

# **Decentralization as a Conflict-Resolution Mechanism on Kurdish Conflict in Turkey**

## **Panacea or Poison?**

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## **Abstract**

Decentralization is an effective conflict resolution mechanism widely used in the countries where ethnic conflicts are experienced. However, the success chance of decentralization is highly dependent on country-specific conditions. In the light of existing theoretical considerations, this study explores the use of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism on Kurdish Conflict in Turkey. The research question of “To what extent can decentralization be utilized as a conflict resolution mechanism on Kurdish Conflict in Turkey?” is designed to explore the capacity of decentralization to bring peace in Kurdish Conflict through qualitative content analysis and case study approach. The analysis is constructed in the framework of two theoretical concepts, which are decentralization and conflict resolution, in order to obtain a better insight to the role of decentralization on the solution of Kurdish Conflict. Accordingly, the first part of the analysis focuses the benefits of decentralization, which provide legitimacy and effectiveness in the local governance, with an emphasis on the differences between the national and Council of Europe legislation while the second part examines on the capacity of decentralization to answer the triggers of Kurdish Conflict. Thus, it is mainly aimed to identify the possible benefits of an ideal decentralization model to be used for the resolution of Kurdish Conflict with reference to the existing problems which exacerbates the conflict due to the lack of legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance. On the basis of conducted analysis, this thesis reveals that decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism can be used on Kurdish Conflict as an alternative and peaceful model across security-based measurements when an appropriate design is provided. However, institutional design of decentralization and regional dynamics in the Middle East can be considered as possible threats in terms of the success of an ideal decentralization model.

**Keywords** : Decentralization, Kurdish Conflict, Democratic Autonomy, Conflict Resolution, Power-Sharing, Territorial Self-Governance

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>AKP</b>	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
<b>BDP</b>	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>DTP</b>	Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
<b>DTK</b>	Demokratik Toplum Kongresi (Democratic Society Congress)
<b>HDP</b>	Halkların Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democracy Party)
<b>PKK</b>	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
<b>PJAK</b>	Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Free Life Party)
<b>SPA</b>	Special Provincial Administration
<b>TBMM</b>	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Turkish Grand National Assembly)

## 1. Introduction

Decentralization in general terms has hitherto been attached to effective governance, development, citizen participation and democratization. In recent times, it has also gained an increasing attention as a mechanism in order to reduce conflict, constitute peace and protect the interests of minority groups (Norris, 2008). As one of the prominent studies on this field, the quantitative analysis of Brancati (2009) revealed that political decentralization mitigates ethnic conflicts. Based on this motivation, this thesis is designed to examine the utility of political decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism on ongoing Kurdish Conflict in Turkey. The nature of decentralization requires to evaluate its role with a case study with reference to country-specific factors. Because, decentralization does not have a universal formula that is valid for all countries in the world. Therefore, although the use of decentralization for conflict resolution is widely recognized, one can say that its success is highly contingent on country-specific conditions. However, decentralization experiences of other countries may also become a road map in order to understand general patterns on conflict resolution. In this respect, Belgium, India and Spain are successful examples in curbing ethnic conflict and secessionism through decentralization while Nigeria, Indonesia and the former Yugoslavia could not grasp the same achievement.

As a general perspective, Brancati (2009) emphasizes the success of decentralization on these countries is mostly related to democratic culture, regional cleavages and regional parties. In terms of cases more specifically, Spain's decentralization experience in the early 1980s decreased the public support for ETA while a number of other violent secessionist groups in Catalonia and Galicia also dispersed. The United Kingdom implemented decentralization in order to control over colonies but Minorities at Risk (MAR) Project revealed decentralized governance by extending autonomy in the Northern Ireland in 1998 and Scotland and Wales in 1999 decreased inter-communal conflicts. 'Local rebellions' and 'small-scale guerilla activity' in Moldova ended up after decentralization was implemented by extending autonomy to Transnistria and Gagauz in 1994 also abated ethnic conflict and secessionism in Moldova (Brancati, 2006, pp.14-15). Kosovo as a country where has one of the most advanced minority protection rights in Europe with asymmetrical decentralization could not be a successful example. However, this situation should be considered in relation to Kosovo's state status. Despite the country provided political engagement with southern K-Serbs, the '*de facto*' partition of northern Kosovo negatively influenced the linkage between the effects of decentralization reforms and Kosovo's status (Wetterberg et al., 2010). In the light of these experiences of the countries and theoretical considerations, it is aimed to get a new insight to the use of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict. However, differently from the previous literature, it is aimed to reveal that the causes of the conflicts are the most

important determinants in order to evaluate decentralization on conflict resolution. The following section is designed to provide historical background of Kurdish Conflict to be used in the analysis of decentralization.

### 1.1. Background and The Roots of Kurdish Conflict

Kurdish Conflict is an *intra-state* and *ethno-political conflict* (Capan, 2015; Özçelik, 2006; Çelik, 2012) that is the most painful problem of the country caused more than 40,000 people have lost their lives. The principal actors of Kurdish Conflict in Turkey are Turkish State and PKK, known in Kurdish as Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (and in English as the Kurdistan Workers' Party) while the question cannot be limited to Turkey. The Kurds have an extensive historical background in Anatolia. The number of Kurds does not have official figures but various research estimate that a total number of 30 million consist of 12 or 15 million in Turkey; more than 8 million in Iran; 5 million in Iraq; more than 1 million in Syria; and almost 2 million in Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries, the former Soviet Union and Europe) as it is shown in Figure 1 (Bozarslan, 2008, p.334). Due to these figures, Kurds are the largest stateless nation in the world (Yanarocak, 2009, p.20; Hassanpour, 1994, p.3). Despite this largest stateless nation status, the representatives of pro-Kurdish political parties (thereafter, Kurdish Political Movement) claim that it is not aimed to establish an independent state since 1999<sup>1</sup>. Rather, the Movement claims that their quests are based on Democratic Autonomy Model that can be considered in scope of political decentralization.

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<sup>1</sup> The capture of the leader of PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, in 1999 has become a turning point in terms of the quest of Kurdish Political Movement. While the Movement had aimed to establish an independent state from 1978-1999, the latest quest of Kurdish Political Movement is the recognition of democratic autonomy since 1999.

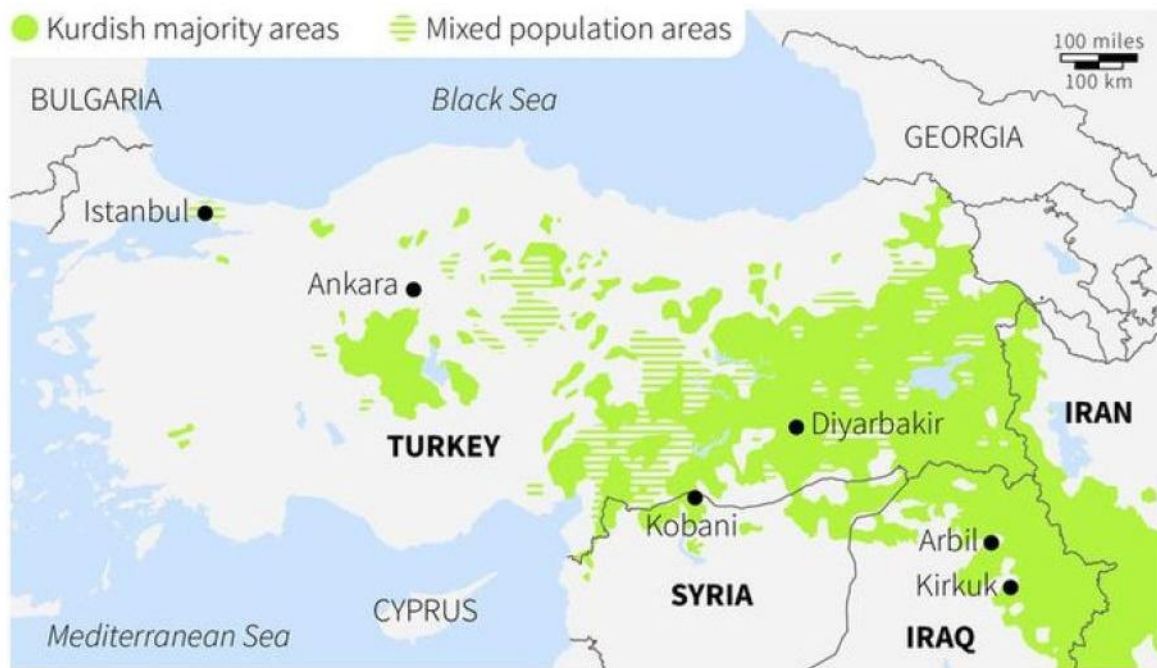


Figure 1 : Distribution of Kurdish Population in the Middle East

Source: Reuters in <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-10/kurdish-map/6763626>

Based on this turning point in Kurdish Conflict, discussions on decentralization gained momentum. However, the issue also has a historical background which lies back to Ottoman Empire period. Accordingly, Kurds had a degree of autonomy granted by Ottoman Sultans in the 15th and 16th centuries. This autonomy was removed in the period of rebellions of tribal leaders against Ottoman Sultans. In the War of Independence Period of Turkey, the Treaty of Sevres signed on 1920 with Western Allies was granting self-rule right to the Kurds (Ergil, 2000, p.124). When Independent War of the country started against Western Allies, Treaty of Sevres was abolished and instead signed Treaty of Lausanne recognized neither autonomy nor self-determination right of Kurds. In the following period, *self-rule* or *autonomy* rights of Kurds was barely expressed until the capture of the leader of PKK, Abdullah Ocalan. In fact, the quest of PKK and Kurdish Political Movement consisted of independent state until 1999. After the capture of PKK leader, a decentralization model has been designed in the name of Democratic Autonomy. Decentralization quest also found a basis in the Turkish Government in 2013. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan clearly declared that he is in favor of a more decentralized state system in Turkey (T24, 2013). Except these exercises, decentralization found a basis neither in the layer of society nor in the political agenda of Turkish State since it was considered as a step towards secessionism and a threat to the unity of state rather than a plausible solution model for



Kurdish Conflict. In other words, the decentralization implementations of Turkish State till today has remained limited to administrative practices without reference to the demands of Kurdish Political Movement.

Therefore, analyzing decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism requires to identify the root causes of Kurdish Conflict in order to illustrate an ideal decentralization model that can answer to the triggers of Kurdish Conflict. The causes of Kurdish Conflict can be classified into three: sociocultural, economic and political causes. The sociocultural causes of Kurdish Conflict are derived from denial of identity and language rights since Kurdish identity and language are currently not recognized in the Turkish constitution. The reason behind this implementation is explained by Ergil (2000) *“Turkish state is based on a conception of ‘nation-building’ that calls for standardizing the citizenry to make them Turkish in language and nationality, secular in orientation, and obedient to the state. Such a conception naturally leads to the denial of diversity and the repression of any other expression of group identity.”* (p.123). In other words, the recognition of the Kurdish identity and language was considered as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state and the unity of the nation (Gul and Kiris, 2015, p.40). Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi - AKP) in 2012 has adopted a range of reforms on education of Kurdish language and broadcasting a national channel in Kurdish language when negotiations started with PKK and its arrested leader to end armed conflict up became an important breakpoint in terms of cultural rights of Kurds. However, the status of Kurdish identity and demands were barely mentioned (Vezbergaite, 2015, p.8; Mutlu, 2013,p.4).

The economic causes of Kurdish Conflict imply that the problem of the least developed regions feature are Kurdish-inhabited regions in Turkey. As to economical causes of problem, regional inequality constituted the most important dimension of the Conflict. The private sector often abstained from investing to the region claiming infrastructure deficiencies and conflict. The government could not minimize these inadequacies and the situation fueled a serious economic and social gap between the Kurdish-inhabited regions and the rest of the country (Barkey, 1993, p.52). According to 2011 TUIK figures, while the GDP per capita was \$15.137 in Turkey, all Southeastern regions were below this figure. While GDP per capita was \$18.101 in Istanbul, it was \$8029 in Diyarbakir and \$2595 as the lowest GDP per capita in the country was in Sirnak (Sonmez, 2012 ;Barkey, 1993, p.52). Based on the idea of Brown (1996) claiming that the economy’s general improvement may be reflected in some groups and growing inequities and gaps can aggravate intra-state tensions, one can say that the dramatic gap between Western and Eastern Regions of the Turkey became one of the most important catalysts on the way of Kurdish conflict (p. 20). *Relative deprivation* which is described by Gurr (1970) as *‘a perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations*

*that are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled and men's value capabilities that are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining given the social means available to them'* (p.13) occurs.

The political causes of Kurdish Conflict cover *centralist state structure, self-rule, official state ideology* and *elite politics*. First, the centralist state structure caused the central government has become far away the problems of Southeastern and Eastern regions of Turkey and to the Kurds in the region. Thus, a gap between central government and locals has expanded. In connection with centralist state structure, official state ideology which hinges on single nationality, flag and language excluded other identities and united them within the umbrella of Turkishness that does not imply an ethnicity, rather symbolizes *a new glue of citizenship* (Yanarocak, 2009, p.32). In other words, *Turkishness* does not refer to a race-based identity while the non-admittance of *Turkishness* is an unacceptable situation. Therefore, the exclusion of Kurds within official state ideology became one of the political roots of Kurdish Conflict. Third, *Elite Politics* is also the determinant as a political trigger of Kurdish Conflict. It is meant that the relations between Turkish and Kurdish Political Leaders can drag masses into conflicts or peace process depending on power politics of elites. Even if lay people on both sides do not demand different political aims, the fate of conflicts are determined by Elites. In a nutshell, the utility of political decentralization on Kurdish Conflict is more likely related to the causes of Kurdish Conflict. Therefore, it is aimed to examine how this root causes are associated with the benefits of decentralization on the resolution of Kurdish Conflict.

## 1.2. Research question(s) and problem statement

Existing literature reveals that decentralization is an effective conflict resolution mechanism (Brancati, 2009; Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009; Brinkerhoff, 2011; Bakke and Wibbels, 2006; Bermeo, 2002; Grasa and Camps, 2009). Nonetheless the relationship between conflict resolution and decentralization is not concluded on the formula of 'one size fits all'. In other words, the achievement of decentralization is highly contingent on country-specific conditions. Based on this understanding, overall aim of this thesis is to examine the capacity of decentralization to abate Kurdish Conflict in Turkey. In this respect, it is important to note that decentralization is an extensive concept which covers different types of power-sharing arrangements such as federalism, political autonomy and other types of territorial self-governance designs. For this thesis, it is preferred to obtain the core features of decentralization models, which is specified in the data collection, in order to constitute an ideal decentralization model for Kurdish Conflict, rather than focusing on specific type of

power-sharing arrangement. Furthermore, the fact that federalism and autonomy are mostly perceived with secessionism, these models hinder to suggest effective methods towards the solution due to the decision-makers' and citizens' biases. It is believed that decentralization does not have the same destiny with the federalism or autonomy since it refers to a more extensive and general definition of autonomy. However, the use of decentralization refers to political decentralization for this thesis.

*“To what extent can decentralization be utilized as a conflict resolution mechanism on Kurdish Conflict in Turkey?”*

The research question constitutes an untouched part of Kurdish Conflict since the issue has hitherto been perceived as a security issue. Whereas if it has been a security issue, it would have been solved in 40 years. The historical development process of the Question indicates that Kurdish Conflict requires to constitute an alternative approach apart from security-oriented solution methods. In the direction of this alternative approach, it is aimed to identify the benefits of decentralization in providing peace to Kurdish Conflict by answering this research question. Even though decentralization may only be considered as a local governance model, several scholars already proved positive impacts of decentralization on conflict-resolution (Brancati, 2009; Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009). From this perspective, the defended argument is here that decentralization through its discussed benefits can mitigate Kurdish Conflict. In order to provide a coherent and precise answer to this question, several sub-questions need to be explained as follows :

*Q1: “To what extent do the benefits of decentralization contribute to the solution of sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict in Turkey?”*

With this question, it is aimed to identify the benefits of decentralization for the solution of sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict. In this respect, sociocultural triggers are defined as the recognition of the Kurdish identity and linguistic rights. The fact that the recognition of the Kurdish identity and language are considered as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state and the unity of the nation (Gul and Kiris, 2015, p.40), it is believed that the elimination of these triggers can bring peace to the Kurdish Conflict and it is only possible through decentralization. Because the current state-society relations should be based the citizens' preferences rather than power politics of the state to hinder possible conflicts. In that sense, it is claimed that sociocultural triggers can only be solved through legitimacy-providing benefits of decentralization. The reason behind this association is that Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) claim that *“greater levels of political legitimacy causes lower levels of armed conflict and the argument”* (Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009, p.21). Accordingly, the legitimacy, which is

believed to be provided by decentralization, mitigates or solves sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict by building a functioning, peaceful and fair state mechanism in the eyes of citizens. Finally, it is concluded that a legitimate governance accepted by citizens can ease the tension in the conflict environment.

*Q2: "To what extent do the benefits of decentralization contribute to the solution of economic triggers of Kurdish conflict in Turkey?"*

It is widely known that the problems on economic development in the Kurdish-inhabited regions fueled the Kurdish Conflict by creating a serious economic and social gap between the Kurdish-inhabited regions and the rest of the country (Barkey, 1993, p.52). Based on this fact, it is aimed to identify the benefits of decentralization for the solution of economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict. The fact that the current state-society relations should also cover welfare of citizens and the governance, which is based on horizontal inequalities, can face with difficulties to constitute the peace in a country; the benefits of decentralization to provide effectiveness in the governance are associated with easing the economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict. In this respect, effectiveness, which is provided by decentralized structures, can constitute a functioning, effective and fair economic structure that does not lead to the conflicts. Accordingly, each dimension serves to heal the existing problematic economic structure and contributes to eliminate economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict.

*Q3: "To what extent do the benefits of decentralization contribute to the solution of political/structural triggers of Kurdish conflict in Turkey?"*

Based on the previous assumptions on legitimacy and effectiveness, it can be said that these components of decentralization are also capable to mitigate or solve political triggers of Kurdish Conflict. The mapping of Brinkerhoff (2011) on conflict drivers and governance dimensions revealed the importance of interventions that can enhance state legitimacy and effectiveness to mitigate the effects of grievance related forces. This mapping also exhibited that these interventions should include decentralized structures and processes to constitute the connections between these two levels (p.147). By asking this sub-question, it is aimed to identify the benefits of decentralization for the solution of political triggers of Kurdish Conflict through these two levels. By answering this question, it is aimed to examine whether the capacity of decentralization is sufficient to bring a permanent peace in the region since peace is the final aim of the use of decentralization in this thesis.

### 1.3. Approach

In this thesis to provide answers to research questions above, a case study research with qualitative content analysis will be proposed. The reasons behind using Qualitative content analysis are the lack of necessary quantitative data sets and impracticability of quantitative analysis for the chosen topic. Qualitative content analysis is defined by Krippendorff (2013, p. 24) “*a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.*” Researchers most often use content analysis descriptively, but they may also benefit from it to generate a new knowledge or to test existing theory. Qualitative content analysis is a convenient method to identify the attitudes, political events and a great deal of social research topics and focuses on research questions on the light of interpretation of texts. Decentralization with Kurdish Conflict could only be conducted with this method since the conflict triggers and proposals suggested by pro-Kurdish Political Parties and TESEV can only be associated with the means of decentralization by analyzing documents. Furthermore, a quantitative analysis would remain insufficient to reflect on Kurdish Conflict within *deterministic nature of the issue*. A case study approach is also adopted to be able to analyze the decentralization’s intertwined and complex structure and consider it as a conflict resolution mechanism in a more concrete way. Such a topic without a case study would remain superficial and lacking (Lyon, 2012, p.27). It is also aimed to measure the capacity of decentralization with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict since it is known that the benefits of decentralization in Kurdish Conflict is only measured with its capacity on answerability to the conflict triggers. Therefore, what is expected from this research is to clarify that decentralization can mitigate Kurdish Conflict by providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance. The evidence is provided through the other cases which are utilized from decentralization for the same goal shown in Chapter 2 and chosen data collection analyzed in Chapter 4. Thus, the core features of presented proposals are the means to create the ideal decentralization model of this thesis.

This analysis is maintained by conducting a content analysis since the use of decentralization in Kurdish Conflict inherently requires to have an exploratory viewpoint to extract the core features of an ideal decentralization. On the other hand, case study approach is presented to handle triggers of Kurdish Conflict vis-a-vis decentralization. The benefit of case study approach is to give an opportunity to the reader to associate the triggers of Kurdish Conflict with the features of decentralization to be able to consider these elements in relation to each other. Lastly, this thesis comprises of five chapters including this introductory chapter. The following chapter entails the use of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism from a general perspective with the aim of providing background information to consider decentralization in the Kurdish Conflict. Chapter 3 is the section that

reveals the methodology for examining decentralization on Kurdish Conflict. For this purpose, the design of case description, data collection and data analysis will help the reader to understand the construction of the analysis. The fourth chapter is the section that decentralization and Kurdish conflict have met up. This chapter explores how decentralization can be used as a conflict resolution mechanism on Kurdish Conflict and what chosen literature suggests regarding to answer the research and sub-questions that are designed to answer the triggers of Kurdish Conflict. On the one hand, the relevant data is compiled to examine whether the deficiencies of existing legislation in comparison with CoE documents in terms of providing legitimacy and effectiveness dimensions of decentralization, and on the other hand the data compilation is utilized in order to extract core features of suggested proposals to create the ideal decentralization model of this thesis that can be used to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict. Lastly, a concluding chapter is designed to introduce the answer for the research question through the findings and introduce the comparable answers to the research questions.

## 2. Decentralization as a Conflict Resolution Mechanism

Second chapter of this thesis has been designed with the aim of enlightening the reader with regards to the use of decentralization on conflict-resolution. By describing the characteristics of this mechanism with reference to conflict resolution, it is aimed to obtain a general viewpoint regarding to the capacity of decentralization on conflict resolution is revealed. In the light of theoretical considerations, each feature of decentralization is revealed in order to associate decentralization with Kurdish Conflict on Chapter 4.

### 2.1. Understanding Decentralization

While decentralization has been mostly assumed to be attached with effective local governance, several scholars claimed that decentralization can also ease ethnic tensions and constitute peace (Ahuja and Varshney, 2005; Brancati, 2009; Faguet et al., 2015; Erk and Anderson, 2009; Horowitz 1991; Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009; Stepan 1999, 2009). In general terms, decentralization can be defined as “...*the transfer of authority, responsibility, and resources—through deconcentration, delegation, or devolution—from the center to lower levels of administration.*” (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007, p.1). This governance method has become a mandatory trend for many countries which suffered from local governance problems in 1990s. Because, the complex governance problems required an effective mechanism to deliver local services to citizens more easily. Due to the fact that the centralist government cannot answer this complexity, increasing the autonomy of ‘local’ governance became inevitable. In terms of conflict resolution, there is no ‘*one-size-fits-all*’ approach for decentralization. Therefore, evaluating country-specific conditions are the main issue to determine the achievement of decentralization on conflict resolution. The heated debates suggest to construct a decentralized governance by taking country-specific conditions into consideration. In order to explain the utility of decentralization on conflict-resolution, two typologies of decentralization will be adopted based on the findings of previous literature: Political decentralization and administrative decentralization. The reason behind taking only these typologies is that the relevance of these typologies with conflict resolution.

*Administrative decentralization* mainly refers to the service delivery of functions such as health services, social welfare, taxation, land use and education to sub-governmental administrative units (Williams, 2005). To put it more concretely, administrative decentralization implies the delegation of centralized power to lower levels of sovereign power (Bannick and Ossewaarde, 2011, p.601). Accordingly, lower levels of sovereign power refer to field units of government agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-

autonomous public authorities, area-wide regional authorities and nongovernmental private or voluntary organizations (Rondinelli, 1981a; Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983, p.13). In terms of the degree of these units, administrative decentralization in this thesis focuses on three types - *deconcentration*, *delegation* and *devolution* -- each have different features. *Deconcentration* is the weakest type of administrative decentralization in terms of transfer of authority, resources and responsibility to local units. This form hardly includes any change in the power structure or policies that have been implemented. The administration is still clearly part of the national government and there may rarely be a shift of workload from a central government ministries to its field offices without transferring central authority to make decisions (Cheema and Rondinelli,1983, p.23). *Delegation* is the form of middle-power administrative decentralization and refers to the transfer of managerial responsibilities for specific functions to organizations which are not attached to regular bureaucratic structure only managed indirectly by central government. Accountability to central government is still available while transfer of power to local entities is not vital. Decision-making on financial issues are partially on the responsibility of local governments while not disconnected from central government authority. *Devolution* is the highest level of the administrative decentralization. Political powers, resources and financial decisions are highly independent from central government. The central government only concentrates on national problems. Devolved local governments are highly autonomous and independent from central government. Authority and public functions are exercised within a specific territorial area under the limited control of central government. The perception of devolved local governments in the eyes of the population as organizations providing services is to satisfy citizens' needs. However, they are perceived as administrative units as part of the central ministry (Cheema and Rondinelli,1983, p.23; Valpoort, 2006, pp.15-16).

*Political decentralization* is described by Norris (2008) as *the most radical version of vertical power-sharing* that implies the shift in the decision-making authority from center to local such as local elected councils, city mayors and state governors. Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) describe political decentralization as follows :

*Political decentralization includes organizations and procedures for increasing citizen participation in selecting political representatives and in making public policy; changes in the structure of the government through devolution of powers and authority to local units of government; power-sharing institutions within the state through federalism, constitutional federations, or autonomous regions; and institutions and procedures allowing freedom of association and participation of civil society organizations in public decisionmaking, in providing socially beneficial services, and in mobilizing social and financial resources to influence political decision making. (p.7)*



In other words, political decentralization implies decision-making transfer which penetrates capability on legislature and requires a solid institutional background in order to constitute the development of pluralistic political parties, the strengthening of legislatures, the creation of local political units, and the encouragement of effective public interest groups (Hossain, 1994, p.3). While power transfer is political, the approach is mostly territorial or regional in the political decentralization. It is also important to specify that the decision-making capacity of political decentralization differs depending on countries. Subnational governments of political decentralization exercise their authority over their legally recognized geographical boundaries (Hossain, 1994). However, the fields, which they exercise, are special to the specific needs of different areas of a country. Sub-national decision-making power can legislate large-scale political issues such as defense, foreign affairs, currency, and immigration as well as health, education, gambling, marriage, roads and transportation (Brancati, 2006, p.5). In the following section, a special emphasis is implemented on the distinction among political, administrative and federal structures. The literature which neglects this distinction is meticulously used attempting to extract specific features of these types of decentralization. Overall, these two typologies of decentralization have been selected depending on their relevance with conflict resolution. However, due to the fact that devolution of decision-making authority and the emphasis of territorial and regional power-sharing, political decentralization is taken as basic concept in the data analysis. Furthermore, the previous literature mainly focuses on the role of political decentralization on conflict resolution.

## 2.2. The Benefits of Decentralization on Conflict Resolution

While decentralization has hitherto been illustrated with strengthening local democracy, participation, representation, accountability, improving quality of local personal and service delivery, several authors discussed the use of these components is also possible for conflict-resolution. In this thesis, it is intended to identify the benefits of decentralization in scope of governance dimensions (i.e. *legitimacy and effectiveness*) constructed by Brinkerhoff (2011). Thus, the benefits of decentralization in providing peace are analyzed with reference to legitimacy and effectiveness dimensions in association with the conflict triggers. The benefits of decentralization in providing peace are mostly realized when legitimacy is provided in the governance. Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) emphasize the importance of legitimacy on conflict resolution, "*greater levels of political legitimacy causes lower levels of armed conflict and the argument because empowered local governments with resources (financial and human) strengthens the legitimacy of local leaders were linked to lower levels of ethnic conflict* " (Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009, p.21-22). In other words, legitimate structures

established by decentralization contributes to the peaceful governance through legitimate local leaders. In terms of legitimacy and conflict resolution, four benefits of decentralization are taken into consideration. First, political participation can briefly be described as “*actions by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing political outcomes*” (Teorell et al. 2007, p.336). The desired form of political participation is citizen involvement in the decision-making process. Decentralization increases political participation through either educating citizens for democratic citizenship or increasing the number of institutional access points to the decision making process. Thus, it leads political representatives to be more responsive to the local needs since locals are involved in policy-making process (Fatke, 2016). This peaceful environment decreases the likelihood of conflict since responsive representatives who are close to local needs will have to satisfy the preferences of locals.

Second, decentralization performs an important role “*to shape and express local identity through political activity*” (Pratchett, 2004, p.366). Decentralization helps *identity recognition* through increasing locals’ control over issues such as education and justice and hereby, they can safeguard their languages and religious practices (Brancati, 2009, p. 9). Thus, *identity recognition* may be fulfilled by decentralized structures providing a democratic environment in which identity rights can be easily discussed and local identity expressed (Lagares, 2013, p.26). In other words, identity-based activities can easily be performed by local governments satisfying identity demands of locals and it decreases the likelihood of conflicts in the respective country. Third, decentralization can have a positive effect on the fair distribution of power (Grasa and Camps, 2009, p.34). Accordingly, it constitutes a balanced and equitable power-sharing arrangement, which automatically supports to eliminate *tutelage* over local authorities, by replacing it with subsidiarity principle. The emphasis on *tutelage* here is the degree of control of central government, which has the arbitrary control over local authorities. Such a system leads locals more to the conflicts due to the dissatisfaction of locals from policy outcomes. When decentralization eliminates *tutelage* in the administrative system through a fair distribution of powers, constituted local governments will both serve tailored outputs for locals and decrease the likelihood of the conflicts.

Finally, *Good Governance* is also one of the benefits of decentralization in scope of legitimacy. According to definition of UN Human Rights Commission, good governance consists of fulfillment of five key elements ‘*transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, responsiveness (to the needs of the people)*’ (UNHRC). The importance of good governance component can be emphasized as Faguet (1997) claims that “*the services of central government are more standardized, less-differentiated outputs less suited to local preferences than local government*” (p.5). Accordingly, an appropriate design of local services, which is suited to the local preferences, is only possible through decentralization.

Furthermore, decentralized structures with good governance facilitates locals' acceptance and hereby, 'hard-working' local authorities can eliminate pretexts used for conflicts. The another prerequisite to establish peace in a country is to provide *effectiveness* through decentralization in the governance in order to strengthen administrative capacity to satisfy the demands of locals. First, *fiscal autonomy* in the local governance provides effective use of resource revenues and strengthens the identity/ethnic-based demands such as '*arranging cultural activities, building schools, publishing books in the language of the ethnic minority and hiring teachers*' (Ayele, 2012, p.108). Limited fiscal autonomy of local authorities causes not to be able to fulfill these services and hereby, ethnic based conflicts may aggravate. Second, enhancing the quality of *local service delivery* through decentralized structures provides a fair distribution of resources and minimize poverty in the conflict areas. Brinkerhoff (2011) specifies that the success of decentralization on conflict resolution is related to the potential of service delivery because '*decentralized structures can guarantee that services are provided by the level of government closest to the intended recipients, which can allow local governments the space to tailor policies/services to local needs and preferences*' (p.142). In other words, decentralization's achievement on local service delivery will facilitate to address local preferences and hereby, the state will be less amenable to conflicts.

Third, *regional development* is another important issue while designing decentralized structures to mitigate conflicts. Brancati (2009) specifies that "*if feelings of economic disadvantage prompt secessionism, then decentralization can lessen demands for independence by allowing groups to decide on how money is allocated within their region*" (p.9). In other words, reducing the authority of central government for resource alleviation through decentralization will provide local authorities to take their financial decisions on their own. This situation minimizes economic unfairness imposed by central government if the region is wealthy in terms of resource revenues. Thus, regional development is maximized for the respective region and economic deprivation is minimized. Consequently, the benefits of decentralization on conflict resolution can be explained with their impact areas in scope of effectiveness and legitimacy. Aforementioned scholars revealed that these benefits contributed to the mitigation or solution of ethnic conflicts. Then, *Can decentralization capture the same success on Kurdish Conflict?* Otherwise, as some scholars warned, are institutional design and country-specific conditions much more important than these benefits themselves? Based on theoretical considerations, it is aimed to analyze the potential of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict in Chapter 4. For this purpose, these impacts of decentralization will be analyzed in relation to the triggers of Kurdish Conflict as well as related to country-specific conditions.

### 2.3. The Risks of Decentralization on Conflict Resolution

Decentralization has been suggested as a panacea in the previous section for ethnic conflicts while its risks are also commonly recognized. The most used argument for decentralization is its potential to drag masses to the ethnic conflicts and finally, to the secession. In this section, the risks of decentralization on conflict resolution will be examined in order to analyze what challenges we may encounter when implementing decentralization to mitigate ethnic conflicts. First, decentralization may be used as a *transition process to secession*. In reality, decentralization can transform to secession. Granting power to locals will constitute the perception that they can manage much better their own country than central government (Faguet et al., 2015 , p.4). Second, decentralization can allow locals to misuse local minorities and ignite ethnic cleavages. This situation may provoke the public against local entities and national unity may be dispersed with the effect of nationalist feelings on both sides. In this respect, regional parties may “*play the ethnic card*” to pressure over central government and hereby, decentralization may make difficult to control possible conflicts due to lack of central authority (Treisman, 2007, p.246). The decreased authority and weak central government will give an opportunity for abusers to constitute their ‘*kingdom*’ excluding minority groups. This is called the danger of *local elites* or *local despotism* (Schrottshammer and Kievelitz, 2006, p.8).

Therefore, *local despotism* created by local elites in the lack of inspection mechanisms may decrease legitimacy of local governance and may cause new conflicts. Regional parties may also perform a role in this process. Brancati (2009) highlights the negative effect of regional parties in his empirical analysis by demonstrating a positive relationship between decentralization and conflict resolution while regional parties exacerbate the likelihood of conflict. Because regional parties with the help of decentralization can facilitate secessionist groups' mobilization and hereby, none of the institutions can hinder this misuse of power due to the lack of central control (Brancati, 2009). Third, decentralization may increase inequalities between regions and cause citizens to describe themselves more ethnic-based by increasing *political polarization* (Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009). This threat can also be perceived as a part of ‘secession’ threat that completely eliminates the benefits of decentralization. Fourth, decentralization may tend to locals to abuse of resource management. Grasa and Camps (2009) put emphasis on economic developments and increasing wealth which may cause corruption executed by local government because local government can inappropriately use transferred authority and local resources in its own account in the lack of central control. Finally, Decentralization cause citizens to describe themselves more ethnic-based by increasing political polarization.unlike a widespread belief, decentralization may break social ties among different groups. Grasa and Camps (2009)

claim that the likelihood of crystallization of ethnic divides with the effect of decentralization causes a possible conflict-freezing effect and decentralization can temporarily provide the peace through its economic benefits. But it may avoid the normal development of social relationships by eliminating ethnic divisions and this social disconnection among ethnic groups may show itself in a new conflict (Grasa and Camps, 2009, p.32-33).

<b>The Benefits of Decentralization</b>	<b>The Risks of Decentralization</b>
Decentralization can provide a fair distribution of power in the governance (Grasa and Camps, 2009, p.34). This automatically reduces the administrative tutelage of central government.	Decentralization can provoke to secession since local authorities can manipulate locals to secession in the lack of local authority or locals can start to consider that they can manage much better their own country than central government (Faguet et al., 2015 , p.4).
Decentralization supports political participation of locals in the decision-making process in accordance with its subsidiarity principle (Fatke, 2016).	Decentralization can cause local despotism where power-sharing arrangements are not appropriately designed. Thus, regional parties may play their ethnic card to take concessions from central government (Treisman, 2007, p.246;Schrottshammer and Kievelitz, 2006, p.8).
Decentralization increases the role of local authorities in the governance and hereby, these authorities are tended to reflect their identity in the governance. This process facilitates the recognition of identity in the eyes of majority and central government (Lagares, 2013, p.26; Pratchett, 2004, p.366 ).	Economic developments and increasing wealth which may cause corruption executed by local government since local government can inappropriately use transferred authority and local resources on its own account in the lack of central control (Grasa and Camps, 2009)
Decentralization increases fiscal autonomy of local governments. This autonomy provides effective use of resources and increases used resources for cultural	Decentralization may avoid the normal development of social relationships the due to the crystallization of ethnic divides and this social disconnection among ethnic groups

activities (Ayele, 2012, p.108)	may show itself in a new conflict. Decentralization cause citizens to describe themselves more ethnic-based by increasing political polarization (Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009; Grasa and Camps, 2009)
Decentralization provides an effective local service delivery and hereby, provided services become closest to the intended recipients. Thus, <i>as a better means to provide goods to local citizens will cause addressing ethnic grievances and rendering a state less open to possible conflicts</i> (Brinkerhoff, 2011,p.142).	
Decentralization contributes to regional development by eliminating regional inequalities. If feelings of economic disadvantage prompt secessionism, then decentralization can lessen demands for independence by allowing groups to decide on how money is allocated within their region (Brancati, 2009, p.9)	

Table 1 : The Benefits and Risks of Decentralization on Conflict Resolution

Source : Own compilation

Consequently, decentralization may pose several risks in terms of conflict resolution. However these risks mostly occur due to country-specific conditions. Therefore, the analysis of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism requires to consider several criteria since decentralization does not include a quick-formula for all ethnic conflicts. In this respect, first, the role of *ethnic concentration* on the capacity of decentralization is the most agreed argument among scholars. It is claimed that '*decentralization has no effect on conflict where groups are not territorially concentrated*' (Brancati, 2009, p.9; Tranchant, 2007). Bakke (2015) also adds distribution of wealth affect the degree to which policy, fiscal, and political autonomy can help preserve peace (p.241). Second, *institutional design* is another important determinant to analyze the effect of decentralization on conflict-resolution. In this respect, Bakke (2015) underlines '*organizational cohesion of sub-national challengers*' (p.271) while

Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) put emphasis on strong, legitimate and accountable political institutions of the state. Finally, although *the role of democracy* on decentralization and conflict resolution is not obvious in quantitative analysis of Brancati (2009), it is assumed decentralization in its shallowest version is seen in non-democracies since dictatorships or one-party states often neglect the decision-making authority of sub-national legislatures. In contrast, the decentralization's conflict-mitigating performance in democracies is more complex since democracies tend to arrange a more genuine division of power and people anticipated to resolve their problems through the legislative process (Brancati, 2009). For instance, no violent separatist movement has ever succeeded in a federal democracy. Each failed federal state which caused a secessionist civil war either was managed by a dictatorship or by a non-democratic regime (Bermeo, 2002, p.108). The last determining factor is that the impact of decentralization on conflict resolution may be either positive or negative and may not be beneficial in every country due to aforementioned country-specific conditions.

#### 2.4. Concluding Remarks

The relationship between decentralization and conflict resolution reveals to what extent the decentralization can be utilized to mitigate or solve conflicts. Accordingly, it is claimed that legitimacy-providing benefits, which can be classified as the elimination of tutelage, good governance, political participation and identity recognition, constitute an acceptable governance structures that the locals less tend to the conflicts. In a similar vein, it is claimed that effectiveness-providing benefits, which consist of local service delivery, fiscal autonomy and regional development, constitute a fair economic system that does not cause relative deprivation of locals and potential economic-based conflicts. In this respect, the basic argument is that the benefits of decentralization improves the quality of governance and hereby, locals less tend to the conflicts. Based on this conceptualization, it can be said that the increasing quality in the governance through decentralization can be a panacea for existing governance problems which lead to the conflicts. Legitimacy and effectiveness components of decentralization emerge because it is defended that the lack of legitimacy in the governance can cause a difficult for the acceptance of existing system in the eyes of citizens; while the lack of effectiveness can generate, economic-based unrest. Both situation can lead locals to the conflicts and the solution to avoid these conflict can only be constituted through a decentralized governance system by satisfying aforementioned needs of locals. However, it is also important to take country-specific conditions into consideration while considering decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism since decentralization does not have a quick formula which is valid for all countries. Therefore, an ideal decentralization

should be designed in line with characteristics of respective country with reference to root causes of the conflicts, namely conflict triggers. Lastly, aforementioned theoretical insights are relevant with this research because it constitutes a basis to understand decentralization concept as a conflict resolution mechanism in order to associate it with Kurdish Conflict for Chapter 4.



### 3. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological strategy, which is designed to answer the research question and sub-questions, will be explained with reference to the qualitative content analysis and Case Study approach. As aforementioned before, quantitative data tend to oversimplify and neglect country-specific conditions such as the roots of the Kurdish Conflict, the effect of official state ideology and elite politics on the Question. Hence, the research methodology of this thesis can be described as qualitative content analysis which is designed to discover “*human experience, perceptions, motivations and behaviors*” and is concerned with the collection and analysis of textual data (Clissett, 2008, p. 100) and case study approach, which handles Kurdish Conflict, is to embody the discussed theoretical insights in Chapter 2. Furthermore, it is not intended to produce a generalizable knowledge which is valid for every case while it is utilized from the core features of decentralization as a supportive theoretical background in this thesis. Based on these methodological justifications, this chapter is designed to outline the research design, data collection and method of data analysis.

#### 3.1. Case Description

With a case study based on qualitative content analysis, it is aimed to have an in-depth information which enables the researcher to make exploratory policy recommendations to the specific case. Decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism without a case study would remain groundless and abstract since there would be no reference country-specific conditions and root causes of Kurdish Conflict that allows the researcher to suggest policy recommendations. Therefore, the scope of this thesis is limited to Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict and suggested decentralization model for its conflict resolution. The reason behind considering Kurdish Conflict with decentralization is that the belief of the author is on democratic solution methods rather than security-based measures. Decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism is capable to draw exploratory policy recommendations rather than explanatory policies. It is important to specify that Kurdish Conflict differs from other conflicts in all the world. First, Kurdish-inhabited regions in Turkey cannot exactly be described since Kurds are dispersed all regions of the country due to forced migration and economic reasons (Gürer, 2015). Therefore, a possible decentralization model can face with some difficulties to represent local communities. Second, Kurdish Conflict cannot only be described as ethnic conflict (Caglayan, 2016, p. 4). Therefore, the nature of the conflict consists of many conflict triggers that require a governance dimension. Third, unlike conflicts in other countries, international support to the PKK and Kurdish diaspora in the Europe influence trajectory of Kurdish Conflict (Van Bruinessen, 2008 in Tezcür, 2015, p. 259).

Finally, Kurds are the largest stateless ethnic group that is spread across five states in the Middle East (Morris, 2008, p. 27). This also makes decentralization complex in terms of Kurdish Conflict since the threat perception for aforementioned countries may occur. As a whole, Kurdish Conflict has different dynamics when compared with other conflicts in the world. This special position of Kurdish Conflict also makes decentralization complex to implement due to the fact there are many dimensions to be taken into consideration. In a nutshell, qualitative content analysis is used to explain the use of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict with an emphasis on qualitative case study, exploratory, non-generalizable, causally explicable characteristics of this thesis. In the light of these considerations, following sections will shed light on data collection and data analysis. In the light of qualitative content analysis, it is aimed to collect data focused on Kurdish Conflict and decentralization in specific, the use of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism in general terms. While keeping in mind that this thesis and the methodological considerations are led by the selected theoretical framework, the foremost importance of choosing specific case with reference to data collection are revealed as an overview in this section. In order to conduct a case study, case is interpreted with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict and the use of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism as specific to case-specific conditions. This relationship reveals the necessity to consider decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism since other cases which are taken as theoretical background shows the relationship between decentralization and conflict resolution either positive or negative direction depending on country-specific conditions. To understand the relationship between decentralization and Kurdish Conflict, it is important to specify which triggers are equivalent to which benefits of decentralization requires to be investigated.

### 3.2. Data Collection

In order to answer the research and sub-questions regarding to the utility of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict, it is necessary to determine which data to be analyzed and how these are structured. For the data collection of the selected articles and books, the following three aspects were considered. First of all, all resources explicitly aim to measure the decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism with reference to its benefits in terms of providing effectiveness and legitimacy in the governance. However, due to the fact that the aims of data compilations are different, the reference points can differ. Thus, the primary data compilation is designed to identify the utility of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism in Kurdish Conflict by examining deficiencies of existing legislative acts in Turkey in providing these benefits while the secondary data compilation is designed to answer sub-questions with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict and the benefits of

decentralization which are obtained through first data compilation and hereby, linking them in order to obtain a concrete answer to the research question. Second, data compilation is designed depending on its relevance with the research and sub-questions and its scientific features in order to provide the validity of data. For this purpose, non-scientific analyses were eliminated to avoid excessive subjectivity threat. Third, only recently conducted studies were used to capture up-to-date information in relation to the topic. Even though decentralization notion on Kurdish Conflict is relatively recent, the use of latest legislative acts is substantial.

Thus, the conducted research activities are initiated by identifying the deficiencies on existing administrative structure and are maintained by examining the potential of an ideal decentralization model on the resolution of Kurdish Conflict. Data sets are structured as the collection of several book chapters, the proposal of TESEV and legislation which can be categorized mainly under five groups: selected Council of Europe documents, Turkish Local Governance Legislative Acts, TESEV's Regionalism Proposal, selected party documents and book chapters regarding to Democratic Autonomy. While gathering the data, Google Scholar, the websites of think-tanks and the governmental websites were used. The analyzed documents are shown below:

#### **The data compilation for the analysis of Decentralization**

##### **1. Council of Europe Legal Documents**

- The European Charter of Local Self-Government
- Resolution 293 : Legislative Powers towards Multilevel Governance

##### **2. Turkish Public Administration Legislation**

- The Act on Municipality No. 5393
- The Act on Special Provincial Administration (SPA) No. 5302
- 1982 Constitution of Republic of Turkey

##### **3. Think-Tank Analysis**

- Toksoz, F. and Gezici, F. (2014). *Turkiye'de Bolgesel Yonetim - Bir Model Onerisi*. TESEV Yayinlari.

## **The data compilation for the analysis of Conflict Resolution**

### 1. The party documents

- BDP (2013). Yeni Anayasa Önerisi
- DTP (2008). Kürt Sorununa İlişkin Demokratik Çözüm Projesi
- DTK (2010). Demokratik Özerk Kürdistan Taslak Metni

### 2. The book chapters regarding to the analysis of Democratic Autonomy

- Ersanlı, B. and Bayhan, H. (2012). Demokratik Özerklik: Statü Talebi ve Demokratikleşme Arzusu.
- Gürer, Ç. (2015). Devleti Sınırlamak, Toplumunu Savunmak.

Table 2: Analyzed data compilation

First of all, primary data compilation consists of Council of Europe documents, selected Turkish Local Governance Legislative Acts and selected TESEV Proposal and is formed of 130 pages in total. This data compilation is designed to examine the utility of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict with reference to differences between the national and CoE legislative acts in terms of providing legitimacy and effectiveness, which are considered as important components of decentralization, to provide peace on Kurdish Conflict. For this purpose, legislation part of data compilation is handled on the one hand; the decentralization proposal of TESEV is analyzed to embody legal deficiencies on the other hand. First, three Turkish legislative acts<sup>2</sup> are chosen to exhibit differences between the national and CoE legislative acts. The European Charter of Local Self-Government and Resolution 293 for Regions with Legislative Powers, which were adopted by Council of Europe, are taken as fundamental legal documents since these documents are the only official documents that specify basic requirements for an effective and democratic decentralization. Furthermore, these documents are chosen because the European Charter of Local Self-Government reflects on the prerequisites of an ideal decentralization model in administrative means while Resolution 293 for Regions with Legislative Powers implies devolution of political authority to the local authorities with an emphasis on local identities and minorities. The reason behind utilizing these documents is to exhibit that the prerequisites of an ideal decentralization model in order to compare them with the existing Turkish legislative acts. When it comes to the details of the primary data compilation, The European Charter of Local Self-Government was published in 1985 and signed by Turkey in 1988 through withdrawal of nine articles. Even

<sup>2</sup> The selected Turkish legislative acts are The Act on Municipality No. 5393, The Act on Special Provincial Administration (SPA) No. 5302, 1982 Constitution of Republic of Turkey

though latest public administration reforms, which came into force in 2005, relatively removed the discrepancy with the Charter on paper while the central government's authority over local entities still exceeds the power of legislation (Sobacı, 2015; Sertesén, 2013).

Therefore, rather than focusing on non-ratifying articles of the Charter, it is aimed to draw a general outline regarding to the problems of Turkish administrative structure in providing legitimacy and effectiveness on the governance. Because, the argument is that the fulfillment of these components of decentralization would provide the peace in the Kurdish Conflict. In other words, analyzing the benefits of decentralization on conflict resolution initially requires to identify the differences between the national and CoE legislative acts in order to suggest possible solutions regarding to the ideal decentralization model. This questioning on the deficiencies of the existing legislation in Turkey gives the researcher the starting point. In addition, to reflect on the importance of local identities and minorities in the design of decentralization model, Resolution 293 of Council of Europe: Regions for Legislative Powers, which was published in 2009, is also taken to emphasize the need to consider decentralization in terms of cultural rights in line with the topic of this thesis. In this respect, Resolution 293 is used to examine how identity recognition should be provided in an ideal decentralization model to contribute to the solution of Kurdish Conflict since this component is also part of providing legitimacy in the governance. Even though Turkey is not one of the signatory countries for Resolution 293, this document is necessary to indicate a plausible viewpoint which can be taken on the identity recognition within an ideal decentralization model. As a whole, the analyses of the Charter and Resolution in accordance with relevant Turkish legislative acts are evaluated in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness components of decentralization. Because, the argument is that if decentralization practices would have been appropriately implemented, the benefits of decentralization could provide peace to the Kurdish Conflict.

Secondly, the Regionalism project of TESEV, which was published in 2014, is formed of 48 pages and is analyzed to constitute the ideal decentralization model of this thesis. The reason behind choosing this document is that this model is the only decentralization model focused on the administrative/political structure of Turkey for effectiveness and legitimacy in the governance with an emphasis on the problems of Kurds and Kurdish-inhabited regions. While CoE documents only focus on the required steps on an ideal decentralization model without reference to Kurdish Conflict, the analysis of TESEV gives an opportunity to the reader to consider the ideal decentralization model on Kurdish Conflict. The fact that TESEV Analysis primarily emphasizes the benefits of regionalism model for the solution of current problems of Turkey in administrative/political terms without reference to triggers of Kurdish

Conflict, it is placed into primary data compilation which belongs to the decentralization section. Overall, primary data compilation is formed for the first section of data analysis and the aim of this data compilation is to identify existing problems of Turkish administrative structure in implementing decentralization and to examine the benefits of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict in the light of Regionalism Project of TESEV with reference to legitimacy and effectiveness dimensions. Secondary data compilation is compiled to answer to the sub-questions and research question of this thesis and to identify the core features of Democratic Autonomy Model developed by Kurdish Political Movement to be utilized for the design of decentralization model of this thesis. In this respect, the secondary data compilation is formed of three pro-Kurdish Political Party documents<sup>3</sup> (37 pages) and the particular chapters of two books<sup>4</sup> (74 pages) and is utilized to analyze the utility of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict as it was mentioned in Chapter 1.

This compilation is based on Democratic Autonomy Proposal developed by Kurdish Political Movement, who are the political actors of Kurdish Conflict. Democratic Autonomy, presents a high level political decentralization model and is the current quest of Kurdish Political Movement with the claim of Democratic Autonomy is capable of solving the ongoing Kurdish Conflict. The reason behind choosing Democratic Autonomy model as a part of secondary data compilation is that the model is the only concrete decentralization model which is designed for the solution of Kurdish Conflict and the official quest of Kurdish Political Movement. Furthermore, Democratic Autonomy has been put into secondary data compilation because this concrete design primarily concentrates on roots of Kurdish Conflict by suggesting its model designed for the solution of Kurdish Conflict. Therefore, the mechanisms of the model such as regional assemblies and the design of devolution of power are considered to be utilized for the ideal decentralization model of this thesis. For this purpose, accessible three pro-Kurdish political party documents have been utilized to capture the core features of Democratic Autonomy model to associate with the ideal decentralization model of this thesis. These party documents are first published resources of Democratic Autonomy Model, required to capture the suggested mechanisms of Democratic Autonomy for the ideal decentralization model of this thesis. In terms of details of the

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<sup>3</sup> The party documents consist of Democratic Society Party (DTP) , Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and Democratic Society Congress (DTK) is a congress which declared Democratic Autonomy Proposal but the meaning of this structure is congress-based community assembly which explains the proposal of Democratic Autonomy.

<sup>4</sup> Third chapter of 'Demokratik Ozerklik : Bir Yurttaslik Heteropyasi ('Democratic Autonomy: A citizenship heterotopia') book of Cetin Gurer which is called 'Devleti Sinirlamak, Toplumunu Savunmak' (Limiting the State, Defending the Society) and Fifth chapter of 'Turkiye Siyasetinde Kurler' (The Kurds in Turkish Politics) book of Ersanlı which is called 'Demokratik Ozerklik : Statu Talebi ve Demokratikleşme Arzusu' (Democratic Autonomy: Request for Status and Democratization) has been chosen to analyze Democratic Autonomy Proposal.

documents, it can be said that BDP document is chosen since it reflects on '*administrative sphere of decentralization*' while DTK and DTP documents focus on '*political sphere of decentralization*' with reference to power-sharing arrangements such as the design of decision-making and legislative authority.

It is also important to note that the only these party documents are accessible since the access to party documents is restricted. Furthermore, due to the accessibility problem, the documents are not available in an official website, rather in the different websites which can be found via GoogleWeb. Therefore, the reliability of these party documents are checked via secondary resources which are selected book chapters of Ersanlı and Bayhan and Gürer. The fact that the notion of Democratic Autonomy is not in a systematic form in the party documents, analyses of aforementioned authors supported to put the analysis into a concrete way. In other words, these chosen chapters help to analyze Democratic Autonomy as a whole especially in the lack of inaccessible party documents. Furthermore, selected book chapters of aforementioned books and party documents lead the researcher and the reader to understand whether the characteristics of Democratic Autonomy as a decentralization model to be utilized the ideal decentralization model of this thesis. Accordingly, the selected book chapter written by Ersanlı and Bayhan in 2012 mainly implies Democratic Autonomy with reference to sociocultural and political conflict triggers while the book chapter written by Gürer in 2015 interprets Democratic Autonomy from a holistic perspective in scope of power-sharing arrangements. The reason behind choosing these documents is that these are only books, which have academic format, mainly focus directly on the causes of Kurdish Conflict with the analysis of suggested decentralization model.

### 3.3. Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the following step in the research after data collection. It is aimed to conduct a qualitative content analysis in order to answer the main research question by giving answers to the sub-questions. The main reason behind choosing this methodology is to provide an exploratory viewpoint to use of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict with reference to conflict triggers and governance dimensions by taking country-specific conditions into consideration. The aforementioned country-specific conditions that cover conflict triggers are best interpreted by the qualitative content analysis, because the relationship between the decentralization and Kurdish Conflict are assumed to be best identified based on non-numerical data. Furthermore, it is applied to re-construct and re-interpret the decentralization concept to constitute it as a conflict resolution mechanism with an emphasis on causal powers (i.e. conflict triggers, historical background) and deterministic mindset. In this respect, data analysis follows a particular path for each theoretical concept: firstly,

theoretical concepts (*decentralization* and *conflict resolution*) are defined; secondly, decentralization is categorized in scope of legitimacy and effectiveness; conflict resolution is categorized in scope of conflict triggers and finally, the codes are revealed under each category in order to analyze the utility of decentralization on the resolution of Kurdish Conflict. In order to execute this process, two steps are to be followed.

First step is to examine '*Decentralization*' concept, which is derived from Brinkerhoff's conceptualization. With the help of Brinkerhoff's governance dimensions, which was mentioned earlier, two governance dimensions have been formulated by eliminating security dimension and will be applied to understand benefits of decentralization. These governance dimensions are (1) *Legitimacy* and (2) *Effectiveness*. Legitimacy implies political and social dimensions of decentralization. According to Grasa and Camps (2009), the inclusion of new groups in the governance through the recognition of minorities and the deepening of the distribution of power increases democratic legitimacy. Such potential benefits of decentralized governance can be used to reduce the root causes of the conflicts. Thus, decentralization can serve as a mechanism that pulls local groups to enter into negotiation processes with the central state. If there is a more fair distribution of power, which incorporates a larger number of actors in decision-making processes the legitimacy of public institutions is enhanced (p.34). The benefits of decentralization in terms of legitimacy reflect on political and social dimensions of decentralization with four codes: (1) *Identity recognition*, (2) *Political participation*, (3) *The Elimination of Tutelage* (4) *Good governance*. With this coding, it is intended to reveal that these benefits of decentralization that constitutes legitimacy in the governance and hereby, it is claimed that a legitimate governance, which aforementioned benefits contributed, can mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict.

(2) *Effectiveness* implies technical dimension of decentralization. For instance, the fact that poorness and economic deprivation can lead the masses to the conflict, providing an effective local service delivery and eliminating horizontal inequalities between regions can be considered as a must to realize peace in the region. Rondinelli (1981) discusses the role of decentralization in stimulating economic growth can be considered in associated with providing social equity and these conditions make decentralization effective (p.145). In terms of economic causes of conflicts, one can say that successful implementation of decentralization for the regions can only be possible through the increase of local economic activity and the amount of investment flow entering the region (Darmawan, 2008). The benefits of decentralization in terms of effectiveness are analyzed with three codes: (1) *Fiscal Autonomy* (2) *Local Service Delivery* (3) *Regional Development*. With this coding, it is intended to conclude that these benefits of decentralization constitutes effectiveness in the governance and hereby, an effective governance, which are provided through the fulfillment



of aforementioned benefits, can mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict. For this purpose, primary data compilation follows this way : first, the existence of code is examined in the existing Turkish legislative act and it is compared with relevant CoE document; second, the code is associated with the analysis of TESEV since these codes are only embodied through a concrete decentralization model. As a whole, this data analysis path exhibits: '*What are the deficiencies in the existing administrative structure in providing legitimacy/effectiveness and what should have been implemented in line with CoE documents?* , '*How the existing problems in providing legitimacy/effectiveness can be eliminated through a decentralization model in order to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict?*'.

The main aim of this step is not to answer the sub-questions of the thesis, rather to introduce decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism for conflict resolution section by identifying how decentralization can mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict through its benefits in providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance with reference to the differences between the national and CoE legislative acts. The reason behind pointing to these differences is the need to identify the existing problems of decentralization in providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance before suggesting an ideal decentralization model. Thus, decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism is interpreted with reference to legitimacy and effectiveness dimensions of decentralization and a coding scheme is revealed to extend this research. As a whole, coding scheme for Decentralization Concept can be executed by analyzing the benefits of decentralization in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness. Overall, data analysis for decentralization concept is designed to exhibit the benefits of decentralization which can be used for Kurdish Conflict, rather than answering sub-questions. Overall, this section is designed to lead the reader to have a basic idea about decentralization's conflict resolution role on Kurdish Conflict. The reason behind distinguishing these benefits into legitimacy and effectiveness is that the possibility of associating them with triggers of Kurdish Conflict in the second section.

Second step is to reveal '*the triggers of Kurdish Conflict*' to be able to see the capacity of decentralization in answering these triggers. Conflict triggers are shown to serve as elements which cause the conflict and are designed to answer aforementioned sub-questions of the thesis. These conflict triggers were created by inspired of the study of Capan (2015) even though the study of Capan takes only conflict triggers without reference to decentralization. In this direction, *sociocultural triggers of the Kurdish Conflict* are divided into two codes (1) *denial of identity* (2) *linguistic rights* in order to answer the first sub-question of this thesis. It is examined how the problems in providing these rights caused Kurdish Conflict and decentralization can eliminate these triggers. Firstly, sociocultural conflict triggers are evaluated with their historical roots in the study of Ersanlı et al. (2012).

Secondly, Democratic Autonomy which is discussed in the BDP, DTP, DTK documents and in Gürer's study is suggested as a solution design of Kurdish Political Movement to be able to answer sociocultural triggers. Finally, sociocultural conflict triggers are associated with legitimacy dimension of decentralization which is discussed in the Decentralization section of data analysis to suggest a newly-designed decentralization model. Thus, the research activities for this section focus on answering the first sub-question. The selected party documents and as parts of secondary data compilation is designed to explain decentralization with reference to sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict. In a similar vein, *economic triggers of the Kurdish Conflict* are divided into two codes: (1) *relative deprivation* (2) *regional inequality* in order to answer the second sub-question of this thesis. It is examined how the economic problems caused to the Kurdish Conflict and decentralization can eliminate these triggers. It is widely recognized that the Eastern and Southeastern Regions are the poorest regions of the country. Therefore, an ideal decentralization model should take regional inequalities into consideration in order to contribute to the solution of Kurdish Conflict. For this purpose, the aforementioned party documents and Gürer's book are used to put forward an effective economic design in scope of Democratic Autonomy. Economic triggers are associated with effectiveness dimension of decentralization which is discussed in the Decentralization section of data analysis to suggest a newly-designed decentralization model.

Finally, *political triggers of Kurdish Conflict* are divided into four codes: (1) *Central State Structure* (2) *Obstacles on Self-rule* (3) *Official Ideology* (4) *Elite Politics* in order to answer third sub-question of this thesis. It is examined how political factors influenced Kurdish Conflict and decentralization can eliminate these factors. In this respect, political triggers are associated with effectiveness and legitimacy-providing benefits of decentralization. For this purpose, historical roots of the current problems are analyzed with the help of analysis of Ersanlı and Bayhan (2012) while the solution stage is developed with the analyses of Gürer and aforementioned party documents. For this purpose, secondary data compilation follows this way: the selected party documents and book chapters are compiled to answer to the sub-questions of the thesis and coding scheme is used to identify the existing problems that secondary data compilation pointed out. As a whole, it is aimed to examine *which triggers caused Kurdish Conflict* with the help of coding scheme and *how these triggers can be mitigated with the help of decentralization that is found in the data*. Lastly, it is important to specify why these elements have been seen as important to mention. First of all, decentralization term was chosen to exceed limited meaning of autonomy concept which mainly emphasizes political devolution of power since this concept neglects holistic framework of decentralization in the conflict resolution. Second, democratic autonomy

proposal as a product of Kurdish Political Movement inherently creates a bias for readers and policy-makers. Therefore, it is not intended to introduce democratic autonomy as a conflict resolution mechanism since this proposal has some deficiencies to constitute an ideal decentralization model. However, choosing Democratic Autonomy as a part of data is a must since the proposal is the only concrete decentralization suggestion which is created for Kurdish Conflict. Third, conflict triggers are taken determinants of Kurdish Conflict since the benefits of decentralization without reference to conflict triggers would remain meaningless. Thus, the benefits of decentralization in scope of legitimacy and effectiveness are analyzed in association with conflict triggers to reach a final answer to the research question.

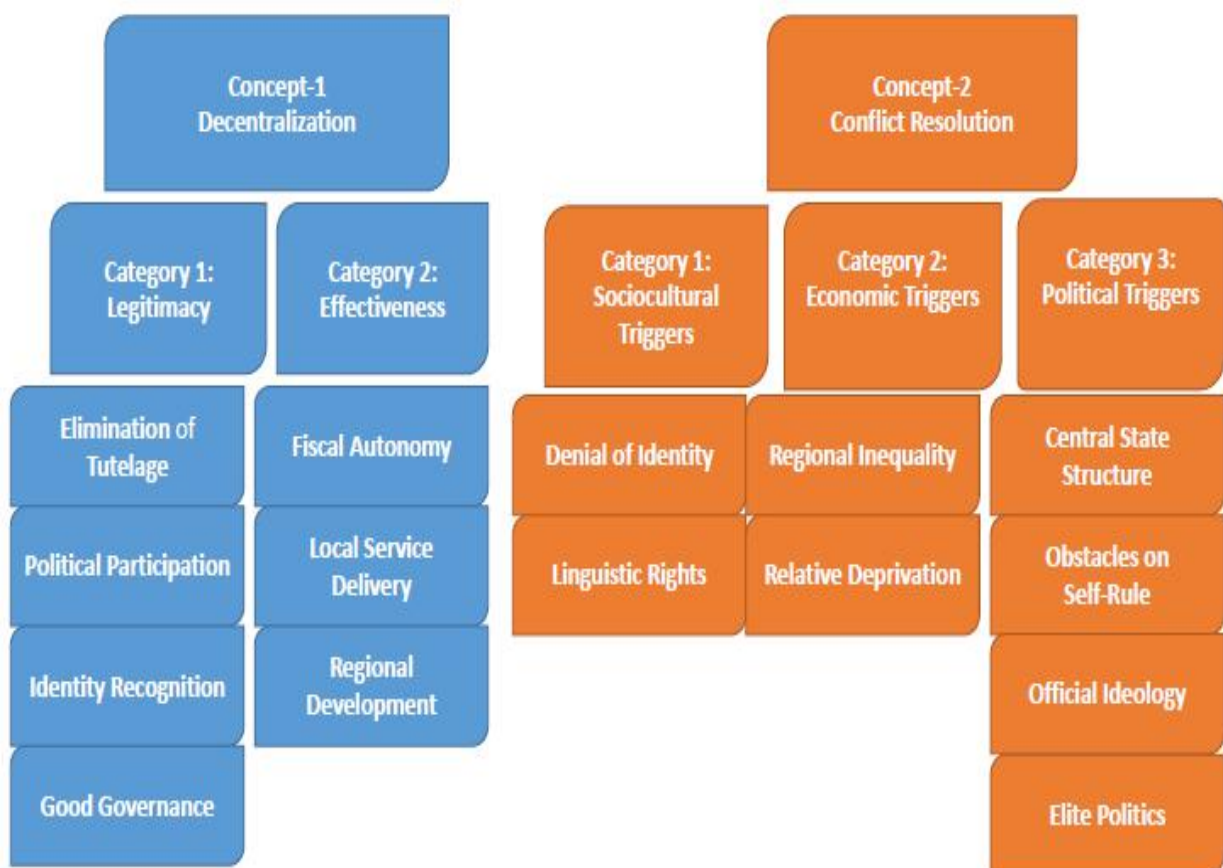


Figure 2 : The Coding Scheme, How to analyze decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict

Source : Own compilation

### 3.4. Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the motivation to answer the main research question comprises of analyzing Decentralization and Conflict Resolution concepts with reference to the codes that are revealed in the coding scheme. Accordingly, the research is constructed to analyze the use

of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict in order to understand the possible benefits of decentralization to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict :

1. The aim of examining *decentralization* for the resolution of Kurdish Conflict is to exhibit its benefits across the triggers of Kurdish Conflict. For this purpose, the theoretical concepts are separately examined as *Decentralization* and *Conflict Resolution*. Accordingly, decentralization is analyzed to reveal the benefits of decentralization, which provides legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance, to associate with Kurdish Conflict. Because the argument is that providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance is the vital steps in order to constitute peace in the region. In addition to this argument, it is also emphasized the differences between CoE and national legislation to reveal the difference between an ideal decentralization model and the existing problems of Turkish administrative structure in providing the components of decentralization before suggesting a decentralization model which is capable to bring peace in Kurdish Conflict.

2. The second concept '*Conflict Resolution*' is analyzed to be able to consider the benefits of decentralization with the Conflict itself in a more concrete way. In this section, the triggers of Kurdish Conflict are associated with the benefits of decentralization. For this purpose; First, sociocultural triggers are classified to understand which sociocultural factors caused to exacerbate the Kurdish Conflict and which benefits of decentralization can answer to these triggers. With the help of coding scheme, sociocultural triggers are revealed and interpreted with possible solutions which are found in the secondary data collection. Accordingly, the argument is that revealed triggers are to be mitigated through legitimacy-providing benefits of decentralization. Therefore, the data is analyzed by questioning to what extent legitimacy components of decentralization can be utilized to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict.

3. The economic triggers are classified to understand which economic factors caused to exacerbate the Kurdish Conflict and which benefits of decentralization can answer to these triggers. With the help of coding scheme, secondary data compilation is used to reveal the existing economic problems and to develop alternative regional development projects and to diminish relative deprivation of Kurds. The aim is that exhibiting how effectiveness-providing benefits of decentralization is capable to answer the economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict. This also implies the satisfaction of economic demands of Kurds through decentralized structures can diminish the conflict possibility in the region.

4. The political triggers are classified to understand which political factors caused to exacerbate the Kurdish Conflict and which solution models can answer to these triggers. Political triggers require to take a holistic perspective since it is related to peace-providing which is an ultimate goal for the Conflict. Accordingly, the argument is that the design of an ideal decentralization model, which is extracted with the help of coding scheme, can fulfill effectiveness and legitimacy in the local structures and hereby, the governance can be capable for answering political triggers.

5. Finally, the utility of decentralization for Kurdish Conflict is evaluated to see to what extent decentralization is capable of answering triggers of Kurdish Conflict. The argument is that providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance through decentralized structures can bring peace in Kurdish Conflict. These also provides less tendency of Kurds to the conflicts in the future.

## 4. Analysis

After conceptualizing decentralization on Kurdish Conflict, Chapter 4 exhibits the analysis of the collected data revealing to what extent decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism can be utilized to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict. It is important to mention that decentralization and conflict resolution are separately analyzed. The reason behind this distinction is that decentralization section provides the background information to illustrate decentralization on Kurdish Conflict while conflict resolution section directly focuses on the capacity of decentralization to mitigate or solve triggers of Kurdish Conflict. By the help of collected data, the analysis sheds light on whether decentralization can be considered as an effective mechanism in providing peace on Kurdish Conflict.

### 4.1. Decentralization

As pointed out in Chapter 2, decentralization can be evaluated as an effective mechanism not only in terms of local development and effective governance but also in terms of conflict mitigating. In this respect, identifying the deficiencies of existing legislation in providing an ideal decentralization model with reference to selected CoE documents, which indicate the prerequisites of an ideal decentralization model, is vital to suggest an ideal decentralization model claiming to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict. Thus, this can allow a closer look at the design of the decentralization model which can contribute to the solution of Kurdish Conflict.

#### 4.1.1. Legitimacy

The benefits of decentralization which are evaluated in scope of legitimacy perform an important role in providing peace in a country. Legitimacy is an important element to mitigate conflicts since the countries that suffer from the absence of legitimacy face with conflicts (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Grasa and Camps, 2009; Schrottshammer and Kievelitz, 2006). In other words, increasing legitimacy is associated with lower levels of conflicts (Siegle and O'Mahony, 2009, p.21). This theoretical considerations can also be associated with Kurdish Conflict. Accordingly, decentralization can abate Kurdish Conflict through the benefits of decentralization that provides legitimacy in the local governance. The benefits are identified as *the Elimination of Tutelage, Political Participation, Identity Recognition and Good Governance*. To associate decentralization with Kurdish Conflict, first step is to identify the deficiencies on existing legislation in providing legitimacy. Because it is not possible to suggest a newly-designed ideal decentralization without identifying differences between the national and CoE legislative acts. For this purpose, the European Charter of Local Self - Government is used to exhibit the necessity for decentralization of power through constituted local decision-making authority and local autonomy. The supervision of these entities in the

Charter is under supremacy of legal principles.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the selected Turkish Legislative acts do not have a specific emphasis on decentralization while decision-making authority and local autonomy are recognized within supremacy of legal principles.<sup>6</sup> However, it is also observed that tutelage of central government as a supervising mechanism exists over local authorities.<sup>7</sup> Even though the European Charter of Local Self-Government specifies decision-making authority is transferred to local authorities under the supervision of legal principles; this supervision mechanism exceeds the legal limitations in Turkey. Therefore, the tutelage problem, which derived from supervisor role of central government, reflects on deficiencies of the administrative structure in providing legitimacy in the governance.

The effect of *tutelage problem* in Kurdish Conflict emerges in the coordination problem between local and central governments since Turkish Public Administration has hitherto witnessed the a commanding and prohibitive implementations of central government towards local entities (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014). This implies that elected local governments and decision-making mechanisms of Kurdish-inhabited regions are neglected by central government when the decisions are contrasting. In terms of solution of tutelage of central government, TESEV suggests regionalism, to change of the weight of the center in the Turkish administrative structure and thus, tutelage remains only under the limitations of legal principles (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.4). When decentralized governance eliminates the tutelage of central government through a fair distribution of powers and local autonomy, this can give an opportunity to constitute a legitimate governance in the eyes of Kurdish citizens. Thus, Kurdish citizens who are represented by regional/local assemblies and local leaders get closer to the governance and thus, they less tend to the conflicts. This proximity to the governance also implies good governance components, which cover transparent, responsive, participant, responsible and accountable policies. The existing legislation in Turkey mentions the existence of good governance elements within the responsibilities of municipalities'

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<sup>5</sup> The preamble of the Charter specify 'decentralization of power' through '*the existence of local authorities endowed with democratically constituted decision-making bodies and possessing a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities*'. Article 8/2 stipulates the supervision over local authorities should be in the framework of constitutional principle and the Charter's Article 6/1 for the autonomy for local units' design and Article 7/3 for the superiority of legal principles.

<sup>6</sup> The Act on Municipality No. 5393/Article 17,55 and The Act on Special Provincial Administration No. 5302/Article 4,7,9,37 indicate the decision-making authorities of municipalities/SPAs' councils are recognized under supremacy of law in their decisions/supervision.

<sup>7</sup>The Act on Municipality No. 5393/4, 8,12,18,30,49 and The Act on Special Provincial Administration No. 5302/11, 18,22,36,62,65 imply the tutelage of central government (i.e.the approval of Ministry of Interior)

citizen assemblies.<sup>8</sup> The reference of the European Charter of Local Self-Government on good governance appears in the exercise of public responsibilities in effective and participant way by the closest authorities to the citizens.<sup>9</sup> These articles imply that Turkish legislation is in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government in terms of good governance. In terms of Kurdish Conflict, good governance increases the respect and belief for local leaders. In cases where good governance cannot be performed well by local leaders, a legitimate local government may not be constituted and this governance can be more open to conflicts. Good governance elements in newly-designed decentralization model are also emphasized by TESEV since there is a need to situate these elements in the governance due to the democracy demands for taken decisions (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014).

*Political participation* of locals is another dimension to constitute legitimacy on governance. Political participation refers to the involvement of civil society and citizens to the decision-making process which enables local governments under the control of citizens (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.4). Political participation exists in the European Charter of Local Self-Government from a general perspective with an emphasis on '*closest to the citizens*' notion and democratic principles while it is more explicitly observed in Turkish Legislation with its mechanisms.<sup>10</sup> However, both legislation point to the increasing role of citizens in the decision-making process rather than devolution of power to local/regional authorities. However, it can also be interpreted that '*closest to the citizens*' idea of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is not completely arranged in Turkish Legislation since this idea can also cover the devolution of power mechanisms to the locals while it is not acceptable in terms of existing legislation. Kurdish Conflict requires political participation to enhance the role of Kurds in the decision-making process for the topics which are directly related to their issues. Furthermore, the devolution of power to local authorities can also develop the idea that they can form their own futures and hereby, they tend less to the conflicts. On the other hand, political participation in Kurdish Conflict is mostly considered in relation to identity recognition since it contributes to the solution of ethno-cultural identity problems by strengthening the democratic pluralism of Turkey (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.4). Since the meaning of identity recognition exceeds the limits of administrative autonomy, Resolution

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<sup>8</sup> Article 76 of Law on Municipality No.5393 mentions the responsibility of citizens' assembly are '*sustainable development; environmental awareness; social solidarity and mutual assistance; transparency; accountability; participation and local self-government*'.

<sup>9</sup> Article 4/3 and preamble of the European Charter of Local Self-Government reflect on good governance features.

<sup>10</sup> The citizen involvement in the Charter is emphasized in the Article 4/3 with '*closest to the citizens*' and implicitly emphasized in scope of democratic principles in the preamble of the Charter. In Turkish Legislation, political participation is in The Act on Special Provincial Administration No. 5302/Article 65 (NGOs) and The Municipality Law No.5393/Article 13, 76,77(citizen assembly) and 24 (Specialist commissions).



293 of Council of Europe for Legislative Powers adopted by Council of Europe can be used to justify the importance of identity recognition in the level of local governance even though Turkey is not a signatory country of the Resolution. In this respect, the Articles 8 and 9 of the Resolution<sup>11</sup> stipulate that political representation of minorities and different identities in local assemblies based on territorial autonomy is a must while these articles do not have equivalents in the Turkish Legislative Acts since the Turkish Constitution accepts neither different identities nor autonomy. Instead, the *'ethnicity'* interpretation of Turkish Constitution (Article 66/1) is *"Everyone who is tied to the Turkish state by his citizenship is a Turkish"*. Such a citizenship definition based on *'single'* ethnic reference inherently neglects other identities.

TESEV (2014) suggests several steps to solve the problem on identity recognition. First, there should be collective effort to create policies to recognize, protect and develop different languages and cultures in the country in accordance with the understanding of human rights and democracy (p.9). Second, to indicate *'who is a Turkish citizen, who is not a Turkish citizen, how citizenship is gained or lost'* in the Constitution would be a beneficial step. In doing so, it can be easier to harmonize different ethnic, religious and cultural identities in the country (p.23). Third, identity regions and identity-providing institutions can be designed through regionalism model. Accordingly, *'identity regions' are established around the cultural and historical partnerships with a bottom-up understanding* (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.12). In this context, the decentralization is not only related to constitute an administrative mechanism, it also establishes regions based on common identities to construct legitimate structures. Similarly, identity-providing institutions are composed of official institutions, social networks and civil initiatives and are constructed to gain social legitimacy and sustainability for new regional structures (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014). Overall, the fulfillment of these steps can be beneficial to mitigate or solve the Kurdish Conflict by solving status problem of Kurds since the design of decentralized structures increase self-rule area of Kurds with an emphasis on identity. Consequently, decentralization can abate Kurdish Conflict through aforementioned benefits which constitute legitimacy in the governance while the existing legislation in Turkey faces with some problems to implement decentralization in line with CoE legislation as *de facto* (Sertesén, 2013). The following chapter is designed to explain effectiveness dimension of decentralization in a similar vein.

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<sup>11</sup> Article 8 of the Resolution specifies *"Regions should also be given a say in policy shaping and political decision making(...) and second chambers should "give the territorial units of a country political representation (...). The powers and responsibilities of this second chamber must allow regional and other territorial authorities to scrutinize and endorse decisions which affect them. (...) the principle of territoriality (...) can draw its identity"* and Article 9 of the Resolution 293 specifies *'Regional democracy, by virtue of its proximity to citizens, is a means of dealing with minorities' issues. Giving legislative powers to regional authorities in conflict areas can help towards establishing peace and democratic stability.'*

#### 4.1.2. Effectiveness

The benefits of decentralization, which provide effectiveness in the local governance, perform an important role in providing peace in a country. This governance dimension is based on the notion that the closest authorities to better identify the needs and priorities of locals and implies to utilize existing resources in an optimal level for an effective local governance. The existing legislation in relation to effectiveness particularly points to the lack of fiscal autonomy of local governments in Turkey when compared to the European Charter of Local Self-Government in terms of effectiveness.<sup>12</sup> *Fiscal autonomy* is one of the basic requirements to provide an effective local governance since regional development and effective use of resources become easier when the local government is closer to the demands of the region. The financial resources of local governments in Turkey are regulated in Article 127 of the Turkish Constitution. Accordingly, the financial resources are determined by the central government depending on the duties of local authorities.

In addition, local authorities do not have local taxation authority on their own. The central government through the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Interior determines municipal budget including the share and rate of local tax revenues and controls local government expenditures.<sup>13</sup> In practice, the budgets of central government and local government are intertwined. For instance, Ankara Subway was constructed by central government. Similarly, local projects such as KOYDES and BELDES were funded by the central government (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.35). Therefore, it is unlikely to say that the fiscal autonomy of the local governments in Turkey is in line with the principles of the local governments. TESEV (2014) suggests that the fiscal autonomy of local/regional governments should be provided by allowing them taxation authority, right for collecting fiscal penalties and licensing or service fees in scope of legal limitations (p.34). In terms of Kurdish Conflict, fiscal autonomy can provide additional resources to the local governments which they can use for identity-based activities such as educational or artistic institutions in the local language. Furthermore, the budget autonomy of local governments can provide effective regional investments to the region since local governments are more familiar with the problems of the region. The efforts for effectiveness should also be considered in relation to *service delivery's quality* to mitigate conflict. Existing Turkish legislation emphasizes the duties and

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<sup>12</sup>Article 6/1 and Article 9/4,6,7 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government are in relation to Article 62 of the Act on Municipality No. 5393 and Article 48 of SPAs Law No.5302 in terms of effectiveness dimension of decentralization.

<sup>13</sup> Article 62 of the Act on Municipality No. 5393, Article 48 of SPAs Law No.5302.

responsibilities of municipalities to provide effective local service delivery as in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government.<sup>14</sup>

The proposal of TESEV stimulates local service delivery in scope of *Regionalism* as a necessity to provide more effective and efficient presentation of public services and elimination of economic imbalances between regions. Regionalism can bring positive results in the context of ensuring the subsidiarity and democratization in the Turkish public administration. According to this model, economic-based problems can be handled with the regional scale which provides advantages such as balanced distribution of public investments, efficient implementation of infrastructure services by utilizing economies of scale. Thereby, local or regional entities can be more efficient and democratic than the central government due to the services' proximity to the locals. When the existing decision-making mechanism for investments does not take into consideration the characteristics and needs of the regions and this causes inappropriate investments from time to time. The most obvious example of this is the prison which was built for 1,000 people in Hakkari province of Turkey which the population is 278.775 (p.10). Public resources could be used more effectively in a situation where decentralization is involved. In order to implement the most efficient method, the way would be to focus on functional understanding rather than on structural changes that bring massive investment and physical infrastructure costs. Instead of centrally designed bureaucratic development technique, a decentralized government can provide to use of regional resources more efficient for a well-defined balanced development that responds better to the needs of the people (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014). Based on an effective local service delivery, *regional development* is also provided by eliminating regional inequalities which exist between Western and Eastern Regions of the country. To analyze regional development problems, it is important to analyze differences between regions attracting investments and regions needs investments. Figure 2 points out that regions which public/private institutions focused on and the districts that regions depending on their development level. Thereby, it is seen that Eastern regions which need investments cannot be attractive for investors in comparison to Western cities.

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<sup>14</sup> Article 14 of the Act on Municipality No. 5393 and Article 6/a of SPAs Law No.5302 mention local service delivery as a part of duties of municipalities/SPAs. These are related to Article 4/3 of the Charter that stipulates '*public responsibilities are exercised as the closest to the locals*'

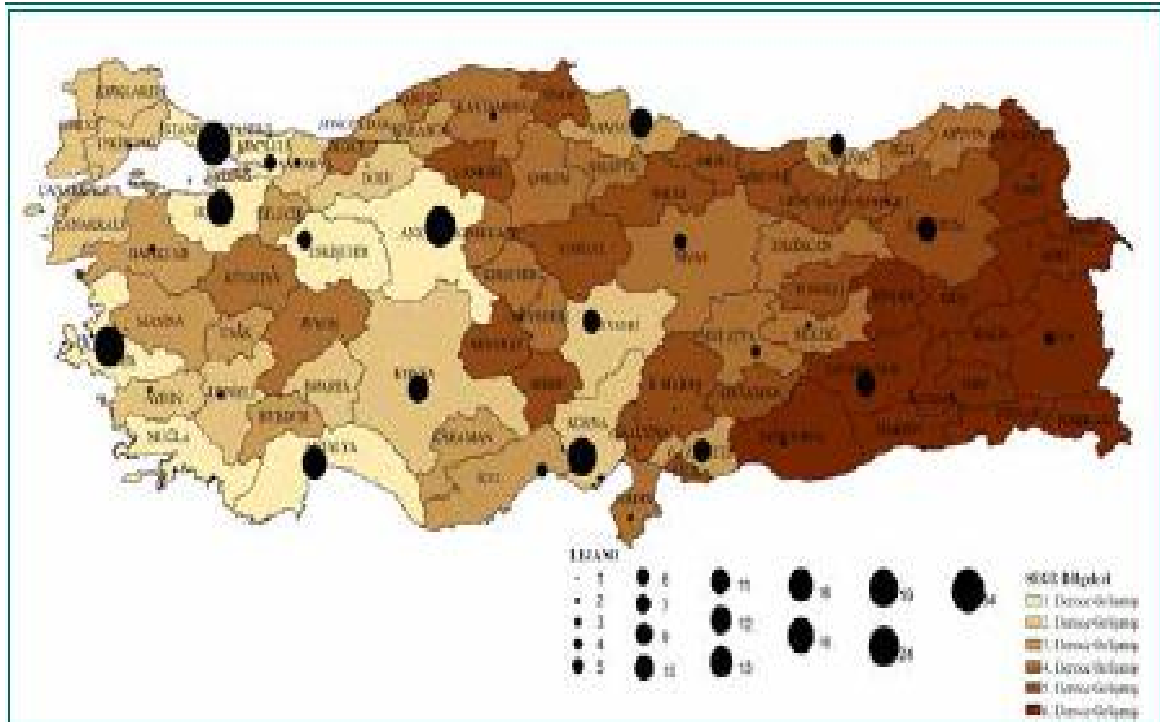


Figure 3: Differences between ‘investment regions’ and ‘regions with their development levels.’<sup>15</sup>

Source : Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.25

Public investments to develop the regions may remain insufficient. The fact that private companies are reluctant to invest to the region due to conflict environment and distance to the raw materials; public investments should exist in the region for either design of incentives for private sector or welfare state responsibilities such as education, health and infrastructure. The private sector companies have several criteria to determine “demand-stimulating” regions. The private sector investments which are made to the region should be encouraged by the central government. In this context, the role of local governments to develop regional development should be prioritized. Development activities shall be carried out within the framework of the decisions and initiatives of the local administrations and not by the central administration. If resource allocation can be arranged depending on the preferences and demands of local people, effective and fair outcomes are achieved and local ownership towards the governance increases (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, p.45). The proposal of TESEV for regional development is based on *the effective design of regions which is distinguished into two types of regions : homogenous and functional regions.*

<sup>15</sup> The size of the circles points out the investments of public institutions and private sectors in proportion to the number of district centers. The dark regions are the least developed regions while light regions refer to the developed regions.

*Homogeneous regions approach* is used to bring together provincial groups of similar socio-economic development level while functional regions refers to a design of regions of grouping according to movements and centrality relations between units regardless of their similarities. The areas identified with the design of homogenous regions include priority regions, incentive zones and public sector appointment zones in development. The regions that are created in this way makes the differences between the regions more visible and can help to find solutions to the problems (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014, pp. 21-28).

In designing resource-sharing, duties to be undertaken by the regions should be reviewed periodically. For regional development plans and periodic consultation between regions, it is a must that a development contract be signed between the regional government and the central administration. According to this contract, the central government must be obliged to put its own share of funding in the budget and to transfer this payment to the regional directorate (Toksöz and Gezici, 2014). Consequently, it is observed that the existing legislation in Turkey faces with some problems to implement decentralization when compared to the European Charter of Local Self-Government. As an alternative to existing problems, the proposal of TESEV opens a door to implement decentralization for both effective governance and the solution of Kurdish Conflict. In this respect, providing fiscal autonomy can extend the capacity of Kurdish local government to implement policies as suited to preferences of Kurds. Effective service delivery is better provided by local government since the local government is more familiar with the needs and preferences of the region. Thus, resources are used more effectively. In a similar vein, Regional development by eliminating regional inequalities becomes the priority for local government while the same goal can be thought for whole country in terms of central government. The implementation of these benefits not only means providing effectiveness in the governance but also can mitigate Kurdish Conflict since effectiveness dimension of decentralization through aforementioned elements exhibits a new design in financial terms. When the problem is considered in the level of economic conflict triggers which are to be mentioned in the following chapter, increasing focus on the Kurdish region is assumed to bring positive results.

#### 4.1.3. Concluding Remarks 1

Decentralization as one of the main concepts of this thesis has been explained with reference to its benefits on Kurdish Conflict. In that sense, it has been revealed that aforementioned benefits of decentralization provide legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance and hereby, Kurds less tend to the conflicts since the devolution of power to the local entities can not only increase satisfaction from services and but also realize the

proximity to the citizens. Thus, it can be concluded that both decentralization dimensions need to be improved in order to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict. However, the salient problems on legislation such as the need for the permission of Ministry of Interior, the assignment of some sub-unit local representatives and not mentioning local autonomy in the Turkish Constitution are principal obstacles on the way of decentralization hinder to improve the role of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict. Analyzing existing legislation was a must to suggest a newly-designed decentralization model which contributes to the solution of Kurdish Conflict. When it comes to the prerequisites of an ideal decentralization model, good governance, political participation, identity recognition and the elimination of tutelage emerge in terms of legitimacy in the governance. In this respect, first of all, decentralization eliminates tutelage of central government, which is not directly interlocutor with Kurds, while local governments produce tailored services to Kurds since they are more familiar with local realities. Second, decentralization increases political participation, which represents involvement of locals on the decision-making process, legitimacy of government increases in the eyes of citizens. Third, decentralization facilitates the recognition of Kurdish identity since the involvement of civil initiatives on the local governance decisions provides the acceptance of Kurdish identity by local government. Finally, good governance concept, which consists of fulfillment of five key elements 'transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, responsiveness' on the governance, can automatically increase the legitimacy on the local governance.

As a whole, the fulfillment of aforementioned components of decentralization can increase Kurds' trust on the governance and for political leaders and Kurds can less tend to conflicts. In a similar vein, fiscal autonomy, regional development and local service delivery emerge as the benefits of decentralization in providing effective governance. First, fiscal autonomy, which is related to fulfill optimal services to the locals, is required to increase the capability of local governments to serve appropriate services including cultural activities to Kurds. Second, regional development is required to eliminate regional inequalities which cause economic deprivation of Kurds. Third, local service delivery, which is provided by local authorities in an effective level, decreases the conflict possibility in the region due to the satisfaction of local service features. Lastly, the comparison between national legislation and CoE legislation showed that the accordance of selected Turkish legislation with the European Charter of Local Self-Government is in the desired level especially in the legitimacy dimension. However, it is hard to mention 'de facto' accordance with the prerequisites of decentralization (Serteser, 2013). In other words, this implies the decentralization implementations are not sufficient in providing legitimacy and effectiveness while the comparison between legislation does not point to discordance. Overall, an appropriate

design of decentralized structures can enable local entities subject to local citizens. In this respect, such a design of governance, which satisfies the needs of Kurds, has capacity to eliminate the roots of Kurdish Conflict which are to be explained in the second section of the analysis. The following section is designed to find the connection of the benefits of decentralization with sociocultural, economic and political triggers of Kurdish Conflict.

#### 4.2. Conflict Resolution

After elaborating the characteristics of an ideal decentralization model on Kurdish Conflict in providing legitimacy and effectiveness with reference to the deficiencies of Turkish administrative structure in the first section of the analysis, this section differently from the first section is designed to identify the relationship between Kurdish Conflict and decentralization with reference to triggers of Kurdish Conflict since the deeper causes of the conflict and the issues at stake should be identified before suggesting decentralization as a conflict mechanism leading to the peace (Kauzya, 2013). In this section, secondary data compilation detailed in Chapter 3 is analyzed with reference to the capacity of decentralization to answer triggers of Kurdish Conflict. For this purpose, Democratic Autonomy Proposal will be discussed in line with conflict triggers by extracting core features of this model to be utilized for the ideal decentralization model of this thesis.

##### 4.2.1. Sociocultural Triggers

The sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict emerged when Kurds faced with the problems on the recognition of Kurdish identity and linguistic rights. The existence of suppressed identity groups in a society exacerbates the likelihood of conflict. In cases where an assimilationist integration is rejected by identity group, some powers should be transferred to the local governments to keep the communities together. In this situation, autonomous or decentralized structures become a mechanism to resolve identity problems when the perception of threat to identity is very high (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.211). In the Kurdish Conflict context, the situation followed a similar way. Unrecognized identity and linguistic rights of Kurds for 40 years ignited decentralization demands by considering 'decentralized structures' on the way of the realization of these rights since it was believed that the way of the recognition of identity may become easier when ethno-cultural communities are involved in local politics through decentralized governance structures (Ersanlı et al., 2012, p.36). Thus, the autonomy quest of Kurds stemmed from identity problem since they realized to be able to get rid of this oppression on their identity would not be possible without getting the right for self-rule (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.224). Similarly, the denial of linguistic rights shared the same destiny with identity since Kurdish language is still not recognized in the

Constitution (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.226). Referring back to the first sub-question is here “To what extent do the benefits of decentralization contribute to the solution of sociocultural triggers of Kurdish conflict in Turkey?”, Democratic Autonomy as a political and administrative decentralization model facilitates the participation of the people in discussions through constituted decision-making mechanisms (DTP, 2008). Every community in their assemblies has discretion to speak out their problems and decisions are directly taken by the people in assemblies if the problem is related to local issues (DTK, 2010).

*Political participation* can also be considered in relation to *identity recognition* since autonomous structures can also provide the recognition of identities and languages. In terms of language problem, it is aimed to be recognized of Kurdish language as second official language and education language in the schools in addition to Turkish. Furthermore, the use of the original names in the settlements such as streets, parks and squares is to be implemented to "re-establish" the language-culture-history ties destroyed by assimilation politics (DTK, 2010; Gürer, 2015). The language issue is important for Kurdish Political Movement because it is considered as the destruction of the individual and the society by breaking bonds of Kurdish society from the past (Gürer, 2015). This situation also caused that Kurdish Society and Kurdish Intellectuals not to be able to develop (DTK, 2010). Similarly, Kurdish Political Movement suggests to constitute an upper identity which covers all cultural identities instead of the definition of existing identity and citizenship (DTP, 2008). The function of decentralized structures is to protect authenticity of identities against pressure and secession (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012). In this respect, the role of local administrations is emphasized in Democratic Autonomy to obtain constitutional status for Kurdish Identity and Language. In other words, the function of local administrations is to reflect on the power of society for development of social, economic, historical, cultural existence (BDP, 2010; Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012). If the problem would only have been the reform for cultural rights of Kurds, the question of ‘*Would it be possible to solve the sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict without a decentralization model?*’ is coming to the table. In this respect, local governments are considered as catalysts for the development of sociocultural existence and democratic society since designed local governments can have power to represent their own regions and hereby, they can be catalysts for the change.

To put it more concretely, Kurdish local leaders (i.e. representatives elected in local assemblies by locals) can inherently have voice in the recognition of Kurdish identity and language since they will have the power to bring the status problem of Kurds to the National Assembly. The notion of democratic autonomy leads to reform efforts on local governance providing legal means for the realization of local autonomy and democracy (DTK, 2015; Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012). In a similar vein, tutelage of central government appears in an



unfair distribution of powers. It is widely recognized that central government would inherently be far away to the identity-based service preferences of the locals while local governments can be more enthusiastic to provide these services. Since the motto of decentralization is "*the capacity to develop and express local identity*" (Pratchett, 2004, p.358 in Ersanlı et al.,2012), decentralization can be understood as a tool providing legitimate structures which can answer to the sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict. The existing central administrative structure of Turkey is the main causes of existing social and political problems. Because the State has pursued a policy that ignores different communities, primarily the Kurdish people, with a centralist and single-minded attitude and hereby, different identities have been tried to be destroyed by the state (DTP, 2008, p.7; Gürer, 2015). Lastly, when it comes to *Good Governance*, Democratic Autonomy is based on democratic politics with a democratic organization for the benefit of society in response to centralist and bureaucratic structure of nation-state. With democratic politics, all layers of the society participate in the political process and function. In this way, political communities can create an open, transparent and face-to-face governance (DTK, 2010). This also provides the less tendency of Kurdish groups to the conflicts due to the democratization of decentralized governance which provides direct representation field for Kurds. The final goal of democratic autonomy is to constitute a women-oriented democratic society with an emphasis on equal, transparent and participatory governance (BDP, 2010; Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012).

However, it is also important to mention that Democratic Autonomy Model remains insufficient to explain the ties between sociocultural triggers and decentralization. For instance, the model handles these triggers in scope of the need for constitutional status while it does not mention how decentralization can be capable of dealing with sociocultural triggers. Consequently, the suggestions of Democratic Autonomy towards sociocultural triggers for the ideal decentralization model of this thesis are based on democratization in the governance. The way of this democratization is to constitute a decentralization model (i.e.Democratic Autonomy) due to the aforementioned benefits. For instance, decentralized structures (*i.e.local assemblies and communes*) does not only enhance the voice of Kurds in the decision-making process but also eliminates central state's tutelage which is an obstacle to democratization. Such a structure will also increase good governance in the governance because Kurds and their local representatives will directly be responsible for taken decisions and face-to-face governance which is illustrated in Democratic Autonomy will maximize good governance. The most important part of this model for socio-cultural triggers is to provide identity recognition. Identity recognition will be the result of decentralization since increasing autonomy of local authorities through decentralized structures will ensure identity recognition of locals and serve in accordance with the identity of locals such as providing necessary

resources for identity-related activities. Furthermore, the demands of Kurds on cultural rights such as the recognition of language and identity can easier be heard in the decision-making process and Kurdish groups can less tend to the conflicts because they are to be aware that their voices are heard.

#### 4.2.2. Economic Triggers

Decentralization's pervasive benefits are also in relation to the economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict since economic-rooted problems in many countries increases the risk of conflict. Decentralization has potential to mitigate economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict by utilizing effectiveness component of decentralization. Referring back to the second sub-question, 'To what extent do the benefits of decentralization contribute to the solution of economic triggers of Kurdish conflict in Turkey?', decentralization's benefits can be explained with reference to economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict. As mentioned in Chapter 1, regional inequality between Eastern and Western regions of the country has obviously become one of the most important causes of the Conflict. According to data of the State Planning Organization (DPT), the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions ranks in the last level of the socio-economic development order. 14 out of the 16 most socio-economically backward provinces are located in the Eastern and Southeastern Regions of Turkey. The Southeastern Region is largely behind in terms of production in the agriculture, industry and service sectors compared to other regions and this is also reflected in other prosperity indicators. Official figures showing the regional distribution of public investments for incentive regulations, investment incentives and investment-employment creation implemented by the government obviously exhibits that these implementations do not have a positive impact on the region and does not alter the destiny of the region (DTK, 2007, pp.114-115). The fact that regional inequality between Eastern and Western regions unproportionally exists, the reason behind this has also been interpreted in scope of '*ethnic lines*' and '*discrimination against the Kurds*' by some nationalist Kurds (Yavuz, 2001, p.20). This implies that regional inequality can easily be misused to exacerbate the Kurdish Conflict even though it may not be true. Depending on this regional inequality, relative deprivation can also be evaluated as an economic trigger of the Conflict while it has also societal outcomes which influence Kurds' perception towards this economic unfairness.

In other words, the feelings of unfairness and discontent created the perception of relative deprivation and caused collective violence. In Kurdish context, Turkey's large population and rapid urbanization which exceeded its available economic capacity triggered Kurds' relative deprivation in the poor neighborhoods of Turkish Western cities where the mostly Kurdish population lived (Özçelik, 2006, p.141). In terms of fiscal autonomy of decentralized

structures, it is specified that the right to use and consume of economic resources must belong to Democratic Autonomous Kurdistan (DTK, 2010). In this model, tax revenues obtaining from the local sources are used to resolve the socio-economic problems of the locals, increasing the role of local authorities and local assemblies (DTP, 2008). The fact that all the regions has own decision-making authority in the illustrated democratic autonomy model, all fiscal decisions are taken by communes except national economic decisions and the autonomous regions have own budget. In terms of local service delivery, the decisions of communes are taken by citizens and hereby, policy outcomes are shaped by preferences and demands. This will automatically produce tailored services which are special to locals. However, one can say that Democratic Autonomy model focuses on regional development by considering a holistic design of economic policies rather than small-scaled economic outcomes. Therefore, economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict are mainly in relation to a new economic policy which is based on local taxation authority, resource sharing for regions, incentives and investments for Eastern and Southeastern regions in the country through positive discrimination. Decentralization can mitigate economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict since there is a need for radical changes in the economic sense to annihilate destruction created by the centralist economic policies (DTK, 2007, pp.114). In this context, a fair economic system which is called as a new "*community economy*" in accordance with the collective and solidarist economic relations of the communities is suggested by Kurdish Political Movement (DTK, 2010; Gürer, 2015) for regional development. Thus, especially pretexts used by Kurdish Nationalist can lose its importance to exacerbate conflicts.

Furthermore, *relative deprivation* and *regional inequality* require a reform which is formed by a new economic policy based on incentives for private sector and public investments. Accordingly, priorities in this economic-design are given to eliminate unemployment and poverty, increasing women's employment and emphasizing equality and solidarity between communities. In addition, the right for the use of underground and aboveground resources in the autonomous regions will belong to local/regional entity, namely "democratic autonomous region" (Gürer, 2015). To constitute a long-lasting peace in the Kurdish Conflict, it is essential to establish an effective and comprehensive economic policy to overcome the existing economic problems of the region. Democratic Autonomy offer suggests a regional development-oriented model, namely 'Participatory community economy' which each community uses its own resources and the use of authority is balanced between the center and the local (DTP, 2008, pp.114-115; Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.232) A special incentive regulation is implemented for the sectors such as mining, agriculture, tourism and labor-intensive sectors in order to ensure the economic and social balance of the regions. It is suggested to implement a positive discrimination for Eastern and Southeastern regions of

the country due to the fact that economical discrepancies between regions exist. In addition to the incentives for private sector, public investments in the autonomous regions will focus on infrastructure (transportation, communication, energy, etc.). The construction of north-south and east-west roads is a must for reinforcing economic and social ties. It is extremely substantial that democratic autonomy is ensured in the political and administrative model in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity in the transfer of development funds within the framework of economic development. The selected cities in the proposal such as Trabzon, Diyarbakir, Van and Erzurum are structured as regional metropolitan cities in order to act as an engine for regional socio-economic development and to mobilize regional dynamics and to prevent migration from the region (DTP, 2008, pp.114-116).

Lastly, it is important to mention that the projects such as regional development and positive discrimination for the region are not new and were discussed in the previous years. This shows that the raising of these projects may not only be the benefits of decentralization. In other words, it is evidence that the implementation of these projects is also possible within unitary state. Therefore, the economic solutions of Democratic Autonomy Model do not specifically point to decentralization. Consequently, the ideal decentralization model of this thesis may be utilized from the economic solutions of Democratic Autonomy for the economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict. First of all, it is not based on capitalist economy, instead community economy is suggested while the details of this economic model can be considered 'utopia'. Second, economic politics of the model is holistic and ignores the details of the responsibilities of local authorities on economic policy. Furthermore, there is no detail regarding to export/import and foreign trade policies. Therefore, the fact that decentralization in a country requires a robust economic structure, decentralization only works on condition that the design of effective structures which can answer to the economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict. An ideal decentralization model to mitigate economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict cannot be utilized of the features of democratic autonomy while the suggestions of TESEV in scope of regionalism have potential to mitigate Kurdish Conflict.

#### 4.2.3. Political Triggers

Another issue to measure the utility of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism is political triggers of Kurdish Conflict. Centralist state structure, Obstacles for Self-Rule, Official State Ideology and Elite Politics became determinants of political-based problems of Kurdish Conflict. Centralist State Structure implies the problems of centralist tutelage and nation state. In contemporary democracies, problems are solved with local governments and participation of locals in the decision-making process while locals in Turkey struggles with heavy, centralist and bureaucratic state structure (DTP, 2008, p.110). The traditional power

of Turkey's central government stems from unitary state and official ideology which supports a single nation, a single flag and a single language. Before the establishment of Turkish Republic, Ottoman Empire had ethnic diversity and various local entities. Even Kurds had an limited local autonomy in the Ottoman Period with the effect of their tribal leaders (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012; Çiçek, 2013). With the the establishment of Republic of Turkey, strong unitary state emphasis shaped the local entities despite the ethnically diverse structure of the country. Over time, the nation-building process melted other identities through nation-state by the use of Turkishness and central administrative structure transformed to a heavy and ineffective structure. Therefore, one can say that Turkey's political culture has always remained under the pressure of group domination, ethnic supremacy, authoritarian/central government and patriarchal state culture (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.24). Democratic Autonomy Proposal intensely criticizes the strict centralism, instead it suggests strong local governments (Gürer, 2015, p.63). The fact that minority groups have always been powerless and defenseless against the central structure of power, autonomy is designed as a functional tool to protect and develop the existence of powerless and defenseless minorities (Wolf, 2011; Gürer, 2015, p.64). It is also important to note that Democratic Autonomy Proposal is based on neither specific ethnicity nor region even though it is a product of Kurdish Political Movement. The reasons behind this holistic framework of Democratic Autonomy can be explained with the geographical dispersion of the Kurds and emancipatory approaches for minority rights (Gürer, 2015).

The problematic central state structure is against any form of self-rule model since it does not want to lose its own authority. In this respect, Kurds consider themselves as a 'founding element' of the country together with Turks and claim a right to govern themselves in scope of Democratic Autonomy. This claim covers the political representation right of Kurds, namely political status of Kurds. The aim of decentralization within Democratic Autonomy is to provide societies can transform into a self-ruling (DTK, 2012; Gürer, 2015, p.217). For this purpose, the ideal self-rule design of Democratic Autonomy is introduced in the documents of pro-Kurdish Party Documents. First of all, its administrative system is composed of 20-25 autonomous regions (DTP, 2008, p.11; DTK, 2012, p. 134). The division of duties are classified foreign affairs, finance and defense for national assembly while policies on education, health, tourism, sport and transportation remains on *Autonomous Regional Authorities* (DTP, 2008, p. 10; Gürer, 2015). Second, the decision-making system of Democratic Autonomy starts from communes in the villages and assemblies in the cities (DTK, 2012, p.108; Gürer, 2015). Figure 4 shows the ideal decision-making process of Democratic Autonomy within local/regional assembly. Accordingly, every groups are represented in this communal organization is born at the local level and continues with a

'congress model' by forming a confederal structure consisting of parliament and communes (Gürer, 2015, p.232). DTK mainly means a congress-based politics form and is at the center of decision-making authority calls a platform which society and politics have met. (Gürer, 2015). This structure consists of local/regional assemblies that are arranged through political parties, communes, councils, councils, non-governmental organizations, associations, trade unions, chambers, sociocultural institutions and religious places (DTK, 2012, p.113; Gürer, 2015, p.232). The organization of DTK consists of six levels : village (köy), rural area, (belde), urban neighbourhood (mahalle), district (ilçe), city (kent), and the region (bölge). The Congress has a divan (executive committee) composed of five persons, among whom one acts as a spokes(wo)man (Gürer, 2015).

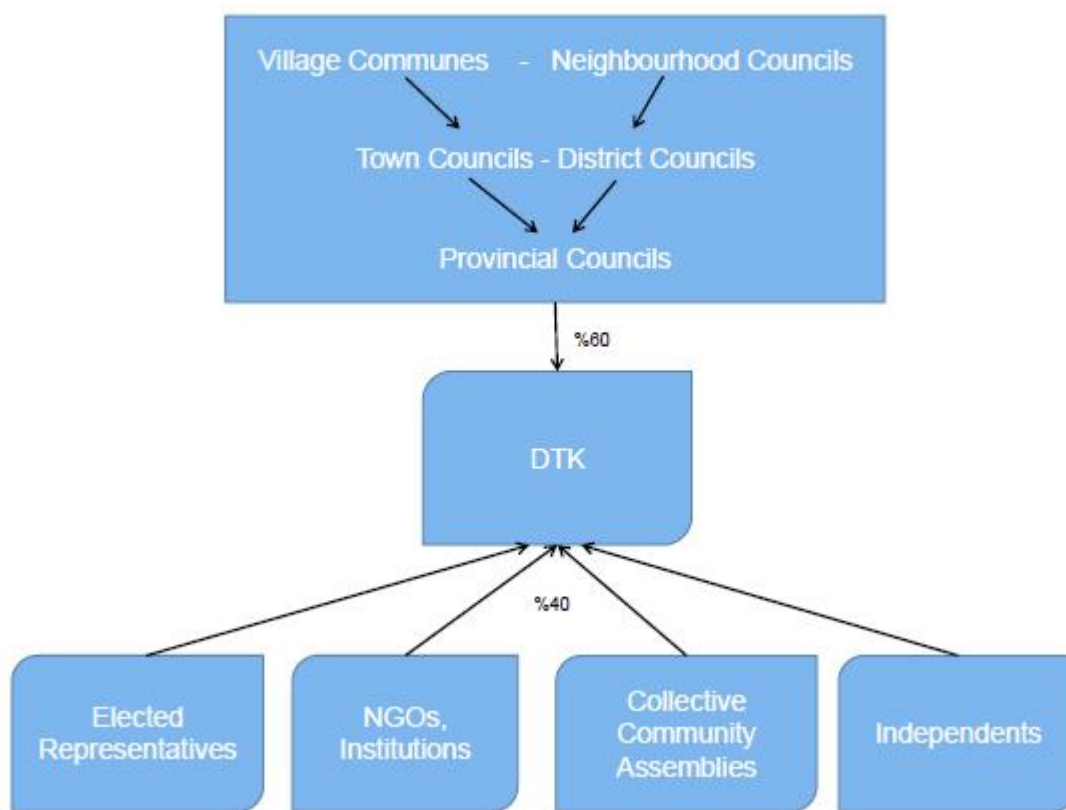


Figure 4 : Decision-making structure of Democratic Autonomy in Regional/Local Assembly  
Source : Gürer, 2015, p.301

The organization of regional assemblies is not limited to spatial scale and covers groups based on ethnical, gender, cultural, religious, NGOs, trade unions are represented. In addition, every Democratic Autonomous Region has its own flags and symbols representing them (DTK, 2010). Finally, every groups are also involved in national issues by sending their local/regional representatives to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) since the legislative power is both on national and regional assemblies (BDP, 2013; Gürer, 2015, p.218). Thus, all identity or social groups are involved in decision-making process by

increasing their political participation. However, the lack of Democratic Autonomy is observed in the details of rules applied for the duties, responsibilities and functioning of the communes and assemblies (Gürer, 2015, p.232). *Official Ideology*, namely Kemalism, has become another exacerbating factor for Kurdish Conflict as a tool to accommodate unitary state and single ethnicity mentality with centralism. The distinction between Central State Structure and Official Ideology is that centralist state structure implies administrative and political meanings while Official Ideology served as the backyard of all political practices in Turkey. Ersanlı et al. (2012) describe that *Official Ideology* as 'assimilator for integration' and 'authoritarian' (p.226). Official Ideology is also defined by DTP as 'an ideology which basically ignores all differences, mainly Kurds living in Turkey, and attempts to abolish different cultures by assimilating them, does not allow the solution of any social problem.' (DTP, 2008, p.109). The political and administrative mechanisms of the state, organized as a strictly centralized nation-state, correspond to a more oligarchic structure than the democratic republic. In order to establish this structure, the education system also played an important role by condemning the dominant cultural elements and symbols of the Ottoman era. The Republic was established as against all traditional symbols (Ersanlı et al., 2012, pp. 122-123). This refusal attitude has also influenced Kurds since they were a representative of tribal/traditional values while Official Ideology rejected all traditional values.

Apart from historical triggers of Kurdish Conflict, *Elites Politics* recently became dominant as a political trigger of Kurdish Conflict. Even though Elite Politics has also roots coming from the beginning years of the Republic, it found its peak point in the Erdoğan period. It is already known that the Kemalist elite aimed to bring modernization project inspired by French modernization project which cover a new secular and modern national society with a homogenous structure and culture. Kurdish feudal, tribal, and religious characteristics of society have also been an obstacle for the Turkish elite's aims and modernization process. In the later years this feudal characteristic became the root cause of the problem between the eastern and western part of Turkey (Mutlu, 2013). In other words, elite-driven projects can easily drag masses to conflicts. In this context, Kurds' elites were historically tribal leaders while their elites can be currently considered as the leader of PKK and pro-Kurdish Political Party representatives. The elites' relationships are the basic determinant of the Kurdish Conflict. For instance, In August 2005, Prime Minister Erdogan claimed that 'the Kurdish problem' is his problem and that he would resolve it through democracy (Yavuz, 2009 in Tas, 2016, p.37) while he claimed that, "*There is no Kurdish problem in Turkey*" several times since 2015 (Tas, 2016, p.39). It is not difficult to figure out the reason behind this change on discourse. Due to the lack of transparency on Turkish Politics, the details of the negotiations carried out between Turkish State and Kurdish Political Movement are not

exactly known. However, clearly the power politics carried out by Erdogan clashed the Democratic Autonomy demands of Kurds while the peace process which were initiated in 2009 with a ceasefire between Turkish State and PKK ended up in 2013. This can be showed as the best example regarding to that how Elite Politics became the determinant of Kurdish Conflict rather than lay people's demands. Therefore, decentralization can be considered as an effort to transform the politics into the level of lay people. When it is considered in line with decentralization's legitimacy and effectiveness efforts, decentralization's emphasis on the participation of ordinary people is that the basic aim for both fighting with conflicts and increasing legitimacy and effectiveness in the government. 'Center' means consolidation of power by being far away to locals, namely lay people, is the most important enemy of decentralization. Elite Politics' problem in terms of Kurdish Conflict to suffer from top-down governance of the process. It is easily seen that the lay people is concerned with Kurdish Conflict while Elites are the conductor of political processes. Ersanlı et al.(2012) describe the problematic of Elite Politics 'In Turkish politics, there are dads and brothers who know better than everyone and they are not willing to share authority' (p.247).

The relationship between decentralization and elite politics can be interpreted based on the decision-making mechanisms of democratic autonomy which increases the participation of locals in the decision-making process and hereby, locals do not become a victim of elite politics. The democracy of existing system consisting of elections in every 4-year does not allow to hear voices of citizens. The power relations in the local axis are different from the national power relations. While the national power is becoming institutionalized and strengthened over time, local's power relations are based on more competition. Local communities are flexible and not bureaucratic; Economic and social resources can be introduced at any moment and create a continuity in the environment (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.212). Therefore, the achievement of the autonomy is subject to permanent dialogue and constitutional principles (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012, p.213). Therefore, decentralization's role in Elite Politics to mitigate the impact of 'big decision-makers in Turkish Politics' by increasing participation of locals in the decision-making process. Lastly, the biggest contradiction in Democratic Autonomy Model can be showed as 'unsystematic form' that is underlined in the party documents. Accordingly, it is shown while BDP document is only in relation to administrative decentralization model, DTK and DTP documents handle the details of the devolution of power (Ersanlı and Bayhan, 2012). Furthermore, it is also observed that the details of the design of devolution of power and representation mechanisms (i.e. regional/national assemblies) are not explicitly explained (Gürer, 2015). Consequently, based on previous analysis on the decentralization section, decentralization's benefits can be evaluated with reference to political triggers. Referring back to the sub-



question, “To what extent do the benefits of decentralization contribute to the solution of political/structural triggers of Kurdish Conflict in Turkey?”. As it is mentioned, central state structure has become one of the historical and administrative-based political triggers of Kurdish Conflict.

Due to the fact that the state has adopted a centralized state structure, the excessive burden on central governance and the denial of different identities can be considered in relation to effectiveness and legitimacy. Because the excessive burden on central governance due to central state structure may not allow to provide effectiveness. Similarly, the denial of different identities also hinders to constitute legitimacy of governance. Second, Self Rule ,as a basic right of every ethnicity, is not accepted by dominant identity in the country and hereby, legitimacy of governance is not provided since the existence of an identity is ignored. Instead, a functioning local governance structure could provide legitimacy in the government by satisfying different identities. Third, Official State Ideology encourages the notion of unitary state by eliminating other identities. The ignorance of Kurdish identity also points to the illegitimate governance structures and the solution of this problem can find itself in the design of decision-making structures through a decentralized model. Finally, Elite Politics influences the Kurdish Conflict since power relations of political leaders are not concerned with the damages of Conflict which mostly influences lay people. Instead, they are more concerned about their authority and positions. Therefore, increasing role of citizens in the decision-making process via decentralization is a necessary step in terms of providing legitimacy in the governance. As a solution, a decentralized model is suggested by obtaining its power from the bottom without ignoring different identities. A new constitution which accepts a decentralized governance based on democratization of Turkey and the recognition of Kurdish identity is a must not only for Democratic Autonomy but also a functional decentralization model.

#### 4.2.4. Concluding Remarks 2

The second section of the analysis focused on the triggers of Kurdish Conflict to examine the capacity of decentralization vis-a-vis the triggers of Kurdish Conflict since suggesting an ideal decentralization model without reference to conflict triggers would not be possible. In that sense, decentralization can mitigate sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict since decentralized structures, which reflect legitimacy-providing benefits of decentralization, can perform an important role in the recognition of identity and linguistic rights. Democratic Autonomy Model suggests to constitute local/regional assemblies, which can contribute to increase political participation of Kurds on policy-making process, to enhance the voices of Kurdish leaders and citizens in National Assembly as well as in Regional Assemblies with

their own identity. This process can also facilitate the recognition of Kurdish identity and linguistic rights vis-a-vis central government since decentralized structures constitute legitimacy in the governance. The importance on identity as a conflict trigger is confirmed by Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) and the solution is suggested as devolving state power(p.5). In other words, sociocultural triggers can be solved through decentralization's 'devolution of power' principle. Second, decentralization can mitigate economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict since decentralized structures can perform an important role to decrease regional inequalities and relative deprivation by providing effectiveness in the governance. The prominent suggestion of Democratic Autonomy is mainly based on positive discrimination that can diminish regional inequalities between Eastern and Western regions of the country through regional development projects. Thus, conflicting Kurdish groups' tendency to the conflict, which are motivated by economic reasons, can highly be eliminated. In a similar vein, Brinkerhoff (2011) points to the importance of economy as a conflict trigger while his solution is based on 'Developing equalization and redistribution policies' and 'improving the capacity of local service delivery'(p.137). Accordingly, even though positive discrimination for Eastern regions covers 'equalization policies', there is no specific emphasis on local service delivery in Democratic Autonomy. The reason behind this is that Democratic Autonomy is more concerned with structural change and devolution of power rather than local services.

Lastly, decentralization plays an important role to mitigate political triggers of Kurdish Conflict by providing effectiveness and legitimacy in the governance. In this respect, the devolution of decision-making authority to the decentralized structures can satisfy Kurds' self-rule demands because thus, Kurds can directly get involved in decision-making process through local/regional assemblies. Increasing role of locals with the help of decentralized structure will change the unquestioned role of Elites on policies which influence the life of citizens. In that sense, decentralization's '*proximity to the locals*' notion can eliminate Elite Politics. In other words, decentralization through its local/regional assemblies, which are suggested in Democratic Autonomy, makes the politics close to the Kurds. Thus, the solution of the Conflict is seen in the hands of Kurdish society rather than big leaders of Turkish and Kurdish politics. Decentralization can also remedy problematic centralist state structure and official ideology. The existing 'centralist' structures which are established based on 'single state-single nation-single language' understanding, became a part of Kurdish Conflict. The elimination of this understanding is possible through strong local governments which facilitate the recognition of Kurdish identity and language that exist within boundaries of the state. As a whole, all political triggers of Kurdish Conflict is in relation to authoritarian government conceptualized by Brinkerhoff (2011). In addition, solutions of Brinkerhoff (2011) mainly focuses on civil society, participation and devolution of power. When it comes to the

solutions of Democratic Autonomy, it is suggested that the design of local/regional assemblies. Therefore, the emphasis points of both analyses are consistent each other.

Consequently, it can be concluded that decentralization can mitigate Kurdish Conflict while triggers of Kurdish Conflict have different dimensions. Thus, economic triggers, which is the most technical part of the Conflict, can be eliminated through concrete projects. It has been examined that Democratic Autonomy Model can contribute this process, however the fact that there is no emphasis on cooperation with central government and local authorities' service capacity, the model can be considered quite autonomous. On the other hand, sociocultural and political triggers require more collective effort that covers the participation of all layer of the society. Therefore, a decentralization model should concentrate more on sociocultural and political triggers to eliminate Kurdish Conflict. In this respect, the devolution of power for political triggers; identity recognition through political participation are vital attempts to mitigate Kurdish Conflict. However, the contradiction between triggers of Kurdish Conflict and Democratic Autonomy as a decentralization model also occurs since the suggested solutions within decentralization do not specifically point to the need of decentralization. In other words, fulfillment of some of the projects, which are believed to be mitigated or solved Kurdish Conflict, is also possible within unitary state through strong reforms. Therefore, it can be said while decentralization is a need to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict, a wide range of reforms can partially be implemented in this direction.

## 5. Conclusion

Starting point of this thesis has been to examine whether the use of decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism can mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict as it has been observed in some countries. Through the qualitative content analysis of TESEV, Democratic Autonomy Model and selected legislative acts, the answers to the sub-questions that have been introduced to lead to the answer of the main research question. Before the analysis, it is important to mention that the importance of decentralization for Kurdish Conflict is two-sided. First, it is claimed that Ottoman Sultans had granted a degree of autonomy to the Kurds in the 15th and 16th centuries. In the Period of Independence War of Turkey, Treaty of Sevres signed on 1920 with Western Allies was granting self-rule right to the Kurds (Ergil, 2000, p.124). The abolishment of this treaty by Turkey changed the fate of the Kurds and neither their autonomy nor their self-rule right was recognized by countervailing Lausanne Treaty. Second, decentralization has become a popular topic for Kurdish Conflict in Turkey since the quest of Kurdish Political Movement transformed into a decentralization model, which is called Democratic Autonomy, after the capture of Ocalan. This model also shaped the agenda of the negotiation process, held between PKK and Turkish State in 2009, but it has not been accepted by Turkish State. As a whole, decentralization is considered both a historical right for Kurds and the necessity for the solution of Kurdish Conflict. In that sense, the overall aim of this thesis is to examine an ideal decentralization model, which every layer of the society can compromise, is the only peaceful model for solution of Kurdish Conflict.

The main goal of this thesis is to identify the benefits of decentralization vis-a-vis triggers of Kurdish Conflict in terms of peace-providing in Kurdish Conflict. In that sense, this thesis reveals that the utility of decentralization to mitigate or solve Kurdish Conflict with the research question of "To what extent can decentralization be utilized as a conflict resolution mechanism for the solution of Kurdish Conflict in Turkey?". As a result, this thesis concludes an answer as decentralization can constitute the peace for Kurdish Conflict through its benefits in providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance. Thus, decentralized governance structures, which is to be constituted of these elements, can be capable in answering the triggers of Kurdish Conflict. The importance of findings of this thesis is derived from constitution of an alternative to the security-based solutions of Kurdish Conflict. In this respect, it has been identified that an appropriate design of decentralization can mitigate Kurdish Conflict on condition that it is a product of collective effort. In other words, decentralization requires to constitute a decentralization model, which is accepted by all layers of the society, in order to curb ongoing conflict and possible reactions. Furthermore, according to the identification of existing legislation, administrative and political structure of the country has problems in providing legitimacy and effectiveness in the governance. In that

sense, ideal decentralization model should first take these problematic elements into consideration to mitigate Kurdish Conflict. Second, legitimacy should be provided through identity-based rights, increasing participation and changing administrative structure to constitute the acceptance of the governance in the eyes of citizens. In a similar vein, effectiveness in the governance should be provided in order to satisfy the living conditions of Kurds through fiscal autonomy, regional development projects and increasing service delivery. In that sense, the fulfillment of these components provides the commitment and trust with existing system and thus, its implications will be to provide peace in Kurdish Conflict.

The findings of this thesis revealed that economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict is relatively easier to be abated when compared to sociocultural and political triggers. Because, the economic triggers as a part of technical reforms can easily be arranged while sociocultural and political triggers require to constitute the process that consists of workshops and civil society activities. The fact that decentralization has hitherto been perceived as a threat to national unity, its benefits on social and political extent may not easily be understood. This thesis also showed Democratic Autonomy Proposal is troublesome due to the uncertainties in the documents. Therefore, decentralization concept has not been considered as limited to Democratic Autonomy. According to Siegle and O'Mahony (2009), decentralization as a conflict resolution mechanism has highly differentiated effects in the countries and these effects are mainly related to type of decentralization, conflict and context. In general, it can be asserted that decentralization's positive effects on conflict resolution are mostly seen if local leaders are responsive to the needs of locals, have their own autonomy to execute local priorities and are granted with financial autonomy (p.50). In other words, increasing autonomy of local leaders through decentralization causes more responsive governance (legitimacy), better service delivery (effectiveness) and stability (peace). To put more concretely; on the one hand, to constitute legitimacy in the governance is a prerequisite in order to mitigate conflicts which are derived from social and political dissatisfaction of locals. This points to the responsiveness of local leaders and structures to the preferences and demands of locals and the performance of local leaders to fulfill local priorities as stated by Siegle and O'Mahony.

On the other hand, to provide effectiveness in the governance, which reflects on technical and economic dimensions of decentralization, can eliminate the likelihood of economic-based conflicts. The emphasis on effectiveness is the use of decentralization for cooperation between center and local to enhance the economic development of conflict-region to eliminate ethnic grievance. The fact that decentralization strengthens ties with central government and thus, interregional infrastructural cooperation including funded investments

for conflict regions is developed through decentralization (ibid, p.57). When this analysis compared to the finding of this thesis, the arguments pointed by Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) are confirmed with the findings of this thesis. In that sense, Regionalism proposal of TESEV points to two points for the success of decentralization on conflict resolution. First, to constitute legitimate structures, which is primary goal of regionalism, are associated with providing accountable and responsive governance. Such a form of government through political participation, identity recognition and elimination of centralist state structure will provide peace in the Kurdish-inhabited regions. In this regard, decentralization can increase Kurds' political participation, which is considered as a key element to enable locals to have a voice in policy-making, and thus, Kurds express more easily their opinions regarding to policies/services in a legal platform and less tend to conflict. Decentralized structures also becomes more sensitive to identity and regional issues than central government due to the local priorities reality as mentioned by Siegle and O'Mahony. Therefore, these region-oriented services provided by local governments satisfies local needs and this exercise also increases the recognition of regional realities such as identity rights in the sense of central government. Second, to provide regional development, which is associated with increasing effectiveness, is mainly considered to enhance cooperation between local and center.

TESEV's agreement suggestion for regional development is also seen in the cooperation through decentralization for funding on interregional infrastructural initiatives. In this regard, emphasis on both analyses is the cooperation between local and center rather than providing fiscal autonomy of local since it is recognized that the regional development is highly dependent funding of central government and this attempt is relatively important to minimize conflicts. In terms of Kurdish Conflict, it was mentioned earlier, Kurdish-inhabited regions are the least developed regions of the country. Therefore, this fact is misused as a conflict-exacerbating factor and the solution of decentralization reflects on 'strengthening ties with center' rather than secession claims. Finally, it is a salient detail that Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) recommend that decentralization should be at the municipal rather than provincial level with claiming that municipalities are far less likely to make secession claims. In a similar vein, the proposal of TESEV criticizes provincial-level decentralization but the argument is defended with different reasons such as misuse of decentralization by politicians in the provincial-level. Although the arguments are similar, it can be said as a contrasting point that the analysis of TESEV never mentions risks of such a decentralization model while Siegle and O'Mahony (2009) indicate that decentralization is not a risk-free endeavour (p.58). For conflict resolution section of the analysis, the conceptualization of Brinkerhoff (2011) has been utilized to interpret conflict drivers and governance dimensions.

Differently from the analysis in Chapter 4, Brinkerhoff (2011) reveals two types of conflict drivers which are greed-related and grievance-related. Considering its relevance with Kurdish Conflict, only grievance-related conflict drivers have been taken into consideration for this thesis. Accordingly, the main question of Brinkerhoff (2011) has been formulated how governance reforms through decentralization can contribute to mitigate conflict drivers. First, it is argued that the existence of decentralized structures enhances the interaction of citizens with public officials and gives a chance to exercise checks and balances over different government levels through separation of powers. It also extends multiple political opportunities for bargaining and political contestation, which can increase the role of minorities at the local level. Such a governance structure can enhance potential opportunities for political participation and provide tailored policies in line with citizen preferences. Second, the capacity of decentralization in providing service delivery is another determinant to reduce conflict. Because decentralized structures can provide services as closest to the local citizens (subsidiarity principle) which can allow local governments the space to tailor policies/services to local needs and preferences. Thus, effectiveness-related problems, which cause citizen dissatisfaction, can be eliminated through decentralization reforms that provide means to deal with grievances and reduce conflict, thus enabling the state to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness (Brinkerhoff, 2011, pp.140-141). Thus, it is concluded that conflict drivers can be eliminated through legitimacy and effectiveness governance dimensions provided by decentralization for ongoing conflicts.

When it comes to the differences between analyses, It can be said that the governance dimensions in Brinkerhoff mainly focus on political and economic triggers of the conflicts while the findings of this thesis classify triggers of Kurdish Conflict in three typologies including sociocultural triggers. The difference between analyses is essentially stemming from the analysis of Brinkerhoff reflecting on the fragile states and post-conflict transformation. However, it can be said that governance dimensions have basically the same goals with the analysis of this thesis and thus, conflict drivers can be considered as complementary each other. To put it more concretely, Brinkerhoff's economic triggers are shaped in scope of skewed public services, relative deprivation and horizontal inequality while economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict identified in this thesis are regional inequality and relative deprivation. In Brinkerhoff's analysis, it is suggested that devolution of power and resources, need-based subsidies, increasing local service capacity and developing equalization & redistribution policies (p.136). These elements can also be considered in line with suggested solutions of this thesis. As a whole, decentralization can increase investments on Kurdish-inhabited regions, provide devolution of economic mechanisms to the local authorities and develop service capacity. Thus, decentralization can mitigate

Kurdish Conflict since the minimization of regional inequalities and relative deprivation of Kurds through aforementioned benefits will less tend Kurds to the conflict.

Decentralization's impact on political triggers of Kurdish Conflict are discussed in scope of official ideology, centralist state structure and elite politics, which were discussed in Chapter 4, can be considered in relation to authoritarian government and oppression, which are shown as conflict drivers by Brinkerhoff (pp.136-137). Accordingly, the authoritarian government will not tolerate the autonomy of local authorities or self-rule right of ethnic group. For instance, identity recognition is a democratic right for Kurds while it is not tolerated under the authoritarian forms of government. In a similar vein, political participation of Kurds remains limited in authoritarian governments since increasing political participation through regional/local assemblies are considered as a step on the secession. The suppression of Kurds' endeavours will be the reason for the beginning of conflicts. Thus, to eliminate political triggers of Kurdish Conflict, legitimacy-providing decentralized structures, which can break the power of authoritarian governments, are vital in both analyses. Thus, decentralization can ease political triggers of Kurdish Conflict through legitimacy implementations. In terms of sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict, it can be said that the utilization of decentralization on sociocultural triggers is neglected in Brinkerhoff's analysis. Accordingly, ethnic/religious division as a conflict driver is interpreted in association with legitimacy and security governance dimensions while identity is not considered as a part of conflict triggers in Brinkerhoff's analysis.

According to the findings of this thesis, sociocultural triggers, which are the denial of identity and linguistic rights, can be solved through legitimacy dimension of decentralization. For instance, local authorities of Kurdish-inhabited regions through decentralized governance can perform identity-based implementations such as activities in Kurdish language, the changing of the names of streets. In addition, local leaders through legitimate and strong local governments can have legitimate power in the national politics and hereby, identity recognition and linguistic rights in the Constitution may be provided by strong local authorities. Eventually, it is claimed that Kurds, who obtained their cultural rights in both local and national politics, less tend to the conflicts. The aim of this thesis has been specified as to constitute an ideal decentralization model which can answer to the triggers of Kurdish Conflict in Turkey. Since the topic addressed in this paper is complex and dependent on many country-specific and geopolitical factors, which can influence the success of decentralization in Kurdish Conflict, errors and omissions are anticipated. In this respect, this thesis is limited to the interpretation of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict within Turkey. However, the scope of decentralization can also be changed through different governance mechanisms. For instance, it has been discovered in the data analysis of this thesis,



Democratic Autonomy Proposal is a product of long process rather than a one-day declaration. Therefore new perspectives developed by different scholars can thoroughly change the meaning of decentralization for Kurdish Conflict.

Furthermore, the effect of geopolitical dynamics in the region, which may influence Kurdish Conflict, such as Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, ongoing civil war in Syria and relatively suppressed activities of PJAK in Iran are neglected in this thesis. Therefore, future research can cover regional realities that can change the design of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict. Another idea on future research can also be an extensive decentralization model that covers Kurdish-inhabited regions in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. For instance, it is also discussed that Kurdish Groups in Southern Syria, which is called Rojava (i.e. Western Kurdistan), currently exercises Democratic Autonomy. The unification of all Kurdish-inhabited regions within Democratic Autonomy can also be discussed. Turkish Public Administration reforms, which are also part of the data analysis of this thesis, can be considered as the biggest attempts in terms of decentralization. However, this process remained limited to administrative decentralization and has never covered Kurdish Question. When decentralization has become a popular topic after the capture of Ocalan, the issue has frequently been overlooked. In terms of Kurdish Conflict, the biggest initiative was Peace Process held in Oslo in 2009. However, the negotiations held between Turkish State and PKK did not end the conflict up due to disagreements. In this process, Democratic Autonomy Proposal has become the main solution suggestion of Kurdish Political Movement. It is also important to note that Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that Turkey should not be scare of federalism (T24.2013). However, all these attempts remained futile for the solution of Kurdish Conflict. In practical terms, decentralization model of this thesis is capable to mitigate Kurdish Conflict. In this direction, first, the biggest positive effects of decentralization on Kurdish Conflict can be seen in economic triggers of Kurdish Conflict by providing effectiveness in the governance. Accordingly, the positive discrimination for Kurdish-inhabited regions suggested by Democratic Autonomy Proposal is the key project for regional development.

Similarly, an appropriate design of 'regions', which is suggested by TESEV, can eliminate relative deprivation of Kurds through resource-autonomy and effective service delivery. The fact that economic triggers reflect on a technical dimension of decentralization, their effects can be easier when compared with other triggers. Second, the sociocultural triggers of Kurdish Conflict can be abated with the help of legitimacy dimension of decentralization. Accordingly, constitutional reform is a prerequisite since the recognition of identity and language can be realized through constitutional reform that covers the design of decentralization. However, Turkish State's support on political participation can also facilitate

the involvement of Kurds in the decision-making process and thus, 'de facto' recognition of Kurdish identity can ease possible conflicts that derive from sociocultural causes. Finally, the mitigation of political triggers of Kurdish Conflict is highly dependent on type of decentralization and devolution of power. Even though political triggers constitute the most important part of decentralization, it may not be easy to leave 90-year state mentality behind. The fact that political triggers, which already penetrated the roots of the state mechanism, require a collective endeavor taken by both Turkish State and Kurdish Political Movement, the execution of negotiations are locomotives to eliminate political triggers of Kurdish Conflict. Lastly, it is also important to consider the role of decentralization to shape Kurds' own destiny and determining their development priorities rather than directly bringing peace, democracy or development to the country (Kauzya, 2013). In other words, it is recognized that the benefits of decentralization can constitute peace in the region but it is basically defended that peace-providing effect of decentralization is to extend Kurds' self-rule right.

As a whole, decentralization is an effective mechanism, which is capable to answer to the triggers of Kurdish Conflict, while the success is highly dependent on institutional design and societal acceptance. In other words, one can say that the success of decentralization is in relation to the extent 'how inter-group dynamics, horizontal inequalities and new local politics are governed in the decentralized context, which is highly dependent on local, regional and the interference of national elites, their interests, grass-roots support base, and how this is mobilised to access the fruits of decentralization' (Diprose and Ukiwo, 2008, p.27). In the context of Kurdish Conflict, the principal responsibility remains on Turkish State to implement decentralization reforms together with negotiations held with Kurdish Political Movement. Accordingly, the primary actors of Kurdish Question, which are Turkish State, PKK and Kurdish Political Movement, can be gathered to negotiate their suggestions. Even though the country's current situation is not amenable to such a peace process in this period, it is likely that ongoing conflicts in the region will highly influence the measures of Turkish Government. For this process, first step is the negotiations held between Turkish State and Kurdish Political Movement. Even though the country previously experienced negotiation process with PKK, the most important thing is to constitute consensus between parties that can give concessions. Second step is to explain the changes to the society through workshops and civil society activities. The execution of transparency politics performs an important role to avoid repercussions from the society. In this respect, collected viewpoints through workshops and NGOs can be utilized for upcoming constitutional reforms. Third step is to fulfill constitutional reform which covers decentralization and solves constitutional status problem of Kurds. Due to the fact that decentralization does not exist in the Turkish Constitution, a wide range of constitutional reforms on this field are needed to be able to

answer triggers of Kurdish Conflict. Consequently, this thesis reveals that decentralization has potential to contribute to the resolution of Kurdish Conflict based on its benefits on legitimacy and effectiveness. It was understood that an ongoing conflict for 40 years in the region requires a different solution model than security-based solutions. In that sense, this master thesis is a challenge against security-focused viewpoint towards Kurdish Conflict. Thus, it is claimed that decentralization, which can penetrate all dimensions of the Conflict, can mitigate or solve to the solution of Kurdish Conflict when an appropriate design by taking country-specific conditions into consideration is provided.

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## **7. Appendix**

The following studies were used for the analysis.

### **1. The data compilation for the analysis of Decentralization**

#### **Council of Europe Legal Documents**

The European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985)

Resolution 293 : Regions with Legislative Powers towards Multilevel Governance (2009)

#### **Turkish Public Administration Legislation**

The Act on Municipality No. 5393 (2005).

The Act on Special Provincial Administration (SPA) No. 5302 (2005).

The Constitution of Republic of Turkey (1982)

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### **2. The data compilation for the analysis of Conflict Resolution**

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