TURKEY-KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ENERGY RELATIONS AND PEACE PROCESS BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE PKK

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Abstract

Military and foreign affairs have long been under the strong grip of the hard-line secular and nationalist elites known as Kemalists in Turkey. This influence has been challenged by successive Justice and Development Party (JDP) governments since 2002. Many reforms have been initiated on various fronts, from foreign policy to the Kurdish issue.

In this study, Turkey's foreign policy shift under the leadership of the JDP is evaluated to demonstrate how Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) energy relations have had an impact on the peace process (2013-2015) between Ankara and Partiya Karkeren Kurdistane (PKK). The study conducted in-depth interviews with various politicians and bureaucrats who participated in the peace negotiations from both sides.

Until the JDP governments came to power, Turkey applied solely security-based measures to tackle the Kurdish issue, including cross-border operations so as to eliminate the PKK camps. However, these measures neither brought a solution to the issue nor prevented PKK attacks. The JDP governments launched initiatives to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully. Meanwhile, Turkey-KRG relations improved significantly, gaining the support of Iraqi Kurds for the peace negotiations and improving relations in terms of security and energy.

The findings of this research demonstrate Turkey's ambition to become an energy-hub country and fulfil its growing energy demands. This ambition prompted Ankara to engage with the KRG to find a solution to the conflict with the PKK. The PKK's presence in northern Iraq is an obstacle for both parties in their efforts to secure energy flow from the KRG to Turkey.

In addition, the Arab Uprising in 2011 has had a major impact on the political landscape of the region, which has dramatically changed since then, especially in that Turkey's neighbours have become war-torn countries. This, in turn, has impacted the peace process, which has stalled.

Abbreviations

KRG - Kurdistan Regional Government
JDP - Justice and Development Party
RPP - Republic People's Party
NMP - Nationalist Movement Party
HDP - People's Democratic party (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi)
PKK - Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdish Workers Party)
GNA - Grand National Assembly
DP - Democratic Party
DDKO - Eastern Revolutionary Culture Hearths (Devrimci Dogu Kultur Ocakları)
PYD - Democratic Union Party
TFP - Turkish Foreign Policy
MENA - Middle East and North Africa
KDP - Kurdistan Democratic Party
ERNK - Kurdish National Liberal Front (Eniya Rizgarîya Netewa Kurdîstan)
PUK - Patrioatic Union Party
TIP - Turkish Workers Party (Turkiye İşçi Partisi)
TKDP - Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey
HEP - People's Labour Party (Halkların Emeği Partisi)
SHP - Social's Democrat Party (Sosyal Demokrat Partisi)
DEP - Democratic Labour Party (Demokratik İşçi Partisi)
HADEP - People's Democracy Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)
DTP - Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi)
WP - Welfare Party
KCK - Kurdish Communities Union
IEA - International Energy Agency
BTE - Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum
KY - Kirkuk-Yumurtalık
BTC - Baku-Tiflis-Ceyhan
TANAP - Trans Anatolian Gas Pipeline Project

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 The Context

The aim of this research is to understand the energy relations between Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), and how such a relationship has impacted the peace process between Turkey and the PKK between 2013 and 2015. In this study, the real motives behind the shift in Turkey's approach to the Iraqi Kurds as well as the Kurdish issue in Turkey have been assessed from both liberal and realist perspectives. This research aims to explain Turkey's relations with the KRG from 2003 to 2015, while examining the historical background of the Kurdish issue in Turkey and Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurds in order to better understand Ankara's Kurdish policy. This research provides the existing literature on the historical background of Turkey's approach towards the Iraqi Kurds, and also the Kurds in Turkey in a broader context. Moreover, in order to better understand Turkey's changing approach to the Kurds, we need to examine the power shift in domestic politics in the 2000s.

Since Turkey's establishment in 1923, the Kurds have historically been perceived as a national threat to the state (Galletti, 2008, 123; Larrabee, 2013, 134; Dalay, 2014). The founding tenets of Turkey, namely the Kemalist principles, were secularism and nationalism. Therefore Kurdish religious institutions were shut down and the speaking of the Kurdish language was banned by the Kemalist governing elite in order to create a secular nation state. Since the early years of the state, Kurds had revolted several times against Ankara's policies; all uprisings had been suppressed by the Turkish military. The last uprising erupted in 1984, led by the PKK terrorist group, and armed conflict has since continued. The armed conflict has caused the loss of over 40,000 people, while costing the country's economy hundreds of billions of dollars (Ete and Özhan, 2009; 100). Over the last 30 years the PKK has achieved the mobilisation of the masses and become a political movement as well as an armed organisation.

Turkish state elites treated the Kurdish issue as a "security threat to the sovereign state" rather than a question of democratisation (Gümüşcü and Keyman, 2014, 24). Moreover, it seems that the Kurdish issue was seen as a terror threat and that the elimination of such a threat was only possible through applying security measures. The Kemalist institutions, such as the military, foreign ministry and the judiciary, were very strong, dominating over politics. From the beginning, the

solution of the Kurdish issue was left to the military; and the military, ultimately, applied solely security-based measures to deal with the problem. Some of the measures were as follows: first, establishing the 'village guard' mechanism in 1985; second, the introduction of the 'state of emergency' in eight cities in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey in 1987; and third, the enactment of the Law to Fight Terrorism in 1991 (Galletti, 2008, 126 However, those security measures have been loosening gradually since the early 2000s, as the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured in February 1999 and Turkey entered the EU membership process.

The Justice and Development Party's (JDP) electoral victory in 2002 has also facilitated the shifting of the country's domestic state policies, as well as its foreign policy outlook, towards a more liberal approach (Bank and Karadağ, 2013, 289). During the EU membership process (2002-2005), the JDP "worked hard to promote the standard of political freedoms and human rights" (Grigoriadis, 2014, 165)**,** as many legal amendments were made to meet the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership. In 2005, the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the Kurdish issue and said that the government would "solve the problem with more democracy, more civil rights and more prosperity" (Aljazeera, 2005). In this respect, the JDP government made reforms regarding Kurdish rights in its second term of office between 2007 and 2011, including the authorisation of the Kurdish language as an elective course in public schools, and launching a Kurdish TV channel which broadcasts 24/7 (Tol and Taşpinar, 2014, 2).

In its second term, the JDP took more risks in launching initiatives to solve the Kurdish issue via secret negotiations with imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK representatives in 2009 during the 'Kurdish opening', while the Turkish military and hard-liners started to lose their grip on politics (Çandar, 2009, 16; Larrabee, 2010, 160; Al, 2014, 102-103; Nykanen, 2013, 87; Aras and Polat, 2008, 501). These initiatives were made possible through the JDP's minimisation of military and security elites' dominant influence over politics, including the Kurdish issue and foreign policy. Following the JDP's second victory in 2007, the military and its allies' humiliation "freed the JDP government to begin to change policies it hitherto had not dared to. The most important such case was Iraq where the AKP [JDP] government implemented a complete 180-degree turnabout in its relations with the KRG in northern Iraq" (Barkey, 2011, 7).

As it mentioned given, the military opposed any initiative which was launched by the governments to deal with the Kurdish issue peacefully, especially Turgut Ozal administration in early 1990s.

However,, since 2007, the Turkish military lost its influence over politics as well as the Kurdish issue. Simply put, the JDP government has established an area to play its liberal policies in domestic and abroad, including the Kurdish issue. As Respondent 1 states, "the military had been extremely powerful in politics and security policies and it staged a coup on several occasians during the Turkish history. Therefore, the JDP government appeared to change it Kurdish policy towards the KRG and launched the Kurdish opening in its second term. Respondent 5 posits "the Kurdish opening and the peace process was not state policy but the JDP's policy. The JDP's leader Erdoğan convinced its base and most party supporters believed that the peace process was for the sake of the country"

It is important to note that the Kurdish issue occupied a significant place in Turkish foreign policy (TFP). In the 1990s, Ankara's foreign policy references were "security-dominated policy references with international actors and neighboring countries" (Bengio, 2011, 625, cited in Özcan, 2011, 72). In other words, Turkey's traditional foreign policy restricted relations with Middle Eastern countries for security reasons. However, former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbours' policy paved the way towards improving Turkey's relations with its neighbourhood. The idea of 'zero problems with neighbours' in foreign policy focused on establishing freedom of movement across regional borders, increasing trade volume and mediating conflicts in the region. According to this policy, Turkey would ultimately become a leading regional player (Grigoriadis, 2014, 160). Furthermore, Turkey's active foreign policy involvement in the region aimed to increase the country's economic relations therein, while also employing a mediator role in the regional conflicts to create visa liberalization with countries in its neighbourhood (Akarçeşme and Aras, 2011, 46). Müftüler-Bac argues that Davutoğlu's policy "emphasizes establishing good neighborly relations, with diplomacy and economic tools as the most important mechanisms of foreign policy, rather than reliance upon military might" (2014, 540). As a result of these policies, the economic growth rate was high and trade volume with Middle Eastern countries increased dramatically in the JDP's first two terms.

For Turkey's policies on Iraq, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to a change in the political structure of Iraq, as well as that of Iraqi Kurds. Since the beginning, Turkey's policies towards the Iraqi Kurds were to prevent PKK attacks from the northern Iraqi region and to respect the integrity of Iraqi territory (Wahab, 2014, 33; İpek, 2017, 414; Duman, 2011, 20; Altunışık and Tur, 2006, 240). However, the Iraqi Kurds became a political entity in 2005 by establishing the KRG, an

autonomy granted by Iraqi constitution and recognized internationally. The transformation in the power structures of Iraq worried Ankara, as it created a power vacuum for the PKK to organize itself militarily and politically, albeit the unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK between 1999 and 2004 following the capture of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999.

Ankara believes that the political gain by the Iraqi Kurds, historically seen as a political threat, could trigger a similar demand by Kurds in Turkey (Tol and Taşpınar, 2014, 2). Therefore, relations with the Iraqi Kurds were restricted until the 2000s. For Turkey, the cooperation with Iraqi Kurds could facilitate a stance against the PKK and its military camps in northern Iraq. In other words, Turkey contacted the KRG only in order to prevent the PKK's activities in the region.

Turkey's ambitions to become a regional leader and an energy-hub country in the region pushed Ankara to solve its internal Kurdish issue and also to approach the KRG, which has untapped natural resources (Charountaki, 2012, 194-200; Park, 2014, 27; Mills, 2013, 51; Barkey, 2011, 664). Therefore, the government launched the so-called Kurdish opening in 2009 to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully through improving human rights and establishing economic reforms for the Kurdish-populated region within the country. However, efforts failed for various reasons in the following year. Meanwhile, Ankara improved its relations with the KRG, and for the first time Turkish officials paid high-level official visits to the KRG in 2009.

The KRG leader Massoud Barzani openly supported the peace process and joined a rally with the Turkish president in Diyarbakır in 2013, delivering a speech to the public during the rally. Barzani believed that resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey would strengthen his position in the KRG and help stabilise the region. Therefore, both Barzani and the Turkish government indicated their willingness to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully. For Ankara's energy needs and Turkey's national security, the KRG is an important actor: "Turkey's growing economy and energy needs dictate a stronger partnership with the oil-rich Iraqi Kurdistan" (Tol and Taşpınar, 2014, 2). Turkey is also the best gateway for the KRG's energy transport, as there are already established energy pipelines between Iraq and Turkey. Therefore, establishing strong relations with Turkey is also vital for the KRG. In order to gain this goal Turkey desired to deal with the PKK where its main camps occupy between the borders of the KRG and Turkey. The energy flow from the KRG and Turkish national security demanded the stability in this region. Therefore, while the government has introduced the democratic opening (Kurdish opening) in Turkey, it has changed

its approach towards the Iraqi Kurds in 2009. More significantly, Respondent 5 states that "the Kurdish issue is an enormous obstacle for Turkey in the international arena"

Following the failure of the democratic opening in 2009, the so-called peace process between Ankara and Öcalan was launched by the government in 2013, ending in June 2015. The peace initiative with the Kurds failed mainly due to external factors. Although there are many reasons behind the ending of the process, key factors include the changes in the balance of power in the region, the challenges caused by the emergence of ISIS in Syria, Iraq's approach towards Kurds and Turkey, and the establishment of cantons by the PKK's Syria affiliate, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), in northern Syria. The rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria changed the dynamics of the region, as the PYD and ISIS were perceived as a threat by Ankara. Moreover, during that time, the PKK's priority was to gain territory in Syria rather than negotiate with Ankara for Kurdish rights in Turkey.

To sum up, gaining new markets for the growing Turkish economy, increasing energy security and aiming to become a regional power were the main tasks of Turkish foreign policy. TFP was designed in order to reach the abovementioned targets from the early years of the JDP era. By doing this, it needs to ebgage the Kurdish issue peacefully in order to secure its energy flow from the KRG. It was believed that having good relations with the KRG would serve Turkey's ambitions to become an energy-hub country and to achieve energy security, and, more significantly, that support from KRG leader Barzani would have a positive effect on the peace negotiations. However, the PKK-affiliated PYD's strengthening position in Syria and its policies brought an end to the peace process in June 2015.

1.2 Literature Review

Although there has historically been some research conducted regarding Turkey's relations with Iraqi Kurds and the former's approach to the Kurdish issue in Turkey, much new research is emerging regarding Turkish-KRG energy relations and the peace process between the PKK and Ankara (2013-2015), as it is very much a contemporary issue. Kurdish studies have grown in popularity and drawn the attention of scholars across the world (Bruinessen, 1994; Gunter, 2007; McDowall, 2007; Marcus, 2007; Özoğlu, 2004; Yavuz, 2007).

In addition, various edited books and articles explore relations between the Kurds and the Ottoman Empire in general, the structure of the Kurdish community, and Kurdish nationalism and uprisings from the mid-19th century onwards, towards an early modern Turkey (Olson, 1989; Bruinessen, 1978; White, 2000; Özoğlu, 2004; Jongerden, 2007).

The status of Iraqi Kurds changed dramatically in the post-Saddam era and they appeared on the political scene as a semi-independent political entity in the north of Iraq in 2005. The present research aims to examine Turkey-KRG energy relations in the post-Saddam era (2003-2015), and their impact on the peace process between the PKK and Ankara. In order to better understand the Kurdish issue, the history of Kurds in the Ottoman era and the rise of Kurdish nationalism within modern Turkey has been evaluated in depth.

The regional development and its impact on Turkey's energy security policies have been argued by Pınar İpek (2017). She refers to major events since 2014, such as the downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkey and ISIS terrorist advancement in Iraq, and argues that they have created a risk for energy security as Turkey imports most of its gas from Russia and oil from Iraq. The question arises of how the KRG's energy relations shape Turkey's approach towards the Iraqi Kurds.

Cagaptay argues that the Kemalist aim of creating a westernised secular nation state and "centralisation of power in Ankara caused the mostly tribal Kurds to resent Ankara's interference in their lives, while the secularisation propelled the Kurds, most of whom were conservative Muslims, to develop an aversion towards Kemalism" (2006, 106). Ömer Taşpınar explains in his book that state policy in the first two decades of modern Turkey, focused as it was on creating a nation state, effectively denied Kurdish identity.

Altan Tan's book is important in order to understand the historical background of the Kurdish issue, Ankara's policies towards Kurds, and the political and social structure of the region, especially in the 1970s and 1980s (2014).

Hakan Yavuz (2007) divides Kurdish nationalism into five stages: firstly, the centralist policies of the Ottoman Empire and their impact on the 19th century; secondly, the period 1925-61, in which he traces "the socio-political consequences of the transformation from a multi-ethnic Ottoman entity to a new nation-state" and the reaction of Kurds against the project of Atatürk; thirdly, the secularisation of Kurdish identity within leftist organisations in the 1960s and 1970s; fourthly, "the PKK-led violent insurgency"; and lastly, "the candidate status of Turkey and the Europeanisation of the Kurdish issue".

In the 1970s, the Kurdish political movement became active in left-wing organisations, culminating in the establishment of the PKK in the late 1970s by the leading Kurdish figure Abdullah Öcalan and his friends. In other words, the Turkish left provided a breeding ground for Kurdish political movements who believed in socialist revolutions in 'Kurdistan' as a solution to the Kurdish issue. The PKK attacked other rival Kurdish groups and land-lords and tribe leaders of the region before the 1980 coup (Akyol, 2006; Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997; McDowall, 2005; Barkey and Fuller, 1998).

Galletti (2008) details Turkish government policies that were mere military solutions in tackling the Kurdish issue, such as the Village Guards System, the Law to Fight Terrorism and the State of Emergency. He also argues that the PKK evolved from a purely military organisation to a more political movement in the 1990s, achieving mass mobilisation and gaining a place on the political scene at both a local and a national level. He affirms that the PKK's ideological establishment of a 'Great Kurdistan' was abandoned by Öcalan at the end of the 1980s.

Cengiz Çandar (2013) states that Özal was the first Turkish statesman to discuss the Kurdish issue publicly and that he significantly improved relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders in the early 1990s. Çandar claims that Özal secretly sent his special convoy to Öcalan, who then immediately declared a bilateral ceasefire in 1993. However, Özal's death in 1993 and the security elite's opposition brought an end to peace initiations. Çandar also argues in another article in favour of the benefits that solving the Kurdish issue would have for Turkey and the KRG: "Once Turkey resolves its

Kurdish question, it would also be able to secure its environs for the realization of new energy transportation projects" (2009, 15).

Maria Charountaki (2015) mentions the historical background of Ankara-PKK-Iraqi Kurdish relations in the Gulf War period. Turkey's foreign policy towards the KRG during the period between 2003 and 2007 was tense, to say the least. However, the PKK's increasing activities from 2004 onwards, the KRG's new status, the exploration of new oil fields in the region and the JDP's governmental efforts to solve the Kurdish issue pushed Turkey to engage with the Iraqi Kurds.

According to Bengio, until the JDP came to power, Turkey's security elite believed that the only possible solution to the Kurdish issue was a military one, asserting that "first the PKK was to be broken and only then could a peaceful solution be devised" (2011, 621-2).

In his articles, Ergil (2000) outlines the evolution of the Kurdish nationalist movement from the establishment of Turkey in 1923 until Öcalan's capture in 1999. He also claims that one of the biggest obstacles for Turkey on the international scene, especially in terms of the EU membership process, is the Kurdish issue.

There was limited literature about the peace process between Ankara and the PKK (2013-2015) when the present research began. The unique aspect of the current work is the inclusion of field-work and interviews carried out in Turkey and in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The interviewees are all people directly involved in the peace process from both sides, or who have directly participated in some aspect of the process.

Ertan Efegil argues that the JDP government followed a similar path to Özal on the Kurdish issue. Özal "supported the idea of finding a solution to the question by taking cultural, economic, social and political measures" (2011, 31). He was in favour of dialogue with Kurds, including Iraqi Kurds. However, strong opposition by the security elite and some political parties prevented any concrete actions being taken towards the Kurds until 2002. Efegil affirms that the JDP launched an initiative on the Kurdish issue and improved its relations with Iraqi Kurds once the military lost their influence over politics.

Kemal Kirişçi (2011) concurs that the 'hard-liners', who believed that the only way to tackle the Kurdish issue was to apply military measures, lost their power over politics via reforms during the

EU membership process in the 2000s. Furthermore, Turkey's policy shifted towards the KRG in 2009, in parallel with reforms to improve Kurdish cultural rights, and the launch of the 'Democratic Opening'. Kirişçi's work has demonstrated the reactions and reasons of the failure of the democratic opening.

Yüksel-Peçen's article deals with the JDP's Kurdish policies since 2003, outlining successive JDP governments and their attempts to solve the Kurdish issue. More significantly, it analyses the Turkish media's discourse towards the peace process and conflicts in the region.

Malik Mufti analyses Davutoğlu's 'Zero Problems with Neighbours' policy, from the Arab Spring to the Kobane protests of 2011-2014 and onwards. Mufti examines Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria and Iraq during that period and, more significantly, its relations with Iraqi Kurds, the PKK, and the PYD. Mufti also details how Davutoğlu's 'Zero Problems' policy changed, and the PYD came to be perceived as a threat by Turkey (2017).

Lowe and Gunes (2015) explain how the developments in northern Syria have affected regional politics since 2011, when the civil war broke out. They mainly focus on the PYD's strengthening position in the region and its impact on the relations between the PKK and the KRG/Turkey. With the displacement of pro-Barzani Kurds – the Kurdish National Council – from the region, both Ankara and the KRG lost their influence over northern Syria.

Although some of the studies regarding these research topics have been reviewed above, the main literature has been analysed in the main chapters of the thesis. Primary sources have been gathered via interviews about the peace process.

1.3 Research Questions

Why has Turkey's Kurdish issue turned into an international problem, intertwining with its foreign policy? Kurds live throughout the Middle East, in countries including Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. These countries have their own Kurdish movements fighting for the rights of Kurdish people. Although these countries are very cautious about the Kurdish movements in the region, some of them have used Kurdish groups in order to get leverage over neighbouring states. Hence, the Kurdish issue has become one of the main concerns in Turkey's relations with the states in its immediate neighbourhood.

Moreover, the Kurdish issue is an obstacle to Turkey's achieving its goals of becoming a regional power and an energy-hub country. In this respect, Turkey's relations with the KRG occupy a vital place, as the KRG has untapped rich natural resources which could serve Turkey's energy-hub ambitions. More significantly, the KRG's efforts towards the peace process between the PKK and Turkey are important steps towards bringing an end to the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

This research aims to understand the motives behind the shift in Turkey's foreign policy towards its neighbourhood. More particularly, it aims to identify and analyse the factors determining Ankara's dramatic change towards the Kurdish initiative and Iraqi Kurds. In order to achieve this, the present research has three specific objectives: firstly, to identify the motives behind Turkey's foreign policy shift and its approach towards the Iraqi Kurds; secondly, to provide and analyse the historical background of Turkey's Kurdish issue and peace talks with the PKK; and thirdly, to unpacks the extent to which Turkey's relations with the KRG impacted the peace process.

The main question of this research is the following: How did the relations between Turkey and KRG affect the peace process between Turkey and the PKK in the years between 2013 and 2015?

For the analysis to be complete, sub-questions must also be addressed: firstly, whilst it is of highest significance that Turkish foreign policy changed during the JDP's governance over the last decade, was the peace process the JDP's party policy or was it a policy of the state in a broader context? Secondly, to what extent does Turkey need the KRG in terms of solving its own issues? And thirdly, is Turkey dependent on the KRG in its desire to diversify its energy supplies?

1.4 Methodology

Methodology in social science research is an essential part of any research project, determining that project's success, validity and reliability. Stemming from an interest in a thorough understanding of human behaviour, social scientists tend to use qualitative research, aiming to accumulate a detailed account of human behaviour and beliefs within the contexts in which they occur (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). My research is grounded within an international field which explores Turkey and the KRG's energy relations and how this relationship impacted the peace process between Turkey and the PKK between 2013 and 2015. Ankara aimed to change its approach towards Kurds in both Turkey and northern Iraq in order to solve its Kurdish issue and become an energy-hub country within the region. Therefore, relations with the KRG were strategically important for Ankara to achieve its goals. This study conducts interpretive analysis of the sources, and, as a result, most of the methods used are qualitative.

The two most important sources of data, examining the related literature and conducting in-depth interviews, make the qualitative method the most appropriate choice for this research. A wide range of empirical and theoretical resources are also used. According to various studies, the qualitative method is an indispensable tool for social sciences; therefore, qualitative data are most often collected by researchers through interviews and questionnaires. However, when compared to questionnaires, interviews are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allows researchers to investigate people's views in greater depth. In a similar vein, Cohen et al. (2007, 29) add that interviewing is "a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting". Consequently, in order to have more reliable information, semi-structured and in-depth interviews have been used throughout this research. The potential sources of information about the issue can be classified as politicians who attended the peace negotiations from all sides, such as MPs, security officials and other politicians. In addition, community members and security members in Kurdish-populated cities have been contacted for contribution to this research.

The relevant data has been gathered via in-depth interviews conducted over a one-year period, mainly in Turkey and the KRG. The interviewees have been identified and selected carefully; importantly, I have talked with some senior officials who were unseen during the negotiation process.

As Prakash and Klotz state, "[i]n International Relations, qualitative method typically means a

study of one or a few foreign policies, with a decision-making process to be traced at the micro-historical level" (2008, 43, cited in George and Bennett, 2005). This thesis examines Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East and the KRG from both realist and liberal perspectives. During the process, the conceptual definitions for the Kurdish issue and the relations between Turkey and the KRG, as well as the peace process between the PKK and Turkey, have been outlined. A historical analysis of the Kurdish issue argues that Turkish state policies have caused the rise of the issue. Although there is a large amount of research about the Kurdish issue and Turkey's relations with the KRG, there is a lack of significant research on Turkey-KRG energy relations and their impact on the peace process.

Related actors from all relevant parties were interviewed: firstly, Turkish lawmakers and politicians from the JDP, individuals from security services and bureaucracy, and some NGOs; and secondly, politicians and some MPs from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP, the pro-Kurdish party), and lawmakers, politicians, researchers and other relevant officials in the KRG. However, Turkish intelligence officials, bureaucrats and some politicians refused to give official interviews due to security reasons, as the topic was a live issue at that time (2016-2017).

During the interviews, some interviewees allowed us to take voice recordings; however, some of them allowed note-taking only. Moreover, in order to increase the credibility of the research, interviews with the opposition parties in the parliament were attempted. The main opposition – the Republic People's Party (RPP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP) – were against the peace process for their own reasons. While nobody from the NMP agreed to give an opinion on the topic, one MP from the RPP accepted an interview.

Thirdly, field research in the KRG has been conducted mainly in the capital city of Arbil. During field work, some information was gathered about KRG-Turkey relations and the PKK's policies in the region, as well as the role of the KRG leader Masoud Barzani in the peace process. During the negotiations, Barzani attended closed-door meetings with Turkish officials and HDP representatives together, to support the peace process. As part of the field research, KRG officials, Turcoman MPs from the KRG parliament, a think tank (RUDAW research centre), and other relevant individuals from the region were contacted.

The peace negotiations between Turkey and the PKK had already ended (June 2015) before the interviews took place. In the aftermath of the failure of the peace negotiations, intensive fighting

erupted with the destruction of some of the mostly Kurdish-populated south-eastern towns, and ultimately a clash between both parties brought on a tense political climate. A coup attempt in July 2016 in Turkey further intensified the political environment. Moreover, the head of the pro-Kurdish party (HDP) and some of the party's MPs were arrested and accused of terrorist propaganda due to activities during the peace process. Therefore, given the tense political climate in Turkey, it seems that the risk of getting unreliable information about the process is a weakness of the present research. However, being in the Turkish Parliament as an adviser to one of the prominent MPs presented an opportunity to contact Turkish officials. There were some obstacles in reaching HDP lawmakers, who were reluctant to speak on the issue. However, this problem was resolved as I was able to contact HDP lawmakers through my wider network in the parliament.

It is usually risky for politicians to talk about sensitive issues which may negatively affect their future positions within the party. Some politicians were reluctant to express their opinions; however, I have assured them of the maintenance of their anonymity. The interviews were carried in various locations, from the parliament to cafés. While the parliament was used in interviews with MPs, choice of location was left to other interviewees to ensure that they felt comfortable during the interviews.

Moreover, another significant weakness of my research is the lack of interviews with PKK members. Having interviews with PKK members may have caused some difficulties for me, as even trying to speak to any PKK member is illegal for any ordinary Turkish citizen by Turkish law. As a consequence, I have had interviews with HDP officials who were deemed to have strong ties with PKK officials. By doing this, I attempted to gain information about the PKK's opinion and strategies about the peace process. Furthermore, relevant PKK members' TV interviews, affiliated political magazines and newspapers were also followed and examined.

Field research was also done in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in order to better understand the role of Massoud Barzani in the peace process and also the ways in which the public in the region approached the Kurdish issue and Turkey. Interviews with officials in the KRG were used as the primary source for this research. The importance of energy relations between the KRG and Turkey was studied through information gathered from the policymakers of the KRG.

Relevant books and articles on the topic are considered secondary sources of information about the Kurdish issue, KRG-Turkey energy relations and the historical background of the topic. There

are many books and academic articles that have been published in regard to the historical background of the topics of interest within the present research. This project was initiated during the peace negotiations. In other words, the research topic is a contemporary topic of study. Thus, some think tank reports, such as Chatham House, the Washington Institute, and the German Marshal Fund; Turkish and international newspapers and websites; Kurdish issue expert opinions; both Turkish and HDP politicians' statements; PKK leaders' interviews; and other relevant official statistics and data on the issue have also been used as secondary sources.

Chapter II: Theory and Turkish Foreign Policy

Introduction

When the Justice Development Party (JDP) came to power in 2002, Turkey redefined its strategic position and goals and intensified its engagement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), in line with Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbours' policy. Following this policy, Turkey further integrated itself into the region and improved relations with its neighbours and other countries in the region through the values of democracy, human rights and market economy (Yorulmazlar and Aras, 2014, 112). This chapter will attempt to evaluate the shifts in Turkey's foreign policy approach towards the Middle East (ME) under the JDP, throughout its time in power from 2002 to 2015. In addition, we will touch briefly upon the turning points in Turkish foreign policy (TFP) following the collapse of the Soviet Union and before JDP rule.

It is important to mention that a realpolitik doctrine had been implemented in Turkey by the state elites since the establishment of the Republic and throughout the Cold War. During the JDP's first term, the Turkish army and Kemalist political elites strengthened their position within Turkish politics and hampered attempts to change traditional foreign policy. However, in its second term, the JDP government strengthened its power domestically with the help of the EU (Barkey, 2011), and this provided room for it to operate and employ its 'new' neoliberal policies at home and in the region. In doing this, Turkey aimed to create a free-trade zone based on visa liberalisation and strengthened cultural and economic ties with Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. This chapter will attempt to evaluate how changes in domestic politics and abroad affected JDP foreign policy implementation.

The Arab Spring has challenged many countries' foreign policies, not just that of Turkey. Relations between Turkey and Syria have deteriorated, whilst Iran has sought to increase its influence in the region throughout the period of the uprisings (Barkey, 2013, 139). New non-state actors have emerged and the whole balance of power has shifted. Turkey's relations with other countries in the region have changed significantly, and its aim to become a 'soft power' and a model of Muslim democracy for the Muslim world has come under serious challenges. In this chapter we will analyse in depth the transformation of the region, and the pros and cons of the Arab Spring in relation to Turkish foreign policy.

It is important to note that Turkey is not a global power, but aims to become a leading regional power within its own sphere. So, in this chapter we will examine mainly the changing relations between Turkey and its conflictual neighbours such as Iraq, Syria and Iran. Historically, Turkey's involvement with its neighbourhood had been relatively limited and focused mainly on security issues relating to the Kurdish question (Martin and Altunışık, 2011, 570). Turkey had hitherto viewed the Kurdish issue as a terror problem and had therefore avoided interaction with Iraqi Kurds, considering them a threat to Turkish national security. Turkey did engage with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq several times in the 1990s, but this was only in order to eradicate the PKK camps, and it continued in its refusal to accept the Iraqi Kurds as a political entity. However, the JDP radically changed this approach and has pursued a proactively liberal policy on the Kurdish issue since 2002, launching a peace process between the Turkish government and the PKK in early 2013. To sum up, in this thesis, I will be evaluating relations between Turkey and the KRG and their impact on the Kurdish issue, with reference to liberal and realist international theories. Furthermore, I will examine the reasons for Turkey's changing policy towards the KRG and its own Kurds, with regard to its energy perspective and its foreign policy objectives.

2.1 The Features of Realism

Realism is the oldest discipline in international relations, with roots that go back to the writings of Thucydides and Sun Tzu in the 5th century BC (Lobell, Taliaferro and Ripsman, 2009, 14). As Lebow says, "Classical realism has displayed a fundamental unity of thought across nearly 2500 years" (2013, 59). Realists argue that the international arena is inevitably conflictual for the following reasons: principally, because human beings by their very nature are egoistic and will always seek power in order to gain security for themselves. States can never be certain about others' intentions and, with no central authority over and above individual states, there is nothing to protect them from each other, or to punish aggressive states (Mearsheimer, 2001). Therefore, in view of basic human nature and the absence of an all-powerful overseeing central authority, there is limited space for morality in the international arena.

Thus we see that human nature is a starting point for classical realists; for human beings, self-interest invariably comes before morality. International organisations, norms and rules do not do much to change the status quo; the only way to survive is to be more powerful than your rival. Thus, universal values, international organisations (IGOs) and non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) are deemed of little consequence by realist thinkers, who assert that the main aim of the state is to advance and defend its own interests (Sorensen, 2013, 66).

The second important pillar of realist thinking is the inexorable/inevitable drive towards world anarchy. The international system is composed of sovereign nation states: every state is responsible for its own survival, and is free to define and pursue its own interests. This 'self-help' system, and the absence of a world government that nation states must obey, inevitably leads to anarchy. As Waltz maintains, "international anarchy is the permissive cause of war" (cited in Weber, 2005, 15). According to Waltz, morality cannot factor into a state's bid to survive within the anarchic system; all that counts is its material capabilities and its alliances with others (1979, 103-104). He argues that states are like firms in a domestic economy and that they all have the same basic interest in surviving: "Internationally, the environment of states' actions, or the structure of their system, is set by the fact that some states prefer survival over other ends obtainable in the short run and act with relative efficiency to achieve that end" (Waltz, 1970, 93).

According to realists, the defence of a country's borders, the enforcement of its laws, the protection of its citizens and generally making the country more peaceful is indeed the duty of individual governments. But this is, in short, domestic politics. International politics is different because there is no higher authority above the state, who acts as a sole, separate and self-interested entity. As Mearsheimer says, international politics is "a brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other" (Mearsheimer, 1994-5, cited in Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010).

Neoclassical Realism

Kenneth Waltz is the father of neorealism, or, as he refers to it in his famous book 'Man, the State and War' (1959), "structural realism". Neorealists have a slightly different approach to classical realists in their analysis of states' behaviour and their quest for power. As Guzinni says, "What sets neorealism apart from realism is its methodology and self-conception" (1998, 127).

Waltz claims that in an anarchical international system, cooperation is restricted because of insecurity and the fear of unequal gain: "States do not willingly place themselves in situations of increased dependence. In a self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest" (1979, 107). Thus cooperation between states is limited. If states cooperate and act together, then there could be a real risk for one side: one party may end up with more

power and gain advantage over the other. In other words, the balance of power could change. According to Rengger, for Waltz, unlike for classical realists, "states really have only two alternatives in terms of general systemic behaviour: balancing against another state or states, or 'bandwagoning' – going along with it – and in general terms, balancing is far the likelier option" (2000). As Morgenthau says, "alliances are a necessary function of the balance of power operating within a multi-state system" (1973, 193). According to neorealists, states or regimes are not the sole actors on the international stage; but they are the most important (Taliaferro, Ripsman and Lobell, 2009, 27-8).

According to Weber, realists and neorealists only disagree about human nature. Morgenthau claims that "man is flawed and therefore prone to conflict". Therefore, the creation of world government is impossible. In contrast, neorealists say that "man may or may not be flawed. Human nature is not essential to an explanation of conflict" (cited in Weber, 2005, 16).

There is significant division among neorealists on the question of how much power is enough for states. On the one hand, 'defensive realists' such as Waltz claim that the system will punish any state which tries to gain too much power (Mearsheimer, 2013, 78, cited in Dunne, Kurki and Smith, 2010), because, if one state becomes more powerful, then the balance of power will change. For example, other states may create new military forces within new institutions and form a balancing coalition, which may leave hegemonic power less secure, or even destroy it. So, the main argument of defensive realists is that the system is in favour of the defender, and if any state attempts to gain too much power, it is highly likely to end up with a series of wars (Ibid, 81). To sum up, Waltz argues that a state needs to have more power than its immediate rivals if it is to depend on itself; stronger states are less likely to be a target than weaker ones. But they should not pursue hegemony.

In contrast, 'offensive realists' like Mearsheimer argue that the anarchic system pushes states to get as much power as possible. The pursuit of hegemony must be a final goal for states, if they have the capability, because it is the best way to survive in an anarchical international arena. Powerful states are less likely to be targets as, by and large, weaker states will be reluctant to fight them. Offensive realists claim that forming balancing coalitions provides opportunities for an aggressor to take advantage of its adversaries (Ibid, 81). Thus, whilst defensive realists claim that defender states have more advantage than attackers and thereby rarely lose out, offensive realists assert the reverse.

Thus, in conclusion, the two strands of neoclassical realism, offensive and defensive, as represented by Mearsheimer and Waltz, agree inasmuch as they say that the behaviour of states is shaped, if not determined, by the anarchical structure of international relations. However, the point at which they diverge is this: the 'defensive realist' believes that states must seek power in order to be secure and survive, whilst too much power is counter-productive, as it provokes hostile alliances. For the offensive realist, on the other hand, excessive power is necessary for security and survival (Sorenson and Jackson, 2013, 84). For Mearsheimer, great powers "are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal" (2001, 29).

Historically, TFP towards the ME was limited due to the traditional foreign policy applied by Kemalist elites since 1923, which was a mainly realist approach, based on the balance of power vis-à-vis other regional powers, in order to gain security and ensure survival. Turkey only cooperated with Syria, Iraq and Iran (who have Kurdish ethnicities) on the Kurdish issue in order to prevent Kurdish uprisings that would have threatened national security. In other words, realpolitik doctrine was implemented in Turkey until 2003 by politicians and diplomats, with the ultimate aim of modernisation (Bertrand, 2013, 63).

The Kemalist elite aimed to create a nation state based on Turkishness which would deny other ethnicities such as Kurdish ethnicity (Unlu, 2016). The state sought to assimilate Kurds, oppress any uprisings and downplay the issue in Turkey. Since the founding of the Republic, the Kurdish issue had been seen as a combination of reactionary forces, pre-modern tribalism, banditry, foreign incitement, economic backwardness and a terror problem (Yeğen, 2015a). Turkey refused to accept the Kurdish issue as one of human rights and democracy. The Turkish army played a prominent role in domestic and foreign policy and saw the Kurdish issue as a considerable challenge to the principle of the Turkish State. Furthermore, the army advocated a traditional Turkish foreign policy which did not engage with Middle Eastern countries except in the case of security issues. However, from 2003 the approach of Turkey towards the Kurdish issue began to change, and constitutional amendments have been made to minority rights as part of Turkey's EU membership process under the JDP's rule. In other words, the later government believed that the Kurdish issue was not solely a security issue.

It is also important to note that the Cold War between two super-powers prevented regional powers from manoeuvring independently. Turkey sided with the US and followed a policy based on the

balance of power in the world system during that period in order to guarantee its security and survival in the face of expansionist Soviet Russia. So, Turkey followed a balance-of-power policy during the Cold War era. In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the bipolar system, the structure of the system continued to prevent governments from acting freely. Although Turkey found room to manoeuvre in its neighbourhood, the state elite consistently avoided engaging with Middle Eastern countries in the post-Cold War period. This elite was also against any political solution of the Kurdish issue, attempting rather to solve it with security measures. However, the JDP government gradually took over power from that elite, as will be described below.

2.2 The Features of Liberalism

Liberalism is the one of the most prominent international relations principles. It brings important contributions to IR in terms of international order, institutions, human rights, democratisation, peace and economic integration (El-Anis, Pettiford, Diez and Steans, 2010, 24). For realism, every state is a potential enemy of other states, who threaten that state's existence and security, intentionally or not. Realism also asserts that human nature is egoistic. In contrast, Immanuel Kant claims that humans are able to cooperate and construct a more peaceful and harmonious community, despite their self-interest (Russet, 2013, 95). A human being is also rational, and can consider the pros and cons of any course of action. Liberalists argue that people are generally inherently good and have no interest in fighting with each other and suffering the consequences of war; they desire dialogue over belligerence (El-Anis, Pettiford, Diez and Steans, 2010, 23). Therefore, people need to end war, and should respect the rule of law and stable institutions, which provide a form of international order leading to peace and security (Ibid). All in all, liberalism says that the harmony of interests between people reduces the possibility of conflict.

Liberalists argue that in order to establish world order, certain conditions are necessary, such as the establishment of republics, or in other words liberal democracies. According to this view, dictators and monarchies are barriers to achieving world order due to their non-democratic systems and lack of rule of law. It is emphasised that the achievement of political pluralism, democracy, human rights, and free trade are essential for liberalism. It is argued that cooperation among democratic states is easier than among non-democratic states. In order to achieve peace and security, which are connected in liberal thought, cooperation is essential among liberal states. According to Michael Doyle's peace theory, "Liberal states, founded on such individual rights as

equality before the law, free speech and other liberties, private property, and elected representation" do not fight with each other, but dictatorships do (1986, 1152). Liberal states choose cooperation rather than conflict because they have similar democratic values, contributing to a 'zone of peace' such that people have no interest in wars (El-Anis, Pettiford, Diez and Steans, 2010, 32).

As Russet says, "The difference between the two traditions (realism and liberalism) is that Kant sees democratic government, economic interdependence, and international law and organisations as means to overcome the security dilemma of the international system" (2013, 95). The father of liberal institutionalism, Immanuel Kant argues that "democracies will refrain from using force against other democracies; that economically important trade creates incentives to maintain peaceful relations; and that international organisations can constrain decision-makers by positively promoting peace" (Russet, 2013, 101).

In explaining these arguments, firstly it should be noted that democratic states do not generally choose to fight or threaten each other. Democracies have principles that choose to compromise and negotiate in conflict resolution. The public and leaders also recognise that other democracies operate with the same principles, which observe that war is a disaster for countries. It is claimed that wars generally bring more disadvantages than advantages, and thus the cost of war may threaten the positions of democratically elected leaders.

Secondly, trade is vital among liberal states in order to sustain economies. Trade becomes a communication tool and a great distributor of national economies, and creates a common place for businesspeople from different countries to understand each other. In sum, trade contributes towards and strengthens the peaceful relations between trading states.

Thirdly, international organisations such as the UN and the IMF have multi-purpose focuses on conflict resolution, military, security, the promotion of international commerce, investment, health, environment, human rights, coercing norm-breaking countries, and reducing the uncertainty of international relations. So, with democracy, IGOs try to build a mutual identity, and therefore, their main aim is to promote peace and stability around the world. The network of these organisations has increased globally since WWII. But IGOs have more influence if the member states have no conflict with each other.

Sterling-Folker states that "Neoliberalism is a variant of liberal IR theory that focuses on the role international institutions play in obtaining international collective outcomes, and for this reason it is often called neoliberal institutionalism" (2013, 115). Neoliberalism argues that international cooperation is difficult in an anarchic world, but that international institutions facilitate cooperation. It is a variant of liberalism that focuses on cumulative progress in human affairs. As a result of the establishment of the free trade market, wealth and production will grow and make states more prosperous. It is also important to note that IGOs push states to cooperate on a range of issues such as health and the environment. In other words, since globalisation, states have more common interests for cooperation than before.

There is similarity between structural realism and neoliberalism in that both theories consider the state as a unitary actor in global affairs. Liberals also argue that the state is a 'necessary evil': the state is necessary in terms of the establishment of rules and norms and to protect the liberty of individuals, but it can become a tyranny if there are no checks on its power. So, the separation of powers and 'checks and balances' control one political party or leader so as not to dominate any others (El-Anis, Pettiford, Diez and Steans, 2010). However, there is an argument that liberals see states as autonomous bodies, and do not consider the powerful elites within the government, the military, or decision makers' identities.

In sum, liberalism is based on cooperation among democratic states, respect for rule of law, human rights, the creation of universal citizenship, the support of NGOs and world government. It is claimed that when these conditions are achieved, the world becomes more peaceful and positive relations between states increase. It is important to note that international organisations are seen as a mediator in conflict resolutions.

Turkey launched a new policy, 'zero problems with neighbours', which aimed to integrate the region between 2002 and 2011. Turkey made an effort to mediate and promote conflict resolutions in the ME, such as in Libya, Iraq, Sudan, and between Syria and Israel. Turkey has promoted democracy, supported the freedom of movement and the stability of the region, engaged in conflict resolutions, encouraged dialogue and trade, lifted visa requirements with many countries, and used cultural ties with certain countries in order to increase trade and influence in its foreign policy (Akarçeşme and Aras, 2012, 47). In doing this, Turkey increased its economic and diplomatic affairs with other countries and also made efforts to solve regional issues. Turkey used economic diplomacy as one of the key pillars in foreign policy planning (Grigoriadis, 2014, 164). The

embrace of the region showed that the JDP followed a liberal foreign policy approach towards the ME.

The JDP government worked hard in order to meet the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership, improving standards of political freedoms and human rights in its first term (Ibid). On the Kurdish issue, the traditional hard-line approach – a denial of Kurdish cultural and ethnic identity (Kirişçi, 2011) – has gradually changed. Cultural rights have been guaranteed, broadcasting in Kurdish allowed, and Kurdish language departments opened in certain universities. It is shown that Turkey has improved minority rights and respected the rule of law and, more importantly, no longer sees minorities as a threat. Following these developments, the government attempted to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully in its second and third terms.

The Kurdish issue is the biggest challenge for Turkey's soft power, and is regarded as Turkey's big problem (Caspian Weekly, 2009). It is believed that a hard-line approach is not the solution to the Kurdish problem. The government followed more liberal approaches: firstly, improving Kurdish cultural rights alongside minority rights; and secondly, deciding to talk with the leader and members of the PKK. The Turkish intelligence service and the PKK began secret talks in Oslo in 2009 in order to solve the issue peacefully. The so-called 'Democratic Opening' was then launched by the government in order to solve the Kurdish issue, granting minority rights alongside Kurdish rights. Lastly, the government launched a peace process between Abdullah Öcalan, pro-Kurdish party HDP officials and JDP officials at the end of 2012 (Gunter, 2013, 89). However, none of these initiatives succeeded, for various reasons. Turkey's paradigm shift on the Kurdish issue, away from the hard-line approach, showed that the JDP government promoted liberal values in domestic as well as international policies. Improving relations with Iraqi Kurds as well as with neighbours, and increasing cooperation with Iraqi Kurds in terms of energy and security, indicates that Turkey has moved away from its traditional foreign policy approach.

2.3 Turkish Foreign Policy in Brief

Historically, Turkey was a bulwark state against the Soviet Union [the USSR] during the Cold War. Turkey became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), established in 1949 after World War II. Western European countries and the US created NATO in order to create a collective defence system among the members, and particularly to prevent Soviet

expansion. Turkey played a pivotal role during the Cold War period, becoming a crucial country due to its strategic location. Following the Cold War, "declining threat perception has diminished an important rationale for Turkey's Western orientation: the defence partnership. Turkey joined the Atlantic alliance during the Cold War because this defence cooperation provided shelter against the Soviet threat" (Kardas, 2010, 117). As Kemal Kirişçi says, in the Cold War era, "Turkey's relations with its neighbourhood were limited and problematic" (2011, 42). National security was the main concern for the state elite. Therefore, they avoided engaging with Turkey's neighbours in order to keep away from conflictual zones. As Barkey says, "The change in Turkish Iraq policy was driven by both domestic factors, primarily Turkey's Kurdish question, and the ruling JDP desire to become a global player and an influential force in its neighbouring regions" (2011, 663).

Turkey changed its approaches to neighbouring countries, some of whom have non-democratic systems, especially in the Middle East. Since the early 2000s, Turkey succeeded in improving its political and economic relations with Middle Eastern countries such as Syria (which has suffered long-standing conflict), Iran and Iraq. However, Syria and Iraq have become war-torn countries since the Arab Spring in 2012. Therefore, the political map of the ME has changed rapidly.

2.4 Turkish Foreign Policy and the Middle East

As mentioned above, Turkey's ME policy was previously based on the balance of power such as it was in a bipolar world. Turkey turned its face to the West after the establishment of the Republic. Western values such as democracy and modernism were the main aim for the ruling elite and so Turkish politics were shaped in terms of these values. However, the Turkish elite tried to establish a nation state that refused any ethnicity except Turkishness. Moreover, during that period Turkey had limited contact with its neighbours due to security problems within its own borders.

The collapse of the Soviet Union provided Turkey with room for political manoeuvre within the region, and the opportunity for free trade and free movement. Its hitherto balance-of-power approach to security and defence policy with regard to ME countries has changed radically as a result. Turkey is now seen as a bridge, in terms of trade with countries in the ME and as an energy hub, from the region to Europe (Tocci, 2012, 199). Its foreign policy is based on universal values: the support of human rights, democracy and cooperation with its neighbours. The Turkish government stresses that Turkey has more common history with MENA countries than any other

global player. Former adviser to the PM Ibrahim Kalın stated that "At a time of Western confusion in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and the Middle East, Turkey feels it has a 'story', something to offer to the region" (Tocci, 2012, 210).

The commercial treaties between Turkey and its neighbourhood states increased trade volume, and contributed to foreign investment and tourism during JDP rule. Turkish soap operas have become more popular in the Arab world. As Henri Barkey says, "Turkey's Middle East Policy was based on an approach that privileged relations with existing power structures and maximised economic linkages" (2011, 12).

Turkey is the only Muslim-majority democratic country in the region. Being democratic in the Muslim world creates soft power for Turkey. The ruling elite wants to use soft power in its foreign policy. Kalın claims that "Turkey's strong economy, young population, and the cultural ties with Middle East countries and Balkans is a sign of Turkey's rising soft power in the region" (2011, 8).

As Turkey received popular support from the Arab street and increased its soft power in the region, some argue that Turkey changed its axis from the West to the ME and Asia. Cornell claims that "The distancing from the West has led Ankara closer to Moscow and Beijing – culminating in Turkey's joint military manoeuvres with China in October 2010, the first such with any country – in what has been described by AKO critics as an 'axis shift'" (2012, 14).

Turkey played a mediator role in peace talks between Israel and Syria in 2007-2008. However, negotiations ended due to the Gaza War between Israel and Hamas, which broke out on 27th December 2008. The Turkish government accused Israel of violating the peace talks and started developing a strong anti-Israeli and pro-Palestine rhetoric (Bank and Karadağ, 2013, 296). Turkey's harsh criticism of Israel and its close relations with Hamas, a terrorist organisation on the EU blacklist, was seen as a significant shift in its foreign policy approach (Kirişçi, 2012, 319). Concern was growing in the West about the Islamist background of the JDP changing Turkey's secular identity (Alessandri, 2010, 85). In an attempt to allay these fears and reassure the West, PM Davutoğlu repeatedly stressed that Turkey had Western values and was fully engaged in promoting them throughout the region: "The US and Europe should welcome [Turkey's] growing engagement in the Middle East because it [is] promoting Western values in a region largely governed by authoritarian regimes" (The Times, 2010).

2.4.1 Turkey's Foreign Policy under JDP Rule

After the Cold War, the bipolar system changed: the USSR had collapsed and the biggest challenger to NATO had vanished; thus, the new regional actors found room for manoeuvre in their region. The then Turkish President Turgut Özal (1983-1993) was determined to run an active foreign policy in the region from that moment onwards. Özal is known as the architect of Turkish foreign policy in the early post-Cold War era in the beginning of the 1990s, setting about challenging traditional TFP. He had an ambitious vision, aiming to be a big player in regional issues, especially in the Middle East, in order to get economic and political benefits for his country (Walker, 2012, 24). He often mentioned Turkey's imperial past and the Muslim brotherhood in his discourse, referring to the Ottoman legacy in the ME and the Balkans (Grigoriadis, 2014, 160). He believed that pursuing an active foreign policy would reap rich economic and political rewards, stating that, "Since developments abroad had consequences at home, isolation was not an option – Turkey would have to shape its environment if it did not want to be shaped by it" (Walker, 2012, 24). Özal broke a significant number of taboos in Turkish politics: he made an alliance with America in the Gulf War, and invited the Iraqi Kurdish leaders Barzani and Talabani to Ankara, in order to develop good relations with Kurds in Iraq. However, he encountered strong internal opposition to his policy of contact with Kurdish leaders. Many within Turkey's political elite refused to recognise the Kurds as political actors, as they were seen as a threat to national security. The connection with Kurdish leaders was one of the biggest changes Özal instituted in TFP. However, in the decade following his death in 1993, these changes were not followed through: Turkish politics remained polarised and experienced a succession of weak coalitions. The security elite maintained its dominance over politics as well as TFP.

Since 2002, Turkey has been run by the JDP, which was established in 2001. The party's founders were mainly members of the Islamist Welfare Party (WP), who had previously used rhetoric against the US and Israel and were in favour of the Islamic Union. During the JDP's founding process, however, its founders claimed to have liberal values and a different ideology to that of the WP. The JDP rapidly grew in popularity after its establishment and won the majority of seats in 2002.

From then on, the JDP proactively started to change the TFP approach towards Turkey's neighbours in the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East. Relations with its neighbours Syria and Greece had already begun to improve in the late 1990s (Kirişçi, 2011, 43). As Kardaş states, this

new approach saw Turkey "willing to play an assertive role in the management of security and economic affairs on its periphery" (2010, 116). Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problem with neighbours' policy was specifically and very openly intended to enhance Turkish influence in the region: "Our long-term vision will inspire our crisis management efforts and help shape the course of developments in our regional and global neighbourhoods" (2012, 5). According to this thinking, Turkey is a geopolitically pivotal country, bearing historical depth and the legacy of the Ottoman Empire (Davutoğlu, 2012), and it should capitalise on this in order to engender influence in its sphere (namely the Balkans, the Mediterranean, the Caucasus and the ME). In terms of foreign policy, the JDP followed a similar path to the Özal administration, aiming to strengthen economic and diplomatic relations with its neighbourhood. As Atlı says, the government "adopted the Özalian model of active state-business partnership in foreign economic relations" (2011, 116).

In 2004 Turkey gained the status of candidate state to the European Union, and in following years it began membership negotiations for EU accession. During the JDP's first term in office (2002-2007), it focused mainly on the membership process, adopting many reform packages (in areas such as education, health, and the judicial system) in order to meet EU laws and criteria (Cornell, 2012, 14). These reforms brought about many changes in terms of minority rights: state television started to broadcast in Kurdish, private Kurdish language schools were allowed to open, and Kurdish towns were given back their original names. These changes helped to improve Turkey's image both domestically and abroad, and to speed up its democratisation. However, although some chapters of negotiation were opened between Turkey and the EU, most of them were blocked by France and Greece. The drive towards membership has consequently lost momentum, and support for it has dropped to below 50% among the Turkish populace (Ibid, 17).

Since their rise to power, the JDP have made many changes to the structure of Turkish politics, promising to promote democratic values both domestically and throughout the region. They began by challenging the Kemalist elite and the dominance of the military, both of whom have always been secular, ethno-nationalist and reluctant to become involved in the ME (Greenblatt, 2013). The military used to see itself as a protector of the principles of the Turkish Republic. Between 1923 and 1980, the military carried out several coups, whenever they saw the political situation as posing a serious threat to Turkey's security and to its founding principles. However, as the JDP advanced its democratisation programme, gradually the EU, civil societies and Turkish liberals came on board to support its reform packages. Moreover, in its first term Turkey had a significant

economic growth spurt and this, coupled with its noticeable improvement of minority rights, helped to increase the party's credibility.

According to Barkey, 2007 was a major turning point for Turkey. Important events occurred that year which were to change the structure of Turkish politics. Firstly, the foreign minister Abdullah Gül, whose spouse wears the hijab, was put forward as candidate for the presidency (2011, 6). This was a first in Turkish politics, and therefore highly significant. The military Chief of Staff issued a memorandum on the subject on its website, warning the government of dire consequences. Sure enough, large demonstrations swelled around Turkey against the government. However, when the general elections took place less than three months later, the ruling party gained a decisive victory, with a clear majority (47%), and held on to power for a second term. The Turkish public had sided with the JDP on these issues and, from that point onwards, the military gradually lost ground in politics.

One of the main domestic challengers to the government had been eliminated, and thereafter the JDP was able to act more independently in its domestic and foreign policy and to fundamentally change its approach towards the KRG and the Kurdish issue. As will be examined deeply in Chapter VII, the JDP launched initiatives and a peace process with the PKK and its leader in late 2012 in order to solve the Kurdish issue of 2008, as will also be explained in Chapter VI.

In order to strengthen its position globally, Turkey had opened 34 embassies in Africa by the end of 2013 (there being 12 embassies in 2009), and become actively involved in conflict management, international development assistance and humanitarian aid missions (Hürsoy, 2013, 65). There are two reasons for opening new embassies in the world, especially in Africa: firstly, Turkey aims to increase its influence not only in its own sphere but also globally (Grigoriadis, 2014, 160). Secondly, the growing Turkish economy needs new markets for its products: Africa is a new market for Turkey.

2.4.2 Zero Problems with Neighbours

It is important to mention that Ahmet Davutoğlu became a main adviser to the Prime Minister on foreign affairs in 2002 and later became a foreign minister in 2009; he was Prime Minister between 2014 and 2016. Davutoğlu is the architect of the 'zero problems' policy first mentioned in his book 'Strategic Depth' in 2001. He was also one of the biggest contributors in Turkey's foreign

office during his service.

As mentioned above, Turkey found room for political manoeuvre in its foreign policy after the Cold War. The change occurring in the Özal era was limited due to the structure of Turkish politics. The Turkish army and the foreign policy elites thought President Özal was too adventurous. They did not support Özal's so-called 'Neo-Ottomanism' foreign policy, which aimed to "prioritise relations with Muslim countries and former Ottoman territories" (Tezcür and Grigorescu, 2014, 261, cited in Murinson, 2006). Özal's initiatives and political life could not bring change to traditional TFP, because the Turkish army elites argued that Turkey was located in a dangerous and unstable area, unsuited to political pluralism; a change in foreign policy might threaten Turkey's stability. As stated earlier, the army saw itself as the guardian of the regime (Müftüler-Bac, 2011).

Therefore, the real foreign policy change came with JDP rule in 2002, which changed the approach of the Turkish perspective on its region, especially in its second term. The JDP saw the region as an historical and natural zone of influence due to shared history and a religious affinity with neighbourhood states (Zihnioğlu and Cop, 2015). The JDP has the same vision as Turgut Özal who came to power in 1983, serving as Prime Minister until 1989, and as President between 1989 and 1993. In the Gulf War, Turkey joined the sanctions against the Saddam regime alongside the US. In 1991, the Kurdish refugee crisis arose, pushing Turkey to create a safe zone in northern Iraq (Walker, 2012, 39). In the Özal era, Turkey maintained relations with the Saddam regime and at the same time attempted to develop relations with Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq in order to eradicate PKK camps in the area (Ibid).

Davutoğlu argues that the 'zero problems with neighbours' policy aims to reduce tension with neighbours and improve economic and political relations, thereby enabling Turkey and the region to become more stable and prosperous (2001). Davutoğlu states the main principles of Turkish foreign policy: "balance between freedom and security, zero problems with neighbours, multidimensional and multi-track policies, [and] a new diplomatic discourse based on firm flexibility and rhythmic diplomacy" (Sözen, 2013, 110). According to Davutoğlu, Turkey does not belong to one identity or region, but rather takes its place where different cultures, religions and regions meet; and historically Turkey ran all these regions for centuries. Thus, Turkey bears the responsibility for the peace and stability of these regions. Moreover, it is evident that recent developments in Iraq and Syria have affected Turkey badly in economic, political and social areas.

As Davutoğlu says, “Turkey enjoys multiple identities and thus has the capacity as well as the responsibility to follow an integrated and multidimensional foreign policy. The unique combination of our history and geography brings with it a sense of responsibility. To contribute actively towards conflict resolution and international peace and security in all these areas is a call of duty arising from the depths of a multidimensional history for Turkey” (2009).

Turkey’s ‘new’ foreign policy is based on democracy, human rights, economic interdependence, common security, peace, political dialogue and stability in the region (Davutoğlu, 2010). The ‘zero problems’ policy for Turkey aims to reintegrate its region and improve its relations with neighbours in economic, cultural and political terms. In enacting this policy, Turkey brought state institutions, civil society, and business groups together and aimed to achieve security for everyone in the region (Hürsoy, 2011, 153). In the scope of this policy, Turkey began to improve its relations with its neighbours, especially Syria, Iraq, Iran and Russia (Barkey, 2011). Another aspect of Turkish policy is to become influential in the region. Therefore, Turkey involved itself in many issues in these regions and mediated many conflicts in the ME and the Mediterranean, such as the Arab-Israeli and Bosnia-Serbia conflicts, and the Shia-Sunni conflict in Iraq (Kirişçi, 2011, 43). In addition, Turkey made efforts to be an active player in global diplomacy, engaging with NGOs and INGOs such as the UN Security Council and the NATO peace operation in Afghanistan. As Davutoğlu says, “Our long-term vision will be to inspire our crisis management efforts and help shape the course of developments in our regional and global neighbourhoods” (2012). Despite Turkey’s capability and capacity limitations, it has played an active arbiter role in the region and globally (Torbakov and Ojanen, 2009).

Karadağ and Bank claim that Turkey became a regional power around 2007, not before, due to the Turkish army’s influence on politics and its struggles with the traditional Turkish elite, who are mainly pro-Kemalist. The JDP consolidated its domestic power and increased its gradual foreign policy and activism during that term (2013, 289). Up until the Arab Spring, Turkey was developing good relations with authoritarian regimes in the region such as Gaddafi’s Libya and Assad’s Syria. The protests around the MENA pushed Turkey to change its approach to these regimes.

2.4.3 Turkey, Iraq and the PKK

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 damaged Turkish-US relations because of the US's request to access Turkish land during the invasion. Before the invasion, the US military plan had been to open a gateway to northern Iraq via Turkish soil. However, the Turkish Parliament voted against the use of Turkey's air base and its land by the US during the Iraq War, and this decision disappointed the US, Turkey's close ally in the region.

From the outset, the newly elected JDP did not support the US and its coalition in their decision to invade Iraq. The main concern of the Turkish government regarding the invasion was the possibility of the creation of an independent Kurdish state within Iraq. Therefore it kept a watchful eye on the movements of Kurdish groups within Iraq, and especially on the rising threat of the PKK. The changing status of the Iraqi Kurds would inevitably have a direct impact on Kurds in Turkey. Any Kurdish uprising or mobilisation would threaten Turkey's security and stability. Kurdish movements in northern Iraq have the sympathy of Kurds in Turkey; the latter had closely followed the Iraqi Kurdish leaders Masoud Barzani and Talabani in their long struggle with the Saddam regime. On the opposing side, however, the Turkish government continued to make the same declarations about Iraq's territorial integrity as it did prior to 2003 (Laundgren, 2007, 108). It was also concerned by the close relations between the Bush administration and the Kurdish leaders, and the implications for a de facto Kurdish state in Iraq, as will be explained deeply in following chapters. However, these concerns were eventually allayed when the US openly stated that they were against the split of Iraq and the creation of an independent Kurdish state (Lundgren, 2007, 106).

The relations between Turkey and Kurdish leaders were limited and based on the eradication of PKK camps in the region. Turkey had formerly viewed the Kurdish movement as a threat to its national security, being concerned that political developments in Iraq could spark its own Kurdish population's move for independence. The US invasion of Iraq altered the political structure of Iraq, and the Kurds gained autonomy in the region in 2005. So, Turkey significantly altered its foreign policy towards the KRG in 2008. It is a turning point for Turkey to recognise the KRG as a political entity in Iraq (Walker, 2012). Moreover, the president of the KRG, Masoud Barzani, changed his rhetoric toward Turkey, encouraging Turkish companies to invest and trade with the KRG (Walker, 2012, 47).

Prior to and during the invasion, Turkey had always argued that the structure of Iraq is complicated; it is made up of different sectarian, ethnic and religious groups who are all differently politically motivated. Invasion could trigger division, Shia-Sunni conflict and sectarian war. Therefore, Turkey's main policy towards Iraq was always to support territorial integrity and stability (Müftüler-Bac, 2014, 538).

According to Müftüler-Bac, the transformation process in Iraq since 2003 led Turkey to reconsider its policies in view of the extremely uncertain road ahead and the involvement of external actors in Iraqi politics (2014, 540). As Davutoğlu states, whilst the "Iraq war created risks for Turkey, this type of international issue creates risks and advantages at the same time" (Matthews, 2001, cited in Müftüler-Bac, 2014, 540). Turkey's revised assessment of the risks, its new 'zero problems with neighbours', its active foreign policy and the KRG's new positions created fresh common ground for both actors. Moreover, the tools of this new foreign policy approach, which aims to establish good neighbouring relations, are diplomacy and economic engagement rather than military might (Müftüler-Bac, 2014, 540). Since the post-Saddam era, Turkey actively engaged with the Iraq market, with building companies in particular signing big projects in the KRG. Turkish exports to Iraq increased from $829 million in 2003 to over $8 billion in 2010, so the fall of Saddam provided an opportunity for Turkey to enter freely into the Iraq market (Barkey, 2011, 6).

Iraq is the one of the most violent countries in the world, with a critical sectarian civil war continuing between Sunni and Shia forces. The withdrawal of the US military created a power vacuum and the Iran-backed al-Maliki government's sectarian policies isolated other political entities such as Kurdish and Sunni groups. Ankara actively supported all political groups to participate in elections, especially Sunni groups (Müftüler-Bac, 2014, 544-545). The Iraqi government accused Ankara of intervening in its internal affairs with support to Sunni groups (Jamestown, 2012). But Turkey-Iraq central government relations had started to deteriorate since the 2010 elections; the al-Maliki government sentenced Deputy Prime Minister Sunni Tariq al-Hashimi and other officials to death in 2012, and Hashimi self-exiled to Turkey. Ankara strongly criticised the al-Maliki government for becoming authoritarian and sectarian (Erkmen, 2013, 50). Since then, Iraq has experienced civil war between Sunni and Shia groups; some terrorist groups, such as Islamic State, received support from Sunni tribes. Turkish-Iraqi relations will be explained further in Chapter VII.

2.4.4 Turkey and Syria

Historically, Turkish-Syrian relations have been turbulent for various reasons, including Syrian demands for Hatay Province, which became a Turkish city in 1939 by referendum, and water-sharing issues between them. Thus, the Assad regime supported the PKK, providing a safe haven, a training camp and equipment in Syria from the early 1980s to 1998. The Syrian government's ignoring of Turkey's demands regarding the PKK brought them to the brink of war in 1998. However, bilateral relations started to improve with high officials' visits at the beginning of the 2000s, while the leader of the PKK was deported from Syria. But the good relations between them did not last long. An uprising in Syria began in March 2011 due to the Assad regime's rejections of political reform and oppression of peaceful protests.

Sheltering the PKK became the biggest issue between the two neighbours and the main tool for Damascus to use against Ankara. Syria was identified as hostile to Turkey until 1999 in the Adana Accord, which accused President Assad of providing a safe haven for the PKK militias as well as training by Syrian officials inside Syrian territory (Barkey, 2011, 4). In regard to the water issue, the Syrian regime accused Turkey of failing to distribute enough Euphrates River water to Syria. It is claimed that Turkey did not release enough Euphrates water and built new dams on the river. Prime Minister Özal visited Syria in 1987 and both countries signed an agreement that Turkey would guarantee the release of a certain amount of Euphrates water (Hinnebusch and Tur, 2013). The long-standing tensions and mutual mistrust between the two countries and Ankara's persistent allegations that the Syrian regime provided both logistical and strategic support to the PKK posed a challenge for improvements in relations between them (Lawson, 2012). President Özal's visit and signed agreement did not help to improve relations in either country. Relations between Syria and the PKK will be explained in depth in Chapter V.

In 1998, the Turkish government publicly threatened Syria with military intervention if they continued to shelter the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. Ankara deployed 10,000 Turkish troops near the Syrian border, and the Turkish military commander called on Damascus to expel the PKK militia and its leader (Mercan, 2005). As a result of this threat from Turkey, the Syrian government expelled Öcalan. He was captured within a year in Kenya by a Turkish Intelligence and CIA joint operation on 15th February 1999. Öcalan's expulsion made it easier to improve the bilateral relations, as in 1998 Turkey and Syria set up the Adana security record which aims towards cooperation on security. This agreement was a milestone for the new chapter of Turkish-Syria

relations (MFA). Since 1998, relations between both countries improved rapidly until the beginning of 2011, when civil war erupted in Syria. Furthermore, Altunışık and Tur state that changing global and regional dynamics concerning events such as the Kurdish Issue and the Iraq War also led both countries to cooperate and improve relations with each other (2006).

The Turkish president attended the funeral of President Hafiz al-Assad in 2000 and his son Bashar al-Assad became the president of Syria. The attendance of the Turkish president at the funeral was a sign of close cooperation between them. In 2004, Bashar Assad visited Turkey and announced that the creation of a Kurdish state was a red line for both countries, indicating his cooperation with Turkey on the Kurdish issue. It is an important fact that the Turkish president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, visited Damascus in 2005, although the US and France put pressure on Turkey to distance itself from the Syrian regime due to the assassination of Lebanese PM Harriri. The Turkish and Syrian foreign ministers signed an accord that ended visa requirements between both states in September 2009 in Istanbul. Moreover, the High Level Cooperation Council (HLSCC) was declared during Assad's visit to Turkey on 16th September 2009. The HLSCC, another milestone in relations for both countries, aimed towards closer cooperation on several issues (MFA). With these agreements, trade volume between these countries increased significantly from $824 million in 2003 to $1.84 billion in 2010.

In 2011, the uprisings around the Arab World and the MENA spread to Syria on 15th March in the city of Daraa. Turkey warned the Syrian regime to make democratic reforms in order to respond to the people's demands. According to Turkish officials, Bashar Assad was initially willing to launch reforms: however, the security elite, including his mother, were against any political changes (Respondent 5). Thus, Assad refused any political reforms and has been using violence against the Syrian people. Therefore, Turkey has cut all relations with Assad, taking position against Damascus and supporting the opposition groups.

2.5 The Arab Uprising and Turkey

The uprisings in the MENA first started in Tunisia in 2011 and then spread to other MENA countries. The so-called 'Arab street' was a protest against cruel and authoritarian regimes in the MENA. The people of the Arab world demanded dignity, good governance and respect for human rights (Keyman and Aras, 2015, 249). However, a change of course did not come smoothly but

rather with inevitable turmoil and violence. Long-lasting oppressive regimes were overthrown, only for sectarian conflicts to rise up in their place, with all sorts of militia groups and religious factions entering the fray, and some countries descending into full-blown civil war. Many countries in the region are still unstable and facing economic difficulties, whilst civil wars continue to rage in Syria and Yemen. Thus the whole political landscape of the region has been utterly overturned and vastly complicated, hardly presenting the promising picture many had hoped for at the beginning of the Arab Spring. It has also brought great challenges to TFP in the ME due to Turkey's hitherto warm ties and economic relations with these countries (Barkey, 2011, 10; Dalacoura, 2011, 76).

According to Ziya Öniş, Turkey faced ethical dilemmas in the cases of Syria and Libya (2012, 46). At the beginning of the uprisings in Syria, Turkey tried using diplomatic channels to pressurise the Assad regime into making democratic reforms, rather than standing with its Western allies, who insisted that Assad must be ousted (Dalacoura, 2012, 76; Respondent 5). However, when the Syrian regime refused to meet any of Turkey's demands for reform, the Turkish government changed track and switched its support to the opposition forces in Syria. Similarly, in the case of Libya, Turkey also did not preliminarily support NATO intervention due to its economic relations with the regime, but later did indeed join the coalition forces (Barkey, 2011, 10; Dalacoura, 2012, 76).

Turkey's activism in the region before the outbreak of the Arab Spring has been well documented. Turkey was involved in many conflict resolutions in Lebanon, Iraq, and Sudan, and launched initiatives towards Armenia in 2009 in order to restore relations. The outbreak of the Arab Spring changed every country's foreign policy, including Turkey's. Previously its government had always had warm relations with regimes in the MENA, even though most were autocratic and some even brutal against their own people. As mentioned above, Turkey's foreign policy was based on the promotion of human rights and democracy, support of free trade and free movement, and stability in the region. So, we may say that Turkey's approach was one of "integrationist vision through cooperation and dialogue over the past decade" (Turhan and Yorulmazlar, 2015, 387).

Since then, however, the cycle of turbulence in the region has overturned Turkey's hopes for regional leadership in the ME (Turhan and Yorulmazlar, 2015, 345). Turkey had always supported the liberalisation of the Arab World in the long term. The former had hoped that other MENA

countries would take Turkey as a model of how Islam and democracy can co-exist successfully. If they had done so, Turkey's economic and diplomatic affairs with these countries would also have improved (Öniş, 2012, 45). However, unprecedented developments in the region such as the Syrian Civil War and the ousting of Egypt's elected president Mursi irrevocably changed all political positions in the area.

As a critic of the JDP's foreign policy approach, Ziya Öniş states that "the JDP's soft-power-based foreign policy, polarised as "zero problems with neighbours" strategy, faced ethical dilemmas prior to the onset of the Arab Spring" (2012, 46). Since then, political transitions in the MENA have become more complicated and even brutal, as too many actors have become involved in the conflicts. Global and regional powers have failed to halt violence in the ME, and its chaotic situation poses great challenges to Turkey, with more than 3 million refugees in its land, and PKK-affiliated insurgency (the PYD) in northern Syria gaining ground with the help of the US.

2.6 Turkish Foreign Policy, Liberalism and Realism

There are numerous discussions about TFP principles. During the bipolar Cold War era, Turkey's foreign policy was mainly based on the principle of the balance of power in order to secure its national interests against the Soviet Union. This is called the realpolitik doctrine of foreign policy. For many decades, Turkey followed these policies, in which priorities for states are security and sovereignty. As Kardaş says, "Turkey was eager to serve as a 'pivotal' country to facilitate Western penetration into the Black Sea, Caucasus and Central Asia" (2010, 117). The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Turkey's declining threat perception has provided an environment in the ME and the Balkans to restore its relations and cooperation with its neighbours on different topics.

There has been a significant policy change during JDP rule which embraces neighbours and the former Soviet Bloc, aiming towards negotiations instead of conflict even with Armenia and Syria. Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problem with neighbours' policy is based on improving cultural ties, increasing trade, cooperating on regional issues, strengthening civil society, lifting visa requirements and supporting human rights. These are the main principles of liberalism. As he says, "we will work towards the establishment of a more peaceful and prosperous regional order and support people's quest for basic human rights and democracy. We will stand against those

regimes that seek to deny and suppress such legitimate demands through coercion" (2012).

"A 'traditional' realist perspective, emphasising clear material interests (involving both security and economic concerns) as the main determinants of Turkey's foreign policy, offers valuable insights regarding Turkey's relations with its neighbours and have other states in its region" (Tezcür and Grigorescu, 2014, 262). According to realism, material interests drive conflict and neighbouring states are seen as a threat. However, in liberalism, material interests drive states towards alignment, and neighbouring states are seen as potentials for cooperation in shared interests. So, Turkey and Syria were enemies in a bipolar world, but Turkey changed its traditional realist hard power policy that balanced against threats from the ME (Tür and Hinnebusch, 2013, 5).

As mentioned above, this change "is a radical departure from the conventional view that Turkey is surrounded by enemy countries against which it should be prepared to defend itself" (Dagi, 2009, cited in Çöp and Zihnioğlu, 2015, 2). According to Kalın, during the JDP era, Turkish foreign policy has been based on three main principles, namely: "political and economical justice, the balance of power and freedom, and economic development as a tool strengthening bilateral relations" (2011, 14). As Kemal Kirişçi says, "Turkey's decision to encourage 'flow of people, trade, and ideas' suggests that it is abandoning the 'realist view of balance of power, and a zero-sum understanding' of international relations, in favour of a 'liberal idea of opening and interdependence' (2011, 45). Tocci and Walker state that Turkey's mediation efforts and the promotion of peace and integration in the region means abandoning a realist understanding of its policy (2010).

There are some criticisms of the TFP by Western allies that Turkey had good relations with the autocratic Assad and Qaddafi regimes before the Arab Spring. Turkey has improved its economic and political relations with those countries; trade volume between Turkey and those countries was, respectively, over $2 billion in 2010 (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and $2.3 billion in 2009 (Turkey Exporting Community). During uprisings in Libya, Turkey initially did not support NATO's intervention, but then joined the coalition. Another disparity emerged on the Russian-Georgian war in 2008: Turkey limited passage for an American warship through the Black Sea to avoid confrontation with Russia. Furthermore, Iran's nuclear issue, dealing with Russia in the region, and the Syrian War has shown that Turkey's international relations differ from Western policies (Kardas, 2010, 116). While Western countries are situated in areas that constitute stable

neighbourhoods, the geography of Turkey incorporates one of the most conflictual regions in the world, bordering failed states such as Syria and Iraq. In addition, there are some questions as to "Turkey's viability as a NATO member state" (David Shenker, cited in Mufti, 2011) due to its policies. It is claimed that the JDP's harsh criticism of Israel's policies signals Turkey's axis shift. However, Davutoğlu's 'zero problems' policy aimed to follow multidimensional foreign policy based on geography, economy and culture.

All in all, while recent developments challenged Turkey's 'zero problems with neighbours' policy and its soft power image, the uncertainties in Turkey-EU relations, the Arab Spring, and broken relations with Israel have challenged Turkey's foreign policy rhetoric (Hürsoy, 2011, 140). These facts are the main obstacles to Davutoğlu's liberal 'strategic depth' doctrine. The JDP pursued neoliberal policies domestically and abroad to strengthen its bilateral relations with its neighbours. It implemented public diplomacy in its foreign policy under the leadership of the JDP until 2011. The Arab Spring challenged the 'zero problems with neighbours' policy: relations with Syria, Iraq and Egypt deteriorated as a result of developments in those countries.

Conclusion

Turkey has undergone major transformations during the JDP era in a number of ways. One of them has been the shift in the domestic balance of power. The power centre shifted from the military to politicians, and new political elites emerged in the form of business associations. These have become a toolkit of the JDP's foreign policy to engage with neighbouring states. Between 2002 and 2011, Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, as well as Turkish domestic politics, experienced huge transformations regarding mentality, identity and rhetoric under the leadership of the ruling party. During this time, Turkey was a rapidly rising country in the ME with its soft power image (Ekşi, 2016, 11).

The new civil society has weighed in with its influence in domestic politics, and groups such as business associations have helped to transform Turkey's foreign policy agenda in parallel with Turkey's liberalisation (Bank and Karadağ, 2013, 289). Turkey's foreign policy is based on mutual gain through economic interdependence and close political relations with regional states. The aim of TFP was to boost the economy and cooperation on various issues. Öniş argues that TFP "towards political liberalization in the Arab world is likely to boost Turkey's economic and

diplomatic ties and will enhance the relevance of the 'Turkish experience,' as a point of reference for the region" (2012, 45). Muharrem Ekşi states that the JDP government used Islamic identity and rhetoric to open spaces in the ME for its goods (2016, 15). Ankara's new foreign policy initiatives made Turkey a regional power, until the Arab Spring.

The JDP succeeded in disempowering the security elite and the military headquarters from politics within a decade (2002-2010). The JDP's consolidation of power within the country paved the way towards opening a new foreign policy approach. It is argued that "with the JDP's domestic consolidation ha[s] come its gradual foreign policy shifts and increased regional activism in the Middle East" (Bank and Karadağ, 2013, 289). In the JDP's first term (2002-2007), the EU's accession process aided the JDP to increase its profile in foreign policy as well as in domestic politics: "The European Union (EU) accession process enabled the JDP to stabilise its political position and, in a way, was instrumentalized as a tool of domestic transformation" (Turhan and Yorulmazlar, 2015, 338, cited in Yavuz, 2016). The EU accession process also enabled Turkey to engage in dialogue, cooperation, rule of law and economic interdependence in its foreign policy.

During the JDP's second term (2007-2011), Ankara accepted the Iraqi Kurds as a political entity and increased trade volume and energy cooperation as well as security. The approach of the Iraqi Kurds has changed in parallel with Ankara's Kurdish initiatives in Turkey. Neither Iraqi Kurds nor Turkey's own Kurds are seen as a threat to Turkey's national security. The dramatic change of Turkey's Kurdish policy has showed that Ankara has abandoned its hard-line approach. It has focused on minority rights and the Kurds have greatly benefited under JDP rule since 2002. However, the Arab Spring and the rise of the PKK in Syria and Iraq after 2014 have started to challenge existing powers in the region.

The 'zero problems' policy of the then Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu viewed neighbours from a framework of cooperation and shared interests instead of a source of conflict. Ian Lesser argues that "Turkey is a security-conscious society in which territorial defines and internal security remain priorities for the political class, the military, and the public" (2004, 90). The aim of 'zero problems with neighbours' is a de-securitisation policy, rather than applying power threats (Ekşi, 2016, 56). Between 2002 and 2011, the JDP government signed foreign trade agreements with ME countries and aimed to create a free trade zone like the EU (Ibid). According to Davutoğlu's doctrine, Turkey's domestic and international problems should be resolved instantly, including the Kurdish issue and any problems with its neighbours.

Until the Arab Spring, Turkey's interest in the Middle East was motivated in terms of economics, trade and investments in order to create a stable neighbourhood. The Arab Spring significantly challenged Turkey's 'zero problem' policy and its soft power, and significant constraints were imposed on its policy objectives. More importantly, the region has become an unstable conflict zone, challenging Turkey's security as well as that of its neighbours.

Peaceful protests in countries such as Libya, Syria and Yemen became civil war. At the beginning of the protests, Turkey favoured peaceful transformation within those countries and asked the authoritarian regimes for political reforms. However, those regimes responded harshly to the protesters and so Turkey took a position against them. The attempt to play a mediator role and "exert its soft power to induce gradual, step-by-step political opening in Syria" (Önis, 2012, 53) was unsuccessful. As Aras and Yorulmazlar state, "The initial public support for democratic reform has been overshadowed by a growing sense of insecurity and instability" (2014, 113-4). Therefore, Turkey's soft power in the region faded following the Arab Spring, and new security challenges emerged.

Chapter III: Turkey's Energy Security and the Middle East

Introduction

Energy security has a very significant place in state foreign policy agendas, especially for developing and energy-poor countries, for whom securing cheap and reliable supplies is vital in terms of their economic future. On the other side of the balance, energy-rich countries such as Russia use their energy as a foreign policy tool against others (Stegen, 2011). The Caspian region and the Middle East (Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Turkmenistan) are rich in energy and are the main energy suppliers to Turkey and Europe.

As will be illustrated, Turkey's own natural resources are far from sufficient to meet its energy demands. Consequently, it has long been importing its energy, especially oil and gas, mainly from the Middle East and the Caspian region. Within this sphere, although Ankara has roller-coaster relations with Russia due to disputes over regional issues such as the Syrian conflict, Russia is still Turkey's biggest gas supplier and an important economic trade partner. Despite recent volatility in the region, Ankara's successful initiatives with regional countries to create oil and gas pipeline projects have meant that its energy demands have been met thus far.

Over the last decade, Turkey's energy demands have been on the rise, in tandem with its economic growth (Güney, 2015, 37). Turkey needs to diversify its energy and secure reliable sources for the future of its economy. It is for this reason that Ankara wants to strengthen economic and political ties with its energy-rich neighbours: to achieve stability and secure its energy routes. As Biresselioğlu says: "Since Turkey is planning to undertake the role of 'Energy Corridor', to transit the rich hydrocarbon resources of the East into the Western energy markets, it requires adequate relations with its neighbours and partners around the region" (2011, 101). Therefore, Turkey has radically changed its foreign policy approach, engaging more actively with its neighbours over the last decade (Han, 2011, 603). Thus the foreign policy of the JDP has always been to strengthen bilateral relations and increase cooperation with regional countries.

Although Turkey is an energy-poor country in terms of oil and natural gas reserves, it has a strategic place amidst the big energy producers and energy markets. It lies between the world's biggest energy producer regions – the Middle East, Caucasus and Russia – and one of the biggest consumers: the European Union (Tekin and Walterova, 2007, 84). The Middle East and the

Caspian region have between them more than 70% of the proven oil and gas reserves of the world. According to the International Energy Agency's report in 2006, 46% of global oil supplies are subject to trade between regions and this is predicted to rise to 63% by 2030. The figure for gas is set to increase from 23% to 26% by 2030 (Bayrac, 2010, 117). Bilgin argues that aspiring to become an energy-hub country means "relying on further transit projects to realise this ambition" (2011, 399). Thus, thanks to its prime location, Turkey has gained huge geopolitical importance in recent years as a transit country, and this importance will be enhanced ever further with the creation of new pipeline projects.

As I will discuss in Chapter VI, Ankara even attempted to solve its biggest historical problem – the Kurdish issue – in order to fortify its position in the region, and to that end started negotiating with the PKK. Indeed, Ankara realised that without settling the Kurdish issue, it would be harder to achieve its foreign policy, as the PKK would become a stronger non-state actor in Turkey and its neighbourhood, including Iraq, Syria and Iraq. As Çiçek says, the peaceful settlement of the Kurdish issue is a condition for Turkey to become an active player in the energy market and the region (2013, 248). In addition, solving the Kurdish issue in Turkey would strengthen both Ankara and the KRG's positions as the PKK constitutes a main threat for each. Mills argues that "Kurdistan's (KRG) energy resources make it an important economic and strategic partner for Turkey in the region, but also involve Ankara in the complexities of intra-Iraq politics" (2013, 51). However, as Respondent 1 and 5 posit, "the security elite were against the Kurdish opening and peace process. They argued that the peace talks would legitimate the PKK terrorist organisations in the eyes of an international arena. They also believed that the only way to tackle the PKK is a military defeat". It is important to note that in order to achieve to become an energy hub country and energy security Turkey needs to deal with the KRG and the PKK. As it will be the subject of discuss in next chapters, the PKK is capable to destabilise the region. One of the aim of this thesis is to research how Turkey needs to enhance its relations with the KRG and tackle the Kurdish issue in Turkey to reach its ambitions.

Respondent 4 stated that "having warm relations with Iraqi Kurds brought some benefits for Turkey, such as securing energy security and winning the hearts and minds of Kurds in the region. Following the 2007 elections, the government consolidated its power and expelled the security elite from politics. And then, the Kurdish opening was launched in 2008. Barzani is one of the respected leaders among Kurds; he can play a crucial role in dealing with Kurds". As Barkey says,

"Improving relations with the KRG as a first step in initiating a peace process would necessarily come to entail the wrestling of the Kurdish file away from the security forces and, in the process, reducing their hold – even if only partially – on policymaking in general and on power more broadly" (2015, 3). In this chapter the importance of the KRG in Turkey's energy policies and its role in tackling the Kurdish issue will be analysed.

3.1 Turkey's Energy Security Policies

Energy security is variously defined in the literature. Some express "energy security as a condition in which a nation and all, or most, of its citizens and business have access to sufficient energy resources at reasonable prices for the foreseeable future from serious risk of major disruption of service" (Barton, Redgwell, Ronne and Zillman, 2004). Moreover, Dyer and Trombetta state that "energy security is in association with national security and defines the continuous availability of energy in varied forms, in sufficient quantities and at affordable prices" (cited in Pavlovic, Filipovic and Radonovic, 2016, 2). Herewith energy security has different definitions; in other words, the country's geographic situation, regional developments and political stability within the neighbourhood are main factors that must be considered in designating a country's energy security. Therefore, these factors, mentioned above, create different priorities in developing an energy security plan. Bilgin states that "Turkey's energy security is based on the availability of resources at affordable prices and sustainable process" (2015, 68). Hence, Turkey has been seeking to improve relations with energy-rich countries in order to get sustainable energy flow; more significantly, building oil and gas pipelines will provide cheaper energy for developing Turkey's economy as well as helping its strategic location. Hence, in order to achieve these gains Turkey needs stability, both domestically and in its neighbourhood.

Safe and uninterrupted flow of oil and gas is vital for Turkey's energy security. Moreover, "diversifying import sources and routes is the cornerstone of Turkey's gas security policy" (IEA, 2009). Thus, Turkey's foreign policy with its neighbours and energy suppliers to pipelines takes its place as an important priority. According to Babali, "Energy cooperation is certainly seen as the key policy with which to promote interdependency and deepen relations between Turkey and its neighbours" (2010, 150).

Turkey has been producing oil in the Batman and Adıyaman provinces in the south east of the

country; production has been 61,000 b/d of petroleum and other liquids, estimated as only 9% of its oil consumption in 2014. It is expected that Turkey's crude oil imports will double over the next decade (IEA, 2015). The oil has been carried via pipeline from Batman to Dörtyol – Southern Turkey – in order to be used domestically.

Although bearing the advantage of geostrategic location and planned oil and gas pipeline projects, Turkey faces some difficulties in the region: the conflicts in the Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh-disputed territory, the attacks on energy infrastructure by terrorists (the PKK), and security concerns in its neighbourhood (Winrow, 2013, 146). These conflicts have threatened the stability of both the region and the projects. The pipelines (BTC and Kirkuk-Yumurtalik), for instance, were sabotaged several times by the PKK terrorists in Eastern Turkey. The PKK terrorist group has attacked the pipelines, pump stations, refineries and Turkish-Iranian gas pipeline more than 20 times since 2004 (Luft and Korin, 2009, 24). These attacks cost millions of dollars to both exporter and importer countries. The KRG Minister of Housing and Reconstruction said that the sabotage carried out by the PKK on 18 February 2016 cost $14 million a day (Rudaw, 2016).

It has been clearly seen that the PKK's presence and attacks on pipelines constitute a threat to Turkey's energy imports from Middle Eastern countries, especially from Iraq and the KRG. They are also a threat to the KRG and its stability within Iraq. It is also important to note that the KRG's revenue comes from central government and its oil exports via Turkey. Thus, the sabotage to energy-exporting facilities put the KRG in an economically hard situation. The PKK has long struggled with Masoud Barzani in northern Iraq in order to increase its influence. The KCK (Koma Civaken Kurdistan), an umbrella organisation of the PKK, said they would not accept the KRG's energy deal with Turkey (Rudaw, 2016). Furthermore, the lack of unity among Iraqi Kurdish parties and political uncertainty within the KRG caused a delay in investments into the energy sector. The economic and political relations between the KRG and Turkey is explained in depth in Chapter VII.

3.1.1 Turkey's Energy Demands (Gas and Oil)

Turkey's energy reserves are short of meeting demand: natural resources have met 25% of its energy demand, and the rest is being imported (MFA). According to the International Energy

Agency's 2009 report, Turkey's energy use is low despite its young and urbanising population. This means that the government's main policy is to ensure sufficient energy supply for its growing economy (IEA, 2009): Turkey is the 17th biggest economy in the world and its economy growth rate was over 5% between 2010 and 2015 (World Bank).

According to IEA, offshore and shale reserves may supply Turkey's oil demand in future (2015). Turkish state company TPAO and Shell began exploratory drilling in the Black Sea in January 2015 (Tattersall, 2012). In addition, there may be large reserves under the Aegean Sea. However, this is uncertain due to a territorial dispute between Turkey and Greece (IEA, 2015). Hence, Turkey has been looking to find ways to conduct coastal oil and gas exploration.

Turkey's entire energy consumption is compounded of 35% gas, 28.5% coal, 27% petrol, 7% hydro and 2.5% renewable energy (MFA). Natural gas took first place in energy consumption in Turkey in 2014 (EPDK, 2015). However, Turkey has very limited resources; only 1% of its gas consumption has been provided for within the country. Gas consumption increased significantly from 20.9 bcm to 45.6 bcm between 2003 and 2013. World demand for gas has also been increasing significantly. Turkey was the one of the biggest-growing gas markets in the EU between 2000 and 2009 (IEA, 2009). Turkey is also heavily dependent on Russia in natural gas, with more than half of its gas (54.76%) imported from Russia, while 18.13% comes from Iran, 12.33% from Azerbaijan, and 8.48% from Algeria and others (EPDK, 2015). Turkey produces its electricity from 37.5% gas, 28.4% coal, 25% hydraulic, 4.4% wind and 1.3% geothermal energy sources (MFA).

On the other side, in 2015 Turkey imported approximately 89% of its oil demand from Iraq (31%), Iran (30%), Saudi Arabia (12%), Nigeria (10%) and Kazakhstan (9%) (MFA). It is clear that the main oil exporters to Turkey are the Middle Eastern countries and that different routes and sources are used for oil importation. Oil is carried generally by the pipelines between Turkey and neighbouring countries. Kirkuk-Yumurtalık is the first oil pipeline project between Iraq and Turkey; the pipeline began carrying oil in 1977. Turkey's main energy export routes are the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık petrol pipeline and the Baku-Tiflis-Erzurum gas pipeline (BTE).

Turkey's growing economy has increased energy demand and it is projected that Turkey's energy demand in coming years will be 6-8% annually (Enerji ve Su İşleri). The satisfaction of Turkey's energy needs is one of Ankara's primary concerns and the ambition to become an energy-hub

country is secondary (Winrow, 2013, 145). Therefore, the rapid growth in energy demand has been pushing Turkey to take concrete action in energy efficiency. The agreements and pipeline projects with the Caspian and Middle Eastern countries has strengthened Turkey's role as a transit country. This will be explained further in later sections.

As will be explained in depth, the KRG and its untapped energy resources near the Turkish border would provide large amounts of gas to Turkey. Respondents 2 and 4 stated that "energy deals between Turkey and the KRG would enhance relations between both actors. More importantly, Barzani would increase his power in the eyes of Kurds, as the KRG becomes stronger economically. However, the PKK is still one of the biggest challenges against the deal".

3.1.2 Turkey's Energy Diversity Policies

Energy Minister Taner Yıldız revealed in 2010 that Turkey's main energy policy strategies were to diversify its sources and routes for energy security; to increase the proportion of renewable energy by reducing fossil fuel consumption and by investing in nuclear energy as an alternative source; and to increase the productivity of energy and contribute to European energy security (MFA). Moreover, Turkey's ambition to become an energy-hub country is another important foreign policy agenda.

Although projections showed that the consumption of oil and gas would increase for the next decade, there are alternatives, such as nuclear energy and renewables, for Turkey to diversify its energy sources. Ankara has ambitions to diversify its energy mixes, decreasing the share of fossil fuels and increasing renewable energy. The European Commission and the IEA project that the EU's gas demand will increase in the future. Therefore, the EU is willing to diversify its sources via Turkey through pipeline projects (Bilgin, 2011, 412).

Nuclear energy is one of Turkey's important projects in aiming to diversify its sources. It is projected that to establish Akkuyu Nuclear Power Station in Southern Turkey and Sinop Nuclear Power Station in northern Turkey will cost Turkey about $20 billion each (Energy Ministry, 2016). In 2010, Turkey and Russia signed an agreement to establish Akkuyu Power Station through the Russian Rosatam Nuclear Enerji Company. It is estimated that the power station will be finished by 2022, and will provide 10-12% of Turkey's energy demand (BBC Türkçe, 2015). The power

station will be built by a joint consortium of Japanese and French companies, and is planned to start operations by 2023 (Energy Ministry, 2016).

Renewables are another energy source for diversifying the energy policies of Turkey. Turkey has huge potential in renewable energy: the main sources are solar and wind power, hydroelectric, geothermal, biomass, wave and flow energy (MENR). However, it needs to improve its energy infrastructure, change regulations and increase the awareness of investors (Ibid). According to Ankara's Energy Strategy Plan of 2010-2014, it is projected that renewable energy (especially hydro, wind and solar energy) would meet 30% of Turkey's electricity demand by 2030 (Yıldız, 2010, 15). In order to reach these targets Ankara plans huge investment into energy infrastructure, together with pipeline projects (Bilgin, 2011, 399).

3.2 Turkey's Strategic Location as an Energy Hub

As mentioned above, Turkey is one of the biggest energy importer countries. However, its location is highly advantageous with regard to its aspirations of becoming a major energy-transit country. Naturally, Ankara wants to maximise this advantage when making deals with regional countries: in return for importing their gas and oil to other markets via pipeline projects through its territory, Turkey hopes to secure reliable and reasonably-priced energy for its own growing economy. Indeed, the Turkish government has been very successful in brokering agreements on pipeline projects between Ankara and Russia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, the Caspian region and Turkmenistan. (IAE, 2009).

Obviously, stability and security in the region are a key factor for Turkey, if it is to fulfil its ambitions of becoming a major energy hub. As explained in Chapter II, Turkey's vision is to increase its role in the neighbouring region, promote peace and stability, and increase trade volume. Babali describes Turkish foreign policy towards its neighbourhood as "proactive" and "visionary", rather than reactive, as it had been before, and "energy cooperation is certainly seen as the key policy with which to promote interdependency and deepen relations" (2010, 150). As Bilgin says, Turkey aims to gain benefits from the growing regional energy trade and seeks to consolidate its geopolitical position with East-West and North-South pipelines (2011, 400).

There is another reason why pipeline projects are vitally important for Turkey's future: the Turkish

Straits are a major waterway for the oil trade. In 2013, about 2.9 million b/d of petroleum liquids were carried from Russia and the Caspian region by tankers (IEA, 2015). This means roughly 3% of the world's oil was carried via the Turkish straits (MFA, 2008). However, being one of the busiest waterways in the world obviously carries with it a high risk of environmental disaster (i.e. oil slicks). Therefore, it is logical that Turkey should want to reduce oil traffic in the Straits by contracting new pipeline projects.

Ceyhan, on the Mediterranean in the south of Turkey, is the country's largest energy port and one of the biggest in the world. It currently carries more than 1 million barrels of crude oil to the global market. Ankara is planning to construct a petrol refinery, LNG terminal and petrochemical plant there, in order to make Ceyhan the energy centre of the region (MFA, 2008). It is one of Ankara's main ambitions to maximise imports of Middle Eastern and Caspian oil to the world market via Ceyhan. The target for 2020 is that "the Ceyhan Energy terminal and other integrated facilities [will] deal with about three to four percent of global natural gas supply, and about five to six percent of global oil supply" (Yidiz, 2010, 17). The major oil terminal at Ceyhan will thus fulfil Turkey's energy transit hub ambitions, and what is more, it will strengthen its energy security for the future.

In addition, it is important to note that Turkey's ambition to become an energy-hub country is also being supported by the EU. The EU needs to diversify its gas demand; therefore pipeline projects via Turkish land are in its favour. It is clear that Russia is using its energy resources in order to consolidate its power domestically and internationally (Gomart, 2011; Zambetakis and Pascual, 2010, 21). The dispute between Russia and Ukraine showed how the former can play its gas card against the EU (Yorkan, 2009, 27). In 2014, 37.5% of the EU's gas came from Russia via pipelines (EUROSTAT, 2016), which was about 25% of its gas consumption (Winrow, 2013, 149). Thus, Caspian gas is vital if the EU is to reduce its dependency on Russia. Young says that the EU's oil dependency in general will increase from 52% in 2003 to 95% by 2030, and that dependency on gas will increase from 36% to 84% in the same timeframe (2009, 2).

Iran has the second biggest gas reserves in the world after Russia. There is a gas pipeline between Iran and Turkey that has been operating since 2001 (Migdalovitz, 2008, 8). Although Iran is the second biggest gas supplier to Turkey at present, there is huge potential for importing Iranian gas to European markets via Turkey in future, if the current UN sanctions are lifted. The global energy

market has focused Iran's natural resources. The UN imposed sanctions on Iran's natural gas and oil due to its nuclear enrichment programme; the finalisation of Iran's nuclear deal agreement may create room for EU access to Iran's huge amount of oil and gas resources (Guney, 2015, 37). However, Turkey and Iran have different motivations for policies on regional issues. As Stein and Bleek say, relations between both countries are based on interest-driven motivations (2012, 144). In an interview, Respondent 5 said that "Iran is Turkey's partner on some issues, but not a reliable partner". He maintains that "in general, Iran and Turkey cooperate against the Kurdish nationalist movement in the region. Although Iran first allowed the PKK to use its land to establish the camps in 1980s, they are against the Kurdish state in the region". In terms of gas supply to Turkey, Iran is its most expensive supplier. More significantly, the flow of gas to Turkey has sometimes been cut in winter due to domestic use in Iran. In sum, Iran has potential reserves which could be an opportunity for both Turkey and the EU to diversify their energy suppliers. However, the EU's sanctions and Turkey and Iran's divergent policies on regional issues seem to be the main obstacles for Iran's gas import via Turkey. Respondent 5 explained that "Iran's relations with the West and its unpredicted policies towards Turkey made relations unstable". For this reason, regional policies regarding areas such as Syria and Iraq could affect the relations between Turkey and Iran.

3.2.1 Oil and Gas Pipelines

Turkey already has a few gas and oil pipelines for its energy needs and for transferring energy to the world market. Its existing oil pipelines are the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık pipeline(s) and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. The gas pipelines consist of Tabriz-Erzurum, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE), the Interconnector Turkey-Greece pipeline, the Russia-Turkey pipeline (Western route), Blue Stream and the Iran-Turkey gas pipeline. These projects are crucial for Turkey's energy security, diversity and ambition to become an energy hub in the region.

The first oil pipelines, the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık (KY) pipelines, were constructed in 1977; the second pipeline on this line was constructed in 1987. The current capacity of the KY pipelines is 1.6 million bpd. However, in 2014 the oil import was about 49 million, and in 2015 this number reached over 192 million barrels per year (Daily Sabah, 2016). Kurdish oil was included in this number. Respondents in Turkey and KRG stated that the amount of imported oil from the KRG has not been publicly revealed. Respondent 2 even stated that "the Barzani administration needs the oil money for its survival". According to Bilgin, this "pipeline is important for building good

relations with Iraq, sustaining regional stability, making profits from transit fees and feeding the Ceyhan Energy Industry Region" (2011, 404).

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) crude oil pipeline was constructed to transport Caspian oil (mainly from Azerbaijan, though including Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) in 2006. It is the longest pipeline in the world at 1,076 km (BP). The capacity of the pipeline is 1 million barrels per day. However, 50 million bpd is imported annually (MFA), expanding capacity up to 1.2 million bpd (BP).

Natural Gas Pipelines

The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzrurum (BTE) gas pipeline started importing Azeri gas in the Shah Deniz field to Turkey via Georgia in 2007. The BTE is one of the components of the East-West energy corridor (MFA, 2008).

The Interconnector Turkey-Greece natural gas pipeline, constructed in 2007, is intended to transport Azeri gas to the EU via Turkey from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz Phase-I. This project was also one of the components of the Southern Gas Corridor.

The Russia-Turkey gas pipeline project was begun in order to transport Soviet gas in 1987 and it increased its capacity from 6 bcm/year to 14 bcm/year by 1993. This pipeline is the only one providing gas to Turkey via the EU.

The Blue Stream gas pipeline, the biggest project between Turkey and Russia, started transporting Russian gas to Turkey in 2003. Its length is about 1213 km and it goes under the Black Sea. The capacity of the Blue Stream is 16 bcm/year (Gazprom).

The Iran-Turkey natural gas pipeline began delivering gas in 2001 from Tebriz to Erzurum. It delivers about 3 bcm/year. Despite the fact that Iran's energy sources are critical for Turkey, Ankara's efforts to lessen its import tariffs failed (Stein and Bleek, 2012, 140). Additionally, there are some problems, mentioned above, regarding gas flow from Iran.

All these established projects have been increasing Turkey's geostrategic position, which may enable the transmission of Caspian and Middle East energy sources to EU markets. More

significantly, energy relations have risen in importance for TFP through Turkey's increasing energy demands and ambitions to become an energy corridor in its region.

Natural Gas Pipeline Projects

The Interconnector Turkey-Bulgaria gas pipeline projects aim to bring gas from Shah Deniz to Bulgaria. It is expected that Bulgaria will purchase 1 bcm of gas from 2019. This project is also supported by the EU.

The most important gas project aiming to enable Turkey to become an energy hub and to guarantee Turkey's energy security is the Trans Anatolian Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP).

These projects occupy an important place for Ankara to meet its energy needs and for Turkey to become an energy-transit country. They are also an opportunity for importer countries to sell their energy to the market. The Caspian region is crucial to Turkey's ambitions regarding the price and amount of gas supply. In 2013, Turkey paid Azerbaijan $120 per thousand cubic metres of gas while paying $400 per thousand cubic metres for Russian gas and $500 for Iranian gas (Ibrahimov, 2015, 90).

3.2.2 The Trans Anatolian Gas Project (TANAP)

The Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Project (TANAP) is one of the pillar pipelines of the South Stream gas corridor, which aims to import Caspian gas via Turkey to EU countries. The pipeline starts from Ardahan province at the Georgian border, and runs to Edirne on the Greek border. The aim of the project is to supply gas to Turkey to meet domestic demand and to import the remainder to the European market. Gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz-2 gas field was predicted to arrive in Turkey for the first time in mid-2018, to then be exported to the EU around 2020 (MFA). Around 16 bcm gas will come from TANAP pipelines. It is projected that 6 bcm gas will be for Turkish domestic use and 10 bcm exported to the EU. Therefore, this project enables Turkey to become an energy trade hub in the region.

Turkey expects that TANAP will be a more valuable project in future with the supply of Kurdish gas reaching the markets via extension pipelines. This project is also good in order for Kurdish

gas to supply to European markets (Mills, 2013, 59). The main aim of the KRG is to secure its oil and gas export routes and become independent from Baghdad's control, while Turkey aims to ensure its energy security and diversity, and reduce dependency from other supplies.

The EU imports 40% of its gas from Russia (Winrow, 2013, 149). This clearly indicates that the EU is dependent on Russian gas. Moreover, it is predicted that the importation of 312 bcm of gas will be increased to 448 bcm in 2020 (Ibid). The EU has been aiming to diversify its energy suppliers, especially after the Russian-Georgian War in 2008 and the Russian-Ukranian gas dispute on stopping the supply via Ukraine to the EU. Thus, Turkey is a key state in securing the southern energy corridor in order to diversify the EU's energy suppliers. As Energy Minister Taner Yıldız says, TANAP is a strategic project for energy security and diversity (Energy Ministry, 2015).

The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), connecting with TANAP at the Greek-Turkish border, aims to deliver 10 bcm gas from the Caspian Sea. The pipeline runs from Greece to Italy through Albania. It is an important energy project constituting the European leg of the southern gas corridor. It will increase the energy security and diversity of Greece, Bulgaria and Italy (TAP-AG).

In taking part in big pipeline projects to meet with rapid-growing energy demand, Turkey attempts to gain energy transit capabilities so as to to increase its efficiency in the international arena. The transportation of Caspian gas via TANAP will reduce Turkey's energy dependency, as well as the EU's, on Russian gas (Karagöl and Kaya, 2014, 13). Thus the TAP and TANAP "ensure the interoperability and connectivity of gas markets of the EU and Turkey", as the EU's Turkey report states (2015).

3.3 Turkey's Middle Eastern Policy and Energy

3.3.1 Turkey-KRG Energy Relations

Although it was argued that the Kurds were the ethnic group that would most benefit from weakening Iraq, the Iraqi Kurds seemed adversely effected by implementations of the UN embargo on Iraq in the early 1990s. The Iraqi Kurds seemed to gain an opportunity to establish an independent state for the first time in Iraq's history following the Gulf War in 1991 (Olson, 1995, 4). The embargo made Kurds dependent on Turkey, as it was their only reliable route open to the rest of the world (Gunter, 1996, 52). However, then-President Özal thought that this would be an

opportunity for Turkey to gain control of Kurdish groups in the region. Ankara was in turn expected to cooperate in the military campaign against the PKK. Another important pillar of Turkey's Iraq policy is Kirkuk, home to huge oil reserves and also its ethnic Turcoman minority; therefore Ankara was very concerned as to Kirkuk's future.

The closing of the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline as part of the UN embargo caused enormous economic losses for Turkey. It is important to note that Özal aimed to get financial support from Western countries by joining the Gulf War. Moreover, Özal invited the Iraqi Kurdish leaders to Turkey, providing them with Turkish diplomatic passports (Taşpınar, 2008, 11). Özal intended to increase Turkey's influence over Iraqi Kurds and to cooperate with them against the PKK. The Iraqi leader Jalal Talabani, sent by Özal to Öcalan get a ceasefire, mediated between Turkey and the PKK. It is argued that Özal was looking for a political solution to the Kurdish issue (Robins, 1993, 669). During his leadership, President Özal advocated a Middle Eastern policy for Turkey based on interdependence, strengthening economic relations and an increasing role in the region. Following Özal's death, peace negotiations imploded due to influence from security elites, as will be explained in depth in the next chapters.

The KRG has been declared an autonomous region in the north of Iraq, in accordance with Iraq's 2005 Constitution (BBC, 2018). In 2007, the KRG passed a natural resources law and set up a Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), which it authorised to sign contracts with international oil companies to explore oil and gas in the region (Wahab, 2014, 16). Since the signing of these deals, energy production of the KRG has substantially increased. The KRG's new energy sources have hugely increased its importance, especially vis-à-vis energy-hungry Turkey, which is both a good gateway and an eager market for energy imports. The KRG will provide oil and gas via existing and projected pipelines in Turkey to Turkish ports, ready for export to the world market, fulfilling Turkey's ambitions of being an energy-hub country. Moreover, "Turkey has been a direct investor major Iraqi oil and gas contracts since late 2008, the Turkish state-owned company participating in consortia that have won technical service contracts to develop a series of oil and gas fields" (Kaye, 2011, 12, cited in Barkey, 2011, 670).

Iraq's energy sources are very important for the world market, especially its oil. Iraq has 18% of the proven oil reserves in the Middle East, and 9% of the world oil reserves, which makes it the fifth-largest proven crude oil producer in the world (EIA, 2016). It is estimated that 60% of the

total proven oil reserves are in the south of the country, while 17% lies in northern Iraq, near Kirkuk, Mosul and Khanaqin (IEA, 2012). However, there is much controversy between the central government and the KRG over the control of these areas within Iraq, and there are of course vast reserves in these disputed areas (Mills, 2013, 53). Iraq is heavily dependent on oil revenues: an estimated 93% of its revenue comes from oil (EIA, 2016). Kurdish oil and gas is not as important to Iraq, except for the conflictual provinces. However, it is very important for the autonomous KRG itself (Mills, 2013, 61): the main revenue of the KRG comes from the exportation of oil and gas. In addition, KRG gas would be very useful for Turkey in order to reduce its dependence on Russia, and in its negotiations with other countries such as Iran and Azerbaijan (Mills, 2013, 57).

The US's withdrawal of combat forces from Iraq in 2011 has left some unresolved problems between the KRG and the Iraqi central government; notably with regard to the boundaries of the KRG and the limits of its autonomy (Park, 2014, 3). Relations between Baghdad and Arbil have steadily deteriorated since 2011. Ankara has sided with the KRG in the dispute between the central government and the KRG, precisely because of the energy resources in the region and central government sectarian policies. Moreover, Ankara accused the al-Maliki government of becoming sectarian and destabilising the country with its pro-Shiite, anti-Sunni policies (Salman and Naama, 2012). Turkey was also disturbed by the growing influence of Iran over Baghdad.

As mentioned above, the KRG region's huge, as-yet-untapped gas resources could go some way towards satisfying Turkey's rapidly increasing energy demands. To this end, Turkey and the KRG have agreed to construct new pipelines to export Kurdish oil and gas, thereby bypassing the existing Iraqi-controlled pipeline (Park, 2014, 5). In 2012, the Prime Minister of the KRG, Nechirvan Barzani, visited Ankara and agreed to construct oil and gas pipelines to export Kurdish energy resources to the world market via Turkish territory. The KRG Oil Minister Hawrami said that the pipeline project would be completed by September 2013 and that the Turkish oil company Genel Energy would start to export oil in 2014 and gas in 2016 (Park, 2014, 28). In this way the KRG began to sell its oil via constructed pipelines through Turkish soil without referencing central government (Wahab, 2016, 12). However, Baghdad strongly criticised Turkey's relations with the KRG, especially in the matter of their oil and gas deals, and accused Turkey of treating the KRG as an independent state. Eventually the Turkish state oil company (TPAO) was expelled from southern Iraq by Baghdad due to worsening relations between the two countries (Hurriyet Daily

News, 2012).

According to the constitution of Iraq, 17% of its national budget goes to the KRG – this figure having been arrived at by the Iraqi central government in conjunction with the KRG. However, disputes have since arisen between the two sides over the payment of this agreed sum. It is important to note that energy resources are vital for the KRG's future in terms of achieving independence and reducing dependence on Baghdad, both financially and politically (Mills, 2013, 51). However, the dramatic decline in oil prices and its impact on the KRG's economy, the power struggle between Iraqi Kurds and, more significantly, the ISIS attacks against the KRG – explained in detail in Chapter VII – have weakened the Iraqi Kurds since late 2015.

It is clear that the KRG chose to ally itself with Turkey for the benefit of its future and its pursuit of independence. This alignment has served to worsen relations between the Iraqi government and Turkey which, as mentioned, were at best uneasy because of Baghdad's sectarian, Shia-dominated and pro-Iranian policies domestically and abroad. In an interview in 2017, a KRG official (Respondent 6) stated that "we have good relations with Turkey and we are both against the PKK's policies in the region", continuing that "Barzani believes that Kurds need to solve their problems peacefully with the countries they live in". He maintained that "we have rich gas reserves in the north of the KRG that would meet Turkey's gas demands". Although great amounts of gas reserves within the KRG are mentioned, their exact region is not specified. This indicates that Barzani is cautious to mention Kurdish unity in the Middle East due to Turkey's and others' reactions.

Turkey's own Kurdish issue is pivotal in its relations with the KRG. Turkey has been closely watching the Iraqi Kurds ever since the Gulf War (1990-91). It initially opposed contact with Iraqi Kurds and refused to cooperate with the KRG in order to prevent Kurdish independence, which might trigger Turkey's own Kurds to press for independence (Tol, 2014). The loosening of the Turkish army's grip on politics has allowed the government to shape and apply a new foreign policy towards its neighbourhood since 2007 (Barkey, 2011, 667). As mentioned in the previous chapters, Turkey has changed its stance towards the KRG since 2008 (Larrabe, 2010, 161). But the Syrian civil war and the position of the Kurdish minority in Syria has since added another layer of complexity to relations between the KRG and Turkey: Ankara now feels worried and threatened by the PKK-affiliated PYD and its policies in northern Syria.

As will be explained in depth in Chapter VII, the KRG is an autonomous state within Iraq, aiming to become an independent state. A viably independent Kurdish state would need security for its own survival and flow of energy. The current economy of the KRG is heavily dependent on oil revenues. The resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey is crucial for the future of the KRG and its relations with Turkey**.**

The PKK's attacks on Turkish forces from their base in the Qandil Mountains have aggravated relations between the KRG and Turkey. The PKK's repeated sabotage of pipelines has threatened oil and gas flow and damaged the interests of both Turkey and the KRG. Furthermore, the PKK has supported opposition movements and mobilised people in the region against Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The PKK and the Barzani movement have been competing for the leadership of the Kurds in the region. The historical background of both Kurdish groups will be explained in following chapters. The KRG feels more than a little discomfort at the PKK's presence in Qandil and its activities in the region. The PKK's main camps and controlled areas lie between the border of Turkey and the KRG. To counterbalance this, the KRG constantly stresses the need for good economic relations with Turkey, especially with regard to energy imports, in order to assure its own future and independence. As Park says, "Ankara has come to appreciate that prospects for its struggle with the PKK and for its bid to win the hearts and minds of Turkey's Kurdish voters might be enhanced by Arbil's cooperation" (2014, 13).

Conclusion

As mentioned in previous chapters, the JDP government has been following a different foreign policy to its predecessors, fundamentally intending to strengthen relations with its neighbouring countries and other regional powers. Traditional Turkish foreign policy was based on 'realpolitik', using a very distinct approach to that of the JDP across many issues. The Kurdish issue, for instance, had been described merely as a security problem, and one that could only be tackled with hard power. As told in previous chapters, the Kemalist institutions such as the military and foreign ministry prevented any attempts to solve the issue peacefully in the 1990s. President Erdoğan was the first Turkish leader to fully accept the Kurdish issue for what it is, in Diyarbakır in 2005 (BBC Türkçe, 2005). Respondent 3 stated that "the Kurdish issue is one of Erdoğan's top priorities. In the early 1990s, Erdoğan discussed solutions to the Kurdish issue with his inner circle and the "Kurdish issue" report was written by one of his advisers".

The Kurdish issue is one of the main obstacles to Turkey's becoming a regional leader, and to its energy security. In addition, the PKK's existence in Turkey, Iraq and Syria is seen as a threat to Turkish national security and to big pipeline projects between Turkey and the KRG. Although one KRG official (Respondent 6) said in an interview that "the KRG is strong enough to secure its oil and gas routes towards Turkey within its soil", that official (Respondent 6) accepted that the PKK controls vast territory within the KRG, including hundreds of villages near the Turkish border (2016). Therefore, the PKK is strong enough to challenge the oil and gas pipelines as it has increased its influence in the KRG's mountainous area. The KRG leader Barzani has thus publicly come out in support of the peace process in Turkey. It is hoped that peaceful settlement of this issue will annihilate the PKK presence in the region, secure the energy routes and stabilise relations between Ankara and Arbil.

Economic integration is the one of the keys to Turkey's 'zero problems with neighbours' policy. As Babali says, economic interdependence is seen as the best way to sustain peace among regional countries (2010, 149). Thus, all to this end, Turkey has lifted visa requirements, facilitated the creation of trade zones, engaged in high-level political dialogue and set up council meetings with foreign cabinet ministers. Energy security, the Kurdish issue and new markets for Turkish products have prompted a radical policy change towards the KRG. As Ahmet Han says, Turkey's *new* foreign policy has been one of increasing integration with the region over the last decade. It cannot be stressed enough how "the success of Turkey's energy strategy and the forecast of its future as a potential energy centre depend largely on its relations with the region – to its ability to develop a viable energy network, both politically and commercially" (Han, 2011, 603). Özek, Yüksel and Öztürk state that the "BTC Pipeline is envisioned as the milestone of an 'East and West transportation corridor' linking the South Caucasus and Central Asia to Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea" (2011, 4291). Babali argues that energy security is one of the top foreign policy priorities for Turkey (2010, 147). Hence, as Barkey says, the KRG is more than just a single market for Turkey: "It is also a potential source of gas as significant discoveries have proved to be a boon for the Turks, who are trying to become an energy corridor to Europe" (2011, 664).

Going back to the question of Turkey's energy balance and its relations with Middle East, to recap: the Turkish economy has hitherto been heavily dependent on Russian gas. The Middle East represented an opportunity for Turkey to diversify its sources and reduce its dependence on Russia (Han, 2010, 608). However, the Middle East has become an extremely volatile region ever since

the Arab Spring, with Iraq and Syria completely torn apart by civil war between different political and sectarian groups. Thus, the stability of the region has collapsed and security has become a critically important issue. These political and geopolitical challenges in the region are far beyond Turkey's own capacity to control (Han, 2011, 613).

To summarise, Turkey's economy has been growing fast and its energy needs have been increasing sharply in tandem. It is projected that energy demand will double within 10 years. Therefore, the government has been actively seeking to diversify its energy sources and increase energy efficiency. The KRG, with its vast untapped energy reserves, represents one of the best options for Turkey's diversification policy. Moreover, the KRG's oil and gas resources would help Turkey to become an energy-hub country. As Tuysuzoğlu says, "the alliance to be developed with the KRG in Iraq will not only serve Turkey's aim of reaching societal consensus in terms of the Kurdish question but also will be reflected in a positive way on the effectiveness of the country in the Middle East" (2015, 92). Thus, as amply demonstrated in previous chapters, energy is one of the pivotal blocks in relations between Turkey and the KRG, as energy relations both serve Turkey's energy-hub ambitions and increase trade relations with Turkey and the KRG. Turkey also offers the best way for the KRG's oil to conduit directly to the EU market (Barkey, 2011, 668).

In an interview, the KRG official in Arbil (Respondent 6) claimed that "we have huge amounts of untouched gas reserves in mountainous areas (near the Turkish border) and oil reserves which are enough for the survival of Kurdistan [the KRG]". Another interviewee (Respondent 8) stated that "around 500 villages, some of them hamlets, are under the PKK's control". This clearly shows that the PKK has increased its influence and expanded its controlled areas in the KRG region, especially the KDP's controlled areas. Therefore, the PKK stands as one of the biggest obstacles against the KRG's drilling and exporting its untouched reserves.

Chapter IV: The Historical Background of the Kurdish Issue

Introduction

In order to better comprehend the Kurdish issue today, we need to take an in-depth look into the history of the Kurds and their relationship with the Turks. Relations go back to a thousand years ago, when the Turkish population emigrated from Central Asia to Anatolia. At that time, Kurds lived in the mountainous area of Anatolia. This area in the East and Southeast of Turkey was called 'Kurdistan'. The Kurdish population in Turkey varied in their language and religion in Kurdistan. As Fuller and Barkey say, "Geography and a nomadic way of life for long periods strengthened the divergence of several Kurdish dialects" (1998, 6). In this chapter, the structure and geography of the Kurds will be examined and the roots of the Kurdish issue will be explained thoroughly.

Kurds played a pivotal role during the Battle of Chaldiran (1514) between the Ottoman and Safavid empires. During the war, Kurds joined forces with the Turkish side under the Ottoman Empire. Following these events, Kurdistan became a buffer zone between these two large empires. As the next sections will highlight, the Kurds gained autonomy that was recognised by the Ottomans and they lived in Kurdistan until the mid-19th century. During this period, the Kurds enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy in Kurdistan (Eppel, 2008). However, the centralisation policies of the Ottoman Empire eliminated these tribal emirates and Kurdish leaders lost their power in those territories.

The Kurds were part of the Sunni community of the Ottoman Empire and independent in their internal affairs. However, as the result of centralisation efforts by the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the 19th century, Kurdish chieftains who ruled in these internal territories were replaced by governors appointed by the central government of the Ottoman Empire (Doğan, 2011, 510). Later, the first Kurdish rebellion commenced in Bohtan in 1847, led by the Bohtan emirate against the Ottoman Empire. This area was near the border of Persia.

With the rise of nationalism in Ottoman territory, there were clear uprisings among Greeks and Serbs who gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. Following the demise of Ottoman authority, which was affected by wars with Russia, another Kurdish rebellion ignited. In order to prevent Russian intervention from the East, the Ottoman regime ruled under so-called pan-Islamist policies and established the 'Hamidiye Regiments' in 1891,

consisting of the Kurds against armed Armenians.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of collapse. The majority of the empire's land was seized by global powers such as Great Britain, France, and Italy. From this process ten new states emerged. Following this disastrous outcome for the Ottoman Empire, former generals announced a war of independence against their invaders. The leading figure of this war was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who used religious discourse in order to get Kurdish support during the war. He later established modern Turkey in 1923 and became the first president of the Turkish Republic. At the beginning of the war, Atatürk often mentioned that the aim of the Independence War was to protect the caliphate and the Sultan from foreign invaders.

Although the Kurdish rebellion had already occurred in a tribal character during the time of the Ottoman Empire, its nationalistic character showed itself with the collapse of the empire in 1918. However, despite various efforts, lack of unity in terms of language and religion prevented Kurds from acting together. Due to the nature of Kurdish communities who are Muslim and religiously motivated, most of them preferred unity with Turks.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk departed from the discourse of 'saving the caliphate and the Sultan', following it with a nationalistic programme. After the siege of the Independence War against foreign invaders in 1923, in his efforts to revolutionise Turkey's political discourse, Atatürk created a secular, Western-style nation by denying the Kurdish identity. Compared to the Ottoman Empire, the newborn Turkish State followed an even stronger course of centralisation efforts. Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the fading power of the Kurdish chieftains and the diminishing significance of Islam in political and civil life led to even more uprisings by the Kurds, explained in the following sections of this thesis.

To sum up, Kurdish rebellions began as a result of Ottoman centralisation policies, which started in the early 19th century, and these uprisings were of a tribal nature, due to the diminishing authority of Kurdish chieftains in the region. However, in the longer term, with the formation of a new Turkish nation in 1923, rebellions bore tribal and religious motives due to the new Turkish regime's secular policies under Atatürk. Even before the last Kurdish uprising in 1984, Turkey experienced various small and large-scale uprisings, suppressed by the Turkish army. The last rebellion, which began in 1984, has become Turkey's biggest problem since then, and will be explained in the next chapters.

4.1 The Ottoman Empire and the Kurds

The Kurds are the largest single ethnic group living without a state in the Middle East. They live mainly in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, and also in small numbers in Azerbaijan and Armenia. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds have had long-running and much-chronicled conflicts with Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. They have repeatedly challenged the state authorities in these countries (McDowall, 2007, 9).

Kurds belong mostly to nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes which represent a "mix between ties of kinship and those of territories", apart from those who live in the foothills and on the plains (Ibid). Tribal ties are strongest amongst Kurds in mountainous regions, but on the plains and elsewhere they have largely lost their tribal identity (Jondergen, 2007, 25). However, tribal ties still play a key role in Kurdish politics, economics and social life (Ibid).

Relations between Turks and Kurds can be traced back to the beginning of the 11th century, when Turkic tribes started to emigrate from Central Asia to Anatolia and established the Great Seljuks in the Middle East. The term 'Kurdistan' was first employed in Turkish history by Seljuks during the rule of Sultan Sencer (1118-1153), and it refers to an administrative unit located to the east of the Zagros Mountains near Hamadan, although there is no evidence of the exact boundaries or numbers it encompassed (Özoğlu, 2004). A Kurdish province with clear boundaries and administrative structure was first established as part of the Ottoman Empire in 1847 (Ibid, 37). At that time Kurds were considered part of Ottoman society, since they were part of a broader Sunni Muslim core, alongside other Muslim communities (approximately 75-80% of Kurds are Sunni) (Bruinessen, 1978; McDowall, 2007). By contrast, it was only groups with other faiths such as Christians or Jews that were considered to be minorities in the Ottoman Empire (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, 16). Religious Sunni Kurds have sided with other Sunni Muslims against heterodox Kurds in some regions of Turkey. The latter were linguistically a distinct group from their Turkish, Arab and Iranian neighbours, and they lived mainly in mountainous areas, isolated from other communities in the region.

Although religion and language are essential identifying aspects for many Kurds, in reality they have no absolute linguistic and religious unity (Bruinessen, 1978, 27). Throughout history they have been politically, geographically, linguistically and tribally divided (Gunter, 2007, 2). As regards religion, Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims belonging to the Shafi branch (rather than

Hanefi, which was the official Ottoman religion). However, some other small religious groups amongst Kurds do exist; namely Jews, Christians, Alevi and Yazidis (Yıldız, 2004, 10). However, tariqas have long been popular "among the Sunni majority, of [the] mystical orders (tariqa), notably Naqshbandi and Qadiri and the sheikhs of these orders are still held in almost superstitious veneration by the peasantry and urban lower classes" (Ibid, 249).

In terms of language, Kurds speak a number of different dialects, namely Kurmanji, spoken in Turkey (where, in the late 1970s, two-thirds of Kurdish speakers were Kurmanji) (Heper, 2007, 35) and also in northern parts of Iraq; and Sorani, in Persia and the Southern Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Both of these have a written literary tradition. The first Kurdish written text is Serefname, which concerns Kurdish dynastic history, and this is the starting point of Kurdish literature (Özoğlu, 2004, 41). Then there is also Zaza, which is spoken in the north and west of Diyarbakır in Turkey (Bruinessen, 1978, 27), and Gurani, in the Hawrami, Paveh and Halabja regions in Iraq. During field research, it was found that while some of the Zaza-speaking community defıne themselves as Zaza, other groups of Zaza speakers believe themselves to be part of the Kurds. It is difficult to produce exact data about this issue due to a lack of official documents.

4.1.1 The Ottoman Empire's Relationship with the Kurds

The Ottoman Empire's relations in Kurdistan began in the 16th century in order to defend its eastern borders and prevent the Safavid Empire's expansion in Anatolia. Kurds lived in semi-independent groups under Ottoman rule from the early 16th century to the middle of the 19th century, forming a buffer zone between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. According to Bruinessen (2004, 32), neither the Ottomans nor the Safavids were strong enough to control Kurdistan completely. Kurdish tribal chieftains had ruled the areas in exchange for symbolic taxes, and members of these elites were given military functions by the Ottomans during the war (Bruinessen, 2004, 32).

The Safavid Empire's Sultan Shah Ismail was trying to increase the Anatolian Qizilbash, the ardent followers of his mystical Shia sect during his leadership between 1501 and 1524. The Ottoman Sultan Selim I saw this expansion as a big threat to the Ottoman Empire's stability during the service of the prince in Trabzon in the north of Anatolia. Selim I organised a massive military campaign against Shah Ismail in 1514 (Özoğlu, 2004, 47; Issa, 2017, 72). Selim I sent his adviser

to Idris Bitlisi, an influential Kurd in the service of the Ottoman court, to organise the Kurdish chieftains to take part with the Ottoman army against the Safavids: he succeeded in getting the support of 20 Kurdish chieftains. Tan (2014) argues that Idris Bitlisi has been seen as a traitor of the Kurdish nation by historians and Kurdish nationalists. The Battle of Chaldiran between the two great armies in August 1514 ended with an Ottoman victory. Selim took over Tabriz, the Safavid capital, for a short period. Subsequently he ordered the killing of the Anatolian Qizilbash (also known as the Alevi), including some Turks and Kurds, in order to eliminate the Shia, who were seen as a threat to the Sunni Ottoman Empire (Özoğlu, 2004, 48).

After the defeat of the Safavids, the Ottoman Empire gave Bitlisi and some Kurdish Begs (tribal leaders) the authority to rule locally. As a result of their service, the Kurds become a larger political power, securing their position in Kurdistan. From that time, Kurdistan became a buffer zone between the two empires, and Kurdish chieftains gained autonomy over Kurdish territories. In the meantime, the struggle between the two rivals (the Ottomans and Safavids) continued over Kurdistan until the end of the Safavid Empire at the close of the 18th century. Between 1533 and 1554, Suleyman I, the son of Selim I, launched at least six expeditions to the Safavids, who retook Baghdad a few times from the Ottomans. During this time, neither the Ottomans nor the Safavids gained complete control over Kurdish territories. Over this period, the Ottoman Empire provided privileges to Kurdish emirates, such as tax privileges and autonomy, and granted their positions in their territories. It is important to note that Kurdish tribes lived around the region without unification. However, there were some strong tribes who posed a threat to the empire, although they also sometimes fought amongst themselves.

By and large, the Kurdish emirs' autonomy was recognised by the Ottomans with a local ruler and representation to the central government, as long as they obeyed the law, did not cooperate with Persians, and paid their taxes, as well as providing soldiers when required and stationing soldiers in their territories in service to central government. These relations lasted until the first decades of the 19th century, when these emirs were replaced with centrally appointed governors, initiating a gradual decrease of the emirs' power. Provincial bureaucracy expanded and emirs had to start to sharing their powers informally with new actors such as sheikhs of the region (religious leaders) and military officers (Bruinessen, 2004, 33). It is important to note that the centralisation policies' aim of weakening the tribal structures was successful in some ways, but it could not eliminate them (Yavuz, 2007, 6). However, the centralisation and modernisation reforms in the reign of the

Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II between 1808 and 1839 brought some of the Kurdish emirs to heel. The central government aimed to prevent co-ordination and unity from enabling strong tribal leadership among the Kurdish communities. In addition, in order to prevent Russia and European powers interfering in its internal affairs and cooperating with Kurdish tribes, some reforms were made which changed the structure of administration of the region at the beginning of the 19th century. Some Kurdish emirs started settling in Ottoman provinces from 1836, and "the areas where the Kurds lived became one of the 10 exalts into which had been the major aim of the Tanzimat (reforms) period of 1839-1876" (Heper, 2007, 41).

The replacement of emirs with centrally appointed governors led to some problems, because the governors did not know the structure of the tribes in Kurdistan. The new governors were "incapable of keeping their tribal conflicts and feuds in check" (Bruinessen, 1978, 289). Their failure to manage conflicts among the tribes helped the sheikhs and religious leaders to increase their power as mediators among the communities.

Until the middle of the 19th century, Kurdistan was used as a geographical term in the Ottoman Empire. As mentioned above, Kurdistan was ruled via local Kurdish emirates. In 1847, the Ottomans formed a province with clear boundaries and a distinct administrative structure, called Kurdistan Province. So, for the first time in the Ottoman history, Kurdistan became a province rather than a geographical expression (Özoğlu, 2004, 62). Over three hundred years of semi-independence in Kurdistan was ended by the Ottomans through their centralisation policies. The main reason for centralisation was to prevent the growing threat of European powers and Russia by coping with Western military superiority and countering the Russian and Iranian minorities' threats. In reaction to these centralisation policies, some Kurdish emirs revolted against the Ottoman Empire in order to maintain their power in the area.

4.1.2 Rebellions in the Ottoman Empire

The leader of the Bohtan emirate, Bedirhan Beg, revolted against the Ottoman Empire in 1847. The Bedirhan family was the one of the biggest notable Kurdish families in the region. Bedirhan Pasha was the emir of the Bohtan emirate, which consisted of Hakkari, the main city, and the neighbouring area. Following the declaration of the Tanzimat (1839), which aimed to modernise the military and the governance of the Ottoman Empire, the central government imposed a new

administration system in the area, aiming to divide Bedirhan land and weaken Bedirhan authority. Some reforms to similar ends were made by the Ottoman Sultan in the constitution and the army. As Nilay Ozok-Gundoğan says, "the Ottoman state utilised only military means in order to suppress Kurdish emirates and... the process ended with the military suppression of the Kurdish emirs" (2014, 162). Although Bedirhan Beg became a strong ruler by receiving small Kurdish tribes before the revolt, the Ottoman state suppressed it and retained authority in the region (Doğan, 2012, 32). After the revolt, Bedirhan was captured and exiled to Crete for ten years, later coming to Istanbul. Although Bedirhan had not revolted against the Ottoman Empire for nationalistic reasons, his later family, especially his grandsons, played a key role in the Kurdish nationalistic movement at the beginning of the 20th century (Özoğlu, 2004, 72).

Another significant Kurdish revolt in the Ottoman Empire was the Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt, which occurred in 1880. Sheikh Ubeydullah was a member of the Semdinan family, one of the most politically active and influential Kurdish families, and a follower of Naqshbandi Tariqa. The Semdinan family had high prestige due to its religious pedigree, which originated from before the 19th century (Özoğlu, 2004, 73). They were spiritual leaders of the local communities and advisors to the emirs in the region. In the second half of the 19th century, the Semdinan family emerged as political and military leaders of the Kurds, controlling a vast area, as political power changed hands from tribal leaders to religious leaders as a result of a power vacuum in the region. The religious leaders gained power when the Kurdish emirs lost theirs due to centralisation policies. Sheikh Ubeydullah was appointed to the commandership of the Kurdish forces in the Russian-Turkish War (Olson, 1989, 215). The destabilisation of the Ottoman-Russian-Iranian borders and the following Russian-Ottoman War (1877-78) also encouraged Ubeydullah to strengthen his power in the region (Ateş, 2014, 744). Sheikh Ubeydullah firstly invaded the north-west of the Qajar territories and then expanded his control over Persian lands in September 1880. He was defeated by Qajar forces and returned to Ottoman territories. In 1881, he surrendered and was captured by the Ottoman forces. According to some scholars, his rebellion is the first Kurdish nationalistic movement (Arfa, 1966, 23). However, some argue that it was rather a great feudal revolt (Nezan, 1980, 31). Hakan Özoğlu states that "the main reason for the revolt was the promise made to Armenians after the Treaty of Berlin was signed on 13 July 1878 by the Ottoman Empire" (2004, 74) and that "This revolt can be seen as Seyyid Ubeydullah's demand for greater control in the region" (2004, 76). Additionally, Wadie Jwaideh, author of many studies on Kurdish history, claims that "fear of the Armenian ascendancy in Kurdistan appears to have been one of the most

powerful reason behind [his] attempt to unite Kurds" (2006, 231, cited in Özoğlu, 2004, 74). Whether his revolt constitutes the first nationalistic revolt or not, he became a symbol of the Kurdish nationalist movement in the 20th century.

4.1.3 The Hamidiye Regiments

Sultan Abdulhamid II set up the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments (Hamidiye Alayları) in 1891 in the east of the region. Sultan Abdulhamid II used a pan-Islamist policy in order to fight against armed Armenian militias who had lived mainly in the eastern provinces with Kurds. The Armenians constituted a minority in almost all the cities where they lived together with Kurds and Turks. The Hamidiye Regiments were mainly made up of Kurdish tribes, as well as small numbers of Turcoman tribes. They had 47,000 armed men in the mid-1890s, expanding to 53,000 men by August 1910, and each tribe had to be Sunni in order to fit into the pan-Islamist policy (Olson, 1989, 9-11). Each big tribe became a regiment, and the leaders of the tribe were commanders of the regiment. The latter were given high military ranks within the Ottoman army and some high officers were even sent to special schools in Istanbul to be educated and to learn the mission of the government. These officers were paid with regular salaries (Heper, 2007, 40).

The main idea of the Hamidiye regiments was to battle against Armenian nationalist militias in Eastern Turkey (Bozarslan 1986, 83, cited in White, 2000, 24). The war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia (1877-78) had destroyed the empire's already fragile economy. Therefore, Abdulhamid II cooperated with Kurdish chieftains rather than trying to subdue them, in order to prevent Armenian rebellions in the region. So, with the Hamidiye Regiments, Kurdish chieftains got ranks, orders, money and guns in return for their allegiance to the Sultan (Reynolds, 2011, 419). As a result of this project, Kurdish chieftains strengthened their power in the region, causing inter-tribal conflict among some Kurdish tribes. Robert Olson claims that the creation of the Hamidiye Regiments had advantages and disadvantages to Kurdish nationalism; "the most negative consequences were the inter-tribal Sunni-Shi'is rivalries that were created" (1989, 11). It also "gave an opportunity for the Kurds to experience and attempt to fathom the wider world" (Ibid, 12).

Some exiled Kurdish families in Istanbul began publications in Kurdish. The first Kurdish newspaper was the *Kurdistan*, published from 1898 to 1902 by the Bedirhan family. They

mentioned that Kurds were one of the largest distinguished ethnic groups and hoped to gain more attention from the Sultan via the Kurmanchi/Turkish newspaper in 1898-1902. During the Abdulhamid governance, Kurds published literature and newspapers in Istanbul. According to Hakan Özoğlu (2004), although the newspaper was published in Kurdish, there was no separatist policy in the paper, and Kurds always adopted Ottoman society.

4.2. Turkey and the Kurdish Issue

Turkey has the biggest Kurdish population in the Middle East. Although there is no exact information on the number of Kurds living in the country, a fair estimate is about 15 million, representing some 20% of the total population (Tol and Taşpınar, 2014; Ergil, 2000).

The Kurds have traditionally tended to live in the eastern cities of the country. However, lately, millions of Kurds have moved to the western cities, for economic, social and, above all, security reasons – especially since the start of the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, Kurdish Workers Party) insurgency in Eastern Turkey. Millions of Kurds were forcibly moved to other cities by the Turkish government in the early 1990s, due to security problems and in order to prevent them from helping the PKK.

As will be explained below, the nationalistic Kurdish movement started in earnest with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, although there were some prior tribal and religious-based rebellions against the centralisation policies of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th century (Özoğlu, 2004; Yavuz, 2007), as discussed above. The Republic of Turkey, however, has experienced many Kurdish rebellions since its establishment in 1923. Some of these rebellions were based on religious motivation and others were nationalistic. Each was squashed by the Turkish army within a short period (i.e. less than a year), except for the PKK insurgency.

The PKK was established in the late 1970s and launched its first attack in 1984. From that time until late 2012, PKK militias and the Turkish army were engaged in fighting in Eastern Turkey, where the vast majority of Kurds lived. MİT (the Turkish Intelligence Service) and PKK members secretly started peace talks in Oslo in 2009, but these failed for a number of reasons. Finally, MİT and the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, who is serving a sentence in prison for high treason on a highly secured island, carried out the peace negotiation process between late 2012 and 2015. The reasons for the collapse of the peace process will be explained deeply in Chapter VI.

4.3 The Origin of the Kurdish Issue

The Kurdish issue has been one of the most important and painful problems faced by the Republic of Turkey since its establishment in 1923. There have historically been many ethnic minorities living in Turkey, but by far the biggest are the Kurds. As stated earlier, the Kurdish issue started with the creation of the new Turkish Republic after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Following World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk went to Anatolia in May 1918 in order to start the Turkish Nationalist Movement and the Independence War. He organised many congresses with representatives around Turkey in different cities such as Erzurum, Sivas, and Amasya. As a result of these congresses, Atatürk and his friends, mainly from the army, opened the Grand National Assembly (GNA) in Ankara in April 1920.

It is important to note that the Ottoman army was eliminated and its ammunition seized by the allied powers in accordance with the peace treaty (the Armistice of Mudros, 30th October) signed after World War I in 1918. This treaty was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the victorious states of the WWI (mainly Great Britain, France and Italy) in Mudros, Paris. Following this treaty, part of the Ottoman Empire was invaded by the allied powers regarding some articles of the treaty. However, some regiments in Eastern Turkey refused to hand over their arms. The GNA succeeded in creating a new army from local regiments and former Ottoman officers to fight against the invaders (namely Greece, Great Britain, France and Italy), under the leadership of Atatürk. Western Turkey was invaded by the Greek army in May 1919. In response to the Greek invasion, the Turkish army started fighting the Greeks on the western front. Thus the Turkish War of Independence was mainly against Greece, in order to defend its land against invasion. The Greek occupation was put to an end by the Turkish army in its decisive victory at Dumlupınar in August 1922. As a result of this victory, the NGA and its president Atatürk strengthened in popularity and power. On 1st November 1922, the reign of the Ottomans was abolished and a new Republic of Turkey was declared on 29 October 1923.

It is important to note that before and during the War of Independence, Atatürk always mentioned the importance of the Caliphate and of defending Ottoman structures and the Sultan's reign against the invaders. He stated that "as a co-religionist, I pray you must want to save the country and Islamism from the hands of the enemies who think that our country is a digestible mouthful" (Natali, 2005, 71, cited in Şimşir, 1973, 215). In other words, in order to win the support of the Kurds, Atatürk mainly used this kind of religious discourse in his speeches during this transition

period. He understood that the most important unifying feature between Turks and Kurds was Sunni Islam and that, therefore, an Islamised political space would give him and the Turkish elite a big opportunity to cooperate with Kurdish communities. Muslim unity was at that time much more important than Kurdish nationalism amongst most Kurdish communities (Bruinessen, 2004, 33).

Thus, at the beginning of the Independence War, Atatürk gained the support of Kurds against the invaders of Anatolia by invoking the brotherhood between Turks and Kurds. In his speech at the first opening of Parliament in 1920, Atatürk argued that the parliament was not there to represent Turks, Kurds, Laz or other nationalities, but rather, the unified Islamic community (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, 19). There is no evidence of "a nationalistic programme or even a nationalistic rhetoric during the 'Turkish National Liberation War' until after the proclamation of the Republic – the culmination of the struggle for survival" (Özcan, 2006, 62). Thus, Atatürk worked hard to bring other nations, most notably the Kurds, on his side in the fight against non-Muslim invaders. However, even at that time, there were some Kurdish tribes who desired independence and so fought against the state. One of the most significant revolts was that of Koçgiri in 1920, when the Turkish army had to divert some of its troops to the east of the country to deal with the issue.

From the establishment of the Republic to the middle of the 1990s Turkey denied Kurdish ethnic existence and cultural rights. They were not even considered a distinct ethnic group in the constitution, while other non-Muslim communities, namely Greek Orthodox communities, were considered as minorities in the Lausanne Treaty of 1924. These minorities were granted some rights, such as education in their own languages (Tank, 2006, 71). According to the Lausanne Treaty, ethnic minorities were defined as non-Muslim communities (Ergin, 2012, 324).

4.4 The New Turkish Republic and Its Kurdish Policy

With the victory of the Turkish Independence War, Atatürk announced the new Republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923 and became the first president of Turkey. Under his leadership, the RPP (Republic People's Party) aimed to create Turkey as a secular, nationalist, modernised, and westernised nation. Many cultural reforms were carried out in order to achieve this political agenda by the Turkish elite (Zürcher, 2005). During the nation-building reforms and centralisation process, the Turkish state imposed direct rule over society. Cultural reforms, the transformation

of the political and legal system, and the state's westernisation policies achieved some limited influence on society, especially rural Anatolian society.

The new secular Turkish nation state saw the Kurdish community and the religious structure of traditions from the Ottoman Empire as the biggest barrier to westernisation. The centralisation process and reforms caused many problems in the Kurdish region, as well as with the religious Turkish public. For instance, the Kurdish rebellions and some Turks were antagonistic to the reforming and lifting of the caliphate. As Senem Aslan says, "The state's objective turned out to be the most ambitious and comprehensive in the Kurdish areas compared to the other regions as it encountered not only the largest linguistic minority there, but also deeply rooted tribal and religious solidarities" (2015, 37). The Turkish state consolidated its power in Kurdish regions by eliminating local power centres (Ibid, 41). The state did not look for mediation with its citizens in order to carry out reforms changing the structure of Turkish and Kurdish societies. In doing this, the state managed to intervene in Kurdish society more than the Ottoman Empire had.

The Turkification of the new Turkey was the one of the main policies for the Turkish elite. The first Prime Minister of Turkey, İsmet İnönü, stated that "Our immediate duty is to make Turks [of] all those who lie in the Turkish fatherland. We will cut and throw away the minorities who oppose Turks and Turkism" (Ustel, 1977, 173). In doing this, there was uncertain potential in the Kurdish area due to the fact that most people spoke no Turkish. Thus, Kurds often resisted changes to existing power structures, secularism and nationalistic policies. As a result of the Turkish nation-building project and state formation, Kurds rebelled several times against the Ankara government. Since its establishment, the Turkish state had denied the existence of Kurdish identity, and the Kurdish revolts were suppressed harshly by the army in the 1920s and 1930s. There were 17 rebellions instigated by the Kurdish communities between 1924 and 1938 (Ibid, 64). As Ömer Taşpınar states, "Turkish nationalism developed an official understanding based on the denial of Kurdish ethnic existence in Turkish soil. In other words, from the mid-1920s until the early-1990s… there was no Kurdish ethnic, linguistic or cultural element on Turkish territory" (2005, 66).

As mentioned above, since the establishment of the republic the Kemalist regime had adopted Turkish nationalism and radical secularism. In order to achieve this, they needed to eradicate the multi-ethnic structure and Islamic legitimacy from Ottomanism (Ibid, 77). Nationalism was a core policy of the new Turkish Republic. The founder of the state, Atatürk, stated his opinion

explicitly in 1925: "'We are frankly [n]ationalist[s] . . . and [n]ationalism is our only factor of cohesion. In the face of a Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. We must Turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose the Turks or 'le turquisme.''' (Fuller and Barkey, 1998, 10, cited in Şimşir et al., 1991). The main idea was to change Islamic identity from the Ottoman period to Turkish nationalism and secularism. In doing so, after the abolishment of the caliphate, the Ankara government did not tolerate any regional liberties granted to the Kurds by the Ottomans.

4.5 Kurdish Rebellions in Turkey

The Ottoman Empire was defeated by allied powers (Great Britain, France and Italy) in World War I, losing a million of its soldiers. Afterwards, allied powers signed the Treaty of Sevres with the Ottoman Empire in August 1920. The treaty had very harsh terms for the Ottoman Empire and it was subject to stipulations by the allied powers. Moreover, the treaty allowed Kurds to establish their own state in Eastern Turkey, where the Kurds were the majority population in the cities where they lived. Therefore the treaty caused some rebellions in Eastern Turkey by Kurdish groups. The most significant rebellion prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic is the Koçgiri rebellion, which broke out in Dersim in Eastern Turkey in November 1920 (Olson, 1989, 28). This rebellion was organised by the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kurt Taali Cemiyeti) in Istanbul and the Koçgiri tribe in Tunceli (Dersim) in order to establish an Independent Kurdistan. The Koçgiri rebellion is an important example of post-World I Kurdish nationalism in terms of indicating weaknesses and strengths after Sevres (Olson, 1989, 33). This rebellion was crushed in November 1921 by the military sent by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara.

In Turkey, so-called Sevres Syndrome, the fear of losing Turkish land to outside powers, had built a frightening scenario for Turkish security elites, as well as the public. The Sevres Syndrome metaphor is also used popularly by some politicians, and in popular discussions, with regard to the Kurdish issue. Therefore, engagement with the Kurdish issue has always been undermined by political and security elites. As mentioned above, Turkey's Kurdish issue had found a place in Ankara's agenda following the necessity of reforms as part of the EU membership process under JDP leadership in the 2000s.

4.5.1 The Sheikh Said Rebellion

The Sheikh Said Rebellion (8 February 1925) was the first large-scale Kurdish religious-nationalistic rebellion in Kurdish history: "While the Sheikh Said rebellion was a nationalist rebellion, the mobilisation, propaganda, and symbols were those of a religious rebellion" (Olson, 1989, 91). Martin van Bruinessen argues that this rebellion was "neither a purely religious nor a purely nationalist one… The primary aim of both Shaikh Said and Azadi (nationalist) leaders was the establishment of an Independent Kurdistan. The motivation of the rank and file was equally mixed, but for them the religious factor may have predominated" (1978, 404-5).

Sheikh Said was a leader of Naqhbandi Tariqa and used his position to mobilise mass rebellion against Ankara and Atatürk. Although religion was a major factor in mobilising combatants, for some the motivation was different from the beginning (Olson, 1989, 74). Sheikh Said called a "fetva (religious decree) that condemned the Ankara government and Mustafa Kemal for destroying religion and stated that it was lawful to rebel against such sacrilege" (Olson, 1989, 94). He declared that "he was the leader of the Naqshbandi tariqa and that he was the representative of the caliph and of Islam" (Ibid, 108). In addition, he wrote a letter to the Alevi tribes (the Hormek and Lolan tribes) asking them to join the rebellion, but they refused and even said they would fight against the rebellion, as they would prefer to stay in a secular Turkish state than the Sunni-led Kurdistan (Ibid, 94).

Many Azadi members and the leaders of the rebellion were upset at the abolition of the caliphate. It is important to note that some tribal and religious leaders joined the rebellion in order to "protect their land, their domination of the markets for their livestock, and their control of the legal system" (Bruinessen, 1978, 404). Secularising and centralising reforms threatened most leaders and sheikhs in the region; therefore, they supported the rebellion in order to protect their positions. These policies encouraged ordinary people to join the rebellion in order to revive the Islamic Caliphate. Sheikh Said militias were defeated by the Turkish army within a few months and, with most of the other rebel leaders, Sheikh Said was captured in April 1925 and hanged in June 1925. The weakness of the rebellion was in its "inter-tribal rivalry and Sunni-Shi'i differences" (Bruinessen, 1978).

The religious Alevi-Sunni division played a key role in the disunity of Kurds. Sunni Kurds allied with the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century and Alevi Kurds lent support to the new secular

Turkish state and not the Sunni-Ottoman caliphate. During this rebellion, the Ankara government declared martial law on 25 February 1925 (Olson, 1989, 123). As a result of this failed rebellion, many Kurds were exiled to different areas of Turkey and Syria. The Ankara government implemented new policies in Eastern Turkey, strengthened its power and accelerated reforms on secularisation. Atatürk's vision was evident: "Gentlemen and those of the nation: all of you should know that the Turkish nation cannot become a nation of sheikhs, dervishes, religious fanatics, and charlatans. The most correct and truest path to the nation is the path of contemporary civilisation" (Natali, 2005, 81). Following the crushing of the rebellion, the Ankara government banned all religious schools (madrasa), the Sufi brotherhood and shrines (Taşpınar, 2005, 80).

4.5.2 The Ararat Rebellion

Following the Sheikh Said rebellion, the Kurds organised another uprising against the Turkish State in order to achieve their goal. The Ararat uprising (1930-31) was one of the biggest Kurdish rebellions in the Turkish Republic (Yavuz, 2007, 8; Olson, 2000, 67). All other rebellions were organised or encouraged by the Aghas (chieftains) or religious leaders. However, the organisers of the Ararat uprising aimed to establish an Independent Kurdistan in a purely nationalistic sense. The rebellion took place in Ararat (Ağrı), the eastern area near the Iranian border, from 1928 to 1930. The rebellion was organised and coordinated by the Kurdish Nationalistic Organisation, which was called Xoybun and founded in Syria by exiled Kurdish nationalists in the early 1920s (White, 2000, 77). The Kurdish Nationalists were well organised, equipped and prepared at that time. According to Bruinessen, "in 1930 the 'Ararat revolt' presented an even more formidable threat to the Turkish government than Sheikh Said's rebellion had ever done' (1978, 394). The Turkish army launched a large military operation against the rebels and the revolt was gradually crushed by the Turkish army in 1930.

Ismet İnönü, one of the prominent army commanders of the Turkish Independence War and founders of the new Turkish republic (who later became the second President of Turkey from 1938 to 1950) stated that "the government of Grand National Assembly is also the government of Kurds as much as Turks" in 1923. After two years, Ismet İnönü stated completely different views about Kurds and reflected the new State's policy about minorities, saying: "We must Turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose the Turks" (Walker, 2012, 70, cited in Şimşir et al., 1991, 58).

4.5.3 The Dersim Rebellion

The Dersim rebellion (1937-38) is one of the most turbulent issues in Turkish history and politics even today. Dersim is the heartland of the Qizilbash (Alevi) Kurdish people of whom the majority speak the Kurdish Zaza dialect. They are in a minority to the Kurmanchi-speaking Kurds in the region. Dersim has high mountains and narrow valleys, and is a relatively inaccessible district of central-eastern Turkey. Large tribes inhabited the Dersim region: they were autonomous and refused any authority. The tribal leaders and chieftains were the only rulers and they had great influence over the people (Bruinessen, 1994, 5). Even the Ottoman Empire had conflict with these tribes in order to get taxes and establish its policies, as there were power vacuums in Dersim (White, 2000, 79). The Ankara government decided to end Dersim's lawless authority and planned to consolidate the state's power in the area. In order to help make new policies in the region, Prime Minister Ismet İnönü wrote a report after a trip to Eastern Turkey in 1935. After his report, the NGA passed the "Tunceli Law" (Tunceli Kanunu) on 25 December 1935 (Cagaptay, 2006, 111). İnönü said in his report:

"We will establish the Dersim province according to a new method. An active duty lieutenant general will be its governor, and uniformed active duty officers will be its district governors. Whenever possible, retired officers will be organised as an army corps headquarters, suitable for this goal, and it will have branches for security, roads, finance, economics, justice, culture, and health. The matter of justice will be simple, private and absolute… Excluding the fixed gendarme units, there will be at least seven mobile gendarme battalions under the governorship… Roads and army stations will be built in 1935 and 1936. If ready by the spring of 1937, two organised army divisions will be put under the authority of the governorship. All Dersim will be cleansed of arms… then shall begin the ensuing process of shaping up Dersim" (Ibid, 111).

Following the quelling of previous Kurdish rebellions, Dersim was the only area to refuse central authority in Turkey. Bruinessen stated that Dersim was, "by the mid-1930s, the last part of Turkey that had not been effectively brought under central government control" (1994, 5). The state sent a military governor bearing extensive authority, aiming by this to strengthen its power and put an end to tribal authority in the region. The tribes revolted against the new government plan, as expected, and started to fight against the military. As a result of the fighting, the leader of the rebellion was hanged by the state. The state implemented harsh policies against the people of Dersim; some were punished, and some expelled to other parts of the country. More significantly,

some rebel positions were bombed by the military. This military operation cost thousands of lives of both civilians and military personnel, the all documents of the Dersim rebellions is still not revealed As a result of this operation, the new Turkish government completed the centralisation policies begun in the mid-19th century. However, these policies caused new Kurdish rebellions, explained in the next chapters.

4.6 Single-Party (1923-1950) and Multi-Party (1950-…) Eras and the Kurdish Issue

Ankara experienced 28 Kurdish revolts against the Turkish state following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (Yeğen, 2016; Cemal, 2005, 72). Turkey was ruled between 1923 and 1945 by a single party – the RRP, established by Atatürk. During this period, Turkey's policies included a complete denial of Kurdish identity. Kurds were described as 'Mountain Turks' and the new Turkish state focused mainly on the assimilation of Kurds, to that end changing the names of Kurdish villages and towns to Turkish ones. Until 1945, the state banned the establishment of new political parties in order to implement new reforms aiming to transform the nature of the state from the multi-national Ottoman Empire into a nation state. From the early 1930s until his death in 1938, Atatürk focused on the nation state process. Under Atatürk's supervision, international conferences in anthropology and archaeology held in Turkey concentrated mainly on research into the Turkish language and Turkish history. According to the hypothesis of Turkish elites, the origins of all languages are in Turkish, as Turks spread all around the world from Central Asia from the beginning of history. Moreover, Turks and their ancestors in ancient history were denoted the centre of civilisation (Toprak, 2012).

In 1946, Turkey experienced multi-party politics; the Democratic Party (DP) hit the election polls and came to power in 1950. The country was under single-party rule (by the RPP) until 1950. The DP ruled the country from 1950 to 1960 until ousted by the military regime. During its decade-long leadership, the party followed less restrictive policies and reduced some secularist policies. During the early days of the DP's period of rule, some of the sons of the Kurdish leaders ('Aghas' or 'Sheiks') executed or exiled before 1946 joined the party and became MPs (Tan, 2014, 316). The DP took a more liberal approach to the Kurds and to Islam in comparison with the Republican Party, which was secular and nationalistic.

The Kurds in particular benefited from this more relaxed decade in terms of religious freedom and

freedom of speech. As Barkey and Fuller state: "The Democrat Decade (1950–1960) was also notable for the new and relative freedom of expression that it allowed all, including Kurds" (1998, 14). According to Tan, the DP's welcoming of the latter to their ranks was an important initial step in tackling the Kurdish issue. However, some of the MPs from Eastern Turkey were subsequently expelled from the DP because of their Kurdish national aspirations, and in the end, the DP followed almost the same policies as the RRP (Ibid, 317). The DP leadership ended in a coup and its leader was hanged by the new military regime in 1960.

To sum up, although there were some reliefs regarding the Kurdish issue and secular policies during the DP era, there were no profound changes, due to the Kemalist elites. As will be mentioned in the next chapter, the Kurds, mainly students, found places within leftist organizations to put forward their Kurdish struggle. However, they split from the Turkish leftists and established their own organizations in order to realize the Marxist revolution in Eastern Turkey.

4.7 The Kurdish Movement in the 1960s and 1970s

The DP was closed down in the aftermath of the 1960 military coup. At the time, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Foreign Minister Fatih Rüştü Zorlu and Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan were hanged by the military coup administration. In the 1960s, with the rise of political activism and the leftist movement, Turkey appeared attractive to the Kurds. As Özcan posits, "despite all the obstacles, the Kurds managed to benefit from the limited democratisation of the 1960s" (2006, 75). Hakan Yavuz described the Kurdish movement of the 1960s and 70s as a "secularisation of Kurdish identity within the framework of the broader leftist movement in Turkey" (2007, 2).

In the 1960s, the military regime created a liberal constitution which set the groundwork for trade unions and student organisations. According to Barkey and Fuller, "the most important of the left-wing Kurdish groups was the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths (DDKO), formed in 1969. It provided the kernel for a large number of other revolutionary Kurdish groups, including the present-day Kurdistan Workers' party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan), or PKK, which began its operations in 1984" (1998, 15). This freedom of expression encouraged Kurds to demand political and social rights. As Michael Gunter says: "Beginning in the 1970s, an increasingly significant portion of Turkey's population of ethnic Kurds has actively demanded cultural, linguistic, and political rights as Kurds" (2007, 6). Therefore, it is important to mention that the modern Kurdish

nationalist movement in Turkey arose from Turkish left-wing organisations.

Socialist Kurdish students among the Turkey Workers Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP), which was the prominent leftist party of the time, organised meetings in Ankara and the Kurdish provinces from 1967 to 1969 under the TİP. The aim of these meetings was to protest against the 'underdevelopment of the East' and the restriction of the Kurdish language (Miroğlu, 2012). These meetings were also contributed to and supported by other Kurdish groups such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (TKDP) (Winrow and Kirişci, 1997, 115).

During this period, the Kurdish youth found an opportunity to develop their policies in an institutional space and, more significantly, the Kurdish issue was put back on the political agenda via the TİP. The public's interest in these meetings inspired the organisers to form an official organisation that would support the Kurdish cause in Turkey. According to Mustafa Akyol, the Turkish left provided fertile ground for Kurdish nationalism in that period (2006, 103). The DDKO drew Kurds from the TİP and Kurdish nationalists and supported the revolutionist Turkish left, such as Dev-Genç (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 116). Furthermore, it instigated the biggest urban demonstration en masse against state policy since 1938. All the while, Ankara had been closely following the DDKO's activities, putting pressure on the party offices in the eastern cities where they held meetings, and keeping an eagle eye on the huge numbers of people who gathered at the regional meetings.

However, eventually the Eastern meetings caused divisions between socialist Turkish and Kurdish individuals in the TİP due to the nationalist tendencies of 'the group from the East' inside the party. These developments put pressure on the TİP to clearly express its policy regarding the Kurdish issue. In its fourth congress it issued the following statement: "There is a Kurdish people in the East of Turkey…. The fascist authorities representing the ruling classes have subjected the Kurdish people to a policy of assimilation and intimidation which has often become a bloody repression" (McDowall, 2005, 409). The Party was closed down by another coup in 1971, due to its anti-constitutional activities. Some of the members of these organisations, including many Kurds, were arrested following the coups. In sum, between 1960 and 1971, Turkish democracy experienced two coups suppressing political activism by both Kurdish and Marxist groups.

In order to better understand the history of the Kurdish movement, we also need to examine the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq. The Iraqi Kurdish struggle against Baghdad was followed

closely by Kurds in Turkey in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For this reason, Molla Mustafa Barzani, the leader of the KDP, considered conflict with the Baghdad regime as the inspiration behind all Kurdish political movements. In 1965, a group of Kurds formed an underground movement known as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (TKDP). The TKDP was impressed by the activity of the Barzani movement in Iraq. As McDowall says, "TKDP was the ideological equivalent of Mulla Mustafa's KDP, purely nationalist and unwilling to examine the inherent tensions between ethnic nationalism, social traditionalism and social development" (2005, 408). This party had the same traditional and conservative approach that Barzani was taking in Iraq (Marcus, 2007, 20). Şerafettin Elçi stated that "the TDKP saw helping the Barzani movement as a national responsibility" (Marcus, 2007, 20, cited in Balli, 1993, 603).

In that period, the Turkish state was very cautious about any developments which might affect the Kurds in Turkey and whip up sympathy amongst them for Barzani's cause. Indeed, Barzani was seen as a hero by many. Ankara suspected sympathisers of helping Barzani's struggle against Baghdad (Kutschera, 2001, 394; Miroğlu, 2012, 207). More significantly, Barzani's movement in Iraq started to lose the sympathy of nationalist Kurds in Turkey, as the Baghdad regime suppressed the Kurdish movement and Barzani escaped to Iran in 1975. However, the Barzani movement is still popular among conservative Kurds, who are against the secular-Marxist PKK and are in favour of a united Turkey. This will be elaborated on in the next chapters. Although not all Kurds supported the Barzani movement, his struggle approximates a symbol for Kurdish separatists in Turkey.

As a result of observing Barzani's struggle, Turkish and Kurdish socialists were divided on the future of the 'Eastern Issue'. Most Kurdish groups left the TİP and established their own Marxist organisations as the party divided between Turkish and Kurdish socialists. As McDowall says, "Kurds and Alevis became the backbone of the TWP [TİP] during the late 1960s" (2005, 409). In the 1970s, there were many underground organisations established by Kurds in Turkey. Most of them defended the notion of Kurdish self-determination (Kreyenbroek-Sperl, 2003, 24).

From the Dersim uprising of 1938 through to the early 1980s, there were no important revolts against the state by Kurds in Turkey. However, the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (Kurdish Worker's Party) was established by a group of students under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in Ankara 1978 in order to establish a great Kurdistan in the Middle East. The last Kurdish uprising, which started in 1984, differed from its predecessors, as the PKK was aiming to create a

socialist Kurdish state and change the social structure of the region in order to destroy the tribal system. All previous Kurdish rebellions emerged out of specific regional and tribal orientations, but the PKK grew out of the anarchy and turmoil of the 1970s. There were many violent left-wing Turkish organisations fighting against the state and other political groups (Gunter, 2007). As Dogu Ergil says, "Until the 1960s, Kurdish movements were led by traditional elites, but the leftist and youth movements that rocked the world during that decade hit Turkey as well" (2000, 126).

However, the Kurdish issue was treated as a security problem by the Turkish state: the problem would be over when the PKK was eliminated. Therefore, it was denied as a minority issue by the state. Moreover, the issue led to the underdevelopment of Eastern Turkey (Barkey and Fuller 1998). Security measures were implemented during the 1980s and 1990s. Tackling the Kurdish issue in Turkey caused some human rights problems, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. The nature of the PKK, its establishment and ideology, and Turkey's response to the last Kurdish uprising will be evaluated in depth in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The Kurds had lived in a semi-independent context in Kurdistan from 1514 to the mid-19th century by becoming a buffer zone between the Ottoman and Persian empires during this period. Kurdistan was divided by administration units and ruled by tribal chieftains and Ottoman rulers. However, Kurds started to lose their power as rulers of the region were replaced by appointed governors from the Ottoman regime. As a result of these political changes, some tribal leaders rebelled against the central Ottoman authority. Although the motivations of the rebellions were tribal in nature, Kurdish turmoil was first directed against the Ottoman Empire and then the Turkish state as centralisation policies became tougher: "Most of the Kurdish tribal revolts against the central government resulted from tribal reactions to the intrusive and centralising policies of the modernisation policies of the Ottoman state and the Republic of Turkey" (Bruinessen, 1978, 5).

As a result of centralisation policies, new Kurdish actors, who were religiously motivated, emerged in the region. Although they were not appointed by the central government, they developed their own power base. Jwaideh argues that "Sheikh leadership has been the most successful leadership among the Kurds during the past one hundred years, especially since the disappearance of the last autonomous Kurdish principality" (1960, 127, cited in White, 2000, 18).

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 by former nationalist Ottoman generals. At the beginning of the Independence War in 1919, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk managed to gain the support of the Kurds by using a religious discourse. However, this discourse was abandoned following the war in 1922. More importantly, the caliphate was lifted in 1924. Thus, one of the most common unifying factors in Islam between Kurds and Turks was severed. As Zeki Sarigil stresses, "the newly created nation state [was] established on the bedrock of Turkish nationalism" (2012, 269).

In order to create a nation state, Turkey denied the Kurdish identity and implemented assimilation policies towards minority groups: "This policy was strongly informed by the traumatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent Kemalist emphasis on complete ethno-linguistic homogeneity as criteria for being 'Turkish', 'Western' and 'civilized'" (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012, 99).

Hakan Yavuz argues that the main reason for the politicisation of the Kurdish identity over the years is based on the changes from the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Ottoman Empire to the nation state of new Turkey (2007). The strict course on centralisation and "Turkification" policies caused uprisings and determined the Kurdish political movement to establish their own organisations. Therefore, the Kurdish movement in Turkey has become nationalist and secular over the past three decades. The nationalist, secular Turkish state posed a threat to Kurdish identity and society, which is made up of strong religious and tribal ties. Moreover, Turkey's discourse "aimed to transform Turkey into a country 100 per cent Turkish" (Bozarslan, 2004, 80) which is why Kurds responded with rebellions to the newly established Turkish State's Turkification policies.

Although different kinds of assimilation policies were implemented on Kurds by the Turkish state, they had not assimilated due to geography and community structures: they live in mountainous terrain and, more importantly, religious and tribal ties are strong in Kurdish communities. Furthermore, political division and divergence on religion and language between Kurds constrained the development of the common Kurdish national movement. Until the mid-1800s, the Kurdish tribal chieftains were very strong and ruled the regions where they lived. However, subsequent centralisation policies shifted the balance of power from tribal chieftains to the religious leaders.

It is important to note that Kurdish movements mainly grew among Marxist-Leninist organisations

and the Turkish left wing in the 1960s and 1970s in Ankara and Istanbul. In the aftermath of the amnesty in 1974, many legal and illegal organisations were established by these Kurdish groups. However, most of the Kurdish-left-led movements believed that revolution could be achieved with armed struggle and, more importantly, that their solution to the Kurdish issue would bring an end to the 'Turkish invasion' and create an independent Kurdistan.

Overall, the origins of the Kurdish nationalist movement go back to the Ottoman Empire (Jwaideh, 1999; Bruinessen, 2003, cited in Tezcür, 2010, 775). Turkey has witnessed a series of Kurdish rebellions since its establishment. The last rebellion in 1984 cost the lives of more than 40,000 Turkish and Kurdish people, and the economic costs are outrageous. The conflict between Turkey and the PKK is still ongoing. Bruinessen remarks that "Kurdish nationalism was the only movement in Turkey that openly defied the official doctrine that Turkey is a homogeneous nation-state" (1996, 7). Furthermore, Kurdish nationalism became a prominent issue for Turkey's foreign policy as well. One interviewee (Respondent 4) stated that "the Kurdish issue led to the rise of the PKK in the 1970s and became the biggest problem for Turkey". During the uprisings, including the last one in 1984, Ankara imposed security measures in order to tackle the Kurdish issue. However, the leading government, the JDP under the leadership of President Tayyip Erdoğan, accepted the Kurdish identity.

Chapter V: The Seeds of the PKK

Introduction

In this chapter, the structure, policies and evolution of the PKK since its establishment will be evaluated. Moreover, the changing approach of Ankara towards the Kurdish issue since the last uprising of 1984 and its attempts to solve it will be examined in detail. In order to better understand the roots of the problem we must first look at the history of the PKK and its structure.

The PKK launched its first attack against the Turkish state in 1984, using guerrilla warfare against the eastern cities of the country, in order to establish Great Kurdistan in an area comprising parts of a region extending into Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. However, it is claimed that this aim has since changed from establishing Great Kurdistan to achieving confederalism inside Turkey (Tan, 2013, 273).

In the early 1980s, the PKK began to train its members in Syria and create military camps in northern Iraq. The ideology of the PKK has changed over time in relation to global and regional developments, and through its struggle with Turkey. However, the PKK has been listed as a terrorist organisation since the early 2000s by both the EU and the US (Philips, 2007, 3).

The PKK's uprising against the Turkish state has been seen as the 29th Kurdish revolt since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. It is the latest and most challenging of the Kurdish uprisings and, more significantly, it bears a different ideology and motivation from those that have gone before. The PKK is secular, anti-traditional and supported by urbanised, educated and anti-tribal Kurds (Yavuz and Özcan, 2006, 106). In other words, it aims to "destroy the tribal ties and the traditional Kurdish social structure and lead to the creation of an independent Kurdish state" (Galletti, 2008, 124). In the early years of its establishment in the late 1970s, the PKK planned to target high-profile politicians in order to make their voice heard. As Barkey and Fuller state, the PKK's "initial actions targeted Kurdish landlords, including an assassination attempt on a member of parliament from the Justice party of Suleyman Demirel" (1998, 22). In sum, the ideology of the PKK has always been a combination of Marxism and Kurdish nationalism (Vali, 2013, 218).

In its first years, the PKK attacked tribal chieftains and villages, and killed village guards, civil servants and civilians, including women and children (Kryenbroek-Sperl, 2003, 24-5). It was thought that by killing those who did not support their cause, the resulting fear of death would help

the PKK to continue to recruit and challenge the state. During the conflict, hundreds of villages were razed and hundreds of thousands of people were forced to move away from their homeland (Fuller and Barkey, 1998, 66).

It is believed that Ankara's policies of intolerance towards the Kurdish movement caused a rise in the PKK, as the Turkish army forced people to cut the PKK's supply from local people who assisted and sheltered PKK militants in rural areas, especially in mountainous villages. As a result of this, hundreds of thousands of people moved to the outskirts of metropolitan cities. Pro-Kurdish parties have mobilised these internal migrants and increased their power there.

There is no doubt that Turkish state policies against the Kurds were a direct cause of the rise of the PKK. As Orhan Miroğlu (an MP from the JDP) suggests, the PKK has paradoxically only been encouraged since its establishment by the Turkish state's policies of assimilation and repression (2012, 34). However, official ideology and the majority of Turks believed that the PKK is a project to divide Turkey and prevent its economic and social development. Even security forces and some politicians share the same opinion about the PKK. For example, former president Süleyman Demirel said that the PKK was awarded foreign aid in the 1990s from countries such as Syria, Greece, the Soviet Union and some EU countries (Bila, 2007, 270).

When the warfare began, the PKK would carry out attacks upon Turkish state targets including military patrols, schools etc. The PKK planned to weaken the state's authority in Kurdish-populated cities and to degrade the state in the eyes of Kurds, using small units of PKK militants. Then, in the final stage of the war, the "people's army supported by the popular uprising of the masses would overthrow the rule of the state and achieve the revolutionary change" (Gunes, 2012, 255). In order to achieve this goal, the PKK tried several times in the early 1990s to incite a popular uprising in towns such as Şırnak and Nusaybin. However, Ankara responded to such uprising attempts harshly and launched counter-attacks on the PKK's enclaves in Turkey and Iraq. As McDowall says, "Regardless of its methods, the conflict between the PKK and the state progressively radicalised the Kurdish population" (2004, 428).

It is evident that the PKK recognised defeat by the Turkish army after attempts to mobilise the masses for a popular uprising against the state in these circumstances. In the meantime, Ankara accepted that the issue could not be solved militarily due to social, economic and ethnic dimensions, as well as those of security, and in the face of such strong support from the Kurdish

masses. Although there were initial attempts at talks instigated by Ankara in the 1990s, the army and security elites' resistance limited these initiatives, as will be explained in greater depth in the next chapter.

5.1 The Establishment of the PKK

In order to understand how the PKK was formed and how it survived the turbulence of the 1970s, we need to look at Turkey's political climate up to 1980. On 12th March 1971, Turkey experienced another coup. The Turkish Armed Forces ousted Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and declared a state of emergency. During this period, Abdullah Öcalan, who was a student at Ankara University, was involved with Marxist organisations and in close contact with other organisations. He "was a sympathiser with the THKP and its leader Mahir Cayan", who was shot dead in clashes with security forces (Özcan, 2006, 77). Abdullah Öcalan was also arrested in Ankara and imprisoned for 7 months due to having taken part in an illegal meeting in April 1971 (Özcan, 2006, 78). After his time in prison, Öcalan continued his political activism by participating in leftist organisations (Ibid; Romano, 2006, 49). However, as Marcus states, these leftists groups did not put the Kurdish question at the top of their agenda; they merely paid lip service to the issue (2007, 26), calculating that the Kurdish issue could wait until after the triumph of the socialist revolution (McDowall, 2006, 414).

In terms of the structure of organisation, as İsmet İmset says, the PKK "emerged not in the guerrilla camps on the rugged terrain of Southeast Turkey, and not [in] any other neighbouring country in the Middle East, but in Turkey's capital city one day in 1974" (İmset, 1992, 9).

Hence, the story of the PKK goes back to the early 1970s, when Abdullah Öcalan and his friends, mainly from the university, would gather in student houses and discuss the establishment of their own organisations. Later, the first meeting was held in Tuzluçayır, a district of Ankara (Özcan, 2006, 81).

At this meeting, Öcalan raised his profile among the group members (Ibid). Öcalan and approximately 20 to 25 people gathered in Dikmen, another district of Ankara, at the end of 1976. In that meeting, a 'central' committee was selected and, more importantly, it was decided that they would return to the location of Kurdistan. Özcan draws attention to the leadership of the party: "in terms of Öcalan's leadership, it was the first and last organisational election in the PKK's

history" (2006, 82). It is also important to note that there were two individuals of Turkish origin within the PKK's main cadre: Haki Karer and Kemal Pir. Therefore, some state that the PKK's strategic plan to create an independent Kurdistan has always been contradictory (Özcan, 2006, 79).

In accordance with the decision to return 'home', the PKK targeted cities in order to initiate its campaign and recruit new members. The target cities were Gaziantep, Maraş, Elazığ, Dersim (Tunceli) and Ağrı, all of which were seen as part of Kurdistan by Kurdish nationalists. The aim was to get people's attention and garner support from within those cities for Öcalan. 'Apocus', as the group was known at the time, held meetings in cities up until 15th May 1977, and these were chaired mainly by Öcalan. The recruitment method of Apocus was one-to-one debates to win people over in Ankara and the aforementioned cities (Marcus, 2007, 35). In the meetings, it was agreed that the only way forward was to 'liberate' so-called northern Kurdistan.

During those years, there were many illegal Kurdish organisations seeking to establish an independent Kurdistan, such as Rizgari, Kawa, Devrimci Yol, Partizan etc. According to Marcus, there were nine illegal Kurdish organisations supporting an independent Kurdistan in the early years of the PKK (2007, 38). However, there were important ideological divisions amongst those groups, such as between Maoist or Stalinist tendencies. These ideological differences sometimes escalated into conflict: at one of the meetings, Haki Karer was shot dead by a Red Star member in Gaziantep. Apocus was not armed until Haki Karer, who had been the second most prominent member of the group, was killed.

Apocus decided to establish a party in order to become better organised and gain recognition among the other groups. Regarding the establishment of the party, a congress which took 6 days was held in Fis village, in the Lice district of Diyarbakır, in November 1978 (Jongerden, 2007, 25). The name chosen for the party was the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) ('Kurdistan Worker's Party' in Kurdish), and Abdullah Öcalan was selected as General Secretary of the Party. In addition, they decided to set up a monthly magazine for the PKK, *Serxwebun* ('Independence' in Kurdish).

While Öcalan and his friends were discussing the possible future of the organisation, Öcalan also met with other leftist organisations in order to get support for his cause. However, he was unable to get attention from either the Turkish leftists or the established Kurdish student organisations (Marcus, 2007, 28). Furthermore, Öcalan's vision was criticised by some Kurdish activists, as

Kurdish society was exceptionally traditional, religious and tribal-based. Thus, it was not realistic to gain concrete support from Kurds in the region.

Despite the fact that the PKK's ideology called for war against the Turkish state, at the outset the PKK was interested in attacking rival Kurdish organisations rather than state targets. As mentioned above, there were many armed groups located in areas where the PKK was trying to get a foothold, especially in Kurdish-populated cities. Therefore, the PKK increased its attacks on other groups who were active in the same place. Öcalan made his lack of respect for rival groups clear in his speeches (Marcus, 2007, 40). The PKK considered that the only route to success was to eliminate other groups wherever necessary and capture the support of the people (Bruinessen, 1988, 40).

5.2.1 Launching a War in Turkey

Turkey has endured PKK violence for nearly four decades, and that violence has claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people. The conflict has cost Turkey enormously, both economically and socially. Thousands of civilians, soldiers and PKK militants died between the PKK's first attacks in 1984 and 2014; hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, and hundreds of villages evacuated, costing the Turkish state billions of dollars (Tol and Taşpınar, 2014). In that time Ankara has implemented many different countermeasures – both repressive and more accommodative policies – in order to thwart violence from the PKK (Ünal, 2012, 433).

Although some say that the PKK did not use violence until 1984, Mustafa Akyol argues that the PKK killed 354 people and wounded 366 people in the period from its establishment to the coup of 12th September 1980 (2006, 136). Those years saw the PKK struggle with other Kurdish organisations and Kurdish tribes in the area. Prior to the 1980 coup, there were many illegal organisations, including Kurdish nationalist and leftist organisations. The military administration suppressed all organisations in the region post-1980. The elimination of these other organisations in southern Turkey enabled the PKK to move freely.

It was known that the PKK needed the camps in northern Iraq that were under Barzani's control. They had taken advantage of the power vacuum created by the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and intra-Kurdish clashes between the KDP-PUK, the main Kurdish political parties in Iraq. Moreover, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982-1985 made it harder to train militants in the

Bekaa Valley. Therefore, at some time in 1982, Öcalan agreed the construction of camps in KDP-controlled territory in northern Iraq with Barzani (Marcus, 2007, 69). After the agreement, the PKK's main cadre was transferred from Syria to the camps in northern Iraq. The PKK built a main camp, 'Lolan', at that time. Before its first attack in 1984, PKK militias infiltrated Turkey and gathered intelligence about the geography of the region and troop locations. Moreover, militants also contacted local people, asked for their support for the PKK cause and, more importantly, avoided clashes with security forces in this pre-1984 period (Tan, 2014).

Abdullah Öcalan believed that the PKK would succeed in establishing a Kurdish state firstly inside Turkey and then in other countries. Öcalan's 'Great Kurdistan' idea led to the clash with Iraqi Kurds over the leadership of the Kurdish cause in following years. From 1978 to the early 1990s, the PKK's policy was to create a 'liberated zone', which indicated the first step of an independent Kurdish state inside Turkey. During that time, the PKK were not the only ones who wanted to 'liberate' Kurdistan. Ala Rizgari, a pro-Kurdish organisation based in Turkey, sent about 150 militants to Kurdish-populated cities inside the country. Moreover, another leftist group, Dev-yol, was camped in Syria; however, they experienced an internal division and had abandoned their camps by 1983 (Marcus, 2007, 72). Thus, the PKK stood as the only Kurdish organisation aiming to start an armed struggle in Syria.

The PKK held its first congress in July 1981 in Syrian-Lebanese territory under Öcalan's leadership. It was an important meeting for several reasons: firstly, it was the first meeting held in Syrian territory and it showed that future plans of Damascus were against Turkey. Secondly, the PKK decided to open a dialogue with other organisations rather than fight them. Thirdly, a decision was taken to oversee the launch of a Vietcong-style guerrilla war against Turkey (İmset, 1992, 32): "In 1984 the PKK began Viet-Cong style guerrilla attacks on Turkish security forces, government personnel and facilities" (Romano, 2006, 50).

After a long period of preparation, Öcalan and the main cadre specified three provinces to attack within Turkey. The initial attacks took place in Eruh (Siirt province) and Semdinli (Hakkari) on 15th August 1984. Following these attacks, the PKK killed 8 Turkish soldiers in Çukurca near the border, and then an army captain was killed in an ambush (Marcus, 2007, 84). Herewith began the low-intensity conflict between the PKK and Turkish army that has continued ever since. Ankara responded harshly to the last Kurdish uprising in the same way as it did to its predecessors. President Kenan Evren (the military coup leader) said in the aftermath of the attacks that "the snake

must be killed while its head is small" (Cumhuriyet, 1984). However, Prime Minister Özal did not take the PKK attacks so seriously and described them as "a bunch of pundits" (Pulur, 2010). It was thought that the revolt would be smashed within weeks or months as its 28 preceding attempts had been.

In its first years the PKK's attacks put Ankara and the Turkish army under pressure as the militants gained an advantage in the rural areas and mountainous territories in the region. Ankara took immediate measures, such as instigating the temporary village guard system in April 1985 to defend the local population from PKK attacks (McDowall, 2006, 423). Some clans, who were mainly involved with right-wing political parties and who were against the PKK's policies, accepted an invitation to join the system. There were some clans who had clashes with other PKK-backed clans who also supplied manpower to the village guard system. As previously stated, the PKK targeted these tribes in its first years. However, since then, the Turkish state and all its affiliations, including security forces, teachers and public workers, etc., have become its main targets (Bengio, 2011, 621).

Village guards joined the operations with security officials in their territory. Moreover, they participated in the blocking of PKK members moving through the precipitous mountains of the Iraqi borders. Village guards were labelled as collaborators of the Turkish state, and the system became one of the main targets of the PKK. The PKK responded very harshly to the village guard system. Local people were threatened and discouraged against joining the system. During the peace process (2013-2015), the PKK demanded the removal of the village guard system as a condition. The PKK attacks on village guard families in Pınarcık village, in Mardin Province, killed 16 children and 8 women, and a total of 30 Kurdish villagers, in 1987 (Cemal, 2005, 77). Again in 1987, in Mardin Province, the village of Pecenek was attacked and many civilians were killed (Cemal, 2005, 266).

In addition, schools and teachers have become targets of the PKK. Thousands of schools have been burnt and hundreds of teachers have been killed since 1984 (Bengio, 2011, 621). The PKK sees schools and teachers as a state policy to assimilate the Kurds in the region. According to human rights organisations in Turkey, around 128 teachers were killed by the PKK between August 1984 and November 1994 in the region (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 130). Furthermore, the PKK attacked tourist sites, state buildings and private companies who worked for the Turkish state, in order to weaken state capacity.

Turkey switched from military rule to civil politics in 1983, when Turgut Özal won a majority in the first elections. The military regime was redesignated "the National Security Council (NSC) and the ruling body after the coup, restructured Turkey's legal, political, and ideological system" (Marcus, 2007, 83). The new constitution, adopted in 1982 by the military regime, banned freedom of expression and restricted political movements or acts. The military regime restricted all political movements which did not suit the state's ideology in the new constitution. More significantly, the NSC designed a method of checking Turkey's security and political system as well as that of any political parties. Therefore, the Turkish army became a dominant force regarding both security issues and domestic politics.

Turkey responded rigorously to the PKK's attacks on both civilians and military targets. From the time of the PKK's first attacks in 1984, the Turkish government and security elites rejected any political solution to this issue. They applied harsh security measures to tackle the PKK uprising. In other words, Ankara's anti-Kurdish policies only fanned the flames of the Kurdish issue in Turkey further by trying to deal with it using the same methods as in previous uprisings.

In sum, Turkey launched 'the village guard system' in 1985, declared a 'state of emergency' in 1987, and enacted the Law to Fight Terrorism in 1991 in order to eliminate the PKK. The Turkish governments and the security elite believed that the implication of those security measures would bring the PKK to its knees. The security elite, particularly the army, was the most influential policy-maker in security policies. As Pinar Tank says, "Due to the securitised nature of the Kurdish conflict, the security forces, not the civilian political actors decided Turkey's policy towards the Kurds" (2006, 70). Although the Turkish army achieved control of the region, these security precautions neither prevented PKK attacks nor brought about the end of the PKK.

5.2.2 The War between Turkey and the PKK (1984-2012)

Mesut Yeğen identifies three separate phases in the Turkish state's changing perception of the Kurdish issue: in the early years (1921-1924) the Kurdish issue was seen by the Turkish state as encompassing the cultural and political rights of the republic. After constitutional changes in 1924, the existence of the Kurds was systematically denied and the Kurdish issue was relegated to a set of merely social and economic problems. In the last period (1990-2003), Ankara applied security measures to the problem, adding to the denial of the cultural and political aspects of the problem

(2016, 22).

As mentioned above, Turkish governments rejected Kurdish identity until the 1990s. It approached the Kurdish issue as a public security problem and left it to military services and the governors who had special authority given by the government. However, in 1992, President Turgut Özal held different views from Turkey's traditional approach to the Kurdish question as a 'security problem': he "supported the idea of finding a solution to the question by taking cultural, economic, social and political measures" (Efegil, 2011, 30). Another state policy was the 'state of emergency', strongly criticised by human rights organisations, which was established in 8 cities in 1987 in order to control the cities and cut the PKK's logistics. During the state of emergency, many assassinations and kidnappings occurred in the area. The 'state of emergency' was lifted in 2002 by the newly elected government (Dymond, 2002).

At the third congress of the PKK in 1986, some important decisions were taken by the central committee, on the subject of tax collection, recruitment (at least one member from each family) and the establishment of rural organisations. These decisions helped the PKK to get intelligence about security forces, recruitment and logistical support for its fighting militants (Kundakçi, 2004, 3). These decisions boosted its network, resulting in an ability to gather intelligence on military spots and significantly increase the possibility of mobilisation.

The thousands of PKK militias currently requiring arms and equipment need a great amount of money, and in order to support this, the PKK has several different types of revenue. Firstly, they collect custom taxes which are taken at the Iraq-Turkey border from incoming trucks and smugglers. Secondly, collaborator landlords fund the PKK. Thirdly, the half a million Kurds in Europe are a significant source of revenue for PKK activities. Fourthly, other states who are using the PKK against Turkey contribute to PKK activities by providing arms, training camps or equipment, and money. Moreover, the PKK use various other ways to raise money such as concerts and meetings (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, 31).

Turkey launched an operation against the PKK's northern Iraqi camps in 1986 and 1987. It increased the pressure on the KDP and urged them to force the PKK from the region. The PKK militias attacked a Turkish patrol in Çukurca on the northern border, killing 14 Turkish soldiers. Turkey blamed the KDP and responded to this attack with an air operation on northern Iraq. This operation killed 165 Peshmerga and civilians alongside militia fighters (Özdağ, 2010, 71).

President Kenan Evren (1982-1989) stated that "the PKK increased its attacks on the villages and killed civilians including children and women in order to suppress the people; during the years 1986 and 1987 lots of Kurds joined the PKK, as the PKK increased attacks" (Bila, 2007, 32). The raids on village guards, their villages and the subsequent killing of civilians, including children, women and civil servants, further intensified in 1987. During that time, the policies of the PKK aimed to suppress people through forcing them into cooperation.

The Kurdish groups in northern Iraq (the KDP and PUK) played a controversial role in the war between Turkey and the PKK. As explained above, the PKK set up camps in the region under the KDP's control at the beginning of the 1980s. With pressure from Turkey, Kurdish groups, especially the KDP, distanced themselves from the PKK. However, the Anfal campaign and the Gulf War in 1991, mentioned in the next chapters, strengthened the PKK's position in northern Iraq due to a power vacuum. Furthermore, the intra-Kurdish clashes between the KDP and the PUK also provided the PKK with room for manoeuvre (Tank, 2006, 74; Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 164). According to the US colonel Richard Naab, who carried out duties in northern Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi Kurds needed the PKK in order to force Turkey's attention onto the region. They believed that Ankara would not be willing to help the Iraqi Kurds if there was not a PKK threat from within the region (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 170).

Turgut Özal improved relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders and invited them to Ankara following the Gulf War. Ankara then tried to keep these leaders under its control and demanded cooperation to remove the PKK camps from the Qandil Mountains. In the meantime, Saddam Hussein was supplying weapons to the PKK in return for intelligence about Turkey and Kurdish groups (Marcus, 2007; Özdağ, 2010). A 'no-fly-zone' and a safe haven were created by Allied countries, as was an autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government. This was seen as a threat to Turkish national security by the Turkish elites. However, Turgut Özal sought to develop relations with the Iraqi Kurds in order to get leverage over them.

As the PKK captured the Iraqi army's weapons and strengthened its position in northern Iraq, it began to attack Turkish patrols with a greater number of militants. Moreover, the PKK attacked some towns near the border in order to create a liberated zone in 1991. This action put Ankara under pressure. Therefore, the Turkish army decided to launch a cross-border operation on the camps. In 1992, the Turkish army launched a large operation on the camps inside Iraqi territory in co-ordination with Iraqi Kurdish leaders (Winrow and Kirişci, 1997, 166).

In 1992, the PKK attacked some towns with a high number of militants and proposed the creation of a liberated zone whilst establishing a 'National Parliament' in Turkey, although they did not succeed in achieving any of these projects. The PKK's increasing attacks on Turkish forces and attempts to invade border towns at the beginning of the 1990s alarmed Ankara. Therefore, Turkey decided to launch an operation on the PKK camps, together with forces under Barzani and Talabani. The Iraqi Kurdish leaders met with two high commanders of the Turkish army in Iraq and planned the operation, which took place on 12th November 1992 (Öztürk, 2007, 83).

The Army Chief Doğan Güreş (1990-1994) named three important results of the operation: firstly, the PKK's motivation decreased; secondly, the idea of establishing an independent Kurdistan faded; and thirdly, the PKK's strength following the operation was irreparably weakened due to the huge loss of manpower and equipment (Bila, 2007, 72). Following the operation, Turkish forces built patrol stations in Iraq in pursuit of the militants.

However, since the fighting started in 1984, thousands of PKK sympathisers or members have been imprisoned. It is said that prisons are also another 'education camp' for the PKK militias. According to General Hasan Kundakçi, the PKK has managed to reorganize itself in prisons, which have become a 'university' for PKK members (2004, 5). During the interviews, some participants (Respondents 4, 5) mentioned that the prisoners (PKK members in the prisons) are one of the influential groups within the PKK.

According to Hasan Cemal, "Barzani supported the PKK between 1980 and 1986, but when the PKK terrors increased in Turkey, he withdrew his support for them. Moreover, he has a fundamental ideological difference with Öcalan. While he [is] thought [of] as a leader of the whole of Kurdistan (including Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria), Öcalan believed that Barzani is a tool of colonialist powers" (Cemal, 2005, 206). The first time Iraqi Kurdish groups contacted Ankara was in 1991. The following year relations between them improved significantly (İmset, 1992, 200). The Kurdish groups emerged as major political actors in northern Iraq, and therefore Turkey approached them in order to prevent PKK attacks from within Iraq.

As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, the First Gulf War (1990-1991) created a power vacuum in the region, as the Iraqi army and civil servants were withdrawn. This power vacuum was quickly filled by the PKK. More significantly, some militants infiltrated Turkey illegally, using the flow of refugees as cover. These important developments greatly increased the PKK's

capability in Eastern Turkey (Cemal, 2005, 133). A former commander in the Turkish army said that the PKK's power and attacks reached a peak following the Gulf War (Bila, 2007, 31). At that time, General Erol Kasnak explained that the Turkish Army reorganised itself and adjusted to guerrilla warfare in order to fight effectively with militias from 1993 onwards. The military started to conduct guerrilla-style warfare, staying in mountain settings for more than a week at a time, when previously they had only carried out operations during the daytime (Cemal, 2005, 438).

Turkish officials, including President Özal, believed that Baghdad was helping the PKK against the other Kurdish groups (the PUK and KDP) in northern Iraq. Furthermore, the PKK was providing intelligence to the Saddam regime about the KDP's movements and Turkish troop dispositions (McDowall, 2004, 428). A report was prepared by Turkish Intelligence which secretly mentioned that the Baghdad regime supported the PKK and had been providing them with weapons and equipment. Therefore, General Doğan Güreş stated that relations needed to improve with Iraqi Kurds, Celal Talabani and Masoud Barzani in order to secure Turkish borders and tackle the issue (Cemal, 2005, 128).

The early years of the 1990s were the PKK's most influential times in the Southeast. During that time, the PKK tried to obstruct institutions, the press and political parties, and encouraged civil disobedience against the state in order to challenge and gain psychological supremacy over the central government (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, 29). Military Chief Doğan Güreş said that the situation in the region appalled him and that he thought they were losing control of the region. The PKK was now in control of mountains and they were attempting to spark mass uprisings in both towns and cities (Cemal, 2005, 161-3). In sum, over the course of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the PKK greatly increased its power: in addition, the war spread to different cities (Günes, 2013, 189).

Although there is a lack of Kurdish unity in each country, Saddam's persistent threats and the situation in Iraq nourished the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Turkey has always closely watched events in Iraqi Kurdistan, as it feared the influence of events on its Kurds. Turkey also opposed any autonomy or federation of the Kurds in Iraq. In the post-Saddam era, Iraqi Kurds created a Kurdish Regional Government in 2005, which Turkey has accepted and with whom it has begun economic relations. In 2008, leaders started to strengthen their economic and political relations by visiting each other in their respective capitals. Masoud Barzani, the leader of the KRG, declared his support of the peace process and an alliance with the Turkish state. He came to visit Turkey several

times and gave a message that the Kurdish issue in Turkey should be resolved by peaceful means. Hence, from 2002 the government began to liberalise its Kurdish policies. The Iraqi Kurds' new position, Turkey's foreign policy and its Kurdish policies will be explained deeply in following chapters.

5.2.3 The PKK's Ideology and Discourse

As mentioned above, the Kurdish movement succeeded in bringing its cause into the wider political arena in Turkey via Marxist and Socialist organisations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, the Kurdish Socialists became disillusioned with the Turkish left wing, accusing them of giving insufficient weight to the Kurdish issue in its policies. Therefore, the PKK and other Kurdish nationalist movements increased their activities during this period. According to Kemal Burkay, one of the main reasons for the division of the Kurdish and Turkish left was that: "the Turkish left was heavily influenced by Turkish (state) ideology and could not openly come up with a Kurdish solution" (cited in Marcus, 2007, 26). Therefore, Kurdish demands for autonomy were not taken into consideration by the Turkish left. Indeed, the Turkish left believed that socialist revolution would free all Turks and Kurds together.

In 1975, Öcalan and his friends gave up university completely in order to focus on forming Marxist-Leninist groups with the aim of carrying out a socialist revolution. However, Öcalan could not get any support from any other organisations due to his obscure past and lack of experience in the political arena (Marcus, 2007, 30). Öcalan and his 'inner circle' focused on new recruitment in Ankara and Southeastern Turkey. His idea was to create immediate revolutions to attract the Kurdish youth. From his standpoint, he wanted to correct "the history of colonialism, the evils of imperialism and apply the theories of his ideological heroes Marx, Engels and Stalin" (Marcus, 2007, 38). The initial idea of the PKK's "Great Kurdistan' was replaced with the desire for autonomy for Kurds in Turkey. The PKK currently demand self-determination and autonomy for the Kurds. The Vice-Chairman of the PKK, Cemil Bayik, said that "All we want is to live freely with our own identity, culture and values in democratic conditions"; "Self-determination should not be interpreted as meaning an independent state." (The Economist, 2015).

Why did the PKK abandon its main objective to establish an independent Kurdistan? There are many reasons for that: changing dynamics in the world, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union;

the realisation that the Turkish State was impossible to beat with insurgency; and the lack of support from the majority of Kurds. It is important to note that no Kurdish nationalist movement has achieved as much as the PKK in terms of mobilising the Kurdish public, posing a long-term challenge for the Turkish state, recruitment of militias from Kurds both in Turkey and Europe, and military prowess.

For Öcalan, Kurdistan was divided among four countries, with the part of Kurdistan in Turkey's south being further hampered by colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, the economic status of Kurds in Turkey was conducive to communist warfare (Ibid, 38). The slogan of 'a united-independent Kurdistan' was used in PKK propaganda until the late 1980s (Özcan, 2006, 91). According to its ideology, the use of force against Turkish 'colonialism' was indispensable for successfully carrying out Kurdish liberation policies (Ibid). During its first years, the PKK recruited mainly peasants and working-class Kurds, the majority of the population. The PKK also used Kurdish nationalism to target the educated Kurdish youth and the urbanised middle class in order to encourage them to join the movement. Since 1984, the PKK has not hesitated to use force on anyone at all related to the Turkish state, including the village guards, workers etc.

The Kurdish tribes dominated socio-politics, territory, and the economy of the region through descent and kinship (Bruinessen, 1978, 40, cited in Jongerden, 2007, 25). Abdullah Öcalan came from a peasant family originating in Halfeti, a town in Şanlıurfa Province in Southeastern Turkey. In order to get support from similar families, the PKK used Marxist and Leninist discourse to boost support from the region. In other words, the PKK focused on re-organising local people against tribal leaders (Romano, 2006, 14). One of the PKK's main aims was to change the social system of the region (Galletti, 2008, 125). They did this by starting to dismantle the feudal system and fighting against the Kurdish Aghas who were seen as collaborators with the Turkish state.

As explained in more detail in Chapter III, sheikhs and landowning tribes had historically dominated the politics and social life of the region. The feudal structure of the region was a significant obstacle for the PKK in mobilising people. Therefore, the PKK intensified its attacks upon leading sheikhs and landowners until the 1980 coup (Tan, 2012, 373-4). Moreover, in some towns some families were wealthy and held a position of stronger influence in their area. Therefore, the PKK's initial attacks in 1979 were against those tribes in the towns of Hilvan and Siverek (Özcan, 2006, 89). It was believed that attacking those families or tribes made the PKK more popular amongst local people and other rival groups, widening the support-base in the region.

The tribal leaders were involved with mainly right-wing parties. The PKK staged an assassination attempt on the leader of the Bucak Tribe, Mehmet Celal Bucak, who was also a Member of Parliament. This attempt increased influence among other groups and local people. Immediately following these clashes with tribal leaders, the PKK declared its founding publicly and aimed at gaining new recruits throughout the region.

Following the establishment of the PKK, Öcalan specified its first targets as rival groups and landlords rather than the Turkish state. During its early years, there were other illegal organisations operating in the same towns, also trying to gain a foothold in the region and preparing for armed struggle against the Turkish state. These groups were seen as the first obstacle to PKK operations in the field by the PKK. As Marcus says, "Öcalan's supporters shared a Leninist-inspired outlook that saw rival groups as impediments to the one-party rule they believed was necessary for a successful revolution" (2007, 40).

During the PKK's establishment meeting in Diyarbakır in 1978, Öcalan and others ratified the 'Path of Kurdish Revolution' document, which claimed that Kurdistan (Turkey) was colonised by the Turkish state and tribal leaders, and that the Kurdish bourgeoisie were collaborating with state (Gareth and Winrow, 1997, 117). As Ali Kemal Özcan says, "the Apocular [Apocus] proposed that the party be Marxist-Leninist and 'a revolutionary party of the proletariat and peasants of Kurdistan'" (Öcalan [1978] 1992, 153-158, cited in Özcan 2006, 86). For the PKK, the only way forward was to launch war against Turkey in order to 'liberate' and establish an independent and socialist Kurdistan, asserting that "the only way [was] to organise and enlarge the fire-power of guerrilla corps and orientate them towards almost all targets" (Serxwebun, June 1999, cited in Özcan, 2006, 91). İsmet İmset explained the PKK's 1977 draft program: firstly, "Kurdistan has been divided into four regions by the four exploiting countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey. Secondly, its "Maximum objective will be to establish a state based on Marxist-Leninist principles". Thirdly, "The main alliance for the revolution will be an alliance between worker/peasants and the intellectual youth" (1992, 15-6). Öcalan defined Turkey as a colonialist state and labelled it an 'enemy' in his book, the 'Encyclopedia of Socialism', published in 1988 (Tan, 2012, 367). A former PKK member said that "We believed in socialism and it was the Stalinist type of socialism we believed in" (Marcus, 2007, 41).

Özcan states that "the ideology of the PKK at its inception generally squares with the framework of a commonplace version of classical Marxism in the Cold War era, with its hesitant, balanced

critique of Soviet socialism" (2006, 105). The PKK believed that the only way to achieve its program and manifesto was with Marxism, Leninism and world socialist powers (İmset, 1992, 21). However, its discourse to create 'Great Kurdistan' changed over the period in relation to regional and global developments. The precise reasons for this change will be examined in the next section.

It is important to note that the last Kurdish uprising differs in its nature from its precedents. Former uprisings were motivated by mainly religious or tribal themes, and were led by tribal or religious leaders. However, the PKK was founded predominantly by leftist university students from rural areas and working-class families of the Southeast. Ali Balcı states that "unlike early nationalism by the Kurdish elite, contemporary Kurdish nationalism is not based on the manipulation of the Kurdish masses by elites or feudal lords but the internalisation of the nationalist sentiments by the Kurdish masses" (2017, 57).

5.2.4 The 1980 Coup and the PKK

The 1971 military coup did not unify the public and there was strife between right-wing and left-wing groups. Leading up to the 1980 coup, the climate of Turkey was again chaotic: lack of stability due to short-term coalition governments, political assassinations, division among the police forces between left and right, thousands of people murdered each year, and economic recession. Thus the Turkish military staged another coup, on 12th September 1980, because of the situation the country found itself in. In the aftermath, the military regime harshly repressed all political activists, closed down institutions and banned all political parties and their leaders from politics. The political party leaders at the time, including Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, were detained and put on trial. In addition, the use of the Kurdish language in public was banned by the military regime from October 1983. According to official statistics, political and non-political crime decreased by 82% in the 8 months after the coup (İmset, 1992, 2).

The excessive use of force and repression under military rule between 1980 and 1983 and, more importantly, the widespread torture of political prisoners in Turkey, particularly in Diyarbakır Prison, are cited as the reason behind the PKK's success in mobilizing such a large number of people in its early years (Gunes, 2012, 249, cited in Taşpınar, 2005, 79). As Hakan Yavuz says, "the oppression of the 1980 coup had the opposite impact by further politicising and strengthening the Kurdish sense of identity and this, in turn, was used by the PKK" (2007). In this frustrated

environment the PKK re-emerged quickly. People who had been tortured in prison were filled with hate against the Turkish state, and therefore many of them joined the PKK on their release.

Following the coup, many Marxist urban group members escaped to EU countries and Soviet Russia as political refugees (Romano, 2006, 50). Furthermore, the majority of insurgent groups were repressed by military rule between 1980 and 1983 (Ibid). However, the PKK and some leftist organisations managed to escape to Syria and Europe, where they maintained their activities and prepared for an insurgency in Syrian-controlled Lebanese territory (İmset, 1992, 93).

Other political activists and a great number of Kurds moved to European countries, especially Germany, as workers or for political reasons. In the 1980s, the PKK made an effort to mobilise these Kurds via established Kurdish cultural organisations (Gunes, 2013, 186). Moreover, it connected with socialist worker parties and human rights groups to put pressure on Ankara in the international arena. Somehow the PKK succeeded in a mass mobilisation of Kurds living in the EU and collected money from them.

Abdullah Öcalan and other PKK members sensed the upcoming coup and escaped to Syria in 1979 (Romano, 2006, 50). In 1980, many PKK members and sympathisers were captured and arrested, including members from the Central Committee, and all were imprisoned. In total, 1790 suspected PKK members were arrested by the military regime (McDowall, 2006, 422), and a further 261 suspects were charged with membership of and activism for the DDKO. Following the coup, İsmet İmset stated that Turkish politicians had failed to notice the rise of the PKK because the political disputes and conflicting interests in the country had focused all their attention on trying to restore democracy (1992, 38).

The military regime tortured prisoners in Diyarbakır prison; these were mainly arrested on political grounds including involvement with the PKK and other illegal Kurdish organisations. The PKK members increased their reputation in prison by resisting the military regime as one body. Some say that the PKK's recruitment increased at this time, as many prisoners joined the organisation after release from prison (Tan, 2012). Furthermore, the PKK watched the Turkish left, which was crushed completely by the Turkish military regime in the early 1980s, very closely. As the only group remaining in the region, the PKK took the opportunity to boost recruitment for its cause by harnessing people's anger at the military regime's rule, using nationalism to gain the support of the Kurdish people.

Mazlum Doğan, a member of the Central Committee of the PKK, hanged himself in Diyarbakir Prison to protest against torture. Following this act, more members and four other leading figures committed suicide as well. The resistance of the prisoners has become a mainstay legend for the PKK in its magazines and publications (Günes, 2012, 260). Their publications claimed that the PKK was the only feasible resistance organisation against the Turkish, as it hailed a 'new era' for the survival of Kurds (Serxwebun, Berxwedan). This myth was much used in recruitment propaganda after the 1980 coup in the first years of the PKK.

The situation did not allow the PKK to operate within Turkey, where the military regime had tightened control all over the country. Öcalan thus called all members to escape to Syria, as he dealt with the Damascus regime and established a training camp there.

5.2.5 From Great Kurdistan to Autonomy

The PKK has been very successful at adjusting to both the regional and the global political agenda. Conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq and Gulf wars and their results in the Middle East helped the PKK to strengthen its political and military position in the Qandil Mountains. Following the Iran-Iraq war, the number of Iraqi troops was reduced in the north. Following the Gulf War in 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the PKK had to adopt a new political system according to the rise of regional powers.

After the invasion of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government was established, creating a semi-independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. These developments created opportunities for the PKK to strengthen its position in northern Iraq. With recent developments, also in Syria, the PKK-related group the Democratic Union Party (the PYD) has taken control of northern Syria and created Kurdish Cantons. These developments show that the PKK has been strengthening its position in multiple areas. Turkey sees these developments in Syria as a threat to its national security.

In fact, the PKK has had to bow to this new reality and adjust its policies and ideologies according to the regional powers' political systems. Initially, it was claimed that establishment of a Great Kurdistan, to include Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, formed the main aim of the PKK. However, this aim subsequently changed to demanding autonomy for the Kurds within Turkey's borders.

From its establishment in 1978 until the early 1990s, the PKK's policies were based on recruitment for guerrilla warfare and obtaining the support of the people for its Kurdish cause. Despite its cruel policies against people who were not supportive of its movement, the PKK succeeded in mobilising a large number of people during this period. From then on, the PKK managed to arrange mass demonstrations and protests especially in Turkey's South (Stansfield and Shareef, 2017, 198).

On 21st March 1985, the Kurdish National Liberation Front (ERNK) was established as a sub-unit of the PKK. The ERNK was founded in order to mobilise Kurds in Turkey as well as in Europe, and to raise awareness of their cause. In the 1980s, as stated earlier, the PKK began to build a network in Europe, especially within Germany, through the Kurdish community who had moved away for political or economic reasons. Its activity grew rapidly throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. It achieved the mobilisation of masses of Kurds and created a big network via community centres and cultural activities in Europe. As Bruinessen says, "before 1980 [the PKK] had been almost non-existent there, and the large community of Kurdish labor migrants (between a quarter and a half million) were under the influence of several other political organisations" (1988, 41).

With the emigration of Kurds to European countries for mainly political and economic reasons, the Kurdish issue has become an international problem faced by Turkey. The PKK collected money from Kurdish workers and businesspeople in the EU towards their endeavours in Turkey. They also organised fundraising meetings, concerts and cultural activities. Once the PKK mobilised Kurds in Europe, they started to contact unions, political parties and other groups. This was in order to lobby against Turkey. Thus mass demonstrations and protests against Turkey's policies were organised at that time. In an interview with an anonymous Turkish security official, it was stated that "the EU provided a space for the PKK to operate freely, so that they spread propaganda freely and extorted money from individuals and businessmen. Hence, the EU has become an important place for the PKK in terms of recruiting, fundraising, mobilisation". As well as fundraising for the PKK, young Kurds from Europe were also recruited to fight against the Turkish army (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). In addition, human rights violations in Turkey were criticised by the European Union and international organisations.

Al states that "The PKK initially adopted a Marxist–Leninist, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist political agenda with the goal of establishing a socialist Kurdish state, but after the 1990s the goal

of secession was dropped" (2014, 99). There are several reasons why the PKK's objective shifted from establishing an independent state to autonomy; firstly, the PKK understood that it would be most likely to win against the conventional Turkish army. Secondly, the PKK achieved mass mobilisation of Kurds in Turkey and abroad. In other words, it turned into a political movement, gaining leverage over politics. Once the PKK became popular among Kurds in the region, it sought to maintain its existence. However, "While the PKK gradually gained command of vast economic resources from voluntary contributions, extortion, smuggling, the drug trade, and external support, it was unable to create 'liberated areas' within Turkey" (Tezcür, 2010, 777).

Although Turkey held meetings with its southern neighbours (Iran, Syria and Iraq) to control Kurdish nationalist movements, these states had been using Kurdish groups against each other in the regional power struggle amongst themselves. The PKK had an advantage in this power struggle between states in the region. In the early 1990s, Osman Öcalan, brother of the PKK leader, developed good ties with Iran's Revolutionary Guards, and the Iranian territory near the Turkish border was opened to PKK members (İmset, 1992, 168). Turkey claimed that there were 700-800 militants within Iran's territory in 1992 (Ibid, 205). The PKK took advantage of the power vacuum in the region of Syria, Iraq and Iran and established military camps within those countries. As will be explained in the next sections, Turkey's problems with its neighbours and the demise of authority in Iraq provided a significant opportunity for the PKK to advance its fight.

Islam is seen as an ideological threat by the PKK because of its differences to both Marxist-Leninist and Kurdish nationalist policies. Additionally, the structure of the PKK's Marxist-Leninist ideologies saw religion as a barrier to the 'revolution'. Islam was targeted by the PKK alongside the tribal system in the region for many reasons. The power of the sheikhs and tariqas disrupted the PKK's ability to manoeuvre in various ways. Religious leaders had spoken against the PKK insurgency since the beginning, and that had a profound impact on the public, preventing recruitment among the youth and support from the Kurdish community. The PKK abandoned the condemnation of Islam, which had been targeted alongside the traditional tribal structure of the region. The PKK moved away from this policy with the changing of its leftist rhetoric in 1995, where previously Islam had been seen as incendiary (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, 31).

The PKK changed its approach towards Islam in the early 1990s, collaborating with a number of Kurdish religious leaders in order to gain support from conservative Kurdish people (Akyol, 2006, 226). Later, some Kurdish conservatives became MPs for pro-Kurdish parties such as the HDP.

It is generally believed that the PKK is seen as an anti-Islamic organization aiming to change the structure of conservative Kurdish community. Hence, conservative and Islamist Kurds have sided with other Kurdish groups (such as the tribes) against the PKK.

Abdullah Öcalan denied that the PKK is a Kurdish proletarian revolutionist movement that has been fighting against a 'colonialist Turkish state' in his trial in 1999 (Tan, 2014, 367), "As in general, a democratic solution is the only alternative concerning the Kurdish question. Secession is neither possible nor necessary. The interests of Kurds lie in the democratisation of Turkey" (Öcalan, 1999, 32). Öcalan explained why the PKK de-emphasised its earlier Marxism in an interview with Michael Gunter: "This is just propaganda. It is not possible for us to be communists. Why did the Soviet Union collapse [while] the United States has not? It is because communism made the government everything, but human beings nothing. The United States represents development" (Gunter, 1998, 82). It is obvious that the PKK adjusted its global politics as well as its regional developments, having been focusing solely on maintaining its existence and spreading propaganda.

It is clear that the PKK was attracted to Socialist-Marxist ideology in its early years by educated working-class Kurds. However, the idea of Great Kurdistan and the discourse of nationalism boosted PKK recruitment of the urban working class.

5.2.6 Abdullah Öcalan's Capture

As has been mentioned in Chapter II, Syria has historically had problems with Turkey. From the early years of the PKK, the Damascus regime sheltered Abdullah Öcalan and PKK militias, supplying them with weapons and providing training camp areas.

Turkey's long-standing pressure on the Syrian government to end its support for the PKK resulted in Öcalan's expulsion from Syria. Successive Turkish government heads visited Syria and asked them to end their support of the PKK. However, the Syrian government used the PKK against Hatay and in relation to some water issues, as mentioned in previous chapters. The Turkish government then decided to use force against Syria if they did not expel Abdullah Öcalan from the country. Hence, the Commander of Turkish Land Forces, Atilla Ateş, stated in 1998 in Reyhanlı on the border with Syria, that "Syria misinterpreted our efforts and goodwill. Turkey made an effort to show its goodwill to Syria. If Syria does not take necessary measures to end its support,

we will do whatever is necessary" (Cemal, 2005, 445). Furthermore, President Demirel condemned Damascus and threatened to retaliate against Syria following Ateş's statement. Therewith, Ankara and Damascus signed the Adana Memorandum in October 1998 with Egypt's mediation (Yavuz, 2007, 15).

Once Turkey increased pressure and threatened Syria with war in the late 1990s, Abdullah Öcalan was expelled to Moscow by Damascus in response. Thereafter, Öcalan went to Italy and stayed there for more than 3 months. He was captured in Kenya through the coordination of both US and Turkish intelligence services on 16th February 1999. After the trial on İmralı Island, Öcalan was sentenced to death after being convicted of treason and separatism. However, the death penalty in Turkey was abolished during the EU membership process in 2002 (BBC, 2003).

Öcalan stated: "'I love Turkey and Turkish people. My mother is a Turk. I can be of service to the Turkish people' in his first speech under custody" (Zaman, 1999, 17). He demonstrated that the idea of an independent Kurdistan had been abandoned since 1996, and that ideas of national self-determination were invalid during his trial. In addition, he declared that the Kurdish uprisings towards the state in Atatürk's era were a mistake. Although the idea of independence was in the PKK's manifesto, it was no longer the policy of the PKK (Akyol, 2006, 257). As Hakan Yavuz says, "Öcalan offered 'to serve the Turkish state' and declared that 'the democratic option… is the only alternative in solving the Kurdish question. Separation is neither possible nor necessary'" during his trial. Moreover, Öcalan criticised the Sheikh Said Uprising which took place in 1925, as well as the feudal system of the region (2007, 16).

As the creator of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan has authority over the PKK militias and the public who support the PKK. He severely crushed any opposition, even those who suggested any alternative opinions about PKK policies. In the 1980s, Öcalan became an authoritarian leader and eliminated several members of the original central group. At its second congress in 1982, most of them were accused of being traitors (Marcus, 2007; İmset, 1992). At the beginning of training in the Bekaa valley, many members, even from the cadre, were judged and executed in order to prevent potential opposition to Öcalan's leadership. Moreover, "one of the most vocal opponents was allegedly imprisoned, tortured into signing a confession of immoral behaviour, and finally killed" (Bruinessen, 1988, 44). Thus, Öcalan succeeded in becoming the one man with all the power over the PKK.

Before launching peace negotiations with Öcalan and the PKK, the Turkish government thought that Öcalan's sure and superior position within the PKK, and over its sympathisers, was an opportunity to enable the solution of the Kurdish issue by negotiating with Öcalan. One interviewee (Respondent 5) said in an interview that, "At the beginning of the peace talks, we believed that the peace process would be successful because Öcalan has huge influence over the PKK and Kurds who support the PKK's cause". However, the peace process failed for reasons which will be explained in the next chapter.

In 1999 Öcalan called for an end to armed struggle, ordering PKK militants to withdraw from Turkish territory to camps in Iraq (Tezcür, 2010, 775; Jongerden, 2007). Hence, Ankara hoped that the PKK insurgency would end when its leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999. However, as Tezcür says, "the PKK took full benefit of the 'ceasefire period' to revitalise itself as a fighting force rather than reorganise as a non-violent party and social movement" (2010, 780). Turkey entered war with the PKK again as the ceasefire ended in 2004.

5.3 The Kurdish Issue as a Security Problem

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Kurdish identity has been denied and suppressed by the Turkish state. Kurds were accepted as main elements of the community and were not defined as a minority ethnic group in the Lausanne treaty, which was signed in 1923 after the Turkish War of Independence, because only non-Muslims were deemed to be minority groups. All modern Kurdish uprisings have been suppressed by successive governments in Ankara. However, the last Kurdish uprising, started in 1984 by the PKK, is still ongoing. Ankara has treated all Kurdish uprisings, including the latest, solely as security issues.

Ankara implemented some security-based policies in order to repress the PKK, such as the launching of the Village Guard System in 1985, the state of emergency in Kurdish-populated cities in 1987 and the Anti-Terror Law of Turkey in 1991. The state hired local people, paid them a salary and gave them weapons to fight against the PKK alongside the military. Many Kurdish village guardians and their families were executed cruelly by the PKK at the beginning of the insurgency in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Galletti, 2008:127). The village guard system has been criticised by humanitarian organisations because they were so heavily targeted by the PKK and pro-PKK parties. As Bengio says, "Until not too long ago Ankara was thinking mainly of a

military solution to the problem. The idea being that first the PKK was to be broken and only then could a peaceful solution be devised" (2011, 621-2).

The army's operations inside and outside Turkey, including cross-border operations in 1993, diluted the PKK's capacity, as it lost more than 1,000 militants over the year. The HDP's Diyarbakır provincial chairman Fırat Anlı stated in November 1994 that the state followed tighter policies towards the Kurdish movement. The PKK had won Kurdish support through the use of force in the past: the Turkish state followed the same method as the PKK did (Cemal, 2005, 247). From 1996, the PKK has found itself in utterly defensive positions, in a struggle to access food and shelter (McDowall, 2004, 442).

In the 1990s, the political parties and governments issued no statements nor proposed any set programs towards a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue, as they were under the control of the Turkish army (Miroğlu, 2012, 105). Moreover, Europe's insistence on finding a peaceful solution to the issue was perceived by Ankara as a threat to Turkish national security, and a plan to destroy Turkey's territorial integrity (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 179).

In Turkey a great number of people, including members of the Turkish Army, believed that power changes in Iraq in favour of the Kurds would be applauded by Kurds residing in Turkey (Tan, 2014, 561). Therefore, Turkey securitised the issue and left it to the army to solve any difficulties on the ground. Hence, a series of Turkish foreign policies were implemented with this perspective towards the KRG until 2008. The Kurdish issue has become an international issue as much as a domestic one and has dominated Turkey's foreign policy since that time.

Even during the EU membership process, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit (1999-2002) said that there was no Kurdish problem but backwardness and a feudal system (Yayman, 2011, 15). Moreover, the General Secretary Council of National Security said that "Turkey cannot allow either education or broadcasting in Kurdish on the grounds that this would tear apart the mosaic of Turkish society" (Yavuz, 2007, 19). At the same time, civilians in the region were subjected to harsh state policies such as village evacuations due to their active or passive support for the PKK (Ünal, 2012, 448).

In the 1990s, reports about the Kurdish issue were put forward by both political parties and other institutions. These reports referred to the necessity of cultural pluralism and an improvement in Kurdish democratic rights (Efegil, 2011, 33). Furthermore, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, while

chairman of the Welfare Party of Istanbul, ordered his advisors to prepare a report on the Kurdish issue, demonstrating that Erdoğan has shown interest in this issue since that time. In addition, Erdoğan's Welfare Party obtained a great number of votes from Kurdish-populated cities during the 1990s. His approach towards to the issue was different from Turkish state policy (Ibid, 28). This will be explained in more detail in a later chapter.

Despite the rejection of the Kurdish issue as an ethnic problem, Ankara determined that the problem could not be fully reconciled through a purely military solution. Therefore, the JDP government tried to instigate talks with Öcalan and PKK members in order to obtain a peaceful solution to the problem. However, though there were some attempts at peace talks during the 1990s, these did not go further than discussion, due to the Turkish security elite. During the course of modern Turkish history, there have been many reports drawn up on Ankara's orders to delineate Kurdish policy inside the country. Although governments openly favoured a military solution and were fighting with the PKK, reports about how to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully were prepared behind the scenes.

5.4 The Acceptance of Kurdish Reality

The Kurdish question has been treated solely as a security issue for Ankara since the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923. Following the 1980 coup, the military regime realigned Turkish politics and institutions towards the founding principles of Turkey. The army has seen itself as a guardian of Turkish democracy – staunchly secular, in line with Atatürk's legacy. The army strengthened its position on politics as well as on the Kurdish issue. However, during Turkey's EU membership process in the early 2000s, some raised their voices to express the view that the social side of the Kurdish issue was equally important, rather than just focusing on the security perspective.

President Turgut Özal tried to discuss the issue with the wider public early on in the 1990s, and the Kurdish language ban was lifted by the Özal government in 1991 (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 144). The following year, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel said that "we recognise the Kurdish reality" (Yavuz, 2007, 19). However, Demirel dropped his discourse about the Kurdish reality after warnings from the military (Barkey, 2007, 366). Tol and Taşpınar argue that "From the mid-1920s until the end of the Cold War, Ankara denied the ethnic existence of Kurds and their cultural

rights" (2014). Although these developments showed that Ankara accepted that the Kurdish issue was not solely a security problem, the Turkish elites, especially the army, were antagonised by the policy changes on the Kurdish issue, as they saw only a military solution.

Şerafettin Elçi, who was a minister in Bülent Ecevit's government at the time, was sentenced to imprisonment for one year because of his statement that 'there are Kurds in Turkey and I am Kurdish also' (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 117). It is clear that the Kurdish question has been treated with security-dominated rhetoric in domestic and foreign policy. The issue was left to security officials to tackle, especially during the 1990s. According to Orhan Miroğlu, Ankara has never thought on nor tried to find a solution to the reasons behind political movements in Turkey (2012, 10).

President Turgut Özal said that he had Kurdish blood in 1989 (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 120). It was one of the most important catalysts for the eventual acceptance of a Kurdish reality in Turkey. As was suggested earlier, Turgut Özal was the bravest and most outspoken statesman on the Kurdish issue in Turkey. During his time in office, there was great fear that Turkey would become divided if Kurdish cultural rights were granted (Winrow and Kirişçi, 1997, 125).

Although some politicians stated that they accepted the existence of the Kurdish reality, the Turkish army and accompanying security bureaucrats criticised politicians who mentioned the social dimensions of the Kurdish issue. However, some claims have been made that Turgut Özal was thinking of negotiating the Kurdish issue with the PKK via other channels. After his death in 1993, Ankara intensified its military operations and took tougher measures against the PKK. The peace talk attempts will be explained in more depth in the following chapter.

Ankara started to perceive Kurds as political actors rather than tribal leaders when the creation of the de facto Kurdish state changed the status of Kurds in Iraq. The Turkish Military Chief Hilmi Ozkok (2002-2006) said that "Barzani was a tribal leader, but his status changed. Talabani was also seen as a tribal leader by the Turkish state; but he is the President of Iraq now. We must accept the new reality" (Akyol, 2006, 194).

The new realities in the region pushed Ankara to ameliorate its relations with the Iraqi Kurds. Furthermore, there are several reasons behind the current JDP government's approach to the Kurdish issue and the KRG: firstly, to meet Turkey's energy needs for its growing economy and

energy diversification policies, as the KRG has rich oil reserves. Secondly, as mentioned in Chapter II, the 'zero problem with neighbours' policy required improvements in Turkey's relations with the neighbourhood. Thirdly, it is believed that exclusively security-based policies have not helped to bring an end to the Kurdish issue. Thus, the government attempted to solve the Kurdish issue via negotiations with the PKK (Respondent 5), which will be explained in the next chapter.

5.5 Pro-PKK Parties in Turkey

Pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey have enjoyed a steady increase in their share of votes since the establishment of the first such party, the HEP (People's Labour Party) in 1991. The rise of Kurdish nationalism and pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey and Iraq is one of the main factors to have pushed Turkey to resolve the Kurdish issue peacefully (Çiçek, 2011, 18). The first pro-Kurdish politician, Mehdi Zana, was elected as mayor of Diyarbakır as an independent in 1977 (Akyol, 2006). However, it is important to note that no pro-Kurdish party has challenged the PKK's activities or policies directly. Some of the reasons for this will be explained in more depth in the next chapter.

The first pro-Kurdish party (HEP) to support the PKK's cause was established on 7th June 1990. Abdullah Öcalan declared his support for the HEP in national elections in 1991 (Marcus, 2007, 128; Balci, 2017, 160). Furthermore, its mass appeal in newspapers such as *Özgür Gündem* and *Yeni Ülke*, as well as throughout some civil societies in the early 1990s, contributed to the rise of Kurdish nationalism in the region (Balci, 2017, 161). Thus, the PKK gained the opportunity to dominate both cultural and political spaces. More significantly, this paved the way to mass mobilisation, which encompassed the closure of shops and a mass protest in the region at the request of the PKK.

The SHP (Social Democrat People's Party), a left-wing party, formed a coalition with the HEP during the 1991 national elections. The HEP's 18 candidates entered Parliament under the SHP's umbrella at this time. However, the party was closed down on 3rd July 1992 by the constitutional court, as its activities were considered unconstitutional. Before the party was closed, some MPs were expelled from the SHP. It was succeeded by the DEP (Democratic Labour Party), a party established by some ex-members of the HEP in May 1993. However, the Turkish National Assembly removed the immunity of six MPs from the DEP; they were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on charges of separatism (CNN Turk, 2016).

Following the arrest of the HEP MPs in 1994, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile was established in 1995 by some DEP officials, as planned by the PKK. As Gelletti says, "Although [the DEP] denies being an instrument of the PKK, other Kurdish parties have not wanted to become involved, so that its representatives are mainly PKK members or sympathisers" (2011, 125). Hence, "65 members drawn mainly from PKK-Change in Fortunes, 1993–1997, 235 affiliated associations and the PKK's own ERNK political front, were inaugurated in a ceremony in the Hague in April 1995" (Marcus, 2007, 235-6). According to security officials, the idea of the PKK was to publicize Turkey's hard-line position in the international arena, especially within Europe (Kundakçi, 2004).

In June 1994, another pro-Kurdish party, HADEP (People's Democracy Party), was established and received nearly 1.2 million votes (4.2%) in the 1995 national elections. They also received more than 1.4 million votes in national elections and won 37 municipalities in local elections in 1999. Despite the capture of Öcalan, HADEP won many municipalities in the region. This shows that the PKK dominated political spaces within the region. In other words, "HADEP's victory was a vote of confidence in the PKK" (Marcus, 2007, 292). HADEP was closed down in May 2003 as, during its national conference, it intended to ignore the Turkish national flag and open with a poster of Öcalan instead (NTV, 2009a).

The Democratic Society Party (DTP) was established in 2005 by former politicians who had taken part in previous closed parties. The DTP did not enter the 2007 national elections officially, but supported independent candidates who were chosen by the DTP: 22 of these candidates went into Turkish Parliament. Moreover, the DTP succeeded in raising its share of the vote to 5.7% in local elections in 2009. Later that same year, however, the party was closed by the Constitutional Court for spreading PKK propaganda, and the co-chairmen of the party were expelled from parliament (Kirişçi, 2011, 336).

In Turkey, the military regime (1980-83) launched a 10% threshold in national elections, required in order to enter parliament as a party. Although the Kurdish parties gained the majority of votes in some parts of the country, they were unable to enter parliament due to this national 10% threshold. However, the last pro-Kurdish party HDP got nearly 13% of votes in June 2015.

The PKK's success in gaining popular support and mass mobilisation encouraged it to get further involved in politics. With the PKK's support, the HEP won many municipalities in the 1989 municipal elections. Therefore, the PKK increased its influence in politics in Turkey's South, and

since 1992 its influence on Turkish politics has been steadily increasing. An MP (Respondent 5) from the ruling party said that, "in my opinion the HDP [the current pro-Kurdish party] will not be constrained by the national 10% election threshold in the future". In other words, the HDP has consolidated its vote at more than 10% in Turkey. He goes as far to say, "the HDP may become an important player in Turkish politics considering coalition talks in the future".

Interviewees (Respondents 3, 4) stated that "the pro-Kurdish party is not influential in the Kurdish nationalist movement. Even the mayoral candidates and MPs were mostly selected by the PKK". More importantly, PKK members may probe the elected politicians if they refuse PKK orders on any given issue. Reasons for and consequences of the increase in Kurdish parties' vote share will be explained in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Kurdish national movement evolved into secularism within the leftist movement. Socialist students involved in leftist organisations began to turn their attention to the Kurdish cause. The founders of the PKK, including Abdullah Öcalan, joined these pre-PKK groups in the 1970s. Most of the cadre came from working-class families. Kurdish sheikhs and tribal leaders lost their monopoly over the Kurdish national movement with the rise of the PKK at the beginning of the 1990s in Turkey. The PKK even declared war against other Kurdish groups and opposition groups who were against its ideology and actions since they launched attacks in 1984.

The first groups of militias trained in Bekaa Valley in Syria, under the protection of Damascus in the early 1980s. They then negotiated with Barzani in 1983 to establish camps in the Qandil Mountains. The first attack was launched against Turkish patrols near the Iraqi border from camps in northern Iraq. While Turkey pressured the Kurdish groups in Iraq in order to force the PKK from the Qandil Mountains, it took harsh security measures in order to tackle the issue inside the country.

Although it declared that the deal was over between the PKK and the KDP in 1987, the PKK strengthened its position in northern Iraq. Moreover, the Anfal Campaign in 1988 and Gulf War in 1991 weakened the Iraqi Kurds and left a power vacuum in the region in the early 1990s: this was aggressively exploited by the PKK.

After the Gulf War, Baghdad withdrew its forces and civil servants from northern Iraq. There were two important consequences of this for Turkey: first, northern Iraq became a de facto Kurdish state. Secondly, there was a power vacuum, filled by the PKK. Moreover, the PKK captured the Iraqi army's weapons during the withdrawal. Relations between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds entered a new phase as Ankara contacted them in order to eliminate the PKK in the early 1990s.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK stepped up its attacks, as its ranks of militants swelled. In 1992, the PKK attacked the border town of Şırnak, in order to create a liberated zone. In the same year, Turkey launched a cross-border operation against the PKK's camp in Qandil in coordination with the Iraqi Kurds. President Özal, at the time, invited the Iraqi Kurds to Ankara for deeper cooperation against the PKK. In other words, Ankara improved its relations with Iraqi Kurds because of the PKK's increasing threat within Turkey. However, the civil war between Kurdish groups (KDP-PUK) in 1994 created another power vacuum for the advantage of the PKK.

However, following the operation in 1992 and the adjustment of the Turkish army to guerrilla warfare, the Turkish military started to take control of the region, even in rural areas. Hence, the PKK's attacks began to decrease from 1993 until the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. In addition to this, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the late 1980s and huge losses for the PKK in military operations at the beginning of the 1990s led to a change in PKK discourse and a fading of the notion to establish Great Kurdistan (Ibid, 231). Furthermore, the hammer and sickle was removed from the PKK's flag in 1995, signifying that its aim to create a Great Socialist Kurdistan had changed completely with the capture of Öcalan.

Turkey's relations with Iraq, Iran and Syria grew vital as the PKK tried to play on them to their own benefit. The long-lasting problems with Syria created an opportunity for the PKK. Damascus even sheltered the PKK and provided equipment from the early 1980s until the capture of Öcalan in 1999. In the meantime, the Kurdish reality was recognised for the first time by Turkish politicians in 1991. Moreover, President Özal aimed to discuss the issue publicly at the beginning of the 1990s. He also intended to improve relations with Turkey's neighbours, including the Iraqi Kurds, pursuing a proactive foreign policy. However, his sudden death called a halt to these initiatives. From then on, the security elite resumed their harsh policies when dealing with the issue. In addition, relations with Turkey's neighbouring countries cooled because of the nature of the Kemalist elite's foreign policy approach.

The first pro-PKK Kurdish party appeared on the Turkish political stage in 1991. The Kurdish nationalist movement turned into a mass mobilisation force in the 1990s. The establishment of that party brought the Kurdish issue to the top of Ankara's agenda. In addition, the Kurdish issue became an international issue as well as a domestic one, with the growth of the diaspora of Kurdish workers and asylum seekers in various European cities.

In the early 2000s, Turkey witnessed a political transformation on many issues, including the Kurdish issue, with the rise of the JDP. The JDP governments followed the same path as Özal, focusing on economic interdependence and increased cooperation with its neighbours. The government's approach towards the Kurdish issue also changed steadily during the JDP era (2002-2015). Firstly, the government improved relations with Iraqi Kurds via economic and political means from 2008 onwards. Secondly, it launched the Kurdish initiative and peace process with the PKK in order to solve the issue peacefully.

At the beginning of the 1990s, pro-Kurdish political parties got less than 5% of the vote. However, in the last election, in 2015, they got more than 13% combined – making the Kurdish movement the third biggest party in the Turkish Parliament. In other words, during the JDP era, the Kurdish political movement has more than doubled its share of the vote.

Chapter VI: The peace process between Turkey and the PKK (2013-2015)

Introduction

In light of the situation outlined above, Turkey has been struggling for more than three decades to tackle the Kurdish issue. Hard-line approaches neither provided a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue, nor succeeded in eliminating the PKK's violence. Turkey has been suffering from the PKK's violent actions since a low-intensity conflict broke out between the Turkish army and the PKK in 1984. Although the Turkish state has been fighting with the PKK for more than three decades, it is important to note that Ankara secretly contacted the PKK in the 1990s to bring an end to the violence.

Historically, Turkish state policies caused the creation of the Kurdish issue, which led to the rise of the PKK. Many interviewees (Respondents 2, 3, and 4) stated that Kurdishness had been perceived as a potential threat to Turkey's integrity, though Islamism posed a bigger challenge than Kurdishness to the secular nature of the state (Dalay, 2014). However, a hard-line approach in favour of a military solution to the Kurdish issue started to alter under the JDP's rule. The Kurdish issue had been securitised by the Turkish policy elite after the founding of the republic. Meanwhile, the Kurdish issue is the main obstacle to a peaceful, fully democratic, stable Turkey. More importantly, it is an obstruction to Turkey's ambition to be a regional power, as well as a threat to Turkey's energy security. As Tezcür says, "The Kurdish problem undermines Turkey's economic growth, democratic achievements, and regional aspirations. However, it is not that clear whether Turkey's Kurdish problem actually overwhelms the Turkish government" (2013, 73).

Furthermore, the JDP government lifted all bans on the Kurdish language and improved minority rights while the EU process was on the agenda during the early 2000s. In addition, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan addressed the conflict between the PKK and the state, calling it the 'Kurdish issue' in a public speech in 2005 (Yayman, 2011, 42). The JDP leader Erdoğan has become the first Turkish PM to accept the Kurdish issue and raise it for discussion in Turkey. These developments showed that Ankara's hard-line approach to the issue was on the verge of change as the former strengthened domestically. As Yavuz and Özcan state, "its (JDP's) main strategy was to demilitarise the state and society" (2006, 108).

The secret talks between the PKK and Turkish governments go back to the Özal era in the early

1990s. These talk attempts were carried out through indirect, unofficial backchannels and kept secret because the Turkish army was dominating security as much as politics, as explained in previous chapters. When the JDP came to power in 2002, there was a unilateral ceasefire, declared in 1999 by the PKK as it withdrew its militants to Qandil camps. In the meantime, the JDP launched a reform package which improved minority rights and freedom of speech during the EU accession process. This meant that the ban on the Kurdish language and the emergency rule in the region was lifted in the JDP's first term (Ergin, 2012, 235).

Following the domestic changes in favour of the JDP the government started to create a new foreign policy to challenge traditional foreign policies. Before the Arab Spring, the 'zero problems with neighbours' policy significantly paved the way for a series of structural changes within Turkish foreign policy, as mentioned in Chapter II.

Turkey's ambition to become an energy transit country also led to an easing in the relations with the KRG, which has rich energy sources, explained in Chapter III. Cengiz Çandar argues that "the resolution of the Kurdish question will remove a major irritant that has been hindering fully fledged cooperation with the Iraqi Kurds, who are set to emerge as major players in energy policies given the presence of significant hydrocarbon resources in Iraqi Kurdistan" (2009, 15). Hence, the JDP government believes that relations between Turkey and the KRG also increase the support of Kurds in Turkey.

Following a series of high-ranking Turkish officials' visits to Iraq in 2009, the JDP's 'Kurdish Opening' was launched in order to solve its Kurdish issue via an improvement in minority rights. In other words, Ankara aimed to change its policy towards Kurdish groups both in Turkey and Iraq. Although there was a high volume of trade between Turkey and the KRG, Ankara did not attempt to officially contact Kurdish groups before 2008. The talks between Turkey and the PKK were strongly supported by the KRG's leader Masoud Barzani (Hurriyet Daily News, 2013).

Following the JDP's second victory in 2007, the Kurdish issue returned to the JDP's agenda. The Kurdish issue had been left to the monopoly of security forces, who were defining and solving it under emergency rule over a 15-year period (Ozhan and Ete, 2009, 103). On 5 August 2009, the JDP government declared the 'Democratic Opening' or 'Kurdish Opening', which aimed to improve Kurdish language and cultural rights in Turkey. This was the first time the Turkish government had shown any desire to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully. There is no doubt that

such a radical change came after certain power alterations within the country. As Öniş posits, "The JDP consolidated its power, marginalising such key actors of the old secularist order as the military and the judiciary" (2016, 142).

Byman says that "beginning a dialogue with terrorists is often a necessary step on the road towards political settlement and an end to violence" (2006, 403). Turkish Intelligence and the PKK's EU diaspora gathered periodically with a third party to discuss the possible settlement of the issue in Oslo between 2008-2011 (Akşam, 2013a). Meanwhile, conflict with the PKK seemed on the verge of political solution in 2009. Turkish president Abdullah Gül was the first Turkish high official to use the word 'Kurdistan' for northern Iraq when he was on an official trip to Baghdad in 2009 (HaberTurk, 2009). Moreover, he expressed that the Kurdish issue is the biggest problem concerning Turkey and that "there is an opportunity [to solve it] and it should not be missed" (Gunter, 2013, 101).

The PKK and the Turkish army went back into conflict between 2011 and 2012, following the Kurdish Opening. However, the government initiated the peace process between early 2013 and July 2015. Over this period, the government held peace talks with the PKK through its imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan. However, the peace process failed due to regional developments in Syria and Iraq. In other words, the balance of power had changed over the period between the conflicting parties.

It is important to note that "the some JDP officials designed and launched the peace process under the leadership of Tayyip Erdoğan. Because of the political risk of the process, Erdoğan proceeded with caution in every step of the process. The peace process also was designed and pursued by limited number of people from the JDP and the security officials (MIT). So, it was Erdoğan's aim to solve the Kurdish issue, rather than state policy" (Respondent 1).

In this chapter, the JDP's approach and attempts to solve the Kurdish issue; the peace talks between the PKK and Turkey (2013-2015) in particular; and the roles of internal and external actors who took part in the peace process will be explained deeply with the help of interview data. In this study, the main sources are interviews based in Turkey and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, involving officials from the government, security forces, bureaucracy, some HDP officials, some MPs in Turkey and KRG officials in Arbil. Moreover, conversations have been held with opinion leaders, tribe leaders and with officials in Eastern Turkey to better understand the situation during the peace

process. In this section, many newspaper articles have also been used to show the events that occurred during the peace process.

6.1 JDP's Kurdish Policies

As is mentioned in the second chapter, Turkey's foundation principles were Western-oriented, and based on secularism and Turkishness. Therefore, Kurdishness was seen as a threat to the nation state by the Turkish elite, who thus did not engage with the Middle Eastern countries: Turkey held Syria and Iran, among others, responsible for providing external support to Kurdish separatists and Islamists, who were seen as the main enemies of the state (Polat and Karakaya, 2008, 496).

Moreover, Ankara feared interaction between Iraqi Kurds and its own Kurdish groups because of security issues. Therefore, it avoided contact with Iraq and neighbours with Kurdish minorities within their countries until 2008. However, the perception of threat to the state has gradually changed since the JDP came into power in 2002. As Polat and Karakaya argue, the domestic changes (especially concerning the Kurdish issue) made by the JDP government paved the way to improving Turkey's relations with neighbouring countries with Kurdish minorities (2008, 496). The JDP's elite challenged older principles with more liberal policies. Hence, the JDP has started to challenge the notion of Turkishness and the Middle Eastern policies of old Kemalist state ideology (Dalay, 2014).

Erdoğan and his adviser had written a report on solving the Kurdish issue, when the latter was the chair of the Istanbul Welfare Party (WP) in 1991 (Hurriyet, 2007). According to Ruşen Çakir, the problem was defined as a Kurdish issue with both social and political aspects (Ibid). Erdoğan's former party (the WP) emphasised Islamic values for the solution of the Kurdish issue and undermined both Turkish and Kurdish nationalism in its political campaigns during the 1990s (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, 99).

However, some argue that "the JDP has used the Kurdish issue as a weapon against secularism in Turkey, identifying secularism as a cause of division between Turks and Kurds" (Özcan and Yavuz, 2006, 103). The JDP underlines religion as a common ground for both Turks and Kurds within its policies. The JDP's anti-secular discourse and liberal policies were attractive to conservative Kurds and it became the first party in some elections in the region.

Furthermore, pro-Kurdish party positions and vote share in Turkish politics has increased since the early 1990s. Although the DTP performed well in local elections, winning critical municipalities in the region in 2009, neither the Kurdish parties nor the DTP could get more than 7% of the vote share until 2015. Pro-Kurdish parties have been some of the most popular parties in the region since 2014. Hence, the DTP and the JDP are the biggest parties contesting for Kurdish votes in the area. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the PKK became a transnational mass movement in Turkey and the EU, also increasing its power in politics via pro-Kurdish parties in the region (Galletti, 2008, 125). According to Tezcür, "the reformist AKP [JDP] has become a greater concern to the Kurdish nationalists than the TSK [Turkish Army]" (2009, 26).

The reasons to launch the Kurdish initiative of the JDP in its second term was the potential for a major confrontation with the military. One MP (Respondent 5) states that "This concerned the fact that the military and security elites were dominant forces within politics and furthermore with the Kurdish issue. However, democratisation efforts and the improvement of minority rights during the EU's accession process later strengthened the JDP's position within Turkey and abroad".

In its second term (2007-2011), the JDP had begun secret talks with the PKK's EU representatives in Oslo during 2008-2011. Although the PKK's EU representatives are not as strong as Abdullah Öcalan and Qandil, for the initial talks a European country was suitable for both sides. Meanwhile, the Kurdish Opening was launched in order to improve Kurdish rights and disarm the PKK. It is important to note that the JDP government avoided contact with Qandil during the democratic opening. However, the PKK's diaspora in EU became a middleman between Qandil and Ankara. As will be explained more clearly, the HDP took the role of middleman between Qandil and Ankara later on during the peace process.

In terms of its Kurdish policy, the JDP launched a democratic package which considered an increase in the rights of minorities alongside Kurds during the EU accession process. In order to meet the EU's Copenhagen criteria for full membership, "full implementation of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities" is required (Özcan and Yavuz, 2006, 103). However, the process between Turkey and the EU has slowed for several reasons since 2008 (Deutche Welle, 2015). The JDP government expanded its relations with Middle Eastern and Caucus countries within the scope of the 'zero problems with neighbours' policy. While the government was planning to launch the Kurdish Opening in Turkey, relations with the KRG

improved significantly as part of its new Kurdish approach, as will be discussed in Chapter VII.

However, the democratic opening ended in 2011 for reasons which will be explained in the next sections. The conflict between Turkey and the PKK restarted in 2011, continuing until the declaration of the peace talks in late 2012. In December 2012, Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that MİT was talking with the PKK's imprisoned leader Öcalan. From then, a measure called the 'Peace Process' started between the state (the government, MİT) and HDP/the PKK/Öcalan from late 2012 and 2015. It showed that the Turkish government addressed the PKK and its leader Abdullah Öcalan as the primary actors of the Kurdish issue (Baser, 2017, 10).

One MP (Respondent 3) stated that **"**although there is no doubt that Abdullah Öcalan is a leader of the PKK and a great influence on the Kurdish movement, there are different power groups within the Kurdish movement in Turkey, such as Qandil, Diyarbakır, the HDP, the EU diaspora and so on". The structure of the PKK and influential groups and their role with the peace process will be further examined.

The JDP had become the first party to recognise the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, as a negotiator in peace talks. Furthermore, the Kurdish issue gradually became the agenda of Turkish politics during JDP rule, while the Turkish army lost its primacy in the system in 2009 (Dalay, 2014). In addition, the high rate of economic growth, a determination to join the EU, wider support from different communities and general rhetoric towards accepting the Kurdish issue by the government increased its popularity both domestically and abroad during the JDP's first term.

6.2 Early Talk Attempts

As mentioned above, in the early 1990s the PKK turned into a mass mobilisation force and reached its peak point in military strength. Although security elites were positioned strongly against the PKK and in favour of denying the Kurdish issue, some governments started to mention 'the Kurdish reality' and attempted to talk with the PKK in order to bring an end to insurgency in the beginning of the 1990s. However, the Turkish army and security elites were against any dialogue and believed that "constitutional rights will lead first to claims for autonomy, later for federation, and finally separation" (Beriker-Atiyas, 1997, 442).

Despite the army's strong opposition, President Turgut Özal was the first statesman determined to

solve the Kurdish issue in the early 1990s. In this regard, "Özal took initial steps toward ending Turkey's policy of denial and acknowledging the Kurdish identity" (Çandar, 2013, 33). The PUK leader Jalal Talabani was asked by Öcalan for a ceasefire at Özal's request. However, President Özal passed away a month after Abdullah Öcalan's ceasefire declaration on 20 March 1993 (CNN Turk, 2010).

The Turkish state's second contact with the PKK was made in 1995. Mehmet Ali Guler, a journalist, claimed that Prime Ministers Tansu Çiller in 1995 and Mesut Yılmaz (1995-6) also tried to contact the PKK for a solution (2015, 31-32). Harun Ercan argues that the Turkish deep state instigated talk attempts (2013, 117). However, Prime Minister Çiller implemented hard-line policies against the PKK during her time in office. Prime Minister Erbakan sent unofficial delegations with letters asking for a ceasefire and attempting to seek a peaceful solution (Kapmaz, 2011).

According to Cengiz Çandar, Erbakan's Islamist movement began to be seen as more challenging to Turkey's national security than the Kurdish movement by the Turkish army, especially in the mid-1990s (2012, 46). Hence, the Turkish army focused on eliminating Erbakan's Welfare Party from politics rather than spending resources on PKK forces.

Since Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999, Turkish officials via MİT have been negotiating possible solutions to the Kurdish issue (Kapmaz, 2011). A former bureaucrat and current MP (Respondent 1) said that the "Turkish state attempted to solve this issue 8 or 9 times, from Özal in 1993 to the last peace process". Turkish governments used back-channel communication in talk attempts with the PKK, bearing two forms: "direct discussion between decision makers or their official representatives, and indirect discussion third party intermediaries" (Pruit, 2008, 38). In leaked Oslo records, Intelligence Chief Fidan introduced himself as a representative of Prime Minister Erdoğan.

None of these talk attempts succeeded, for reasons such as the opposition of security elites including the army, a lack of strong will to solve the issue, and more importantly the huge risk contained in negotiations with the PKK for the leader of any political party.

It is important to note that "the PKK was no longer a mere guerrilla organisation but had become an organisation enjoying the indirect support of almost one-third of all Kurdish citizens in Turkey"

(Yeğen, 2016, 376). In other words, the Kurdish issue remained unsolved even though PKK militants were eliminated. The next sections will examine the JDP's attempts to solve the Kurdish issue via negotiations with the PKK after 2008.

6.2.1 The Oslo Talks

Alongside interested third parties, Turkish Intelligence (MİT) and the PKK's EU representatives held secret talks in Oslo, the capital of Norway, during 2008-2011 (Akşam, 2013a). However, records of these talks were leaked to Turkish media in 2011. During these meetings, the Turkish former and current Intelligence chiefs Emre Taner and Hakan Fidan respectively and also Adem Uzun, Mustafa Karasu and Zübeyir Aydar, the PKK's EU diaspora, discussed possible solutions, enlisting mediation support from a third party. According to Charountaki, MİT and the PKK "negotiated three protocols on how to settle the Kurdish cause in Turkey as well as the stages for a political solution" in Oslo (2012, 190).

The Oslo talks showed that the Turkish government engaged in direct talks with the PKK to solve the conflict (Ensaroğlu, 2013, 10). As a result of leaks to the media, the judiciary attempted to detain intelligence chief Hakan Fidan and others who participated in these talks in February 2012 (Hamsici, 2012). It is important to note that a power struggle between Gülenists and the JDP surfaced as Fidan was summoned to court regarding negotiations with PKK representatives in Oslo (Dombey, 2012). However, government changes to the law required the Prime Minister's permission to interrogate MİT staff (Bianet, 2012). Both government and the PKK claimed that the Oslo talks were leaked by the Gülenists via their intelligence network service (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015; ODATV, 2012).

Although the Turkish state began talks to disarm the PKK with Öcalan earlier in İmralı Island, the JDP government aimed to solve the issue via negotiations and democratisation with Öcalan and the PKK. Therefore, the Oslo talks came after long negotiations with Öcalan and the Turkish government on İmralı Island. According to Mustafa Karasu, Deputy Chairman of the PKK, the first meeting was held in September in 2008 (Akşam, 2013a).

In leaked records of the Oslo meeting, it was seen that important subjects were discussed: Hakan Fidan stated that he was a special representative of the Prime Minister, and the PKK's

representative stated that "the PKK declared ceasefire in order to gain confidence" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOy0LQAksjo). The leaked information showed that Turkish intelligence met first with Öcalan, who wrote a draft for negotiations with the PKK and Turkey before the meeting with the PKK's EU diaspora.

A series of talks with a terrorist organisation contain huge risk for any political actor in the world. Therefore, the government avoided engaging with the PKK directly and utilised back-channel movements in order to reduce the risks of upsetting its credible political future. This method also prevents the terrorist organisation's aim in gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the public and within the international arena (Puritt, 2008, 45). However, back-channel communication has some disadvantages, incurring damage to political reputations after being revealed to the public (Ibid, 48): "The Oslo process collapsed in 2011 and important issues such as conditional amenities, returns, transitional justice and disarmament remained unresolved" (Baser, 2017, 10, cited in ICG, 2014, 3). When the Oslo records were leaked to the media, they were criticised by wider society and the opposition parties. Prime Minister Erdoğan admitted that Turkish intelligence joined the Oslo talks as a representative of the Turkish state.

During these secret talks, the JDP government launched the Kurdish Opening in order to solve the Kurdish issue via strengthening the rights of minorities, including Kurds. Turkish political parties and various leaders have a long history of talk attempts with the PKK. An anonymous MP from the JDP (Respondent 1) stated in interviews that "President Turgut Özal was the first politician to attempt to solve the issue, and Prime Ministers Tansu Çiller and Necmettin Erbakan contacted the PKK during their terms". Furthermore, "the Turkish Intelligence Service contacted the PKK for similar reasons in the early 2000s".

6.2.2 Democratic Opening

The 'Kurdish Opening' or 'Democratic Opening', latterly known as 'the Unity and Fraternity Project', was launched by the JDP government on August 5, 2009 in order to pave the way for an end to long-lasting armed conflict between Turkey and the PKK. Meanwhile, a number of democratic initiatives were also launched to tackle Turkey's chronic problems, such as the Alevi and Roman issues, among others (Keyman and Gümüşcü, 2012, 91).

Erdoğan stated in 2005 in Diyarbakır that the Kurdish issue "has different dimensions, such as the

social, economic, psychological, diplomatic and political" and that "the aim of this initiative is to ensure that all people feel freedom in this land" (Gazate Vatan, 2009). In this historic speech, Erdoğan expressed that the "Kurdish issue is not only one part of the country, but ours. This is also my problem. We will solve this question within the principles of the people who left this country to us and in the concept of the constitution with more law and more comfort, and welfare. Turkey will not regress from the point it has reached. We will produce more democracy; we gave the promise of more democracy and we are still giving more. We are the only recourse for all the problems in Turkey. Democratic progress will not regress. We are against regional and religious nationalism. The only relation which keeps all of us together is the Turkish Republic" (BBC Türkçe, 2005). It is within this historic moment that for the first time a Prime Minister of Turkey named the 'Kurdish issue' publicly. In other words, it was clearly demonstrated that the JDP was determined to change the Turkish state's hard-line approach towards the Kurdish issue with its political agenda. As Nykanen says, "Erdoğan made an audacious declaration that the answer to the Kurds' long-running grievances is not more repression but more democracy" (2013, 86).

However, there was no consensus about the Kurdish Opening among political parties. The main opposition party, the RPP, and another, the NMP, strongly criticised the Kurdish Opening, influencing public opinion against it (Pusane, 2014, 89; Larrabbee, 2010, 164). Furthermore, the RPP leader Deniz Baykal stated that this opening process was a "threat to Turkey's national formation and its unitary state structure" and moreover "it [could] not be a negotiation with a terrorist organisation [the PKK]" (NTV, 2009b). The RPP "took the risky position of promoting democracy over security, political actors over state elites, and the parliamentary domain over the state bureaucracy" in the 1990s; it strongly opposed the JDP's Kurdish Opening process and aligned with pro-hard-liners (Keyman, 2010, 92-93). The Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) held meetings to show its support towards the Opening. It was the only supporter of the process among the opposition parties.

In Turkey a set of democratic packages were launched, intended to improve the standards of democracy, freedom of speech and human rights since the JDP came to power in 2002 (Interior Ministry). Erdoğan met with both civil society and NGOs about the Kurdish Opening and asked for their support for this process. He explained the road map of the Kurdish Opening process: "We will issue circulars in the short term, pass laws, and make constitutional amendments in the long term" (Philips, 2007, 64). However, the public were not privy to the exact details. During the

Kurdish Opening, DTP officials publicly mentioned several times that the negotiators were the PKK and Öcalan (Bianet, 2009). It was indicated that the DTP as a political party were not strong enough to express a different position from the discourse of either the PKK or Öcalan. The pro-Kurdish parties' position on Kurdish movement will be explained in more detail during discussion of the peace process between the PKK and Turkey in the next section.

Over time, there were a series of constitutional amendments, including state-owned TRT starting a 24-hour TV broadcasting and radio station in Kurdish, the establishment of an institute in the Kurdish language within some universities, road-security checks being reduced in the region, and anti-terror laws being changed regarding the phenomenon known as stone-throwing children (Yüksel-Peçen, 2018, 6). Although these changes did not meet the expectations of Öcalan or the DTP, they constituted an important step in an attempt to solve the Kurdish issue, which was previously considered taboo (Baser, 2017, 13).

On 11 December 2009, the pro-Kurdish DTP was closed by the constitutional court due to its support for the outlawed PKK. This closure followed a two-year trial. In 2009, the Turkish police launched an investigation into the KCK (Kurdish Communities Union), an umbrella organisation of the PKK. Thousands of people were charged with becoming members of the KCK (Jenkins, 2011). The KCK had been established under Öcalan's orders in order to maintain checks and balances alongside control of politicians in Turkey (Ogur, 2011). On 14 April 2009, Turkish police detained over 1000 members of the KCK due to their activities. In the middle of 2012, nearly 2000 people were arrested due to related KCK investigations (Yağmur, 2012). Yalçın Akdoğan, who had one of the leading roles in the peace process, expressed the government's support for the KCK operations and noted that the PKK was planning to incite a 'Kurdish Spring' and create a parallel state in Turkey (Küçükşahin, 2011 and Ensonhaber, 2012).

Although opposition parties maintained strong criticism of the process, different segments of society initially supported it. However, after the occurrence of an event known as the 'Habur incident' there was increased public grievance against the democratic opening. This involved 34 PKK members, 8 of them from the Qandil camp and others from the Mahkmour refugee camp, who entered Turkey as a result of Öcalan's call to build confidence in the process on 18 October 2009 (Gunter, 2013, 103). More than fifty thousand people gathered alongside the PKK and Öcalan's supporters to welcome PKK militants near the Habur Gate, the border checkpoint

between Iraq and Turkey (Yeğen, 2015b, 7). This initial historic movement for peace turned into a "road accident", states the co-ordinator of the Kurdish Opening, Beşir Atalay (T24, 2010). As Larrabee says, the PKK members' entry "enraged … many Turks who regarded the insurgents as terrorists, forcing the government to shelve the initiative until passions had cooled" (2013, 135). Furthermore, the group participated in meetings and stated that they came as representatives of the PKK, did not regret joining the PKK, etc. Cagaptay stated that "[t]hese demonstrations, and images of individuals involved in terror attacks walking freely in Turkey, have touched a raw nerve" (2009).

In 2011, the PKK's attacks on Silvan and Çukurca killed 21 Turkish soldiers between July and September (Pusane, 2014, 87). The Kurdish Opening officially finished following the PKK's attack in Silvan. As a result of the mismanagement of the Kurdish Opening, popular support started to decrease and this led to a rise in Turkish nationalist sentiments inside the country. The PKK did not agree to all the terms and conditions with Abdullah Öcalan and the Turkish State due to regional challenges such as the Arab Spring, which had broken out all over the Middle East and North Africa. The PKK tried to ignite the 'Kurdish Spring' within the country in 2012.

While Turkey was launching the Kurdish Opening within the country in 2008, it changed its approach towards Iraqi Kurds. Although Kurdish movements have a different nature in Turkey to those in Iraq, the Kurdish issue is international as well as domestic. The Kurdish initiatives in Turkey and Iraq, also a result of the JDP's 'zero problem with neighbours' policy, gave the movements credibility in domestic and international arenas (Nykanen, 2013, 86). Iraqi Kurds occupy an important position and played a crucial role as interlocutors between Turkey and the PKK. One example of this could be seen when Jalal Talabani met with Öcalan at Özal's request in 1993, after which the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire in 1993 (Ensaroğlu, 2013, 11). Although the Kurdish Opening in Turkey did not succeed for several reasons, "this initiative ensured an in-depth discussion of the Kurdish question and carried the issue into the mainstream" (Ensaroğlu, 2013, 8).

One internal reason to start this initiative was to increase the JDP's vote share in Kurdish-populated cities, as the former lost many municipalities to the pro-Kurdish DTP during the March elections in 2009. Furthermore, the military and security forces, who had "maintained their monopoly over the defining and solving of the Kurdish question under emergency rule for 15 years" (Ete and

Ozhan 2009, 103), lost their influence on politics, especially on the Kurdish issue, as the JDP strengthened its position in domestic politics.

6.3 The Peace Process (2012-2015)

One of the main aims of this thesis is to answer why the JDP government launched the peace process with Öcalan, since he is seen as an enemy by the Turkish public. To what extent could Öcalan have influence over the PKK and the HDP from İmralı Island? To this end, Turkey's relations with the KRG and Barzani's role in this peace process will be further examined.

What is the peace process; what was the government aiming to achieve; why did this result in collapse? These queries can help to begin to understand the peace process in Turkey. A general definition of the term 'peace process' is understood as "initiatives intended to help reach and implement a negotiated agreement to end an armed conflict and create the basis for a new political settlement" (Conciliation Resources 2009, cited in Haspeslagh, 2013, 189).

Talks with the jailed leader of the PKK who caused the end of forty thousand lives – negotiations with the PKK within such a conservative-nationalist country – contain a huge risk for the future of the JDP. Although the Turkish State has used a variety of methods to tackle this issue since the PKK's first attack in 1984**,** it has been unable to eliminate the PKK. Therefore, the JDP government decided to resolve the issue peacefully via negotiations with the PKK.

Although the government's first choice was to fight ethno-nationalist terrorists, negotiations generally produce a peaceful settlement (Zartman and Alfred, 2005). As Haspeslagh argues, it is preferable that governments and armed groups do not sit at the table together, but rather that third parties make efforts on both sides for talks (2013, 189). Conflicting parties engage in a negotiation process with the possibility of obtaining a better outcome than their current situation (Zartman and Faure, 2005, 4).

Many people argue that governments should not negotiate with terrorist groups due to the risk of gains in their legitimacy, or a perception that terrorism has won (Cronin, 2011, 38), and also that this action "undermines groups who pursue a political change through peaceful means" (Neumann, 2007, 128). However, the state's refusal to negotiate with terrorist groups strengthens those groups' argument that there is no other way to get the attention of the state than that of violence

(Cronin, 2011, 39). Given the situation outlined above, a third party took a role as mediator in the Oslo process between Turkey and the PKK. The third party provided talks between both conflicting parties to discuss Abdullah Öcalan's road map for negotiations.

There are various reasons that explain the government's efforts to solve this issue peacefully: firstly, Turkey had reached a point that indicated it could not eliminate the PKK using force as long as the PKK were accepting new recruits. General Chief İlker Başbuğ stated that "more than 30,000 PKK militants were killed since 1984", and that the average number of militants at that time totalled about 6,000 (NTV, 2009a). In other words, the PKK has continued a recruitment drive since inception. Hence, Başbuğ points out that the social aspect of the problem needs to be tackled. Secondly, these actions were in line with Turkey's foreign policy ambitions in the region. As Tezcür says "the ongoing insurgency contributes to regional inequalities, worsen Turkey's human rights record, and limit its foreign initiatives" (2013, 73).

There are different strategies when dealing with ethnic separatism within a study of terrorism. Pruitt argues that there are generally five overlapping strategies in dealing with terrorists: capitulating, combating, isolating, mainstreaming and negotiating (2006, 293-4). In line with the actions of most governments worldwide, Turkey chose to fight terrorism, encompassing the use of curfews, checkpoints and fences, amongst other combat tactics. However, it was concluded that the fighting did not bring an end to the PKK's violence.

Peter Neumann states that some terrorist organisations believe "the utility of violence sometimes diminishes, leading them to conclude that their aims might be better served by nonviolent agitation" (2007, 130). Although the PKK has maintained armed struggle, it has abandoned its absolutist ambition to establish an independent Kurdistan as a democratic republic in order to guarantee Kurdish cultural and political rights (Ercan, 2013, 115).

In negotiations, there are no enforcement mechanisms to punish terrorists who renege on their promises (Bapat, 2006, 214). Therefore, trust-building between both parties is essential. Additionally, negotiations are the best way to demand concessions for terrorist groups. In the Turkish case, neither party succeeded in building mutual trust for various reasons which will be further explained.

Due to the involvement of violence prior to the ceasefire, terrorists believed they would not be

accepted into a post-peace political order (Fortna, 2015, 527). In this case, "it [was] agreed that some PKK members would go to different countries and some of them would come back to Turkey" said a JDP MP (Respondent 5), which was also agreed with Öcalan. However, this issue was only touched upon and not negotiated deeply, as it was earmarked for discussion in the final stage of negotiation.

As Neumann (2007, 132) states, "Additional difficulties arise when terrorists are sponsored by a state, in which case they may have little authority to make commitments without their backers' consent". In this case, Ankara viewed Iran's role in this process as very controversial. Turkish media, as well as some interviewees (Respondent 1, 2), asserted that "Iran pressured Qandil to leave the negotiations to return to a focus on autonomy in Syria". Military aid was also offered to the PKK, as Turkey and Iran advocated for different sides in the Syrian conflict (Türkiye, 2013, and Aydıntaşbaş, 2013).

Accepting a terrorist group as a negotiating partner is in itself a significant concession (Fortna, 2015, 523). During the peace process, the PKK's urban members found a chance to canvass the public in town centres. The peace process was portrayed as a concession of the Turkish state towards the PKK, who are a powerful actor in the region in terms of political, economic and military forces. This took place while the Turkish government halted its operations in rural areas and loosened security checks in urban centres. Therefore, the PKK portrayed itself as a new authority to people in the region. In interviews conducted in the region, most people stressed a similar problem and criticised security forces for leaving the field to the PKK. Hence, hundreds of young people were recruited by the PKK during the peace process, viewing the PKK as the main authority in the post-peace process.

As has been discussed in this section, the presence and oversight of a third party in peace agreements and during implementation is essential. Chandra Sriram argues that the international involvement in peace negotiations "might be limited, involving observers who monitor and report on compliance and cheating, human rights abuses, and implementation of key aspects such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants" (2008, 15). However, Cemil Bayık demanded the US act as an international mediator during the peace process (Reuters, 2014). Furthermore, "many studies have demonstrated that the presence of strong third-party guarantors in the peace process, is helpful at ensure the prevention of cheating" (Sriram,

2008, 13). The government rejected a third-party observer in negotiations (Gunter, 2016, 78). The interviewee who was involved in some talks in İmralı (Respondent 1) stated that "the government refused to use a third party in order to prevent any leakage of the talks as had happened during previous talks in Oslo".

Why did the Turkish government choose imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan as the main negotiator rather than PKK members in Qandil, who had been running the armed militants? The PKK has a variety of different groups of influence including Abdullah Öcalan, Qandil, members within the EU diaspora, those within prisons, and those within politics (the BDP and DBP). Prime Minister Erdoğan explained the background of the process: "[we believe that this] separatist terror organisation has four sources of guidance, which are İmralı [Abdullah Öcalan], Qandil, the PKK diaspora and politics [the HDP]" in TV interviews. He also stated, "When we talked over possible solutions with those influence groups within the PKK, they designated İmralı [Abdullah Öcalan] as a negotiator without objection to his statements" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALQJ_eBYzqc). From statements such as these it can be gleaned that the government decided to begin negotiations with Öcalan when they became convinced that Öcalan had considerable influence over the PKK's constituent parts. According to Tezcür, "the Turkish government perceives Öcalan to be less demanding than the Kurdish movement's pursuit of power-sharing in the form of some sort of autonomy" (2013, 76). However, developments during the peace process demonstrated the reverse.

In late December 2012, Prime Minister Erdoğan acknowledged that officials were talking with Öcalan (HaberTurk, 2012). Following Erdoğan's position on negotiations between MİT and Öcalan, the first visit to İmralı Island took place at the beginning of January 2013, with the BDP's Deputy Ayla Akat Ata and Ahmet Türk (T24, 2013). In the first meeting, Öcalan gave the history of talk attempts with the Turkish State, positing that the negotiation process started first in Özal's term (probably the early 1990s) some twenty years ago (İmralı Tuatanakları, 2015). Moreover, Öcalan discussed the road map for the peace process including such ideas as the ceasefire, withdrawal, political reforms and a normalisation process (İmralı Tutanaklari, 2015, 14).

Prior to the announcement of negotiations with Öcalan, certain developments occurred to launch the peace talks. In early December, the statements of Prime Minister Erdoğan and his deputy Beşir Atalay gave some signals to the start of peace negotiations for the Kurdish issue (Aslan, 2012).

More importantly, there were hunger strikes among the PKK's members, beginning on 12 September 2012, in several prisons around the country. These hunger strikes, which brought Öcalan to the forefront of politics, concerned the improvement of conditions in prisons, demands for the Kurdish language to be made the second official language of Turkey, and demands for the lifting of the lockdown of Öcalan on İmralı Island. According to Turkish officials (Respondent 1)**, "**there were between 600 and 700 people who joined the hunger strike". After the talks between Öcalan and the government, the hunger strike ended on its 68th day (CNN Turk, 2012). During the interviews, some interviewees (Respondents 3, 4) suggested that "the prison [the PKK members] is one of the main influence groups within the PKK".

Following the BDP's first visit to Öcalan, the co-founder of the PKK Sakine Cansız was killed with two other PKK members on 10 January 2013 in Paris (BBC, 2013). Although both the government and the PKK condemned the killing, each side pointed out different groups who wanted to sabotage the peace process between the PKK and Turkish State. During interviews with MPs (Respondent 1, 2) it was claimed that Gülenist members who were against the peace process had ordered the assassination of the three women. The government has officially placed the blame on the Gülenists for these assassinations. Moreover, Bayık stated that Gülenists are sabotaging the peace process: "they are clearly opposing the process and they are asking, 'why are you negotiating with the PKK rather than annihilating them?'" (Hamsici, 2013).

In March 2013, the PKK released eight Turkish civil servants who were captured by the PKK at different times during their road checks (Star, 2013). This gesture was a show of goodwill by the PKK for trust-building for the peace process. Subsequently, the government released some sick and some KCK prisoners (Al Jazeera, 2013). However, the BDP were not satisfied and claimed that other prisoners with health problems had not been released (Haberler, 2013). In interviews, a JDP MP (Respondent 1) who was involved in the process said that "the number of sick prisoners was inflated, as the figure was given to the BDP by the relatives of prisoners to take advantage of the process".

On 21 March 2013, Öcalan called for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of militants from Turkish soil in a letter which was read by the HDP's MPs in Nawruz in Diyarbakır (Arsu, 2013). It was a historic moment that suggested that nearly three decades of armed conflict between the PKK and Turkey was on the verge of halting. Thus, this increased most people's hope about the future and

a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. The interlocutor between the government and Öcalan stated that some sentences in the letter had been changed a few times, as requested by the government. In addition, one JDP MP stated that Öcalan's letters contained messages of unity and embraced Turkey's National Pact.

In historic calls, Öcalan stated that "We have to come to a point where we say 'let the arms be silenced, opinions and politics speak" and "It is time for our [PKK] armed entities to withdraw from the [Turkish] border" (Euronews, 2013). Öcalan's call was welcomed by the government. Deputy Prime Minister and co-ordinator of the previous Kurdish Opening Beşir Atalay said the message was "a gesture of goodwill" (BBC, 2013). Although the declaration of ceasefire was welcomed by most of the public, there was uncertainty about the withdrawal of the militias in terms of time-frame and method.

Following Öcalan's call, Murat Karayılan, the military leader of the PKK, declared a ceasefire on 23 March 2013. He then announced that militants would begin to withdraw from the Turkish-soil main camps from 8 May and from those in northern Iraq from 25 April 2013 (BBC, 2013). Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK demanded constitutional guarantees for its militants during the withdrawal. Although the PKK's request for constitutional amendments was not granted, there were no clashes between Turkish armed forces and the militants.

On 9 April 2013, the peace process commission was established in the Turkish Parliament, to the contrary wishes of the NMP and the RPP (NTV, 2013). Deputy PM Atalay explained that the aim of this commission was to inform the Turkish Parliament, to seek cooperation and to exchange views about the ongoing peace process (CNN Turk, 2013). Öcalan mentioned that he offered eight different commissions to Parliament to establish the second phase of negotiations during discussions with the HDP delegation on 24 June 2014 (İmralı Tutanakları, 2015, 92). Öcalan also demanded several times the establishment of an independent monitoring board which would observe and report deficiencies in the process.

On 30 September 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan unveiled the reform package, also called the democratisation package, which included allowing mother-tongue education in private schools, the restoration of original Kurdish village names, the lifting of the ban on using the letters X, W, and Q, relaxing state funding for political parties, state funding for pro-Kurdish political parties and the abolishment of the nationalist student pledge in middle schools (Letsch, 2013).

However, the reform package was unsatisfactory to Qandil and the BDP: the co-chairman of the BDP stated that "this package did not meet with our expectations" (Hurriyet, 2013) and Qandil stated that "the JDP chose a lack of solution as a policy; it was seeking to win the next election". Karayılan announced a halt to the withdrawal process, and demands for constitutional changes and a third-party observer to maintain the peace process were also halted (Hurriyet, 2013). In addition, the leader of the KCK, Bayık, stated that in order for negotiations to begin, Öcalan's situation had to be resolved, Kurdish rights guaranteed and anti-terror laws changed (Akşam, 2013b).

On 7 July 2014, the Turkish Parliament gave legal status to the peace process. The Turkish Parliament approved a legal framework which included "shielding from prosecution those involved in disarming and reintegrating Kurdish rebels, as well as giving legal protection to meetings aimed at ending the bloodshed" (Bektas, 2014). Although the HDP and Qandil insisted on the establishment of the commissions originating with Öcalan, they welcomed the law amendments for granting the legal status of the peace process (Sözcü, 2014). The aim of these law amendments were to secure the attendance of people who were involved in the peace process: the head of MİT and two other high officials were called in regarding their testimony about the Oslo talks in 2011 (HaberTurk, 2012).

The withdrawal of the PKK had become controversial on both sides. The PKK began withdrawing its militants from Turkish soil to the camps in the Qandil Mountains during May 2013. However, Turkish officials claimed that only 15-20% of its militants were withdrawn (Al Jazeera, 2014). On 24 February 2013, Erdoğan said that the peace process would begin when the PKK's militants withdrew from Turkey to another country (Yenişafak, 2013). In other words, the government expected all militants to leave the country by the end of 2013 (Radikal, 2013). The HDP's Demirtaş stated that 'Qandil and Öcalan have said that the withdrawal of the militants is not a final settlement' (Milliyet, 2013). The PKK did not withdraw all its militants immediately, as the government had expected militants not to leave Turkey until the end of 2013 (Radikal, 2013). As Respondent 1 states, "The withdrawal of militants was highly crucial for the government to get public support of the peace process".

Bayık, the leader of the KCK, said that "it was not possible to withdraw all of our forces before June", mentioning that "the aim was to ease fighting, so the first phase of the peace process could be completed". It was said that the government must take necessary measures during this period

as were planned at the beginning of the negotiation process (Sancar, 2013).

Historically, it is important to note that Abdullah Öcalan's call for ceasefire and withdrawal of all PKK militants from Turkish soil gained a positive response from the PKK on 1st September 1999. It was suggested that its withdrawal to the main base of Qandil would provide an opportunity for reorganisation (Kapmaz, 2011). The PKK lost hundreds of militants during the withdrawal as a result of Turkish army operations. Hence, the PKK demanded legal protection in order to prevent any provocation. However, the government refused to carry out any law amendments for the withdrawal. As mentioned above, there were no clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK militants during the withdrawal.

However, it is claimed that the PKK ceased the withdrawal of its militants on 9 September 2013, blaming the government's approach as 'playing around' and claiming that the building of dams and patrols were ongoing in the eastern region (BBC Turkce, 2013). Interior Minister Muammer Güler stated that only 20% of the militants had left the country and that others still remained in Turkey. In interviews, the JDP MP (Respondent 1) verified the figures given by the Interior Minister. According to him and other JDP MPs, the PKK thought that after the Gezi Parkı protests, which took place between early June and August 2013, the JDP government lost its domestic and international credibility and thus might lose power in the forthcoming election. Therefore, he said, the PKK ceased its withdrawal and focused on Syria.

The second phase of the peace process was to push for constitutional amendments and the launch of democratic reforms increasing the basic rights of minorities. With the implementation of these steps, the third stage, "normalisation", would start: "The normalisation stage [was] the stage of consolidating peace, social accord and freedoms" (Rudaw, 2013). There was no official confirmation about the third stage in public, nor in interviews. Furthermore, in interviews, reliable sources could not be found concerning the details of constitutional changes and democratic reforms. However, it is confirmed that a third stage was discussed by Öcalan and the government via MİT, although some interviewees stated that the third stage was not permitted to be published.

During the peace process, there were negative discourses on both sides. The vice chairman of the BDP, Gülten Kışanak, stated that "we want to be equal and free in Kurdistan and demand autonomous governance in the region" (Gazete Vatan, 2013); "The leader of the Kurds [Öcalan] is going to meet one day in this square" in March 2013 (Hurriyet, 2013). Subsequently, the Turkish

national flag was hauled down by protesters in Diyarbakır on 9 June 2014 (Sözcü, 2014). This discourse and action angered the public and raised suspicion about the future of the peace process. The leader of the BDP, Demirtaş, stated that "there was nothing to fear from autonomy" (Milliyet, 2013). Although this discourse aimed to consolidate grassroots support, it led to a decrease in the support of peace talks among the Turkish public.

Regional developments, especially in Syria, meant that the regional and global powers maintained a proxy war in Syria. The power struggle between Turkey and Iran also affected the peace process in Turkey dramatically as both countries sided with opposite fronts in the war. Although Iran and Syria cooperated with Turkey against the PKK over northern Iraq, they were doubtful about each other's intentions regarding foreign policies. Barkey and Fuller (1998) mention that there are many issues in the region: these still remain. In interviews with MPs from the JDP and HDP (Respondents 1, 2), it was thought that Iran forced the PKK to turn the tables in return for self-governing regions in Syria. The head of the KCK, Cemil Bayık, also said that "the Syrian War is vital for the future of the Iranian regime. Therefore, Iran was seeking cooperation with Kurds in Syria and Iraq": his answer to the question of Iran's position to the peace process in Turkey was that "Iran wanted to axe the peace process" (Sancar, 2013).

On 10 October 2014, the Turkish Parliament voted to use force in Syria and Iraq against ISIS and other terrorist organisations who were active in the region (Deutsche Welle, 2014; Letsch and Borger, 2014). It has often been stressed that the Turkish government was accused of assisting ISIS by the HDP and Qandil. According to Bayık, "it was the declaration of war to the PKK. If they [Turkey] maintain these policies, we relaunch the guerrilla war" (Al Jazeera Turk, 2014). Some acts occurred in late 2014 to impair the process: firstly, the HDP declared that the peace process had reached an important stage, and would take further important steps from 15 October during the aftermath of a visit from Öcalan; secondly, three Turkish soldiers in civilian dress were killed in Yüksekova, Hakkari, on 25 October; and thirdly, Cemil Bayık accused Turkey of "helping ISIS and disarming the PKK, which was not on their agenda as ISIS was maintaining the attacks on our people" on 20 December (Polat and Deniz, 2014). Following the Kobane protests (6-8 November) and the strengthening of the PYD's position in Syria (explained in later sections), this changed the positions for both sides.

The PYD refused Turkey's request of aligning with opposition groups such as the Free Syrian

Army within Syria, and declared autonomy in three regions of Syria (Cumhuriyet, 2013). The PYD typically dealt with Damascus, who left northern Syria to the former. There was an undeclared agreement between the PYD and the Syrian regime that the former would not form a coalition with opposition groups. Turkey and the KDP refused the unilateral declaration of autonomy and blamed the PYD for its use of excessive power over other Kurdish groups in northern Syria (Rudaw, 2013). As detailed in previous chapters, PYD leader Salih Muslim's visits to Turkey did not return results in favour of Ankara.

Cemil Bayık believed that the victories against ISIS in Kobane and Shengal (Iraq) changed the situation in favour of the PKK, stating "It is proved that the PKK is a freedom movement as well as a humanity movement, and the perception of the PKK has changed around the world" (Doğan, 2014). The creation of an autonomous region in Syria and the YPG's successful war against the cruelty of ISIS raised sympathy towards the PYD in the international arena. Therefore, the PKK affiliated with PYD's territory gain. International recognition empowered the PYD and, in turn, the PKK. As discussed earlier, the gains in Syria were more important for the PKK than for Turkey, according to MPs from the HDP and JDP, as the PKK's grassroots in Turkey remained loyal.

While the peace process was being maintained, a disagreement surfaced between the Gülenists and the government. This was because the Gülenists launched a corruption interrogation on three government ministers via its members within the Jurisdiction on 17 and 25 December 2013. The resulting struggle shifted Turkey's agenda for a while, due to changes in Turkish bureaucracy and the cabinet.

While Prime Minister Erdoğan was elected president on 10 August 2014 and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu became Prime Minister of Turkey on 28 August, in this rally, the head of the HDP became a candidate for presidency and achieved 9.76% of the votes (TRT Haber, 2014). This was a great success for a pro-Kurdish party in Turkey.

Turkey was on the verge of the June 2015 elections when the HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş began maintaining an anti-Erdoğan discourse of which the most famous statement during the campaign was "We will not make you [Erdoğan] president". As previously mentioned, the HDP designed a new party to embrace the Turks rather than solely being a party for the Kurds. Its campaign became anti-Erdoğan and anti-JDP. Therefore, there were harsh words between the

HDP and the JDP during the campaign.

On 28 February 2015, a delegation of HDP members including Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Pervin Buldan and İdris Baluken – who had officially visited İmralı Island – and a delegation from the government, including Deputy Prime Minister Yalçin Akdoğan, who was one of the public speakers about the peace process in government; Interior Minister Efkan Ala; the deputy chairman of the JDP Mahir Ünal, and Yalçin Akdoğan attended an open meeting and read the declaration written by Öcalan and the government. A statement was read which mentioned the importance of the peace process, new constitutions, disarmament, etc. Önder summarised the 10 articles listing the priorities of Öcalan. In an interview, JDP MPs (Respondents 1, 5) stated that the aim of the Dolmabahçe Agreement was to enable the disarmament of the PKK.

Erdoğan stated that "There is no call for democracy on this text of ten articles. How could this text be associated with democracy? When examined closely, it can be seen that most of the topics within the text do not have anything to do with democracy. And still, new demands are coming up. A statement was issued by Deputy Prime Minister Akdoğan, which posited the direct opposite of their claims" (Hurriyet, 2015).

Respondent 1 said that Akdoğan's statement was approved by both the government and the HDP. However, Erdoğan did not inform others about Önder's statement, denouncing the Dolmabahçe Agreement. Yet as Talha Köse says, "the 'Dolmabahçe Agreement' between the government and the HDP delegations was not well managed; the trust between the parties was shaken even more while the public started to question the transparency of the process" (2017, 156). Following Erdoğan's statement about the Dolmabahçe Agreement, the peace process slowed as the campaign for the general election in June 2015 started.

On 11 March 2015, the Co-Chairmen of the KCK, Bese Hozat and Cemil Bayık, said that "the statement that the PKK would disarm was election propaganda […it] could be discussed with Öcalan's attendees in congress. The PKK will not make a decision without Öcalan's release from prison" (Bianet, 2015). In other words, the PKK could not lay down arms without a congress that Öcalan could attend. The demand of Öcalan's freedom before the PKK's disarmament enraged Ankara.

According to Respondent 1, the peace process ended for the government after Öcalan was called

to the PKK's congress in Qandil. Respondent 1 maintained that Öcalan's attendance at the congress on disarmament was unrealistic, even if his non-attendance made a peaceful resolution less likely. This statement demonstrates that the government's trust in the PKK had vanished. Circumstances in Turkey and Syria increased the popularity of the HDP, with the PYD gaining international support. This meant that the PKK's geopolitical reach and its base in Syria and Turkey expanded significantly during the peace talks. The collapse of the peace process will be explained in the following sections.

The Kobane Protests

The Kobane protests, taking place between 6-8 November 2014, were one of the most important actions to cause a crisis of confidence on both sides during the process. The protests became violent throughout Turkey, causing the deaths of more than 50 people including security forces and protesters (Anadolu Agency, 2015). The activities of the PYD had long been discussed between the HDP, Öcalan and the government during the peace process.

Öcalan, a MP of the HDP and a member of the HDP's İmralı delegation, Pervin Buldan, remarked that "if Kobane falls to ISIS, there would be no peace process" (Diken, 2014; Cumhuriyet, 2014). After a fierce war between ISIS and YPG, the HDP issued the statement "we call all people to the street against the massacre in Kobane. From now on, everywhere is Kobane" on 6 November 2014. (CNN Turk, 2014; Mufti, 2017, 75).

As a result of the Kobane protests, 1,113 buildings were burnt or damaged, 221 people (of whom 139 were security forces) were wounded, and tens of public buildings were burnt in three days' violence (Anadolu Agency, 2015). The violence was stopped by Öcalan's call to protesters (Yavuz and Sunar, 2014).

It is evident that Ankara's stance on ISIS and the PYD was that the former did not distinguish between them as terrorist organisations. Prime Minister Erdoğan's declaration, "Whatever ISIL is, the PKK is that to us as well", made Turkey's position clear (Blaser and Chudacoff, 2014). Violence erupting all over Turkey caused many lives to be lost and hundreds of people wounded.

The PYD's territory gains and self-governance was perceived as a massive achievement: hundreds of PKK militants crossed over to Syria in 2013 (Thornton, 2015, 871). As mentioned above, the

PYD is affiliated with the PKK in terms of ideology, governance and so on. In July 2012, the Assad regime withdrew its forces from northern Syria, which is populated by Syrian Kurds, among ongoing civil war (Khaddour, 2017). The power vacuum was filled by the Syrian Kurds of the PYD and the armed wing of the People's Protection Unit (YPG). Turkey's efforts of uniting opposition groups were rejected by the PYD. Ankara then accused the PYD of collaborating with the Assad regime and forcing anti-PYD Kurds under their rule.

Despite Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's statement "we do not want Kobane to fall into ISIS's hands; we will do whatever we can in order to save Kobane" on 3 November 2014 (Sputniknews, 2014), Turkey did not interfere with the Kobane siege as the HDP had requested. Although Turkey allowed the entry of hundreds of thousands of Kurds into Turkey, it did not permit any equipment, soldiers or YPG members to transit over Turkish soil as this was seen as a threat. However, Ankara allowed the KRG's Peshmerga forces to transit via Turkey to fight against ISIS with the YPG (BBC, 2014).

The Kobane war bore vital results for Turkey; firstly, Ankara's neutrality policy towards the PYD-ISIS war in Syria, especially Kobane, increased Kurdish mobilisation within Turkey. Hundreds of Kurds were attracted to go to Kobane to fight against ISIS alongside the YPG. Hence, Kurdish youth became more radicalised and consciousness rose among Kurds in the world as much as in Turkey. Secondly, the Kobane protests increased Turkish nationalism and scepticism dominated the peace process as protests led into violence. In some places, there were counter-attacks against pro-Kobane protesters. Therefore, after the Kobane protests, support for the peace process fell dramatically, according to an MP from the JDP (Respondent 5), who quoted the surveys of the party. In addition, "For Turkey, support for the Syrian Kurds in Kobani would be tantamount to aiding the PKK, a terrorist enemy that had been trying to dismember Turkey for more than 30 years" (Gunter, 2016, 83).

It is evident that tensions increased in the aftermath of the Kobane protests. Both sides started to blame each other, and the rhetoric became increasingly harsh. The government criticised Qandil and the HDP over the Kobane protests; this will be explained in the next section. Whilst the government's rhetoric embraced the peace process, it began more often to mention a lack of concessions on public order and security, due to public anger, and to give a message to the PKK (Milliyet, 2014).

6.3.1 The Structure of the Peace Process and its Actors

The following sections describe the structure of the peace process and the actors who took part in negotiations. As mentioned above, the opposition parties in Turkish Parliament did not support the peace process. Therefore, it took place between the JDP government and the PKK (Öcalan, Qandil, the HDP, and the PKK's EU diaspora). The questions of what extent of influence these actors had during the peace process, as well as the role of the KRG's leader Masoud Barzani, will be deeply examined and explored through the interviews in Turkey and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The peace process encompassed three stages, as described by interviewees (Respondent 1 and 2): the first period concerned the withdrawal of PKK militants from Turkish soil (İmralı Tutanakları, 2013). The PKK was responsible for the completion of this stage. Although the PKK and Öcalan's demand for the constitutional amendments were refused by the government, there were no clashes between the militants and Turkish security forces. The second stage concerned a process of democratisation. The government was to introduce constitutional changes to improve Kurdish rights as discussed between both sides. However, the changes satisfied neither the HDP-Qandil nor Öcalan. The third stage was the full disarmament of the PKK and its full adaptation to politics. However, the peace process ended before this third stage was reached.

The peace process was launched following long talks between MİT and Abdullah Öcalan. Direct talks were held between the MİT and Öcalan on İmralı Island. While MİT were used to meeting with JDP's high officials such as Erdoğan and Beşir Atalay, the HDP delegation came together with Öcalan to present Qandil's letters, and attendees were briefed as to their observations of Qandil and other groups in Turkey and abroad. However, the HDP delegation also met from time to time with Vice Prime Minister Beşir Atalay, the Interior Minister, the Justice Minister and Hakan Fidan to discuss distinct issues such as the release of sick prisoners belonging to the PKK and constitutional amendments.

One interviewee (Respondent 5) stated that although the government gave greater responsibility to MİT in talks, the latter were not authorised to carry out any actions or make any promises without first notifying and discussing potential outcomes with the government.

When interviewed, an HDP MP (Respondent 2) indicated the role of the pro-Kurdish HDP in this

process. The interviewee stated that the government was acting as a representative of the Turkish state on one side of the conflict, while on the other side, Qandil and Öcalan were decision-makers in negotiations. Hence, the HDP conveyed Qandil and Öcalan's messages to each other. The HDP's influence will be further examined in the next section.

Turkey's Justice Ministry held a role between the government and the HDP/Öcalan during the peace process. For instance, the names in the HDP delegations who visited İmralı Island for discussions with Öcalan were approved by the government before permission was given to visit. During this process, the government blocked some individuals due to their actions or statements. A JDP MP (Respondent 1) stated that one of these was Sırrı Sureyya, who led the Gezi protests during the beginning of June 2013. In fact, it is important to observe the balance of power among conflict groups at the beginning of the negotiations.

Although some JDP interviewees (such as Respondent 5) explained the details of negotiations, those details were not ratified as publishable. Abdullah Öcalan was the main negotiator of the process on the PKK side. Issues were negotiated with MİT, especially representatives such as Hakan Fidan. After this, the HDP delegation came to İmralı and discussed Qandil's opinions on the issues. Öcalan generally criticised the HDP or politicians in Turkey rather than PKK members, even approving Qandil's policies in Syria and in northern Iraq.

The context of the peace process was not clearly revealed to the public, and the aim of the process was described as bringing an end to the 'bloodshed and tears' alongside the disarmament of the PKK for the final settlement. According to an interview with the HDP's MP (Respondent 2), the government did not have a proper plan to solve this issue peacefully. However, the JDP's MPs (Respondent 1, 5) stated that the government had discussed all possibilities and even agreed, to some degree, to solve this issue.

Some discussions in İmralı Island were revealed by the PKK. Furthermore, most of the discussions between Öcalan and the HDP delegation were presented in a book published in early 2016 called 'İmralı Tutanaklari' (İmralı Records) whose background is confirmed by both sides in interviews. As mentioned above, talking with terrorist organisations contains huge risk for politicians. Although the JDP carried out the peace talks with the PKK and its jailed leader publicly, the former were very cautious due to the possibility of losing public support.

6.3.1.1 The JDP Government

During the peace process, the JDP government was the main negotiator, and its leader Tayyip Erdoğan carried great influence within the party and its grassroots. One interviewee (Respondent 5) said that "Tayyip Erdoğan has a transforming power within the community and his rhetoric, 'it is time to say stop this carnage and ease the mothers' tears', was responded to positively by most of the public at the beginning of the peace process. Therefore, the grassroots of the party trusted him and did not object to the peace process". However, few MPs or officials were involved in the peace process, which was managed by Erdoğan and a group of officials including some ministers and MPs. The details of the negotiations were known only by those groups within the party and some security bureaucracy involved in the peace process.

In the 2002 elections, the DTP increased its vote and became the number one party in Kurdish-populated cities during the national elections in 2007. The JDP is still the party with the biggest following in the region after the pro-Kurdish parties. This electoral success of the JDP is due to the fact that some policies implemented during the EU accession process have improved Kurdish rights.

Moreover, the JDP's policies in this period were supported by the EU as well as Kurds. Intensive democratisation efforts were made by the government between 2002 and 2005 (Ünal, 2012, 445). The ban on Kurdish broadcasting was lifted and teaching Kurdish in private schools was permitted by 2002 as a part of EU-oriented policies (Özcan and Yavuz, 2006, 114). Lifting the state of emergency, the reduction of pre-trial detention periods, the abolition of state security courts, the advancement of the use of Kurdish language and allowing Kurdish broadcasting during JDP's EU membership process were also of direct or indirect benefit to Kurds in Turkey (Larrabee, 2013, 135).

Although Turkey has been ruled by a strong government and has had a popular leader since 2002, there is still opposition in parliament, from some state institutions and within the Turkish army. The majority of Turkey is a conservative and nationalist nation which is against the PKK or pro-Kurdish politics. In addition, opposition parties have uncompromising stances towards talks with the PKK. Hence, the peace process was conducive to manipulation from within state institutions. Therefore, the JDP government was very prudent on law amendments and public speeches on the issue. How does a democratic government talk with such groups without jeopardising its political

system? MPs from the JDP and HDP (Respondents 1, 2) pointed out in interviews that the Gülenists were stronger in state institutions, especially in police intelligence and the Turkish army.

Although some JDP voters were against the talks with the PKK, there was no great resistance or criticism of the government within its base. However, the latter was very cautious at the beginning of the process. In other words, their position was 'wait and see'. Interviewees (Respondents 1, 5) explained that "the grassroots of the JDP trust Erdoğan. It must be underlined that Erdoğan possesses a transformative power over voters and that the peace process was seen as taboo within Turkey's conservative-nationalistic public. Those people neither supported the peace talks publicly nor resisted them openly". However, the Kobanî protests changed their positions from neutrality to opposing the talks. Furthermore, the JDP experienced clear changes in election results: the JDP vote decreased from 49.9% to 40.9% between 2011 and 2015.

6.3.1.2 The PKK

It is important to note that the PKK has great influence over the public in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey. There are hundreds of thousands of PKK sympathisers who lost their loved ones in struggles between the Turkish state and the PKK over 30 years in Kurdish-populated areas. The PKK has achieved the mobilisation of the masses ever since 1984. The JDP's MP from Diyarbakır Province expressed in a TV interview that "the PKK is not an uncontrolled organisation, as the people, who are expert about the PKK, know very well. If the PKK wants to organise a peaceful protest, they can gather 1 million people in Diyarbakır without throwing a stone. If the PKK wants to organise violent protests, they can terrorise 1 million people" (Cumhuriyet, 2014). This indicates the PKK's great influence among pro-PKK Kurdish people.

The Kurdish Opening was officially closed following the PKK's attacks that killed 13 Turkish soldiers in Silvan in the Diyarbakır region on 14 July 2011. Following the failure of the Kurdish Opening, 2012 was the deadliest year in fighting between the PKK and the Turkish army since Öcalan was captured in 1999. The PKK tried to create liberated zones on the border towns Şemdinli and Çukurca as it attempted to incite a Kurdish Spring within Turkey, following the aspirations of an Arab Revolution in the region (Coskun, 2012). However, the PKK failed to reach its target, being obstructed by the Turkish Army.

Certain developments caused pessimism about the peace process among the public over this period. On 24 June 2013, a group called the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (Yurtsever Devrimi Gençlik Hareketi, YDG-H) was established with a ceremony in Cizre, in Şırnak Province (Aljazeera Turk, 2015). The group was organised by PKK members from Qandil. Members were young, armed and masked and came from within a local population; they described themselves as the guardians of Kurds in the region. Hence, they acted as a young urban wing of the PKK in predominantly Kurdish-populated cities (Ibrahim, 2015). The PKK organised youth and built up an armed presence in the region during this process (Mandiraci, 2017). The YDG-H fought with Turkish security forces in town centres following the collapse of the peace process. This fighting was known as the 'barricade wars', explained in the following sections.

An establishing ceremony of the YDG-H and its ID checkpoints in the region caused a rise in harsh statements between the government and the opposition (Yetkin, 2014). Although affiliation with the YDG-H was denied by the PKK, this group was trained and organised as part of the PKK's self-defence strategy in urban centres (Milliyet, 2013).

In addition, in Lice, a town in Diyarbakır, one person died when protesting the building of a patrol tower; this led to a clash between the army and local people (Gazate Vatan, 2013). Furthermore, in Yüksekova (Hakkari Province), two protesters died in a clash between security forces and protesters on 7 December 2013 (Hurriyet, 2013). It could be argued that some PKK militants leaked information to the public in town centres rather than withdrawing to northern Iraq (Milliyet, 2013).

It is important to note that the PKK increased its activities in the region as security forces avoided intervening with the HDP's or the PKK's campaign and subsequent meetings. The PKK filled all spaces, including security, cultural and social spaces, via the political party and its members. As has been previously explained, the PKK transformed itself into a political movement as well as an armed group in the early 1990s. As the Turkish State withdrew its forces to the patrols, some PKK militants appeared around urban areas. A tribe leader and politician in the Siirt region expressed that the anti-PKK inhabitants were under pressure during the peace process and that pro-PKK sympathisers had even attacked and burned down his local business. During this period, a great number of young people were recruited by the PKK. One administrator in the region intimated that anti-PKK inhabitants had heard about the hundreds of PKK recruits, but did not intervene due

to the ongoing process.

In interviews with opinion leaders (Respondents 7, 8), including tribe leaders, it was said that "the PKK increased pressure on people, such as mobbing them and threatening candidates of the JDP. More importantly it was thought that the Turkish State left the region completely to the PKK. It was also thought that security forces did not interfere with the PKK's activities, as ordered by officials". Another businessman and politician said that "pro-PKK sympathisers burned down [his] workplace during the riots on 6-8 November 2014. In rural areas, the PKK threatened people to vote for the HDP candidate in the 8 June 2015 elections". Therefore, for various reasons, people across the regions were clear that they did not support a peace process.

Another conflictual issue between the government and the PKK was the building of new patrols and village guard systems in the region. However, the government denied recruitment of the guard system and the building of new patrols (İçgen, 2013). According to Öcalan, abolishing the village guard system, easing the new dam projects and reducing patrols were the first conditions for transitioning to the second phase of negotiations.

As has been explained in a previous chapter, the PKK is an international organisation with bases in Iraq, Iran and Syria. Perhaps more significantly, however, it has a huge network in EU countries. While the fighting in Turkey eased during the peace process, an increase in activities in terms of recruitment, financial and political support from EU countries did occur, according to the EUROPOL 2013 report (Milliyet, 2013).

The PKK's activities in rural areas in the southeast and east of Turkey increased with mobilisation, especially of the youth. Its activities were criticised by the government: the chairman of the JDP, Hüseyin Çelik, stated that "they set armed road checks, kidnapping opposition members or pro-state people, collecting money in the name of tax, [and] burning contract vehicles" (Akşam, 2014). Interestingly, anti-PKK Kurds strongly criticised the government and the PKK for continuing activities during the peace process. It is commonly stated in interviews that the PKK acted as an authoritarian state in the region. It was established that youth centres were used for recruitment: one MP (Respondent 4) claimed that "the PKK used those centres and cultural festivals as a recruitment. They even established a court in the region". In addition, the state's role was also criticised for, among other reasons, seemingly leaving anti-PKK inhabitants unsupported in many spheres of activity and only addressing the PKK's activities when discussion occurred on solving

the Kurdish issue.

6.3.1.3 Abdullah Öcalan

There is no doubt that Abdullah Öcalan is the founding leader of the PKK and a major influence for the PKK and pro-PKK sympathisers. Although nobody denies the leadership of Öcalan within the PKK, Qandil sometimes acts differently to Öcalan's wishes, as will be explained.

During the peace process, Abdullah Öcalan was portrayed as the main negotiator between the Turkish State and the PKK. Evidently the government believed Öcalan had authority over Qandil, the HDP and any diaspora in the EU. One MP (Respondent 3) stated that "the influential groups within the PKK, such as Qandil, the HDP, the [pro-PKK] public, Diyarbakır, the Kurdish groups in EU, etc., saw Öcalan like a god. Therefore, the government thought that Öcalan was the right person to start negotiations with". Therefore, it was plausible that those sharing power within the PKK would not object to Öcalan's ideas or orders during the negotiations with the Turkish State. However, certain developments showed that Öcalan avoided crossing Qandil and, more significantly, only addressed Qandil on a few issues such as the PYD in Syria. At the beginning of the process, Larrabee argued that Öcalan did not control all groups within the PKK and that some hardcore nationalist sections could be challenged (2013, 137). According to Pusane, Öcalan carries messages in regard to the PKK's mood, but his approach does not constitute his genuine thoughts, in order to prevent being viewed as an aggressor (2014, 91). Developments indicated that Öcalan tried to act according to Qandil's mood and its policies in Syria and Iraq.

Furthermore, a former MP from the JDP (Respondent 3) expressed that "Qandil cannot challenge Abdullah Öcalan directly or publicly, but Öcalan might indirectly be bypassed by the actions of Qandil, contradictory to Öcalan's advice". More significantly, the respondent said that "Qandil did not take the peace process seriously and lied to Öcalan and the Turkish State in order to gain territory and maximise its efficiency". However, another interviewee (Respondent 4) stated that "we thought that there was a sham fight between Qandil and Öcalan". It was evident that Öcalan's lack of involvement in the PKK's policies in the region somehow prevented backlash against him. Furthermore, although the PKK did not object to Öcalan's position on some issues, they bypassed his ideas or statements in negotiation.

Although Öcalan and the HDP delegation discussed the conditions of the peace process, Öcalan also expressed his opinions on the policies of Kurdish groups in Syria and the PKK. From this perspective, he gave an order for the HDP to transmit to the PKK: "Kurds in Syria [the PYD] must negotiate with both sides of the conflict, meaning Assad and any other actors. Whoever gave them rights must work with them; they cannot go under Barzani's rule. They must create self-defence forces in Syria" (İmralı Tutanakları, 2016, 28).

On 23 June 2013, Öcalan said that "we can be an ally for both sides [Assad and anti-Assad] for the sake of our interests" (İmralı Tutanakları, 2016). Öcalan also believed that "the PYD is on the right path in Syria and they need to strengthen their ideology and army" when meeting with HDP delegates.

In response to Öcalan's request, Qandil stated that "since the beginning of the Arab Spring, we have taken measures to create 'democratic confederalism', one of Öcalan's ideas" (Radikal, 2013). A further idea was to establish between 10-15 thousand armed forces immediately: this was expressed on meeting the HDP delegations (Ibid). It is obvious that the HDP and Öcalan discussed developments in Syria and northern Iraq during negotiations on İmralı. Therefore, the peace process can be seen as relating to Syrian Kurds and the PYD's position in Northern Syria.

6.3.1.4 The HDP (The People's Democratic Party)

In discussion with Öcalan in İmralı, the BDP (later HDP) delegations informed on developments concerning the PKK's activities in the EU (İmralı Tutanakları, 2013). Discussions with Turkish officials including the Justice and Interior Ministers and the Intelligence Service were explained, along with a discussion on their observations about the Qandil members. It was clearly displayed that Qandil designated all candidates of the pro-Kurdish party (BDP/HDP) for local and national elections. Therefore, the HDP was the least influential group in the peace process.

Moreover, it was shown that the HDP delegation discussed possible candidates for the 2015 parliamentary elections with Öcalan during the meeting in İmralı. It could be said that the pro-Kurdish party HDP has no influence on the Kurdish movement. Based on interviews (Respondents 2, 3, 4) in Ankara, it appears that most of the HDP's candidates have been selected by Öcalan and the PKK in reference to the demography of the voting districts: Alevi, secular, conservative, etc.

Therefore, it is not realistic to expect resistance or counter-arguments against the PKK or Öcalan from the HDP.

It is important to note that Öcalan had discussed the formation of the HDP, which was established to embrace all voters in Turkey rather than just Kurds in the region. Furthermore, regional developments and the PKK's position, especially in Syria, took up a great amount of time during discussion with HDP delegations (see İmralı Tutanakları, 2016). Hence, it may be demonstrated that Öcalan can still influence the pro-Kurdish HDP and the PKK. However, he has no complete authority, as he is confined in prison.

During this process, the PKK did not agree to all of the terms and conditions from Öcalan and the Turkish State due to regional challenges. In these circumstances, neither Öcalan nor the PKK wanted to concede their positions for several reasons: firstly, there is no doubt that Öcalan is the constituent leader of the PKK and, more significantly, is seen as a hero to pro-PKK sympathisers and members of the PKK militants. Therefore, Qandil avoids clashes with Öcalan due to his charisma among the PKK's base majority. Conversely, Öcalan also avoids enforcing anything as he is imprisoned. An interviewee believes "the PKK cannot stand against Öcalan; however, they can put Öcalan in a difficult position by not acting on his orders. I think we experienced this situation during the peace process". Bayık believes that "neither Abdullah Öcalan nor the HDP could decide the decision of disarmament of the PKK. Only we, the Qandil leadership, can take this decision after the collapse of the peace process" (Hamsici, 2015). According to Bayık, "Abdullah Öcalan is imprisoned and under pressure by the Turkish state. Although Öcalan is the main negotiator for peace negotiations, we have been running this movement" (Ibid).

The HDP election strategy was based on 'Türkiyelileşmek' (a transformational movement that represents the whole of Turkey rather than just Kurds). Its rhetoric was anti-Erdoğan in Western Turkey in order to get support from liberals and leftists (Gürbüz, 2015). Deputy PM Yalçin Akdoğan criticised the HDP's anti-Erdoğan rhetoric, which harmed the peace process (T24, 2015). These types of policies created the confidence crisis between both parties. However, the HDP succeeded with 13% of votes in the June 2015 elections.

To sum up, the HDP's election victory showed that the HDP gained an advantage in the peace process. Moreover, the balance of power changed in Turkish politics as the HDP gained significance. More importantly, the political party of the Kurdish National Movement has become

an independent political actor, as it passed the 10% threshold without coalition with other parties.

6.3.2 The Wise People Committee

During April 2013, the government created a group of prominent figures called 'wise people'. This was comprised of artists, musicians, former politicians, journalists, intellectuals and representatives from NGOs (CNN Turk, 2013). Seven geographical regions were created within Turkey and nine 'wise people' were selected from each region, making 63 in total. The 'wise people' met with the Prime Minister, were informed of the aims of the peace process, and were asked to promote the settlement process with the PKK.

The committee organised meetings with people and representatives from a cross-section of society, including union members, journalists, civil society, ordinary people, etc. There was some criticism in some regions due to the fear of partition within the country (CNN Turk, 2013). However, there was optimism about the future of the peace process in most regions, as surveys carried out by the 'wise people' showed.

A political adviser and former journalist (Respondent 9), who participated in the Wise People Committee of the Black Sea region as an interviewer, stated that "at the beginning of the process, the Aegean region, which is mostly secular, was not in favour of the peace process according to the surveys". He stated that "the economic relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government changed some people's minds about the Kurdish issue".

A former MP from the JDP (Respondent 3), who was general secretary of the Wise People for the Southeastern region, stated that the "majority of people were excited and hopeful about the future of the process for a peaceful solution. However, some people from the organic structure of the PKK took a dim view of the process from the beginning of visits in the region". However, "these people were questioning how one prisoner [Öcalan] could negotiate this issue; but they ceased questioning and followed the process as Qandil [the PKK] supported the peace process". It was expressed that "the main aim of the Wise People was to raise people's support for the peace process".

These Wise People Committees organised meetings every two months in cities and towns around Turkey, reporting their impressions and experiences. In some meetings, the nationalist groups

harshly criticised the members of the Wise Committees and even tried to put them forward for treason (ODATV, 2013). The government measured public opinion and reaction towards the peace process via these committees. The common anxiety among people reported by the Wise People was the division of the country. On the other hand, the main expectation of the process was peace, dialogue, a new constitution and democratisation. The Wise People Committees met with Prime Minister Erdoğan on 27 June 2013 to share their experiences and public expectations and anxieties regarding the government. Erdoğan stated that there were some problems in the withdrawal of the PKK and thus things were moving slowly (Gazete Vatan, 2013).

The reasons for forming these committees were, firstly, to get support from all segments of the community in Turkey, as the opposition parties were critical of the peace process. The members of the committees were from various segments of society, such as Turk and Kurd, Right and Left wing, Alevi and Sunni etc. Secondly, although this committee did not take part in any decision-making processes in negotiations, their reports and observations of the meetings helped the government to make policies in regard to the public's expectations. Furthermore, the Wise People Committee was established in accordance with Öcalan's request to inform the public about the peace process.

6.4 The Collapse of the Peace Process

Although there had still been ongoing accusations by both sides, especially following the Kobane protests, the peace process was kept on track until July 2015. Turkey suffered bomb attacks in core locations, such as Ankara and Diyarbakır in 2015 and Istanbul in 2016 (Diken, 2016). The killing of two police officers ended the peace process but its end was not yet officially approved (Hurriyet, 2015).

On 7 June 2015, for the first time in its history, the pro-Kurdish HDP passed the 10% threshold in the national election with 80 MPs. The JDP lost its absolute majority and established a single-party government, losing 69 MPs compared with the 2011 elections (Milliyet, 2015). The Nationalist MHP party also increased its votes significantly compared to the previous election. Therefore, Turkish and Kurdish nationalism had increased. This was due to a variety of reasons: the reaction of Turkish nationalists to the peace process; the PKK's use of excessive power over Kurdish populated cities; and the PYD's victories against ISIS, which boosted the HDP's votes.

Former politician and businessman in Siirt Province said that "the PKK visited the rural areas, especially small towns and villages, and threatened the people not to vote for the JDP government for the June elections".

On 26 June 2015, President Erdoğan threatened that he "would not allow the establishment of a State in Northern Syria" (Mynet, 2015). Beset Hozat said that "the KCK ended the peace talks due to ongoing dam projects" on 11 July 2015 (T24,2015). Furthermore, Hozat declared "the revolutionary people's war" against the Turkish state three days after her statement (Firatnews, 2015).

On 20 July 2015, an ISIS suicide bomber killed 32 young people who were gathered in Suruç, Şanlıurfa, to go to Kobane (Independent, 2015). On the same day, Cemil Bayık called people "to get armed and dig tunnels against ISIS and colonialist powers" (Gazete Vatan, 2015). Two days after Bayık's call, the PKK's hawk arm wing killed two police officers in their homes in Ceylanpınar, Şanlıurfa (ANF News, 2015). However, the PKK later denied that they killed the two police officers (Hamsici, 2015).

On 22 July, following the Suruç attack and Ceylanpınar incident, President Erdoğan stated that "our state is against terrorism of any sort, including the PKK and DAESH. We do whatever necessary in order to find the perpetrators of the Suruç attack and the assassinator of two police officer in Ceylanpınar" (Kalafat, 2018). Moreover, on 28 July Erdoğan expressed that "it is not possible to carry out the peace process with those who are against national unity and brotherhood" (NTV, 2015). In light of the harsh statements between the government and the PKK, and the air strikes against the PKK's camp in July 2015, Erdoğan stated that "the peace process was in the freezer" on 11 August 2015 (Rudaw, 2015).

Respondent 2 assessed the situation as follows: "the government did not have a detailed plan about the peace process, such as the rehabilitation of PKK's militias, etc. "The government's negotiation was based on the disarmament of the PKK; in other words, it approached the issue as security-based, except for the fact that some cultural rights were guaranteed in that period": "The HDP delegation was chosen to play a role as courier between İmralı and Qandil by the government and the PKK". Hence, elected MPs were not playing an active role in negotiations in terms of representing the public's opinion. There is no doubt that the PKK convinced itself it had dominance over its supporters: an MP from the JDP believes that the PKK thinks that the public

who support them have no alternative.

6.5 Post-Peace Process

Following the collapse of the peace process, Turkey launched air strikes against the PKK's camps in the Qandil Mountains on 23 July 2015 (Deutche Welle, 2015). On 12 August 2015, the KCK declared self-rule over thirteen towns within Turkey after the HDP scored a major victory in Southeastern and Eastern Turkey in the June 2015 elections (Kasapoğlu, 2015). On 16 August 2015, Hozat said that "a new term was starting in Kurdistan. Time to be freed from the colonialist state and establish self-rule" (Kızılkaya, 2015).

Domestic and international developments enhanced the PKK's military capabilities and its political position in majority Kurdish districts (Kadercan and Konaev, 2015). Turkey was concerned with the spread of the PYD's self-rule cantons in the Eastern cities, and the Kurdish uprising within its borders. Furthermore, "the PKK had built up a presence in the region during the 2012-2015 peace process. In June 2016, the conflict moved back to its traditional rural arena. Since then, around ninety per cent of all deaths have occurred in rural south-eastern districts" (Crisis Group, 2017).

YDG-H, the youth organisation of the PKK, began digging trenches and erecting barricades to prevent security officers' entry into several districts. These urban youth militias were organised and trained by PKK militants who infiltrated those districts following the collapse of negotiations. The YDG-H militants were not trained for urban warfare, but they were determined. The government responded to the self-rule declaration with 'anti-terror' operations. Curfews were imposed over 30 districts including rural areas around the east of Turkey. The failure of the peace talks contributed to the violence, reaching its peak with urban warfare occurring in 2012 at the same time that the Kurdish Opening failed.

Turkish security forces and the PKK militias fought for nearly a year in these areas. Crisis Groups categorised the death of 2,918 people in conflict: "PKK militants (1,378), followed by state security force members (976) and civilians (408). The remainder (219) were "youths of unknown affiliation, a category created to account for confirmed urban deaths, aged 16-35, who cannot be positively identified as civilians or members of the PKK or its urban youth wing", occurring across

two years' conflict including urban warfare (2017). According to the UN's report, between 350,000 and 500,000 people were displaced as a result of the conflict between July 2015 and December 2016 (BBC, 2017).

During the so-called 'barricade war' between security officials and PKK militias, the HDP's position and its mayors were criticised for providing equipment: "The Kurdish voters were disappointed by the actions of the HDP municipalities, such as declaring self-government and not recognising the legitimacy of Ankara, not paying taxes or public utility bills, and digging the ditches around the government buildings and along major roads against the police forces" (Yavuz and Özcan, 2015, 82).

According to an unidentified security official, 80% of PKK militants who died in urban warfare with security officials had joined the PKK (YDG-H) in the last 6-8 months. So, those who had lost their lives were local people who had joined the PKK via YDG-H. The official stated that urban warfare was led by PKK militants who had infiltrated the region from Qandil and Syria. The conflict has been maintained ever since the collapse of the peace process in July 2015.

Conclusion

Turkey's Kurdish issue has become one of the main agendas of the JDP government, particularly since 2008. Two major initiatives were launched by the JDP government to address the Kurdish issue. Although a few Turkish governments prior to the JDP's made some attempts to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully, the security elites always prevented initiatives for a peaceful solution. Consequently, President Özal was the first Turkish politician to truly risk tackling this issue.

The JDP government's new foreign policy initiatives paved the way for strengthening relations with neighbours, as well as with the KRG. However, these initiatives only became possible after significant domestic changes in Turkey, whereby the JDP challenged the state structure as it had existed under the Kemalist establishment.

After the JDP's major victory in 2007, the JDP initiated contact with PKK members in the EU in order to seek a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. To this end, MİT held secret discussions with them in Oslo, and with Öcalan on İmralı Island, for possible solutions, and the Democratic Opening was launched in 2009 as a result of the Oslo talks. The government aimed to solve the

issue by improving minority rights alongside Kurdish rights. However, this initiative failed.

The JDP government once again launched the peace process in December 2012, in its third term. During the Democratic Opening, the government's negotiations with the PKK had been kept secret. Now the peace process was declared publicly by the government, such that people knew that there were negotiations in progress with the PKK. However, the broad details and terms of the discussions of negotiations were not revealed publicly. The JDP government was very anxious not to lose the people's support in the peace process.

Not long into the peace process, the Arab Spring broke out in the Middle East. At that time, the PKK-affiliated PYD was not yet strong enough to be a major player in Syria. Furthermore, the PKK had failed to create liberated zones in Turkish territory just before the peace process in 2011-2012. However, the PYD's subsequent struggle against ISIS, its ensuing territory gain, and cooperation with Russia and the US now made the PYD a pivotal actor in the war against ISIS. Hence, the Kurdish National Movement increased its mobilisation capacity and self-confidence with the growth of the PKK's power during the Syrian civil war.

The Kobane protests in 2014 and the ISIS attacks in 2014-5 seriously threatened Turkish national security. Moreover, the public was angered by what it considered to be a grave mistake by the government: leaving the eastern regions to the PKK. Hence, the balance of power among the parties changed in favour of the PKK, and, crucially, the pro-Kurdish party HDP increased its power base.

Significant events such as the Kobane protests impacted negatively on the peace process. However, the main reason behind the collapse of the peace process in June 2015 was the shift of power between the two sides in the negotiations. The PKK armed local militias in Kurdish-populated town centres with the aim of creating cantons, as they had done in Syria. War broke out again between the PKK and Turkey, mainly in town centres, thus bringing the peace process to an end.

To sum up, as Talha Kose says, developments related to the PYD in Syria and Iraq in recent years show that the Kurdish issue has become more of a regional issue than a domestic one. In this scenario, disarming the PKK or finding a peaceful solution seems ever more unrealistic, as the PKK gains territory and increasingly finds room to manoeuvre in Syria and Iraq. The PKK's

influence and its strengthening power in both Iraq and Syria is a challenge for the KRG leader Barzani. A large number of PKK members joined operations against ISIS in Iraq and achieved control of some parts of Iraq. This challenged Turkey's national security as well as the KRG's energy importation via Turkey. More importantly, "The PKK's popularity has increased in the KRG due to the fight against ISIS; some youth join the PKK in order to fight against ISIS rather than the Peshmerga" (Respondent 1).

Chapter VII: Turkish-Kurdistan Regional Government Relations in the Post-Saddam Era

Introduction

In this chapter, Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurds will be examined across three periods: from the establishment of Iraq (in brief) and the Gulf War; the period between the Gulf War and the US invasion in 2003; and the post-2008 period. The main aim will be to focus on the changes in the Turkish government's approach towards the KRG, and the impact of these changes on the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Therefore, the importance of energy relations with the KRG, and the post-2008 period of Turkish foreign policy in particular, will be analysed in depth. In order to better understand these topics, it is useful to examine the historical background of Iraqi Kurdish-Turkish relations. Moreover, this chapter will examine the extent to which the developments in Iraq and Syria and, more importantly, the power struggle and power shifts between Kurdish groups affected the Kurdish issue and the peace process.

As has been stated previously, Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq and the KRG was based on preventing the PKK from attacking the region and thereby ensuring that the Iraqi Kurds established an independent state, which would be seen as a national threat. Thus the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq was the main goal for Turkish policymakers. In order to achieve this, Turkish foreign policymakers avoided official contact with Kurdish groups before 2008. Bilgay Duman argues that Turkey's foreign policy towards the KRG was not consistent, therefore, with its Iraq policy (2011, 23). In other words, Ankara limited its relations with the KRG and did not accept the KRG as a political entity within Iraq. Hence, the traditional foreign policy of Turkey was to maintain status quo and not to intervene in any conflict in the Middle East.

2011 marked an important change: Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan became the first Sunni leader to visit a Shia shrine and the first foreign leader to give a speech in the Iraqi Parliament (Duman, 2011, 3). The Turkish PM's Baghdad visit showed that, despite differences, Ankara was in favour of the unity of Iraq.

The changes in internal Turkish politics created room for the JDP to manoeuvre freely domestically and abroad. The Kurdish issue was always the main obstacle for the JDP due to its

democratic and security dimensions. The KRG and its leader Barzani's role will be discussed deeply in the next sections: easing relations with the KRG government was a key part of solving the Kurdish issue. As Barkey says, "contemplating a new approach to the domestic Kurdish problem that had been Turkey's most important challenge, Ankara has realized that important relations with the KRG could prove to be a quick signal that the new Turkey was capable of a good relationship with Kurds" (2015, 3).

Turkey's relations with the Iraqi Kurdish groups had two dimensions: firstly, the existence of the PKK in the Qandil Mountains, (their main base in northern Iraq, bordering Iran and Turkey); and secondly, the disputes over the oil-rich Kirkuk province, where Turcoman people live along with other nations such as the Kurds and Arabs. The creation of the de facto Kurdish state in Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991 and the strengthening of the PKK's power challenged Turkey's national security. Ankara was concerned that the establishment of an independent Kurdish state might trigger Turkey's own Kurdish minority to demand the same for themselves. As a result, Ankara limited its relations and treated all Kurdish groups in Iraq, such as the KDP, PUK and others, as a potential threat.

In other words, "Turkey's perceptions of the Iraqi issue have been very much intertwined with domestic issues – particularly the rise of Kurdish nationalism, with its historical and contemporary dimensions – even this external threat perception does not solely originate from systemic factors." (Altunışık and Tur, 2006, 245). However, the Turkish approach towards Kurds in Iraq has begun to change, owing to regional and internal developments since 2008. From the KRG's perspective, Turkey is the best-positioned and most reliable state to sell its natural resources. According to Dalay, this sea-change in relations with the KRG occurred around 2008-09; before that time, Turkey's policy towards the KRG was epitomised by a set of untenable "red-lines" (2014).

In the post-Gulf War period, the Allies created 'safe havens' in northern Iraq for humanitarian intervention for refugees who had escaped to the Iranian and Turkish borders; thus the Kurdish refugees came to the forefront of Ankara's agenda. Since then, Turkey has more closely followed the Kurdish groups and PKK activities in the region, as northern Iraq has become a de facto state for Iraqi Kurds. The Gulf War and the withdrawal of the Iraqi Army from the region also created a power vacuum, which the PKK was able to fill, and around that time (the early 1990s) the PKK increased its attacks from northern Iraq.

The KRG and Ankara have a common policy of hindering the strengthening of the PKK in the region, as this would pose a challenge to them both. Over the years, Turkish troops have launched substantial raids across the border – at times with the agreement of Baghdad – in pursuit of PKK fighters in particular. Turkish troops have even cooperated with Iraqi Kurdish forces in tracking down PKK operatives in Iraq (Park, 2003, 13). Turkey increased its pressure on the Iraqi Kurds when attacks by the PKK intensified against Turkish army bases near the border.

The Iraqi Kurds were closely monitoring the PKK and also seeking cooperation from Turkey against them. Therefore, the Kurdish leaders Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani were invited to attend discussion by the Turgut Özal administration in order to control these groups and to restrict the PKK's activities in the region in the early 1990s. Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurds gained autonomy within Iraq and were treated as a non-state actor by the international community.

The Iraqi Kurds became an ally of coalition forces against Saddam's regime as the Turkish Parliament voted against the use of Turkish land by the US army. So, the Kurdish region of Iraq was granted autonomy with the new constitution, formed in 2005. However, initially the new status of the KRG was suspected by Ankara, especially by the Turkish Army. The status of Kirkuk was the subject of a (postponed) referendum in 2007 in line with the constitution and the PKK's activities in the region. Although Turkey emphasises the integrity of Iraq and opposition to an independent Kurdish state, Kurds enjoy autonomy in the region.

Since 2008, Turkey has improved relations with the KRG in order to prevent the PKK's activities in the region. The KRG's energy resources and Turkey's energy demand played a vital role in improving these relations and, more importantly, Turkey believed that good relations with the KRG and its leader Masoud Barzani could contribute towards the peace process in Turkey.

7.1 Historical Background to Turkish-Kurdistan Regional Government Relations, up to and including the Post-Saddam Era

During the Ottoman era, the area we know as Iraq was divided into three 'vilayets' under Ottoman rule, each with their own distinct ethnic and religious profile: these were Baghdad, Basra and

Mosul. This segmentation according to ethnicity and religion persists more or less along the same lines in the country today. The population around Basra in the south is mainly Shia. The Sunni population generally occupies the middle of the country, which used to be called Baghdad vilayet. And the Kurds live in the mountainous area in the north of Iraq, where their population makes up between 17% and 20% of the population (BBC, 2017).

Following WWI, Iraq was created out of these three regions of the Ottoman Empire. Iraq is an artificial state created by British imperialism (Rimscha and Rigg, 2007, 826). The Kurds desired to have an independent state under Great Britain's rule. However, the British government ignored the demands of Kurds when they established Iraq in 1925, then left Iraq to Baghdad's administration in 1932. In other words, the British Empire assigned Iraq's governance to Sunni Arabs who ruled the country until the US invasion in 2003: "The British never advocated or supported an independent state in Iraq during the period from 1920 to 1958 when they were in control of the country" (Olson, 1995, 3).

The Kurds have rebelled against Baghdad many times since the establishment of Iraq, despite repeatedly being brutally crushed by Baghdad. The first Kurdish uprising took place under Molla Mustafa's leadership in 1931-2 in modern Iraq. The Kurds were unsuccessful in this uprising. The second rebellion against Baghdad occurred towards the end of the Second World War (1939-45). The Soviet invasion of Iran helped the Kurds to create the Kurdish Mahabad Republic in 1946 in Iran. However, with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Iran, the first Kurdish Republic dissolved against Tehran administration (Balcı, Baykal and Öğür, 2014, 13). Nevertheless, the creation of the Mahabad Republic was an important stage in the rise of Kurdish Nationalism (Olson, 1991, 404).

The most tragic of these events in Kurdish minds is the Anfal Campaign, which took place in 1988 in the final year of the Iran-Iraq war, and which ended with a massacre in Halapja, a Kurdish town in the north. Saddam's regime planned this campaign against the Kurds, blaming them for helping Iran during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, and also intending to suppress Kurds in the north who revolted against Saddam's regime after the war.

As a response to the uprisings in the north, the Iraqi army carried out a mass execution of Kurds. Saddam's cousin, Ali Hassan al-Macid, attacked the Kurdish cities with chemical weapons (Bruinessen, 1994, 164). During this campaign, hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled to the

mountains, most of them ending up as refugees on the Iranian and Turkish border. Over 5000 people perished in Halapja and 3000 villages were destroyed during the Anfal operation (Stansfield, 2003, 46). As a result, approximately 100,000 Kurds came to Turkey and were placed in refugee camps in the southern cities in 1988 (Danis, 2009, 16).

The Baghdad regime started to lose its power over the Kurds after the brutal Anfal campaign: "with a history of discord and internal conflict compounded by the wartime atrocities of the *al-Anfal* campaign, […] the first formal stage of de facto statehood in Kurdistan emerged" (MacQueen, 2015, 10). The PUK and KDP created an alliance against the Saddam regime in 1988, called the Iraqi Kurdish Front (Gunter, 1996, 52). As explained in the next section, northern Iraq became a de facto state for the Iraqi Kurds following the Gulf War in 1991, as the Iraqi army withdrew all administration from the region.

The Gulf War and the withdrawal of the Iraqi army from northern Iraq created an advantage for both the PKK and Iraqi Kurds. The new picture of Iraq that was emerging, with the merging of the PKK and the autonomous Kurdish de facto state, was a matter of grave concern for Ankara. Historically speaking, it may be said that Ankara has been in unofficial contact with the Iraqi Kurds since the mid-1980s, as the PKK began attacks on Turkey in 1984.

In short, however, the PKK settled down in the Qandil Mountains and took control of some of the KDP's territory, withdrawing some of its forces from near the Turkish border. Since then, the PKK has had opportunities to operate in the region freely and has organised its attacks from the Qandil camps.

Although the KDP and the PKK have been contending over Kurdish Nationalism in Syria and Iraq in recent years, these two Kurdish nationalist groups cooperated in the early 1980s. The PKK took the decision to develop contact with Iraqi Kurds in its conference in 1981. In July 1983, the PKK and the KDP signed a deal called 'Solidarity Principles', which aimed to seek mutual cooperation against all states' imperialist plans in the Middle East (Özdağ, 2007, 43). This deal provided advantages for the PKK in that it was able to transfer some of its militants from Beka Valley to the Qandil Mountains: Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, where the PKK's main camps had been, had severely hampered the PKK's ability to act (Ibid).

The PKK built new camps in the region and its higher commanders moved to those camps

following the agreement with the KDP. As Michael Gunter says, "Under the agreement, which was formalised and made public a year later, the Iraqi Kurdish groups [had] provided a land for Öcalan's militants to have camps in northern Iraq and agreed to not stop them from crossing into Turkey from KDP-controlled land" (2007, 69). In 1983, the PKK also built Lolan camp, its largest, which was used as the organisation's press and campaign centre (Gunter, 1993, 305, cited in Baykal, Öğür and Balcı, 2014, 20). The following year, the PKK launched its first attack on Turkish patrols near the borders as it strengthened its position in the region (Özdağ, 2008, 52).

The PKK's new camps near the Turkish border gave them opportunity to assault the Turkish patrols with their increased number of militants. The Turkish army lost a large of number of its soldiers during these early attacks. In the meantime, the Iraq-Iran war (1980-88) was raging, which hampered control of the border region. Hence, Turkey increased its pressure on both Baghdad and Barzani in order to remove the PKK from northern Iraq. In 1983 Barzani was concerned that the possible Turkish military incursion against the PKK might also target KDP positions in the area (Gunter, 2007, 103).

Barzani demanded that the PKK change their location rather than attacking from near the border. It has been mentioned that the KDP ceased its relations with the PKK in 1985 and then pulled out of the 'Solidarity Principles' agreement in 1988, claiming that Turkish operations against the PKK camps were damaging its positions in the area (Öğür, Baykal and Balcı, 2014, 21, cited in İmset, 1993, 225). From then on, the KDP made efforts to improve relations with Ankara and distance itself from the PKK (Ibid). In the same year, another Iraqi Kurdish party (PUK) signed a 'protocol of understanding' with the PKK in Damascus (Gunter, 1996, 52; Kumral, 2016, 122).

In the 1990s, the Turkish army launched substantial raids on the PKK camps, and Ankara forced the Iraqi Kurds to curb PKK activity in their region. Following the Kurdish uprising against the Baghdad regime, Saddam imposed a strict economic embargo against the Kurds. While Turkey cooperated unofficially with the Iraqi Kurds until 2008, the JDP has been steadily improving its activities and relations with the KRG throughout the post-Saddam era. Turkey and the KRG have common interests on many issues, such as tackling the Kurdish issue in Turkey, energy, and the economy.

7.2 The Gulf War

The Gulf War was sparked by the following series of events: first, Saddam Hussein refused to pay his country's debt to Kuwait, an oil-rich country who had loaned money to Iraq to finance its war with Iran. He then claimed that Kuwait was part of Iraq, as it was an artificial state created by colonialist powers. Using this as justification, Saddam invaded Kuwait in August 1990. His regime refused US calls to withdraw from Kuwait. As a consequence, the US and its allies launched the 'Desert Storm' operation against Iraq on 17 December 1991. Saddam's regime was defeated and accepted a ceasefire with the coalition in April 1991 (Natali, 2010, 75).

During the Gulf War, Shia Arabs in the south and Kurds in the north rebelled against Saddam's regime with the encouragement of the allies, but they were crushed again by the Iraqi army (Olson, 2007, 477). As a result of this, one million people escaped to Iran and half a million to the Turkish border. In order to prevent a refugee crisis, the Gulf allies created a 'safe haven' and prohibited use of the air space above the 36th parallel. As O'Leary says, "military forces from eleven countries, including the United States and Turkey, implemented 'Operation Provide Comfort' to give security and humanitarian assistance to refugees in camps along the Iraq-Turkey border" (2002, 18-9). Turkey was concerned about the refugee flow from northern Iraq, fearing that interaction between Kurds in Turkey and those in Iraq would lead to infiltration into Turkey by PKK members. For this reason, Ankara wanted to resettle the Kurds within Iraq (Natali, 2010, 36).

Turkey sided with the coalition against the Saddam regime in the Gulf War, and opened its Incirlik air base for coalition forces to use during the war. President Turgut Özal's joining the anti-Saddam coalition broke taboos in Turkish politics, which had hitherto sought to avoid involvement in any intervention in the Middle East. The Turkish elites and the majority of the public were against taking part in the Gulf War with the coalition (Brown, 2007, 85; Aral, 2009, 79).

It is important to stress the fact that Iraq and Turkey had strong economic relations before the Gulf War. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline is one of the biggest secured export routes for Iraq. In addition, Ankara and Baghdad signed a security deal in 1984 in order to prevent PKK's infiltration (Kirişci and Windrow, 1992, 162). The agreement granted Turkey the right to pursue PKK militants up to 10 kilometres inside the border. However, the security deal was cancelled by the Baghdad regime, as their request to pursue Iraqi Kurds who had escaped to Turkey as refugees

was refused (Öğür, Baykal and Balcı, 2014, 23). Meanwhile, the Saddam regime and the PKK agreed to act against the Iraqi Kurdish groups as Turkey sided with the coalition forces and cooperated with Iraqi Kurds.

After long discussion with coalition groups, Turkey deployed tens of thousands of troops to the Iraqi border. The war was seen by Turkish elites as a threat to Turkish national security. They had always been against the political and military destabilisation of the region triggered by the possible state change of northern Iraq. According to Altunışık, "[s]ince the establishment of the republic, Turkey has largely been a pro-status quo power, aiming to preserve the existing distribution of power and territory" (2007, 69). For Turkey, the most important outcome of Saddam's Kuwait invasion was the withdrawal of Baghdad civil administration from northern Iraq. As MacQueen says, "After the Iran–Iraq War, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent UN sanctions regime, Baghdad effectively withdrew from the northern three provinces, imposing an internal embargo on trade" (2015, 10). Before the UN embargo, the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) had already deteriorated the national economy and the decrease in oil prices had caused recession in Iraq.

The United Nation Security Council imposed sanctions against Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait. These were the most comprehensive and effective sanctions in UN history, banning all imports to and exports from Iraq (Stansfield, 2003, 48). The main revenue of the country was temporarily cut off as a result of the shutting down of oil exports, its main source of income. However, the sanctions weakened over the course of the following years with a new resolution (SCR 986) by the UN. Although the UN embargo worsened its purchasing power, it has provided the KRG with a great opportunity for political manoeuvring over the last 20 years. As Natali says, "with the approval of UNCSR 688, the three governorates of Kurdistan Region gained international security protection in the form of safe havens and no-fly zones, implemented by coalition forces" (2010, 30). The period of the 1991-96 UN operations in Iraq was funded mostly by donor states. However, with SCR 986, the Security Council proposed an oil-for-food deal, which allowed the Iraqi government to sell up to $2 billion worth of oil in a 3-month period (Stansfield, 2003, 54).

There were some serious consequences for Turkey in the creation of the 'safe haven' in northern Iraq: firstly, the PKK filled the power vacuum in the region and seized the Iraqi Army's weapons

following the withdrawal of the Baghdad administration from the region in 1992. Thus, the PKK strengthened its position and entrenched itself in the Qandil Mountains as the KDP cleared various villages. Secondly, economic sanctions on Baghdad and UN Security Council Resolution 688, which was supported by Turkey in order to prevent Saddam attacking the Kurds, created a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq (Robins, 1993, 674). Thirdly, Turkey lost its major trading partner and a lucrative source of revenue in the region. As a result of the war, the closure of the Yumurtalık-Kirkuk pipeline imposed a huge economic cost on Turkey (Park, 2003; Kumral, 2016, 123).

Although the Iraqi Kurds have been fighting for independence against Iraq, they have a lack of unity within the country. There are two main Kurdish groups in Iraq, the PUK and the KDP, and they have been divided since 1975. While the leader of PUK, Jalal Talabani, established the party along the lines of a Marxist-socialist ideology, the nature of the Barzani movement is tribal-based and takes a conservative line. Following the withdrawal of Iraqi offices from the north, regional elections took place in May 1992 in 3 provinces (Sulaymaniya, Duhok and Arbil). The Kurdish regional government was established in June 1992, following the elections. Though the elections and parliament were not officially recognised by Iraq or internationally, the Kurds gained autonomy within Iraqi territory. With regard to the elections, Barzani's KDP won 51 seats and became the first party, with 45.05% of the popular vote, while Talabani's PUK won 49 seats and become the second party, with 43.61%. Only these two parties passed the 7% threshold, but the KDP and PUK agreed to power-sharing with 50 seats to each party.

The KDP and PUK agreed to establish a presidential council with an equal number of members from both parties rather than going to a second ballot (Stansfield, 2003, 130). Kurdish groups stated that they did not want to seek independence in order to avoid provoking a negative reaction from neighbouring states. However, the regional states, including Syria, Iran and Turkey, held a conference following the elections in the KRG, and declared that they were in favour of the territorial integrity of Iraq (Kakayi, 1994, 122, cited in Öğür, Baykal and Balcı, 2014, 28). As Robert Olson says, "Talabani claimed that Ankara was putting pressure on the Kurds in northern Iraq to negotiate with Baghdad" (1995, 19).

The closure of the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline and the withdrawal of the Baghdad regime from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq led to varying relations between Ankara and the different Kurdish groups.

Turkey's oil needs had to be met by oil tankers from the KRG. The demise of state authority in Iraq prompted Turkey to get in contact with Kurdish groups (the PUK and KDP) in order to prevent PKK activity. Moreover, the new phase of economic relations legitimised the Iraqi Kurds in Ankara's eyes and increased cooperation between the two Kurdish parties against the PKK (Öğür, Baykal and Balcı, 2014, 27). The difference between the KDP and PUK in terms of ideology and policies caused a split among the Iraqi Kurds and eventually both groups went into civil war after the end of the Gulf War. The struggle between these groups led each party to cooperate with different regional states. Therefore, Turkey has mostly been cooperating with the KDP where KDP-held territory borders Turkey.

Elections in 1992 failed to put a definitive end to the territorial disputes between both sides, and in 1994, the inter-Kurdish civil war broke out. Although Ankara was sceptical of the establishment of the Kurdish de facto state within Iraq, it was concerned that the PKK would take advantage of the power vacuum. As Natali says, "the Turkish government had its own Kurdish problem to manage, particularly during the ongoing civil war with the PKK, and was highly sensitive to the idea of an autonomous Kurdistan Region" (2010, 36). Therefore, Turkey launched an initiative in order to solve the dispute: both conflict parties were brought together in 1994 in Şırnak near the border (Gunter, 1996, 223). However, this initiative failed due to a weakened economy, the traditional socio-political structure and a monopoly of power within the two parties.

Finally, both sides accepted the Washington agreement, halting the dispute in 1998. While the KDP controlled the northern side of the region, the PUK strengthened its power in the south of the KRG. As a consequence of the inter-Kurdish civil war, more than 3,000 people perished, including civilians, and thousands were displaced (Ibid,829).

7.3 Turkey-Kurdistan Regional Government in the Post-Saddam Era

Iraqi-Kurdish autonomy and the PKK's strengthened position in northern Iraq following the Gulf War created one of the most conflictual zones in the Middle East, situated between Turkey and the KRG/the PKK (Balcı, Baykal and Öğür, 2014, 13). Ankara has consistently argued that the division of Iraq did not bring stability to the region. Turkey has opposed an independent Kurdish state for two reasons. Firstly, an independent Kurdish state could trigger ambitions for self-determination amongst Kurds in Turkey. Secondly, should the rest of Iraq fall under the complete

control of Iran, this would worsen the Sunni-Shia conflict in Iraq.

After a long struggle with Baghdad, Iraqi Kurds gained autonomy according to the Iraqi constitution of 2005: "The new Iraqi constitution, adopted by a national referendum on 15 October 2005, recognises Kurdistan as a federal region with its own (regional government, parliament, presidency, and internal security forces) in the framework of to-be-created federal order" (Rimscha and Rogg, 2007, 824). Earlier in the post-Saddam era, Romano argued that "[s]ince Saddam's fall, Iraqi Kurdish groups have therefore stressed that they wish to be a part of the new Iraq and that they must play an important role in Baghdad as well as Iraqi Kurdistan" (2006, 215).

Kurds were the group who most welcomed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and they cooperated with the US politically and militarily before and after the invasion. In the post-Saddam era, the Iraqi constitution met the majority of most Kurdish demands. The new constitution recognised three Kurdish provinces of Iraq – Arbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk – as a legal region of Iraq (Article 113) (Katzman, 2010). Arabic and Kurdish are the official languages in those regions (Article 4). It was also agreed by the Iraqi government that 17% of the national budget should go to the KRG, although there has been some disagreement between the central government and the KRG on payments. In addition, Kurds took higher positions in the governance of Iraq. Jalal Talabani, the leader of the PUK, became the sixth president of Iraq from 2005 to 2014. Hoshyar Zabari, the uncle of Masoud Barzani, was Foreign Minister of Iraq between 2003 and 2014.

During all this time, Turkey has been closely watching every movement of Kurdish groups in Iraq, for the reasons mentioned above. According to Kenneth Katzman, the Iraqi Kurds have always insisted that the Kirkuk, Diyala and Nineveh provinces must be integrated into the KRG. The status of Kirkuk has always been one of the most controversial issues between Turkey and the KRG – not least because it holds 10% of Iraq's oil reserves (Katzman, 2010). Turkish officials have always argued that the future of the Turcoman people is their red line, since the integration of Kirkuk would help Kurds in their drive towards independence. Therefore, Turkey has always strongly opposed the assimilation of Kirkuk into the KRG.

Since 2005, the Kurds have believed that they need oil and gas revenues in order to become fully independent. Exploration for new oil and gas is another live issue between the KRG and the central government. The KRG has invited oil companies to invest, signing many deals with foreign firms. However, Iraq's Oil Minister called these deals 'illegal' and accused the KRG of exploiting

national resources (Katzman, 2010). It is claimed that the KRG needs Baghdad in order to be able to import oil via national pipelines.

The reality is that the KRG is a land-locked region, where Barzani's KDP rule the Duhok and Arbil provinces. They are dependent on the Turkish border in order to export their oil and gas. The only reliable and cheap way for the KRG to export is to pump its oil via pipelines through Turkey. Therefore, Barzani has always sought good relations with Ankara. For Turkey, the KRG is the only gateway for Turkish products into Iraq, its third largest export market.

In the early 1990s, the Iraqi Kurds, especially the KDP, fought against the PKK. As noted above, Turkey entered northern Iraq several times in the 1990s, making incursions into the Qandil Mountains with the aim of destroying the PKK camps. Consequently, relations between Ankara and the newly established KRG were tense. Barzani stated that if Turkey entered northern Iraq, the KRG would incite unrest in Turkey's Kurdish cities in Turkey after the Turkish Parliament approved the major incursion into Iraq in 2007 (Katzman, 2010). Additionally, "Turkey threatened to intervene militarily if the KDP and PUK did not leave Kirkuk" (Romana, 2006, 213).

However, the relations between the KRG and Turkey have improved steadily since 2008. The KRG president Barzani has become Turkey's de facto Kurdish ally against the PKK in recent years. According to Michael Gunter, the Turkish president has offered Barzani the chance to establish a new and moderate Kurdish party in Turkey (2014, 23) in exchange for the KRG siding with Turkey against the PKK and supporting the peace process between the PKK and Turkey.

Although Ankara initially voiced concerned disapproval of any structural changes to Iraq, it has since been forced to accept new realities that are beyond its sphere of control. There are several reasons why Turkey has changed its Iraqi-Kurdish policies. First of all, the new post-2003 era in Iraq has seen the Kurds become a political entity in themselves in Iraq and abroad. Secondly, Turkey's Kurdish issue was an obstacle to its new foreign policy which "aims to reorganise and normalise the political system in the region in accordance with the liberal democratic polity" (Çiçek, 2011, 17); in other words, to have good relations with the KRG and seek their cooperation in solving the Kurdish issue in Turkey. It is very difficult for Turkey to ignore the now-internationally recognised KRG and its huge amount of oil and gas reserves: "The Iraqi War, the official recognition of the KRG in the 2005 Iraqi constitution, and the 2006 unification of the Kurds after the internal conflicts of the past obliged Turkish foreign policy to deal with the KRG

as a stable and considerable regional player" (Charountaki, 2012, 198). Kurdish political movements in Iraq have had an effect on Kurdish nationalists all around the world, and have led to an increase in the demand and motivations of Turkey's Kurds (Ibid). In addition, the US expects Turkey to develop strong political and economic relations with Iraqi Kurdish groups, in order to solve its Kurdish issue peacefully and disarm the PKK (Barkey, 2009).

It has been pointed out in previous chapters that 2008 marked a turning point in KRG-Turkey relations. The Turkish government has accepted the KRG officially and the first high official meeting was held in Baghdad in May 2008. After these positive developments, Turkey launched the so-called 'democratic opening', which aimed to lift some restrictions on minority rights in 2009. This initiative was the first step in the peace process, which started in late December 2012. The KRG publicly supported Turkey's initial efforts to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully. Following the first official meeting, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with Mesoud Barzani on 31 October 2009, and Tayyip Erdoğan became the first Turkish premier to visit the KRG in 2010 (Charountaki, 2012, 192). Turkey has been less concerned about the KRG since 2008. However, it has continued to watch the PKK and act against its activities in KRG-controlled areas. Turkey has been seeking the KDP's cooperation against the PKK since the 1980s. However, President Barzani believes that the war will not bring resolution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Following these positive developments, Turkey opened a new consulate in Arbil in 2010. Even though Turkey avoided official contact with Iraqi Kurds, its economic relations with the KRG increased sharply in the post-Saddam era. The trade volume between Iraq and Turkey went from 941 million USD in 2004 to 7,398 million in 2010 (Duman, 2011, 19). It is important to note that Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'Strategic Depth' policy stipulates engagement with countries who have common geography and history. The main aim of this policy is to promote shared interests and cooperation, thus creating mutual benefits for those countries. Since then, strengthening economic cooperation between the KRG and Turkey has boosted Turkish investment in the region, particularly in the energy field. According to some, "Cultivating closer energy ties with the KRG has become one of the most important components of Turkey's attempts to address the Kurdish problem at home" (Tol and Taşpınar, 2014**)**. Indeed, one cannot overestimate how much the KRG's rich natural resources meet Turkey's energy demands, and its energy hub aspirations have contributed positively to relations between both sides, as explained in the previous chapter.

The KRG's stability was seriously affected by a series of factors such as sectarian politics in Iraq, the Syrian crisis and the peace process in Turkey. The Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's sectarian policies ignored Sunni and Kurdish demands and expectations inside the country, displacing Sunnis particularly from the political process. The pro-Shia al-Maliki government's policies deepened the disputes between itself and the Sunni opposition from 2010 to 2014. During al-Maliki's term, Iran became influential in Iraqi politics and Baghdad's Shia-dominated policies angered other groups in the country.

As stated above, the Turkish Prime Minister supported the integrity of Iraq and the unity of all constituencies in Iraq (Duman, 2011, 3): "The Turks tried for a long time in 2008, 2009, 2010 to develop a good relationship with Baghdad as a way of countering the KRG to a certain extent. That is all falling by the wayside because of Maliki's policies" (Larrabee, 2012, 85). Political turmoil, the KRG's de facto status and its oil and gas contracts signed with foreign firms led to disunity between the KRG and Baghdad.

In 2014, the economic crisis, the advance of ISIS and difficult relations with Baghdad worsened the situation for the KRG. Barkey argues that these problems have "made the KRG government more dependent on Turkey than ever" (2015, 6). What's more, the KRG and Turkey are both against the PYD's policies in northern Syria, which Turkey sees as a national security threat.

In addition, a new party was established in the KRG. Some politicians split from the PUK and established Gorran (The Change Movement) in Sulaymaniyah, the central location of the PUK. Thus, another political actor entered the stage of the KRG. In the elections of 2015, Gorran became the second party after the KDP, and the main opposition to the KDP-PUK coalition government. It is important to note, however, that Talabani and Barzani both maintain strong positions of power in the Kurdistan Region. Therefore, it will not be too easy to challenge them; they have been struggling for Kurds in the region for a long time.

7.3.1 Barzani's Role in the Peace Process

It is significant to note how much clout Barzani has over the Turkish Kurds. The Kurdish movement in Turkey, especially the PKK, is hugely different from Barzani's movement in Iraq in terms of ideology, motivation and structure, as has been analysed greatly in Chapter V. In Turkey,

"Kurdish nationalism surfaced in the late 1960s and 1970s. Most of the political parties that emerged were either influenced by the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq (Mustafa Barzani and Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP)" (Jongerden, 2007, 57).

Barzani and his family have a long history in the struggle for Kurdish rights in Iraq. Moreover, Masoud Barzani himself has been the most prominent leader of the Kurdish movement in Iraq since 1987, during which time the Kurds have suffered much persecution, bloody execution and wars at the hands of the Iraqi regime. As Salih says, "the two figures [Öcalan and Barzani] have long been vying to become the most powerful Kurdish transnational leader, using domestic influences and regional proxies to gain the upper hand" (2014).

Turkey's conservative Kurds who are not in favour of the PKK's secular structure sympathise with the KRG leader Masoud Barzani. In other words, Barzani is seen as a tribal leader, accused of being undemocratic by the PKK and therefore lacking the support of pro-HDP Kurds. As Cagaptay says, "[t]he PKK and HDP are leftist, social movements – in the past the PKK even espoused Stalinism and Maoism" (2015).

Barzani attended an open meeting with Tayyip Erdoğan in support of the peace process in 2013. In his speech to the public, Barzani stated: "My request from my Kurdish and Turkish brothers is to support the peace project. I want to tell them that we support the peace process with all our force […] Long live Turkish and Kurdish brotherhood. Long live peace. Long live freedom" (Hurriyet Daily News, 2013). That was the historic moment that Erdoğan used the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government for the first time. However, the BDP did not support the meeting and blamed the JDP for using the event as a political tool (Aljazeera Turk, 2013). The government aimed to reap the benefits of having good relations with the KRG, particularly in terms of energy and economic relations, while political relations with the KRG also improved significantly until 2015.

Barzani's influence in the peace process is limited for various reasons. It must be underlined that the pro-PKK or nationalist Kurds in Turkey believe that the Barzani movement is tribal-based; also, its doing business with Turkey, who is against Kurdish nationalism within its own borders, is problematic for them. Moreover, the PKK's criticism against Barzani and his lack of support for the former raises concerns for Kurdish nationalists in Turkey.

It is also important to note that the PKK and Barzani have recently been struggling for power-sharing in Kurdish-populated countries such as Syria and Iraq. However, Barzani does not support any Kurdish movement in Turkey, including the PKK. Therefore, anti-PKK Kurds mainly vote for the JDP government in Kurdish-populated cities in Turkey. In other words, Barzani encourages those Kurds to support the JDP, as mentioned before. As Barkey argues, "the more the KDP perceived the PKK as a challenge to its dominance among Kurds, the more it saw its interests coincide with those of the AKP [JDP]. Barzani, through his family and clan networks, sought to ensure that these Kurdish votes went to the AKP [JDP]" (2015, 5). In an interview, a KRG official (Respondent 5) admitted that "Barzani called some Kurds who have a connection with him and the KRG to vote in favour of the JDP". During the peace process, the JDP government began negotiations only with the PKK and did not include any other Kurdish groups or parties. Therefore, no pro-Barzani Kurdish groups took part in the peace process.

Although the KRG's leader called on Kurds in Turkey to support the process, the ties between Barzani and Qandil became more tense due to the PYD's policies in Syria at that time, as will be explained in the next chapter. Barzani condemned the PYD's unilateral declaration on the Rojava by saying, "We only support the steps that have the consensus of all Kurdish parties in Rojava" (Rudaw, 2013).

In 2013, Öcalan and the BDP delegation agreed to organise a series of congresses which would be held in Turkey, the EU and KRG for the youth and female Kurds at a Kurdish National Congress (İmralı Tutanakları, 2013). Masoud Barzani refused to attend this Kurdish National Congress in Arbil, claiming that the congress would only serve the PKK's interests (Aslan, 2013). It is obvious that the rivalry between the KDP and the PKK over the Kurdish nationalist movement has been maintained.

According to one interviewee (Respondent 2), "Barzani is a member of a family who has been struggling for Kurdish rights for over 100 years in the Middle East. Therefore, Kurds respected these historical ties and his position in the KRG. Although energy and economic relations between Turkey and the KRG are an important factor, the KRG leader Barzani's role was limited over the Kurds in Turkey: the KRG's oil production meets more than Turkey's need; however, there is no transparency on oil exportation to Turkey".

Respondent 2 says that "KRG-Turkey energy-based economic relations, especially oil, played an important role in easing Turkey's Kurdish policy". Moreover, Respondent 2 maintained that "the KRG exported 614 thousand bpd, which was more than Turkey's daily consumption of oil (550-600 b/d), in October 2016. It is said that the KRG has enough reserves to fulfil Turkey's entire oil and gas consumption". Another interviewee (Respondent 9) who was involved with the Wise People Committee stated that "we witnessed that the economic relations with the KRG changed people's perception positively about Iraqi Kurds. Several nationalist businessmen who are in business with the KRG acknowledge that their point of view was negative about the region before they went there". They were able to express this opinion during the meetings in the Black Sea Region in Turkey. It is clearly seen that energy deals and business with the KRG has brought Turkish businessman great comfort in understanding the Kurdish issue.

According to a JDP MP (Respondent 3), "Barzani's role was limited in this process and was seen as minor. However, during field work in the region, anti-PKK Kurdish politicians who were also called conservative in Turkey were shown to have sympathy towards Barzani". Furthermore, Barzani's main adviser Hawrami stated on 21 June 2017 in Ankara that "Barzani asked Kurdish opinion leaders in Turkey to vote 'YES' in Turkey's presidential referendum in April 2017". Furthermore, an MP from the KRG (Respondent 8) argued that "there are 18 provinces in Iraq and two of them are under Barzani's [KDP] control. The PKK maintains its activities freely in those 16 provinces, including the PUK-held territories. Only in two provinces (Duhok and Arbil), which are held by the KDP, are they not free to maintain their activities".

Respondent 6, who is in charge of KRG's Turkish affairs, stated that "Kurds have a different background and consequently different problems with countries [such as Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria]". He went on to say, "Barzani believes that Kurds need to solve their problems with these administrations peacefully." In response to the question of how Barzani contributed to this process, he explained that "When the JDP came to power, Erdoğan convinced Barzani that he would be able to solve this problem peacefully"; "Erdoğan asked him to support the peace process and Barzani started to meet with HDP officials regarding the issue". One Kurdish politician from Eastern Turkey revealed that during the off-the-record meeting in Turkey between Barzani, the HDP and Turkish government officials, Leyla Zana, an MP for the HDP in Ağrı province, said: "We have a great opportunity to solve this issue peacefully: there are two great leaders, Mr. Erdoğan and Öcalan, who will be able to solve this issue". In that meeting, Barzani is reported to

have said that "Kurds [in Turkey] should solve this issue and the government is willing to negotiate with [them]."

One senior official (Respondent 6) said that the HDP's co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ, who has a socialist background, responded to Barzani with the words: "You are not a leader of Turkey's Kurds; it is not your problem". This clearly indicated that Barzani does not have much leverage over HDP officials. In another meeting in Ankara, Barzani's adviser Hemin Hewrami said that "Mr. President is to meet with the KRG in Turkey, together with political and religious leaders from Turkey, to support the peace process". Henry Barkey states that "the more the KDP perceived the PKK as a challenge to its dominance among Kurds, the more it saw its interests coincide with those of the JDP. Barzani, through his family and clan networks, sought to ensure that these Kurdish votes went to the JDP" (2015, 5).

Beside the economic and trade relations between Turkey and the KRG, as Tazcur argues, "cooperation with Barzani offers a way for the Turkish government to compete against the PKK for the hearts and minds of the Kurds" (2013, 75). However, it can be observed that Barzani has sympathy mainly from pro-JDP Kurds, not the pro-PKK. Barzani's influence over pro-PKK Kurds in Turkey is somewhat limited as they see his movement as anti-revolutionist.

There are good reasons why Barzani would seek to gain advantage from a peaceful solution: firstly, contribution to the peace process would greatly increase his popularity among the Kurds, as he would be seen as a wise leader of the Kurdish movement. Secondly, the PKK's pressure on opposition to his leadership would lessen in the region as his dominance increased: it was supposed that the PKK would be disarmed in the case that the peace process was achieved**.** Thirdly, the legitimacy of the KRG would be strengthened by being part of a solution rather than conflict.

However, the breakdown of the peace process, together with the PKK's growing power in Syria and the war between Turkey and the PKK, poses a serious challenge to Barzani. Although the KRG has been globally recognised as an autonomous region of Iraq, it has struggled to deal with the ISIS attacks and the economic crisis as oil prices have fallen. As Respondents 5 and 8 have remarked, these developments frayed Barzani's charisma among the Kurds, including those within the KRG. Conversely, the PKK was affiliated with the PYD's successful fight against ISIS and with this international assistance was able to raise its profile among Kurds. In an interview with an MP from the KRG parliament (Respondent 8) in 2017, it was said that "young people from the

KRG join the PKK to fight against ISIS rather than the KRG's official army, Peshmerga."

All in all, the KRG president Barzani has repeatedly voiced the opinion that the Kurdish issue in Turkey must be solved peacefully. He believes that security-based policies will not bring a solution to the issue: that Turkey and the PKK need to look for peaceful solutions, and that fighting will not help to overcome the crisis. As Özcan states, it is suggested that "during the 1990s this issue dominated Turkey's foreign policy's options and led 'to security-dominated policy preferences with international actors and neighboring countries'" (2011, 72, cited in Bengio, 2011, 625). Although Barzani has been struggling with the PKK over Kurdish leadership in the region, his aim, with the independence bid for Iraqi Kurds, was to become the first Kurdish leader to establish Kurdistan.

7.3.2 The PYD, the KRG and Turkey

It is vital to note that the policies of the PKK's sister organisation, the PYD, are one of the main factors that caused the demise of the peace process. As Barfi states, "Turks fear that the PYD will allow the PKK to open a new front on the country's southern border" (2017). During interviews, most interviewees mentioned that the PKK's policies and its territorial gains in Syria were the main reason behind the collapse of the peace process.

The PYD was established by the PKK in 2003 and has been enjoying de facto state autonomy in Syria since July 2012, when the Assad regime pulled out its troops from northern Syria (Gunter, 2014, 39; Federici, 2015, 81; Khaddour, 2017, 3). Following Abdullah Öcalan's expulsion from Syria in 1998, former members of the PKK established the PYD, which is ideologically linked to the PKK, and whose members were also trained and educated by PKK militants. The PYD is also openly a member of the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK), the umbrella body for groups supportive of PKK ideology and goals.

It is said that opposition groups, including Arab residents, were forced to flee from PYD-held areas (Human Rights, 2014). The defeat of ISIS in Kobane in 2015 strengthened the PYD's position in Syria, as well as that of its military wing, YPG, which is armed by the US. Therefore, the defeat could be viewed as having been an unprecedented opportunity for the PYD, which has been enjoying self-rule within an autonomous structure. Moreover, "A further factor here is that the

parties in the KNC mostly operate outside Syria, limiting their influence there" (Lowe and Gunes, 2012, 5).

Following the uprising in Syria in October 2011, thirteen Syrian Kurdish parties established the Kurdish National Council (KNC) under the sponsorship of the KRG (Federici, 2015, 83; Paasche, 2015, 84). As previously stated, one of the common policies between Turkey and the KRG is to prevent the PKK from gaining ground in Syria and Iraq. Tol argues that "In an attempt to address the challenges posed by the Syrian conflict, Turkey sought to use its leverage over Barzani and the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) to marginalize the PYD within the Syrian opposition and among Syrian Kurds" (Tol, 2014). However, the PYD is still the most powerful political entity with armed militias in Syria**.**

The demise of state authority in Syria has created an opportunity for both the PYD and the PKK to organise themselves politically and militarily: "The establishment of the de facto autonomy in Syria's Kurdish majority areas has turned the Kurds into key actors in the conflict in Syria" (Lowe and Gunes, 2015, 3). On 12 November 2013, the PYD declared a provisional self-rule area, which it named the Democratic Federal System of Northern Syria (Khaddour, 2017, 12). The declaration was criticised by Turkey, the KRG and the main Syrian opposition alliances. Barzani said that "this is clearly a unilateral… act which disregards the other Kurds" (Gunter, 2014, 25). He went on to say, "the PYD's cooperation with the regime is a dangerous game for the future of our people in Rojava. The PYD has not only taken control of the region, it has already started to arrest and kill members of other parties" (Hurriyet Daily News, 2013).

In addition, whilst the PYD is blocked by Ankara from joining the Geneva talks, whose aim is to bring the Syrian war to an end, the Barzani-backed KNC (Kurdish National Council) in Syria has been invited to the talks, with Turkey's support (Rudaw, 2016). In contrast, Turkey has blocked the PYD from taking part in the Syrian War talks.

The opposition parties, broadly supported by the KDP, have no armed groups in Syria. Supported by Turkey, Barzani recruited some Syrian Kurds to establish the Peshmerga forces in Syria (Khaddour, 2017, 10). Barzani lost his leverage over Syrian Kurds as the PKK/PYD strengthened their influence in Syria. Moreover, Barzani's political agenda is perceived as a threat by the PYD (Paasche, 2015, 83). Thornton states the difference between Barzani and the PKK, such that "in terms of achieving goals for the Kurds as a whole, Barzani tends to take a long-term, pragmatic

view set against the less constrained approach adopted by many in the PKK" (2015, 870).

The KDP and the PKK have a violent past, fighting over territory in northern Iraq. The conflict between them is also waged at the ideological level, the KDP claiming to have a western-style democracy and accusing the PKK of being brainwashed extremists. As Gunter says, "Barzani's KDP/KRG and Öcalan's PKK have become the two great rivals in the struggle for leadership of the pan-Kurdish movement" (2014, 19). Cale Salih states that "[t]he two figures [Öcalan and Barzani] have long been vying to become the most powerful Kurdish transnational leader, using domestic influences and regional proxies to gain the upper hand" (2014). Moreover, the KDP is a recognised autonomous entity in Iraq, while the PYD has a lack of international recognition as a political group (Cagaptay, 2015).

The PYD has taken advantage of the power vacuum since the Arab Spring. Moreover, the PYD and the Assad regime have a kind of agreement which aims to eliminate opposition groups, including jihadists, in the country: "The rise of the PYD has been aided by the tacit acquiescence of the Syrian regime, which allowed the PYD to take over without fighting, retaining a presence in the major city of Qamishli and continuing to pay the salaries of civil servants in PYD-controlled areas" (Lowe and Gunes, 2015, 5).

Historically, the Kurds have not used arms against the Syrian regime for their cause. They have, however, fought against Turkey as members of the PKK and for Kurdish groups in Iraq (Lowe and Gunes, 2015). Until the siege of Kobane (late 2014), as stated above, Kurdish nationalism in Syria was much weaker than in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Vittoria Federici argues that "in comparison to other Kurdish populations, Kurds in Syria have had a much quieter history of nationalist mobilisation, lacking powerful symbols of national struggle that could compare with the Halabja genocide in Iraq or the Mahabad republic in Iran" (2015, 85). However, the PYD's victory against ISIS boosted Kurdish nationalism among all the Kurds, including in Turkey. As Dalay says, "Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, no other battle received as much international media coverage as Kobani during the fight between Kurds and ISIS" (2016).

Turkey has refused to recognise the PYD as a political entity in Syria. However, the leader of the PYD, Salih Muslim, has been invited to Turkey a few times since 2013, being asked by Turkey to have the PYD join an opposition group (the Free Syrian Army) against the Assad regime and also to refuse Kurdish demands for autonomy. Davutoğlu (then Foreign Minister) made the statement:

"We expect three basic things from the Kurds in Syria… Firstly for them not to cooperate with the regime… The second is for them not to form de facto foundations on ethnic or religious bases… The third is for them not to engage in activities that could endanger the security of the Turkish border**"** (Radikal, 2013). However, the PYD refused Turkey's requests for the former to take part in opposition groups.

Ankara threatened to invade northern Syria if the PYD established autonomy in Syria. Even the creation of a Kurdish state in northern Syria would be a reason for war for Turkey. President Erdoğan said that "we will never allow the 'terror state' in northern Syria, whatever the cost is for Turkey" (Hurriyet, 2015). It shows that Turkey is strongly against any territorial change or shift in the balance of power in northern Syria. During the battle of Kobane, the US bombarded ISIS targets around Kobane and air-dropped some weapons to the YPG military wing of the PYD in October 2014 (Aljazeera, 2014). The YPG have become the boots on the ground of international coalitions against ISIS, following ISIS's defeat in Kobane in early 2015 (BBC, 2015). It is important to note that the YPG is the only non-religious group in Syria. Ankara strongly criticised the coalitions, especially the US's arming of the PYD, saying that weapons might go to PKK militants (Solmaz, 2017) and be used against Turkey. The legitimacy of the PYD and its military support from Western allies has worsened relations between Turkey and the US.

Turkey was criticised for not assisting the PYD during the Kobane siege, which was a turning point for the PYD in terms of strengthening their position in Syria. The HDP and the PKK accused Turkey of assisting Jihadist groups, including ISIS, especially during the Kobane war (Philips, 2014). However, as Hugh Pope states, this accusation was cynical, since Turkey could hardly be expected either to invade Syria to save Kobane, or to supply the heavy weaponry needed to equip a group against whom it is still effectively at war (2015, 152). In any case, the government strongly denied the allegations and accused the HDP of provoking Kurds in Turkey.

During the siege, the HDP wanted Turkey to supply arms to the PYD and launch attacks on ISIS. The Turkish government, however, refused, as it sees the PYD merely as the Syrian branch of the PKK. The HDP leader Demirtaş called on people in Turkey to take to the streets and protest against the government on 9 October 2014. Essentially, Demirtaş "called for Ankara to allow passage of weapons to Kobani" (Financial Times, 2014). On 1 November 2014, Turkey allowed the Peshmerga forces to fight, with heavy weapons from the KRG, against ISIS alongside YPG

fighters. ISIS was fully expelled from Kobane in January 2015, with the help of the Peshmerga and air bombardment by coalition forces. From the beginning of the conflict, Turkey wanted to create a buffer and no-fly zone with international coalitions along its Syrian border in order to prevent an influx of refugees threatening its national security.

Despite long-standing divergence between the various Kurdish groups, the conflict in Syria did bring the two rival parties the KDP and PKK together for a short period of time. Both parties signed the Duhok agreement on 25 October 2014 (Gunter, 2015, 105). It was recognized that "ISIS's impact has extended beyond the military sphere, as its emergence has loosened previous alliances and enmities among the Kurds" (Lowe and Gunes, 2015, 3). However, for a time at least, "[a]lthough their differences are vast, we can see some developments easing those inner Kurdish tensions, allowing a careful resurrection of the pan-Kurdish idea" (Paasche, 2015, 84). The KRG supplied weapons and equipment to the PYD during the Kobane siege and the Peshmerga fight alongside YPG militias. However, the rivalry has since resurfaced in both groups in post-ISIS Syria. Yasin Aktay, who is in charge of the JDP's foreign policy department, said "there are two terrorist groups fighting in Kobani" (BBC, 2014).

In 2014, the dramatic plunge in oil prices led to economic crisis in the KRG, as its main revenues come from oil exportation. Meanwhile, ISIS attacks against the Peshmerga forces in Iraq, especially in Mosul, dragged the KRG into the war zone. The KRG asked for military assistance from the Western coalition, as they lacked heavy weaponry.

7.3.3 The Rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria

Following the total withdrawal of the US from Iraq in 2011, the al-Maliki administration increased its pressure on the Sunni opposition. The alienation of Sunni groups and the pro-Shia policies of Baghdad threatened the stability of Iraq and angered Sunnis and other minorities (Al-qarawee, 2014; Gulmohamad, 2014, 4). Thus, the power vacuum and pressure of hostility towards Sunnis created an opportunity for ISIS to expand its territory in Syria as well as Iraq (Aljazeera, 2017). In the ensuing war, the Iraqi army scattered and again fled their positions, leaving them to the only-too-eager ISIS militias (Chulov, 2014). Weapons of the Iraq's army were thus captured by ISIS as the army left the city without fighting. In 2014, the Fallujah and Anbar provinces of Iraq were captured by ISIS; in June 2014, the second-biggest city, Mosul, was taken over by ISIS militants

(Baker, 2014). Mosul's fall into ISIS control shocked the world: around 7000 militia fighters took the city from 250,000 US-trained soldiers (Beachamp, 2014), and sophisticated US-provided weapons – including, artillery, mortars and armoured personnel carriers – were captured by ISIS (Slaman, Parkers and Coles, 2014). More than $800 million worth of cash was also taken from the central bank of Iraq (Moore, 2017). These developments significantly increased ISIS's morale and war capability. Following the fall of Mosul, the ISIS leader Al Baghdadi declared the caliphate, alarming both regional and global powers.

There is no doubt that during this time the KRG was one of the worst-affected regions within Iraq, as tens of thousands of people fled to the area. The territorial gains of ISIS in Syria and Iraq and their direct attacks on KRG positions put the Kurds in a difficult position. At the start of the ISIS extension in Syria and Iraq, they became an existential threat for Kurds both in Syria and Iraq (Gunter, 2015, 102). However, the situation was perceived as an opportunity for Kurds to expand their territory and get international support (Barfi, 2016, 2). The Kobane siege was a milestone in Kurdish liaisons, with Kurdish leaders and communities (in Iraq, Turkey and Syria) engaging and collaborating in order to oust ISIS from the city. This unity among Kurds in the region was also demonstrated in the battle with ISIS in the Sinjar Mountains, when more than 100,000 Yazidis fled to the KRG cities of Duhok and Arbil. Moreover, the PKK also used its role in the war against ISIS and the peace negotiations with Turkey in order to be delisted as an international terrorist organisation (BBC, 2013; Serinci, 2015).

However, divisions between the PKK and KDP on territorial issues soon surfaced in the post-ISIS period. The persistence of political differences and deteriorating relations between Turkey and the KRG made it very difficult to maintain cooperation. A KRG official, Respondent 6, argued in an interview that "the Barzani family has been struggling for Kurdish rights and it has maintained the same policies which aim to bring stability to the KRG". As Natali states, "the PKK's radical nationalist tendencies remained a threat to Turkey's territorial integrity, as well as Masoud Barzani's aim to become the leader of all Kurds and Kurdish nationalist movement across borders" (2015, 149).

The ISIS attacks and the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from disputed territories created an opportunity for the Peshmerga to get control of those areas, including Kirkuk and Diyala. In June 2014, the Peshmerga took control of Kirkuk, as the Iraqi army fled when ISIS started to threaten the city.

The seizing of Kirkuk by the Peshmerga led to a crisis between Baghdad and the KRG. In response to seizing Kirkuk, the central government suspended the payment of 17% of Iraq's total revenue to the KRG in January 2014 (Philips, 2015, 352). The Mosul dam and Makhmour, 30km from Arbil, was seized also by IS fighters. In the wake of ISIS's advance on Arbil up to within 40km of Baghdad, the KRG demanded weapons from Western powers to defends its lands (Al-Salhy, 2014). Peshmerga had military and training help, especially from US air forces, to launch air strikes against ISIS militants. Following the capture of Mosul, ISIS headed south to Samarra and then, on 3 August, attacked Sinjar, one of the main settlements of the Yazidi people.

Sinjar Province is a strategic place, close to Syria and the PKK's Makhmour camp. The PKK filled another power vacuum left by the fight against ISIS, capturing Sinjar. It trained and armed Yazidi volunteers as the Protection Forces of Shingal (Al-Hamid, 2017). The massacre of the Yazidis triggered the US intervention against ISIS in Iraq (Ackerman and Roberts, 2017). Since then (August), the US-led coalition has carried out more than 10 thousand airstrikes against ISIS targets (BBC Türkçe, 2016).

Following the expulsion of ISIS, the PKK declared 'Democratic Autonomy' in the Sinjar area on 20 August 2017 (Goran, 2017). This declaration further raised tensions in the region: Sinjar has been turned into another battleground between the PKK and Turkey/the KDP. Turkey continues to see the presence of the PKK as a threat: as President Erdoğan said, "Turkey will not allow Sinjar to be the 'new Qandil' for the PKK terror organisation" (Anadolu Agency, 2016). Moreover, the KRG Prime Minister Nechervan Barzani said, "The PKK should leave Sinjar. Today's PKK presence in Sinjar causes instability in the region" (Rudaw, 2017). The future of Sinjar remains uncertain as the PKK and the KDP each continue to lay claim over the area.

The expansion of ISIS and its territorial gains threatened the Shia population as well as Kurds and other minorities. The Iraqi army's unsuccessful battle against ISIS and the latter's further expansion to the Shia-populated southern cities led to mobilisation among the Shia population. Iraq's most senior cleric, Ayetullah Ali Sistani, issued a call to arms against ISIS (BBC, 2014) and a militia grouping known as Hashdi Shabi was formed. Thousands of Shia joined these militia forces to fight as ISIS pushed south, towards Shia residents. However, there are many subgroups in the Hashdi Shabi. It contains three distinct groups connected to Ali Sistani, Ayatolah Ali Khamanei and Muqtada al-Sadr respectively; each of these have a huge influence over Iraq's Shia

Muslims. People tended to join the Hasdi Shabi rather than the Iraqi army, which dissolved in the face of ISIS attacks. It is important to note that Baghdad has been paying the salaries of the Hasdi Shabi and a great number of militias have been under the control of Tehran (Alaaldin, 2018). Thus, these militia groups have become the main military actors in Iraq, with Iranian assistance.

During this period, Turkey has found the KRG to be an acceptable political partner. Ankara and the KRG cooperated on security issues, especially to prevent PKK influence in the region. "They [the KRG and Turkey] also have a growing security relationship: Ankara has supplied weapons and trainers to the Peshmerga, the KRG's military force, to help defend against the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham [ISIS], also known as the Islamic State" (Cagaptay, 2015). However, the international legitimation of the PYD, a sister organisation of the PKK, and its war against ISIS, created an unexpected opportunity for the PKK. It was given sophisticated weapons by the Western powers in the name of the war against ISIS, and thus expanded its territory.

Another important issue that worsened relations between Baghdad and Ankara was the Turkish military presence in Iraq. Turkey sent soldiers to the Bashika camp near Mosul in March 2015 in order to train the Iraqi soldiers and Kurdish Peshmerga for the fighting against ISIS. Although initially the KRG and Turkey had agreed to train soldiers (Bora, 2016), Baghdad, at Iran's demand, subsequently asked Turkey to pull its forces out from Bashika (Arslan, 2015). Turkey's military presence in northern Iraq goes back to the 1990s. In order to prevent PKK attacks from the region, Ankara agreed with Iraqi Kurds to maintain a Turkish military presence there (Bengin, 2017). Despite the Iraqi Prime Minister's threat of regional war if Turkey did not pull its forces out from Iraq, Ankara refused the demand and the Deputy Turkish Minister affirmed that "Turkey's presence in Bashiqa is legitimate. We will continue our presence there as long as Turkey is needed there" (Güldoğan, 2016).

The weakening of the state authorities in Syria and Iraq helped the PKK to strengthen its power in Turkey and the surrounding region. In this case, it will be far more difficult to broker peace with Ankara. In sum, the PKK is highly likely to pose a grave challenge for both Turkey and the KRG throughout the post-ISIS period in Iraq and Syria. Turkey is one of the countries who are worst affected by the civil war of its neighbours (Iraq and Syria). The ISIS attacks and the PKK's strengthening power in the region threaten Turkey's national security. More significantly, the PKK's growing presence also challenges the KRG's trade with Turkey, as well as its oil exports

via Turkey.

Respondent 5 clearly stated Turkey's position towards the PYD and Syria: "[T]he creation of a Kurdish canton in northern Syria is the first step of an independent Kurdistan in the Middle East. Furthermore, the PKK and its sister organisation the PYD could become legitimate political entities in the international arena. Following the establishment of the secular Kurdish state in northern Syria, the next goal would be toppling the Barzani movement. And then, Turkey's national security would be in grave danger, as this may trigger the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey".

Conclusion

Historically, relations between the KRG and Turkey have been uneasy. The security challenge by the PKK from Qandil and the Iraqi Kurds' aspiration to gain autonomy has made Ankara very suspicious. Ankara avoided official contact with Iraqi Kurds until the last decade, except for President Turgut Özal in the 1990s. Until 2008, Turkey's foreign policy was determined by a struggle against the PKK and political stability, as well as the territorial integrity of Iraq in the 1980s (Khan, 2015).

Following the Gulf War, northern Iraq became a de facto Kurdish autonomous state. Ankara had been watching Kurdish groups closely in order to check the establishment of an independent state in Iraq and to seek cooperation against the PKK. In the early 1990s, the conflict between Kurdish groups (the KDP and the PUK) turned into civil conflict, which caused a power vacuum in northern Iraq. The PKK thus strengthened its power and increased its attacks on Turkish targets near the border within Turkey. In the 1990s, Ankara launched many incursions against PKK camps in the Qandil Mountains. For the KRG, "The difficult years between 1991 and 2003 were not all wasted, though, as the Iraqi Kurds gained some experience going at it alone, literally isolated as they faced official rejection from all of their neighbors, who feared the spillover effect on their own Kurdish minorities" (Barkey, 2015, 3).

The US's Iraq invasion in 2003 and the Kurds' new status as an autonomous region within Iraq paved the way to a new phase in relations between the KRG and Ankara. Turkey's policies towards Iraqi Kurds has changed dramatically over the last decade, as the status of Iraqi Kurds has

changed. In 2005, the KRG gained an autonomous state with Iraq's new constitution and internationally recognised status. The JDP's new foreign policy, 'zero problems with neighbours', opened a new phase in Turkey-KRG relations as well as with other neighbours. Moreover, the KRG's energy resources and Turkey's solving the Kurdish problem peacefully required the easing of relations with Iraqi Kurds, who have been at the heart of the Kurdish problem, which has been closely watched by Kurds in Turkey since the Second World War (Barkey, 2015, 3).

Ankara's desire to become an energy hub, and its energy security policies, changed its Kurdish policy: "The JDP government's decision to increase cooperation with the KRG aimed to strengthen a regional interdependence in which energy security has been both a goal and an instrument by creating economic incentives to lessen risks of Kurdish secessionist aspirations in Iraq and to solve Turkey's Kurdish problem" (İpek, 2017, 410). Turkey has increased its energy partnership with the KRG since 2011, as the Baghdad administration grew more sectarian against Sunni and other minorities. Since 2008, Turkey has improved its relations with the KRG both politically and economically. Furthermore, the KRG became a close partner against the PKK over the decade.

In the beginning of the peace process in late 2012, when the KRG had strengthened its influence within a stabilised region, Turkey and the PKK started peace negotiations. The KRG and its leader Masoud Barzani openly supported the peace process, which would strengthen their position in the region. As Michael Gunter says, "The rise of the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq as well as the ongoing peace negotiations with the Turkish government are empowered by the Kurds and challenge the existing political map of the Middle East" (2015, 102). However, ISIS attacks against both the KRG and the Baghdad regime, including on the second-largest city, Mosul, and also the plunge in oil prices, threaten both its economy and security.

Although the KRG and Turkey had been enjoying energy cooperation and stability in the region, the advance of ISIS and the PYD's strengthening in Syria were the first challenge for both actors. The rapidly changing political map of the Middle East challenged the existing states. In northern Syria, the anti-PYD parties established the Kurdish National Council under the supervision of the KRG. Turkey also supported the KNC and pro-Barzani political entities in Syria. However, the KNC was excluded from the region by the YPG (PYD's armed wing), which took control of the area and created cantons; northern Syria was left to the PKK-affiliated PYD by the Syrian regime in 2012: it became the only authority in the region. As Salih says, "PKK-affiliated groups [were]

seizing political and military control in majority-Kurdish parts of Syria. As of summer 2013, the PKK had quickly begun to raise its profile in Iraq" (2014).

In addition, repelling ISIS from the Kurdish town of Kobane made the PYD the boots on the ground of the anti-ISIS coalition. Turkey's demands for the PYD to join anti-Assad forces were refused. These developments increased the PKK's power in Syria and Iraq, challenged Turkey's national security and caused the peace process to end in 2015. Meanwhile, the arming of the PYD worsened US-Turkey relations, as Turkey strongly opposed the YPG. In this period, Ankara and Arbil closely cooperated in many issues including the Syrian conflict and the war against ISIS.

In summary, Turkey is the most effective partner for the KRG in the region as its main route for oil exportation. Cagaptay (2015) argues that "KRG leader Masoud Barzani is keenly aware that to receive his oil money he needs to keep Turkey's all-powerful president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, content". The advance of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the PYD's control of northern Syria and the collapse of the peace process put Turkey's energy security in danger. Despite Turkey's opposition to the referendum of the KRG in 2017, Turkey is still the best-positioned strategic ally of the KRG in terms of energy exportation and action against the PKK.

CONCLUSION

General Outline

This study has been designed to illustrate whether Turkey-KRG energy relations have impacted the 2013-2015 peace process between Turkey and the PKK. It has attempted to provide analysis on the shift in Turkey's approach towards the Kurds in Turkey and also the Iraqi Kurds from both liberal and realist perspectives.

The existing literature has widely covered Turkey's Kurdish issue and Turkish foreign policy towards its neighbourhood. However, research on the peace process between Turkey and the PKK is rather limited. Under the JDP, the Turkish state has experienced a dramatic shift in terms of policies towards the Kurds. In the present research, the changes affecting the topic of this study in domestic, regional and international politics have also been evaluated.

Chapter II focused on Ahmet Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbours policy' and changes in Turkey's foreign policy under JDP policy-makers from 2003 to 2015. Turkey's traditional foreign policy towards the neighbourhood and its changing approach towards the KRG (Mufti, 2017, 71) have also been presented. Liberal policies and political reforms during the EU membership process were seen to be among the leading factors behind the JDP's electoral victories. In addition, Ahmet Davutoğlu's foreign policy approach towards Turkey's neighbourhood paved the way for a shift from Turkey's traditional approach towards foreign policy. Until the Arab Spring uprisings, thanks to the 'zero problem with neighbours' policy, trade volume and integration with Middle Eastern countries had increased dramatically, and Turkish economy experienced fast growth rates in the JDP's first term. Parallel to the economic growth, as an energy-dependent country, energy demand increased rapidly.

There is no doubt that Turkey's ambition to become an energy corridor and KRG energy resources play a vital role for Turkey's energy security policies. In Chapter III, Turkey's energy diversity policies as well as pipeline projects and the role of energy in Turkish foreign policy have been evaluated. Turkey's energy demand has increased in tandem with robust economic growth over the last decade. Although Turkey is poor in terms of energy resources, its strategic location provides great potential as an energy-transit country. Turkey's neighbourhood – the Middle East and Caspian regions – has more than 70% of the proven energy resources in the world.

Furthermore, Turkey is located between oil and gas producer countries and their ultimate consumer markets. In order to achieve its goals, Turkey needs to tackle the PKK threat and secure its energy route. It was assumed by Ankara that Turkey's warm relations with the KRG would help gain momentum with the peace process, while also helping to build and strengthen bridges with Kurds in Turkey. Moreover, the JDP government changed Turkey's approach to its own Kurds and the KRG. Solving the Kurdish issue would strengthen energy-route security, vital for both Turkey and the KRG.

The historical background of the Kurdish issue in Turkey is crucial to understand the topic of this study. In Chapter IV, the history of the Kurds and their relations with Turks from the 16th century to the establishment of the PKK in 1984 was investigated. In the Ottoman era, the Kurds lived in a semi-independent region called Kurdistan, which included some parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. However, as a result of the centralization policies of the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the 19th century, the balance of power shifted from tribe leaders to centrally appointed governors. It is important to note that the Kurdish uprisings, until the establishment of modern Turkey, were tribal-based. The aim of creating a secular, nationalist and western-oriented Turkey, beginning with the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923, caused new uprisings by the Kurds. Since then, Kurdish identity and the existence of Kurds have been denied by the Kemalist elite. A number of Kurdish uprisings took place, yet were all defeated. However, Ankara has been dealing with the last Kurdish uprising since 1984. Hard-liner policies have further complicated the issue, as hard-liners linked the issue with backwardness, economically under-developed regions, etc.

In Chapter V, the foundations of the PKK and the Kurdish political movements have been evaluated. The PKK was established in 1976 by a group of students from the rural areas of Eastern Turkey, with the aim of creating an independent great Kurdistan, comprising parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. The PKK uprising is structurally and ideologically different to its predecessors, being Marxist-Leninist. However, its ideology and aims have evolved and been affected by regional and global developments over time. Since the PKK had dominated the political sphere in the region under its influence by the 1990s, the tribal and religious leaders lost their power over the Kurdish nationalist movement. The PKK also took advantage of the power vacuum in the region following the Gulf War in 1991 and the KDP-PUK conflict in the early 1990s. The rise of the PKK in 1984, followed by its successful mass mobilization in the early 1990s, pushed Ankara to accept the Kurdish reality. President Turgut Özal (1989-1993) was the

first leader to take initiative on the issue and took a step to end the denial of Kurdish identity. He also exerted himself to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. Although Özal made attempts to solve the Kurdish issue through negotiations in the 1990s, the military's strong dominance over politics and foreign policy restricted the civilian government's manoeuvring ability.

In Chapter VI, the peace process between the JDP and the PKK (2013-2015) was discussed. In the JDP's second term, the government began secret talks with Öcalan in order to bring an end to 30 years of conflict with the PKK. In 2009, the JDP government launched the 'Democratic Opening' as a step to solve the issue through democratization and increasing minority rights. Following the ending of the Democratic Opening, the government launched the so-called peace process with the PKK and its imprisoned leader, Öcalan.

In Turkey, there are two approaches towards the Kurdish issue: on the one side there are the hard-liners who believe the problem needs to be tackled militarily, and on the other, the liberal approach aims to solve the issue via more democratisation. However, this approach is weak in state institutions and the political arena. There is no doubt, however, that there has been a political and a power transformation in Turkey during the JDP era. Erdoğan has been attempting to change some of Turkey's founding principles, such as secularism and nationalism. Turkey's uncompromising stance on its Kurdish policy, including towards the Iraqi Kurds, has also been changing over time, together with domestic and regional developments. Since 2008, Ankara has adjusted its policies towards Iraqi Kurds and has employed an attitude of winning the hearts and minds of the Kurds. Following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the internationally recognized Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was established in northern Iraq in 2005.

In Chapter VII, relations between the Iraqi Kurds and Ankara, the historical background, the period between Gulf War and Iraq invasion, and the post-Saddam era until 2015 were analysed. Historically, Ankara's relations with the Iraqi Kurds, who gained autonomy in 2005, were based on the strategy of preventing PKK activities in northern Iraq. More importantly, Ankara was concerned that the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish state in its neighbourhood might create aspirations in the Kurds in Turkey as well. However, Ankara's shift in foreign policy and its approach to the Kurdish issue paved the way to engagement with Iraqi Kurds in 2008. Furthermore, the new market search for Turkish goods, the aim of becoming an energy-hub country, and growing energy demand for its growing economy pushed Turkey to engage with the

KRG, a region which has untapped energy resources. Ankara and the KRG also discussed the possible northern pipeline project, which aimed to export Kurdish oil and gas to the world markets via Turkey's Ceyhan port. In addition, this chapter presented an analysis of Masoud Barzani's role in the peace process and his influence over Kurds in the region. The rise of the PYD and ISIS, however, has damaged Barzani's reputation since 2014, and eventually his influence over the Syrian Kurds diminished. Ultimately, pro-Barzani Kurds have also lost their power in northern Syria.

Contribution to Knowledge and Key Findings

The Kurdish issue and Turkish foreign policy towards its neighbourhood have been evaluated in this research. While the peace process has been discussed publicly, interviews with key personalities who were involved in the peace process have provided key detailed insights about this episode, which in turn inform the key findings of this thesis.

Although some Turkish officials admit that the Kurdish problem is an obstacle for Turkey to achieve its ambitions in foreign policy and secure its energy flow, they avoided expressing their opinion publicly for fear of receiving harsh criticism by nationalists. For this reason, the Kurdish initiative was launched in the name of the 'brotherhood' and 'unity' projects by the JDP government.

The peace process was announced by Erdoğan after long discussions with Öcalan and the MİT chief who represented Erdoğan on İmralı Island. One of the key findings is that the JDP government believed that Öcalan had absolute control over the PKK executives in the Qandil headquarters. In other words, the government thought that negotiating terms and conditions with Öcalan was enough to reach a peace deal with the PKK. However, it was discovered that, although Öcalan has huge power among PKK members and the pro-PKK support base, his influence over the PKK leaders is limited. Furthermore, Öcalan avoided entering into conflict with Qandil executives over the PKK's Syrian policies in order to maintain his influence over PKK members.

As mentioned above, the majority of people voted for the JDP, and were not against the peace process at the beginning of the negotiations. The main reason behind the support was Erdoğan's transformative power among the JDP's base. Erdoğan convinced voters that the bloodshed would

stop as a result of the peace process. However, the support declined gradually over time, as people became more concerned about security. Some respondents stressed that Erdoğan's credibility was the main motivation behind the launch of the Kurdish initiative.

Another key finding is that the HDP did not take part in critical parts of negotiations, such as the talks over terms and conditions. The HDP, the political wing of the Kurdish movement, is deemed to be one of the weakest actors of the peace process by government officials. As interviews revealed, the HDP had little bearing over the negotiations, and merely played a messenger role between Öcalan and the PKK. It was also stated that the HDP's candidates for general and local elections in Turkey were appointed by the PKK. They mostly discussed various issues on behalf of the PKK between Ankara and the Qandil headquarters. Moreover, they were in close contact with some of the MPs and ministers from the JDP government to solve other issues, such as the release of sick prisoners.

Some interviewees also indicated that the fall of Kobane in Syria to ISIS terrorists brought an end to the peace process between the PKK and high-level officers. During the war, the HDP and the PKK accused Ankara of helping ISIS and preventing military aid from reaching the PYD. Following Ankara's clear message that there was no difference between ISIS and the PYD, HDP officials called their supporters to the streets to show solidarity with the PYD in Kobane. During the nationwide protests more than 50 people were killed and hundreds of others wounded. Kurdish mobilisation reached its peak during the Kobane war in 2014. The government's unwillingness to take part in the war between ISIS and the PYD disappointed most Kurds, who subsequently voted in favour of the HDP in the following general elections. As a consequence, the Kurdish political movement was able to increase its votes, compared to previous polls.

At the beginning of the peace process, the balance of power was in favour of the KRG and Turkey in the region. However, the PKK's territorial grab in Syria and Iraq during the fight against ISIS threatened Barzani's KDP and the KRG's territorial integrity. One respondent stated that the PKK had seized around 500 villages and hamlets around the border between Turkey and the KRG in 2017. The area controlled by the PKK within KRG borders has increased dramatically since late 2014. The PKK's increasing power has challenged both Turkey and the KRG's national security.

HDP representatives claimed that the JDP's approach to the Kurdish issue was the same as that of the Kemalist elites. According to them, the JDP's agenda was to get more Kurdish votes rather

than a peaceful solution to the issue. They accused the JDP government of not keeping its promises about the release of sick prisoners and the building of new patrols and dams around the region.

According to Turkish officials (Respondents 2, 3), during the peace process, the PKK's primary motive was to create an independent Kurdish state based on its ideology in northern Syria, rather than advocating for the Kurds' cultural and political rights in Turkey. Moreover, its strength in northern Syria gave the PYD more room to manoeuvre in negotiating with Turkey and helped to legitimise its status internationally, as they also receive international support on the basis of fighting against ISIS. In other words, peace negotiations were not a priority for the PKK, as the developments in Syria rose in importance for them.

The leadership contest between the PKK and Barzani resurfaced during the peace process. Barzani had more shared interests with the JDP government (such as energy imports and the PKK) than any other groups in the region. Therefore, during the general and presidential elections, Barzani privately advised his network of Kurdish opinion leaders in Eastern Turkey to vote for Erdoğan and his party.

Barzani's role in the peace process was also discussed. It emerged that Barzani had no direct role in the negotiations, as they took place between Öcalan/the PKK and Turkey. Although the JDP's government wanted Barzani to be involved in the peace process, the PKK publicly rejected his participation and blamed him for allowing himself to be used by the JDP government. HDP officials refused Barzani's participation in the closed meeting between himself, Turkish officials and HDP representatives. It is also important to note that conservative Kurds wanted Barzani to play a role, as this would enhance support behind the peace negotiations. During the field research in Kurdish-populated cities in Turkey, conservative Kurds expressed their support for Barzani and his movement in Iraq.

During the peace process, security was the most controversial issue in Kurdish-populated cities. The JDP's base said that security officials did not interfere with PKK members' activities in the region. People in the region thought that the Turkish state left the region to the PKK due to the lack of security checks in Eastern Turkey. More importantly, the PKK had illegally established local courts, presiding as an autonomous entity. Turkish security officials avoided confronting the HDP or pro-PKK members of the public due to ongoing negotiations, saying that these were the orders they received.

Another key finding is that, although the security elite was eliminated from politics by successive JDP governments, a considerable number of bureaucrats and military members within state institutions were against the peace negotiations. These people believed that to deal with the PKK meant the partition of Turkey, and considered the peace process to be a threat to Turkey's unity and territorial integrity. In other words, they were unconvinced that the PKK would abandon its ambition to establish a Kurdish state within Turkey. It is also interesting to note that a great number of the people who voted for the JDP also carry the same views. Hence, according to critics, it was best to confront and fight the PKK rather than negotiating with them.

To sum up, the uprisings in several Arab countries and the emergence of non-state armed groups in its borders posed a challenge to Turkey's policy of 'zero problems with neighbours' and ultimately represented a threat to its national security. The PYD territorial expansion in Syria and northern Iraq in late 2014 and 2015 and the advances by ISIS in Syria and Iraq have challenged the balance of power in northern Iraq, ultimately becoming challenges for both the KRG and Turkey. In addition, ISIS attacks in the hearts of Turkish cities in 2015 posed a grave threat to Turkish national security. Consequently, the feeling of being under threat posed by non-state armed actors in its neighbourhood, coupled with the existence of two failed states, Syria and Iraq, along its borders, pushed Ankara to reset its liberal foreign policy towards its neighbourhood.

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Anonymous (Respondent 3), 2017. Cözüm süreci, PKK, Güneydoğu ve Akil Insanlar heyeti [The peace process, PKK, the situation in South East of Turkey and Wise People Committee] interviewed by Ahmet Seckin. Voice recording. 12 February 2017.

Anonymous (Respondent 4), 2017. Cözüm süreci, Kurds and the PKK [The peace process, Kurds and PKK]. interviewed by Ahmet Seckin. Voice recording. 14 March 2017.

Anonymous (Respondent 5), 2017. Cözüm süreci, Hükümet, Suriye ve PKK [The peace process, the JDP government, Syria and PKK]. No voice recording but notes. 12 December 2016, 15 January 2017, 2 March 2017.

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