic assimilation was perceived as connected to modernity, opportunity, rationality, identification with the state, and the future, which was providing many good things, such as education and pensions. However, if you were not assimilated linguistically, or only partly assimilated with diglossia, keeping your home language in the home and maybe in your religion, then there was a perception of being underdeveloped, subject to folklorisation, and identification with tradition, emotion and the past. These are perceptions arising both within the majority and within the minority.

There is quite interesting imagery at that time. One of them is the tributary, the river and the sea. Lloyd George was a Welsh speaking Prime Minister of Britain in 1914. His first language was Welsh, and he was able to reach the pinnacle of power of the British Empire only if

he used English. The image that Lloyd George used was of being a small tributary stream in the mountains, which went down like a river into England and eventually into the great stream of humanity. I found that image repeated by politicians from the south of France as well as Basque writers in Spanish. Another interesting image I heard used in Turkey by a Kurdish writer who explained why he was writing in Turkish. He said, 'Kurdish is my mother and Turkish is my lover.' There is a similar late 18<sup>th</sup> Century saying in Welsh. It is very interesting how these images arise, either by borrowing or just out of the situation.

Many minority nationalist movements started at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but remained very small. After 1945, however, there was a considerable growth of minority nationalist movements in Western Europe. This went hand in hand with the decolonisation process, with rhetoric of internal colonisation and external colonisation. Linguistically, many of the methods used on minorities in the home state were reproduced in the colonies. One of the more barbarous practices of making children not speak their home language in school by putting something round their neck, which they had to pass on to other children heard speaking the minority language, and beating the child who possessed it at the end of the day, was migrated to Ghana. This was particularly true in the French state after withdrawal from Algeria. Some of the Bretons who spent time in Algeria recognised that they were doing something similar to that which they had encountered at home.

The two things I am going to concentrate on now are the spread of regional autonomies and the codification of minority language rights. Elected regional governments were introduced post 1945, but regional governance was not introduced, generally speaking, for linguistic reasons. In Germany the introduction of regional governance took place with

the encouragement, or even insistence, of the allies, who did not want a centralised Germany for fear of another Hitler. In Italy, it was due to a very strong grass roots movement by the modern communist resistance. It took longer in Spain, because Franco lived until 1975, after which the new constitution that used regions followed. In each of these cases it was perceived as a form of democratisation, but in some places it also had a linguistic dimension. In France, there are regions with elected councils. These lack legislative powers, but have considerable economic powers. In the UK, after a failed earlier attempt, a Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly were established in 1997. The Welsh Assembly had no legislative powers at first, but these were approved after second referendum. Following the Scottish referendum, there is a question of new constitutional arrangements for England, but it remains very uncertain as to what will be proposed.

Typology of language and regionalism works in very different ways. In Catalonia, the regional language is majoritarian, with not everyone speaking it, but the great majority understanding it. It is not so different from Spanish that a degree of transparency cannot be achieved. The re-establishment of an old historic region has strengthened the language naturally. In the Basque country, which does not include all Basque speakers, but is an autonomous area within Spain, the proportion of speakers of the language is still minoritarian, but the historic identification of language is so strong that the policies in favour of the language are probably the strongest I have encountered, due to support from the non-Basque speaking population. Different models of school have been established to provide people with a choice, and people have increasingly chosen the model where Basque is the leading language for the instruction of all subjects, except other languages. The Finland Swedes are an interesting example. They are not a cross-border minority

in the sense that the boundaries have been redrawn in the recent past. Instead, the Swedes have been present since the Middle Ages. They used to be the dominant economic group, and they led the Finnish national movement, only to find they were in the minority, so they negotiated a historic compromise. The Slovenes in Karnten Austria are a cross-border group. The area once belonged to what is Slovenia, but they voted against this in a referendum. They are a fairly weak minority within Karnten, down to the very local levels, and only ever form around 30 per cent of the population at their maximum. They were traditionally victimised and discriminated against by a fairly right wing regional government. Now they have a slightly better situation because of the presence of the Slovenian state just across the border. One cannot equate language and regionalism, and you can have a great variety of situations.

In Finland, the Swedish speaking population are found on the coasts and on the Aulund Islands. The Aulund Islands are as autonomous as possible without being a sovereign state. They issue their own stamps and are permitted to break European Union rules about free movement of capital. They do not speak Finnish in general, instead doing everything in Swedish, and only a handful of civil servants speak Finnish with the central government in Helsinki. A lot of Finland is sparsely populated and in other areas of the country, there are some very complicated local arrangements tied to the proportion of Swedish speakers. If more than five per cent of an area's population speaks the other language then this is a bilingual area, and services have to be in both languages. If the proportions change significantly then the order of the languages on the signs has to be changed. These areas do not have autonomy, but they do have something unique in the form of a cultural parliament – they elect people to the usual parliament where the Swedish speaking members are the minority, but they also elect people onto a cultural parliament that

has to examine every law going through the real parliament to establish what effect these may have on the Swedish language. These individuals only have a consultative role, but there is a chance that parliament will listen to them if they say the law will have negative effects on the Swedish.

I am now going to examine the initiatives and attempts to codify minority rights. I have concentrated on ones that are essentially linguistic, rather than focus on all minorities. Arfé was an Italian socialist MP, who was exiled before the war at the time of Mussolini. His first initiative in 1981 was to try develop a resolution about autonomy, but this was considered politically impossible because it involved discussion on the borders. His next resolution in 1983 decoupled language from difficult political questions on the drawing of boundaries and territories, and just spoke about language. This went through the European Parliament and was strengthened some years later by the Kuijpers Resolutions. Kuijpers is a Belgian Flemish. Although the Flemish were now economically dominant in Belgian, their historic experience was of linguistic discrimination. In the European Parliament there was suddenly a large group of people from minority language areas, where the state policies were not favourable to them. On the European platform they were able to talk to people who suffered from the same experience, and a form of networking was established. At this stage, the European Union did not have a policy for minorities but the European Parliament did, and it could ask the Commission to do certain things. It possessed a small budget for initiatives in the field of education and culture. It also had money for networking, so minorities could visit each other. This was very important because this created a minorities' identity at the European Union level.

The first Euromosaic Report of 1992 was the first time in history an official body commissioned people from the minorities – one was Welsh,

one was Catalan and one was Belgian - to try and establish how the people who spoke minority languages perceived their strengths, weakness, and what their needs for survival. The sociologists' methodology was interesting. They did not suppose they were dealing with ethnic groups or cultural groups, but with social groups, where the people who formed the social groups also formed other social groups denoted by aspects such as class. They allowed for people not having a purely monolithic ethnic identity, but language was an important feature of their lives. The measure of the strength of their minority language was the degree to which the language was institutionalised sufficiently that first language speakers could take it for granted and not be constantly made aware of their inferior position, or have to deal with the authorities in another language. Although the actual data are now dated, the summary of the first report is a very interesting document because everything else done on minority languages comes from nation states or from international organisations. This, instead, was sociologists trying to see what people were thinking, what they perceived their situations to be, and what could be done to improve it.

The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was much wider than the European initiatives, and that is perhaps one of its weaknesses. It has no international acceptance, and although it was presented to UNESCO and a number of states accepted it, it will never get through. I think it is a little utopian and it remains a moral charter, despite having the names of Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama behind it. Next, is the Council of Europe's Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, which incorporates many of the ideas that had been discussed in the European Parliament and the European Union up until 1992. What gave this great impetus, though, were the wars of Yugoslavia. It was used as a point of reference for application for membership by Eastern European countries,

examining the way in which they treat their minorities. However, France has still not ratified the charter, only signed it, despite being one of the founding members of the European Union. That is a weakness – when the European Union asks states that want to enter to reach a standard that is not reached by one of its founding members.

In the European Charter and in the work of the European Union, initiatives tend to come down to three areas: education in minority languages, media in minority languages and minority languages in public administration. I am going to focus on the first two. Outside of some kind of autonomy, local or regional, it is difficult to obtain the use of minority languages in public administration.

The experience of most European minorities is that it is better to teach their language as a subject than not to teach it at all. However, if there is to be any credibility and success in teaching the language, it has to be a medium of instruction. This is the only way for new people to be absorbed into the language as well. In Wales and the Basque country today, schools are full of people who do not have Welsh or Basque as a home language but who believe it to be culturally, or even economically, advantageous. There is a great advantage in having a variety of school models because a lot of parents in minority languages are not confident due to their own experience of an education system that did not use the minority language. They need to be offered a model where there is some of the language, and where there is a higher choice. The best way of gaining confidence is doing everything in the language. Of course, the teachers need to be trained in advance of making such a great change, and it needs to be shown that there is an economic advantage.

Television is so omnipresent that if you do not have television in your language today, the status of your language is similar to not having printed books at earlier stages. There is a problem with the costs, so I would stress from experience that broadcasting in your own language is necessary to gain the resources needed to create films in that language. In Wales, no Welsh programmes were sold to another country until we had our own channel. Once we had this, and the capacity to do things like animation, our programs started to be saturated in other countries. There is an insatiable appetite for material, but you have to be able to create, as well as dispense. There are various techniques for this. Television always has an over hearing audience – people who do not understand the language will look at images – so there are techniques like hidden subtitles, allowing first language speakers to not see the subtitles, as well as access to subtitles in your own language. That technique is very good for cohesion. All these things have been overtaken by the spread of international languages, international media and privatisation. Privatisation can represent a move backwards. We used to have our telephone bills in Welsh, but Vodafone no longer provides them in Welsh. I would also stress the role of soft power, through mechanisms like literary translation, simultaneous translation of cultural events and courses in language sensitization. People do not necessarily have to learn another language fluently, but language classes can help sensitise them to the existence of other worlds.



*Keynote speaker Professor Ned Thomas*

**Moderator Catriona Vine:** Thank you very much Ned for that very rich and interesting presentation. We started with a historical overview, and it was very interesting to see the impact on languages populations spoke from the advent of industrialisation, education and media. You then looked at a number of different regional autonomy models and different types of language arrangements within those models, as well as initiatives for minorities and the impacts these have on the languages they speak. You also looked at how education and media can play a role in increasing the use of minority languages and the impact of enabling measures and other factors which come into play.

*Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.*

**Participant:** Based on observation, as well as based on readings, it is apparent that linguistic minorities should be protected. In order to enjoy linguistic rights on a wide basis, autonomous regional management is necessary. Such a system protects minority rights.

**Participant:** Can you please elaborate on regionalisation? You gave examples of Spain, Britain and Italy, as well as France. They are all different regionalisation cases, some involving ethnic regionalisation, but in France I think this was an administrative regionalisation. In Turkey, it would be difficult to have administrative regionalisation, but this is a concept that is often raised. It is important, because it is similar to France. This is not only for Kurdish regions, but other regions as well. It may be easier to establish linguistic regions. Could you make a comparison between the French, Italian and Spanish cases?

**Participant:** Is mother tongue a binding clause in international conventions and regulations? If we look at the Charter of the European Convention, article 8 is on education in the mother tongue. There are four clauses, including education in mother tongue and instruction as a second language, or as an elected course. Is this really binding on states? If not, why are such flexible clauses included in international conventions? Why is it not binding?

**Speaker Ned Thomas:** On the question of public administration, a lot depends on the units of the administration. Different countries have different levels of local administration. I think the Finland-Swedish example shows how this can take place on quite a miniature level, with

the language of services provided at the level dependent on whether it is a majority Swedish or Finnish speaking area, or even dual lingual. However, due to the way many states are organised, with a centralised civil service and government, it is often more difficult to do that. If you do have regional administration and legislative powers, then of course you have your own civil service and you can provide bilingual services. Whether it is a good thing to have general regionalisation is a very interesting question. Spain has regions that perceive themselves as nations – Basque, the Galicians, and the Catalans – but it also has other regions with no linguistic dimension, or only a partly linguistic dimension, like Valencia. I think if you are starting from the beginning then it would be beneficial to have a general regionalisation that took into account linguistic factors when drawing the boundaries. However, many states start this process with something already in place. This was seen in the UK, where there was an acceptance of different nations in Scotland and Wales. The first steps towards regionalisation involved administrative devolution.

A Welsh Office was established in the 1950s, which ran every aspect of services in Wales. That was very unsatisfactory because there was less democratic control than in London, with the Welsh Office performing a similar role to a colonial governor general. There was a strong argument for democratising the administrative regionalisation. France's regional administration has an element of election but no powers of voting on taxes or legislation. People are elected to distribute the money they receive from Paris. When Welsh devolution commenced, it started as an elected assembly that received a sum of money from London and then divided it out for services such as health and education. Wales was then offered a second referendum on receiving some legislative powers, because Scotland was receiving some. Interestingly, where as the first referendum on devolution for Wales was won by a very small majority, the second

referendum on legislative powers was won by a much greater majority. People had acquired confidence. They had been running their own affairs for about ten years before the second referendum. I think a lot depends on where you are in the process of devolution, but I think administrative regionalism will lead to a call for democratisation led by already elected local individuals and sometimes legislation for small linguistic units, like in Finland.

The European Charter has strengths and weaknesses. One of its strengths is that countries must change their laws if there is active discrimination against a linguistic group. For example, Sweden had to change laws about its army that had been legislated years ago. In Northern Ireland, the UK discovered a law that had been passed in the 1980s forbidding the use of Irish street names. Although people had forgotten the law existed, it was still sometimes enforced, and Britain had to get rid of this law. The other strength of European Charter is that it allows for monitoring. Every two to three years, a group of people from other countries visit to examine the situation in the country. Technically, they can only report on whether the State is carrying out what it said it was. If, for example, the State said that it offered education in minority language, these monitoring groups check whether this is actually being offered. But the groups can also give suggestions for further activities, such as that they would expect support for a daily newspaper for a minority group of a certain size. There is an escalator within the European Charter, if the parties are willing to regard it as such. The weakness from the point of view of the minorities is that the Charter is a menu and states can choose the weakest or strongest level of the articles. Most states simply choose to continue what they are already doing. This makes the Charter very dependent on this escalation aspect. The language of the Charter is that it is not an absolute. Given the choice of education, states can offer some tuition in the language at

some education level, right up to higher education, even university. In Finland, Swedish-speaking people have their own university, so the state has chosen the highest level of that requirement. There is another aspect of it as well, with people able to see the activities in other countries, and this could perhaps lead to a feeling among states that they would rather be in the top half of the group.

**Moderator Catriona Vine:** Unfortunately I am going to have to wrap up this session now because it is time for lunch. But I think we can continue to have these discussions with Ned throughout the course of the day. Before we finish I would like to thank both our speakers for an incredibly interesting and rich series of presentations and for prompting many questions about this topic. I look forward to the rest of the sessions this afternoon where we can continue to explore these ideas.



*Participants during the morning session of the roundtable.*

## SESSION TWO:

**Moderator Aydın Uğur:**<sup>5</sup> Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Aydın and I am the Dean of the Social Sciences Department at Bilgi University. We have two speakers for this session - Ronyai Önen and Karin Karakaslı. This discussion will be different from this morning's and we will try and take more questions from the participants. We will start with Ronyai Önen who was the one of the first to teach Kurdish as an elective course at university level at Bilgi University.



*Moderator Aydın Uğur with speaker Ronyai Önen.*

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<sup>5</sup> Aydın Uğur is the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities Faculty at İstanbul Bilgi University.

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## Speaker: Ronayi Önen<sup>6</sup>

**Ronayi Önen:** I have been teaching Kurdish as an elective course since 2009. I am a Kurdish language activist, which is my own definition, and have been struggling for the Kurdish language and actively involved in this movement. This is the main axis of my presentation, as I have witnessed the processes on a one on one basis. Language and media have a specific role in conflict resolution, but I am going to focus on language as a domain of power. The language policies present in Turkey have for a long time been used as an instrument of power, as well as an instrument of resistance. Language has recently become a very important instrument of resistance for the Kurdish population. I am going to talk about the Turkish language policies and the reaction of the Kurdish population to these policies. I will also discuss the construction of a nation state, as national identity is constructed with the contribution of language. National unity is constructed through unification and national discourse, which makes language very important. This often involves the homogenisation of language and I will look at how this initiative of homogenisation is reflected on the Turkish process.

Why is language so important when talking about nationalisation? Different symbols are very important when discussing nationalisation and the most important of these is language. Language is free from time and space and plays a significant function in the formation of identity for the nation state. The central power structures of a state are always composed of elites who chose the state language, which creates a hierarchy. Other languages are therefore under the threat of extinction.

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<sup>6</sup> Ronayi Önen of İstanbul Bilgi University; Kurdish Institute Recipient of the 2014 Feqi Huseyin Sarnıç Language Award

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In this sense, language can be an instrument of power, and it is also an instrument of resistance.

I will now examine the language policies of a nation state. The official language in Turkey was Turkish and those using different languages, as well as non-Muslims, were pushed out of the system. There was a process of assimilation and discrimination against non-Turkish speakers. Turkish has been the state's official language since 1924, when the constitution of the Turkish Republic was ratified. One of the first important steps was the Law on Unification of National Education. Under this, all training institutions were placed under the control of the government. This law can be viewed from different perspectives. From the perspective of the Kurdish population, we see that Kurdish language education, which was possible only through the instrument of the medreses, was no longer allowed under this law. With the shutting down of these medreses, the Kurdish language was pushed out of the public domain. The national language policies continued in this vein. For example, in 1934, a law was passed excluding Persian and Arabic words from the Turkish language. This law of simplification was supported by the Sun Language Theory. This theory argues that all languages stem from Asia, and the only existing language close to this is Turkish. Lots of time and effort has been put into this theory. The Sun Language Theory is complemented by the Turkish History Thesis. This latter thesis assumes that societies have always been Turkish and have emerged from Turkish origins. In 1928, a campaign was established to make all citizens of the state speak Turkish. To achieve this, a policy of assimilation was developed, in which minorities were banned from using any language other than Turkish in public areas. In ensuring the extensive use of Turkish, education facilities were very important, with Turkish as the basic language of instruction, other than in minority schools.

These policies were continued until the 1960s. In the 1960s, Kurdish people started to become visible actors in this process. Together with global decolonisation and the moment of 1968, an opposition began to emerge in Turkish, which included the Kurdish. In 1969, a Turkish group created a trade union that included Kurdish activists, and under the name of the 'problem of the East,' Kurdish problems started to be tackled for the first time. This was also important for the language of the Kurdish people because the intellectual process was initiated in the 1960s. In some publications, Kurdish people wanted to make sure that the Kurdish language was part of Turkish social identity as well. However, together with the coup of 1971, intellectual people were punished and temporarily imprisoned. This was temporary because a rising opposition was formed in the 1970s when a Kurdish group separated from the trade union movement and a socialist Kurdish structure emerged in Turkey. The Kurdistan Worker's Party became a very important actor in the state. The final part of the 1970s that I should talk about is the Kurdish renaissance, during which activists tried to put an emphasis on the use of the Kurdish language in the public domain. However, in the coup of 1980, the Kurdish movement was silenced and a very serious and systematic series of policies were created to enable that.

In the Constitution of 1982, the official language of Turkey was accepted as Turkish. However, the article containing this law was not allowed to be debated or discussed because the primary position of the Turkish language was never to be changed. In the second part of this article, it was stated that no language other than the official language of Turkish could be used for publications or printings. Very severe punishments were given to those using other languages. This meant that acts such as listening to Kurdish music or speaking Kurdish in daily lives or bureaucratic affairs were not allowed. At the end of the 1980s, a series of opposition initiatives

began through the Kurdish movement. Language was the centre of this opposition and the reduced flexibility was the result of that.

However, in the 1990s, such oppressive policies on language started to become more flexible. In 1991, the Turkish government passed legislation that partially lifted the ban on Kurdish language, although it was still banned from education. Kurdish people started to use their language and cultural instruments to a greater extent. Post-1994, Kurdish intellectuals began to speak in their own languages. Stories, poems, magazines and newspapers were written in Kurdish. The Kurdish movement and intellectuals took advantage of this increased activity and Kurdish music started to be used as a political instrument. This played a very important role in creating a common identity. However, there were also negative impacts, with some groups arrested for playing Kurdish music.

The real transformation began in 1999, with a change in the discourse used by the Kurdish movement. At the beginning of 2000, the Kurdistan Workers' Party pushed its armed forces outside of Turkey and Abdullah Öcalan stated that the Kurdish struggle would become mainly political. At this time, the language policy became more evident. The party wanted all attacks on Kurdish language to end. All Kurdish people were invited to feel ownership of their language. In 2001 and 2002, university students in Turkey undertook the first initiative to make Kurdish an elective course at university level. Some of these students were expelled from university or required to leave for a while as a result of their actions. Thanks to their struggle we have arrived where we are today, but in those days it was not even permitted to talk about the possibility of elective Kurdish courses and the students were punished for their attempts.

In 2000, Articles 26 and 28 of the Constitution were amended and the ban on language was erased from the Constitution. In 2001, television and public broadcasting became possible in non-Turkish languages. A 30 minute Kurdish language program was broadcast by the government channels. In August 2003, another amendment allowed non-Turkish publications and education in foreign languages, including Kurdish. This was originally met with great happiness by the Kurdish population. This first took place in the form of private courses and a number of them were opened in main cities, increasing in number later. However in 2005, the Kurdish movement decided to shut down the courses. They argued that no community in foreign countries have to learn their mother language in privately paid for courses, so they should not have to pay for Kurdish courses.

After shutting these down, the struggle for language gained impetus. In 2006, the grass roots civilian language movement started. This aimed to make the use of Kurdish more extensive, to improve the use of it and to increase awareness of language in the community at large. The Kurdish Education and Language Movement (TZP-Kurdi) collected materials and developed training to enable the provision of education and training in Kurdish. Under a new campaign called ‘That’s Enough,’ Kurds took to the street to gain the right to learn in their mother tongue.

This led to advances for all. In 2004, the government Kurdish language TV channel began 24 hour broadcasting. Kurdish became an elective course at university in 2009. Istanbul Bilgi became the first university to make use of this opportunity, with other universities since starting to teach Kurdish as well. In 2009, the Kurdish Living Languages Institute was also created. At first, only postgraduate students were allowed to

study Kurdish as an elective course at university, but this opened to include undergraduate students in 2011.

In 2009, however, T'ZP-Kurdi called for Kurdish parents to not send their children to school for the first week of the year. This was a decision with a pedagogical impact, because it was taking away the right of children to education. However, it did make an impact, resulting in the first discussions on Kurdish teaching on television. This was the first time that the Turkish public was faced with this discussion. In 2012, the government took a further step and announced that Kurdish would be available as an elected course starting from Grade One. However, the Kurdish movement perceived this to be insincere and a tactic by the government, so told the Kurdish parents to stop their children from choosing the elected course.

A negotiation process was started in Turkey in 2012. In the context of this process, emphasis needs to be put on Erdogan's democracy package, within which there is an article about education in the mother tongue. The law stated that it was possible to have education in languages that were traditionally used in Turkey, but only in private schools. This is an important handicap, because this was supposed to be part of government education. Instead, the government is expecting poor Kurdish populations to pay to learn in their mother tongue, and only starting from the high school level. The Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party stated that it would not support this initiative and called for a process to advance education in mother tongue.

On 15 October 2014, three schools were opened by Kurdish initiatives to teach in Kurdish. These were sealed by police raids though, and people had to go reopen the schools to ensure that education was taking place.

The school in Diyarbakır has been reopened by the government and is now recognised as a private high school.

In conclusion, language is being used as an instrument of resistance by the Kurdish community in Turkey. If we address the Kurdish struggle in all its totality and understand that we are talking about a conflict process, then language rights are very important and we should start with these rights. In conflict prevention, language rights should be one of the most important points.

I believe that there are quite a few people at this roundtable who are experts in this field, and I would ask them to add their views and talk about this topic.

*Aydın Uğur opens the floor for questions.*

**Participant:** I would like to make an addition regarding the regulation introduced on 30 September. Two concepts have not been discussed in the public. The law says that the Council of Ministers will decide which language is to be used in education, but nothing has been done on this yet. The implementation and the instruments used will be decided by the National Administration, which has also done nothing on this.

**Participant:** Ronayi was talking about the process in 2001. I was one of the victims of the process. This was the first time that the struggle for language courses at university was done through legal means, and the language in the petition was very soft and very foreign to us and to the state. We submitted the petition requesting education in Kurdish in universities. We were terrorised, and a lot of pressure was put on us. For the first time, though, media used different rhetoric towards the state for

these terrorist actions. I was suspended from school for two years, even though no such disciplinary measure existed. In the language used after 1979, this was considered a civil disobedience. Others were imprisoned for five years. This process taught us different ways of acting and different ways of affecting the state. I think we should undertake more studies on the relationship between the media and the state to examine the positive impact that the media can have on state policies and the public at large.

I would also like to talk about the state's position on the Kurdish. In 2014, the Kurdish people opened schools in three regions, and faced state resistance. These three schools lack official support, but the state seems resistant on this. The state has called for the schools to apply to it next year, indicating that they will be accepted as private schools. The Kurdish language has been suppressed – it does not exist in the public order, which is the lowest level in the hierarchy of languages. The only way to achieve the rights for a language that has been suppressed like this is through allowing the right to education in the mother tongue. There is a certain resistance on the part of the Kurdish people, and the state is faced with a bottle neck in terms of resolving this, but it is a very critical point. It would be a very important compromise for the state if the right to language and mother tongue education were granted.

**Participant:** I would like to focus more on the identity that language imposes and how the Kurdish language is known and used in our society. One of the important factors that Ned Thomas spoke about is how languages spoken by people should have an identity and there should be a right to education in these languages. Equal rights should be enjoyed in terms of language and education. Even though the rights have been given, Kurdish rights have not been realised in the education curriculum, and there should be parallel development and progress in

this implementation for the inclusion of Kurdish people and in order to achieve coexistence. This will not be easy, but I would like to take everyone's views on this.

**Participant:** I would like to talk about TRT 6, the state TV channel broadcasting in Kurdish. This was a very important initiative and it was imposed through the European Union negotiation process. What is your opinion on TRT 6 providing Kurdish language broadcasting, in the context of the Kurd's rejection of it? How can this provide public broadcasting given that it was rejected by the Kurdish people because of its top down imposition?

**Participant:** Ronayi discussed how Kurdish language is now provided as an elective course, and how the Kurdish movement has distanced itself from this. This ties into how language is a means of resistance and a subject of politics, as language is also a subject of assimilation, and the state should place great importance on it. I think that mixing mother tongue education with politics is can be a disadvantage. This is important because some people have put a lot of effort into protecting their language, and are also paying a price for their actions. It is very difficult for individuals working in this field. Teachers have to instruct elective courses in the mother tongue without a curriculum or resources. I am aware that the lack of training for teachers and lack of development of the curriculum are problematic. However, maybe instead of boycotting, the Kurdish movement should make a call for choosing these elective courses, which could highlight the deficiencies and handicaps of the courses and push for reform. Do you not think campaigning for this could be used as a method of resistance, rather than boycotting?

**Speaker Ronayi Önen:** The general approach of the Kurdish movement was to go against the use of these areas as a means of resistance. Instead, obstacles preventing the courses should be removed so the courses can be elected. The elective courses should go forward. In my opinion, the opportunity for the new generations to attend these courses is important, especially in light of our complaints that the Kurdish language is dying because these generations are unable to speak the language. The opportunity to participate in these courses should be taken after the obstacles to them are removed. For example, although a Kurdish language teacher training program was established, the government did not appoint these teachers to any available positions or vacancies, with only six of them receiving positions. So who is going to provide these Kurdish language courses? Kurdish is not listed as a course in the list of elected classes in schools.

The response of the Kurdish people to TRT 6 was because the channel belonged to the state rather than to the public. The Kurdish people said that this television neglected us for many years and now will be neglecting us in the Kurdish language. This is using our own language to deny our identity.

**Participant:** I completed a study analysing government textbooks to see when human rights violations took place. The textbooks contained nothing about the Kurdish identity and history. In the Kurdish textbook, the word 'Kurdish' was never even used.

**Participant:** I would just like to correct something about TRT 6. It is not a state channel. It was opened by a private company, not the state. The state was strategic about this, so made sure it was not a state channel.



*Participants during the afternoon session*

**Participant:** The Kurdish people demanded elective courses, but the government said that the infrastructure was not yet ready. I have experienced this with my own children's education, and it is a problem in the rural areas. A school providing education in the Kurdish language at the primary level is preparing to open in September next year. The curriculum will be prepared first. The school will be private, but will not take money from students.

**Participant:** What is the relationship between the movement for education in mother tongue and resistance?

**Participant:** I conducted a study with 350 grieving families, in which we undertook deep interviews. The conclusion was that one of the basic reasons for grieving is the denial of language. This goes beyond simple denial to treating people as though they possess an inferior identity. The basic problem for the Kurdish issue is the denial of language for grieving.

**Speaker Ronayi Önen:** We are trying to develop these mother tongue courses at the best possible level. Meetings, conferences and workshops have been organised for that purpose. In these we do not only talk about right for education in mother tongue, but how it should be implemented as well. Gender and hierarchy issues in education should be eliminated. These seminars are not only for preparing materials for teaching in Kurdish language, but also for developing new areas. We need to say new things in the Kurdish language. The materials and teachers are not all ready, so we cannot know at the moment if this initiative has succeeded – in fact we may only know in years to come. Although this has not yet gone a very long way, the content and curriculum of Kurdish language education are not matters that are being tackled separately from the right for education.

**Participant:** You spoke about the medreses and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Which subjects were taught in the medreses and how did teaching take place? Can you access these instruments and use them?



*Participants Fazil Husnu Erdem and Tarık Çelenk.*

**Speaker Ronayi Önen:** No, I do not have them.

**Participant:** Why not? If you are a Kurdish expert, then surely you should be working on that.

**Speaker Ronayi Önen:** I am not personally working on this, but others at the university are.

**Participant:** I would like to discuss the relationship between language rights and economic politics and power. It is not possible for minorities to claim language rights without economic and political power. There are many examples of the difficulties here. What is the relationship between economic power and language rights amongst the Kurdish population? Additionally, international frameworks were not mentioned in the struggle for Kurdish language rights. In the original charter, there is one issue. The EU accession framework could be useful, as could the framework convention for the Protection of National Minorities. I would be interested in hearing if these have any use in the struggle.

**Participant:** Education in the medreses included political education, language education, astrology and religious education. The topic we are discussing here is different though.

**Participant:** I am Circassian and when my sibling was born, my father wanted to give him a Circassian name. The relevant government official, however, queried why my father wanted to name my brother this, and he changed it to a Turkish name. My father did not know his rights, though, and was not even aware that he had a right to object this. Even though he is part of the Nationalist Movement, he is very proud when he sees

the struggle now. He wanted us to stay away from being Circassian when we were growing up. Until the beginning of 2000, Circassians could not express themselves. They were saying that when we were saving this nation we did not know Turkish and realised this after 300 years – we came here as exiles, and the Ottoman Empire opened its doors. In the east, the official structures are in the centre of the village. However, when I went to the west, I saw something else. I stayed with a friend in the west and took a shuttle bus every day to the school, as the government schools were outside of the village. The teachers were appointed to positions in the schools, but were left alone, regardless of ideology and perspective. So in terms of language and identity, in 2014 the communities living in these territories are still perceived as foreign and their language is seen to be very separate, even though they are not very foreign to each other.

**Speaker Ronayi Önen:** On the issue of language rights and political power, I definitely agree with you. We should not forget that the Kurdish society and community tried to struggle for their language rights without having a political status, because it is not possible to reach a political solution while teaching in Turkish only. Although language and mother tongue education is fundamental to the Kurdish movement, the political organisation of people is also very important. The right to language should not be separated from regional administrations, because these authorities can solve the problems.

**Participant:** The Framework Agreement does provide the foundation. It did establish a law, but it is not absolutely binding. This is usually handled in line with the authority and the government's potential. The Framework Agreement does have a morally binding effect on the government though. It is morally bound to increase sensitization on language, and there are three very important areas here – in the media, in

education and in the administration. These agreements that were brought by law are important, but it is the political struggle itself that will actually solve the problem. The language issue necessitates a decentralisation of government administration.

**Participant:** Language rights and the destiny of a nation are parallel to one another. When do you think this relationship of harm will come to an end in the near future?

**Participant:** The government cannot transfer the running of TRT 6 to a private level and avoid the legal implications. Kurdish and Turkish people alike are all very critical of TRT 6 now. The state should have involved the people in the establishment of TRT 6, as this could have provided them with an advantageous position.

**Participant:** Regarding TRT 6, I meant that the state was subcontracting to private companies in order to avoid responsibility.

**Speaker Ronayi Önen:** When thinking about this topic, it made me question whether these issues would really matter, or contribute to anything, as everything in the country seems to be going backwards. If this presentation had been made six months ago, I would have been more enthusiastic and said that more channels were open. But this process is very discouraging for me. I do not know if there is anyone who can give a clear answer on what will happen, but I can say that this struggle is something that will continue in the future.



*Participants during a break in the roundtable.*

Speaker: Karin Karakasli<sup>7</sup>



*Karin Karakasli*

**Karin Karakasli:** I would like to base my speech on my life, because when one belongs to a certain identity, one's life can be quite political. I will be looking at certain milestones in my life, some of which overlap with the government's policies. Language is important, but before language there were sounds. Comprehending these sounds necessitated putting them together, and this is the reason why language is spoken in the home. A child naturally thinks that the entire world can understand the language of their mother tongue, because the child's world is composed of their family speaking this language in the home. In the present situation, being Armenian does not necessitate speaking Armenian. After the genocide, a number of generations were deprived of speaking their own mother language because of their continued migration. As a result, there are many people who claim ownership of Armenian identity, yet do not speak any Armenian. Another identity related fact which makes us question this process is the concept of survival.

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*7 Karin Karakasli is a Novelist and the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Armenian Newspaper Agos.*

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Armenians had to become Muslims if they wanted to survive, and although many later returned to Christianity, some wished to remain Muslim. The Patriarch had to answer many questions about this.

My family was a very classical family. My parents were Armenian and I had a grandmother, who was the reason for me speaking Armenian. I did not even realise that this was Armenian until I left the house and heard other languages. We had a television, and on the television I heard other sounds and languages when I was a child. I asked my grandmother what this language was, and she said it was Turkish. I asked her what language we used, and she told me it was Armenian. Therefore a separation began when everything was labelled in my mind for the first time. These labels were established when I was a child, creating anchors that have contributed to my separate identity as Armenian.

My bilingualism has been a blessing and a curse. My first year of primary school was a story of trauma, as it was for all Armenian students. We had to learn a new language and alphabet. I was trying to learn the 28 letters of the Roman alphabet, alongside 38 other ones in the Armenian alphabet. It was important for me to learn a language that was actually spoken. However, that was not the case. Armenian's history is not very similar to Turkish or English, rather Latin, and the formation of Latin is something associated with the Armenian language.

The primary school had a Turkish Deputy Director, as with all schools. The presence of these Turkish deputy directors was due to a questioning in the country about how schools were carrying things out, such as how the curriculum worked in practice, or how the holidays were being celebrated. The deputy directors were actually reporting agents for the government. This is no longer the case, as deputy directors now perform

different duties, and when the communication flows perfectly between the Armenian directors and the Turkish deputy directors then the schools functions very well. In my primary school in the 1980s, the national holidays had to be celebrated with excitement. The Armenian children all had to sing the national anthem with more excitement than other children, and had to memorise Ataturk's sayings at a far younger age. In the schools, blue and red paper was used to cover the textbooks and stationery, with blue for the Armenian books and red for the Turkish. At the end of primary school, following a test that I undertook, my teachers did not want me to continue at an Armenian high school because I had performed too successfully. Instead, they suggested that I should attend a Turkish high school. Whilst it would have been more appropriate for me to go to a Turkish speaking school, I did not have national ideas, and did not want to be separated from my friends. Instead, after graduating, I started studying at the Austrian high school.

My experience of studying Armenian and Turkish separately took place at the same time as the ASALA attacks on the Turkish people. Thanks to the government's curriculum, the Armenian children were very knowledgeable of the Turkish alphabet and were able to read the newspapers reports stating that Turkey belonged to Turkish people, and the rhetoric describing the terrorist Armenian groups. If you were Armenian, you knew that these organisations were formed of bad people, but you would also know that you were not a bad person, despite being Armenian. You start questioning these issues – what exactly happened in the history of the Armenian people, and why the Armenian language was used if Armenians were not very good. However, there were not many Armenian people to ask these questions to, and families usually did not want to speak about this with their children. This included my own family and friends. My parents used to tell me that I was supposed

to say I was a Christian and not an Armenian if asked about my religion, as being Christian was deemed to be better than being Armenian.

At the Austrian High School I attended, everyone was equal to a certain extent, and I had Jewish friends as well. There I was able to learn a third language, and I perceived the ability to have a language other than Turkish and Armenian as a freedom. This is how I still feel about German. We had lessons on the Turkish revolution and the country's history. In one of those lessons I remember a student asking the teacher to talk about the Kurds, because Kurdish people were mentioned in the history of the Turkish people, and then would disappear from the narrative again. In Armenian schools, history and geography are Turkish courses, and teaching on other groups like Armenians is usually more focused on individuals. National assimilation was also an issue in these schools. For example, science lessons such as chemistry, biology, physics and mathematics were supposed to be provided in Armenian. However, subjects at university like organic chemistry cannot be taught in Armenian, and although students have the right to learn in Armenian, they need to pass the Turkish university exams, so in practice this is often different.

Returning to the Turkish history lesson, the teacher said that the Kurds were people walking on the snow, and they were called Kurds because of the sound their feet made on the snow. This was said by a teacher, who is a person of authority that students took very seriously. I have always been interested in languages, though, and in my free time I have tried to learn about language origins. I had seen that Kurdish and Armenian were parallel to one another in the same branch of Indo-European languages when looking at a map of language origins. I told my teacher that Kurdish is a branch of the Indo-European family, just like Armenian

is. In response, my teacher dismissed me from the class. Since then, I have learnt that Kurdish and Armenian are not the normal and natural languages I thought them to be.

This is all that I can say about the Armenian aspect of my identity. I came from a middle class family that stayed away from politics, and only traditional religious rituals were recognised in my family. I went to Church, and I was expected to be in line with the Western model, because of the nature of education in Turkey.

I have an interest in language and translation, but when studying languages I always found there to be something missing inside myself. Other people knew about Armenian literature, yet I knew nothing even though I am Armenian. When I started working at Agos newspaper, I visited a high school in Istanbul and asked an Armenian teacher to give me private lessons on Armenian literature. The Turkish Deputy Director of the school followed me every time I visited, because I came from Agos newspaper and he was concerned about what I was doing there – he never thought that it was possible for me to be learning something. This perspective showed that Agos was also treated differently.

Agos was established in 1996, with the publishing house formed in 1993. The Kurdish reforms and right process helped contribute to its establishment, as the Armenian societies and communities were inspired by this process. During this period, Diyarbakir's Armenian identity began to be discussed for the first time and in the discussions on the incitement of the Turkish and Armenian issues, the newspaper was formed. The Patriarch had been presented as one of the most important terror organisations in Turkey by the press and was framed as an organisation with close ties to the PKK. Newspapers were constantly

publishing pictures of PKK Kurds and the Bishop Patriarch together. In response, the Patriarch invited newspapers and media so that he could address this. However, people queried why he was doing this each time and whether it would not be better for the Armenian people to speak for themselves through the creation of their own Armenian newspaper. Prior to this, there were two other Armenian newspapers – Marmara and Jamanack – which are also very important and useful newspapers. Because they are published in Armenian, though, they are only accessible to older generations, who follow the newspapers for information such as obituaries. Agos, on the other hand, was published in Turkish as well as Armenian. Both the government and the Armenian organisations took a lot of interest in this, and queried what the newspaper was attempting. The newspaper was leftist and an opposition paper and it placed an emphasis on the Armenian community and the history of the Armenian people. The government did not understand what kind of newspaper it was, nor did members of the opposition, who have been expelled from political processes since the establishment of the Republic. They accused the newspaper of disclosing them to the Turkish people and being agents by publishing in Turkish. Agos has never been liked by everyone in Turkey. However, it offered a different Armenian-ness and different perspectives on that Armenian-ness.

After the newspaper was founded and became politicised, it assumed a certain responsibility and performed an important role. It was influenced by Hrant Dink's private life, and contacts were established with his elders and through his visibility in the community and newspapers. This was the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the process of European Union accession was initiated. There was a lot of hope not just within the Armenian people, but throughout Turkey, because there was a sense that this was the start of something new. The European Union accession was

the last time I was optimistic in Turkey. There was a very big atmosphere of excitement.

Then, as many of you will recall, something happened to initiate a process in which Armenian history started to be discussed for the first time in Turkey. Hrant Dink wrote an article about the possible Armenian origins of Sabiha Gökçen, the adopted daughter of Atatürk, in which an Armenian citizen claimed that Gökçen was her aunt. Agos newspaper published this, and Hrant Dink approached the issue from a specific perspective because this was a very interesting story that would cause a scandal. This created an atmosphere of discussion, which was perceived to be very dangerous. After two weeks, the issue reached the front pages of Hürriyet, and the military General Staff became involved in the process, publishing a declaration in which the word Turkish was said eighteen times and it was claimed that Sabiha Gökçen, who is assumed to be the epitome of Turkish identity, was insulted by this.

In the aftermath of Agos's article, attention was drawn to a statement that Hrant Rink had made in an article on the Armenian issue. On the eight week of an eleven week-long series on the Armenian issues, the topic of the diaspora had been addressed, and the different experiences of Armenian people in Lebanon, Turkey and other parts of the world were discussed. None of the Armenian diaspora only speaks their mother tongue – the diaspora in the United States are perceived to speak a very stylish English and Armenian, French and Armenian is another combination that is appreciated, and Arabic and Armenian is also a distinct combination. However, the use of Turkish was seen as an allergy for the Armenian diaspora. They argued that the Turkish are enemies of Armenians, and when the Turkish Armenians speak these two languages they are reminded of the terrible history. They queried why Armenian

still lived in Turkey. However, the diaspora is not a very large lobby group against Armenians in Turkey. There are a lot of people who migrated from Anatolia to other countries, who actually feel very warm about us when they visit Turkey. After 1999, the Karabakh border was closed, marking the start of an ignorance campaign. Turkish Armenians and Armenians from Armenia were all mixed. In Hrant Dink's article addressing the diaspora, he stated that the Turkish problem had become an obsession for them, creating issues for developing their identities. He explained that their identity should not be established in reference to the Turkish other, because one tragic historical fact did not have to become their defining fact. Instead, identity should be established independently. In this article, Hrant Dink referred to Turkish blood as something poisonous, and many main stream and right wing media sources picked up on this following the Gökçen article. Because of this writing, Hrant Dink was imprisoned for six months. He could never disassociate himself from this, and was forever more introduced in the media as the Armenian journalist who was imprisoned for six months. This did not change until his death.

The date of Hrant Dink's assassination – January 19 – is very important to us. Following this, there are new areas of struggle for the Armenian people. Turkish people now chant out slogans in solidarity with Armenians, such as 'We are all Armenians.' Hrant Dink was not just a journalist – he was an opposition figure to the Turkish government, and he became a symbol of separationist policies for all of Turkey. As a result of this, being a novelist has become a second identity for me. The image of my two identities as a novelist and a journalist is that of the red and blue of my school books coming together and creating purple. However, this is also the point at which everything is collapsing in the eyes of most people.



*Speaker Karin Karakaslı addresses the participants, alongside Aydın Uğur and speaker Ronayi Önen .*

*Aydın Uğur opens the floor for questions.*

**Participant:** The Kurdish people have of course suffered less than the Armenians, so historians have made very important observations on this matter. I would like to make a few contributions about the matters that have been discussed today. Of course, language is the end goal of people in becoming nations across the world. This is not a recent demand of the Kurdish people – it began with the Kurdish associations in the 1920s. Ronayi had said that education in mother tongue was the request of the Kurdish movement, but I think it should rather be said that this was the

request of the Kurdish community as a whole, because we can talk about a lot of movements from the past and from today. This shared claim for education has been a shared request especially since 1975. Education in mother tongue is not being brought about through legal regulations and arrangements, so a political stance is also required. Regarding TRT 6, regardless of whether this is a state channel or not, it is a very important expression of a mentality change, because the Kurdish language was previously denied by the state. As such, broadcasting a TV channel in the Kurdish language must be seen as an important sign of change. In the struggle for language rights, the Kurdish people should use every front available to them.

It was asked what the aftermath of this process will be. I think there will be positive results, because the Kurdish issue is important not only for the status of the Kurdish people in Turkey, but in other parts of the world as well. The state is always better than it was in the past, and it will probably be better in the future than it is today. Of course there are certain problems and challenges to a resolution process, and the priority is to envisage such challenges, but I remain hopeful for the political status and future of the Kurdish people.

**Participant:** Language is nothing by itself. Retrospectively thinking, Antakya is a very good example. I think this is the only place in Turkey where many people speak different languages –Armenian, Turkish and Arabic. These language combinations can be seen in segments of society in Antakya. People probably define identity by their mother tongue, but spoke other languages previously. I think that the state's struggle for assimilation should be understood through language, but not solely this, as the nation state is destroying everything. We should be struggling for all parts of our identity, including religion, gender, class and culture, and language is only one part of this. I think this issue of Kurdish language

education should also be addressed on a bidirectional level. Turkish people should also learn Kurdish. When we talk about language and power, we should also talk about socialisation and supporting the speaking of multiple languages. In Germany, for example, the new generation tries to learn Turkish because of the large numbers of Turkish immigrants. Strategic essentialism is a concept that should be used in post-colonial studies – whilst you should struggle for your identity, this struggle should not become more than a strategy. It should be temporary and efficient, but not very essential. Language and identity should be just one part of the struggle.

**Moderator Aydın Uğur:** We are talking about the past and the present, but we should also be talking about the future. I think the world awaiting us will require us to use different languages in different settings. Different languages will all serve different parts of our lives. Therefore, maybe we should think about how people are being unfair to language by defining it as something beyond our daily activities.

**Participant:** I agree that language should be considered together with other concepts such as gender. However, I do not agree that language is only part of the whole. Language ensures communication, but it is also the way in which we give a sense to the world and to our lives. Imposing a certain language on people means that you are imposing a certain life perspective on people. For languages, we use the concept of ‘minority.’ This concept is considered something that naturally surfaces by itself. However, maybe we should examine how communities become minorities. Even though the law may define them as such, none of the communities defined as minorities would be likely to see themselves as such. This concept is deliberately pushed onto minorities by majorities and we should endeavour to unveil the deliberate intention behind this process.

Over the past years, I have given presentations on many different platforms about mother tongue education and what exactly this means. However, people often try to find a missing part in my presentation as their centralised and singular mentality prevents them from comprehending the use of multiple languages in education. I do not know if this is going to produce a settlement for the current Kurdish situation, but I do think such a settlement is possible. Of course, we need simultaneous struggle in different fields for this, part of which is the enjoyment of rights of education in mother tongue, and pilot projects are being developed for this. The use of multiple languages in education has an important potential for peacebuilding - allowing different communities to learn each other's languages increases inter-community understanding.

How can this happen, then, for the Kurdish situation? Currently the Kurdish population is opening Kurdish schools and the Turkish population is opening Turkish schools. People say that this will ultimately deepen polarisation between the two groups. This is why the development of a mother tongue education system should allow children to learn other languages, and languages should be built on top of one another in the education system. Kurdish and Turkish should be taught in a comparative manner, rather than developing separate spaces and school structures for the two languages. The languages should interact with each other and a comparison should take place of the way in which the languages are taught in contemporary situations.

**Participant:** There is a very important relationship between language and national identity, but what about religion and identity, as seen in Catholicism for the Armenian community? Is there a relationship as such, and how is this defined?

**Speaker Karin Karakaslı:** That role is on the rise, and I think this is due to the fragmented organisation of the Armenian people. The Armenian language is necessary for national unification of the state, and people are working to protect it. The Armenian language was previously different in different parts of Armenia, as the western Armenian language is different to the eastern Armenian language. The diaspora speaks Western Armenian now, whereas Armenians living in Armenia speak Eastern Armenian. The diaspora continues to learn Western Armenian because they want to preserve their language. In cases where there are state interventions, particularly in Turkey, the civil Armenian organisations have been hindered in this. Because of this, the patriarchate, which is the religious organisation, goes beyond religious affairs to also assume a political position. This is something that the Turkish state prefers. However, the patriarchate's position is being discussed by the Armenian community, with arguments for the establishment of civil commissions so that the Armenian people can have a separate and transparent organisation. The Armenian language is completely specific and unique because it is based on an Armenian alphabet. Because of this, and their Christian religion, there is also a relationship between Armenian identity and the church. Catholic congregations were established by missionaries coming from Europe, and the rhetoric of Christianity, rather than Islam, as the traditional religion is one considered true by Catholics, and legitimised by Armenians today. The Armenian Church has become meaningful for atheist Armenians as well. Politicisation can be seen behind this assumption that Catholicism is part of the Armenian identity. The actual flexibility of the Armenian identity is something that should be discussed in Turkey, if we have enough Armenian people to discuss it with.

**Moderator Aydın Uğur:** This is a shared concern for other communities, such as the Jewish. Members of the Jewish community do not have to

be religious but can still define themselves as Jewish. There are also other examples of communities who capture their identity through their language and religion that they worship.

**Speaker Karin Karakaslı:** The language of mass for Armenian Catholics is ancient Armenian. This can only be spoken by a few spiritual figures of the Armenian community. However, the worship area is a place for socialising, and people interact with one another in the church. This goes beyond identifying or defining the identity.

**Participant:** I would like to ask a question based on a hypothesis. If the legal and political structures were put in place by the Turkish state and the Kurdish people were given the same status enjoyed by Armenian people, how would Kurdish people perceive this? Would it be satisfactory for Kurdish language education to be offered from primary school level in private schools, or should this be provided by the government? If the status enjoyed by the Armenian people for education is granted to the Kurdish people, would this be accepted? If it were to be rejected, would this be for political or pedagogical reasons? If education in mother tongue is provided by the state, there would be political implications. Furthermore, have the Kurdish ever analysed the Armenian's status from a political and education perspective?



*Discussions during the second session of the roundtable at Bilgi University in İstanbul.*

**Participant:** This is a very important question. What kind of education do we foresee or want? Is it enough if we just have Kurdish language education? First of all, the overall mentality should be changed. The point of departure is how to convince people who have been poisoned by this understanding of nation states as responsible for education. This would of course have an impact on education, and all the other spheres of life, by developing a more pluralistic discourse and practice. The state providing Kurdish language education is not enough. We have undertaken a field study in which we looked into examples from the rest of the world, looking to draw conclusions about the type of training or education model that should be implemented. It is important to not only focus on Kurdish matters. Instead, we should to create a pluralistic education model in which there are many different languages. A preparatory process for the curriculum is also being worked on.

Multilingualism is very important. For example, in Mardin Province there are Syrian, Kurdish and Arabic people present, so how can language be used as an instrument of socialisation there? Kurdish people should be able to learn Syrian or Arabic, and vice versa, as allowing communities to learn more about one another would help proximate different parts of society with one another and the society as a whole would become stronger. We do not want to simply focus on the Kurdish language, nor do we want to replace Turkish with the Kurdish language. Language education should be changed as a whole, which is what the Kurdish movement is attempting to initiate. However, although Kurdish people are pioneering this language struggle, groups like the Circassian people can also use this as a platform for their activities. If the process involves only the Kurdish and the Turkish, then the state is more likely to refer to those undertaking the language rights struggle as ‘separatists,’ which will result in negative repercussions. Should other societies also work with Kurdish people, this would deliver important results for these societies, as the state cannot simply dismiss them as ‘separatists.’ Additionally, it is not the sole responsibility of the Kurdish to push for mother tongue education; rather this should be shared by different societies and should be inclusive for groups from all backgrounds.

What will happen in the future for mother tongue education? Turkey has reached a certain threshold as a state, with relevant courses and private schools opened. But this is simply going around the actual problem, and the next step should not be left up to the sole discretion of the state. I think the communities at large should be involved in the process alongside the state. State involvement is required as education is very expensive and civil society cannot assume all the expenses. It is necessary, though, for our society and community to find a way for academics, civil society and intellectuals to play an active role in education. I think that if

everybody plays a role in this, it will create a very important and strong effect and allow the issue to be solved.

**Participant:** I was not trying to discuss how democratic the process could be, as I believe that to be more of an ideological question. I am trying to ask what the political implications will be on the schools that teach in mother tongue, as well as on the Kurdish movement. The political and cultural spheres cannot be separated from one another. Should the Kurdish and Armenian people prioritise the preservation of identity, or the political consequences of teaching in the mother tongue? I am not trying to talk about the content of the education, as I think that the status of the schools and the political implications of these schools is more important and crucial.

**Participant:** I would like to remind you of something. The discussions we are holding here are always been framed within the context of the nation state. We have to move away from this. When we do so, the problem of the mother tongue will be resolved automatically. Maybe you can elaborate on that as a basis of this thesis.

**Participant:** I think the Kurdish political movement and the Kurdish people are very sensitive to this. In Diyarbakir, the minority problem is being addressed with great sensitivity, as it is creating some issues. Minority education is very complicated, especially parallel to such issues. Therefore the Kurds and the political representatives of the Kurdish movement may have appeared to use a concept that actually avoids a reference to the minority phenomena. The rights and freedoms mentioned are therefore aspects that should be analysed outside of the scope of the minority concept and require support from public opinion. The government has to make sure that the decades of wrongful practice

are compensated; otherwise this will simply be a repeated of the case of the elected courses, in which a policy was delivered that only served to delay the actual solution. What is important to us is a permanent and durable solution. Language education should start at kindergarten level, and should continue to be used at later stages as well. Steps supporting this idea are currently being met with a lot of suspicion by some people. This suspicion is being misused, and I think we should enjoy these rights. Because of the suspicion, issues like TVT 6 and education in mother tongue are being met with great resistance. To counter this, we need to create a process that is owned by the public.

**Participant:** I have met with the representative from many Kurdish political parties. Some of them suggested that Kurdish mother tongue education should be a public right – it should not be something to be taught only in private schools, instead education should be publically owned. This was the joint idea of the political representatives with whom I spoke. In the interview with BDP’s representative, there was an emphasis on recognition of this in the constitution as well. This will, of course, have political implications. Political power will have to be shared, as carrying out public education in the mother tongue will force the government to give some authority to local representatives. This is currently legally unactable, so Articles 6 and 42 of the constitution will have to be amended. However, education in the mother tongue is not only a priority for political parties from a Kurdish origin.

There are three points that should be discussed regarding education in the mother tongue. Firstly, the ethnic and language identities may be different from each other, as ethnic identity could be specific to a certain region or country; it could be splintered around the country and forming a majority in a specific province; or it could be centred in a very specific

country. All of these options require different solutions. The first requires the collective right understanding, the second requires the group right understanding and the third requires the individual right understanding. The Kurds living in Kurdistan's demand for education in mother tongue can be solved by a completely different solution to a similar demand by an individual in Istanbul. Secondly, language policies can benefit from other examples in the world, because what these examples show us is that language policies have to be as flexible as possible. It is also important to gain a comparative understanding of different models. All identities should not be provided with the same model, though; instead all require different solutions, and it is important to think asymmetrically, rather than symmetrically. Thirdly, language policies are closely linked to economic development. For example, there is a right to education in mother tongue in certain parts of China, however after the liberal economy was adopted in China, Chinese became the most economically valuable language to learn, so people dropped education in mother tongue. Examples from around the world also showed that language is so important that you cannot only use state authorities for developing language policies, and civil society had an important role to play as well. Therefore, if you are going to create a new language policy, the issue should be approached from these parameters.

**Participant:** I think we have reached a very critical point in this meeting. We are struggling with the holistic structure of the state. There are many examples of that. Pluralism is usually seen as a threat by the state, and it is very important to combat this. It is also crucially important to develop multilingual education based on the best known language.

**Moderator Aydın Uğur:** What do you mean?

**Participant:** Mother tongue based multilingual education.

**Participant:** The platform is not functioning very well, and people are struggling to bring multilingual language education together, even though the Kurdish materials are being developed. There is a real problem, so what else can we do to make this platform function better?

**Participant:** I think the main theme of the conference is media and language, but we have been mainly talking about language here. We should try to link the two together. Education of the majority in Turkey is also problematic. It is only possible to create a durable and sustainable solution through education, because education will produce a content on which negotiations can be based. This is important, not just for language or the Kurdish and Turkish solution, but for all communities who have been previously treated hostilely by the Turkish government. The language in which rights are granted is also very important. This can be perceived as a sacrifice made by a powerful identity, but this should be about delivering rights as a platform to enter the political arena. All of the decisions made in 1997 are the same as those made in 2014, but I think that the freedoms and rights based on language are more important. Regarding religion, I think we have seen some improvements in the case of the Armenians. But the child of an atheist still has to memorise verses and courses and does not have the same right to defend themselves as a religious person. Therefore, a pluralist education process should be developed to ensure against this. I am not sure if this can be developed, but if Turkey is to become truly pluralistic, and if democracy is really desired, then discussions like this are required within different groups.



*Participants at Bilgi University*

**Participant:** Karin said something striking here when she said that Kurdish and Armenian are not regarded as natural languages at the government level. But, no language in Turkey is perceived as natural by the State, and the Laz people are experiencing the same issue at another level. All comments so far have been based on the Kurdish and Armenian experiences, so I wonder whether this is a meeting specifically for the Kurdish and Armenian? Kurdish people, though, have the power to have their voice heard in Turkey, and the Armenian likewise have an intellectual and historical accumulation of power that allows them to make themselves heard. However, there are other minority groups and other dialects used as well who do not have the ability to be heard. All these languages are at the verge of extinction. The elective courses were not very welcomed by the Kurdish people at the beginning, but Laz people welcomed elective courses because they enjoyed being able to learn Laz. For the first time in Turkish history, the Laz felt as if they were being taken seriously. At first, there were just five classes, and now there are 15 different classes, and Laz people are teaching in schools. It has been said that the state is not approaching the families positively or encouraging Kurdish education,

but this is not true for all communities. I am here representing the Laz Language Institute, which is a small organisation that has tried to organise activities to encourage Laz language education, such as making movies. I think this has had positive effects. It is important to ensure that languages other than Kurdish and Armenian are also regarded as languages. I am a leftist and a Marxist by nature, and I know that all leftist people love to talk about issues relating to the Kurds and Armenians. However, no one even knows what the identity of a Laz person is. It is essential that this process for language rights involves pluralism. The overall problem in Turkey is the preservation of all languages, and the struggle to preserve this is a holistic effort.

**Participant:** You claim that the struggle of Kurdish and Armenian people is more prominent. However, this is only because Laz people have only just started on this journey, whereas Kurdish people have been involved in this process for a long time.

**Participant:** But you have a language.

**Participant:** Yes, this is true. We do have a language, but we have not been trying to be heard. In Western Turkey, the schools are close to the villages, but in the eastern part of Turkey, schools are very far from villages. The Circassian people organised a protest about their language rights, and there were many people chanting slogans about it. However, none of them chose Circassian as an elective course. The government then said that they gave the Circassians a chance, but they did not take it. The state always sees language as a divisive instrument, but instead language needs to be seen as something rich, not a separatist issue. The process of advocating for minority language rights has just been embarked on, and the Kurdish people deserve their language rights. It

is thanks to the Kurdish people that the Circassians have been provided with an opportunity for more rights and have been able to take steps towards realising this. If they are granted rights, they will have to thank the Kurdish.

**Participant:** No one has spoken about the solution process in Turkey. TZP-Kurdi has been active in the region for years now, advocating for Kurdish education. The universities, NGOs and media should support this process and universities should prepare data for media, which should be shared with the public. Support from the EU is also very important for the improvement of the situation of language minorities in Turkey.



*Participants at the roundtable.*

**Participant:** Kurdistan's local administration has a model that can inform this matter. The democratic approach of the Kurdish people can be a good example. I was surprised to see what was taking place – the region was doing very well at this, better than Turkey. Kurdistan uses Swedish and Europe as the basis of their education policies. There is a

very good education curriculum. If the process is given the opportunity, it can naturally evolve on its own organic course. Regarding language as an instrument of power will contribute to the way in which we perceive languages. Currently, the Kurdish movement and the State are doing a tango, and language is being held hostage. I hope that this will soon no longer be the case, and the Kurdish identity will be able to express itself. Operas and plays are now being developed in Kurdish. The best language use and sentences are still delivered by lay people, such as mothers, and we must ensure that we do not lose this. We must maintain the richness of the Kurdish language, as the Kurdish language is more important than the Kurdish flag for sustaining Kurdish identity.

## Concluding Observations by Yılmaz Ensaroğlu<sup>8</sup>



*Yılmaz Ensaroğlu*

**Yılmaz Ensaroğlu:** During this roundtable, we have discussed the language rights of Kurdish people in Turkey and the methods that can be used to achieve those rights. As is the case generally, what is ethical has been curtailed down. Since we are currently going through a solution process, we should not forget the direction of our compass.

The first speaker spoke about language and identity and the post-Ottoman example of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mr Thomas talked about language pluralism and provided different examples from around the world. He provided a good map of minority languages that is useful for us all.

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<sup>8</sup> *Yılmaz Ensaroğlu is the Director of Law and human Rights Studies at the SETA Politics Economics and Social Research Foundation and is a Wise Persons Commission member.*

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The second session discussed different things. The language rights of the Kurdish people were discussed by Runayi and Karin and how the Kurdish language was transformed into a conflict area. A conversation on this has been taking place for a long time, and this will contribute to the solution process. However, the government's actions on languages and the attitude of the PKK and the Kurdish movement are also important, because all political actors want control over language as with other things. Even if all the problems regarding the Kurdish language can be solved, this will only be a certain amount of progress for us. It is not a full solution because there is a serious power struggle based on language and third party actors not to do more brain storming about how they can contribute to this process.

Karin spoke about language by giving examples of a child's experience in life, as well as the politicisation of Agos. After that, we mainly spoke about the Kurdish issues. However, we cannot talk about the matter of language whilst only discussing the Kurdish language. Rather, it is easier to talk about language issues when also including other languages in the discussion. Of course, political acts can have a political structure for conflict resolution, human rights and the political process. This should not be reduced to language and a solution should not be created that focuses on only one language or ethnicity. Support must be provided for segments of society other than the Kurdish.

Is it correct to see language as an area of resistance? Or is it better to eliminate it as an instrument of political power? Politicians can think about that, and will be using it, and be willing to use it, as an instrument of political power, because using it as an instrument will attack the settlement. If this is taken the opposite way, then it can be used as a positive. When talking about Turkey, we also need to talk about how

language can be a solution in this process, as well as the media's impact on the settlement process. We did not really discuss this latter part in the meeting, though we were supposed to. The media used to attack this process, but it now is more positive about it. In the media there are two sides – one advocating against the settlement, and one supporting the settlement. The media is far sharper than political actors and is fuelling the fires. In this context, the media's role in the Turkish settlement process should also be discussed.

Finally, we should not lose hope during such problematic periods of the settlement process. If we lose hope it will be the biggest trap. The nature of a settlement process necessitates that progress and positive outcomes will fluctuate, but we should never allow this to deviate from the peace building route. I would like to thank DPI for organising this meeting, as well as Bilgi University and the Sociology Institute. Thank you also to everyone who contributed to the organisation of this roundtable, and our colleagues who have joined us from abroad. The biggest thanks goes to the interpreters who have made this discussion possible by acting as a bridge for us all.

# Appendix

## Participants from Turkey

- • Gülçin Avcı - Lawyer, Researcher, Turkey
- • Müge Ayan - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Batuhan Aydagül - Education Reform Initiative, Turkey
- • Önder Bayındır - SAMER/Göç Vakfı, Turkey
- • Tahir Baykuşak - Kurdology Study Group, İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Ali Bayramoğlu - Daily Newspaper Yeni Safak, Turkey
- • Nurcan Baysal - DISA, Researcher and Journalist, Turkey
- • Şah İsmail Bedirhanoğlu - Head of Dogunsifed, Turkey
- • Raci Bilici - İnsan Hakları Derneği, Turkey
- • İsmail Avcı Bucaklışı - Laz Language Institute, lazca.org, Turkey
- • Cansu Camlibel - Journalist at Daily Hürriyet, Turkey
- • Necip Çapraz - Journalist, Yüksekova Haber, Turkey
- • Kenan Çayır - İstanbul Bilgi University, Head of Sociology Department, Turkey
- • Tarık Çelenk - Ecopolitic Thought Center, Turkey
- • Zafer Çelik - Advisor to Ministry of Education, Turkey
- • Vahap Çoşkun - Wise Persons' Commission and Dicle University, Diyarbakır, Turkey
- • Betül Dógun - Marmara University, Turkey
- • Esra Elmas - DPI
- • Yılmaz Ensaroğlu - Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı, Wise Persons' Commission, Turkey
- • Fazıl Husnu Erdem - Dicle University, Diyarbakır, Turkey
- • İtir Erhart Hrant - Dink Foundation, Turkey

- • Bahar Fırat - Bosphorus University, Turkey
- • Özge Genç - Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı, Turkey
- • Ayhan Işık - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • İdris Kardaş - Platform for Global Challenges, Turkey
- • Nurcan Kaya - Academic, Turkey
- • Gülay Kayacan - Historian, Turkey
- • Ferhat Kentel - İstanbul Şehir University, Turkey
- • Ohannes Kılıçdağı - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Dilara Koçbaş - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Bejan Matur - Poet, Author and Columnist, Turkey
- • M. İdil Özkan - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Nazan Haydari Pakkan - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Afik Pamuk - Marmara University, Turkey
- • Remzi Sanver - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Uğur Sevgili - Lawyer, International Criminal Law, Turkey
- • Ceren Sözeri - Galatasaray University, Turkey
- • Tuğba Tekerek - Taraf Daily Newspaper, Turkey
- • Aslı Tunç - Professor, İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Kelemet Çiğdem Türk - TV Programmer, Turkey
- • Aydın Uğur - İstanbul Bilgi University, Turkey
- • Sevtap Yokuş - Kocaeli University, Turkey
- • Sedat Yurtdaş - Former MP, lawyer, Columnist, Turkey

### **International Participants**

- • Neşe Akkerman - British Embassy in Turkey
- • Didier Chassot - Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Turkey
- • Canan Gündüz - European External Action Service Mediation Advisor in Turkey

- • Eleanor Johnson - Head of Programmes and Research, DPI
- • Joost Lagendijk - Turkey-EU Parliamentarians
- • Catriona Vine - Deputy Director and Director of Programmes, DPI
- • H.E. Brendan Ward - Ambassador of Ireland in Turkey
- • Catherine Woollard - European Peacebuilding Liaison
- • Kerim Yildiz - Director, DPI

## Annex

### **Enabling Linguistic Pluralism: the experience of European minorities**

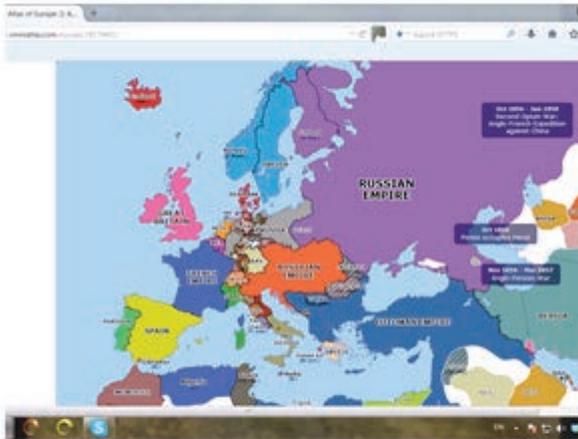
Presented by Professor Ned Thomas

**DPI Roundtable: The Role of Language, Identity and the Media in Conflict Resolution**

**8 November 2014**

Enabling Linguistic Pluralism  
the experience of European minorities

Ned Thomas



**Europe 1857**



**Europe 2014**

## Railways penetrate the geographical space

**FRANCE 1850**



**FRANCE 1870**



**Rail Lines in Rural England and Wales, 1854 and 1876**



Source: The Victorians Railway O&D

## Free Compulsory State Education

- Prussia 1763
- Austria-Hungary 1774
- France 1880
- UK 1880

## Media penetrate the cultural space

- Newspapers distributed by rail network
- Radio broadcasts from 1920s onwards
- Television increasingly from late 1930s

## Majority/Minority

- Assimilation =  
modernity/opportunity/rationality  
identification with the state
- Non-assimilation =  
tradition/folklorisation/emotion  
growth of minority nationalism

## Post 1945

- Spread of regional autonomies
- Codification of minority language rights

## After the dictatorships

- Post 1945 Regional Governments introduced in Germany and Italy.
- Post 1976 Regional autonomies introduced in Spain following death of Franco.

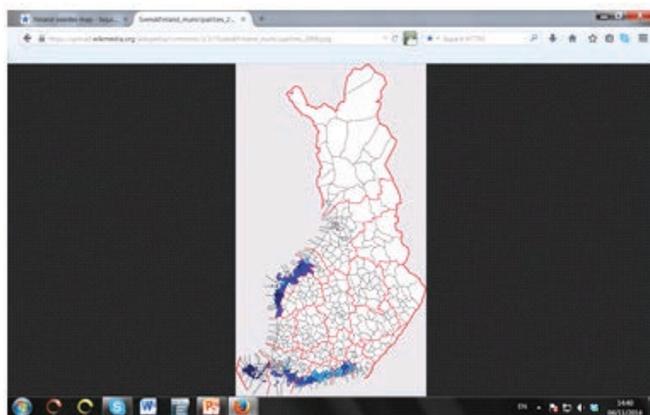
1982 France establishes regions with elected councils that have no legislative powers.

1997 Scottish Parliament and Welsh National Assembly established following earlier administrative devolution. Both now have some legislative powers. And England ?

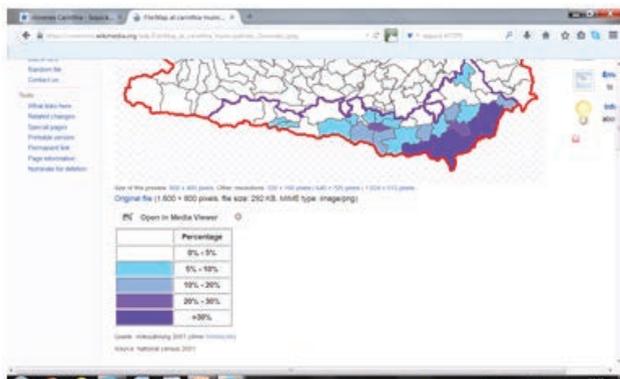
## Language and regionalism

- Catalunya (Spain) – regional language majoritarian
- Euskadi (Spain) language minoritarian with strong support by region
- Finland Swedes – mixed pattern based on historic compromise between language groups
- Slovenes in Kärnten (Austria) Historically weak regional support, but cross-border support

Location of the Swedish-speaking and bilingual cities and municipalities of Finland  
Dark blue: unilingually Swedish  
Middle blue: bilingual with Swedish as majority language  
Light blue: bilingual with Finnish as majority language  
White: unilingually Finnish



## Slovenes in Kärnten (Austria) 2001



## European Initiatives for linguistic minorities

- Arfé (1981/83) and Kuijpers (1987) Resolutions (European Parliament)
- Council of Europe's Charter of Regional or Minority Languages 1992/98
- First Euromosaic Report 1992

## Three pillars

- Education in minority languages
- Media in minority languages
- Minority languages in public administration

## New factors

- Spread of international languages
- Internationalization of media
- Privatization
- Social media

## Education

- Language as subject/language as medium
- A variety of school models allows choice
- Development of teaching profession
- Mother-tongue or territorial base?
- Economic value of minority language

## Enabling measures

- Literary translation
- Simultaneous translation at cultural events
- Hidden sub-titles on TV programmes
- Language sensitization
- Adult language classes

## Pluralism

“Members of one culture can by the force of imaginative insight understand the values, the ideals, the forms of life of another culture or society” I.Berlin in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (1990)

## **DPI Board and Council of Experts**

### **Director:**

#### **Kerim Yildiz**

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

### **DPI Board Members:**

#### **Nicholas Stewart QC (Chair)**

Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom . Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.

#### **Professor Penny Green (Secretary)**

Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

## **Priscilla Hayner**

Co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

## **Arild Humlen**

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

## **Jacki Muirhead**

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

## **Professor David Petrasek**

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United Nations.

## **Antonia Potter Prentice**

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

## **DPI Council of Experts**

### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

### **Dr Mehmet Asutay**

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International

Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

### **Christine Bell**

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

### **Cengiz Çandar**

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

### **Yilmaz Ensaroğlu**

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

### **Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres**

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

## **Professor Mervyn Frost**

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

## **Martin Griffiths**

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

## **Dr. Edel Hughes**

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

## **Avila Kilmurray**

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

## **Professor Ram Manikkalingam**

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

## **Bejan Matur**

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

## **Professor Monica McWilliams**

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.

## **Jonathan Powell**

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

## **Sir Kieran Prendergast**

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

## **Rajesh Rai**

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

## **Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza**

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

## **Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar**

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on Constitutional Citizenship and Transitional Justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



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