Université de Montréal

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A Case Study of the 2012-2015 Peace Talks
between Turkey and the PKK

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Mémoire présenté

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Résumé

Pourquoi les négociations de paix échouent-elles ? Pour répondre à cette question, ce mémoire synthétise la littérature sur les théories de la négociation et l'intervention de tierces parties dans les conflits intra-étatiques. À l'aide de la méthode de l'étude de cas, j'applique ce cadre théorique au troisième cycle de négociations de paix entre la Turquie et le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, qui s'est tenu de la fin décembre 2012 à Juillet 2015. Le modèle de négociation de guerre met l'accent sur les problèmes d'information asymétrique et engagement crédible qui mènent à l'échec de négociations. Les problèmes d'information asymétrique et engagement crédible sont habituellement plus aigus dans les conflits intra-étatiques. Car il est plus difficile d'obtenir les informations sur les capacités militaires des groupes armés non-étatiques (GANE) et il y a généralement de grandes asymétries de pouvoir entre les États et les GANE. Cette étude de cas apporte ainsi quatre contributions à la compréhension du sujet. Premièrement, lors d'un processus de paix, les deux parties impliquées peuvent consciemment faire des choix qui ne leur permettront pas d'atteindre leurs objectifs. Deuxièmement, ces choix résultent des mesures mal-conçues dans les pratiques de négociation et/ou l'absence de tierce partie qui rétablirait l'équilibre relatif de pouvoir et qui le maintiendrait pendant les négociations de paix. En fin de compte, cela accentue les problèmes d'engagement crédible. Troisièmement, les changements exogènes perturbateurs en matière des capacités relatives, en particulier en faveur des GANE, peuvent produire les problèmes d'information asymétrique. Quatrièmement, certains conflits ne se prêtent pas à l'intervention de tierce partie. Il peut être très difficile ou lourd de conséquence pour les tierces parties de rétablir l'équilibre relatif des pouvoirs.

Mots-clés : Turquie-PKK; théorie de négociation; intervention de tierces parties ; échec des négociations ; processus de paix; engagement crédible; information asymétrique

Abstract

Why do peace negotiations fail? Answering this question, this dissertation synthesizes the literature on bargaining theory and third party involvement in intrastate conflicts. Using qualitative case study methods, I employ this theoretical framework to the third round of the peace talks between Turkey and Kurdistan Workers' Party, which was held between December 2012 and July 2015. Bargaining model of war highlights the problems of information asymmetries and credible commitment that lead to bargaining failures. Information asymmetries and commitment problems are usually more severe in intrastate conflicts because it tends to be more difficult to obtain information about the military capabilities of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and there tends to be larger power asymmetries between states and NSAGs. The case highlights four sets of implications. First, both sides in a peace process can willingly make choices that fail to achieve the ends to which they aspired. Second, these choices result from ill-designed measures in bargaining practices and/or the lack of a third party that would redress the relative balance of power and maintain it during the peace talks. This ultimately intensifies the problems of credible commitment. Third, disruptive exogenous shifts in relative capabilities, especially in favor of the NSAG, may produce asymmetric information problems. Fourth, some conflicts do not lend themselves to third-party involvement, as it may be too difficult or costly for third parties to redress the relative balance of power.

Keywords : Turkey-PKK; bargaining theory; third-party involvement; negotiation failures; peace processes; credible commitment; asymmetric information

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List of Abbreviations

AKP / AK Parti: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)

ARGK: Arteşên Rizgariya Gelê Kurdistan (Kurdistan Peoples Liberation Army)

BDP: Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)

DBP: Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi (Democratic Regions Party)

DDDK: Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları (Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths)

DTK: Demokratik Toplum Kongresi (Democratic Society Congress)

DTP: Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)

DP: Demokrat Parti (Democratic Party)

EU: European Union

HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party)

HEP: Halkın Emek Partisi (People's Labor Party)

HPG: Hêzên Parastina Gel (People's Defense Forces)

IHD: İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association)

IS: Islamic State

KADEK: Kongreya Azadî û Demokrasî ya Kurdistan (Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress)

KCK: Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Communities' Union)

KNM : Kurdish National Movement

KONGRA-GEL: Kongra Gelê Kurdistan (Kurdistan People's Congress)

MGH: Milli Görüş Hareketi (National Outlook Movement)

MHP: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)

MP: Member of Parliament

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NSAG: Non-State Armed Group

PKK: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

PYD: Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (Democratic Union Party)

SHP: Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti (Social Democratic People's Party)

TAK: Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (Kurdistan Freedom Falcons)

TIP: Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Turkey Workers' Party)

US : United States of America

YDG-H: Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi (Patriotic Revolutionary youth Movement)

To my mother

Acknowledgement

This research essay has been impossible without the instruction, assistance, and encouragement that friends and teachers offered me throughout my years of studying, researching, and writing. Among the many teachers I had the privilege to study with, I must single out Marie-Joëlle Zahar, who supported me throughout my graduate studies as a supervisor. Marie-Joëlle Zahar acted as a vital support for me, guiding me through a long and difficult process, and pushing me to step out of my comfort zone to grow both personally and professionally. This research essay would not be possible without Professor Zahar listening to my concerns and finding ways to make sure everything works out in the end.

Research is a process that begins with the researcher's problem. The gap between the researcher's knowledge about the problem and what the researcher needs to know to solve the problem is the key component of a research. Pursuing a research can be an overwhelming venture, especially if you do it in a new discipline. I, therefore, owe a great debt to the Department of political science at the University of Montréal, who shaped my academic development in the realization of this research essay. I would also like to thank Jean-François Godbout and Laurence Bherer for their advice on administrative and operational issues.

Finally, I would like to thank the commentators for their suggestions, recommendations that improved my research in many ways.

Introduction

In the summer of 2015, the peace process between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* in Kurdish, hereinafter referred to as PKK) and Turkey collapsed. The resulting crisis was the third major disruption to peace talks that began in 2007: it had serious implications for the social cohesion between Kurdish and Turkish communities and caused an escalation of conflict in urban centers in eastern and southeastern Turkey. It also resulted in military campaigns, which took an increasing toll on civilians; leading thousands flee their homes (International Crisis group 2015; Amnesty International 2016).

The armed conflict between the PKK and Turkey began in 1984 and has claimed more than 50,000 lives, including 5,000 civilians, and 40,000 PKK militants (Özdag 2010).[1] Over 3,000 villages and hamlets in the southeastern and eastern parts of the country have been destroyed; either by the Turkish security forces or by the PKK, and this has caused the internal displacement of over one million people[2] in the early 1990s. By 2011, the war with the PKK had cost Turkey over 400 billion USD (Cihan News Agency 2011).[3] Turkey recognized the

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[1] The author relies on numbers provided by Turkey's General Staff, Gendarmerie General Command, and General Directorate of Security by the virtue of the Turkish Law on the Right to Information.

[2] The number of internally displaced persons as a result of PKK-Turkey conflict is estimated to be around two million by the US State Department, see Turkey: *Human Rights Report. 1996* (Washington, DC: US State Department 1996).

[3] The estimate of USD 400 billion was made by Turkey's then Minister of Labour and Welfare, Faruk Çelik. However, this huge sum was contested by Mutlu (2011), who has studied the direct and indirect economic impact of the conflict with PKK. According to Mutlu (2011), until the end of 2005, the estimated total cost was USD

costly deadlock of the conflict and initiated a "Democratic Opening" in 2007, with covert talks known as the "Oslo Process," which included the participation of the PKK's incarcerated leader, Abdullah Öcalan; it collapsed in a new round of fighting that lasted until March 2013. In late 2012, the Turkish government reached out to Abdullah Öcalan again and started the third round of peace talks, commonly referred to in Turkish as the "solution process".

Despite occasionally grave setbacks, nine years of intermittent peace talks represented a turning point in an armed struggle that was based on the rejection of conciliatory strategies. The peace process raised hopes for prosperity and stability. Both actors seemed to benefit. The peace process was supported by Turkey's important allies including the EU, the UK, and the US, as well as by key domestic actors, such as business associations, non-governmental organizations, and trade unions.

Peace offers both domestic and foreign policy benefits for the country. Turkey was a, if not the, major human right violator from 1959 to 2002 among the 47 signatory states of the European Convention of Human rights. Most of these violations were related to the Kurdish question (Casier 2009). Peace may, therefore, improve the country's prospects for democratization and the rule of law. Beyond its potential boon to the EU-Turkey relations, peace may improve Turkey's relations with other Kurds in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Iraq, providing potential security and energy-related gains. The PKK-Turkey conflict constitutes a major obstacle to better relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government

88.1 billion, of which USD 54.2 billion were direct, and USD 33.9 billion indirect costs. Nevertheless, it is difficult to estimate the cost of fighting the PKK because the expenses of the Turkish Defence Ministry are not transparent. Other research on the regional effects of terrorism on Turkey's economic growth indicates that 20% of PKK attacks have hit factories and state institutions in the southeastern and eastern parts of the country, and estimates the cost of these acts at over USD 100 billion (Öcal and Yıldırım 2010).

(KRG) in Iraq. Iraq is Turkey's second export market after Germany, with 70% of that trade directed to the KRG.[4] Needless to say, with its 45 billion barrel proven oil reserves, the KRG provides two significant opportunities: diversification of energy-poor Turkey's energy resources and Turkey's ambition to be the energy hub of the eastern Mediterranean. As the Syrian civil war and the advent of Islamic State pose a challenge to the entire region, without achieving peace, cooperation between Turkey and Kurdish groups against the jihadist threat, particularly from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is not possible.

Major disruptions in earlier rounds of talks spurred fears of war and instability. Yet instability and uncertainty seem to have been a regular feature of the PKK-Turkey peace talks since they began. What causes uncertainty and instability in the peace process between Turkey and the PKK? Why did peace talks fail in July 2015? I investigate this puzzle in the context of the third round of talks between December 2012 and July 2015.

In this research essay, I argue that an answer can be found by drawing on the literature on the bargaining theory of war and third-party interventions in intrastate conflicts. The bargaining model of war sees war as politics all the way down. It, therefore, views intrastate conflicts as disputes over scarce goods, contested borders, government composition, or the control of natural resources. The bargaining model also provides an approach for the efficacy of third-party intervention on intrastate conflicts and views it as part of the conduct of third parties' foreign policy. In this respect, states and non-state armed groups use both "war and words as bargaining tools to help them to achieve optional allocation of goods" (Reiter 2003, 1). With supporting quantitative and qualitative analysis (Cunningham 2011; Salehyan 2011;

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[4] "Peace, harmony and oil." *The Economist.* 20 April 2013.

Testerman 2012; and many others), the continuing development of the bargaining model (Fearon 1995; Wagner 2000; Powell 2002; Reiter 2003; Walter 2009, etc.) offers a better theoretical account of the protracted conflicts such as the three-decade-old conflict between the PKK and Turkey and the centennial Kurdish question in the broader sense. It especially points to overlooked factors such as disagreement over military capabilities, and many other differences that are insurmountable. In this vein, it offers a robust model for the termination of war, especially with regard to concerns about the ability to commit to an agreement to settle the conflict in the face of changing capabilities. The bargaining theory of war also serves a useful framework for some ideas about the conduct of foreign policy of third countries toward protracted conflicts. The bargaining theory, in this regard, examines the necessity and possibility of third-party intervention to terminate civil wars (Reiter 2002; Walter 2009).

The bargaining theory of war suggests that bargaining failures in intrastate conflicts are particularly susceptible to asymmetric information and commitment problems. The first focuses on private information both sides have about their capabilities and resolve and the benefits they receive by withholding this information. Information problems are more acute in intrastate conflicts because it tends to be more difficult to obtain information about the military capabilities of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Commitment problems make war a rational strategy when adversaries are unable to credibly promise to adhere to an agreement. If a peace process cannot progress and goes into a deadlock, a decisive victory may be perceived as the most stable way to resolve a conflict. Commitment problems are more acute in intrastate conflicts due to the large power asymmetries between states and NSAGs (Walter 2009).

The concept of third-party intervention is analyzed in this research essay as a complementary to the bargaining theory of war. A third-party intervention may reduce

uncertainty by monitoring compliance, redress the relative balance of power, and maintain it during the peace talks in order to make peace a desired outcome for both sides (Fortna 2008). However, a third party's decision to intervene in a peace process is an important foreign policy choice. It largely depends on a third country's ability and willingness to intervene (Starr 2005). Thus some conflicts do not easily lend themselves to third-party intervention (Walter 2009).

I argue that this theoretical structure captures the outcome of the third round of PKK-Turkey peace talks that occurred between December 2012 and July 2015. I observe a set of bargaining practices employed in accordance with rationalist explanations. The negotiations continued successfully, with a ceasefire of two-and-a-half years, largely because the bargaining practices employed by both actors worked as bargaining practices are intended to: they allowed both actors to communicate their political interests in order to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. However, due to Turkey's established preference for maintaining control over information, the bargaining practices, which were imposed by the government, became a source of asymmetric information and commitment problems. Rather than signaling resolve, the bargaining practices employed led to the breakdown of the third round of peace talks.

The breakdown of talks results from a mismatch between bargaining practices and the long-term interests of both sides to reach a mutually acceptable outcome. These bargaining practices were (1) the selection of PKK's jailed leader Öcalan as the only interlocutor on the Kurdish side; (2) the lack of a legal framework for conducting peace talks; (3) the rejection of third-party intervention. Using evidence derived from my case study, I argue that these bargaining practices are not designed to reveal information about resolve and overcome

commitment problems so much as they are aimed at allowing negotiating parties to advance their immediate interests over a set of possible outcomes. This understanding gives meaning to particular practices and strategic decisions made throughout the third round of PKK-Turkey peace talks between December 2012 and July 2015. In the third round of peace talks, bargaining practices were established in a way that increased uncertainty and made the peace process susceptible to shifts in the relative balance of power. In this regard, I also discuss the extent to which a third-party intervention would have been necessary and possible for the third round of PKK-Turkey peace talks. A third party could have suggested a remedy for these shortcomings. However, some conflicts, such as the Turkey-PKK peace process, do not easily lend themselves to a third-party intervention. The strategic and security priorities of potential third parties, such as the UK and the US took precedence over the PKK-Turkey peace process. In particular, the US, in spite of the PKK's repeated calls, did not act as a third party against Turkey's will.

The central concern of this study is to examine the relevance of the bargaining theory of war and the third-party intervention literature to explain the failure of the third round of the PKK-Turkey peace process. Other leading theories to explain the success/failure of peace talks such as Spoiler theory (Stedman 2000, 2008), ripeness theory (Zartman 1991, 2008, 2013), and Readiness theory (Pruitt 1997, 2005, 2006, 2007), etc. have been eliminated for all sorts of reason. Theories are defined as analytic simplifications of complex phenomena. Derived from previous experiences with similar problems, they are useful but not, necessarily, true or false. Certainly, each of them might have had certain explanatory purchase over a case like this. Instead, I have chosen to focus on bargaining theory of war because this theory establishes an in-depth understanding of how and to what extent the potential costs of fighting and changing

military capabilities and the differences that are insurmountable influence decisions to fight or settle.

Methodology

This study employs a case study approach to analyze the third round of PKK-Turkey peace talks. By bringing together two interrelated sets of literatures, namely bargaining theory of war and third party involvement in intrastate conflicts, this study explores the usefulness of the insights derived from these theories to understand, at least partially, in the breakdown of the third round of Turkey-PKK peace talks between 2012 and 2015. Thus, my account is limited to a specific stage of the process and its conclusions are specific to that stage and may not apply to the entire PKK-Turkey peace process (2007-2015).

It should also be noted that I have refrained from conducting process-tracing analysis because the secrecy surrounding the talks and the limited amount of first-hand information prevent me from conducting such thorough evidence-based analysis. Instead, I relied on secondary materials and journalistic accounts, with the exception of a few official documents and reports to support the historical reconstruction of facts.

My research thus does not qualify as a within-case analysis, nor is its ambition to offer a full and well-rounded causal account. This research essay, therefore, limits itself to uncover in-depth insights and to understand the breakdown of the third round by reconstructing the processes that led to this outcome. The narrative is bounded in time and produced with meticulous data collection in an effort to increase the internal validity of the conclusions.

Methods and Data Collection

The case study method employs historical evidence structured around a relevant case. Accordingly, this research project is based on the method of gathering information as close as possible to the events that make up the phenomena, without relying on commentary or opinions. I use news items produced by local news agencies that were released as close as possible to the time the events in question occurred. I accessed these news agencies through web search engines. I also use government reports, official statements of state and non-state actors, and recent reports posted to the official websites of relevant institutions. In this particular case, I use a variety of Middle Eastern and International news agency services relevant to this project, including Anadolu Agency (a state-run news agency based in in Turkey); Dicle News Agency (a pro-Kurdish news agency based in Turkey); Doğan News Agency (a news agency with critical coverage of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, based in Turkey); Cihan News Agency (a news agency closely associated with the Gülen movement,[5] based in Turkey); Rûdaw Media Network (a Kurdish news agency and media group based in Iraqi Kurdistan); Fırat News Agency (a pro-Kurdish news agency linked to the PKK, according to Turkey,[6] and based in the Netherlands); Al Jazeera (a Qatari government-owned news agency based in Doha); T24 (a Turkish independent and liberal online newspaper founded in 2009 with the aim of offering accurate news and information on Turkey); and international press outlets such as the Guardian, New York Times, Euronews,

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[5] For further information on the Gülen Movement, see *Joshua D. Hendrick. 2013. Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World. NYU Press.*

[6] Firat News agency. 2014. "Firat News Agency banned in Turkey". Accessible from https://anfenglish.com/features/firat-news-agency-banned-in-turkey.

CNN International, Vice News, among others. Besides news agencies, I also use official papers emanating from relevant governments (including non-recognized ones, such as the Kurdish autonomous region in Northern Syria / Rojava).

Producing a case study narrative from the material available from these sources requires several steps. First, I use a series of searches based on generic terms related the project, such as "PKK", "peace process", "Oslo process", "solution process", "Öcalan", "BDP", "HDP", "negotiations", "peace talks", etc., within a specific date range, from the end of December 2009 to July 2015, to produce a list of thousands of documents culled from their databases. Second, I eliminate the articles that fail to meet the criteria of strict reporting: editorials, commentary, and analysis. Third, I compare documents covering the same events from different institutions/agencies. The goal of this method is to construct a narrative that is as honest and neutral regarding the historical occurrences as possible.[7]

In addition to this, the editorials culled from the database written by key figures of the Turkish government or the PKK were closely scrutinized with a view to supporting the narrative and analysis. Official documents relating to the peace process and issued during the time frame of the case at hand have also been closely scrutinized and added to the analysis.

Structure of the Research

The research is divided into a theoretical chapter and two empirical chapters. Chapter I develops a theoretical framework based on the contributions of political science literature to our understanding of negotiation failure in intrastate conflicts. It aims to explain the causes of

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[7] In this research essay, unlike other references that are presented in text form, the data compiled for the case study appear in footnotes.

the breakdown of peace negotiations in intrastate conflicts by drawing on the bargaining theory of war and on theories of third party involvement in intrastate conflicts.

Chapter II provides a brief introduction to Turkey's Kurdish question and describes the historical evolution of the Kurdish National Movement by focusing on the PKK. The chapter also provides a chronological overview of the armed struggle between the PKK and Turkey, including the first two rounds of the failed peace process. Chapter III provides an analytic summary of the case study, namely the third round of the PKK-Turkey peace negotiations, between December 2012 and July 2015. And then the chapter assesses the various hypotheses using the data compiled for the case study. Finally, the conclusion sums up the findings and discusses the possibility of a way forward in peace talks.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews the contributions of the political science literature to our understanding of negotiation failure in intrastate conflicts. The existing literature comprises a variety of theoretical approaches that have been developed to study bargaining processes. These approaches can be broadly categorized under historical, material, psychological, cognitive, strategic and game-theoretic, and social-psychological approaches (Bercovitch 2009). Rather than covering all of these approaches, I focus on the rationalist explanations, namely the bargaining theory of war and third-party interventions in intrastate conflicts.

1. Negotiation Failures in Intrastate Conflicts

Negotiated settlements are less frequent in intrastate than in interstate conflicts (Licklider 1995). With the end of Cold War, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) started to engage more actively in armed conflicts (Hartzell 2006). Yet there is a higher rate of negotiation failure in attempts to resolve civil wars. When negotiations are unable to bring parties together, the peace process may break down and conflicts may become more severe.[8]

Taking a closer look at failed negotiations provides scholars with opportunities for theory-building that can be taken up in policy and practice. In most instances, negotiations are

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[8] Hauge-Storholt (2001: 331) suggests that the success of negotiations depends both on reaching an agreement and being able to implement Though it is not the aim of this paper to address this aspect of failed peace processes, it is important to acknowledge that failure of a peace process is not necessarily limited to negotiation failures.

not aborted because of a single misstep, but due to a series of complex conditions. In the following section, I summarize the contributions of the bargaining theory of war to our understanding of negotiation failures.

1.1. The bargaining theory of war in the termination of intrastate conflicts

Bargaining theory views conflict, violent or otherwise, as costly, and postulates that peaceful settlements give actors a higher utility than fighting does. However, wars, both intrastate and interstate, are very common. Why can't conflicting parties reach a desired settlement, considering the great cost of fighting? (Fearon 1995; Powell 2002; Reiter 2003) Bargaining theory provides two explanations for bargaining failures:[9] information asymmetries and commitment problems.[10]

1.1.1. Information asymmetries

The first set of explanations advanced by the bargaining theory of war focuses on a lack of information, on both sides, on their relative power (Fearon 1995). Information asymmetry may play an important role in intrastate conflict when both sides overestimate their ability to win, or underestimates their opponent's strength. Each side's willingness to fight, its resolve, is a crucial element of private information. On the basis of this private information, parties in conflict send out signals to maximize their benefits (Reiter 2003). They send signals

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[9] Bargaining failure and negotiation failure are used interchangeably in this paper.

[10] The literature identifies a third explanation, namely indivisible shares. Indivisible shares were examined in Fearon's (1995) paper on the use of bargaining theory to understand interstate conflicts, and to a lesser extent by some scholars who study intrastate conflicts (Zartman 2008; Goddard 2006; Toft 2002). Indivisibility problems might be more difficult to resolve in disputes over certain goods such as symbolically and strategically important territory; however, in this research, indivisibility has been folded into the discussion of credible commitment problems (Walter 2009).

about their resolve, to dissuade their opponent from further escalation, and they exaggerate their capabilities, to convince their opponent to concede (Fearon 1994: 579-580; Reiter 2003).

Some studies suggest that information asymmetry explains the early phases of intrastate conflict (Rauchhaus 2006; Walter 2006). A government may be uncertain about the extent to which an NSAG is willing to use violence and suffer the costs of fighting. The NSAG may be uncertain about the government's actual military capabilities and resources, or the tactics it will likely employ. Walter (2006: 106) argues that one of the main factors leading to "the outbreak of violence is a government's private information about its willingness to negotiate with separatists and the incentives a government has to misrepresent this information when numerous potential challengers exist." In such a situation, the government has an incentive to exaggerate its determination to use force in order to deter escalation.

Some research also considers information asymmetry an obstacle at later stages, especially in reaching a negotiated settlement. Regan and Aydin (2006) suggest that both sides in an intrastate conflict possess private information, and have an incentive to misrepresent capabilities and resolve during negotiations. In particular, NSAGs may have concerns that the government will renege on agreements made in the course of negotiations. In such cases, NSAGs are reluctant to reveal information about their capabilities that could later be used against them.

There are two types of intrastate conflicts where it is particularly difficult to get accurate information: (1) guerilla wars, (2) multiple shifting factions (Walter 2009). In general, intrastate conflicts are fought as irregular warfare "characterized by small, lightly-armed bands practicing guerilla tactics from rural base areas" (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 79).

Because guerilla fighters are irregular military forces and can hide among civilians, it can be hard to identify them and obtain accurate information about their numbers. Distinguishing between rebels and civilians "is [an] extremely difficult political, military, and organizational problem even for well-equipped and well-paid modern militaries" (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 80). Cunningham (2006) suggests that intrastate conflicts with multiple and shifting factions are also less likely to reveal accurate information. In this type of conflict, information sufficient to reach a settlement may be collected, but the information becomes "obsolete as new alliances are formed" (Walter 2009: 253). Yet NSAGs that have transnational links in other countries may have fluctuating and unpredictable power depending on regional alliances (Saideman 2002; Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch 2009; Salehyan 2007; Gurses 2015).

In the absence of a decisive victory by either side, there will always be a significant degree of uncertainty with regard to the consequences of continued fighting. In order to arrive at a deal, both sides must agree on their relative power and reduce this uncertainty (Werner and Yuen 2005: 267-8). Nevertheless, both sides face a dilemma. On the one hand, they find it difficult to exchange credible information during a ceasefire and on-going negotiations. Uncertainty regarding each other's military capabilities may even increase during ceasefire, since war is viewed as an activity that reduces this uncertainty by putting their capabilities on display. Although they prefer not to fight, they also want to maximize their gains during the negotiations and even keep the military option on the table[11]. This desire causes each side to exagerate its military capabilities and resolve in order to convince the other side to relinquish

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[11] In dealing with negotiations, conflicting parties generally keep the military option on the table in the absence of a victory by either side. In fact, they may sometimes use ceasefire to regroup, rearm, and prepare for escalation (Newman and Richmond 2006).

or lower its expectations. The incentives to misrepresent relative power in the course of negotiations are great, and may produce uncertainty. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1: During negotiations, the asymmetric information and/or uncertainty warring parties have about each other's relative power increases the likelihood of negotiation failure.

1.1.2. Commitment problems

Commitment problems arise when neither side can promise to abide by a deal. Along with information asymmetries, commitment problems have been found to be particularly important in explaining negotiation failures (Fearon 1995; Powell 2006; Walter 2009). A government cannot credibly commit to taking steps during negotiations while sharing the monopoly on violence with the NSAG on its territory. On the NSAG's side, reaching a settlement means that rebels must disarm. However, when NSAGs disarm, the balance of power shifts in favor of the government. If the NSAG believes the government has incentives to renege on a peace deal, they are less likely to take steps to withdraw and resign.

Although both sides possess complete information about each other, commitment problems may also arise if relative capabilities shift exogenously or there are random shocks that affect capabilities during negotiations. If one side is expected to relatively get stronger in the future, any peace deal the opponents might reach today will become obsolete tomorrow. The party that is growing stronger will not be able to convince the other that it will abide by the peace deal possible today and not demand later when it can (Stedman 2002).

Commitment problems are particularly severe in intrastate conflicts. Walter (2009) posits two factors that render intrastate conflicts difficult to settle. First, given the great power asymmetry between governments and NSAGs, governments easily renege on their promises.

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As part of a negotiated settlement, a government may offer reform of the human rights situation and the political process, or a transfer of regional autonomy and power sharing with adversaries. However, when adversaries are weaker, they have little capability to penalize a government that fails to honor its promises. Moreover, states have recognized legitimacy in the international system, and may apply economic, political, and military means to deter aggression on its soil. Second, while in international armed conflict both parties retain armies and have capacity to return to war, in an intrastate conflict, settlements typically require the disarmament of non-state armed groups as part of the agreement (Walter 1997, 2009: 246). It makes NSAGs the more vulnerable party. Given the deep mistrust that often accompanies intrastate conflicts, this raises concerns with regard to the enforcement of an agreement resulting from a peace deal (Walter 2009: 246). Therefore:

Hypothesis 2: During negotiations, the inability of warring parties to credibly commit the bargain they may reach increases the likelihood of negotiation failures.

1.2. Third-Party Intervention

Information asymmetry and commitment problems to negotiated settlements may be overcome when a third party bridges the relative power gap and reduces uncertainty.[12] The existing literature[13] emphasizes the role of third party involvement (Fortna 2004; Greig and

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[12] Nonetheless, some studies cast doubt on the efficiency of third-party guarantees (mediation or by force) to overcome commitment problems, especially if the NSAGs are fragmented (Zahar 2008). In addition, they may produce harmful, unintended consequences for local ownership of peace processes by warring parties, leading to the breakdown of peace and stability at a later stage (Zahar 2010).

[13] Along with securing guarantees from third parties, the post-conflict peacebuilding literature also focuses on institutional reforms to share or divide power between warring parties to overcome commitment problems in intrastate conflict (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007); however, this goes beyond the scope of my research .

Regan 2008; Regan 2002; Walter 1997, 2002, 2009). In the post-Cold War era, most third-party interventions are intended to facilitate or impose negotiated settlements, either through mediation or military intervention by international organizations, or by great, or regional powers acting on their behalf. Since 2000, the United Nations has established large peacekeeping operations in 9 countries, and it is currently leading sixteen peacekeeping operations[14]. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has played an active role in the enforcement of Dayton Peace Accord in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the mid-1990s.

How do third parties make peace more likely? Scholars have identified two mechanisms for overcoming commitment problems: monitoring and disarmament (Walter 1997). By monitoring the peace process, a third party reduces the uncertainty the government has about withdrawal and the disarmament process. In providing a guarantee of the peace deal, the third party agrees to intervene if the government reneges on its promises.

Fortna (2008) formulates a fourfold argument to explain how peacekeeping operations guarantee the implementation of a peace deal. They can (1) enhance incentives for parties to settle a peace deal by raising the costs of returning to the battlefield and increasing the benefits of peace (aid programs, etc.); (2) reduce uncertainty by monitoring compliance (overcoming information asymmetry); (3) prevent an accidental return to warfare due to information asymmetry; (4) prevent political abuse in relation to the peace deal. Therefore:

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[14] MINURSO, Western Sahara (since 1991); MINUSCA, Central African Republic (since 2014); MINUSMA, Mali (2013); MINUSTAH, Haiti (since 2004); MONUSCA, D.R. Congo (since 2010); UNAMID, Darfur (since 2010); UNDOF, Golan (since 1974); UNFICYP, Cyprus (since 1964); UNIFUL, Lebanon (since 1978); UNISFA, Abyei (since 2011); UNMIK, Kosovo (since 1999); UNMIL, Liberia (since 2003); UNMISS, South Sudan (since 2011); UNMOGIP, India and Pakistan (since 1949); UNOCI, Côte d'Ivoire (since 2004); UNTSO, Middle East (since 1948) (UN 2016).

Hypothesis 3: if there is no third party involved to redress the relative balance of power and reduce the uncertainty between parties in conflict, negiotiations are more likely to fail.

However, a third party's decision to intervene in a peace process is an important foreign policy choice. A credible third party involvement requires sufficient resources, leverage and credible sanctions (Walter 1997). The decision to intervene largely depends on a third coutnry's ability and willingness to intervene (Starr 2005: 48). Ability refers to environmental and state-level factors (Corbetta 2010). Willingness refers to "the motivational factors that may influence a state's interest toward a particular dispute" (Corbetta 2010: 66). In this regard, a third party's security-driven interests are highlighted by the models of joining behavior. Rational explanations suggest that third party will intervene in a conflict when their expected utility is sufficiently high (*Ibid*).

Walter (2009: 255) distinguishes two types of countries where it is less appealing for a third party to intervene: "(a) those with strong governments and large military capabilities and (b) more democratic countries with high standard livings." Research on the role of the international community— be it external powers or international organizations— indicates that the greater the capabilities of the warring state, the harder it is to find third parties to intervene (Fortna 2008; Gilligan and Stedman 2003). Fortna (2008) argues that the international community is particularly hesitant to deploy preacekeeping operations in democratic countries with relatively high living standards. Gilligan and Stedman (2003) emphasize that the international community is less likely to send peacekeepers to countries with large government armies. To put it plainly, some conflicts do not easily lend themselves to third-party intervention. It may be too difficult for third parties to redress the relative

balance of power and reduce the uncertainty. In some conflicts, the role of third parties is limited or impossible.

Combining micro and macro-level analysis, the ability and willingness to intervene are considered as a function of: (1) the characteristics of a third party; (2) the external environment; (3) the characteristics of a dispute; (4) the characteristics of the disputants (Enterline 1999). Therefore:

Hypothesis 4: The ability and/or willingness of third parties to redress the relative balance of power and reduce the uncertainty will affect the outcome of negotiations. When third parties cannot or do not want to redress the balance of power, negotiations are more likely to fail.

The following chapter is an overview of the historical journey that has given rise to Turkey-PKK conflict including the broader Kurdish question in Turkey, the Kurdish National Movement, and earlier rounds of the Turkey-PKK peace process.

CHAPTER II: PKK-Turkey Conflict *Background and History*

This chapter presents the long-standing Kurdish question in Turkey, and the low-intensity war that has pitted Turkish security forces against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* in Kurdish, hereinafter referred to as PKK) since 1984. I explain the background of the Kurdish question, then focus on how the PKK has become relevant, and how it has made an impact on Turkish politics.

1. Turkey's Kurds: Demography and Geography

After ethnic Turks, Kurds make up the largest ethnic group in Turkey, accounting for 15-20% of the population (Bozarslan 2008).[15] Until the late 1990s, half of Turkey's Kurds lived in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country (hereinafter referred to as Turkey's Kurdish Southeast). This area shares borders with Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and contains valuable water resources, since the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow from the southeastern mountains and into Iraq and Syria.

In thirteen southeastern administrative provinces, Kurds constitute a majority of the population, ranging from 55% to 90%;[16] in 8 neighboring administrative provinces they are an important minority, ranging from 15% to 50% of the population (Watts 2010, XI). Half of the Kurds in the Middle East live in Turkey, although there is a significant number in northern

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[15] Turkey stopped publishing information on ethnicity and mother tongue after the 1965 census, so the numbers depend on calculation methods and politically driven estimations (Watts 2010).

[16] Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Iğdır, Mardin, Muş, Şırnak, Siirt, Tunceli, and Van.

Syria,[17] northern Iraq (known as the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan), and Iran, as well as a sizable diaspora in Asia and Europe.

Andrew (1989), in his prominent study on ethnicity in Turkey, estimates that 70% of the Kurdish population in Turkey are Sunni, mostly of the *Shafi'i* tradition (whereas most Sunni Turks are *Hanafis*); 30% belong to the Alevi (or, Alawite) sect of Islam; and a small number are Yezidi (Andrews 1989, 116). However, being overly reliant on such markers does not shed light on a heterogeneous portrait of Kurdishness that "sidesteps the complexity of Kurdish identity in Turkey" (Watts 2010, XII). There are people who identify as Kurds but don't speak Kurdish, and vice-versa, especially in the large cities (Aktan 2012). In addition, the social complexity of the Kurdish question manifests itself in the distribution of the Kurdish population. Today, half of Turkey's Kurdish population lives outside of the traditional Kurdish provinces, and Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey, hosts more Kurds than major Kurdish cities, such as Diyarbakir in Turkey, or Irbil in Iraqi Kurdistan (Bilgin and Sarihan 2013, viii).

2. The Kurdish Question in Turkey

The Kurdish question is Turkey's most complex and painful problem, one that presents not only a moral dilemma, as a major source of human rights violations throughout the republican era (1923 – present), but also challenges the foundations of the Republic of Turkey. Its most pronounced manifestation is the ongoing armed conflict with the PKK that has taken more than 50,000 lives, including about 5,000 Turkish security forces, 5,000 civilians, and

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[17] As of 2016, this area is also known as Rojava, and has had non-recognized autonomy since 2014. "Syria Civil War: Kurds declare federal region in north." *Al Jazeera*. 17 March 2016.

40,000 PKK militants (Özdag 2010).[18] Despite massive Turkish military efforts, and temporary gains in coping with the PKK, the fighting has continued since 1984. But the problem has existed for almost two centuries. From the late 19th to the 21st century, Kurdish groups used various means to achieve territorial autonomy and cultural recognition from Ottoman centralization, and later, present-day Turkey. Over time, the Kurdish question has been defined and addressed by the Turkish state in different ways. When it has been viewed as external terrorism, the state has increased vigilance at its borders with military force; when the problem has been defined as one of internal terrorism, security has been raised and police forces deployed to identify sources of criminal activity; when the problem has been understood to be economic in nature, the state's response has been to increase their attention to economic development in the Kurdish southeast; when the problem has appeared to lie with Kurdish demands that the Turkish state considered unacceptable, and could neither meet nor appease, the conflict has entered a state of zero-sum equilibrium (Barkey and Fuller 1997). In the following sections, I will discuss the evolution of the Kurdish question throughout the history of Turkey.

2.1. The Ottoman Era (until 1923)

The Ottoman Empire was based on a political and social order known as the *Millet* System, whereby a confessional community (Muslim, Christian, or Jewish) was allowed to rule itself under its own religious system. This system was used to organize various ethnic, linguistic, and tribal populations into a single politico-religious community. Kurds, like Turks,

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[18] The author claims to rely on numbers acquired from Turkey's General Staff, Gendarmerie General Command, and General Directorate of Security by virtue of Turkish Law on the Right to Information.

were part of the Sunni Muslim nation and neither Kurdishness nor Turkishness were political identities. Sunni Islam ideology assumed a central role in Ottoman institutions, including the educational system, which was defined by Islamic jurisprudence. At the same time, the Ottoman elite partially recognized the ethno-religious particularities of Muslim communities, and defined Kurds as the gray nation (*boz millet*), and the Turkomen as the black nation (*kara millet*). Within Muslim communities, there were Kurdish-speaking mosques and Kurdish-run and independent religious schools (*medreses*) that advanced Kurdish literature (Bruinessen 1998). Until the 19th century, much of the geo-cultural region of Kurdistan in the Ottoman Empire was under the rule of autonomous Kurdish principalities (Bozarslan 2009).

It was only when the Ottoman Empire tried to centralize its administrative system, starting in the 19th century, that Kurdish tribes began to revolt; Turkishness gained political significance when the Ottoman Empire faced a series of nationalist uprisings, of non-Muslim as well as Muslim groups (Ergil 2000). This was the beginning of the Kurdish nationalist movements (Bozarslan 2009).

2.2. The Early Republican Era (aka The One-Party Era, 1923 - 1943)

Following World War I, the Ottoman government was forced to sign the Treaty of Sèvres, dividing the remnants of the Empire along ethnic lines, including Kurdistan and Armenia in the east and southeast of present-day Turkey. The occupation of present-day Turkey by the Greek army, as defined by the Treaty of Sèvres, triggered a popular national liberation movement led by Mustafa Kemal. During the war of Independence (1919-1923), Kemal embraced a pan-Islamic discourse and recognized the ethno-religious particularities of the Muslim community. This stance gave him the support of non-Turkish-speaking Muslim

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communities, especially the Kurds (Ergil 2000), who sought "to preserve the sanctity of the caliphate in a Turkish-Muslim Empire" (Natali 2005, 76). Neither Kurdish nor Turkish political groups were highly ethnicized during the transition period, and "the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion were not based on ethnicity but on the lines between the rulers and the rules, which included religion" (Natali 2005, 77).

After its victory against the Greek army, Turkey signed the Treaty of Lausanne, which gave rise to the Republic of Turkey. Rather than naming itself the Turkish Republic, the new state's official name was the Republic of Turkey in order to refer to "the geographical region in which all the peoples of Turkey" lived (Ergil 2000: 124). Nevertheless, while the Treaty of Lausanne recognized the cultural rights of non-Muslims, it failed to mention the collective rights of non-Turkish Muslim communities (Yeğen 2007). In addition, soon after its foundation, the multicultural stance of the new ruling elite changed.[19] Beginning in 1925, Kemal abandoned reference to the peoples of Turkey, and launched an assimilation campaign to reshape national identity in the newly-born republic, in an attempt to create a unified, secular, modern official state nationalism known as Kemalism. The army was charged with safeguarding the Kemalist character of the republic. Kemal centralized the Kurdish provinces in the southeast by appointing inspector generals tied to the military as their supreme chiefs.

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[19] Kemal institutionalized Turkish-Kurdish character in the new state with the first provisional constitution of the national assembly on 23 April 1920. The constitution claimed that the Republic of Turkey consisted of two groups, Turks and Kurds. In 1922, the Turkish parliament created a draft law for proposed autonomy in Kurdistan. Referring to the Kurds as a nation, the law offered them the right to establish an autonomous administration that recognized Kurdish national customs (Natali 2005, 73).

Secularization policies aimed to elevate the new secular Turkish urban classes, while opportunities the traditional Kurdish strata had previously enjoyed disappeared.

In response, Kurdish unrest and rebellion hit the country throughout the 1930s. The rebellions were eventually suppressed by the Republic, and their leaders were tried and executed by special tribunals called the Independence Tribunals (Barkey 1999). Kurdish language and cultural symbols were banned, and the region was ruled under a state of emergency for many years (Yeğen 2007).

The Kemalist conception of nationalism had many inherent contradictions. On the one hand, the Republic of Turkey was based on the indivisible integrity, and the Turkishness, of the state. The existence of Kurdish people was ignored (Gurbey 1996, 13). On the other hand, the doors to assimilation (voluntary or perforce) were left open. To the extent that Kurds, as individual citizens of Turkey, did accept the "new Turkish identity," they enjoyed the full rights of citizenship. Shortly after the foundation of the Republic, all Kurdish *medrese*s were closed, and publication in any language other than Turkish was banned (Yeğen 2007). Starting in the early years of the Republic, Kurdish people were internally displaced, from Turkey's Kurdish southeast to western regions where they were in the minority (Bozarslan 1997). The official attitudes and actions of the Turkish state were based upon the idea that Kurds were mountain Turks (Natali 2005; Gurbey 1996).

The idea of Turkish nationalism was both civic and ethno-cultural in nature. Its civic character allowed individual Kurds to rise as Turkish citizens of Kurdish descent, but those who refused to accept Turkish identity and language were severely suppressed. The results were unpredictable, and assimilation was limited by geography (the remoteness of the region

where Kurds were in the majority), and economics (Turkey's Kurdish southeast was underdeveloped and relatively poorer) (Barkey 1999).

Kurds became non-entities in Turkish politics. All references to Kurds as a distinct group were dropped. For instance, in 1937, in the course of Kurdish revolts in Dersim (today known as *Tunceli*, a city in Turkey's Kurdish southeast), news media were allowed neither to refer to incidents in the region nor use the words evocative of Kurds (e.g. Kurd, Kurdistan, Kurdish), the likes of which incrementally disappeared from the media and official documents, including school textbooks (Barkey and Fuller 1997, 64).

2.3. The Multiparty Era (1946 - present)

The suppression of the last large-scale Kurdish rebellion in 1937 and the transition to multiparty politics paved the way for the creation, albeit limited, of a political space for Kurdish politics. The Democratic Party, although it was a breakaway faction of the hard-liner Kemalist Republican People's Party, promised to reduce secularist policies that were inherently related to the Kurdish question. They promised to change some of the oppressive practices in rural areas of Turkey's Kurdish southeast, and enlisted exiled members of prominent Kurdish families to help them. The Democratic Party won an outright majority of the vote in a landslide victory in Turkey's Kurdish southeast (Barkey 1999).

However, as a breakaway faction of the Republican People's Party, the Democratic Party was unwilling to engage in activities that might encourage Kurdish nationalist activism. While they made attempts to meet some Kurdish demands, such as the pursuit of General Mustafa Muğlalı, who had executed 33 Kurdish activists in cold blood, they ignored many

more. Eventually, in 1960, the Democratic Party was overthrown by the military, which was disturbed by its increasing distance from Kemalist republican principles.

In the years that followed, the plotters of the 1960 coup created a liberal constitution that set the groundwork for the emergence of trade unions and student organizations by increasing freedom of expression regarding the Kurdish issue. For the first time, the Kurdish question found space in a left-wing party, namely the Turkey Workers' Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TIP), to express itself as the "Eastern Problem," using a left-wing political terminology under the soviet sphere of influence. Nevertheless, the TIP was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1971, following another military coup.

The 1960s were momentous for the Kurdish question. It was a period of left-wing activism. Seeking national rights, Kurdish activists joined the Turkish left, with the hope that Kurds, as inhabitants of the most underdeveloped regions of the country, would be liberated after an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist revolution. However, some Kurdish groups were frustrated with the Turkish Left's attitude toward the Kurdish question, and ended up creating explicitly Kurdish left-wing organizations. The Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*, DDDK) was founded in 1969. It provided a training ground for numerous other Kurdish organizations, including the present-day Kurdistan Workers' Party (Barkey 1999; Bozarslan 1997).

A military coup in 1980 marked another important turning point. The junta eradicated not only left-wing and right-wing opposition, but also all Kurdish organizations that were related to Kurdish identity formation. Turkey returned to the hardline policies of the 1930s, including the ban on the use of the Kurdish language and regional folklore, and oppression of

the local population. Kurdish politicians joined the political parties after the return to democracy, but in the late 1980s they expressed their grievances within the ranks of the left-wing Social Democratic People's Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*, SHP), which led to their expulsion, and the beginning of the pro-Kurdish parties' era (Barkey 1999).

By the early 1990s, the Kurdish question manifested itself more overtly than ever in the Turkish political scene. Kurdish refugees arriving from Iraq and the Halabja massacre brought the Kurdish question out into the center of Turkish politics. The refugee problem led Turkish Kurds to mobilize to help their kin, which contributed to their alienation as a distinct population. In addition, the increasing PKK insurgency gave new impetus to their growing national identity formation. Turkey's Kurdish political activism wasn't only restricted to its national identity crisis, but was also expanded to include the creation of human rights organizations, cultural associations, and political parties. The psychological gap between Kurds and Turks has become increasingly visible, and has been seen as a threat to national security and cohesion by the Turkish governments (Barkey 1999).

In the mid-1990s, Turkish politics went through another important change. As the Kurdish question was internationalized, it became more visible and gave momentum to a new wave of Kurdish nationalism. The growing strength of ideas about identity, difference, and cultural and human rights, and the increasing armed struggle of the PKK, were perceived by the Turkish state as the anger of Turkey's Kurds.

Both mainstream and extreme Turkish nationalist parties quickly became very popular. For the extreme nationalist parties, the Kurdish question was an artificial question imposed on Turkey by foreigners. It was nothing more than the incitement of some Kurds who had

forgotten they were actually of Turkish descent. They needed to be re-Turkified. However, as the Kurdish question became more visible and inevitable, it became more difficult for the extreme nationalist parties to hold this view. As a result, they started to perceive Kurds as an untrustworthy people on Turkish soil, an enemy within (Yeğen 2007, 137). Mainstream nationalist parties were forced to recognize the distinction of Kurdish identity as well, due to the changing paradigm in international politics and the pressure of the Kurdish opposition. However, mainstream nationalism held its ground in denying recognition of the "physical existence of Kurds in the language of law" in the 1990s (*Ibid.*).

2.4. The Kurdish Question in the 2000s

With Öcalan's capture in 1999, and Turkey becoming an official candidate for accession to the European Union (EU), the Kurdish question entered a new dimension. Until then, the state had made a great effort to prevent "the communalization of the conflict between Kurds and Turks," and had tried to make a distinction between the PKK and the larger Kurdish question of cultural rights. However, as part of the EU's Copenhagen criteria, Turkey was asked to reform its legal system and provide minority rights for Kurds. In addition, the accession process created new opportunity spaces for the PKK, which shifted its strategies after Öcalan's capture. These developments brought the Kurdish question to social and political spheres it hadn't reached before. At the same time, the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) raised expectations for the resolution of the Kurdish issue. As a self-described conservative democratic party (*Muhafazakar demokrat* in Turkish), the AKP challenged Kemalist secularism and offered its own solution – Islam as a cement- to end the polarization of Kurds and Turks. The AKP introduced a series of reforms to fight the dead hand of the past, and free Turkish politics from

its subjugation by hardliner Kemalist state institutions, namely the military and the judiciary. The weakening of the Kemalist elites within these institutions set the stage for the peace process (I*bid.)*

In the following section, I will summarize the main political parties involved in the peace process between the PKK and Turkey.

2.4.1. Justice and Development Party (AKP)

Over half of Turkey's Kurds usually vote for the AKP. Erdoğan, especially, is a popular figure. His conservative Muslim image, his emphasis on development and investment, and his drive to join the European Union, make him attractive. When the AKP came into office in 2002, the state policy concerning the conflict with the PKK was challenged. Its approach moved from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency (Ünal 2016). The AKP-led Turkish government began to recognize the political, social, and economic aspects of the Kurdish conflict. They were critical of the traditional Turkish state policy, especially when it came to hardline secularism. Founded by former members of the political Islamist movement (the National Outlook Movement—*Milli Görüs Hareketi*), the AKP's emphasis on democracy and human rights shaped their policies on Turkish secularism as well as on the Kurdish question (Güneş-Ayata 2003).

As the first majority government in over a decade, the AKP pushed forward political, social, and economic reforms to become an official candidate for EU inclusion. These reforms consisted of democratization, the rule of law, human rights, and the protection of minorities. These policy reforms were deeply related to the Kurdish issue, since most of the PKK's

grievances pertained to human rights violations and the quality of democracy (Yavuz and Özcan 2006, Ünal 2016).

Through initial engagement with reforms supporting cultural pluralism, with an emphasis on Islam as a "unifying bond between Turks and Kurds" and democracy, the AKP manifested itself as a party that sought to resolve the conflict with the PKK, and extend the minority rights of Kurds in Turkey (Yavuz and Özcan 2006, 5). They took steps toward "ending the state of emergency in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, eliminating the practice of torture and ill-treatment, extending freedom of expression and association, amending the broadcasting law to allow for broadcasting in ethnic languages by public and private television stations, and permitting the granting of Kurdish names to children" (*Idem*, 5).

The AKP receives about 40 % of the vote in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, making it the main rival of the pro-Kurdish party.[20] However, the AKP also relies on Turkish nationalistic votes, which constrains its efforts to settle the Kurdish conflict. Nevertheless, Achankeng (2015, 291) argues that two important dynamics have influenced the AKP's decision to move forward with the peace process: "(1) [the] emergence of a new wave of political mobilization led by the PKK that has effectively used both armed struggle and peaceful protest since 2005; [and] (2) the AKP government's commitment to control the field of Kurdish politics in order to prevent possible PKK-led instabilities that would undermine its political power, particularly in the context of its fierce fight with the Kemalists (hardline secularists) to control state power." The increasing influence of softline politicians on policymaking, and the diminished

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[20] You may see the results of previous elections on the official website of the Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey—http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ (in Turkish).

influence of the military establishment have had important effects on the peace process as well.

2.4.2. Republican People's Party (CHP)

The main opposition party promotes a traditional Turkish nationalism based on the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey, as represented on its flag by six arrows: republicanism, populism, nationalism, secularism, statism, and reformism. The CHP received 25.98% of the total vote in June 2011, and 25.98% in June 2015.[21] While the CHP appears to be open to democratization, it retains authoritarian tendencies from its past, and has close ties with the military. Yet the CHP is far from being a homogenous party. It includes a left-wing hawkish faction that defends a unitary and secular state, and views political Islam and Kurdish nationalism as threats to the very foundation of the republic. But it also includes a liberal faction that is open to the peace process, democratization, and the European Union. Although the CHP strongly opposed the peace process in the beginning, its new leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, took a softer stance, indicating dramatic changes within the party, starting from the 2011 elections. For instance, a Kurdish rights lawyer of Kurdish origin, (albeit not a supporter of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement), served as a vice-chairman of the party between 2010 and 2016. The peace process caused an internal struggle between the hawkish faction and the liberal faction that led some MPs to resign.[22]

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[21] *Idem.*

[22] The peace process produced some internal debates within the CHP regarding the party's position on the process. As a result, the CHP vice chairwoman Gülseren Onanç resigned from the Executive Committee and criticized the CHP's reluctance to be involved in the peace process by stating, "65% of the CHP grassroots

2.4.3. Turkish Nationalist Action Party (MHP)

The MHP was founded in 1969. Its conservative right-wing and Turkish-Islamist ideology glorified the Ottoman past, underlining Turkey's kinship with other Turkic countries in Central Asia. To a certain extent, the MHP embraces secular ideas, calling itself *Atatürkçü*, referring to the founding father of the Turkish republic in 1923. The MHP received 13.1% of the vote in the June 2011 elections, and 16.29% of the vote in the June 2015 elections. They focus on Turkey as a single, united nation, and view Kurds as being like other ethnicities that make up the nation, not recognizing their cultural and linguistic differences. It has almost no presence in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, due to its hostility to Kurdish grievances. It refuses to recognize the collective rights of the Kurdish people, and has a very hawkish stance on the peace process.

2.4.4. Pro-Kurdish parties

Starting in 1990, Turkey's legal pro-Kurdish parties became an important actor in Turkish political arena. These parties, officially at least, were not Kurdish parties. Turkey's political party law banned formation of parties that defended "regionalism, racism" or that "threatened national unity by promoting other languages and culture (Marcus 2007). However, the vast majority of its supporters were Kurdish, and also because their main focus was on the resolution of Turkey's Kurdish grievances. They have been successively known as the People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi, HEP), Freedom and Democratic Party (Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi, ÖZDEP), Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi, DEP), People's

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support the Reconciliation Process". "CHP'de Gülseren Onanç istifa etti [Gülseren Onanç resigned from the CHP]". *Radikal.* 17 April 2013.

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Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP), Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi, DEHAP), Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP), Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP), Democratic Regions Party (Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi, DBP).

The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) was the first pro-Kurdish party that was not banned; its six predecessors were banned by the constitutional court due to close ties with the PKK. However, the main Kurdish political party since 2012 has been the Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) at the national level, and the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) at the municipal level. The HDP was founded as part of the peace process, when Öcalan called to redefine national identity as *Türkiyeli* (of Turkey) rather than "Turkish," arguing that the latter has ethnic connotations, just as "Kurdish" does. Subsequently, BDP MPs joined the HDP during the third round of the PKK-Turkey Peace Process in April 2014.

The HDP faces challenges from insiders and PKK hardliners, who often use violence to quash dissent.[23] For instance, after the Mayor of Diyarbakır (a major city in Turkey's Kurdish southeast), Osman Baydemir, said that armed struggle was no longer valid, Öcalan and the PKK lashed out, saying Baydemir didn't have the authority to make such decisions.[24] However, the pro-Kurdish parties have unquestionable popular legitimacy in legal politics, since at least a third of all ethnic Kurdish votes across Turkey have consistently gone to them. This percentage rises to above 50% in Turkey's Kurdish southeast (Watts 2010).

[23] For details of the PKK's tactics to crush dissent within the Kurdistan Liberation Movement, see Aliza Marcus (2007).

[24] "PKK leader lashes out at Baydemir for his remarks". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 15 November 2011.

3. The Kurdish National Movement

3.1. The organization

3.1.1. Kurdistan Workers' Party (1978-2004)

The PKK was founded in Turkey by Abdullah Öcalan and 23 of his friends, some of whom were Turks, in 1978, in Lice near Diyarbakir, with the aim of establishing an independent Kurdish state (Marcus 2007; Cornell 2002). Because of Öcalan's preeminence, the organization first called its followers "of Apo" (*Apocular*) – the Kurdish word for uncle, and the vocative form of Abdullah in Kurdish. Öcalan was the country's only contemporary Kurdish leader who did not come from a prominent Kurdish family (Gunter 2009, 119), and most of the early members came from the lowest social classes. The PKK eventually recruited Kurds from all classes, and came to consist of a number of divisions that operated at various levels of command in Turkey, the Middle East, and Europe.

Shortly after its foundation, Öcalan moved from Turkey to Syria, from where he led the PKK until his capture in 1999. Early police pressure had driven him and most of the party leadership to Syria and Northern Lebanon ahead of the 1980 military coup that swept extreme left-wing organizations, including Kurdish nationalist ones, out of Turkey. Many of the party members who remained in Turkey after the coup were incarcerated, but the military regime's repression of Turkey's Kurdish southeast brought new adherents to the PKK in following years (Kutschera 1999).

By the 1980s, the PKK resembled a traditional communist party, with its undisputed leader (General secretary Abdullah Öcalan, leadership council), and central committee. The PKK also held several congresses where major policy decisions were made and announced,

like the other communist parties of the era (Gunter 2009, 120). In the mid-1980s, the PKK created a guerilla army of some 10,000 fighters, namely the Kurdistan Peoples Liberation Army (*Arteşên Rizgariya Gelê Kurdistan*, ARGK). There was also a series of subdivisions for women and youth.

After Öcalan's capture in 1999, the PKK created a presidential council of 10 senior members to act in his place. Öcalan's imprisonment marked the end of the PKK's alliance with Syria. They had had bases and camps in northwestern Iran and northern Iraq since the 1980s. Starting in the early 1990s, they moved more people to their camps in the region controlled by Iraqi Kurdish groups.[25] After Öcalan's capture, the camps in the Qandil Mountains in Northern Iraq became headquarters of the PKK's military high command,[26] although Öcalan has been able to guide the PKK and maintain his leadership position from prison.

Öcalan received a death sentence in 1999, but the European Court of Human Rights asked Turkey to suspend the execution, and the issue was complicated by Turkey's candidacy process for EU membership. In February 2002, Öcalan called for a ceasefire and pursuit of non-military options, and the PKK's eighth Congress changed their name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (*Kongreya Azadî û Demokrasî ya Kurdistan*, KADEK).

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[25] Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) – Masud Barzanî; Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) – Jalal Talabanî.

[26] In order to eliminate the PKK camps in Northern Iraq, Turkey's first crossborder operation was carried out as early as 1983, under the framework of a bilateral agreement with Iraq, allowing the armies of both countries to cross up to 30 kilometres in pursuit of guerrilla groups. Since the early 1990s, Turkish armed forces have established a military intelligence network and organized a series of major operations, including one in October 1998 that was part its actions against Syria for Syria's support of the PKK, and one immediately after Öcalan's arrest, in February 1999, and a couple in the early 2000s (USAK 2008).

The name change represented their declared intention to become a legal Kurdish party seeking to promote cultural rights for Turkey's Kurds. In November 2003, another congress was held that led to a second name change, to the People's Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra Gelê Kurdistan, Kongra-Gel), in an attempt to abandon nationalistic and state-building goals. During this period, a number of reformist leaders, including Öcalan's brother, Osman Öcalan, left the organization, together with 1500 militants. In the beginning of June 2004, the organization called off the cease-fire.

The Kurdish national movement came to comprise a wide array of nebulous entities, ranging from armed groups to civil society organizations and legal political parties.[27] Although the PKK is a benchmark player, it continues to waver between armed struggle and non-violent resistance, and between grassroots democracy and centralized organizational practices. The Kurdish *mouvance*, in the broadest sense of the term as defined by Hamit Bozarslan, includes civil society organizations, legal pro-Kurdish political parties, local committees, and the PKK, to make up a genuine political corpus within Turkey and throughout the Middle East.

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[27] The PKK has called itself the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK), Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK), and the People's Congress of Kurdistan (KONGRA-GEL); currently it prefers the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK). Its military wing was previously the Kurdistan National Liberty Army (ARGK), and is now the People's Defense Forces. The movement has newspapers, TV stations, and civil society organizations that have also changed their names several times. Name changes have usually occurred after the closure of their legal organizations, or when they needed to rebrand themselves after an ideological shift. A lot of this needed to be in-text. [I don't know what this previous sentence means—can you cut it? –RG]

3.1.2. From the PKK to the KCK (2005 – present)

Today, the PKK is part of the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), which emerged from various congresses and representation from Kurdish-populated areas in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, in 2005. It considers itself an alternative system to state organization, and is based on a constitution proclaimed in 2005.[28] The KCK, therefore, refers to an umbrella body that integrates the whole Kurdish *mouvance*. The KCK consists of various armed judicial and legislative groups, including the PKK, and legal groups, such as pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey. After the foundation of the KCK, previous organizations were abolished and/or replaced by new institutions within the KCK system. However, the distinction between the PKK and the KCK remains obscure. In other words, although not everybody in the KCK is PKK, the PKK and the KCK are intermingled in most respects.[29] The name PKK continues to be used by both sympathizers and opponents to refer to the new organization.[30]

The KCK is a giant system of transnational ties that is meant to be an alternative to the nation-state paradigm. Its contract of 47 articles declares that every "Kurdistan-born citizen" enjoys a wide variety of rights, such as use of the mother tongue, and religious freedom within a "democratic, communal-federal system" organized in five regions: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the Kurdish Diaspora (mainly in Europe). Within Turkey, there are four regions:

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[28] See the KCK Contract in Turkish on https://tr.wikisource.org/wiki/KCK_S%C3%B6zle%C5%9Fmesi (2 September 2016).

[29] Although the PKK is designated a terrorist organization by the USA and the European Union, the KCK is not officially listed as a terrorist organization, and neither is its Syrian Kurdish member Democratic Union Party (PYD). However, the PYD is officially listed as a terrorist organization in Turkey, which has become a point of contention between the US and Turkey. "Envoy reiterates US does not consider PYD a terror group". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 24 June 2016.

[30] In this research, PKK and KCK are used interchangeably.

Çukurova (in the eastern Mediterranean part of the country), Amed (Diyarbakır, a province in the southeast), Serhat (Erzurum, a province in eastern Turkey), and the Aegean region (Western Turkey).

The KCK has a complicated horizontal pyramid structure. In accordance with Öcalan's gender-equality principle for the liberation of women, the KCK is based on a co-leadership system, with a woman and a man occupying each position. After the honorary president, Öcalan, the KCK is currently co-presided over by Cemil Bayık, a Sunni Kurdish man from Turkey, and Bese Hozat, a Kurdish woman of Alevi descent, also from Turkey. The KCK's supreme organ is a parliament of 300 members, the Kongra-Gel. The legislative Kongra-Gel assembly elects a 31-person Executive Council. The Kongra-Gel works through social, political, ideological, fiscal, defense, and public relations committees (KCK Constitution 2015).

In addition to the PKK, the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (*Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê*, PJAK) is active in Iran; the Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekitî ya Demokratik*, PYD) is active in northern Syria; and the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (*Partiya Çaresera Demokratik Kurdistan*, PÇDK) is active in Northern Iraq. In each region, people's assemblies, representing people living in the KCK, are organized in cities, towns, neighborhoods, and villages, in accordance with Article 21 of the KCK Contract. The KCK Contract (Article 28) establishes a judiciary consisting of a high court of justice, courts of people's justice and administrative justice, and military courts (KCK Contract 2005). The PKK's armed unit, the People's Defense Forces (HPG), which is run from the Qandil mountains in Northern Iraq by Murat Karayılan, and the PYD's armed unit, the People's

Protection Unit, which is run from the de facto Federation of Northern Syria – Rojava— by Sîpan Hemo, are also included in the KCK.[31]

In addition, as part of the KCK, the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) was established in 2007 as a civil society platform, and acted as the Kurdistan Liberation Movement's de facto parliament. In 2011, during their extraordinary congress, with 850 delegates from throughout Turkey's Kurdish southeast, the DTK unilaterally declared democratic autonomy, inspired by Öcalan's ideas.[32] Although there have been several changes in leadership, the three top leaders of the KCK are its jailed founder, Abdullah Öcalan, the KCK Executive Co-chair, Cemil Bayık, and the HPG commander-in-chief, Murat Karayılan. Those three have decisive power in the KCK (Bilgin and Sarihan 2013).

The extent to which the KCK system is put into effect in Turkey is ambiguous. Turkey's arrest of thousands of Kurdish people for their connection to the KCK since 2009, however, may indicate that Turkey certainly believes that the KCK has become an important actor outside of the PKK's armed struggle.

3.2. The Ideology

The PKK was founded with the aim of establishing an independent Kurdish state on the basis of Marxist-Leninist ideology (Marcus 2007; Cornell 2002). The PKK's founders were activists on the extreme left, but they were highly critical of the Turkish left's attitude towards the Kurdish question, which denied the national rights of Turkey's Kurds (Kutschera

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[31] "PKK yeniden yapılanıyor [PKK is restructuring itself] ". *BBC Türkçe*. 10 July 2013. See KCK Constitution in Turkish on https://tr.wikisource.org/wiki/KCK_S%C3%B6zle%C5%9Fmesi (2 September 2016).

[32] "Pro-Kurdish DTK declares democratic autonomy in Turkey's southeast". *Hurriyet Daily News*.15 July 2011.

1994). Soon after its creation, the PKK distinguished itself from other Kurdish organizations. It emphasized armed struggle, with a Marxist-Leninist ideology and centralist organizational patterns, more than any other organization did (Kutschera 1994, 13). They mobilized the peasantry, since Turkey's Kurdish southeast had essentially no industrial working class, and the rural economy was controlled by traditional landlords. Accordingly, they initially targeted Kurdish landlords who were in cahoots with the state, such as the member of parliament from the right-wing Justice party whom they attempted to assassinate (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 22). Early police pressure drove Öcalan and most of the party leadership to flee to Syria and Northern Lebanon before the 1980 military coup that swept extreme left-wing organizations, including Kurdish nationalist ones, out of Turkey. Although many party members who stayed were incarcerated due to the post-1980 coup dragnet, the military regime's repression in Turkey's Kurdish southeast helped the PKK gain adherents in the following years (Kutschera 1999).

In 1991, the PKK removed the hammer and sickle from its flag and started to call itself the Kurdish Liberation Movement, and more recently, the Kurdistan Liberation Movement. The PKK now recognizes different minority groups living in the geo-cultural region of Kurdistan, which includes northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, northern Syria, and northwestern Iran, and it rejects the nation-state paradigm.[33]

In the mid-1990s, although certain features of "Leninist democratic centralism" remained within the party administration, the PKK underwent a dramatic shift in its political

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[33] "Mustafa Karasu, HDP'nin çizgisini açıkladı. [Mustafa Karasu explained the stance of HDP]". *Radikal*. 6 May 2014.

orientation and adopted a critical approach to the concept of nation-state (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 25). The arrest of Öcalan, in 1999, was the impetus for the ideological transformation. The PKK's ideological framework was reestablished on the basis of Öcalan's official defense texts during his trials, and has been accepted as the official party line. Öcalan's radical concept of democracy, "Democratic Confederalism," is defined as a model for "democratic self-government" (Öcalan 2008, 32). Democratic Confederalism, according to Öcalan (2008, 33), is a libertarian socialist political system based on "the self-government of local communities, and is organized in the form of open councils, town councils, local parliaments and larger congresses". According to Democratic Confederalism, the Kurdish Liberation Movement should build these self-governing bodies throughout Kurdistan; thus the KCK was established as an alternative to the nation-state concept (Casier and Jongerden 2010).

Despite this ideological transformation, armed struggle remains central to the Kurdistan Liberation Movement. The on-going war in Syria, especially, increased the role of its armed wings.[34]

3.3. The Leadership

Despite his capture in 1999, Öcalan is the undisputed leader of the KCK. Öcalan's personality and approach to leadership had a great impact on the organization of the PKK,

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[34] Although Turkey doesn't see a difference between the KCK, the PKK, and the Syrian PYD, which is a KCK entity, the KCK and the PYD are not designated terrorist organizations by any other country. While the PKK is designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department and the EU, it has never been so designated by the UN, due to rejection by Russia and China. In addition, the PYD opened a representative in Moscow in February 2016 and the HDP attended its inauguration. "PYD opens office in Moscow, inauguration attended by HDP deputy". *Daily Sabah*. 11 February 2016.

making him a legendary symbol of the Kurdish National Movement (Marcus 2007). His sympathizers call him "Apo", the vocative version of Abdullah and the Kurdish word for uncle (Cagaptay 2007). Öcalan has consciously sought this loyalty. He said in an interview "Everyone should take note of the way I live…The way I eat, the way I think, my orders, and even my inactivity should be carefully studied. There will be lessons to be learned from several generations because Apo is a great teacher" (Çevik 1998 in Cagaptay 2007: 46).

Öcalan monopolized the Kurdish nationalist struggle. Not only did he refuse to tolerate other political or armed Kurdish groups operating in Turkey's Kurdish southeast or the other parts of Kurdistan,[35] he also consolidated his power within the PKK by eliminating potential rivals (Cagaptay 2007). He has become an object of extraordinary devotion, whose followers regard him with a mixture of fear and respect. Since his capture, more than 100 Kurds have set themselves on fire, including an 11-year-old school girl from Iranian Kurdistan, and a 56-year-old housewife from Istanbul, who shouted, "Long live our leader, Apo" (Özcan 2006: 174).

After Öcalan's capture, the PKK's military high command headquarters moved to their camps in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq, [36] but Öcalan has been able to guide them and

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[35] Despite having military bases in Northern Iraq, the PKK do not get along with other Kurdish political groups in Northern Iraq and Syria, especially with the president of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region in Northern Iraq, Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party. The PKK and the PYD have disputed over control of emerging Kurdish autonomous regions in Northern Syria.

[36] In order to eliminate the PKK camps in northern Iraq, Turkey's first cross-border operation was carried out as early as 1983, under the framework of a bilateral agreement with Iraq allowing the army of both countries to cross up to 30 kilometers in pursuit of guerrilla groups. Since the early 1990s, Turkish armed forces have established a military intelligence network and organized a series of major operations, including one in October 1998 against Syria due to its support for the PKK, another immediately after Öcalan's arrest in February 1999, as well as others in the early 2000s (USAK 2008).

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maintain his leadership position from prison. His main channel of communication with the PKK was through regular meetings with his lawyers and immediate family members. Nevertheless, his guidance of the PKK has changed over time. In the first years of his imprisonment, until 2005, he was active in the practical details of the organization, thanks to the loyalty of a number of PKK militants. Later, his leadership of the PKK was more strategic, dealing with geopolitical, regional, and other large-scale challenges (Akkaya and Jongerden 2010).

Öcalan views himself as a key player[37] in the peace process, and in fact he was the main negotiator during the two rounds of peace talks that took place between 2005 and 2011 and known as the Oslo Process, as well as in the third round of the peace process, which took place between December 2012 and July 2015. His leadership was entirely accepted by the non-armed factions of the Kurdistan National Movement, as well as by the Turkish government.[38] As for the armed units of the PKK, although they respected and carried out the commands Öcalan conveyed during the course of negotiations, [39] they disagreed with plans to disarm the organization and repeatedly sought direct involvement in the peace talks. This disagreement reveals the existence of competing factions within the organization that sprang up during Öcalan's long imprisonment.

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[37] "Muhatap Kandil değil benim [The main negotiator is not Qandils but me]". *Hürriyet*. 30 September 2012.

[38] "Asıl muhatap Öcalan [the main interlocutor is Öcalan]". *Al Jazeera Turk*. 23 March 2012; "Türkiye'nin muhatabı Öcalan [Turkey's interlocutor is Öcalan] ". *Al Jazeera Turk*. 2 January 2013;

[39] "PKK'dan Öcalan'a gönderme: PKK da muhatap! [PKK's implicit response to Öcalan: the PKK is also an interlocutor]". *T24*. 4 September 2012.

3.4. Competing Leadership Factions and Fragmentation

In the early years of the PKK, Öcalan eliminated rivals and opponents when he asserted his control over the PKK.[40] After his capture, he was still the undisputed leader, but no longer a physical presence in the field. In June 2004, the group's hardline militant wing took power and renounced the unilateral ceasefire of the previous five years despite Öcalan's call to end the military struggle (U.S. State Department 2010). Since then, power in the armed forces seems to be shifting to hardliner KCK leaders like Cemil Bayık, Duran Kalkan, Fehman Husain, Ali Haydar Kaytan, and Mustafa Karasu, who are closely associated with the armed units and favor an increased armed struggle against Turkey.[41] Their rhetoric is tougher than Öcalan's, and their armed units engage in more violent activities against Turkish forces. In the aftermath of the failure of the second round of peace talks, despite positive steps from pro-Kurdish party members to relaunch them, a KCK leader, Duran Kalkan, stated that they would escalate the low-level armed struggle to a large-scale civil war.[42] In June 2013, Murat Karayılan, known as a dovish leader, was replaced by the hardliner Cemil Bayık.

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[40] For instance, in the early 1980s, Duran Kalkan broke with Öcalan over the PKK's use of violence against Kurdish villages, which Kalkan believed hurt the PKK's recruitment efforts. Kalkan was allowed to return to the PKK only after he accepted Öcalan's undisputed leadership. In another instance, Doctor Baran, a long time commander of the Kurdistan Peoples Liberation Army, was eventually executed by the PKK for pacifism. In the 1990s, Kani Yilmaz was in charge of all PKK activities throughout Europe. He was executed by the PKK for failing to find sanctuary for Öcalan when he was in Europe, before his capture. (Gunter 2009).

[41] "Osman Öcalan: Ağabeyim, PKK'daki derin yapıyı tasfiye ederek, savaşı bitirmek istiyor [Osman Öcalan: My brother wants to end the war by eliminating the deep [pro-war] faction within the PKK]". *T24*. 11 October 2012.

[42] Kurdish politician Leyla Zana's visit to then-Prime Minister Erdoğan after the failure of the second round of peace talks was highly criticized by KCK Executive Committee member Duran Kalkan, who stated, "we are from now on in the process of a military solution…We would like to resolve the Kurdish question in line with the Revolutionary People's War". "PKK'nın şahin liderlerinden Duran Kalkan: AKP'den birşey beklenmemeli. Artık

Some hardline factions that use terrorist methods in western urban areas have established themselves as autonomous entities within the PKK. Although they remain loyal to Abdullah Öcalan, and don't claim total independence from the PKK, they prefer to use different names.[43] The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan, TAK), which formed in 2004, is one of them. TAK has been targeting western cities and tourist resorts since 2006, and issues statements under its name (Marcus 2007). The TAK's breakaway from the PKK became evident when the PKK denounced the TAK after its deadly attack in Istanbul in November 2010, calling for an end to their activities, which "don't serve the liberation struggle of our people".[44] Nevertheless, while the TAK is a designated terrorist group according to the US State Department, the Turkish state refuses to distinguish between the PKK and the TAK.[45][46] Other independent terrorist attacks in urban areas staged by young Kurdish militants, like the hijacking of an Istanbul ferry in November 2011, have been neither rejected nor accepted by the PKK.[47]

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askeri çözüm vakti [one of the PKK's hawkish leaders, Duran Kalkan : Nothing should be expected from the AKP. It is now the time for a military solution]. *Taraf*. 2 July 2012. This kind of information needs to be in-text as it points to one of the areas of disagreement among the various Kurdish factions.

[43] When Öcalan calls for a ceasefire, these factions, together with the PKK, respect his call and suspend their activities.

[44] "PKK'dan TAK'a: Eylemlerine derhal son ver [PKK to TAK: immediately end your actions]". *T24*. 5 November 2010.

[45] "U.S. labels Kurdish group as terrorist". *CNN*. 11 January 2008.

[46] According to a former member of the PKK, the TAK is financially affiliated with the PKK, but remains very secretive and takes no orders from the PKK's military wing, HPG. Mahmet Bozarslan. "Who is TAK and why did it attack Ankara?. *Al Monitor*. February 2016.

[47] "Turkish Commandos end ferry hijack in Gulf of Izmit". *BBC*. 12 November 2011.

Some radical Kurdish youth have established themselves as an autonomous entity in Turkey's Kurdish southeast. The group calls itself the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement YDG-H. Although it was created as a pro-PKK urban youth group in February 2013, and was partially supported by the PKK, it established its armed branches mostly in urban areas throughout Turkey's Kurdish southeast and engaged in autonomous activities. Pro-PKK media announced the establishment of YDG-H one month before Öcalan called for a ceasefire and the limited withdrawal of PKK militants from Turkish soil, which began in March 2014. YDG-H sought to support and defend the democratic autonomous cities and districts established according to Öcalan's ideology, pledging to bar police from entering the self-proclaimed autonomous areas such as Cizre, Silopi, Sur, etc. in Turkey's Kurdish southeast.[48]

4. History of the armed conflict

4.1. Outset of confrontation (1984-1993)

After having eliminated other armed or non-armed Kurdish organizations in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, the PKK launched its first serious military operation against the Turkish state in 1984.[49] They subscribed to the three-stage Maoist theory of people's war. These three

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[48] Starting in the early 2010s, YDG-H militants proclaimed democratic autonomy in a number of towns in Turkey's Kurdish southeast. It transformed streets into battlegrounds as violence between Turkish security forces and the YDG-H militia surged, an urban warfare that hadn't occurred since the 1980s. Although YDG-H militia have dug explosive-laden trenches and raised barricades in an attempt to keep these proclaimed autonomous towns free of Turkish security forces, they asserted control only in selected neighborhoods, for a short period of time. "PKK Youth Fight for Autonomy in Turkey". Vice News. 13 February 2015.

[49] In addition to the hostility the PKK aimed at other Kurdish organizations, the latter were also swept out of Turkey by the 1980 military coup.

stages consist of defense (the organization of peasants and initiation of guerrilla warfare); strategic balance (reducing the capacity and influence of the state while building up an alternative government-in-waiting); and offense (regular warfare and capture of towns) (McDowall 2004, 422). In accordance with Maoist theory, the PKK focused on the socialist transformation of the conservative Kurdish population in rural areas, using coercion when necessary. Their main activities included propaganda for recruitment, urban activities such as mass riots, collecting money and information, and logistical supply, as well as liaison with European organizations through the Kurdish diaspora (Gunter 2009). In response, the Turkish government organized intensive military operations and recruited village guards—Kurds who worked in state-funded defense units. The number of these guards reached 16,000 by the end of 1989, and increased progressively in the 1990s (Kutschera 1994, 14). In the early 1990s, the PKK attempted to capture certain towns in Turkey's Kurdish southeast. A number of simultaneous uprisings (in Kurdish *Serhildan*) took place, lasting three years and resulting in the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people from the rural areas.[50] Nevertheless, the PKK, in spite of some temporary gains, was eventually hampered by the superior manpower and weaponry of Turkish security forces.

4.2. In the aftermath of the acknowledgment of the military defeat (1993-1999)

Despite the failure of their urban uprisings, and the heavy losses suffered by the PKK in the early 1990s, they continued to gain widespread support among Turkey's Kurds (Gunes

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[50] See Turkey: Internal displacement in brief (2013) on http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/turkey/summary (14 June 2016).

2013: 119-123). Ünal (2016: 8) highlights two significant developments, starting in 1993, that were critically important to the PKK's strategy. First, they perceived that they could no longer escalate the conflict and score a victory over Turkish security forces, due to the latter's advantage in manpower and weaponry. Second, they began to engage in political activities, within and outside Turkey, a change from Öcalan's strict opposition to making any political initiatives in the 1980s.

The PKK managed to survive in the following years. There are a number of reasons for their ability to survive in spite of the Turkish security forces' superiority, and their own heavy losses.[51] First, their insurgency falls into the category of "peripheral insurgencies," civil wars involving rural guerrilla bands that typically operate near the state's borders (Fearon 2004). Such wars are difficult to end, because the government has trouble exerting force in these areas, and resistance tends to be widespread and difficult to reduce. Furthermore, Turkish military forces weren't prepared for irregular warfare, and were challenged by PKK guerrilla tactics, especially in late 1980s (Gunter 2009). Second, the PKK enjoyed the external support of neighboring countries. Saideman (2002) puts particular emphasis on transnational linkages such as geographic proximity, porous borders, and transnational ethnic ties in intrastate conflicts, because they provide external sanctuaries for evading state repression (Salehyan 2007), as well as a large pool of human and economic resources (Cederman, Girardin and Gleditsch 2009). Instability and hostilities in the region gave the PKK the opportunity to benefit from the external support of Syria and Iran and, to a lesser extent, Iraqi Kurds (Gunter

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[51] The PKK-Turkey conflict killed about 35300 people since 1984 of which 21800 were PKK militants. "28 yılın bilançosu: 35,300 kişi terör kurbanı oldu. [The balance of 28 years: 35,300 were the victims of terrorism]". *Milliyet*. 16 August 2012.

2009). [52] The Assad regime aimed to use the PKK as a proxy against the Turkish state, which was building dams in Turkey's Kurdish southeast in an attempt to control Syria's limited water supply. The PKK moved its military camps into Syria, and Öcalan resided in Damascus under the protection of Syrian intelligence (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 23). In 1997, the PKK signed a cooperation pact with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders, Barzani and Talabani, that granted it freedom of movement in Northern Iraq (Kirişci and Winrow 1997, 160-180).

The PKK changed its strategy, hoping to reach its goals through other tactics, such as international campaigns and revolutionary terrorism (Ünal 2016, 8-9). They resorted to violence in areas outside Turkey's Kurdish southeast, such as western cities in Turkey that were not under emergency rule.[53] At the international level, a group of pro-PKK Kurdish intellectuals established a Kurdish parliament in exile in Europe in 1995 (Barkey and Fuller 1998, 25-27). The Kurdish parliament in exile worked for political recognition, and launched a lobbying campaign in European countries to create public awareness of the Kurdish question

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[52] The onset of first the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), and later, the Gulf War (1991), resulted in an unsuccessful Kurdish uprising in Northern Iraq, the exodus of nearly two million people from the region, the establishment of a no-fly zone, and eventually the establishment of the Kurdistan autonomous region in Northern Iraq. The Iraqi Kurdish civil war between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)—Masud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—Jalal Talabani, also provided a safe haven for the PKK. As a result, the PKK moved to Qandil mountains in Northern Iraq Gunter (2009).

[53] In 1987, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency in ten provinces in Turkey's Kurdish southeast where the PKK was engaged in a fight against state authorities. The state of emergency allowed the regional governor to exercise comprehensive legal powers. The state of emergency was renewed in 1994; see Human Right Association of Turkey, Human Rights Report 1998. Non-emergency areas comprise all of Turkey, except for Turkey's Kurdish southeast.

in Turkey. Ünal (2016) argues that the unilateral win and heavy military action of Turkish security forces marked the period between 1993 and 1999.

4.3. Capture of Öcalan and Deadlock of the Conflict (1999-2007)

Öcalan's capture in 1999 gave a new impetus to the PKK-Turkey conflict. Following the bilateral agreement between Syria and Turkey in 1998, Öcalan had to leave Syria, and was arrested by the Turkish Intelligence Service at Rome's airport and incarcerated on the island of Imrali in northwestern Turkey. As a result of Öcalan's call, the PKK declared unilateral ceasefire and started to withdraw, in an attempt to bring the armed struggle to an end. However, instead of initiating negotiations, the Turkish government declared victory over the PKK and attacked the PKK militants during their withdrawal from the Turkish soil. After Öcalan's capture, the PKK's camps in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq became the headquarters of the PKK's military high command, although Öcalan maintains his leadership position from prison. During this period, Öcalan's main channel of communication with the PKK was through regular meetings with his lawyers and immediate family members.

The PKK ended its longest ceasefire in June 2004, due to a leadership change in the military wing. It began to make terrorist attacks in large cities in Turkey, with targets that included civilians, local government officials, and teachers, etc., with the goal of undermining the state's authority and its institutions in Turkey's Kurdish southeast (Ünal 2016). Accordingly, non-violent pro-PKK activities increased after the implementation of the KCK system.

4.4. Earlier Failed Peace Process (2007-2011)

The PKK's violent campaign continued until secret peace talks were initiated in 2007 and they declared a ceasefire. Top-level Turkish Intelligence Agency officials agreed on the framework of a road map with Öcalan, and then began a series of secret talks, known as the Oslo Process, with a PKK delegation comprised of the European wing and military wing in Qandils, and an undisclosed third party, possibly officials from the United Kingdom or from the Norwegian Peace Research Institute (Ünal 2016). The content of the talks was not made public, except for some leaked audio recordings that revealed that both sides agreed on a stalemate, and had strong intentions to resolve the conflict.[54]

The Turkish government initiated the Kurdish opening (known as the Democratic Opening or the Oslo Process) and made it public in 2009. However, in the same year, the AKP faced opposition from the other parties in parliament and the military establishment. The opposition parties accused the AKP of granting legitimacy to the PKK.[55] The Turkish army renounced the AKP's initiative with an official statement posted on its website (Ünal 2016). Moreover, Kurdish activists and politicians, including elected mayors, started to be prosecuted as alleged members of the KCK under the country's anti-terror law.[56] In addition, the AKP lost a great deal of public support after the Habur events. As an early act of the Democratic

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[54] "AKP-PKK Oslo Talks Audio Recording (2007-2011)". On https://vimeo.com/87901376 (2 August 2016).

[55] The Republican People's Party (CHP) Chief Treasurer stated, "The debates on the Kurdish opening is made in a way that gives legitimacy to the PKK. The fight against terrorism is not carried out by giving terrorists a pat on the back". "Açılım tartışmaları PKK'yi meşrulaştırıyor [Debates on the opening give legitimacy to the PKK]". Milliyet. 18 October 2009.

[56] "30 ayda KCK'den 7748 gözaltı, 3895 tutuklama [In 30 months, 7748 held in custody, 3895 arrested from the KCK trial]". *Bianet.* 6 October 2011.

opening, the AKP and the PKK had negotiated the return of 34 Kurds, as the first step toward the PKK's disarmament. However, the way it was carried out prompted a negative reaction. On 18 October 2009, 34 PKK members in guerilla uniforms arrived at Turkey's Habur border. The Kurdish Movement's legal party, the Democratic Society Party (DTP), organized rallies throughout Turkey, calling the 34 PKK members peace ambassadors, and chanting slogans in favor of Öcalan.[57] It provoked a great deal of disturbance in the Turkish public. The AKP government, who thought they had agreed that the returnees would go quietly to their villages, felt betrayed. They accused the DTP and the PKK of spoiling the peace process. Shortly after, in December 2009, the Democratic Society Party (DTP) was banned by Turkey's constitutional court for its alleged links to the PKK.[58]

In the following months, KCK operations gained momentum and resulted in the arrests of multiple prominent Kurdish intellectuals, mayors, and political figures. The PKK declared another ceasefire in August 2010. The secret Oslo Talks with the PKK Delegation continued until June 2011, when the Oslo Peace Process ended in failure.[59] Both sides were using force once again, with attacks increasing in the lead-up to the June 2011 elections.[60]

The 12 June 2011 elections were initially hailed as a new opportunity for the peace process. The AKP retained power with a parliamentary majority winning 49.9% of the vote. It

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[57] "PKK fighters in peace initiative". *Al Jazeera.* 10 October 2009.

[58] "Turkish top court bans pro-Kurdish party". BBC. 11 December 2009.

[59] "Oslo Süreci neden tıkandı? [Why is the Oslo process jammed?]". *BBC Türkçe.* 24 September 2014.

[60] The PKK attacked the PM Erdogan's election bus on 4 May, missing the PM, who was traveling by helicopter, but killed a police officer. The PKK also kidnapped two soldiers and a health officer on 9 July at a roadblock. "Kurds blamed for attack on Turkish PM Erdogan's election bus". *The National.* 6 May 2011. "PKK asker kaçırdı [PKK captured soldiers]". *Takvim*. 11 July 2011.

campaigned promising to solve the Kurdish question through democratization and constitutional amendments. The main opposition, the Republican People's Party, softened its tone on Kurdish issue, and embraced a pro-peace process program.[61] A record number of 36 Kurdish lawmakers were elected from the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), of whom 6 were in prison due to KCK operations.[62] They were released when the third round of the peace process started in December 2012.

In the following chapter, the third round of the peace process will be examined closely.

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[61] In 2011, the CHP declared 8 articles to address the Kurdish question. "CHP'den 8 maddelik çözüm tartışılacak [The CHP's 8 articles for the resolution would be discussed]". *Yesil Gazete.* 24 October 2011.

[62] The Kurdish movement opened the BDP after the DTP was banned.

CHAPTER III: The third round of PKK-Turkey Peace Talks

1. Descriptive Analysis

Although regional developments put great strains on Turkey's ability to deal with the Kurdish question and its peace efforts, a third round of talks, from December 2012 to July 2015, between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) presented the best possible option for reaching a peace deal. Both sides were convinced that armed conflict was not conducive to victory. As well, the rise of the Islamic State (IS) presented a destabilizing threat to Turkey and posed a serious challenge to the PKK, which has become a major force on the front lines, fighting against the IS in both Syria and Iraq.

Nevertheless, talks between the state and the PKK were not unprecedented. The PKK's imprisoned founder and leader, Öcalan, had direct contact with military officials from his capture, in 1999, until 2006. During that time, however, no progress toward peace was reported. From 2007 onwards, top-level state officials from the National Intelligence Agency (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, MIT) had face-to-face contact with Öcalan. Having agreed on the framework of a roadmap with Öcalan, they embarked on covert talks, also known as the Oslo process, with a PKK delegation, comprised of the party's European wing, its military wing, and an undisclosed third party (Ünal 2016). [63]

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[63] Possibly officials from the United Kingdom or experts from the Norwegian Peace Research Institute according to Ünal (2016).

As a result, in 2009, a series of reforms, also known as the Democratic opening or the Kurdish opening, was initiated by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP).[64] Top-level state officials, including cabinet members and the president, began to speak openly of the Kurdish question, breaking longstanding taboos in the Turkish political arena. In addition to the reforms carried out by the AKP, as steps toward meeting EU membership criteria— including banning capital punishment, and allowing the limited use of the Kurdish language on radio and television channels— in 2009, the government established a Kurdish-language state TV channel, and permitted private institutions to teach the Kurdish language.

These reforms were an integral part of the Oslo process, and their progress was affected by the state of the peace talks. Talks were not made public and they excluded some key actors, such as civil society organizations and opposition parties. The first round eventually collapsed due to a lack of trust, unity of purpose, and comprehensive intention to reach a peace deal. In particular, the Kurdish National Movement perceived the AKP government as disingenuous following the 2009 arrest of thousands of Kurdish individuals, including elected representatives and intellectuals, accused of connection with the movement's umbrella body, the Kurdistan Communities Union (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*, KCK).[65] And, when PKK militants in guerilla uniforms were welcomed home by thousands of people as the

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[64] The initiative was later officially called the National Unity and Brotherhood Project.

[65] The division between the KCK and the PKK is not always clear, and the terms are often used interchangeably. According to the KCK Convention, as explained in Chapter II, today the PKK is part of the KCK. This paper refers to them interchangeably since their leadership overlaps.

heroic veterans of a victorious war, the resulting exacerbated nationalistic feelings in Turkey caused the government to backtrack on further plans for the peace process.[66]

The AKP's inaction, and its repeated postponement in making decisions about Öcalan's protocol for the peace process that included the establishment of a peace council, a truth commission, a democratic constitution, and the recognition of the collective rights of Kurds kindled resentment on the Kurdish side (Achankeng 2015).[67] The second round of talks collapsed shortly before the parliamentary elections on 12 June, 2011. Armed conflict resumed, on 14 July, when PKK militants killed 13 Turkish soldiers.[68]

The main goal of this chapter is to focus theoretically and substantively on the process leading to the breakdown of peace negotiations. Theoretically, it allows us to test the hypotheses on negotiation failures formulated in the first chapter. Substantively, the aim is to demonstrate that the conduct of the peace process was as significant as its content. Because the first two rounds of Turkey-PKK peace talks were not made public, and involved few actors, there is not enough accessible information to analyze. Thus, they are not included in the case

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[66] As part of their confidence-building efforts, the two sides agreed that the PKK militants would return home from their bases in northern Iraq. The intention was for the PKK militants to surrender to the state as a sign of hope for the peace process, but the prosecutor who came to the Habur border between Iraq and Turkey released them immediately. Then, the PKK overplayed its hand, organizing widespread celebrations for the militants, who were dressed in guerilla uniform. As a result of the Habur celebrations, the government came under heavy criticism from hardline Turkish nationalists. The peace process failed. In June 2010, the returnees were charged and convicted of terrorist propaganda and committing crime on behalf of a terrorist organization. "PKK fighters in peace initiative". *Al Jazeera.* 10 October 2009. "Retrial request for Habur convicts" *Hürriyet Daily News.* 14 December 2012

[67] The Öcalan's protocol on steps to be taken for the peace process became public through his lawyers (Achankeng 2015).

[68] "13 Turkish soldiers die in fire attribute to Kurdish groups". *CNN.* 14 July 2011.

study. The case is temporally bounded by the initiation of consecutive meetings between State officials and the Kurdish National Movement, including the PKK jailed leader, Öcalan, PKK representatives from the Qandil headquarters in northern Iraq, and BDP/HDP members of parliament.

1.1. Onset of the third round of peace talks

At the end of December 2012, the peace process was renewed, as Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan announced on television that state officials had been conducting talks with Öcalan, to settle the dispute between the PKK and the state.[69] It was the beginning of the third round of talks, also known as the Solution process or İmralı process (named after the island where Öcalan has been imprisoned since 1999).

The talks were reopened as the result of a 68-day hunger strike mounted by Kurdish prisoners in the fall of 2012 in response to recurring violence between Turkish security forces and the PKK. In fact, despite the failure of previous efforts, both sides had kept the lines of communication open. Prior to the commencement of the third round, two factors can be said to have contributed to the State's willingness to resume peace talks with Öcalan. First, had any of the hunger strikers died, Erdoğan's credibility would have been cast into doubt; second, Öcalan's ability to convince the hunger strikers to end their strike assured the government that

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[69] In a bid to institutionalize the process and reduce the political risks (chasing Turkish nationalist votes as well as Kurdish votes), the AKP government only partially owned the peace process and presented it as a state project. On the government side, the peace talks were conducted by National Intelligence Agency (MIT) officials. The major political opposition, including the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), as well as the military, has largely been against negotiations with the PKK.

any deal reached with him would be respected by other elements of the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) (Democratic Progress Institute 2013: 17).

The government's commitment was limited and conditional, as suggested by these words of Prime Minister Erdoğan's: "If we see the light, we will continue to take steps, but if there is no light, we will not".[70] The Kurdish side, on the other hand, displayed a strong commitment to the renewal of peace talks, and welcomed its public announcement. With the third round of talks, for the first time, members of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP) visited Öcalan at the prison island İmralı, as well as the PKK's main military base in Qandil in northern Iraq, and the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe.

1.2. New and Revitalized Initiatives Take off

As in previous peace talks, Öcalan was given a key role for the Kurdish side in the third round: the government unofficially acknowledged him as a chief negotiator on behalf of the Kurdish National Movement. But now, for the first time, the government gave members of the pro-Kurdish BDP/HDP permission to talk to him.[71] The government also changed the way it portrayed him. In contrast to the evil figure, labeled "baby killer," in the Turkish media in the past, now he began to be seen as a benign paternal figure.[72]

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[70] (*Işık olduğu sürece devam ederiz. Baktık olmuyor bırakırız*, translation is mine*)* "Başbakan: Apo ile görüşüyoruz [Prime Minister: We have been conducting talks with Apo]". *Haber3*. 29 December 2012.

[71] Later merged into a new pro-Kurdish party, namely the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP)

[72] Beginning in 2013, new photos of Öcalan were leaked through social media in which he appears sitting in a meeting with the Kurdish delegation on the prison island Imrali. Subsequently, other photos of Öcalan were released, and were used by the pro-Kurdish media, and then by the mainstream Turkish media. "Abdullah

In fact, Öcalan's role in the peace process proved to be a vital one. At the Newroz celebrations (Kurdish New Year) in Diyarbakır, on 21 March, 2013, a letter he had written, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of PKK armed units from Turkey, was read aloud. In the letter, Öcalan said: "Those who cannot understand the spirit of the times are bound for the rubbish bin of history".[73] Following this call, the PKK declared a ceasefire, on 23 March, 2013; it began to withdraw its armed elements from within Turkish borders in May 2013.

However, given its experience in 1999, when hundreds of PKK militants were killed by Turkish security forces during the withdrawal that followed Öcalan's capture, the PKK approached the process cautiously. A senior commander, Bahoz Erdal, criticized Öcalan for the losses incurred in previous withdrawals, and drew a distinction between laying down arms and disarmament: "we lay down arms today, but it doesn't mean disarming ourselves".[74]

The withdrawal process was carried out without a formal monitoring mechanism. Without such a mechanism to provide reliable information, both sides fell prey to suspicion, and mutual accusations were made throughout Summer 2013. The Turkish armed forces increased their numbers in the region.[75] The PKK accused the government of constructing new military outposts and dams along the routes they traditionally used to withdraw into northern

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Öcalan'ın yeni fotoğrafları yayınlandı [The new photos of Abdullah Öcalan were released]" *Radikal*. 16 January 2014. "Öcalan'dan yeni fotoğraf [The new photo of Öcalan]" *Hürriyet*. 16 January 2014.

[73] SETA Foundation, Timeline: Reconciliation Process.

[74] "Bahoz Erdal: Bugün silahı bir kenara koyuyoruz, ama bu silahı bırakmak demek değil [Bahoz Erdal: we lay down arms, today but it doesn't mean disarming ourselves]". *T24*. 14 May 2014.

[75] . "Çözüm süreci olgunlaşma safhasında ["The peace process is maturing"], Anatolian Agency, 8 July 2014.

Iraq in the fall and enter Turkey in the spring.[76] The government, for its part, claimed that the PKK was not withdrawing quickly enough.[77] Eventually, in protest against the government's inaction, on 9 September, 2013, the PKK suspended its withdrawal, yet maintained the ceasefire. [78]

1.3. (In)Action plan for the road map towards peace

An initial roadmap, agreed upon by both sides, was divided into three stages: (1) ceasefire, and withdrawal of the PKK from Turkish soil, (2) democratization, and (3) disarmament of the PKK, and normalization.[79] However, there was disagreement about the timing of the first and second steps; specifically, whether each stage should be completed before beginning the next, or whether confidence in one another's intentions was sufficient to move the process along. Following the reading of Öcalan's letter, the government called for the PKK to withdraw all its armed units from Turkey, and to leave its weapons behind. Turkey's security bureaucracy supported this call.[80] The government would then take steps toward democratization.[81] However, the PKK expected the government to create a legal framework for negotiations, as well as constitutional reforms in regard to the Kurdish

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[76] While the AKP announced that the construction of dams and military outposts had nothing to do with the peace process, the PKK viewed Turkey's move as a strategy to undermine the PKK's capacity in Turkey's Kurdish southeast. "Karakol yapımı devam ediyor [The construction of military posts continues]". *AK Parti Haberler.* 13 July 2013. "Kalekol'un ardından bu da baraj tezgahı" ["After police stations, now dams are part of a ploy"], Türkiye, 4 July 2013. "Kurdish rebels say Turkish army is endangering peaceful pullout". *Reuters.* 7 May 2013.

[77] "Erdoğan says PKK did not fulfill promises concerning withdrawal". *Today's Zaman.* 16 August 2013.

[78] "PKK çekilmeyi durdurdu. [PKK ended withdrawal]". *BBC Türkçe.* 1 August 2016.

[79] "Bakan Ergin'den Öcalan açiklamasi [Statement about Öcalan from Minister Ergin]". *Sabah.* 29 March 2013.

[80] "Bila: Türkiye'deki 1500 PKK'lıdan 800'ü sınır dışına çekilmeli [Bila: Out of 1500 PKK militants, 800 should withdraw to outside Turkey]". *T24.* 2 April 2013.

[81] *Ibid.*

question, simultaneously with their steps, which included the release of eight Turkish hostages, ceasefire, and withdrawal of its armed units (International Crisis Group 2014).[82]

Before the PKK's withdrawal, the government had taken two important steps. It had established a committee of wise people, to promote civil society participation in the peace process.[83] And second, in a bid to formalize it, it had created a commission in parliament - officially named the Solution process (in Turkish, *Çözüm süreci,* referring to the third round of peace talks). Public support for the process was high; in May 2013, a survey showed that it had reached 81.3%.[84]

After the PKK suspended the withdrawal of its armed units, and to keep the peace process rolling forward, the government, passed a series of reforms addressing Kurdish grievances. The government "legalized education in mother languages in private schools; removed the national pledge of allegiance, which Kurds felt was discriminatory; gave financial aid to political parties that received at least 3% of the national vote (such as the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party / Peoples' Democratic Party, BDP / HDP); lifted the ban on election propaganda in languages other than Turkish; allowed reinstatement of (mostly Kurdish) names for villages and towns; and formalized the possibility of two co-chairs for

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[82] "Kronoloji: 2013 Nevruz'undan bugüne [Chronology: From 2013 Newroz till the present]". *Al Jazeera Türk.* 19 March 2014.

[83] The wise people committee is comprised of 63 intellectuals, including 12 women. Among them, there are prominent figures, such as authors, artists, academics, and opinion leaders. Divided into nine subgroups in seven different geographic regions across Turkey, the government-appointed wise people committee served to normalize the peace process through meetings with the public. The committee reported to Prime Minister Erdoğan. "Wise men committee members announced". *Anadolu Agency.* 3 April 2015.

[84] "KONDA'nın son anketi: Çözüm sürecine destek yüzde 81.3'e ulaştı [KONDA's last survey results: the support of the solution process increased to 81.3%]". *T24.* 6 May 2013

political parties (a practice based on gender equality, until then carried out only by pro-Kurdish parties)" (International Crisis Group 2014).

Nevertheless, the Kurdish National Movement was dissatisfied. The BDP/HDP leader, Demirtaş, discussed the disappointment felt by many Kurds with the contents of the democratization package, particularly because it came in a unilateral move by the government.[85] In addition, the government had failed to form a truth commission, as Öcalan had requested, and took no steps toward doing so. Both the BDP/HDP and the PKK expressed the need to transform the talks with Öcalan into institutionalized negotiations.[86] The PKK came to believe that the AKP's democratization package was motivated by a desire to win another election, rather than recognition of the collective rights of the Kurdish people.[87] The PKK leader, Cemil Bayık, warned the government of a return of the withdrawn PKK units.[88]

However, the peace process gained new momentum following the AKP's victory in local elections in March 2014. The AKP government passed a bill granting Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (*Milli Istihbarat Teşkilatı,* MIT) the authority to meet and negotiate with terrorist organizations.[89] Further, it amended the law on pre-trial detention, reducing its duration from 10 to 5 years. This paved the way for the release of Kurdish activists and elected

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[85] "Time running out for Turkey-PKK peace process". *Al-Monitor.* 4 November 2013.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] "KCK: AKP'nin Politikasi Çözüm Degil Çözümsüzlük ["KCK: AKP's policy is that of non-solution]." *bianet.org.* 1 October 2013.

[88] Cemil Bayık warned, "We are preparing ourselves for the return of the PKK units which have withdrawn from Turkey to Northern Kurdistan [Turkey's Kurdish southeast] if the government doesn't accept our conditions". "Time running out for Turkey-PKK peace process". *Al-Monitor.* 4 November 2013.

[89] Gül, MIT yasasını onayladı [Gül approved the law on MIT]". *BBC Türkçe.* 25 April 2014.

politicians who had been charged with PKK/KCK membership and detained since the beginning of the lengthy KCK trials that began in 2009.[90]

Furthermore, the AKP government took a radical step and passed a bill to "end terror and strengthen social integration" on 10 July, 2014. The bill aimed to create a legal framework for negotiations, as requested by the Kurdish National Movement. Following Erdoğan's election to the presidency of the Republic in August 2014, the AKP announced that the peace process would be included in the program of the new government, led by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.[91] Öcalan praised these developments, stating that the 30-year-old conflict had neared its end.[92]

1.4. The Peace Process under the shadow of Regional Developments

When the civil war in Syria started in 2012, PKK-affiliated groups began to defend Kurds in Syria and Iraq against jihadist groups, in particular, Islamic State (IS). Following territorial gains and victories against jihadists, total disarmament and demobilization of the PKK became an unrealistic option. The war changed the role of the PKK, turning it into an important regional actor. This contributed to their renewed confidence, and new objectives for the Kurdish national movement in Turkey. While the PKK has officially abandoned its separatist goal, as of 2014, regional autonomy has risen to the top of its agenda, particularly with the establishment of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), as a civil society platform

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[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *Ibid.*

[92] *Ibid.*

of the KNM, which could be described as the unofficial precursor of a regional parliament in Turkey's Kurdish southeast.[93]

Within this context, the siege of Kobanê (in Arabic, *Ayn al-arab*), a Kurdish majority city in northern Syria, by Islamic State forces marked a turning point for the peace process, as it changed security strategies on both sides. The Turkish security bureaucracy had already voiced concerns about the exclusion of the military in the politician-led peace process. In 2014 alone, the military asked for permission to carry out 290 operations against the PKK in the Kurdish southeast; for the sake of the peace process, only 8 were approved.[94] However, with the increasing possibility of a Kurdish-controlled 511-mile border with Syria, the preferred security-related strategies of the military and the government began to converge.[95] The government was particularly wary of the possibility that the success of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD)[96] would lead to further separatism among Kurds in Turkey.[97]

Faced with harsh criticism from opposition parties and the security bureaucracy, the government was pressured into taking some security measures during the withdrawal process,

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[93] "DTK yeniden yapılandırılıyor [DTK is being re-structured]". Al Jazeera Turk. 7 September 2014.

[94] "Talep 290, izin 8 [290 requests, 8 approved]", *Hurriyet*. 19 September 2015.

[95] Turkey asked for a no-fly zone and refugee safe haven along a 98-km strip of the Syrian border, which the Kurdish movement viewed as an attempt to prevent KCK-affiliated Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD) expansion. Later, the government announced plans for a high-level security barrier along its 500-mile border with Syria. "Turkey to build 500-mile wall on Syria border after Isil Suruc bombing". *Telegraph*. 23 July 2015. This was also viewed as an attempt against PYD expansion since, at that time, the PYD already controlled most of the Syrian-Turkish border.

[96] Syrian branch of the KCK umbrella organization. See Chapter 2.

[97] Selahattin Demirtas, HDP Co-Chair, stated "Kobanê is our internal matter…You can't abandon Kurds in Kobanê…". "Jailed PKK leader calls for speeding up peace process, warns of massacres: HDP co-chair". "HDP'den önemli açıklamalar [Important statements from the HDP]", *Hürriyet* on 9 October 2014.

as early as in mid-2013. As a result of regional developments in Syria and Iraq, Turkey's military bureaucracy consolidated its position, and the government increased the pace of its construction of military outposts and dams in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, moves that were considered a re-securitization of the Kurdish question. A huge number of Turkish military personnel and armored vehicles were deployed as early as the summer of 2014. On 2 October, 2014, a resolution permitting Turkey's military to enter Iraq and Syria to join the campaign against the IS passed in the Turkish parliament, sparking outrage in the Kurdish National Movement.[98]

Considering these developments, the Turkish government was wary of Kurdish gains, and remained silent on the siege of Kobanê. The delayed reaction to Syrian Kurds' need for military and humanitarian aid triggered outrage among Turkey's Kurds. Many sought to cross the border to join forces with Kurdish fighters and deliver humanitarian assistance to their kin. The Turkish government thwarted their efforts, giving rise to several large protests across Turkey on 6, 7, and 8 October, 2014, resulting in 50 deaths.[99] In late October 2014, the government finally allowed a group of Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga fighters to enter Kobanê from Turkey to help the Syrian Kurds.[100]

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[98] "Islamic State: Turkish MPs back Iraq-Syria deployment." *BBC*. 2 October 2014.

[99] "Most of the fighting was between pro-PKK and pro-HüdaPar groups. HüdaPar, a Kurdish pro-Islamist party, is widely regarded as a political revival of Hizbollah in Kurdish-speaking regions in Turkey. In the 1990s, the latter was used as a proxy by the Turkish state to murder scores of PKK supporters" (International Crisis Group 2015).

[100] Turkey has a complicated relationship with Iraqi Kurds. For a long time, Turkey did not support the idea of an autonomous Kurdish region in Northern Iraq. Given the large Kurdish population in its southeast, Turkey feared that it would threaten its territorial integrity. Yet, Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Turkish government cooperated against the PKK as early as in 1997. Since the AKP came into power in 2002, large

The Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (*Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi*, YDG-H) played an important role in the Kobanê protests. An urban youth militia of the KNM that was established in February 2013, it grew rapidly, with armed branches in cities in Turkey's Kurdish southeast that had the capacity to draw Turkish security forces into street clashes. Since mid-2014, the urban warfare had been defined by street battles with heavy weapons. The YDG-H dug explosive-laden trenches and erected barricades in a bid to assert control of autonomous cities and neighborhoods.[101] Despite its rapid rise after the PKK's withdrawal and its ideological ties, the PKK has always denied controlling the group, although it acknowledges their efforts.[102]

Although talks resumed in late October 2014, peace efforts were constrained on both sides by a need to double down on security strategies in the period following the Kobanê incidents. The Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H)[103] declared democratic autonomy in Cizre and Sur in Turkey's Kurdish southeast[104], and the government's approach to the Kurdish Question became security-oriented once again. The government introduced a

commercial interests and oil trade have made a rapprochement possible. Although the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) tolerates the PKK bases in its territory, the PKK and the KRG do not get along well. Both have disputes over the Syrian Kurdish autonomous regions in Northern Syria (Paasche 2015). "Iraqi Peshmerga Fighters cross into Kobanê" *Al Jazeera.* 1 November 2014. "Portre: Mesut Barzani [Portrait: Masoud Barzani]". *Al Jazeera*. 8 April 2014.

[101] "Çözüm sürecinin maskelileri: YDG-H [The masked ones of the solution process]". *Aljazeera Turk.* 19 January 2015.

[102] "Bayık: Artık tek taraflı ateşkeş olmayacak [Bayık: There will be no more unilateral ceasefire]". *BBC Türkçe.* 30 November 2015.

[103] "PKK Youth Fight for Autonomy in Turkey". *Vice News.* 13 February 2015. For detailed information see chapter II.

[104] "Çözüm sürecinin maskelileri: YDG-H [The masked ones of the solution process]". *Aljazeera Turk.* 19 January 2015.

highly-debated domestic security law that gave the police enhanced power.[105] This sparked the concern of opposition parties, in particular the HDP. The bill was perceived as contradictory to the road map, and a sign of the government's lack of sincerity about the peace process.[106]

1.5. The last effort to save the peace process: Dolmabahçe Consensus

In the midst of the hotly contested debate on domestic security, and increasing Kurdish anger over the Turkish government's failure to support the Syrian Kurds in the fighting in Kobanê that raged from September 2014 until January 2015, the government and the Kurdish National Movement made a final endeavor to save the peace process. On 28 February, 2015, at the state-owned Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, where President Erdoğan hosts events, Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan and senior officials from the government and the HDP jointly announced a 10-item list of priorities for the peace process.[107] More importantly,

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[105] The law criminalizes the use of fireworks, Molotov cocktails, iron balls, and straps in public meetings and demonstrations. Those who cover their faces partly or entirely during demonstrations may face sentences of up to five years in prison. The law also enables law enforcement officials to take a person into custody for up to 48 hours if this person attends social events that may lead to a serious disruption of public order. "Turkey : Parliament approves domestic security package." *Middle East Eye*. 27 March 2015.

[106] "Demirtas: İç güvenlik paketi geri çekilmezse direnişimizi artırarak sürdüreceğiz". [Demirtas: If the domestic security bill is not withdrawn, we will increasingly pursue our resistance]. *Yurt Gazetesi*. 1 March 2015.

[107] The statement, as explained at the time by Hürriyet ("Kurdish peace call made amid row on security bill"), included: (1) definition and content of democratic politics; (2) defining a democratic solution's national and local dimensions; (3) legal, democratic guarantees of citizenship; (4) state-society relations and how to institutionalise issues; (5) the resolution process's socio-economic dimensions; (6) handling democracy-security ties during that process to sustain public order and freedoms; (7) legal solutions and warranties for policies on women, culture and ecology; (8) developing a pluralist democracy to define identity; (9) defining a democratic republic, common homeland and nation with democratic criteria and creating a legal and constitutional warranty within the pluralist democratic system; and (10) writing a constitution that internalises all democratic moves
and transformations (International Crisis Group 2015).

Öcalan's letter urging the PKK to convene an extraordinary congress to lay down arms was read aloud on television in the presence of government officials. This was the first time the sides revealed the overall content of the peace talks, and the first time the government openly acknowledged Öcalan's role as a peace partner. His call for disarmament was repeated when his letter was read to a crowd of over one million people gathered in Diyarbakır for Kurds' Newroz Festival on 21 March, 2015.[108]

Nevertheless, rather than revitalizing the peace process, the Dolmabahçe consensus revealed strains on the Turkish side, particularly between the government and President Erdoğan. On 18 March, the government announced its plan to discuss the establishment of a monitoring committee that would supervise and coordinate the implementation of the future peace agreement. President Erdoğan announced his objection to a monitoring committee, and disapproved of the Dolmabahçe consensus.[109] He was dissatisfied with the nominations for the committee that the government, the HDP, and Öcalan had agreed on (International Crisis Group 2015). According to Pervin Buldan, President Erdoğan objected because he was excluded from the preparation of the list.[110] Media reports confirmed that the monitoring committee was to observe the meeting between Öcalan, the PKK, the HDP, and the government. Yet the committee never convened, and the Kurdish delegation was no longer allowed to visit Öcalan after 5 April, 2015.

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[108] "Renewing call to end Turkey conflict, Kurdish rebel leader hails new era", The New York Times, 21 March 2015.

[109] "Gov't and HDP should not be in same picture, says Turkish President", Hürriyet, 22 March 2015.

[110] "Pervin Buldan: Erdoğan listeye müdahale etmek istedi ancak... [Buldan: Erdoğan wanted to intervene on the list; however…]" *Doğan News Agency*. 20 May 2015.

1.6. The Peace Process collapses

As the Kurdish side simmered in frustration and anger over the monitoring committee and the government's reluctance to intervene in Kobanê, the run-up to the parliamentary elections on 7 June, 2015 became a battlefield between the HDP and the AKP. Political violence was directed at HDP offices across Turkey particularly.[111] The AKP, though it condemned the attacks, toughened its tone on the HDP. Although the Constitution stipulates that the president must remain neutral, President Erdoğan actively engaged in the election campaign and targeted the opposition parties, especially the HDP.[112]

On 7 June, 2015, the HDP won an unexpectedly high 13.1% of the total vote, attracting voters from the liberal and left-wing segments, as well as from the Islamist Kurds.[113] Not only did it pass the 10% threshold for the first time as a pro-Kurdish party, it also secured 80 seats

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[111] The Human Rights Association (IHD) estimates ten HDP members were killed in more than 175 attacks on the party before the June election. "HDP'ye Yönelik Bombalı ve Silahlı Saldırıları Kınıyor, Sorumluları Lanetliyoruz ["We condemn the bombings and armed attacks against the HDP and denounce those responsible"], *IHD Statements.* 6 June 2015.

[112] In addition to criticism from opposition parties, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) highlighted concerns over Erdoğan's active role in the campaign. "Two members of Turkey's top election body criticize Erdoğan's role in campaigns". *Hürriyet Daily News.* 15 May 2015.

[113] Since the Gezi Park protests, in the summer of 2013, which became a focal point for broader anti-government sentiment from the liberal and secular quarters of the Turkish population, the AKP government has lost the support of liberal democrats. Although the Gezi Park protests seemingly had little impact on the peace process in Fall 2013, they certainly contributed to voting mobility in favor of the HDP among liberal and left wing segments who are wary of Erdoğan's authoritarian ambitions to change Turkey's parliamentary system into a presidential one. For a broader understanding of the Gezi Park Protests, see Arat (2013). The government's reluctant stance toward helping the Syrian Kurds in the siege of Kobanê by the Islamic State also alienated the conservative elements of the Kurdish population that had been close to the AKP. Consequently, "nearly all ethnic Kurds, including Islamist Kurds who used to support the AKP, voted in record numbers in June for the HDP…" (Yavuz and Özcan 2015: 75).

in the parliament. With 40% of the vote, the AKP secured 258 of the 550 seats, but for the first time since 2002, it lost its majority to form a government.[114]

Following the 7 June, 2015 election, the failure of the peace process loomed. The HDP delegation, which had formerly met with Öcalan, was twice denied authorization to see him, once immediately before, and once after the election. Taking false confidence from the victory of the HDP in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, the PKK announced on 11 July that neither the HDP nor Öcalan could order them to disarm, and that only the KCK had the competent authority for the decision of laying down arms.[115] The government interpreted this as an end to the PKK's ceasefire.

When an explosion hit a Kurdish cultural center on 20 July in Turkey's Kurdish southeastern city of Suruç, 10 kilometers outside of Kobanê, killing 32 pro-Kurdish activists, the Kurdish National Movement accused the acting AKP government of collusion with the Islamic State.[116] On 22 July, 2015, two police officers were found dead in a house located in the district of Ceylanpınar, near the Syrian border; PKK militants claimed the murders.[117] Meanwhile, Turkey, giving in to pressure from the US-led coalition, changed its approach toward the Islamic State. Now, at the same time they were hitting IS targets, Turkish

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[114] "Turkey ruling AKP loses majority in surprise result." *BBC.* 7 June 2015.

[115] *Ibid.*

[116] "Bayık : AKP DAİŞ'tir DAİŞ de AKP ! [Bayık : AKP is the Islamic State as the Islamist State is the AKP !]". *Firat News Agency.* 21 July 2015.

[117] The KCK denied any link between the killings and the PKK on 29 July 2015. The pro-PKK media, however, reported the attack as a retaliation against the Suruç bombings. It attributed the attack to the militia called Apoist team of self-sacrifice (Apocu Fedai Timi, AFT). "PKK: İki polisi öldürdüğünü söyleyen Apocu Fedai Timi bizden bağımsız, yerel güç [PKK: The Apoist Team of self-sacrifice, which claimed to kill two police officers independent of us, it is a local force]". *T24.* 29 July 2015. "HPG: Two police officers punished by Apoist team of self-sacrifice". *Firat News Agency.* 22 July 2015.

warplanes started bombing multiple PKK bases in Northern Iraq, and KCK-affiliated Kurdish bases in Syria. By the end of July 2015, communication channels between Turkey and the PKK were cut off. The two and a half-year-old ceasefire ended and the peace process collapsed.

2. Findings

This part discusses the findings of the case study, namely the third round of the PKK-Turkey peace talks, between December 2012 and July 2015. After providing the context of the peace talks, the bargaining practices, which became a source of information asymmetries and commitment problems, are analyzed.

2.1 Bargaining Theory of War

The third round of peace talks between the PKK and Turkey can be classified as a bargaining scenario as defined by the bargaining theory of war. There were two sides interacting over uncertain terms of a set of agreements. While there were incentives on both sides to secure a cooperative outcome, there were also incentives to profit as much as possible from the peace process. Both sides had rational justifications for the attacks they continued to conduct throughout the peace process, and for bringing any crisis back to the brink of war.

Under the bargaining model, commitment problems and asymmetric information are identified as the main causes of failure (Rauchhaus 2006; Walter 1997; 2006; 2009). When we look into the PKK-Turkey peace process, we identify three bargaining practices that have either caused or contributed to deepening commitment problems and asymmetric information: (1) The choice of the PKK's jailed leader Öcalan as the only interlocutor on the Kurdish side;

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(2) the lack of a legal framework for conducting peace talks; (3) the rejection of third-party intervention.

These bargaining practices are easy to observe throughout the talks and they reflect the imbalance of power between Turkey and the PKK: each practice is imposed by the Turkish government and together, they constitute some of the most important regularly occurring events or actions taken during the third round. Before delving into bargaining practices, the context of the peace talks in which these bargaining practices are carried out, will be discussed.

2.2. Context of Negotiations

The third round of peace talks witnessed two sets of tensions which negatively affected the peace process: (1) Tensions between short-term and long-term goals; (2) Increased readiness of both sides to fight. Though such tensions are not uncommon for intrastate conflicts, they made the peace process fragile and provided a basis for back-up plans in case the peace process failed.

2.2.1. Tensions between short-term and long-term goals

Short-term and long-term goals were at odds with one another throughout the third round of peace talks. Instead of finding a mutually agreeable solution, both sides focused on extracting immediate political benefits from the peace process. The government and the Kurdish National Movement were more than willing to propose and accept arrangements that secured some of their other interests; they were less willing to make sacrifices for the long-term. President Erdoğan sought to change the parliamentary system into a presidential one; in

order to get the support of the BDP/HDP, he was willing to agree to the regional autonomy of

Turkey's Kurdish southeast.[118] As early as February 2013, Öcalan stated,

> We can think of an executive presidential system. We will support the presidency of
> Tayyip Erdoğan. We can go into an alliance with the AKP on this basis. However, the
> presidential system should be like the US one, with a senate as a state assembly.
> Second, there should be an assembly of the people. This you can call the democratic
> assembly, like the House of Representatives in the US (…) In this context, we can turn
> the Peoples' Democratic Congress into a parliament.[119]

However, in an illustration of the theoretical point that, while information sufficient to

reach a settlement may be collected, it becomes "obsolete as new alliances are formed"

(Walter 2009: 253), the early plan of trading a presidential system for decentralization

collapsed when the HDP began to expand its traditional constituency. In the presidential

elections of 2014, the HDP attracted the votes of liberal democrats who previously supported

the AKP but who turned away from the ruling party after the Gezi Park protests in the summer

of 2013. The HDP also gained the votes of conservative Kurds who had also previously voted

for the AKP following the Kobanê riots in October 2013. As a result of this voting mobility in

favor of the HDP, the party's candidate, Demirtaş, won 9.8% of the total vote on 10 August

2014. Thus, and given that the national threshold for parliamentary elections was 10%, the

HDP decided to enter the 7 June 2015 parliamentary elections as a party for the first time. This

changed its strategy, as it was no longer willing to make a secret deal with the AKP in

exchange for the peace process. On 17 March, 2015, referring to Erdoğan's ambition to

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[118] The AKP government announced its intention to introduce a "Turkified version of the U.S. executive system", in November 2012, which would strengthen the executive branch, and ultimately transform the regime. In March 2013, in the beginning of the third round of the peace process, the AKP MPs of the Constitutional Commission insisted on a proposal to switch to a presidential system of government in conjunction with the peace process.
 "AK Party proposes its version of presidential system". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 22 November 2012.

[119] "İmrali görüsmesinin tutanaklarının tam metni [The full text of Imrali meetings]" *T24*. 28 February 2013.

transform the system into a presidential one, the HDP's co-leader stated, "We will not make you the president"; this would later become the party's election campaign slogan.[120] The run-up to the 7 June 2015 parliamentary election created a fierce rivalry between the AKP and the HDP. The HDP won an unexpectedly high 13.1% of the total vote. As a result, the AKP lost its majority to form a government. The AKP fulminated against the HDP's success. The first reaction to the elections result came from Yalçın Akdoğan, the deputy prime minister, who said, "The HDP can only shoot the movie of the Kurdish peace process," and continued, "If they got 13% of the votes, they should call on Qandil and make the PKK lay down arms".[121]

The peace process was thus highly susceptible to become hostage to short-term interests. Short-term calculations led to actions that had unintended consequences and contributed to derailing the process.

2.2.2. Increased readiness of both sides to fight

Despite the 2.5-year ceasefire and the ongoing peace talks, both sides simultaneously prepared for fighting, in case the peace talks failed. This finally resulted in the resumption of violence in July 2015.

Both sides took actions that brought security costs to the other party. The most notable escalations included the construction of military posts by the government, and the creation and armament of urban youth movements by the PKK. From the beginning of the third round in late December, the Turkish government began to construct military outposts and dams in Turkey's Kurdish southeast despite the PKK's unilateral ceasefire. The government

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[120] "We will not make you president HDP co-chair tells Erdogan". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 17 March 2015.

[121] "HDP can only shoot movie of Kurdish peace process, deputy PM says". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 8 June 2015.

accelerated this process dramatically during the PKK's withdrawal.[122] According to the government, this decision was made in response to the ongoing civil war in Syria; however, the PKK pointed out that the new outposts were located on the routes they traditionally used during their annual withdrawal to Northern Iraq in the fall (and return to Turkey in the spring). On 29 June, 2013, a group of pro-PKK protestors tried to block the construction of a military post by setting the workers' tent on fire with Molotov cocktails; during the incident, the gendarmerie killed one protestor and injured nine others. This ignited large-scale protests in cities and towns across Turkey, including Istanbul.[123] The PKK issued a warning that negotiations might fail.[124]

While Turkey was constructing military outposts and dams, in February 2013, pro-Kurdish media announced the formation of the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (*Devrimci Yurtsever Gençlik Hareketi, YDG-H).*[125] A youth militia sympathetic to Öcalan and the PKK ideology, the YDG-H grew rapidly in urban areas in Turkey's Kurdish southeast, with the capacity to turn street clashes with Turkish security forces into urban guerilla warfare. In addition to fireworks and Molotov cocktails, YDG-H militants started to carry automatic rifles (AK-47) and heavy weapons (rocket-propelled grenades, RPGs), especially after

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[122] "Karakol yapımı devam ediyor [The construction of military posts continues]". *AK Parti Haberler*. 13 July 2013

[123] "Lice'de karakol inşaatında olay: 1ölü, 9 yaralı [Incidents in the construction of a military post near Lice: 1 killed, 9 wounded]". *Hürriyet*. 29 June, 2013.

[124] "PKK çekilmeyi durdurdu. [PKK ended withdrawal]". *BBC Türkçe*. 1 August, 2016.

[125] Since its formation in February 2013, the YDG-H has spread across Turkey's Kurdish southeast by establishing public order units, issuing certificates to their members. You can watch one of the ceremonies organized by YDG-H Public Order Unit in Cizre, a district of Turkey's southeastern province of Şırnak. On https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPlWcfojwaM (3 December 2016).

Kurdish riots spread across the country from 6 to 8 October, 2014 over Turkey's reluctance to help Syrian Kurds fighting against the Islamic State in the Syrian border town of Kobanê.[126]

After the Kobanê riots, the YDG-H gradually extended its activities and began to declare autonomous cities and neighborhoods. In response, Turkey tightened its public security policies. On 30 October, 2015, under President Erdoğan's chairmanship, the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurumu*, MGK) took an important decision to give public safety and security priority over the peace process.[127] This decision marked the return to a security-oriented approach to the Kurdish question, which had been held in abeyance since the beginning of the paradigm shift that occurred in 2005, when then-Prime Minister Erdoğan acknowledged the existence of Turkey's Kurdish question.[128] Most importantly, the National Security Council's intervention indicated that the military had increasingly consolidated its position in Turkish politics.[129] In early 2015, the government passed a public security bill

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[126] You can watch an online video shot by *Vice News* of the Kurdish riots in Istanbul (30 October 2014) on https://news.vice.com/video/istanbuls-kurdish-riots?utm_source=vicenewsyoutube&utm_medium=video&utm_campaign=relatedvideo. (6 November 2016). The 6-8 October anti-government protests "6-7 Ekim'in ac bilançosu 50 Ölü [the heavy loss of 6-7 October : 50 deaths]" *Hürriyet* 6 November, 2014.

[127] The peace process was endorsed by the MGK for the first time during its 25 June, 2013 meeting. In its 30 October, 2015 statement, the MGK, while recognizing the positive environment hitherto created by the peace process, casts a wary eye on its progress: "The Turkish state will strive to fight against illegal entities who operate under a legal appearance … [and] determination will be displayed to prevent provocative actions geared towards harming the positive atmosphere created by the solution process, initiated to fight against terrorism in a multidimensional approach, and all measures to ensure national security and public safety will be taken." "30 Ekim 2014 tarihli Toplantı [the meeting on 30 October 2014]" MGK. www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/30-ekim-2014-tarihli-toplanti. 30 October 2014.

[128] "Disarming the PKK: The critical stage in the Kurdish Issue". *Daily Sabah.* 5 May 2015.

[129] The National Security Council was considered to be the formal institutional channel that allowed the Turkish military to intervene in politics. MGK was a very influential body until the early 2000s, when civil-military

expanding police powers to detain demonstrators without a court warrant and to allow the use of deadly force during violent protests.[130] This sparked the concern of opposition parties, particularly that of the HDP. The bill was perceived as contradictory to the road map[131] and a sign of the government's lack of sincerity in the peace process.[132]

In this context, three bargaining practices, identified above as (1) the use of the PKK's jailed leader Öcalan, as the sole interlocutor on the Kurdish side; (2) the lack of a legal framework for conducting peace talks; (3) rejection of third-party intervention, marked the third round of the peace process.

2.3. Bargaining Practices

2.3.1. Öcalan as the only interlocutor

During the third round of talks, Öcalan played a larger role than either the PKK's armed wing or its European wing. During the first and second round of peace talks, known as the Oslo Process, state officials had worked with a PKK delegation including members of the party's European and military wings (Ünal 2016). In the third round, they were left out of direct talks. Instead, the government allowed members of parliament from the pro-Kurdish BDP/HDP to act as mere intermediaries between the government and Öcalan, and between the

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relations underwent a dramatic change due to Turkey's EU process and the AKP's democratization efforts. However, The MGK's 30 October statement was perceived as a return to a security-oriented approach to the Kurdish question. For further information see Kaynar (2016).

[130] "Explained: Turkey's controversial security bill". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 21 February 2015.

[131] The Minister of Justice, Sadullah Ergin, laid out a road map for peace as follows: (1) ceasefire and withdrawal of the PKK from Turkish soil, (2) democratization, and (3) disarmament of the PKK and normalization. "Bakan Ergin'den Öcalan açiklamasi [Statement about Öcalan from Minister Ergin]". *Sabah*. 29 March 2013.

[132] "Demirtas: İç güvenlik paketi geri çekilmezse direnişimizi artırarak sürdüreceğiz [Demirtas: If the domestic security bill is not withdrawn, we will increasingly pursue our resistance]." *Yurt Gazetesi*. 1 March 2015.

KCK and Öcalan.[133] Thus, Turkey conducted peace talks with Öcalan sitting in his prison cell on İmralı Island, without consulting either the pro-Kurdish party BDP/HDP or the PKK.

While the decision to make Öcalan into the chief negotiator was almost universally approved by pro-Kurdish groups, the peace process was conducted in a way that inhibited the flow of information on the Kurdish side. For instance, the government had the final say on the makeup of the Kurdish committee that visited Öcalan and it dictated the schedule of this committee's meetings with the imprisoned leader.[134] Öcalan was allowed to send letters to the KCK leadership, but most of their letters back were not delivered.[135] The government also used access to Öcalan as leverage during the talks. For instance, when the two parties disagreed in 2015 over the establishment of a monitoring committee that would supervise and coordinate the implementation of the future peace agreement,[136] after April 2015, the government withdrew the HDP delegation's authorization to visit Öcalan to signal its disapproval.

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[133] HDP Delegation visited the KCK leadership in Qandil about five times throughout the process to convey Öcalan's message. "Kronoloji: 2013 Nevruz'undan bugüne [Chronology: From 2013 Newroz till the present]". *Al Jazeera Türk*. 19 March 2014. When the HDP Delegation weren't given the authorization to meet with Öcalan after April 2015, they visited the KCK in Qandil in May 2015 before the June 2015 elections. "HDP cannot contribute to democracy under PKK tutelage". *Daily Sabah.* 19 May 2015.

[134] "…we learnt, at this meeting, that Qandil [the KCK]'s letters were not delivered to Mr Öcalan. The letter containing his three suggestions, that he previously sent to the state and the government has not been responded to yet. As you know, these three suggestions included legal arrangements for his condition, enabling and ensuring conditions for democratic politics, and the active involvement of a monitoring committee in the process."
"KCK'nin mektuplari Öcalan'a verilmedi [The letters of the KCK were not delivered to Öcalan]" *Firat News Agency.* 29 November 2013

[135] *Ibid.*

[136] See Chapter III, p. 12.

In addition, although the Kurdish delegation's visits were widely covered by the media, the information about the visits could only be made public upon approval by the Turkish government.[137] Most of the substance remained secret. Information became a scarce commodity, vulnerable to manipulation. For example, following the public reading of Öcalan's Newroz letter, in May 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan referred to the letter to call for the immediate withdrawal of PKK militants outside of Turkey, leaving their weapons behind. For its part, the PKK, though it welcomed Öcalan's call, refused to comply with Erdoğan's request. This resulted in tension. In fact, while Öcalan's letter had called for the PKK to withdraw, it did not mention the modality of the withdrawal process and had remained silent on the issue of the weapons. In May 2013, after the BDP/HDP delegation's April visit to Öcalan, the details of which were not disclosed to the public, the PKK started to withdraw with their weapons.[138]

The decision to select Öcalan as the only interlocutor and exclude other Kurdish representatives created uncertainty by inhibiting the flow of information on the Kurdish side, making them vulnerable to forces opposed to peace. In accordance with rationalist explanations, a fully rational agent may end up in war because of their uncertainty about the rationality of adversaries, the PKK increasingly became wary of the peace process due to the

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[137] "Cemil Bayık: ABD arabulucu olsun; Müzakereye oturulmazsa ya iç savaş gelişir ya da darbe [Cemil Bayık : USA should mediate; Unless negotiations begin, a civil war or a coup d'État may develop]" *T24*. 23 December 2014.

[138] The PKK announced that the withdrawal of its armed forces from Turkish territory would start on 8 May 2013. Early PKK estimates expected the withdrawal of 2,000 rebels to take some five months. Early accounts of the withdrawal process reported that small groups of PKK rebels were moving toward the Iraqi border, although not laying down their arms as required by the Turkish government. "PKK begins to withdraw from Turkey". *Guardian*. 8 May 2013.

asymmetric information. Consequently, the expectation captured by Hypothesis 2 in our analytical framework and suggesting that the inability of warring parties to credibly commit to the bargain increases the likelihood of negotiation failures, was clearly met.

2.3.2. Lack of legal framework

The second bargaining practice that marked the peace process was the absence of a legal framework. A legal framework for peace talks would have provided a context in which (1) the Turkish government would pass a series of reforms about the root causes of the PKK-Turkey conflict, (2) the peace talks would be conducted in a systematic and legalized fashion, (3) the withdrawal of the PKK to outside Turkey would be accomplished without falling into the trap of commitment problems.

The absence of a legal framework for peace talks became the bane of both sides. Without a legal framework, the talks were vulnerable to forces opposing to peace, something that became clear in March 2012 when a faction of the Turkish state that opposed the peace process launched an investigation into state officials involved in the talks.[139] Another illustration of the vulnerability of the talks was provided by the example of the opposition party MHP, which declared that any attempt at settlement was a betrayal of Turkey and filed complaints against the government officials throughout the third round. For instance, on 1

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[139] According to some media reports, the Gülen movement, the religius network inspired by the teaching of the self-imposed exile Muslim cleric Fettullah Gülen, was behind this attempt to jeopardize the peace process. However, the Turkish government denied these claims. "Cemaat devlete sizmis [The movement – referring to Gülen movement- infiltrated the State; it's enough to make a cat laugh]". *NTV* 20 February 2012.

March, 2015, the MHP reacted to the Dolmabahçe Consensus by accusing Erdoğan and the AKP of "treason" and "losing their national bond" with the Turkish people.[140]

Due to the plots, attacks, and allegations against the government officials who were involved in the peace process, the government had begun to strengthen the legal status of state officials meeting with Öcalan as early as in 2013. They gave formal recognition to the peace process by establishing a commission responsible for it in the Turkish Parliament.[141] In April 2014, the government also passed a bill granting Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (*Milli Istihbarat Teşkilatı,* MIT) the authority to meet and negotiate with terrorist organizations. Soon after, on 10 July, 2014, the government passed another bill to "end terror and strengthen social integration". The law allowed state representatives other than MIT officials to contact terrorists, in order to ensure disarmament and to take other steps for greater accountability and transparency.[142]

While these efforts provided a legal framework to protect Turkish state officials, no measures were taken to either allow the creation of a united Kurdish negotiating team, nor was any action taken to define common end goals in a legal framework that would entail a comprehensive agenda, a clear timeframe, mutually agreed ground rules and a monitoring

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[140] "MHP accuses gov't, Erdogan of treason over Kurdish peace process" *Hurriyet Daily News.* 1 March 2015.

[141] When the opposition parties MHP and CHP refused to take part in the commission, the commission members were made up of members of parliament (MP) from the AKP, with an exception of one MP from the pro-Kurdish BDP. The official name of the commission is the Parliamentary Investigation Commission for the Assessment of the Solution Process and the Search for Social Peace. For further information on the commission, see their report published in November 2013 (in Turkish) on http://tbmm.gov.tr/komisyon/cozum_sureci/docs/cozum_kom_raporu.pdf (4 September 2016).

[142] "Turkish gov't submits bill to boost Kurdish peace bid, provide legal framework for PKK talks". *Hürriyet Daily News*. 26 June 2014.

committee for the withdrawal of the PKK's armed elements to outside Turkey. This not only allowed the government to minimize the number of interlocutors in the process, but also made the process less a long-term project than a series of ad hoc initiatives. For instance, due to the lack of a monitoring mechanism, the PKK was wary of withdrawing its armed elements outside of Turkey. Before the PKK's withdrawal, which started in May 2013, the government had taken two confidence-building steps[143] but none of them were fully able to put an end the commitment problem the PKK faced during its withdrawal. Eventually, the PKK would suspend the withdrawal in September 2013, to protest the government's inaction on the peace process. Following this suspension, and in an effort to keep the process on track, the AKP government passed a democracy package that involved a series of reforms in regard to Kurdish grievances.[144] Nevertheless, neither the PKK nor the BDP/HDP leaders were satisfied. The BDP co-leader, Demirtaş, was particularly vocal in expressing the disappointment felt by many Kurds with the content of the reforms, particularly because this was the result of a unilateral move by the government, without consultation with the BDP/HDP lawmakers in parliament.[145] In addition, the reforms did not address the modality of the PKK's withdrawal. Rather than build confidence, the reforms failed to convince the PKK to resume withdrawal.

Because there was no legal framework for the two sides to jointly discuss the peace process in a way that would reduce the uncertainty, each began to announce their own

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[143] See chapter III, p. 68

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] "Demirtaş: Paket AKP'nin paketine dönüstü [Demirtaş: Package was transformed into the AKP's package]". *Firat News Agency*. 19 September 2013.

interpretation of the road map for peace. This was clear when the Minister of Justice, Sadullah Ergin, laid out a road map as follows: (1) ceasefire and withdrawal of the PKK from Turkish soil, (2) democratization, and (3) disarmament of the PKK and normalization.[146] Soon after the government's announcement of the roadmap, the PKK's military leader, Murat Karayılan, criticized it and provided the PKK's version.[147]

Furthermore, the sides disagreed about the timing of mutual steps in carrying out this road map. They disagreed about whether each stage should be completed before beginning the next one, or whether confidence in one another's intentions was sufficient to move the process along. Turkey's security bureaucracy and Prime Minister Erdoğan insisted that the PKK should withdraw its armed elements, leaving weapons behind. The PKK, however, expected to withdraw its armed units with their weapons, while the government took steps towards democratization.[148] Hence, when Öcalan called on the PKK to withdraw its armed elements from within Turkish borders, some PKK leaders criticized him for surrendering territory.[149]

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[146] "Bakan Ergin'den Öcalan açiklamasi [Statement about Öcalan from Minister Ergin]". *Sabah.* 29 March 2013.

[147] (1) Gradual withdrawal of the PKK from Turkish soil to the PKK's Qandil Headquarters; (2) Democratic reforms, including the establishment of a joint parliamentary commission to monitor the peace process, and the amendment of the Constitution to address Kurdish grievances; (3) the PKK's disarmament, followed by the release of Öcalan and other jailed PKK members, and the PKK's eventual integration into Turkey's political scene "Murat Karayılan announces PKK withdrawal from Turkey". *BBC.* 25 April 2013.

[148] "Bila: Türkiye'deki 1500 PKK'lıdan 800'ü sınır dışına çekilmeli [Bila: Out of 1500 PKK militants, 800 should withdraw to outside Turkey]". *T24.* 2 April 2013.

[149] Given its experience in 1999, when hundreds of PKK militants were killed during the withdrawal following Öcalan's capture, the PKK approached the process cautiously. Referring to the PKK's withdrawal process: "Bahoz Erdal: Bugün silahı bir kenara koyuyoruz, ama bu silahı bırakmak demek değil [Bahoz Erdal: we lay down the arms today but it doesn't mean disarming ourselves]". *T24.* 14 May 2014.

The absence of a united negotiating team on the Kurdish side thus hindered the efficient implementation of the decisions taken by Öcalan and state officials.

Consequently, the lack of a legal framework became a source of asymmetric information between both sides and produced commitment problems, in particular during the PKK's withdrawal process. Because there were no systematic and legal provisions in conducting the peace talks, the future of the peace process became uncertain and open to manipulations of forces opposing to peace from both sides. Both sides often exchanged harsh rhetoric, which further deepened mistrust between them. Every step was taken only after a threat from either side or a potential risk damaging the peace process had been experienced. The lack of a legal framework rendered all real progress impossible. Hypothesis 2, which asserts the inability of warring parties to credibly commit the bargain they may reach increases the likelihood of negotiation failures, thus offers a plausible account of failure.

2.3.3. Rejection of Third-Party Intervention

The purpose of a third-party intervention in a peace process is to reduce uncertainty (by reducing asymmetric information), ensuring compliance and effective progress toward the goal. A third party may also raise the cost of returning to the battlefield, and increase the benefits of peace (Fortna 2008). Turkey's rejection of third-party intervention will be analyzed in two steps. I will first discuss the necessity of a third-party intervention and I will then evaluate the possibility of ensuring third-party intervention.

2.3.3.1. Necessity of third-party intervention

In contrast to the previous rounds, the third round of the peace process was held between the government and Öcalan alone. The government consistently rejected third party

involvement under the pretext that it had not yielded positive results in previous rounds. It is useful to recall that previous rounds were held in secret, and that, according to information leaked on the Internet, the talks were facilitated by Norway and coordinated by the United Kingdom (Philips 2015).

At the outset of the third round, in late December 2012, the government assured the public that the peace process wouldn't be hidden from them, yet the contents of the talks were revealed to a very limited degree. The Kurdish side voiced concerns, saying they couldn't secure credible information because of the way the peace talks were being conducted. [150] The PKK's armed wing, Öcalan, and the BDP/HDP all repeatedly expressed the need for a monitoring committee, but the government held fast to its position against third-party involvement.[151] On 15 November, 2014, Prime Minister Davutoğlu stated that the peace process was an internal matter of Turkey, and should be carried out among its citizens, and cited third-party involvement as a cause of the failure of previous rounds.[152]

Although there was no official monitoring mechanism during the early phases of the withdrawal of PKK militants from Turkey, it was unofficially monitored by a delegation of Kurdish journalists and BDP/HDP politicians.[153] However, the lack of reliable information fed suspicions on both sides, and mutual accusations were recorded throughout the summer of

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[150] "Cemil Bayık: ABD arabulucu olsun; Müzakereye oturulmazsa ya iç savaş gelişir ya da darbe [Cemil Bayık : USA should mediate; Unless negotiations begin, a civil war or a coup d'État may develop]" *T24*. 23 December 2014.

[151] "Davutoğlu: Çözüm sürecinde yabancı göz olmaz. [Davutoğlu: There is no place for a third party in the solution process]." *Al Jazeera Turk.* 19 November 2014.

[152] *Ibid.*

[153] "PKK begins to withdraw from Turkey" *The Guardian*. 8 May 2013.

2013. The withdrawal process illustrates the importance of third-party involvement for independent verification. In the absence of such verification, perceptions remain subjective and open to manipulation.

The imbalance of power between Turkey and the PKK coupled with mutual mistrust resulted in a commitment problem. Turkey did not want to make any compromises before the PKK's withdrawal and disarmament, and the PKK was unwilling to withdraw or disarm without a mechanism in place to guarantee the enforcement of a peace deal. Thus, both parties anticipated the failure of negotiations, and prepared to fight.

Asymmetric information and commitment problems may have been overcome if there had been a third party to bridge the power gap between parties and reduce uncertainty by providing a monitoring committee (Walter 1997; Fortna 2008). The need for a third-party mechanism, especially in regards to the withdrawal process of PKK militants from Turkey, and the way the peace talks were conducted, is retrospectively obvious. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, which asserts that negotiations are more likely to fail when there is no third party to redress the relative balance of power and reduce uncertainty between parties in conflict, offers a plausible account of failure.[154]

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[154] While third-party intervention can sometimes alleviate some of these problems, it is not in and by itself a hard guarantee of success. As emphasized by Walter (1997), it requires credible third-party involvement with sufficient resources, leverage and credible sanctions. Some studies even cast doubt on the efficiency of third-party guarantees (mediation or by force) to overcome commitment problems, especially if the NSAGs are fragmented (Zahar 2008). In addition, a third-party intervention may produce harmful, unintended consequences for local ownership of peace processes by warring parties, leading to the breakdown of peace and stability at a later stage (Zahar 2010).

2.3.3.2. Possibility of third-party intervention

While the Turkish government firmly rejected the idea of third-party involvement,[155] the PKK's repeated calls for third-party intervention and the recent developments in the region, namely the Syrian civil war and the rise of Islamic State, became the major challenge in this respect. Indeed, regional developments created a policy gap between Turkey and its major allies in the west regarding the Kurdish question. Although the European Union, the UN, and NATO supported the peace process, they had little impact on this matter. Therefore, they will not be analyzed here. Instead, the analysis will focus on Turkey's main allies in the west with assertive foreign policy in the Middle East, namely the United Kingdom and the United States.

From the beginning of the third round, the Kurdish side wanted a third-party witness to the peace talks that could investigate responsibility on each side in case of a breach. After the failure of the withdrawal process, in September 2013, the PKK stepped up its demands.[156] Cemil Bayık, a PKK leader, called insistently for a third party to oversee any further steps in the peace process.[157] In November 2014, in the aftermath of the Kurdish riots over Kobanê, he said, "We have now reached the point where there has to be movement. That is why we are suggesting that a third power observe this process. This could be the United States. It could

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[155] Turkish government fiercely rules out third-party involvement in peace process". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 17 November 2014.

[156] The PKK warned that the possibility that negotiations would fail should not be overlooked, "PKK çekilmeyi durdurdu [PKK ended withdrawal]". *BBC Türkçe.* 9 September 2013.

[157] "Kurdish rebels threaten new fight in Turkey as Syria clashes intensify" *Reuters*. 22 October 2013.

also be an international delegation." He repeated, "We would also accept Americans. In our view, it is moving in this direction".[158]

In contrast to the Oslo process, namely the first and second round of peace talks, the United Kingdom was not involved in the peace talks. At the same time, however, in the beginning of the third round, both sides jointly visited Britain and Northern Ireland to learn about the Good Friday Accords that brought a peaceful settlement to the Northern Ireland conflict.[159] Furthermore, the UK repeatedly endorsed the third round. When Öcalan urged the PKK to convene an extraordinary congress to lay down arms, the UK praised the peace efforts by saying that it was ready to help make it work.[160]

While growing suspicious about some developments - Turkey's reluctance to counter IS and hostility against the PYD-run Kurdish enclaves in Syria – during the third round of peace talks, the UK considered Turkey as an increasingly important strategic ally. Besides being a NATO member, the UK's foreign policy interests overlap significantly with the Turkish government's on issues relating to the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG). Both the UK and Turkey have very close ties with the KRG. The British government sees the oil-rich KRG as vital to the UK's long-term energy security.[161] Turkey, for its part, is a major actor in the security of the KRG's pipeline.[162] British-Turkish joint venture Genel

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[158] "Kurdish rebel leader says US could mediate in Turkey talks". *Reuters*. 3 November 2014.

[159] "Turks and Kurds look to Good Friday accords as template for peace". *The Guardian*. 1 March 2013.

[160] "Ingiltere'den çözüm sürecine destek [The UK supports the solution process]". *TRT Haber*. 2 March 2015.

[161] UK government policy on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. 2015. p. 24.

[162] "KRG statement on first oil sales through pipeline export". *Kurdistan Regional Government Press Release*. 23 May 2014.

Energy is the largest holder of oil reserves and resources in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.[163] Furthermore, the UK gives clear signals that a future KRG independence would be respected and recognized.[164]

In this instance, had the UK been asked to intervene, its bilateral relations with Turkey would probably have taken precedence over the Turkey-PKK peace process, as there was far too much at stake had the UK decided to remove the PKK - with which the KRG has also been on the outs - from its list of designated terrorist groups or directly engaged with the KCK-affiliate PYD in Syria. The United Kingdom was largely reluctant to put into action such a foreign policy that would confront Turkey.[165]

The US had long downplayed the significance of the Kurdish question in its bilateral relations with Turkey, yet a policy gap emerged between the two states in relation to the greater Kurdish question in the Middle East. Their first disagreement was over Turkey's relations with the KRG, which they maintained at the expense of their relationship with the central government in Iraq. They also disagreed on the potential use of KCK-affiliated PYD fighters in the Syrian civil war.

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[163] "Kurdistan Operational Update". *Genel Energy PLC Press Release.* 12 October 2016.

[164] UK government policy on the Kurdish Region of Iraq, *op. cit.,* p. 61.

[165] "We recognize that armed groups associated with the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD) have been fighting ISIL for some time. (…) We are also concerned that the PYD maintains some links with the PKK, which is a proscribed organisation in the UK. (…) The UK is not providing any assistance to the PYD." Government Response to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Report: UK Government policy on the Kurdish Region of Iraq. 2015, p. 9-10.

Despite the inconsistencies in its policy toward the KRG,[166] Turkey has close working relations with the KRG. Turkey remained silent when the KRG took control of disputed territories, including the city of Kirkuk.[167] More significantly, the Turkish government did not oppose a potential Iraqi Kurdish declaration of independence. The AKP spokesperson, Hüseyin, said, "The Kurds of Iraq can decide for themselves the name and type of the entity they live in".[168] In the past, any attempt by Kurds to claim independence would have constituted a redline for Turkey.

In addition, Turkey clearly prefers the KRG to the overall KCK structures that operate in Turkey and Syria. For instance, in October 2014, in the midst of clashes between the PYD and the IS in the northern Syrian city of Kobanê, the Turkish government facilitated the transit of Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga groups through Turkey. Yet the same Turkish government did not allow Turkey's Kurdish fighters to join the PYD in Kobanê, nor did it deliver weapons to them.[169]

The second disagreement between Turkey and the US emerged after the PYD (a KCK affiliate) gained prestige fighting against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria. This disagreement became evident on 20 October, 2014, as US military aircrafts began to provide military

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[166] For instance, when IS militants advanced toward the KRG's capital,Arbil, Turkey did little to help. "Senior Kurdistan Official: IS was at Erbil's Gates; Turkey did not help". *Rudaw*. 16 September 2014.

[167] The status of Kirkuk has long been a hotly-disputed issue between the KRG and Turkey, due to the significant number of ethnic Turks residing there.

[168] "Turkey's AKP Spokesman: Iraq's Kurds Have Right to Decide Their Future". *Rudaw*. 13 June, 2014.

[169] Turkey's delayed reaction to the besieged city of Kobanê triggered Kurdish riots across the country. "Peşmerge'nin Kobani'ye geçişine destek için yardım ediyoruz [We are assisting peshmergas' transit into Kobani]". Sabah, 21 October, 2014.

support and humanitarian aid to PYD fighters battling IS.[170] Since the advent of IS in Iraq and

Syria, and Turkey's reluctance to take it on, the US government has raised questions about

Turkey's goals and foreign policy.[171] While Turkish-American relations soured, the PYD and

the HDP began to receive serious attention from the US (Bezci 2015). The success of KCK

elements fighting against the IS, namely the PYD in Syria and the PKK in Iraq, paved the way

for an alliance between them and American forces on the ground. Furthermore, as of 2014, the

idea of removing the PKK from the list of terrorist organizations began to have widespread

media coverage, and to be discussed seriously by the most influential think tanks in the US.

For instance, Hoffmand and Werz (2014) stated, "It might be time to acknowledge that the

PKK, once a malicious terrorist organization guilty of targeting civilians (…) has morphed

into a militant political group…"

Shifting regional alliance patterns have had an impact on the Turkey-PKK peace

process. Turkey makes no distinction between the PYD, the PKK, and IS.[172] On the day before

the US military made airdrops in Kobanê, on 19 October, 2014, President Erdoğan stated that

"it would be wrong for the United States— with whom we are friends and allies in NATO —

(…) to expect us to agree to support terrorists."[173] The government feared that US military

equipment delivered to the PYD might end up in the hands of PKK militants in Turkey.

Turkey feared, as well, that the emergence of a new Kurdish autonomous region near its

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[170] "Kobane: US drops arms and aid to Kurds battling IS". *BBC* 20 October 2014.

[171] "Turkey refuses to host US anti-ISIS forces". *Al Arabiya*. 11 September 2014.

[172] "IŞİD ne ise PKK da odur" ["PKK is what IS is"], *Al Jazeera Turk*, 4 October 2014.

[173] "President Erdogan says PYD no different than PKK for Turkey". *Hurriyet Daily News*. 19 October 2014.

border would "translate into rising recruitment potential and support for separatism among Kurds in Turkey" (International Crisis Group 2015).

For its part, the Kurdish National Movement viewed Turkey's policy toward Rojava (the PYD-run enclaves in northern Syria) as part of the peace process. During the battle for Kobanê, Öcalan said, "the fall of Kobanê in Syrian Kurdistan would kill the peace process." The PYD's victory in Kobanê in early 2015, with the support of the US military, and its other advances in Syria, had a tremendous impact on the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) in Turkey. With the participation of HDP lawmakers, thousands of Kurds took to the streets across Turkey to celebrate the victory, waving the flags of the various KCK elements, including the PKK.[174] The KNM sought to internationalize the peace process, using its new reputation for fighting against the IS, and repeatedly called for third party involvement in the peace process, particularly from the US.

However, these developments did not cause a breaking point in Turkish-American relations. Turkey is an important strategic ally of the US. As a NATO member since 1952, Turkey played a crucial role for the US during the Cold War. The US has a military base in Incirlik, near the Syrian-Turkish border, and has important security agreements with Turkey, particularly in relation to counter-terrorism.[175] Thus, the US' greater policy interests prevented it from removing the PKK from its list of terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, the US

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[174] "Kurds in Syria and Turkey celebrate Kurdish YPG fighters Kobani victory over ISIS" *International Business Times*. 27 January, 2015.

[175] "Relations between Turkey and the United States of America". *Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 2016.

designates neither the PYD nor the KCK[176] as terrorist groups, and it sees no obstacle to working with them in Syria (Bezci 2015).

In the end, neither the UK nor the US intervened in the Turkey-PKK peace talks against Turkey's will. The expectations captured by Hypothesis 4, which asserts that when third parties cannot or do not want to redress the balance of power, negotiations are more likely to fail, are clearly met.

In deference to its strategic alliance with Turkey, the US refrained from involving itself directly as a third party in the peace process; however, its new foreign policy on the Kurds, advancing its interests in Syria and Iraq, resulted in a shift in the balance of power in favor of the PKK. Turkey made a tremendous effort to keep the process "national, local and authentic," to use the Prime Minister Davutoğlu's terms,[177] while the KNM endeavored to internationalize the peace process against Turkey's will.

Consequently, the PKK's two-and-half-year ceasefire with Turkey and the KCK's US-backed military success against the IS both in Syria and Iraq brought increasing international reputation to the PKK. While the PKK was confident their international position was improving, Turkey grew concerned that the PKK would be able to consolidate its power in the region as the Syrian crisis dragged on. This forced Turkey to revise its stance on the IS; under international pressure, Turkey eventually joined the US-led coalition against the IS on 25 July, 2015. Seeing its role in the fight as opportunity and insurance against the KCK ambitions in

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[176] The division between the KCK and the PKK has never become clear. According to the KCK Convention, the PKK is a member of the KCK, like the PYD. It should be remembered that despite regional variations, their leadership overlaps.

[177] "Turkish PM says Kobane offers two baths: Peace or pain". *Huriyet Daily News*. 19 October 2014.

northern Syria and Iraq, Turkey began shelling IS targets at the same time as KCK-affiliate PYD and PKK targets in Syria and Iraq.[178] Therefore, Hypothesis 3, which asserts that the asymmetric information and/or uncertainty warring parties have about each other's relative power increases the likelihood of negotiation failure, offers an explanation for negotiation failures.

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[178] "Turkey expands bombing raids to PKK targets in Iraq." *Al Jazeera*. 25 July 2015; "Syrian Kurds accuse Turkey of attacking their forces." *BBC*. 27 July 2015.

Conclusion

This research essay sought to explain bargaining failures in intrastate conflicts by drawing on the empirical analysis of the Turkey-PKK peace process. It asked specifically why the third round of the Turkey-PKK peace talks (from December of 2012 to July 2015) collapsed. To respond to this research question, the first chapter contained an overview of the rationalist approach to war, or, simply, bargaining theory of war and that of the literature on third-party interventions as one possible explanation of the failure of the PKK-Turkey peace process. Chapter II provided an overview of Turkey's Kurdish question and the historical evolution of the Kurdish National Movement by focusing on the PKK. Furthermore, the chapter provided a chronological overview of the armed struggle between the PKK and Turkey, including the first two rounds of the failed peace process. Chapter III provided an analytic summary of the case study, namely the third round of the PKK-Turkey peace negotiations, between December 2012 and July 2015, and more importantly, assessed the various hypotheses by using the data compiled for the case study.

The bargaining theory directs attention to the inherently strategic nature of wars. The main idea of bargaining theory is that, because war is costly, there must be a negotiated settlement that will leave both sides better off than if they actually fight. In this regard, war is a bargaining failure and it can be avoided in the absence of bargaining imperfections. Although both sides are better off bargaining rather than fighting, the theory postulates that negotiations are more likely to fail under two conditions: asymmetric information and commitment problems. First, bargaining failure is more likely when warring parties have private information about their costs of fighting and incentives to misrepresent this

information. It is assumed that each party knows its own costs of fighting but may not be sure about its opponent's costs. This creates an uncertainty. Information problems are more severe in intrastate conflicts because it tends to be more difficult to obtain information about the military capabilities of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Second, bargaining failure is more likely when bargaining is not credible. Commitment problems are more severe in intrastate conflicts due to the large power asymmetries between states and NSAGs (Walter 2009). The existing literature on third-party interventions also offers an account of bargaining failures. A third-party intervention may reduce uncertainty by monitoring compliance, redress the relative balance of power, and maintain it during the peace talks in order to make peace a desired outcome for both sides (Fortna 2008). However, a third party's decision to intervene in a peace process is an important foreign policy choice. It largely depends on a third country's ability and willingness to intervene (Starr 2005). Thus some conflicts do not easily lend themselves to third-party intervention (Walter 2009).

This theoretical ground provided me with the conceptual apparatus to make sense of the way both parties conducted the third round of talks. They were bound by strategic actions and unintended consequences. The government imposed a repertoire of bargaining practices that expressed the large power asymmetries between Turkey and the PKK. They were obviously with a view to (1) minimizing the private information the Kurdish side has, and (2) exerting the government's full control over the peace process. These practices were the following: (1) the selection of Öcalan as the sole interlocutor on the Kurdish side, (2) the lack of a legal framework for conducting peace talks, and (3) the rejection of third-party intervention. First, the decision to select Öcalan as the only interlocutor and exclude other Kurdish representatives created uncertainty by inhibiting the flow of information on the

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Kurdish side. The government limited and monitored the interactions between the HDP delegation and Öcalan and used this as leverage for negotiations. Second, in the absence of a legal framework; the peace talks could not conduct in a systematic and legalized manner. There was neither a comprehensive agenda nor a clear timeframe nor mutually agreed ground rules. That raised uncertainty about the intentions of the opponent and the credibility of the peace process. There was also no monitoring committee while the PKK was withdrawing its armed elements to outside Turkey; thereby, the withdrawal process fell into the trap of commitment problems. Third, in the absence of a third party that would have increased the costs of returning to the battlefield and the benefits of peace, the peace process was susceptible to shifts in relative power that affected the choices of both sides. The shift of alliances due to regional developments, namely the Syrian civil war and the rise of Islamic State, produced a dramatic unintended change in the balance of power in favor of the PKK. The US military assistance to the KCK-affiliated groups in Syria and Iraq and the PKK's growing international prestige increased the PKK's capabilities. Lacking the complete information of the PKK's capabilities in this new context, the peace process was subject to asymmetric information problems. While the PKK repeatedly called on a third party, in particular the US, to intervene in the peace process, Turkey rejected such intervention. The US, like the other possible candidate, the UK, decided to protect their strategic and security priorities with Turkey and decided not to heed the calls of the PKK to intervene in the Turkey-PKK peace process. Finally, rather than mitigating asymmetric information and commitment problems, these bargaining practices intensified them, thereby increasing the likelihood of a return to war.

This research essay suggests four sets of implications. First, both sides in a peace process can willingly make choices that fail to achieve the ends to which they aspired. Second,

these choices result from ill-designed measures in bargaining practices and/or the lack of third party that would redress the relative balance of power and maintain it during the peace talks in order to make peace a desired outcome for both sides. This ultimately intensifies the problems of credible commitment. Third, disruptive exogenous shifts in relative capabilities, especially in favor of the NSAG, may produce asymmetric information problems. Fourth, some conflicts do not lend themselves to third-party intervention, as it may be too difficult or too costly for third parties to redress the relative balance of power.

Research Limitations

Two possible limitations are identified: the limited scope of the case, and the consequences for the analysis from the fact that the PKK leader, Öcalan, was in solitary confinement. These limitations may impact the ability of the research to effectively answer hypotheses as well as the quality of my findings. First, the data for the case study was gathered only on the third round of peace talks and how they failed, and does not provide a more robust assessment of the Turkey-PKK peace process over all. Although I used qualitative analysis and tried to be as systematic as I could, my method cannot be considered a thorough account of the Turkey-PKK peace process, because I did not study the entire process but only a small part of it and because, the secrecy surrounding the talks, prevented me from conduction thorough process-tracing analysis. Thus, the research falls short of expectations as a theory-grounded case study, due to the lack of comparable or exhaustive data. The results, therefore, may be hard to generalize.

The second limitation relates to the content of the peace process. Öcalan acted as a chief negotiator throughout. Yet, he has been in jail in Turkey since his capture in 1999. Although he never ceased to be an important figure in the Turkey-PKK conflict, the power of

his leadership and his ability to negotiate have been challenged. It is atypical for peace talks to have one of their main protagonists in jail; it is also relatively atypical for peace talks not to involve directly one of the main armed actors, in this case the PKK's armed factions. Thus, the process lacked transparency and inclusiveness. This created a serious imbalance of power, giving the Turkish government more control over the peace process. The negotiating parties mistrusted each other and there was even mistrust within each of them. This, in turn, had serious repercussions on my ability to gather reliable information and data for the analysis. I thus opted to gather information as close as possible to the events without using commentary or opinions. To minimize the risk of inaccurate or unreliable information, I crosschecked the data, yet I must acknowledge the possibility of bias in my sources.

Is a fourth round of peace talks possible?

Following the collapse of the third round of negotiations, in July 2015, armed struggle between Turkish security forces and PKK units escalated in southeastern urban centers where Turkey declared 62 urban curfews, ranging from several hours to several weeks. Between July and December 2015, 194 security officials, over 221 PKK militants, and as many as 151 civilians have lost their lives. Thousands of residents of Turkey's Kurdish southeast have been displaced (International Crisis Group 2015). Despite its losses in the November 1 elections, the HDP has maintained a guaranteed position in the Turkish parliament, but the spillover of the Syrian civil war with the advent of the IS against the Kurdish PYD in Syria has created an even more hostile environment for the peace process. Turkey has been rocked by a series of deadly terrorist attacks in major urban centers – the largest terrorist attacks in its history. Though not all attacks have been directly linked to the collapse of the peace talks, there is certainly blowback from the violence radiating out of the Syrian civil war, especially the battle

between the PYD and the Islamic State in Syria, and this minimizes the chances of the peace process resuming in the near future.

The outbreak of another crisis has further complicated the possibility of a fourth round. Turkey faced a coup attempt on 15 July 2016.[179] Unprecedented reconciliation between Turkish political factions, namely AKP, CHP, and MHP, following the failed coup attempt did nothing but deepen the HDP's exclusion. Despite their strong condemnation of the coup attempt, this exclusion, at a time of perceived national (read Turkish) solidarity, indicates that a renewed round of the peace process will not be in the cards in the near future.[180] At the time of writing, the co-leaders of the HDP party, along with 9 MPs, have been arrested.[181] New deadly terrorist attacks have hit Turkey's Kurdish southeast.[182]

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[179] "Turkish President Erdogan appears in Istanbul to denounce army coup attempt''. *BBC*. 15 July 2016.

[180] "After Failed Coup, Turkey enjoys a Rare Period of National Unity''. *New York Times*. 23 August 2016.

[181] "Turkey detains HDP leaders Demirtas and Yuksekdag''. *Al Jazeera*. 4 November 2016.

[182] "Turkey : Deadly explosion rocks major Kurdish city of Diyarbakir''. *The Guardian*. 4 November 2016.

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