Sayari then gives what he terms examples of where "Gunter's study is also replete with questionable claims," asserting that "the author's suggestions that the Kurds in Turkey make up 24.1 percent of the population is a highly inflated figure that has no empirical basis." Unfortunately, Sayari neglects to mention that among the citations for this figure, I list a report drawn up by the National Security Council Secretariat in Turkey itself and the late Turkish President Turgut Özal. I also have admitted, however, that other scholars have cited considerably lower population figures, and that in general Kurdish nationalists exaggerate their numbers, while the states in which they live undercount them for political reasons.

Sayari asserts that my statement, "already parts of Turkey outside the original trouble zone are experiencing ethnic violence similar to that which has been going on in the southeast for years," is a second example of my "questionable claims." Again Sayari neglects to mention my documentation of this statement. In addition, Sayari is overreacting to my point here, as all I wrote was that "parts of Turkey" outside the southeast are experiencing ethnic violence, not all of the country.

As a third and final example of my "questionable claims," Sayari points to my assertion that "people in Turkey are not encouraged to think for themselves, let alone be different from others." Not only does Sayari fail to cite me fully here (I prefixed my assertion by writing "By Western standards"), but he also fails to consider the many examples I gave (parents choosing careers and spouses for their children; head scarves for women; stifling constitutional limitations on speech, press, and human rights in general) and the citations I listed to verify them. Obviously, I touched a raw nationalist nerve. Indeed, the greatest taboo in modern Turkish society remains the Kurdish issue. Sayari's reaction to my book and the failure of the Turkish national elections in April 1999 to address the Kurdish issue readily demonstrate this.

I do not want to end on a negative note, however, because I personally know that Sayari is an able scholar and that Turkey is a great, viable state capable of solving its Kurdish problem fairly. Based on my discussions with many Kurds, including Abdullah Ocalan, Turkey would be pleasantly surprised by the vast number of Kurds who would be proud to be citizens of a Turkey that would protect their Kurdish ethnic heritage instead of trying to destroy it. Kurdish rights in Turkey are not a zero-sum game. Granting them would make Turkey stronger, not weaker.

A REPLY TO MICHAEL M. GUNTER

By Sabri Sayari

I must express my surprise at the offensive tone of Michael Gunter's reply to my review of his book *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, since, in addition to my criticisms, I did enumerate some of the merits of his study. I can only assume, therefore, that he has either misunderstood my comments or chosen to ignore the favorable points I made and focus instead only on the critical ones.

In my review, I noted Gunter's lack of knowledge of Turkish or the main Kurdish dialects used in Turkey and suggested that this is "regrettable since in recent years there has been a proliferation of books, monographs, journal articles, and television programs in Turkey on the Kurdish issue." Gunter apparently believes that this is not a problem because he collected his information from a variety of sources. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the references in his book are translations from the Turkish press in the *FBIS Reports*. Unfortunately, the Turkish press is not exactly best known for its accuracy and professionalism in reporting. On the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800002968 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contrary, it has a well-earned reputation for forsaking facts in pursuit of sensationalist headlines and fictitious news. More important, as I pointed out in my review, his linguistic limitations prevent Gunter from examining the vast amount of literature that has appeared in Turkey on the Kurdish issue in the 1990s and integrating its substance into his analysis. The subtleties of the Turkish debate that Gunter misses are to be found in publications such as *Kürt Sorunu: Aydınlarımız Ne Düşünüyor* (The Kurdish Problem: What Do Our Intellectuals Think), edited by Metin Sever; *Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu* (Turkey's Kurdish Problem), edited by Seyfettin Gursel; *Kürt Sorununa Çözüm Arayışları* (Searching for Resolution to the Kurdish Problem), edited by Faik Bulut; and TUSIAD's report on *Türkiye'de Demokratikleşme Perspektifleri* (Perspectives on Democratization in Turkey), to name a few.

In his reply, Gunter takes me to task for pointing out that his book is devoid of theoretical and comparative perspectives. His notion of theory as a form of discourse that divorces one "from the reality of the unique situation" or is "so bland as to border on being merely platitudinous" will come as news to most social scientists. The only theoretical work that Gunter cites in his bibliography—without, however, making a single reference to it in the text—is Donald L. Horowitz's seminal study *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. This work provides a good example of how theorizing based on empirical data can enrich our understanding of the complexities of ethnic politics. I also believe that anyone who writes a book about the Kurdish issue in Turkey will understand its dynamics much better if he or she does not view it as a "unique situation" but examines it in a comparative perspective, making use of the findings from research on similar cases. Had Gunter shown some interest in, say, how the Spanish government has dealt with the Basque terrorist organization ETA or why the repeated attempts to sign peace accords between the government and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka have failed to end the political violence there, his analysis might have come closer to capturing the political reality of the Kurdish question in Turkey.

I suggested in my review that democratization has played an important role in bringing the Kurdish issue to the forefront of Turkish politics in recent years. Gunter does not agree and maintains that it is the absence of democracy in Turkey that has produced the Kurdish problem. In doing so, he seems to ignore the fine distinction between democratization as a continuing process and democracy as an institutionalized form of governance. Turkey has made significant progress in democratization during the past fifty years without, however, fully reaching its final phase. Nevertheless, as most observers agree, democratization through honest and free elections in a competitive party system has provided Turkey's Kurdish citizens with a significant voice in national and local politics. The fact that today politicians of Kurdish origin hold more than a quarter of the 550 seats in the national Parliament in Ankara and control dozens of elected local offices in the southeastern and eastern provinces is a testament to this process. The important changes that have taken place in Turkey during the past decade, including the discussion of the Kurdish question in newspapers and television talk shows; recognition of the Kurdish identity by some leading public officials and politicians; the rise of ethnic Kurdish political parties and their participation in the elections; and the appearance of publications, music cassettes, and films in Kurdish, further underscore the impact of the ongoing democratization process. However, as I stated in my review, "[T]he state's response to the campaign of violence conducted since 1984 by . . . the PKK has significantly undermined democratic processes and institutions." Indeed, through its "action–repression–action spiral" strategy, the PKK has not only made political violence self-sustaining, but it has also hindered greater progress toward the consolidation of Turkish democracy. Incidentally, if Gunter really believes that Turkey is as undemocratic as he makes it out to be, I suggest that he should visit neighboring countries such as Iraq and Syria to experience firsthand what undemocratic and authoritarian regimes are really like.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800002968 Published online by Cambridge University Press

I find Gunter's reply to my criticisms about examples of his questionable assertions unconvincing. The absence of recent census data makes it difficult to know with precision the number of Kurds who live in Turkey. Gunter's choice of 24.1 percent reflects the belief of a Kurdish nationalist writer rather than a serious demographic analysis. The latter is available in two studies by Servet Mutlu: "Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: A Demographic Study," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (November 1996), and "Population of Turkey by Ethnic Groups and Provinces," *New Perspectives on Turkey* (spring 1995). Mutlu's careful and painstaking demographic analysis shows that Turkey's Kurdish citizens constitute about 12.6 percent of the country's total population. I would have thought that a serious analyst would give much more credence to a refereed scholarly article published in this journal than to an alleged offhand remark by Turgut Özal or a report that is attributed to Turkey's National Security Council whose authenticity is highly questionable. Gunter's defense of his point concerning the spread of ethnic violence outside the southeast is similarly unconvincing: his original statement clearly gives the impression of ethnic violence taking place in other parts of Turkey—an assertion that simply does not reflect political reality.

I am surprised that Gunter still seeks to justify his egregious remark that "people in Turkey are not encouraged to think for themselves, let alone be different from others." The only source of documentation that he provides for this gross generalization is an article by an unnamed observer writing in an English-language monthly published in Turkey. My reaction to Gunter's remark has nothing to do with my alleged "nationalist nerve," as he insidiously puts it. Rather, as someone who has lived, studied, and taught in Turkey for many years, I find it factually incorrect. Throughout my education in Turkey, I do not remember ever having been instructed not to think independently. Similarly, I encountered nothing that would support Gunter's claim during my decade-long teaching experience in a Turkish university, where students were always encouraged to develop their own ideas on a wide range of political and social issues. I also wonder how such sweeping generalizations can be made about a country of 62.5 million people without any empirical data to support it. Public-opinion surveys have flourished in Turkey during the past decade, and there is a substantial body of knowledge about people's behavior and attitudes. Respectable think tanks, such as TESEV and TUSES, frequently publish reports that are based on sophisticated and reliable survey research methods. Anyone who is interested in making accurate generalizations about people's behavior in Turkey would be well advised to consult the available public-opinion data before jumping to conclusions.

Finally, it is unfortunate that Gunter has chosen to throw up a smokescreen to conceal the shortcomings of his study by insinuating that what I really object to in his work are his criticisms of the policies of the Turkish government. A look at my review will show that this is hardly the case. I wrote, for example, that "successive governments in Ankara have made little progress in the 1990s toward meeting the expectations of the country's Kurdish citizens for social, political, and institutional reforms." I have also stated that "the political stalemate which has gripped Turkey since the 1991 parliamentary elections has been a major reason for the lack of progress on the Kurdish issue." I leave it to the readers to judge for themselves whether these remarks substantiate Gunter's allegation.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800002968 Published online by Cambridge University Press