In the certain stages of the history, Kurds have been deprived from the right of self-determination, and oppressed by the different nations. The problematic case of the Kurds with the concepts of “nation”, “nationalism”, and “nation-state” has been discussed and studied by many Kurdish and non-Kurdish scholars, political activists and parties. Their current situation created a new base and the new arguments of the concept of the Kurdish nation-state. That is why this paper is aimed to analyze the Kurds in the frameworks of “nation”, “nationalism”, and “nation-state”, their historical and present circumstances in the territories in which they lived and they live, the emergence of nationalist idea and the movements among them. Finally, the paper enlightens the situation of Kurdish people within the concept of “nation-state” based on the right of self-determination.

**Keywords:** Kurds, Kurdistan, Nation, Nationalism, Nation-State.

Since the recent events have developed generally in the Middle East and particularly in Iraq and Syria, the discussion of self-determination of the Kurds once again gained a tension. Especially, the situation of Iraqi Kurdistan and its negative and unsuccessful relations with
the Iraqi central government as well as the recent chaotic circumstances of the region led the new discussion and certain decisions to be made by the Kurdish officials. On the other hand, the Syrian Kurds who are struggling to protect their territory, so-called Rojava cantons, have created more complicated situations in the terms of the observation about their destiny. To come to the questions of what the Kurds really want and what they should do to solve their problems in the region where they live under the control of different states, indeed cannot be analyzed without understanding the situation of the Kurds in Turkey and Iran. Certainly, each part should be studied in different frameworks, so our argument is to analyze the Kurdish people in the prism of self-determination by concerning their position in the prism of “nation”, “nationalism”, and “nation-state”. It is certain and obvious that the Kurds who live in these four parts are deprived in many ways of each other, however, they are one nation. This includes political, cultural, social and linguistic ways. This also brings another argument about the Kurds in the term of “self-determination”, including its different understanding and different implementation. That is why, I shall first analyze the terms “nation”, “nationalism”, and “nation-state”, and later on the term “self-determination” with the perspective of nation-state in the points of Kurdish people. In the practical mean, the origin of the Kurds, their political, cultural, regional and linguistic division, the rise of Kurdish nationalism and the evaluation of their current situation with the necessity of being an independent state shall be studied. As the advantageous points of national sovereignty for the Kurds shall be classified, and finally, the role of international community on protecting the right of self-determination relatively to the international peace in general, and particularly in Kurdish case, shall be clarified.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF “NATION”, NATIONALISM AND “NATION-STATE”

In order to understand the relations of Kurds and nation-statehood, it is useful to analyze the concept of the nation-state. Indeed, this
concept cannot be clarified without covering the terms “nation”, and “nationalism”. These two terms create the basic structure of the nation-state that shapes the construction of its understanding. Many scholars have interpreted the nation and nationalism in variety of ways, putting different elements and criteria in the core of their definitions. Therefore, I shall firstly analyze these different approaches of the scholars.

Ernest Gellner identifies nation and nationalism based on political principles. He defines nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy. On another side, again Gellner defines the concept of “nation” as a general imposition of a high culture on society. And more interestingly, he claims that nationalism creates the nation.\(^1\) The definition of Anthony D. Smith opposes the idea of Gellner’s political principles as he states “we cannot understand nations and nationalism simply as an ideology or form of politics but must treat them as cultural phenomena as well.”\(^2\) Smith also closely relates nationalism to national identity as “a multidimensional concept, language, sentiments and symbolism”. And also “myths and legends” have another important role of his definition.\(^3\)

More different than these definitions belongs to G. P. Gooch. Gooch claims that the nationalism is the love of community. He does not see the nationalism as a doctrine, for him it is an instinctive emotion.\(^4\) Regarding to Gooch’s point, the blood line and the language have nothing to do with the sense of nationalism, except the feeling for it. Therefore, any individual who can feel love or sympathy in the term of nation does not really necessary have to be related to that nation with blood line, kinship or even historical background. On another hand, the Marxist approach on the nation is totally in a different spectrum. Marxist theory defines nation as a result of historical evolution, emerged with war, invasions, dissolution and emerging new ones. This theory puts the concept of nation in the center of class division as a tool of capitalist oppression.\(^5\)

The definitions of a nation, however, differ from one scholar to another, but the common point about the nationalism is to be politicalized as it emerges to be a nation state. Although the term of
nation is basically related to the culture, language, history, legends, but regarding the concept of nationalism, it is clearly understood as an existence of a political entity based on national boundaries. The idea of nationalism has been used for establishing necessary bases for the boundaries of a sovereign state. In order to understand the emergence of nationalism with the national state, it is useful to analyze the concept of nation-state.

**WHAT IS A NATION-STATE?**

When the famous Orientalist Bernard Lewis describes the concept of nation, he takes the word of “millah” from Aramaic language and claims that the nation is a group of people who gathered around a belief. In Arabic terminology, despite the word and belief of “ummah”, the term of “millah” is still being used in religious approach. For example the term of “millah–al Ibrahim” or “millat-i Ibrahim” is used among the Muslim population. Regarding the point of Lewis, the Jewish nation can be an example of his definition. But on another hand, the term of “nation” in our recent time gives more different meaning than just religious terminology. The idea of a nation and becoming a nation, the transition period of ‘people’ to ‘nation’ and more importantly the ‘nationalism’ firstly used by Johan Gottfried Herders in 1774 as the key stone of this process as an ideological tool. In both cases, the certain element of both ideas, especially Herders’, creates a territory in which those ideas can be easily implemented, and that territory is called a nation-state. The key point of a nation-state, the term “nation” and the confusions on this concept, creates different definitions about the discourse of the ‘state’ as well. In the 17th century, the movements against the kings and monopolist elitist aristocracy on the name of ‘national sovereignty’ prepared a new base for the revolutions of Europe and America. The terms religion, family, king, and etc. were replaced with secularity, nation, and nation-state. Finally, the chain was completed by the French Revolution. While the national entities in Europe were ethnically oriented, the new nation-state being created in America was entirely based on
different ethnic groups including the locals. This feature that puts America in different category of nation-state can be defined as the creation of ‘super ethnic American’.

The most important term of the nation-state refers to homogeneity. In the details of this homogeneity, it can be seen that a nation speak the same language, comes from the same lineage, shares the same culture and historical heritage, and is designed as a community of people who seem to have common enemies, so that the nation-state appears as a structure where all its parts are completed with an excellent coexistence. Taking in account the inclusion of these created states, their degree of emergence and the factors affecting their survival can be predicted by analyzing their internal dynamics. Concerning this point, Habermas offers a satisfactory explanation. According to him, the nation states emerge in three different ways; the first one starts with the ethnic groups which have spread to their neighbor communities. The second category is formed by the groups of people who have been oppressed, marginalized, assimilated in the new states. The third stage concerns on ethno-centric nation-states which have kept the ethnic minorities under the extreme oppression or forced them to exile, in another word: racist.8

The discourse of nation-state can be simply described as the nation-state is the structural form which is an institutionalized political power wrapped in a certain historical stage; nation is the fiction that works as the legitimate source of this structure; and nationalism can be perceived as a political movement that aims to impose this source of legitimacy as the current political view. Regarding this point, it is difficult to claim that the terms “nation”, “nationalism” and “nation-state” have developed at the same time or in the same way. Besides, to make a universal assumption on which one came before or after another is more difficult. On this issue Erözden offers this approach; “On a universal scale, showing the prevalence of the nation-state fiction and their structures in accordance can be divided into three basic groups. The first group contains nation-states in Europe and Europe oriented regions. The second group is formed by the nation-states especially observed in the America with the elimination of
native peoples and replaced by immigrants. The nation-states which formed as a result of stripping from the decolonization after the second half of 20th century are in the third group.”

Hans Wicker suggests that in the 19th and 20th centuries nation-states’ power comes from three basic concepts;
1. Thought of Republic: its implementation is connected with a public administration and a defined area whose democratic norms are available to the citizens;
2. Capitalism: providing technological advances developed new industries and ensured the issue of capital accumulation abilities, leading to a slow rise in general living standards and provided the new elements of economic development;
3. Nation: formed as a result of interaction between capitalism and the state.

Regarding the concepts of nation and nationalism, the answer for the question of the national entity of the Kurds clearly appears here. Because the structure of the Kurdish people sometimes was being discussed whether they are a nation or a small ethnic group. Since these two concepts are related to the thought of nation-state, putting the Kurds out of this category would not be a healthy approach. As it is understood from the definitions, the scholars did not specify for any nation in the boundary of a state. Therefore, according to those definitions, we can claim that a nation does not necessary need to be related to a nation-state in order to complete its national identity. Hence, the Kurdish people, while they are related to each other culturally, linguistically, historically even though they live in different regions, are in the certain category of ‘nation’. From this point on, before analyzing the position of the Kurds, it is necessary to understand the right of “self-determination” in international law.

**SELF-DETERMINATION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW**

The United Nation’s 1st and the 2nd articles clearly indicate the right of self-determination relatively to promote the international peace
not only as a right but also as a principle. The same subject is mentioned also in the article 55 with the equal rights of the people. However, the development of this term and its implementation has been through different stages, such as before the United Nations and during the 2nd World War, later on, this principle has strictly concerned on the colonial regions and their right of being an independent state, on another hand, the discussion of the “principle of nations” hasn’t been clearly answered. Therefore, this principle has become more complex to choose whom to be considered. The collapse of different political entities with the rise of many independent states also justified their actions according to this principle.

The term of “self-determination” has been interpreted in different meanings in different times. Even though it is still valid in the international documents, this term carries the meaning of fear that would disrupt the status quo and the international balances. Giving a meaning to “self-determination” might be simple as well as complicated. In general, self-determination is the right of the citizens to choose its own government. In another word, it is the right of the people to choose the form of their government. At this point, the term “people” contains contradictions. Another definition can be given as the right of an ethnic, linguistic, and a religious group in order to establish their national sovereignty, to reshape the existing national boundaries. Also self-determination can be the separation of a political unit from the federal system and to be an independent sovereign state. Another definition which does not require any separation describes it as the right of the ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups to have a wider autonomy to use and to implement their religious and cultural rights.

When the meaning of self-determination is analyzed, its two sides can be seen, internal and external self-determination. The internal self-determination is related to the internal organization of the states, and it requires the right of choice of the people to choose the governmental form of their state without any external interfere or pressure. The internal self-determination is about the form of the government, to choose, shape, or reshape it. Indeed, the
internal self-determination also concerns about the ethnic minorities in a country, generally found in the fields of democratic ruling, cultural rights or autonomy, and unlike the external self-determination, this right has the function of continuity.

On another hand, the external self-determination is the right of a group of people to create their own independent territorial integrity and also the right of governing their territory. In another word, the group of people, whether an ethnic group or claimed to be a nation, without the pressure of any external forces, have the right to separate from the state in which they live under the control and to become an independent state. Such a right is approached through the natural right that has already been existed, and with this approach, the groups of people who are under the occupation or pressure of their states would take their national, cultural, social and political rights under the protection of their own state, and also would be able to give such rights a legitimate status. However, taking the political and social facts of the world in account, this right without identifying any group of people as a “people” or a “nation” is given by the condition of being colonized. Unlike the internal self-determination, the enforceable right here is one-time right. This means if colonial people had executed their right of self-determination, this would have required ending the right. However, along with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Yugoslavia in 1992, the self-determination has been raised to implementation outside the colonial principles. This brings the new argument of the right of self-determination and its implementation in our modern era. The states which separated from these unities claimed their right under this right of self-determination. Another important feature of these countries is that previously they have been federative part of federal states and their right of self-determination was protected under the constitution. Consequently, it would be possible to say that viewing these examples shows that the right of self-determination that is being implemented in our time and accepted in international law has been accepted for all nations.
WHO ARE THE KURDS?

Kurds are known as one of the ancient nations, and many theories have been written on their origin. Currently, they live on a land called Kurdistan, which is divided into four parts; Iran (eastern Kurdistan), Iraq (southern Kurdistan), Syria (western Kurdistan) and Turkey (northern Kurdistan). They are known as one of the largest indigenous groups in the world without a nation-state. Modern history contains only their attempts to establish a Kurdish state in different parts, but from the ancient times beginning with the Medes Empire, Kurds have also established many kingdoms, dynasties, emirates as well as states, such as Shadadis, Marwanis, Fadlewi, Zand, Ardalan, Mitani, Subaro, and many others.

Many historians and scholars have researched the origin of the Kurds, including Kurdish and non-Kurdish scholars. Famous Kurdish historian Muhammed Emin Zeki Beg, analyzing the research of Vladimir Minorsky in Islamic Encyclopedia, and the plates from early Assyrian era, includes that the Assyrian king Tighlat had the fight with Kurti people who lived in the area of “Kar-Daka” around the lake Wan (recently in Turkey). Zeki Beg also mentions Anabasis of Xenophon that he described as Kardukis and the region where they lived, generally by the river Tigris and around mountain Cudi (Shirnak province of Turkey).

Another theory on the origin of Kurds is suggested by Hassan Arfa. Arfa draws a map where the Kurds lived since ancient history, from mount Zagros to the lake of Rezaiye in the east, from Kerman-shah (now in Iran) to Kirkuk and Mousul in the south, and in the north from Marjan and Harhal mountains to Mount Ararat.

However, there is precise information about the origin of their first history, but almost all scholars who study their origin agree on the region where they lived. The word Kurdistan was first used by the sultan of Seljuk, Sanjar, and referred to the territory between Azerbaijan and Loristan (now in Iran). The same word Kurdistan has been used by different sultans for different regions.
During the Seljuk sultanate and the Ottoman Empire, Kurds have lived as principalities and emirates dependent on empires. Interestingly, their history does not include any attempt of being state at that time. However, the first Kurdish historical book is written by Şerefxanê Bitlisi in 1597, Şerefname, who was also the emirate of the Bitlis region in the Ottoman Empire, but the book contains only the historical background of the Kurds, and is accepted as the first historical archive of Kurdish lineage.

THE EMERGENCE OF KURDISH NATIONALISM

The emergence of nationalist thoughts firstly appears in 16th century in the book of famous Kurdish poet Ehmedê Xanî (Ahmad-i Khani), ‘Mem û Zin’. Although Xanî’s book is a love story between Mem and Zin, he also analyzes the circumstances of Kurdish people in that time when they are struggling between Ottoman Empire and Safavid dynasty of Iran. The majority of Kurdish scholars, even foreigners, believe that Xanî’s book is the manifesto of Kurdish nationalism. However, there were many books written on Kurdish history before Xanî, such as Şerefname (Sharafnama) by Şerefxanê Bitlisî (Sharaâkhane Bitlisy), but all of them are written in Persian and Arabic. Writing Mem u Zin in the Kurdish language marks a huge distinction between Xanî’s book and others in the term of Kurdish language, culture and the idea of Kurdish nationalism. Many parts of Xanî’s book concern the unity of the Kurds, and their situation against the Turks, Arabs and Ajams (Persians). In his own words, Xanî expresses his thoughts of unity and statehood:

“Ger dê hebuwa me serfirazek “
Sahibkeremek suxennuwazek
Xemxari di kir li me yetîman
Tinane derê ji dest leîman
Herçi bide şûrê destê hîmmet

Zebt kir ji xwera bi mêrî dewlet”

If we had a blessed one
the owner of good
would pity us orphans (Kurds)
save us from cowards
whoever laid his hand on the
sword of power
he took over his state like a
man.”20
The following word of Xani clearly explains the situation of Kurds compared with other nations describing their problems:

“Ez mame di hikmeta Xwedê da
Kurmanc di dewleta dinê da
Aya bi çi wechê mane mehrûm
Bîlcimle jibo çi bune mehkûm?

…………………………………………………………………………

Bifikir ji Ereb heta Gurcan
Kurmanciye bûye şibhê bircan
Ev Rum û Ecem bi wan hesarin
Kurmanci hemî li çar kenarin”

From these parts of his book Xanî gives a clear message about national identity of the Kurds. Neither mentioning them as “millah” (people) or “qawm” (ethnic groups) nor as a huge nation, the author describes them as “Ekrad” (Kurds) or just Kurd. Calling for a nation-state is the main message given through unity, and this shows up before the appearance of modern nationalism in Middle East. Considering this point, Van Bruinessen states that the idea of nation-state in Xanî’s book is the real message which the book was written on, and this message was given to the Kurds in such a difficult era, between Safavids and Ottomans. Following Mem u Zin, many other classical poets wrote about the situation of the Kurds and the need of a Kurdish nation-state, such as Haji Qadir Koyî, Feqî Tayran, Melayê Cezîrî.

The idea of Kurdish nationalism and nation-state started to appear significantly in different parts of the region. The timeline of Kurdish nationalist movements shows approximately thirty-three Kurdish rebellions. An interesting point of these movements is that the first started in 20th century; the Bitlis-Bayazid rebellion in 1905, long after the concept of nationalism had been studied. It merged with the political circumstances of the century, which follows the last era of the Ottoman Empire, during and after its collapse.
existence or the collapse of Ottomans was not the only obstacle at that time, however. Especially, after the collapse, Kurds have faced external powers as well. As the current president of Kurdistan Regional Government, Masood Barzani, states in his book Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement, mentioning the Treaty of Spires, “Over the centuries, the Kurdish cause has remained captive to powers vying for control of the Middle East. Foreign powers, especially imperialists, have favored their own interests over the principle of legitimate Kurdish aspiration. They have made compromises and concluded deals at the expense of hopes, sufferings, and great sacrifices of the Kurdish people.”

From early 20th century to recent time, Kurds have struggled to establish their own state in Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish parts of Kurdistan. The nationalist movements in Turkish part of Kurdistan had greater influence than in other parts. The Bitlis-Bayazid uprising, Dersim Rebellion, Qocgri, the rebellion of Sheikh Said, Sheikh Ubaydollah Nehri, the Ararat Rebellion, the Xoybun movement, and many other rebellions till PKK in present day, numerous times they attempted to achieve at least a small territory or Kurdistan as a whole. Unfortunately, all of them were recorded just as an “attempt” and most of them ended up with massacres and genocides.

The uprisings in both Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan were connected with each other through the leaders. After the exile of the Barzan tribe from Iraq to Iran, and the cooperation of Mustafa Barzani with Qady Mohammad by the influence of Soviet Union and establishing Kurdistan Democratic Party, they managed to declare the Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad in 1946. Yet again, this republic did not last long, only eleven months. The president Qadi Mohammad was hanged by Shah’s regime. Although after the collapse of Mahabad, Mustafa Barzani could survive and his tribe had their struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan under the flag of Kurdistan Democratic Party. Even though the party was divided in Iraqi and Iranian parts, the I-KDP suffered much in Iran, especially after the assassination of its leader, Dr. Abdurrahman Ghassemlou in Vienna, in 1989.
The most influential Kurdish movement was the rebellion of Mustafa Barzani, which resulted in a revolution in Iraqi Kurdistan. After surviving in Mahabad, Mustafa Barzani with his family faced exile to Soviet Union till 1950. Returning to Iraq, the Barzan rebellion recommenced as guerilla warfare against the Iraqi government. The death of Barzani in 1979 did not stop this revolutionary movement. The leadership was replaced by his eldest son Idris Barzani, and after his death, the rebellion finally resulted with a revolution in 1992 under the leadership of the current president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Massoud Barzani.27

From all these rebellions, it is clearly seen that all of them were limited to their own regions. The main reasons are the division of Kurds in different countries, limited power and different circumstances of the regions in which they live. So far, none of them could be seen as a wide movement to include all Kurds in all parts. Besides, having the experience with Kurds in terms of revolt, the governments of those parts oppressed them brutally in order not to give them any other chance.

Before covering the right of a nation-state for the Kurds, it is very important to clearly understand the right of “self-determination”, its theoretical structure, historical evolution, and its understanding related to our contemporary discussion.

**KURDS AND NATION-STATE**

The concept of nation-state, indeed, is related to the subject of self-determination. The right of self-determination is given to every nation in the world, and protected under the United Nations Charter. However, it is given as a natural right, but to use this term with the Kurds conceptually becomes difficult in their political frame, especially in current circumstances as well as with having a history filled with rebellions, revolutions, and genocides. As we analyzed the types of self-determination (internal and external), this principle can differ due the conditions of Kurdish people depending on the countries they live in. The main point is that whether it is a necessity for Kurds
to have a state rather *likelihood* of their having one. There are many nations in the world without an independent state, although some of them have the equal rights within the states in which they have integrated, such as Catalonia with Spain, or Scotland with the UK. Certainly, the Kurdish case cannot be compared with them, due to the different stages of modernity and civilizations. Besides, the division of Kurds into four states makes the situation even more complicated. Since the breakdown of Kurdish power, their states in early history, kingdoms and emirates, Kurds have lived under the control of different nations: Turks, Arabs (Syria and Iraq), and Persians. What makes the Kurd equal to the other people is that like every nation on the earth who has state and every nation who is struggling for their national sovereignty they also have their own history, cultural and linguistic ties, kinship and a large territory(ies) they live. Therefore, in this aspect, they shall not have any differences than any other nation.

This raises the question of whether an independent state for Kurds would be advantageous or not. All in all, Kurds in Kurdistan territory and the diaspora have been through incidents that go against their national rights; from the cultural and linguistic assimilation to ethnic cleansing by other governments. And the incidents that are taking place in the Kurds’ life recently in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq are related to this argument.

There are more than two-hundred member states of the United Nations in the world and half of them are under the number of Kurdish population. Every nation, speaking the same language, sharing the same historical and cultural heritage, including demographic unity, is guaranteed with the right of self-determination. Therefore, despite the violence and separations, being an independent state is an undeniable right of the Kurds. Under the geo-political and conjectural circumstances, in order to prevent crises, civilian casualties and destruction, the idea of autonomy or being federated to a country can be suggested. At this point, the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and cantons of Rojava (Syrian Kurdish provinces) can be seen as an example of this process. The claim that giving more cultural rights
can solve the problem actually leads more problematic issues in the future as seen currently in Turkey.

Kurds are creating a new paradigm that represents the human values and their struggle for freedom and independence. As their present position in the Middle East, particularly the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, it is a historical obligation for Kurdish forces to create political unity. In order to gain the support of international communities and especially the global powers’ for their survival in such era, this political unity should strongly be considered by all Kurdish parties. National unification for Kurdish powers would achieve more opportunities in the process of independence.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A NATION-STATE FOR THE KURDS?

First of all, the concept of an independent state is connected with the entity and the existence of the identity. Being a state means existing. Some examples show that some nations have been diffused with other nations for not having their own state. For instance, while Assyrian people once ruled Mesopotamia and were the superpower of that time against Persian and Medes empires, since then, they do not have an Assyrian state, they are lost within different nations in Middle East, especially in Iraq, Syria and Iran. Furthermore, they are known as Kurdish Christian or Arabic Christians. The Kurds faced the same situation as the Assyrians. However, Kurds kept their identity even though many have been assimilated. We can see the example of the Kurds who have been put in the exile to Khorasan (Iran) or the middle of Anatolia. While they are being forced to be integrated with other people, their cultural, language and national identity diffuses through this forceful integration. An independent Kurdistan will keep their national entity and protect their culture and language.

One of the most important points of an independent state for Kurds is the case of human rights. At this stage, Kurds have faced the most brutal and violent violations of human rights in their history. Tens of thousands of civilians died in the Anfal campaign during Saddam’s era in Iraq, including the Halabja genocide in 1988.
the deaths of thousands of Kurds in the Dersim massacre by the Turkish government in 1937, and the Zilan massacre with the death of 47,000 Kurdish civilians and the destruction of countless of villages. More recent incidents include the deaths of 36 young Kurdish civilians in 2012 in Roboski (Shirnak province), the continuing operations of the Turkish government in certain Kurdish provinces, countless deaths of Kurds by the Iran regime. All these events that are happening to the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and the situation in Iraq and Syria bring a clear result. Without freedom and without a nation-state, these inhumane events cannot be stopped.

The Kurdistan region of Iraq is now the fundamental target of ISIS. The appearance of ISIS in Mosul and attacking of the Yazidi Kurds in Shingal brought a new base for the conflict between them. While the Kurdistan region seems to be working cooperatively with the Iraqi central government, the failure of the central government to manage this crisis left the Kurds to fight by their own. In the current situation, as Kurdistan regional government strengthened its borders against the threat of ISIS, they also managed to fight beyond these borders. The fact about the Kurds was accepted as they are fighting this international terrorist organization on behalf of the world. This case has already been in the agenda of international community especially the United States. Since the Iraqi Kurds are holding the line to secure their territory, on another hand, they are being attacked not only by ISIS, but also by Shiite and Sunni groups in the problematic regions, as in Kirkuk, Tuzkhurmatu, and Jalawla.

The attacks of Shiite militias and Sunni tribes who are cooperating with the ISIS in Kirkuk and other provinces have escalated the tension between Kurds and Arabs. The strategic situation of Kirkuk is undeniably important for Kurds, especially in the case of oil reserves. The importance of Kirkuk has always been a huge problem during Baathist regime and even after the collapse of Saddam. To be dependent to the central government, Kurdistan region must share the oil reserves in Kirkuk with the Iraqi government. This might seem normal between the regional and central governments. Unfortunately, the unequal share of incomes by central government towards
Kurdistan has already been in agenda long before the appearance of the ISIS. This and such economic problems between the regional and the central government pushed the Kurds to export their own oil without the permission of the Iraqi government. Eventually, such legislative problems cannot be solved without a division between them. Otherwise, this problem will be more crucial even if the country succeeds in this sensitive stage. Alternatively, being independent from the central government would gain more economic advantages to the Kurds to keep their economy alive and help such a small state to gain more benefits from different markets.

Another crucial issue is the situation of Western Kurds (Syria) in recent times. However, the Syrian Kurds (YPG, YPJ) are supporting Assad’s regime and declaring they are fighting not for an independent state but for a democratic Syria, the bad image of Assad in Western world in political terms would not help Kurds to find a trusted side even if ISIS and other opposition groups were defeated. By supporting Assad’s regime, Kurds are not being the target of ISIS only, but the other opposition groups as well. In this case, picking the regime’s side would bring more disadvantages to the Syrian Kurds rather than the advantages. However, in a case of unification of Iraqi and Syrian Kurds, it will certainly encourage the Kurds in Turkey and Iran. Because what seems to be the most crucial problem among the Kurds is the lack of unity, and this issue can be solved only by the unity that is called a state. If the situation of Syrian Kurds turns on the contrary and they lose their support from Assad and his allies, the consequences would be much difficult for them to bear.

The case of Kurds in Turkey is another complicated issue. Northern Kurdistan forms the biggest part of the Kurdish state with a huge population (15 to 20 million). This also causes bigger problems between them and the government. Like Iraqi Kurds, Turkish Kurds have also suffered in their past time in Dersim and Zilan genocides. Although the Turkish parliament now includes pro-Kurdish party and the government ensures limited cultural rights, the conflicts between the government and PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), despite the cease-fires in several times, take a part influentially between the
government and the people. In the last 30 years, more than 30,000 people lost their lives in this conflict apart from the current events.  

For several times, the Turkish officials called this issue as an issue of terror, economical issues, cultural and educational problems, but in fact from the case of education in mother tongue to unsolved murders in past and the present time, explosions in pro-Kurdish rallies, special security zones in some specific regions and curfews, detention and assassination of Kurdish intellectuals are the unfortunate consequences of not being independent. However, several solution alternatives were suggested from both sides, but eventually none of them could bring a concrete result to solve the issue between the Kurds and the Turkish government. In another word, everything was tried, none worked. The only way of solution is to give the Kurds their independence.

CONCLUSION

We are living in an area where the idea of nationalism and nation-state is being less important compared to and influenced by the international communities and global marketing systems. Practically, the world becomes a small village where all people know and are tied to each other. The international communities, such as the European Union and the United Nations, cooperatively with the powerful countries, are they key actors leading the political and economic development in the world. Therefore, within these communities, especially in the EU, the national identity in their foreign policy, relatively to their national interests, takes the second place after the common foreign and security policies. Any division in such community would not benefit any parties. It is important to mention that even those member states of the international communities have gained their current positions starting with the national movements and establishing their own nation-states. However, the states are the members of the community, their identity is still mentioned by their nation-state. Therefore, the consensus of nation and nation-state is an undeniable point.
The social and political structures of the developed countries and their positions in modernity and civilization have been shaped relatively to their national accumulation. As a result of their national accumulation, those countries could have reached the high level of social, political, and economic development. Accordingly, the countries which completed their national dynamism become a voice in international arena. A country that shows weaknesses in national sense cannot gain an impressive place in international sense either. That is why the way to reach an effective international position starts from a strong national body.

Compared with the issue of the Kurds, in the term of protecting their own civilization and providing their cultural, intellectual, economic, and political status, it can only be resulted after losing their national values by living under the shadow of the other nations. Thus, they will remain outside of the world’s developed and developing civilization. Economically being adhered to the countries in which they live under the authority of, while being accepted as a simple community, socially and culturally they will be deprived from and lose all their values.

Since the right of self-determination is protected and respected by the international organizations, and the role of the organizations in global governance and in international policy is undeniable, promoting and providing this right is once again the duty of these organizations. Within the frameworks of liberal understanding, in order to prevent the regional conflicts and promote the human rights and the global peace, the solution of regional and international issues are the most important elements in the agenda of the international organizations. At this point, the United Nations, NATO and many other humanitarian organs play an effective role. Therefore, the aspect of the right of self-determination of the Kurds should also be a crucial concerning point for them.

By analyzing the different circumstances of Kurdish people in different regions, their political situation in the regions differs from each other. During the last events, the Syrian federal state including different minorities as well as the Kurds, viewing the Iraqi central
government as a failed state and on the edge of division and declaration of the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan, becomes example of enjoying the right of self-determination. However, the situation of the Kurds in Turkey, their demand of the autonomy and the unfortunate consequences are causing the civil war in the country. As Turkey is the member of NATO and the UN, the government is not fulfilling the requirements of the membership considered the human rights and the rights of minorities. Therefore, the solution of this chaotic situation and protecting the right of self-determination of the Kurds in Turkey should be another duty of these organizations. By this way, the country would have more stable position in political perspective and the conflicts which caused civilian casualties would come to an end, otherwise the country may face the worst events. Unlike these events, the humanitarian rights of Kurds in Iran shall not be ignored. Indeed, in such situation, talking about external self-determination for Iranian Kurds would be fruitful. However, as it was mentioned before, gaining cultural, linguistic and religious right is also another definition of self-determination. Once again it should be the duty of the international community.

Every nation is formed by free-born individuals, and freedom is the most important value that no one can deny. Neither individuals nor the communities are willing to live under the hegemony of any other power. Prohibiting its language and culture, denying the national values, and most importantly, prohibiting living in the land under its own provision is one of the greatest atrocities applied on a nation. The violence and persecution developing consequently not only between people and the governments, but also between communities lead to the emergence of civil wars, and therefore, the communities and the states face lots of problems socially, politically as well as internationally. It is crucial that the situation of Kurdish people is not far from such events, and the consequences are endured by the people and the states. In order to prevent the causes and the results of violence in both sides, it is necessary for the opposite states to recognize the right of Kurds to establish their own nation-state. In order to prevent more conflicts between the Kurdish people and the states,
this right of self-determination and the right of being an independent state should be protected by the international organizations respectfully to the articles of the Charter of United Nations.

NOTES


21 Ibidem, p. 20.
32 Bilgic, M. S. Turkiye’de Kurtler ve Toplumsal Algılar. İstanbul: Bilgesam Yayınları, 2012, p. 3.
33 Ibidem, p. 20.
Cihat Yilmaz
KURDAI IR JŲ TAUTINĖ VALSTYBĖ:
APSISPRENDIMO TEISĖ IR KURDŲ POZICIJA

Santrauka
Tam tikrais istorijos laikotarpiais iš kurdų buvo atimta tautos apsisprendimo teisė ir kurdai buvo valdomi kitų tautų. Daugelis mokslininkų yra tyrę problemas, susijusias su kurdų tauta, nacionalizmu ir kurdų valstybės koncepcija. Į šias diskusijas buvo įtrauktos politinės partijos, įvairūs socialiniai judėjimai bei politiniai aktyvistai. Nepaisant daugelio tyrimų ir diskusijų, dabartinė situacija kurdų gyvenamoje regione sukūrė naujas prielaidas ir būtinybę aptarti kurdų tautinės valstybės idėją. Šis straipsnis yra skirtas išanalizuoti ne tik istorines, bet ir dabartines problemas, susijusias su kurdų tautos, nacionalizmo idėjos bei judėjimo ir tautinės valstybės kūrimo koncepcijomis. Straipsnyje analizuojant kurdų valstybės siekį, pabrėžiama tautų apsisprendimo teisė.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: kurdai, Kurdistanas, tauta, nacionalizmas, tautinė valstybė.