Territorial Control and Minority Reforms:
A Study of the Kurdish Borderlands in Turkey

By

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Abstract

This study seeks to explain the failure of the Kurdish Opening in Turkey. I theorize that an important, hitherto largely ignored, factor in explaining this failure is the state's policy of territorial control, which has existed in parallel to the reform processes and peace talks. More specifically, I argue that territorial control is a key factor in explaining why minority policy reform failed to achieve its goals and hence, violence returned. For this analysis, I develop a typology of territorial control, which juxtaposes the lived experiences of people living alongside five forms of territorial control, identified as: *expulsion and expropriation*, *securitization*, *border control*, *administrative control* (right-sizing and gerrymandering) and *nationalizing the landscape*. My observation and documentation of the mechanisms and experiences of territorial control and the peace process are based on semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation during extensive fieldwork in conflict-ridden borderlands. This study reveals that the successes and failures of state strategy toward a minority population cannot be understood without an analysis of both state policies and people's experiences. This study achieves a unique perspective that incorporates people's perceptions and sentiments with theoretical and analytical premises.

Preface

In the early 1990s, the Turkish military burned my father's hometown, leveling six houses to the ground and destroying the village. My grandfather, who was living in the town at the time, had no choice but to move to Istanbul. He resisted accepting the harsh reality of losing his hometown and struggled to adapt to his new life in the city. A few times, he even attempted to return to his homeland. On one occasion, he got lost trying and was found disoriented in a park. Following those few years of grief, he developed cancer and died. Over the years, I have kept the memories of my grandfather's overwhelming desire to return home. These memories did not fade; whenever a relative died in the city, people would return the body to the abandoned village and organize funerals in that geographically remote but emotionally central place. The grave of my grandmother, the woman who raised me during my childhood, also lies in the valley next to my grandfather's hometown. Place, in other words, is not simply a space on a map; it is where memories are made.

I visited the Kurdish region twice as a child prior to conducting fieldwork for this project. The first time was in the early 1990s. My family's hometown, Karakoçan, was not yet destroyed and I had the chance to see my grandfather's home for the first time. It was a two-story mud-brick house, typical of the architecture in many Kurdish villages. Years later, in 2004, I visited the village again. All the houses were gone. The only things left to remind me of the village and its past were the remnants of my grandfather's home and a lone walnut tree. It was hard to believe the rest was gone.

I have witnessed and experienced this strong attachment to place, to home. Being witness to people's memories, emotions, and narratives of place is what motivates me to explore this conflict academically through the lens of territoriality. When I began my research, I discovered

that very little work had been done on the territorial dimension of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. My research questions have thus emerged from both personal and academic interests.

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I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother Zêneb (Karahan) who raised me. I know that you are proud of me wherever you are! You are really missed, *dapîr*!

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Turkish, Justice and Development Party)
BDP	*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* (Turkish, Peace and Democracy Party)
CHP	*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Turkish, Republican People's Party)
DBP	*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi* (Turkish, Democratic Regions Party)
DDKD	*Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Dernekleri* (Turkish, Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations)
DDKO	*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (Turkish, Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths)
DEHAP	*Demokratik Halk Partisi* (Turkish, Democratic People's Party)
DTP	*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (Turkish, Democratic Society Party)
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
GAP	*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi* (Turkish, Southeastern Anatolia Project)
GNAT	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
GÖÇ–DER	*Göç Edenlerle Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği* (Turkish, Migrants Social Solidarity and Cultural Association)
HADEP	*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* (Turkish, People's Democracy Party)
HDP	*Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (Turkish, People's Democratic Party)
HEP	*Halkın Emek Partisi* (Turkish, People's Labor Party)
HPG	*Hêzên Parastina Gel* (Kurdish, People's Defense Forces)

HSYK	*Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu* (Turkish, High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors)
IDP	Internally Displaced People
İHD	İnsan Hakları Derneği (Turkish, Human Rights Association)
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KCK	*Koma Civakên Kurdistan* (Kurdish, Kurdistan Communities Association)
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KUK	*Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları* (Turkish, Kurdistan National Liberationists)
KURDI–DER	*Kürt Dili Araştırma ve Geliştirme Derneği* (Turkish, Center for Kurdish Language Research and Promotion)
MEYA–DER	*Mezopotamya Yakınlarını Kaybedenlerle Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği* (Turkish, Mesopotamia Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Missing Relatives)
MGK	*Millî Güvenlik Kurulu* (Turkish, National Security Council)
MHP	*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (Turkish, National Movement Party)
MİT	*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı* (Turkish, National Intelligence Organization)
NGO	Non-government Organization
OHAL	*Olağanüstü Hâl* (Turkish, State of Emergency)
OHAL–BV	*Olağanüstü Hâl–Bölge Valiliği* (Turkish, State of Emergency Regional Governorate)

PJAK	*Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê* (Kurdish, Party for Freedom and Life in Kurdistan)
PKK	*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdish, Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* (Kurdish, Democratic Union Party)
RTÜK	*Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu* (Turkish, Supreme Council for Radio and Television)
SDF	Syrian Defense Forces
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TESEV	*Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı* (Turkish, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation)
TKDP	*Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi* (Turkish, Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey)
TKSP	*Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi* (Turkish, Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan)
TOKİ	*Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı* (Turkish, Turkish Housing Development Administration)
TRT	*Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu* (Turkish, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation)
TUHAD–FED	*Tutuklu Hükümlü Aileleri Hukuk Dayanışma Dernekleri* (Turkish, Prisoners' Families' Solidarity Association)
TÜİK	*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu* (Turkish, Turkish Statistical Institute)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

US	United States
YÖK	*Yükseköğretim Kurulu* (Turkish, Council of Higher Education)

A Note on Turkish Orthography

The Turkish alphabet has been written in Latin script since the language reform of the 1920s. The six key letter–sound combinations in the Turkish alphabet not found in the English counterpart (ç, ğ, ı, ö, ş, ü) are presented in the following table, which provides a set of examples of how they can be approximated more or less by a (North American) English speaker. Turkish orthography is highly regular, and the pronunciation of a word is typically identified by its spelling.

Ç ç	***Ch*** as in ***ch***air	**çelik** [“chelik”]
Ğ ğ	Silent, indicating an extension of the previous vowel sound	**Erdoğan** [“Erdowan”]
I ı	***e*** as in op***e***n, pronounced something like “uh”	**ışık** [“ushuk”]
Ö ö	***Ur*** as in n***ur***se, with very short intonation of the “r”	**Özel** [“Urzel”]
Ş ş	***sh*** as in ***sh***ower	**Koşaner** [“Koshaner”]
Ü ü	***oo*** as in st***oo***l	**Atatürk** [“Atatoork”]

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis is about the Kurdish Opening (2009–2015) and its limitations in improving Kurdish–Turkish relations. The Kurdish Opening was a short-lived, state-sponsored initiative that included a set of minority reforms to mitigate violence in Turkey, under the aegis of the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government, in power since 2002. However, this initiative ended when the AKP adopted a vehemently anti-Kurdish narrative as part of its far-right nationalist turn in the run up to the November 2015 general election. The collapse of these negotiations marked a return to intense violence and a renewed insurgency in the southeast of Turkey, mostly in the border areas that are close to Iraq and Iran.

The existing literature on the Kurdish Opening has offered diverse explanations for the failure of this process. Some scholars (e.g. Pusane, 2014) point to the political fragmentation of the parties concerning the Kurdish Question while some others (e.g. Gunter, 2012) argue that there were problems endemic to the peace process because the opposition parties did not support it. Another explanation addresses people's decreasing support, noting the public outcry that followed the entry of 34 unarmed rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (in Kurdish: *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK) from northern Iraq to southeast Turkey in 2009 (Aydin-Düzgit & Keyman, 2017). Although none of these explanations are completely irrelevant, they ignore one important fact: that democratic institutions coexist with a wide range of control mechanisms in Turkey. This is why this study is needed.

Against this backdrop, this study explores the salience of territorial narrative, which is—quite paradoxically—an understudied topic. If borders challenge the state's capacity to manage populations, then what might the analysis of Kurdish borderlands tell us about the relationship

between the Turkish state and Kurds? This question is what has inspired me to focus my research on the borderlands. Based on an ethnographic study that I conducted in the borderlands during 12 months of fieldwork, this study reveals the ways in which the perceived imperative of the Turkish state's territorial control over Kurds' everyday lives undermined the success of the policies designed by the same state (or parts of the state), which had been seeming to pursue a more democratic treatment of Kurds. The purpose of this study is to show how territorial control in divided nations precludes solving ongoing territorial conflict.

In addressing the issue of the failure of the Kurdish Opening, the present research focuses closely on the *question of territory*. More specifically, it takes the territorial concept of *borderlands* as a central analytical and empirical referent. I use the term borderlands to refer to the geographical area at the periphery of the state where its sovereignty comes up against that of another. In adopting the term "Kurdish borderlands," I refer to the regions of Turkey that border Syria, Iran and Iraq and that are inhabited predominantly by Kurds (see Figure 1.1).

The Kurdish Question continues to be one of the most serious issues on Turkey's political agenda. Millions have been displaced, thousands have died, hundreds have been arrested. Thousands of villages have been evacuated. According to a 2017 report released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCR), half a million people left their homes due to the Turkish army's ongoing military operations over the 17-month period from July 2015 to December 2016 (Cumming-Bruce, 2017). The Turkish army entered the peripheral neighborhoods of urban centers after the PKK declared "democratic autonomy," and kept those districts under curfew, sometimes for up to 90 days. The language of violence and fear has dominated the political sphere, and people have been left to live in limbo since 2015. The resolution of this protracted conflict, therefore, is what matters most to everyone living in the region.

Arguably, nowhere on earth has been more impacted by the legacy of colonial border-making than the Middle East. In particular, the demarcation of borders along various post-WWI settlements left Kurdish-populated areas divided between Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq. Nearly a century later, the war in Iraq and, more recently still, the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, have recast the map of the Middle East and thrust the Kurdish-populated borderlands to the center of global politics. Today, many regional and extra-regional actors jostle as they vie for control of these vital territories.

The core claim of this thesis is that the Kurdish Opening failed because the state pursued policies of territorial control in parallel to its agenda on democratization and peace. That is, the state continued to employ various mechanisms of territorial control, which contradicted its stated intention to resolve the ongoing conflict democratically. In response, Kurdish political actors also had a dual-position strategy: one in the legal domain and the other on the military front.

I will elaborate on these core claims in detail in the remainder of this present chapter, which is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief survey of Turkey's Kurdistan—the historical context, and the roots of the current conflict. The second section outlines in more detail the key research questions animating the thesis and lays out the significance of the study, followed by a statement of the thesis argument in brief. The fourth section lays out my critique of the existing research on the question of the failure of the Kurdish Opening and the fifth part presents the theoretical framework. Following that, the last part summarizes the contributions of this study and ends with the thesis outline.

1.1 Turkey's Kurdistan

Turkey is a culturally, linguistically, and economically heterogeneous state. It comprises (at least) two distinct, nationally mobilized communities: one Turkish and the other Kurdish. My argument

is positioned literally and figuratively along the eastern borderlands of Turkey (see Figure 1.1). There, 13 provinces comprise the Turkish part of a regional zone—historically called Kurdistan—that extends across international boundaries into Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Although since the 1960s, increasing numbers of Turkey's Kurdish people have migrated to large cities far away, such as Istanbul and Ankara, this region remains home to the large majority of Turkey's approximately 20 million Kurds.[1]

Perched at some three thousand meters in the Zagros mountain range, the region features fertile grazing plateaus. Spanning approximately 518,000 square kilometers (200,000 square miles), the Kurdish borderlands start north of the Turkish cities of Ağrı and Van,[2] extend to the mountains and plains of Hakkari and Şırnak in the south and then run along Turkey's borders with Iraq, Iran and Syria. This region is rich and fertile, making it well suited for farming both livestock (mostly cattle) and other agricultural products, such as grains, sugar beet and potatoes. In the valley, located beside the Turkish–Iraqi border, rice and a variety of fruits, including pomegranates, are also grown. The closer one gets to Çukurca, located beside the Turkish–Iraqi border, the landscape changes to rolling hills dotted with clusters of walnut trees.

[1] This is an estimated number due to the limited access to reliable and accurate data on demography. See Mutlu (1996).
[2] The sites of the research (i.e. cities, towns, villages and hamlets) will be referred to by Turkish or Kurdish names unless otherwise stated.

Figure 1.1. Turkey's Kurdish borderlands (highlighted green). Compiled by the author with ARCGIS software.

Because tribes still play an outsize role in societal structure, understanding the current picture of the borderlands and the rise of violence requires a glimpse into the political and social organization of this region as it has evolved since the Ottoman era. The Kurdish borderlands, which comprise the Mesopotamian plain and are demarcated by the surrounding mountainous region, have been ruled by various dynastic powers and tribal confederations since the sixteenth century (Ateş, 2013, p. 32). Under Ottoman rule, the region was divided into semi-autonomous entities called "emirates" in which members served in the central army and paid taxes in return for a significant degree of local autonomy. Since the Ottoman period, these borderlands have challenged state authority to penetrate its power and control its population. The Ottoman Empire penetrated the borderlands in both direct and indirect ways. While co-opting emirates and certain tribes was a common practice employed for the indirect control of the area, building new institutions like the gendarmerie and vesting it with extensive power to police the eastern provinces was used for the direct control of these distant provinces (Mardin, 1973).

The functioning and internal structure of Kurdish tribes was very much affected by external factors—namely other tribes and non-tribal populations sharing nearby territory as well as the larger imperial states; the Ottomans and the Safavids (van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 134). While the tribal chieftains were semi-autonomous under the rule of Kurdish emirates in the initial stages of the Ottoman Empire, administrative organization was revised at the center through reforms, creating a new form of chieftain as the most powerful local authority (van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 136). In the context of Ottoman–Safavid confrontations, the region remained a "frontier province" between the two empires. Kurdish tribesmen gained political advantage from the contest between the two empires and authority was shared between Ottoman bureaucrats and the local elites.

To maintain effective control of the frontiers, the Ottomans increased their capacity by assigning bureaucrats with greater authority than local elites to administer localities. This process of building state effectiveness has gone hand-in-hand with territorialisation of the state-space (Ateş, 2013), which turned unsettled and ambivalent zones of state frontiers into settled and demarcated borderlands seen as a marker of territorial limits of state sovereignty.

The Kurdish borderlands are inhabited overwhelmingly by politically active and mobilized Kurds,[3] meaning that these are the areas where Kurds are both territorially concentrated and highly engaged. As such, any territorial policies of the state implemented in these contested borderlands also regulate Kurds' access to and benefit from these territories—as well as its resources. Additionally, these areas represent a testing ground for the degree of the permeability of state authority, as well as for the extent of territorial control through the allocation of resources and other

[3] There are historical, political and psychological reasons that explain the high level of Kurdish political engagement in these borderlands. The inhabitants of these borderlands have not only gained consciousness from remarkable historical events, such as the first ethno–religious rebellion called the Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri rebellion in 1880 (Celil, 1998; Jwaideh, 2006; Soleimani, 2016; Ateş, 2014), but also from living on a battlefield. These borderlands continue to be the center of deadly clashes to this day.

means, in a country where there is a dominant state center and a subordinate minority nation. I will explore this process through an in-depth single case analysis that builds upon my fieldwork in the cities of Van and Hakkari (Turkey) that are located along the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Iran, predominantly inhabited by Kurds. The selection of Van and Hakkari (and Çukurca, a district of Hakkari) as contested borderlands fits well with the purpose of this study.

In the Kurdish-populated borderlands, the everyday life of the people is distinct—it differs significantly from life in other areas of Turkey. In Turkish media reporting on the everyday lives of people in the border cities of Van and Hakkari, the area is noted for the high death toll from smuggling, insurgency and landmines. This observation led me to think about the relationship among state institutions, ethnic conflict, people, territory and borders. I purposefully chose to conduct my research in Hakkari and Van because both cities offer significant insights on territorial policies and control mechanisms in divided nations or settings.

Both cities also pose challenges to the Turkish state's territorial control. First, they are surrounded by high mountains. Hakkari, located beside the Turkish–Iraqi border, sits amid the Zagros Mountains, a major mountain range extending across Iran, Syria and Turkey (Falcon, 1974). Van is also a border city, adjacent to the Turkish–Iranian border. Van has been an urban center for centuries and stretches over a larger area than Hakkari. In the hot summer, barring any extraordinary circumstances (such as a state of emergency), many villagers move to these more temperate climes, remaining there temporarily to cater to their animals and benefit from the cooler mountain air. Some nomadic Kurdish tribes, such as the Mîran, travel from adjacent cities to this area for the same reason.[4] The tribes remain influential actors for the resolution of everyday conflicts related to Kurdish politics in Van, Hakkari and the surrounding towns.

[4] For a detailed list of Kurdish tribes, please see Oberling (2004).

The Kurdish political movement is very active in the borderlands, where they recruit many guerrillas. The mountainous character of these contested territories makes it more difficult for the state to exercise control. In these regions, the death toll within the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) has been very high. For instance, Çukurca, the village near Hakkari where I stayed for two months in the summer of 2014, witnessed the death of 81 soldiers in a single insurgency attack on October 19, 2011 (Yeni Özgür Politika, 2011). Another important factor is the presence of politically active Kurdish parties and ethnic kin (i.e. Kurds across the border), who make territorial claims on contested territories along and across Turkey's borderlands.

The 50-year political struggle of the Kurdish political parties and movements straddle state borders in this area, and Iraqi Kurdistan (as a strong territorial entity) has acted basically as a kin-state to the Kurdish population living on the Turkish side of the border. This cross-border activism involves the Kurdistan Democratic Party (in Kurdish: *Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê*, PDK) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) on the Iraqi side of the border, and the PKK, which has its headquarters in the Qandil Mountains located in northern Iraq but is also present in Iran, Syria and Turkey. It thus further challenges the Turkish state's ability to exercise control over the borderlands. The role of kin-state activism in minority mobilization also makes the borderlands contested and hence relevant for this study (Csergő & Goldgeier, 2013). All of these factors underline the significance of Hakkari and Van, where the contestation between the state and the Kurds over territory is manifest.

Conducting research on the Kurdish borderlands, however, remains very challenging. Each of the four nation-states with historical Kurdish populations (Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Syria) has imposed severe legal and practical constraints not only on their respective Kurdish populations but

also on scholars, intellectuals and journalists who show interest in the subject.[5] In Turkey, every citizen is obligated to protect and respect the state's territorial integrity and anyone who "allegedly threatens" that integrity must be penalized by law (Constitution of the Turkish Republic, 2006).

The TAF's continued securitization of the region has also prevented scholars from conducting empirical research. Moreover, the state's serious legal constraints on freedom of thought and the press have terrified people against writing on this subject and disseminating the findings of their research.[6] These restrictions leave the territorial and spatial aspects of the Kurdish Question remain understudied. In the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), I offer a more detailed description of the Kurdish borderlands as a site of research and the challenges involved in conducting my study.

1.2 Research Questions and Relevance of the Present Study

The success of the Kurdish Opening was never guaranteed. A number of significant hurdles stood in the way from the very outset, including the long-standing record of violence, rising tensions in relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU), and the regional security crisis in Syria and Iraq after 2011. Yet the democratic reforms that commenced in the early 2000s—heralded in most quarters as an unprecedented step forward for Turkey—seemed as opportune a moment as any for a settlement of the long-standing conflict. This period provided political actors on both sides with the opportunity to shift the trajectory of events, in this case from civil war to peaceful contestation. Indeed, there was a peace process, and there were political negotiations channeled

[5] Ismail Besikci, a reputable academic, was imprisoned for 17 years due to his interest in researching the Kurdish Question and publishing on the subject between the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Please see Değer & Unlu (2011).
[6] In 2016, more than 2,000 local and international scholars—known collectively as the "Academics for Peace"—signed a petition calling for a complete end to state violence in the Kurdish region of Turkey. In response—and despite the message of peace and the balance of concern to violence on both sides—President Erdoğan and other prominent politicians accused the group of being traitors and following that, legal prosecutions against them began. See Pişkin (2019).

through democratic forms of party competition. However, in the end, the process failed and the democratic reforms involved in the Kurdish Opening failed to stabilize relations.

The deepest sources of the failure of the Kurdish Opening can only be properly understood if the central element of the relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish minority in the country's borderlands is laid bare. This is the intense territorial control exercised by the Turkish state over the Kurds in their everyday lives in the borderland region, where a large segment of Turkey's politically active Kurds live. This study addresses the question of why the Kurdish Opening, also a crucial step in Turkey's broader democratization efforts, failed to mitigate violence and bring peace to ethnic conflict. There are also other relevant questions that speak to the main question: Under what conditions can democratization lead to peace or end violence? What are the policy recommendations to sustain peace (and mitigate violence) in divided nations?

1.3 The Argument in Brief

In my approach, I suggest shifting the focus of analysis to the Kurdish borderlands of Turkey to determine if: 1) the Kurdish Opening has triggered any change in the lives of the target population, in particular Kurds living in the region and; 2) if so, what change? If not, then what else emerged as the alternative narrative from the 1990s and 2000s? The empirical Chapters 4 and 5 show that the minority policies and reforms designed at the national level intertwined with narratives of territorial control at the local level.

Policies (Chapter 4) and narratives (Chapter 5) constitute the two main building blocks of my argument. The ruling AKP initiated a set of cultural, political and legal reforms to resolve ethnic conflict in Turkey but the result was a failure. Chapter 4 advances the argument by dividing the reform process into distinct periods in which the parties to the Kurdish Question continued to contest and negotiate over the content of reform packages. The Turkish state assumed that the increased cultural rights would mitigate violence and resolve the ethnic conflict, but the lived

experiences of Kurds were not taken into account by the policy-makers. The next chapter (Chapter 5) then fills this gap and presents the other main component of my argument, laying out the forms of territorial control that the Turkish state has implemented. These include both mechanisms of territorial control and lived experiences. This chapter indicates that Turkey's democratic reforms have been in tension with the people's experiences in Turkey's eastern and southeastern borderlands and, as a result, the Kurdish Opening failed to meet the expectations of the Kurdish population living there. These findings imply that the state pursued the Kurdish Opening as a top-down project even as it continued to deploy several forms of territorial control in the Kurdish borderlands.

Based on the empirical data, I argue that the intensity of territorial control in the lived experiences of Kurds in the borderlands has outweighed the Turkish state's expected positive response from the Kurdish Opening. In other words, any potential success the reforms might have brought was undermined by the intensity of territorial control that continued in parallel. Intensity stands for the level of different mechanisms of control that the state uses to exert and sustain its power and sovereignty over a territory.

I buttress this core argument with a series of supporting claims throughout my thesis. I argue that democratization occurs in various fields and that a critical account of Turkey's democratization must include political, economic, legal, social, territorial and psychological elements. It is crucial to focus on political, social, cultural and economic outcomes to assess the successes and failures of democratization attempts. It follows that the success of democratization requires enacting policies that support it in these various fields, such as implementing reforms in political institutions and creating an ideological transformation in the mindset of the Turkish population. At this stage, explaining the reasons behind the failure of Turkey's Kurdish Opening

also requires identification of the barriers. In doing so, we must trace the process of the Kurdish Opening, look at its consequences and demonstrate how the salient political actors perceive it.

Territorial control takes different forms as well, and adapts according to the state's intentions, the mechanisms used to enforce that control and people's experiences. As I will show in the next chapters of this study, the Turkish state has used expulsion and expropriation to enforce sovereignty, resulting in the displacement of communities and the loss of property. Moreover, the state's adoption of a securitization approach to make its sovereignty compulsory has resulted in the militarization of the lived experiences of people. In addition, minority cultural practices were disrupted by the state's policing of its borders through control of movement across them. The state's use of administrative and demographic control has violated the collective rights of the people so controlled. Finally, nation-building practices[7]—such as nationalizing the landscape—reconstructed the social geography at the expense of minorities' collective memory and produced a loss of cultural heritage. The details of each of these processes are discussed in the ethnography chapter (Chapter 5).

Drawing on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork, my explanation of territorial control works at two distinct levels. At the state level, I examine democratic reforms and detail the various mechanisms developed by the Turkish state to enforce territorial control in the region. At the minority (i.e. Kurdish) level, I look at the responses of Kurdish political actors. This reveals the Kurdish take on the reform process. Through a detailing of the narratives of Kurds from the 1990s through to the 2000s, I am able to show the lived experience of territorial control at the borderlands.

[7] Co-optation (Lustick, 1979) is also a significant instrument used by the Turkish state to suppress Kurdish dissidence. Although I do not offer a detailed discussion of the patterns of co-optation in this thesis, I agree that co-optation is an ideal tool to control people but can also serve as a component of territorial control in certain cases.

These two main components comprise the typology of territorial control that I propose in Chapter 5.

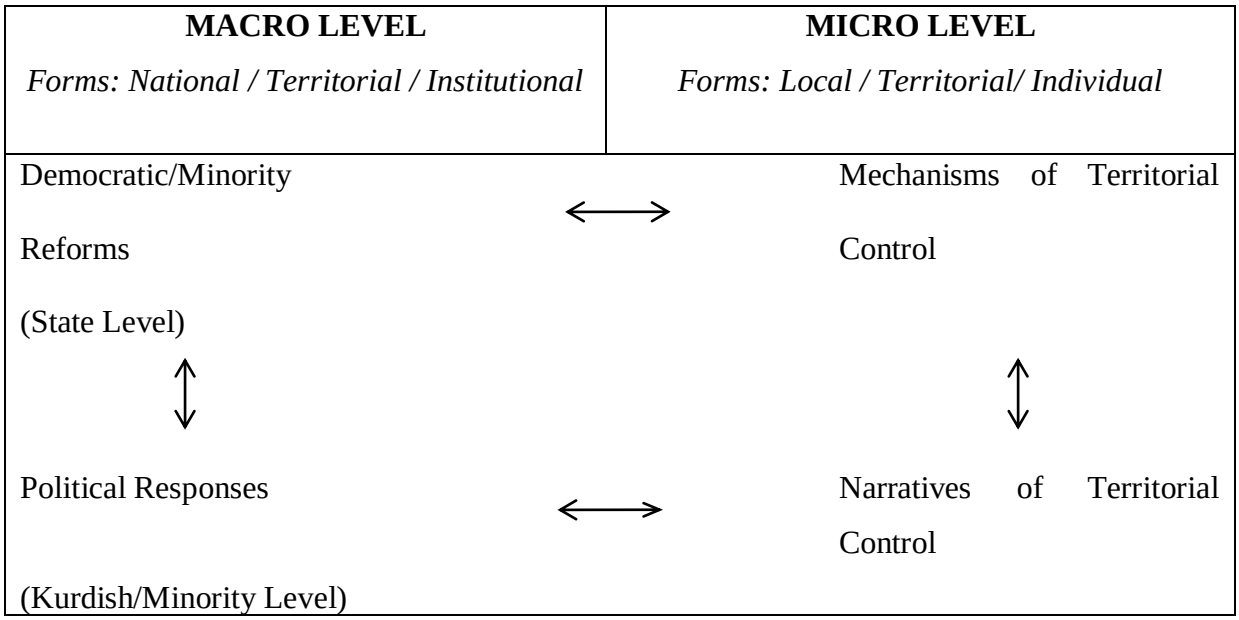


Figure 1.2. Macro- and micro-level coexistence of territorial control and democratic reforms. Compiled by the author.

In Figure 1.2, the vertical arrows show the interaction between the Turkish state and Kurdish actors. At the macro level, the state enacts policies and Kurdish political actors respond. At the micro level, the state employs various mechanisms—I identify five in this research—and the Kurds perceive, experience, and narrate these mechanisms in their own ways. The horizontal arrows show the policies at the state level as well as the responses of Kurds at both macro and micro levels. These arrows also show the interaction between democratic reforms and territorial control at the state and minority (i.e. Kurdish) levels.

To operationalize territorial control and democratic reforms (e.g. the Kurdish Opening), indicators are needed to disaggregate both variables. The main indicator of the outcome is the

increased level of ethnic violence. The clear demarcation of this outcome was the July 2015 end of the ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish state. This new period unexpectedly became one of the most violent episodes in the 32-year history of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict (Mandıracı, 2016), as I will show in Chapter 4. This chapter lays out the minority reforms and the Kurdish political responses to them.

My main explanation for the return to ethnic violence is an increase in the intensity of territorial control in the lived experiences of Kurds on the borderlands before and after the two years of peace process (2013–2015). The indicator of territorial control is that such control is reported as the dominant experience of Kurds living in the borderlands. I will show this in my ethnographic chapter (Chapter 5) about lived experiences. However, my treatment of the narratives of those I interviewed extends back well before this, drawing on their experiences in the 2000s but also back through to the 1990s, mostly because the early 1990s is when the state and the PKK began the initial talks for a ceasefire.

1.4 Limitations of Existing Approaches in Explaining the Failure of the Kurdish Opening

There are alternative explanations to the failures of Turkey's Kurdish reforms. Some scholars (e.g. Gürsoy, 2010) argue that the process of democratization came to end because Turkey's path to Europeanization was interrupted by certain problems and this reduced the motivation of state bureaucrats to pursue admission to the EU. Political elites subsequently had fewer incentives to pursue the path of democratization and minority reforms in the absence of any external pressure from the EU. This explanation is unsatisfactory because it places too much emphasis on the power of the EU on the Turkish state's minority policies and downplays the impact of domestic state policies and practices, which are more directly experienced by Kurds especially outside of the state capital.

The role of external factors in the failure of the Kurdish Opening points to the security crisis unfolding on Turkey's Middle Eastern neighborhood. According to this stance, the positive atmosphere manifested itself more in passing reforms for the improvement of rights for Kurds came to an end after the Kurdish political movement has accelerated its mobilization across the borders. The PKK has already created sister organizations[8] that have allowed it to expand its influence in Iran via the Party for Freedom and Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) and in Syria through the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF),[9] which now control numerous Kurdish and Arab territories. The party also has long-standing connections in Iraq, in Mount Qandil where it is based, but also in the Maxmûr Kurdish refugee camp in Turkey and the Yazidi regions of Sinjar (Dorronsoro & Grojean, 2018, p. 265). At the time of writing, the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the associated Women's Protection Units (YPJ) continue to control one-third of Syrian territory. In short, the Kurdish upsurge in the north of Syria, the territorial and institutional gains of the SDF and the international support and legitimacy given to this movement from the United States, France and other allies, has fueled Turkish anxieties about Kurdish secession in Turkey. According to this view, the rapidly changing dynamics in Syria—especially the creation of the independent Syrian Kurdish region called Rojava—have had spillover effects on Turkey's relations with Kurds. Because the state was afraid of irredentism on the Turkish side of the border, the Kurdish Question once again became a matter of state security (Weiss, 2016; Al & Byrd, 2018).

In response, the Turkish state perceived these changes in Syria as a rising security threat to its territory, which compelled the government to change its approach from the reform process to

[8] Although the PYD, the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) and the more recent SDF are not identical with the PKK, these organizations are closely aligned and share certain goals, ideology, infrastructure and logistics.

[9] The SDF is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious alliance of predominantly Kurdish, but also Arab and Assyrian, militias, as well as some smaller Turkmen, Armenian, Circassian and Chechen groups. This US-backed group was formed in 2015 and they have been actively fighting jihadists since then. See Jongerden (2019).

higher securitization (e.g. building walls along the Turkish–Syrian border). This explanation for the failure of the Kurdish Opening, while not irrelevant, is unsatisfactory because what was happening in Syria had some direct impact on Turkey's Kurdish Opening (and the Turkish–Kurdish talks) but this was only one of the factors explaining the failure of the entire reform process. The changes in Syria went together with the changes in Turkey's political milieu, itself a product of shifts in state–society relations. The Turkish government was indeed situated at the intersection of these conflicting pressures, which constrained the options of the dominant political elites. However, both of these explanations over-emphasize the significance of external factors on minority policy.[10]

Both rival explanations point in the same direction in the sense that they locate the failure of the Kurdish Opening in a lack of sufficient commitment to it within the central state.

As European pressure to introduce minority-friendly policy weakened and Middle Eastern security pressure to reinforce state sovereignty strengthened, the Kurdish Opening did not have sufficient support in the state center. As my literature review chapter will discuss, the influence of Europeanization on minority policy was only indirect even in states that successfully joined the EU in the 2000s, while domestic policies and practices had a direct impact on minority experiences.

The third explanation is that the pre-existing ethnic and religious cleavages/divisions in the society made it impossible to move the Kurdish Opening to the next stage. More specifically, the social divide between secularist and Islamist elites in Turkey has become a serious ideological and ideational barrier to a solid transformation of state practices (Somer & Liaras, 2010). This sectarian tension dates back to the establishment of the nation-state in 1923 and both sides had reasons to

[10] The impact of Europeanization on state–minority relations is also overemphasized. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary draw particular attention to the exaggerated impact of European integration on the politics of divided nations. The next chapter will present this debate in full but for further details readers might usefully consult McGarry et al. (2013).

resist the state's concessions in favor of a mobilized ethnic minority. Secularists were a more pro-military group of people who saw Kurdish rights as redundant because secularism and Turkish nationalism were tied together and became the backbone of the new Turkish state. Likewise, Islamists were against Kurdish rights because this was hostile to their *ummah* project, which rests on the idea of unifying Muslims regardless of their ethnicities. Both Islamist and secularist groups thus sought a politico-social order that would bind state and people totally. Hence, they found the Kurdish Opening threatening to their political aspirations. Again, this view is not irrelevant but also unsatisfactory because the failure of the Kurdish Opening is more complex than the opposition of certain groups in the society. Besides, the Kurdish Opening had begun despite these pre-existing cleavages and objections. This explanation is unsatisfactory because it does not show how exactly these existing cleavages and critiques have operated to bring failure to the reform process.

The final explanation is that the Turkish state did not have any unified position vis-à-vis the Kurdish Opening. There were certain groups within the state that were willing to resolve the conflict peacefully but there were also hardliners, resisting any solution except warfare, mostly for the preservation of their status quo. So, this view explained the failure of the Kurdish Opening with reference to the fragmentation and polarization within the state (Al, 2015). This state fragmentation argument is not inconsistent and irrelevant at all but still unsatisfactory because it is a state-centric explanation that only addresses the interactions within the state and the role of political elites as the source of the failure. In other words, it does not offer any insights on the perceptions of ordinary people from the borderlands. Similar to the scholars who regard the state as a potentially autonomous agent (Skocpol, 1982; Nordlinger, 1987), the main limitation of this approach is that it downplays the formative role of responses by human agents to state preferences. As a result, it underestimates the role of agency and thus eliminates the impetus to examine the interrelations of political actions with societal conditions.

Drawing on my twelve months of ethnographic research, what I argue is that the success of the Kurdish Opening should also take into account people's everyday experiences of territorial control mechanisms on the ground. By focusing on people's experiences on the ground parallel to the adoption of those policies in the state center, I argue that the continued practices of territorial control (which were the everyday experiences of people on the ground) undermined the success of those policies. Hence, there is a need for an approach that accounts for these contradictions. Overall, each of these explanations points to important obstacles to the success of the Kurdish Opening, but none of them focuses directly on Kurdish experiences during the period of the Kurdish Opening and this is a major gap that my study begins to fill.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

There are three components in my theoretical framework. The first is the Kurdish Opening which involves a set of reforms that the ruling AKP enacted to improve the political and civil rights of Kurds in Turkey. When the AKP came to power in 2002, people's hope for progress were high since internal and external circumstances were viewed as fortuitous. Internally, there was an ongoing ceasefire with the PKK while externally the motive for European integration encouraged the government to pass reforms allowing limited broadcasting and private education in Kurdish (Yavuz, 2009). This private broadcasting was, however, not implemented until 2006 (Somer & Liaras, 2010). The AKP announced the launch of this reform package, which it labeled the "Kurdish Opening" and the "Democratic Initiative" in 2009. This reform package included the provision of certain cultural rights, such as the start of TRT-6, the first official Kurdish TV channel (which still lacks constitutional recognition), offering optional Kurdish language courses in private schools and the opening of several institutes for languages still spoken in Turkey (although the word "Kurdish" was never incorporated into the official names of these institutions) (Çiçek, 2011,

p. 20). These reforms were seen as signs of a complete departure from the traditional policy of 'coercive assimilation' (McGarry, 2010) toward political accommodation of Kurds.

Rather than introducing a concrete roadmap, it appeared that the government intended to trigger more open debate on the Kurdish Question and start a reform and reconciliation process that would include the PKK's disarmament and would culminate in peace and economic development for the country's Kurdish-populated eastern provinces (Somer & Liaras, 2010). In addition to cultural rights, other proposals included an amnesty for PKK rebels, public instruction in Kurdish (beginning at the university level), the changing of Turkicized local place names in the Kurdish-populated region as well as a genuinely democratic constitution (Somer & Liaras, 2010; Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2014).

Meanwhile, the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, demanded collective cultural rights as well as local and regional self-rule. The only pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, the Peace and Development Party (BDP)[11] followed his example, and shared the same roadmap for the resolution of the conflict. However, the gaps between the demands of both sides poisoned the positive atmosphere, and once again the Kurdish Question was left to be influenced through the use of weapons.

The second component of the theoretical framework is territorial control. Territorial control (Newman, 1989; Yiftachel, 1996; McGarry, 1998a, 1998b) refers to the formulation of public policies and practices in the field of land, development and planning by appropriating space and incorporating national symbols to enhance spatial control by one dominant group over others. Territorial control is also a military and political resource that is used by political actors to ensure sovereignty over certain regions.

[11] At that time, the Turkish Constitutional Court had not yet closed the pro-Kurdish BDP. Please see Human Rights Watch (2011).

Control is the concluding theme of my theoretical framework. First, it anchors the theoretical lens through which I identify and detail the mechanisms of (territorial) control exerted by Turkish state. Second, it provides the grounds for my explanation of the limits of the Turkish state's accommodationist attempts to resolve its intractable conflict with the Kurds. I define control in empirical and relational terms, namely as a condition or process in which "the superior power of one segment (a dominant majority) is mobilized to enforce stability by constraining the political actions and opportunities of another segment or segments (subordinate minorities)" (Lustick, 1979, p. 328). Practically speaking, it constitutes a mechanism of conflict regulation for states to maintain stability despite pervasive ethnic cleavages. Control demands an infrastructure to enforce it—to broadcast power and to conscript the loyalty of citizens (Herbst, 2000, p. 3). Within this framework, territorial control refers to the formulation of public policies and practices—in the field of land, development and planning—that appropriate space and incorporate national symbols to enhance spatial control of a dominant group over others (Yiftachel & Ghanem, 2004, p. 652). Territorial control can also be extended variously, encompassing not only land, but also property and people; not only to the use of coercion but also to an abstract space where non-compliance and control can coexist (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995).

While the Kurdish Opening was in process, policies of territorial centralization were also at work. Depending on the cases, the state also deployed violence to pursue territorial centralization along Turkey's borders. Scholars have written extensively on examples of territorial centralization in Turkey, some of which involve modernizing reforms and development policies—including a range of different development plans, programs, and projects formulated over many decades. The most salient of these examples of territorial control are: 1) the so-called Southeastern Anatolian Project (Bilgen, 2018); 2) construction of large dams for security purposes (Öktem, 2002; Jongerden, 2010; Hatem & Dohrmann, 2013); 3) implementing a rigid border policy that ends up

in increasing numbers of smugglers killed along the borders (Bozçalı, 2014); 4) the establishment of regional primary boarding schools (known as YIBO) to assimilate Kurdish children through education (Arslan, 2015) and; 5) the Roboski incident in which 34 civilians died in a Turkish airstrike claimed to be against militants at the Turkish–Iraqi border in 2011 (Sandal, 2014; Weiss, 2016).

The third component of my theoretical framework is Migdal's state-in-society approach (2001), which implies an ethnographic study of the state and a balanced account of the relationship between state and society. Although the theoretical framework is built on the institutionalist perspective, as will be seen throughout the thesis, this study departs from the existing literature in one important aspect: it incorporates Migdal's relational understanding of state behavior and draws attention to the processes of interaction between different social and political organizations, actors and their contestations with elements of the state.

My approach expands on Migdal's state-in-society approach in two ways. First, it enables us to see the variation between the interests and preferences of different power holders, such as between local military and civilian agents and central or national policy-makers. This point is important because the divergence and outright reversal of state policies in Kurdish-populated areas of Turkey, especially in borderlands, generated new practices and legal vs. illegal networks,[12] such as the creation of the village guard system which relies on the co-optation of certain Kurdish tribes by the state in its struggle against the PKK.[13]

[12] Ceren Belge's (2009, pp. 1-40) research also points out the effects of clan authority over the relationship between the Turkish state and Kurds. In explaining the resilience of the informal authority of clans, Belge argues that "it is more about the relations at the local level than the national level." She further notes that "the likelihood that the state officials, such as judges, prosecutors and police, will impose the jurisdiction of the state over minority communities that resist state authority depends […] on how they view the boundaries of their own authority, and the extent to which state officials are able to penetrate the local community."

[13] Nicole Watts (2010, pp. 19–20) explains this situation thus: "local bureaucrats, judges, and police chiefs in the Kurdish-majority provinces of the east and southeast were often more concerned about governing without excessive

To understand the complexity of territorial control and its operationalization, I suggest disaggregating state and society. Rather than advocating the bipolar model, where state and society are perceived as two distinct entities, this study suggests exploring a diverse set of actors and their engagement with each other at the macro- and micro-political levels. In that sense, my approach also runs parallel with scholars (e.g. Pearlmann, 2003, 2011) who argue that movements fighting for some form of self-determination are composed of multiple actors and their decisions are the result of social processes and interactions among them. In my framework, both the Turkish state and the Kurdish political movement are composed of multiple actors who exercise varying degrees of political *agency* and exert political *influences* on policies related to war and peace. Hence, the negotiations between the state and the Kurdish movement (guerillas, the leadership, and party members) can be better understood if there is a framework that addresses the multiple roles of the various actors at work. This is the appropriate strategy to achieve a nuanced understanding of the interaction between state, territory and people in the context of Turkish–Kurdish relations.

1.6 Contributions in Brief

The main contribution of my thesis is that it provides readers with an account of the depth of territorial control in the lived experiences of Kurds in the borderlands. More specifically, the research shows how the depth of territorial control—more concretely, its negative and corrosive impact on the everyday lives of Kurdish people living in the borderlands—has undermined every attempt by the Turkish state to resolve the conflict. While scholars have long addressed state control mechanisms (e.g. Lustick, 1979; Herbst, 2000; Hallik & Vettai, 2002; Newman, 1989), they have failed to examine the complexities of territorial control and how experiences of territorial control

disturbance than fulfilling the mandates coming from Ankara, and, in any case, usually lacked the resources to penetrate local society."

shape people's attitudes toward the state. My research uncovers the negative impact of territorial control on the lived experiences of Kurds in the borderlands, which I argue has contributed significantly to the failure of the Kurdish Opening.

In addition to the above contributions, this study also contributes to the literature on the impact of democratization on peace and post-conflict resolution. Unlike the majority of the scholarship on this topic as will be shown in Chapter 2, this study looks beyond policies to focus as well on people's narratives. In doing so, this study contributes to our understanding of the prospects and challenges of democratization processes in divided nations. This study also fills a lacuna in the literature on territorial politics because one of the main contributions is to identify forms of territorial control and illustrate the impact of territorial policies on people's everyday lives, as will be seen in Chapter 5.

1.7 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature in comparative politics and the contribution of the thesis to a range of literatures, including those on divided nations, on the impact of democratization on conflict resolution, and on control regimes—mostly the literature on territorial control. In Chapter 2, I show that the democratization literature has overlooked the specific dynamics that can unfold in divided societies. Following that comes methodology, covered in Chapter 3 where I lay out the mixture of methods that I have deployed for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 focuses on key critical turning points in terms of the democratization attempts of the AKP, and explores state policies in different fields, tracing the patterns of negotiation and contestation between the state and Kurdish political actors. Chapter 5 reveals typologies of territorial control and presents the original interview data. This chapter provides a detailed description of territorial control and its various strategies and delineates people's lived experiences

of territorial control in the borderlands as well. Following the empirical chapter, Chapter 6 reiterates the argument and summarizes the principal findings of the thesis.

Chapter 2

The Puzzle of the Failure of the Kurdish Opening: A Review of the Literature

Having laid out the main components of the research design in the previous chapter, in this chapter I provide an overview of the relevant literature. As discussed in the introduction, the long-standing Turkish–Kurdish conflict and, in particular, the failure of the ruling AKP government's 2009–2015 "Kurdish Opening", has been a topic of interest to scholars and general observers alike. But while many of the factors and dynamics of this conflict have been drawn out and examined in existing studies on the Kurdish issue, that literature is nevertheless unable to adequately address, or answer, the general research question that guides my dissertation: Why did the Kurdish Opening fail?

More particularly, the existing literature cannot, for all of its value in other respects, provide adequate answers to two crucial, albeit narrower, questions: What specific factors—power–political, socio-cultural, territorial and so forth—are fundamentally related to the failure of the Kurdish Opening? And: What specific mechanisms within those factors led the Kurdish Opening to fail?

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section (2.1) offers a brief sketch of the field of Kurdish Studies to highlight how the conflict has been addressed within this body of research. The subsequent four sections cover a substantive set of literatures in turn. Section 2.2 thus covers the research on divided societies, with a focus on the comparative literatures. Section 2.3 addresses the literatures on democratization and violent conflict, including the impact of democratization on state–minority relations. Next, Section 2.4 covers the literature on territorial control. Finally, I analyze the broad subfield of border studies in Section 2.5. The concluding section of the chapter draws the discussion together and details the limits in the literature to identify the factors and mechanisms that speak to the failures of the Kurdish Opening.

2.1 Kurdish Studies

The academic scholarship on the Kurdish conflict in Turkey has been growing in recent decades with the conflict becoming a key political issue in Turkey. While a review of the entire corpus of Kurdish Studies as an academic discipline is beyond the scope of this study, it is essential to briefly highlight how the conflict is studied within this body of research. Kurdish Studies is an interdisciplinary field in which scholars from various subfields have addressed key questions related to the situation of Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria—and in transnational perspective (i.e. the Kurdish diaspora). Within this growing research field, a number of studies have examined the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey since the 1960s and the conflict since the 1980s. Barkey and Fuller (1998) and Kirisci and Winrow (1997) are two of the earliest studies to have examined the conflict between the PKK and Turkey. Both of these studies offer a historical account of the conflict that trace its origins and highlight the social, political and economic causes behind it, including the economic backwardness of Kurdish regions and migration. They highlight the important negative role that the state's assimilation and modernization policies played in the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey (Barkey & Fuller, 1998, p. 13; Kirisci & Winrow, 1997, p. 89).

A number of studies that have examined the rise of the Kurdish movement in Turkey also provide an account of the conflict. Of these, Özcan (2006) studies the PKK as a movement and discusses its ideology and objectives as well as its internal structure and how it motivated its members. Romano (2006) examines the rise of Kurdish nationalism through the theoretical lens of rational-choice theory and resource mobilization theories and Gunes (2012) uses post-structuralist discourse theory to explain the rise of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey. The main question these studies address relates to how and why the PKK has managed to mobilize the Kurdish people in Turkey in its armed struggle. The socio-economic aspects of the Kurdish conflict are also studied in the existing literature. Yadirgi (2017) details the economic impacts of policies on the population.

The legal literature addresses the situation of Kurds in Turkey's legal system (Hughes, 2006; Bayir, 2013), while the majority of cultural studies scholarship on the subject unpacks multiple representations of Kurdishness in the media (Sheyholislami, 2008; Demir & Zeydanlioglu, 2010; Kocer, 2016).

A number of recent studies have examined the Kurdish conflict as a case study to explore relevant analytical questions. Aydin and Emrence (2015) focus on the strategy and tactics used in the conflict and firstly provide an account of the PKK's organizational growth and the policies it has pursued to increase its resources and access to territory. It argues that the PKK's military activities have enabled it to exert its control over some territory, but it has not been able to consolidate it because the "rebel's organizational structure and ideological discourse failed to garner civilian support and facilitate territorial control" (Aydin & Emrence 2015, p. 63). These authors also examine the Turkish state's counter-insurgency policies and strategies and how it discursively represented the PKK's insurgency to the public. This is an important study that sheds light on the issue of territorial control within the conflict, but the focus is mainly on the 1984–1999 period and the developments in the past decade do not feature in their analysis. Gurses' (2018) more recent work studies the PKK's insurgency and the wider social transformation it has brought about in Kurdish society in Turkey by looking at the way it has affected political participation, gender norms in society, and people's attitude to religion.

Jongerden (2007) and Gambetti and Jongerden (2011) focus on the spatial dimension of Turkish–Kurdish conflict. Jongerden (2007) addresses the handicaps of modernization in dealing with ethnic diversity and examines the use of settlement and resettlement policies by the state as a means of sustaining political control over people and land. In this prominent work, the author argues that the state used settlement policies in two ways: while the state mentality destructed certain negative spaces—the ones that it pursued as a threat to state unity—the same logic also

used resettlement policies to construct spaces that it could easily control (Jongerden 2007). In a similar vein, Gambetti and Jongerden (2011) further state that overlooking the spatial dimension of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict leads scholars to neglect the relations between people, land, institutions and territory.

In general, the literature mostly attempts to explain the failure of the Kurdish Opening by focusing on shifting power dynamics and competing interests between the actors involved in the process. In a seminal work, Toktamis (2018) argues that the process did not go further because the prevailing power bloc in Turkey—the concordat between the ruling AKP and the Gülen movement—disintegrated.[14] According to her view, fragmented and competing power blocs *within* the Turkish state negated the possibility of a peaceful resolution of a long-lasting Turkish–Kurdish conflict (Toktamis, 2018, p. 12). Ozpek (2017) argues that the peace process was merely an instrument used by the ruling AKP to gain the upper hand at the negotiation table, and in a similar vein, Çiçek (2017) offers an insightful account that draws attention to shifting power dynamics in favor of Kurdish actors in Syria, and the potential impacts of this change on Turkish domestic politics. Çiçek specifically argues that the peace talks were halted because the pro-Kurdish HDP gained leverage from the peace process while rejecting compromises with Erdoğan on his presidential bid (Çiçek, 2017). In a recent important contribution by Al (2019), the policy changes of the state toward minorities is explained in terms of intra-elite competition within the state. On the other hand, Erensü and Alemdaroğlu (2018) see the reform process and return of repression as

[14] The Gülen movement or *cemaat* is the political faith-based movement led by the outlawed Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen, currently living in the United States. Some (Ebaugh, 2009; Johnson, 2013) argue that this movement is rooted in moderate Islam and strives for peace through intercultural dialogue. However, there are also some others who argue that this movement glorifies Turkish nationalism and represents another face of the Turkish state (i.e. pro-Western but also moderate Islamist and Turkish). For more details, see the 2018 special issue of *Politics, Religion and Ideology* entitled, "Ruin or Resilience? The Future of the Gülen Movement in Transnational Political Exile" (Watmough & Öztürk, 2018a, 2018b). See also Watmough (2019).

two complementary modes of government. These accounts are useful to see a range of explanations for the failure of the Kurdish Opening. Yet neither of these explanations address the role of territorial factors to understanding the process of the Kurdish Opening and its limitations.

As mentioned, the domain of Kurdish Studies is highly variegated and includes studies drawn from the fields of *political science* (Gunes, 2012, 2017, 2019; Bayir, 2013, 2018; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008, 2012; Gunes & Zeydanlıoğlu, 2014; Çiçek, 2011, 2016, 2017; Romano 2002, 2006; Belge 2011, 2016; Gurses, 2010; Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011, 2013; Yeğen, 2007; Watts, 2000, 2010; Tezcür, 2015; Gambetti, 2005; Gambetti & Jongerden, 2011; Loizides, 2010; Baser 2017), *history* (van Bruinessen, 1986, 1994, 2000, 2018; Bozarslan, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2013, 2014; Vali, 2003; Soleimani 2016, 2017; Y.Türkyilmaz, 2011; Z. Türkyilmaz, 2016; Altug, 2013; Ateş, 2012, 2013; Karaman, 2016; Yüksel, 2011); *anthropology* (Sengul, 2014; Ozsoy, 2010, 2013; Bozcali, 2011; Bozcali & Yoltar, 2013; Hakyemez, 2017; Duruiz, 2015; Ozcan, 2011, Darici, 2013); *women and gender studies* (Mojab, 2001; Göksel, 2018; Schäfers, 2017, 2018; Duzel, 2018), and more. These scholars analyze both internal and external dynamics to understand and explain political, historical, cultural as well as spatial dimensions of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. In doing so, the growing breadth of Kurdish Studies often offers a nuanced and procedural examination of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict writ large and indeed how the Kurdish Opening failed, but nevertheless lacks a comparative dimension.

This dissertation fills this critical gap in the relevant literature. In order to examine what is at stake in these questions, this chapter critically assesses, in turn, the contributions and shortfalls of each of four sets of relevant literatures: 1) divided societies; 2) democratization and conflict; 3) territorial control and civil war and; 4) border studies.

2.2 Divided Societies: Turkey as a Deeply Divided Society

An unavoidable theme of Turkish–Kurdish relations is a long history of violence between the Turkish state and the PKK insurgency, which began in 1984 (van Bruinessen, 1988; Bozarslan, 2000, 2004, 2014; Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2014). At that point, a long-simmering ethnic conflict turned into a violent conflict that has continued with very little pause for over three decades. More than 30,000 people have lost their lives in clashes since 1984.

The peaceful resolution of ethno-territorial violent conflicts has also proven incredibly hard to achieve (Mandıracı, 2016). To understand the dynamics of this situation, it is important to put the Turkish–Kurdish conflict into context and ask to what extent the literature on other divided societies (e.g. Northern Ireland, Israel–Palestine, Sri Lanka) can tell us anything about the ethnic divisions in Turkey.

Turkey is in many ways a typical example of a divided society in terms of both its ethnic and religious composition. In Turkey, ethnicity is a politically salient cleavage around which interests are organized for political purposes, such as elections (Reilly, 2001, p. 4). Indeed, analyses of electoral behavior have shown that minority parties attract significant turnout in minority-populated regions, despite restrictions of the institutional design, such as the nation-wide 10% electoral threshold (Tezcur, 2015; Kalaycioglu, 2018). This divide can also be confirmed by the increased likelihood of instability and conflict in those cases where the system includes both moderates and extremists (McCulloch, 2014, p. 3).

Similar to Sri Lanka, Israel–Palestine, Colombia, Rwanda, Sudan, Nigeria, Kashmir, Syria, Lebanon (in the 1970s), and other areas characterized by widespread ethnic violence, Turkey has a dominant ethnicity (i.e. Turkish) that controls the security apparatus of the state. Long-standing ethnic Turkish domination in state institutions, for example the police and the army, has come at the expense of Kurdish representation or presence (Nimni & Aktoprak, 2018) as the Turkish state

pursued both assimilationist and controlling techniques to manage Turkey's ethnic diversity. A peaceful resolution of conflict and violence is harder to achieve in such deeply divided settings (Guelke, 2012; McCulloch, 2014). It is true that with respect to casualties of violence, the violence that has characterized all of the above-mentioned cases has been far greater than in Turkey. Nevertheless, the Turkish–Kurdish conflict remains unresolved.

The number of cases that are torn apart with ethnic violence are ethnically mixed but not all of these are control regimes that are divided by ethnic conflict and violence. Unlike ethnic democracies (Smooha, 1997, 2002) or ethnocracies (Yiftachel, 1997, 2000, 2006), control regimes (Lustick, 1979, 1980; O'Leary and McGarry, 1993; McGarry, 2010; Peleg & Waxman, 2007; Arasaratnam, 1986, 1987) are comprised of a range of different techniques and relationships, which together constitute a complex system of hegemonic control.[15] Hegemonic control is coercive and co-optive rule, which successfully manages to make an ethnic or nationalist challenge to the state order unworkable (O'Leary & McGarry, 1993, p. 109). This set of literature is directly relevant to this study since the typology of territorial control (as will be shown in Chapter 5) is the explanatory factor for the failure of the Kurdish Opening. However, none of these prominent scholars include people's narratives of territorial control (and other control mechanisms) in their account and this is where my thesis comes in.

What is striking for the purpose of this study is that these control regimes look democratic in image, but the practices of these states tell a divergent story (Migdal, 2001, 2004, 2009). This

[15] In examining the status of the Arab minority in Israel, Lustick provides us with three main components of control regimes: segmentation, dependence and co-optation (Lustick, 1980, p. 108). O'Leary and McGarry (1993, 2010) have also identified various mechanisms of control, such as demographic, spatial, legal, and electoral control, in their analysis of Northern Ireland.

gap between the image and reality of the state gives it a hybrid form[16] in which democratic principles coexist with various control mechanisms. The primary goal of these control systems or regimes is to maintain stability by enhancing the interests of the dominant ethnic group through political, legal, spatial, demographic and economic means (O'Leary, Lustick, & Callaghy, 2001).

This dissertation classifies the Turkish state's treatment of Kurds in the borderlands as part of a "multifaceted system of control" (Lustick, 1979, 1980), which is also the model that Lustick used to describe the policies of the Israeli state toward Arab Palestinians. In certain cases where a particular ethnic group controls security and policing mechanisms—such as Northern Ireland (1920–1972) or South Africa—reform processes face significant obstacles in rolling back systems of hegemonic control. This is because majority rule in (liberal) democracies can also be an instrument of hegemonic control, as seen in South Africa (McGarry & O'Leary, 1994). This ties directly to a central claim of this dissertation: the Kurdish Opening failed because the Turkish state continued to pursue control mechanisms even as it negotiated peace.

In divided settings, not only are there different episodes that define the intensity and durability of ethnic conflict and violence, but every episode is likely to have its own dynamics. Instead of aspiring to a single theoretical lens, we need to identify and explain the *heterogenous processes and mechanisms* involved in generating the varied instances of what we all too casually lump together as "ethnic violence" (Brubaker & Laitin, 1998). Following this logic, we can suggest that state–minority relations were characterized by alternating and sometimes contradictory policies, practices and experiences in Turkey; and large-scale ethnic violence consisted of a dynamic between varying levels of state violence, insurgency, and street protests extending in

[16] This is different than the hybrid state (Jaffe 2013) in which multiple governmental actors—in this case, criminal organizations, politicians, police, and bureaucrats—are entangled in a relationship of collusion and divestment, sharing control over urban spaces and populations.

space and time. The Turkish state's counter-insurgency methods mostly included environmental destruction (van Etten et al., 2008) and outsourcing violence to death squads and militias (Biberman, 2018). The complexity of the political violence and war in Turkey requires disaggregating the issue into processes, events and occurrences that recurred during the outbreak of ethnic violence (and civil war), as will be shown in Chapter 4.

In light of all that has been said, this dissertation poses a challenge to the *state-centered studies* that are limited in scope. These studies rely on a series of problematic assumptions: 1) that the state is the main unit of analysis; 2) that the phenomenon can be explained by looking only at the state as a whole (and its institutions) while ignoring prominent components, such as the interaction between state and society at varying levels and in multiple domains, and 3) that relations between states are worthy of attention, but not relations of states to sub-state groups, e.g. divided nations, stateless nations and borderlands people.

State-centered approaches (Nordlinger, 1987) to state–society relations suffer from these very problems. The primary focus of this literature is on state institutions and preferences of majority elites/policy-makers, yet the claims of minority ethnic groups and the interests of their representatives have significant influence on state–minority relations. Those who ignore the claims of minorities living in the same state would be less interested in the claims of divided nations. This is also shown in the scholarly debates on redesigning institutions, such as those that advocate power sharing (Wolff, 2008; Mcculloch & McGarry, 2017) in accordance with the demands of ethnic and national minorities in deeply divided societies.

To sum up, this set of literature on divided nations offers multiple accounts that identify barriers and suggest accommodations for ethnic minorities at the institutional level. That is, the existing scholarship is helpful to examine the extent to which state institutions succeed or fail to accommodate diversity. Furthermore, this scholarship proposes alternative schemes for these

institutions and come up with policy suggestions that wither away the barriers. However, this literature offers little guidance on the lived experiences of institutions (i.e. statehood) and policies (i.e. the Kurdish Opening) over the population in the margins. The next part offers the overview of the literature on democratization and peace and conflict in such divided settings.

2.3 Democratization and Violent Conflict

Turkey stands between Europe and the Middle East, which puts the country between two challenging and contradictory regional environments. In the early 2000s, the EU project was giving an external push to Turkey to move toward democratization, and Turkish politicians were speaking of the prospects of EU membership (Bahcheli, 2006; Gül, 2014). Likewise, EU member states were encouraging Turkish officials to take democratic initiatives and stay committed to the EU membership process (Öniş, 2003; Müftüler-Baç, 2005).

Meanwhile, the Middle Eastern regional environment was moving toward uncertain and volatile circumstances, and while the PKK was not in active war with the Turkish state between 1999 and 2004, it had continued to recruit guerrillas from Turkey and neighboring countries. And after the US intervention in 2003–2004, Iraq underwent violent and destabilizing regime change (Dodge, 2013).

These circumstances informed the Turkish–Kurdish situation when the Arab Spring created a climate of change across the Middle East beginning in early 2011 (Anderson, 2011; Bellin, 2012; Ahmed & Capoccia, 2014; Stepan & Linz, 2013; Volpi, 2013). The entire region was in a state of flux after a set of upheavals that initially began in Tunisia, then spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria (BBC News, 2013b). The wave of protests in several countries saw major protests that turned into either large-scale conflicts (e.g. the Syrian civil war and the escalated insurgency in Iraq), or to the toppling of regimes as happened in Libya.

Turkey experienced its own contentious episode with the Gezi uprisings that began in the heart of Istanbul in 2013. The Gezi resistance started in response to a plan to transform a public park—one of the last remaining in central Istanbul—into a mixed-use commercial and hospitality development. Gezi was thus an episode of popular resistance against the commodification of urban space, nature and everyday life for the reproduction of capital (Ercan & Oguz, 2015). The government responded to the people's protest with violence, causing 22 people to die and leaving more than 8,000 injured (The Guardian, 2013).

While these incidents were happening in Istanbul, Turkey's eastern and southeastern borders were facing a relatively silent period. The PKK and its leader Öcalan announced another ceasefire in March 2013 (Letsch, 2013). Despite some small-scale clashes, the ceasefire officially continued, and talks initiated between the government of Turkey and the PKK resulted in the de-escalation of violence for two years from 2013 to 2015 (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015, p. 543). Meanwhile, a significant portion of PKK guerrillas, alongside Kurdish civilians from Turkey, crossed the border and joined the various Syrian Kurdish groups (known as Rojava in Kurdish)—the SDF, the YPG and the YPJ—in their fight against ISIS in the north of Syria. As shown, regional, national and local dynamics were shifting rapidly, and the future of Turkey's democratization process was not predictable under such uncertain circumstances.

The literature focusing on the relationship between democratization and violent conflict offers essential concepts and arguments for the reform process and its ultimate failure. It also provides insights about the conditions under which the policies of democratization can succeed or fail in settings that are nominally similar to Turkey—that is to say, a state where there is a *politically mobilized* and *territorialized* minority population, which has challenged state sovereignty for a significant period of time in a conflict that has involved significant violence.

Given the essence of this thesis, I will review some of the relevant studies on the nexus between democratization and violent conflict in both International Relations (IR) and comparative politics. In IR, democratic peace theory has preserved its dominance. The basic premise is the assumption that democracies do not fight each other (Bremer, 1992; Chan, 1997; Ray, 1998). There are two variants of this theory: a normative explanation[17] and an institutionalist explanation. The former addresses the role of values that are inclined toward democratic peace, while the latter looks at the institutional constraints that are necessary for democratic peace to survive. But neither versions are relevant to this study given the context. The theory itself is not about conflicts within states.[18]

More importantly, both the normative and institutional logic behind the democratic peace theory was found unconvincing because, as shown in the US interventions in Brazil, Guatemala and Chile, state concerns for security still overrides its concern for democratic norms. Furthermore,

[17] The protagonists of the normative version are influenced by Immanuel Kant's argument about perpetual peace which states that people would never vote to go to war unless in self-defense. According to Kant, there are three important elements crucial to lasting peace, and today they are interpreted as international institutions, democratic governance and international commerce (Antić & Vlahovec, 2013, p. 56). These three criteria are the preconditions for perpetual peace to emerge.

[18] The democratic peace theory has become the most powerful liberal contribution to the debate on the causes of war and peace (Rosato, 2003). This view has been more appealing to normative theorists who stress the importance of liberal democracy, such as Michael Doyle (2012), who argued that liberal democracies differ from non-liberal ones inasmuch as the former do not wage wars for non-democratic causes. According to this view, the world would be a peaceful place if the number of liberal-democratic states increased. Likewise, Michael Mousseau (2005) argues that market-oriented capitalism supports the democratic peace theory because a market economy creates norms and values that support democracy and peace. A number of studies also support the capitalist peace theory by emphasizing the pacifying effect of economic relations between democracies (Polachek, 1980; Domke, 1988; Oneal & Russett, 1999). This view does not directly speak to this study because its basic assumptions are questioned by the Turkish–Kurdish case: the Turkish state is not liberal-democratic and the focus of the present research is not *inter*-state, but rather *intra*state, conflict. Kurdish mobilization, of course, has regional as well as transnational dynamics but this study examines the relationship between the Turkish state and Kurds on empirical grounds. Therefore, this normative theory—which relies on limited assumptions—cannot address and respond to the present study's research question. The main assumptions of normative (democratic) peace theory have been challenged on various grounds. Realists (e.g. Spiro, 1996) criticize the democratic peace theory by arguing that there is no connection between the presence of democracy and peace as the proponents of the democratic peace theory suggests. According to these realists, the explanatory factor for the causes of war and peace is about the calculations of power (Faber & Gowa, 1996).

the empirical claims of democratic peace theory have been challenged by the empirical facts of those countries undergoing a democratic transition (Rosato 2003). Would democratic peace theory hold for these democratizing countries? The controversy around this question still sparks debates in academic circles.

The relevant strand of literature that examines the relationship between democratization and war is the institutionalist perspective. According to this approach, the institutional setting is the main explanatory factor in the democratization-war nexus. In democratizing countries, the theory runs, conflict is less likely when there are strong institutions in place (Bogaards, 2010; Mansfield & Snyder, 2002a). Mansfield and Snyder (1995, 2002a) initially claimed that democratization leads to war. This statement generated much controversy in academic circles and received several criticisms with respect to their study's operationalization and measurement of both democratization and war. Some scholars questioned Mansfield and Snyder's methodology, others criticized their understanding of concepts (e.g. regime change) (Thompson & Tucker, 1997; Wolf et. al, 1996). The role of institutions in the increased and decreased likelihood of conflict is still a matter of controversy (Vorrath, Senn & Krebs, 2007, p. 17).

Partly in response to these concerns, Mansfield and Snyder suggested differentiating between complete and incomplete democratization and introduced the strength of institutions as an intervening variable (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002b; Bogaards, 2010, p. 477). According to their revised argument, inter-state wars are more likely to start in the contexts of incomplete democracies with weak institutions. When there are strong institutions in place, political competition between old and new actors is regulated effectively. However, in infant democracies, the escalating political competition between elites for popular support to win elections is likely to foster nationalist sentiments and generate divisions in the society. The weakness of transitional states allows old elites to take advantage from power vacuum and to manipulate the society in the early stages of

democratization. According to this latest formulation, political institutions matter most in understanding how democracies lead to war.

How does this literature address my research question? Truly, the institutionalist framework predicts a positive relation between democratization and the likelihood of war if the country in question lacks strong institutional infrastructure. In these cases, there is some progress toward achieving peace or toward mitigating violence. Mansfield and Snyder offer a useful perspective for those who are interested in democratization and inter-state war in global affairs but offer little guidance with respect to intrastate conflict and its domestic–level causes.

In comparative politics, there is an extensive literature that addresses the relationship between democratization and peace and conflict in divided settings, with specific attention to minority accommodation and institutional redesign.[19] The existing literature on minority accommodation and institutional redesign offers rich insights into the prospects of diminished violence in the context of Turkish–Kurdish relations. For instance, Tezcur (2011) draws attention to the ongoing political competition between the combatants and argues that democratization cannot mitigate violence as long as it introduces competition. The path to democracy in conflict-ridden settings, according to these theories, involves the path to building effective institutions, such as federations and autonomous regions. The study of political institutions is accordingly integral to the study of democratization because institutions constitute and sustain democracies.

There are two camps in this debate. On the one hand, there are scholars who support democratic federations under certain circumstances and identify internal and external factors that are conducive to their success. For these scholars, such as R. Watts (2004), McGarry and O'Leary

[19] I am not making a clear-cut distinction between international relations and comparative politics. This is principally because the academic debates on democratization and violent conflict lie at the intersection of these two subfields of political science.

(2005), Cameron (2009), and Erk and Anderson (2009), democratic federations[20] can be successful under certain conditions, and there are certain internal and external factors that are conducive to the constitution of stable federations.

On the other hand, others—including Roeder (2007) and Snyder (2000)—note the negative consequences of federalism. This second position is skeptical about the capacity of federations to control political separation. From this perspective, federations that are constituted along ethnic lines—the so-called "ethno-federations"—can foster secession since ethno-federations have the incentive to escalate minority demands and to generate new ethnically conscious minorities demanding the right to self-government (Snyder, 2000; Roeder, 1991, 2007, 2009). Likewise, Horowitz (1992) argues that consociational democracy and federalism have centripetal characteristics that are prone to raising inter-group cleavages and conflicts. In order to prevent nation-state crises that are endogenous to federal arrangements, Horowitz (1985) suggests promoting inter-group alliances, which he believes will mitigate secessionist demands. This literature also speaks to this study because the failures of the Kurdish Opening in Turkey also show the failures of the Turkish nation-state in minority accommodation, as I have already mentioned above.

There is a growing literature, which posits the idea that the relationship between democratization and violent conflict is context-bound. According to this view, democratization serves as a much less effective tool in mitigating violence in the context of armed conflict, because democratization fosters competition among actors in way that makes escalated violence more likely (Cederman, Hug & Krebs, 2010). In countries like Turkey where there is a history of armed conflict, democratization faces more challenges in terms of bringing peace. For example, the

[20] All of these authors assume that federalism reinforces some principles that are crucial to democracy and democratic accountability.

ongoing political competition between fighting actors limits the prospects of democratization for a positive change (Tezcur, 2010b). In such settings, the success of the reform process is conditional. This study speaks to this literature by showing that the reform process is conditional on recognizing the relevance of territorial factors. Put simply: 1) geography matters and 2) the conflicting sides in the Kurdish Opening peace process evinced not only *political* but also *territorial competition*. This ongoing competition is reflected in the contrasting views of the combatants regarding the political status of Kurds in Turkey.

2.3.1 The impact of democratization on state–minority relations. The literature focused on the impact of democratization on state–minority relations provides some of the most relevant arguments for this study. Scholars have pointed out that democratization processes have an ambiguous impact on the status of minorities (Haklai & Bertrand, 2013). The specific effects of democratization are mediated by multiple domestic and international factors. Scholars who emphasize the significance of domestic conditions highlight the role of institutional legacies (Linz & Stepan, 1996; Haklai, 2011); the role of agency and coordination among majority and minority actors (Csergő, 2007) and the significance of minority mobilization and popular protest—namely, its degree, instruments, and duration (Vermeersch, 2011; Stroschein, 2012). Others argue the significance of international organizations and external agency (Whitehead, 1996; Levitsky & Way, 2006; Jenne, 2015; Csergő, Wolff & Roseberry, 2017).

On the question of whether democratization improves state–minority relations, influential comparative work based on a global survey of cases shows improvement in the quality of life for minorities by eliminating discrimination targeting them (Gurr, 2000). Indeed, democratization has occurred without violence and enhanced minority rights in many cases, including minorities living in newer EU member states of central and eastern Europe. In other cases, however, democratic regime change generated a deterioration of the status of minorities. The recent case of state-

sanctioned violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar, for instance, challenges the conventional expectation that democratization lessens violence in state–minority conflict. Rather, it supports arguments that regime change creates conditions of insecurity that can escalate conflict and violence (Snyder, 2000; Rothchild, 2004; Young, 2006).

Despite the richness of the comparative literature on democratization and state–minority conflict in various regions of the world, there is a significant lacuna in our general understanding of why—in an overwhelming majority of cases—processes of democratization do not significantly improve state–minority relations. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of this highly salient question by introducing the factor of territorial control in exacerbating the conflict—even in a case where a number of domestic and international conditions are lined up in favor of a positive outcome in interethnic peace.

The literature on EU integration and its impact on state–minority relations is also relevant for this study, inasmuch as there is a shortcoming to that literature. With the process of EU accession in the democratizing countries of Eastern and Central Europe, scholars began to analyze the impact of Europeanization on institutional change in state–minority relations (Smith, 2002; Galbreath & McEvoy, 2012). The process of EU integration has had both direct and indirect effects on state institutions and minority activism. Most studies on this subject, however, focus only on the state institutions (i.e. reforms), domestic politics or inter-state relations (Jenne, 2007; Stroschein, 2012), leaving the question of how EU integration has affected mobilized minorities and their political agency unanswered (Csergő & Regelmann, 2017). This study acknowledges this shortcoming in the literature and looks at the picture through a lens that considers the presence both of state and minority agency. In this regard, this study is interested in both policy reforms as well as their impact on the ground (marked by personal narratives). In constructing an appropriate

conceptual framework for such an analysis, this study has benefited from the literature on territory and territorial politics, to which I shall turn next.

2.4 Territorial Control and Civil War

This part presents a review of relevant literature on civil wars, violence and territorial control. There exists a considerable body of literature on territorial control in the scholarship covering civil wars in the field of IR. This literature has embraced debates about the definitions, methodologies, and causes of civil wars, and generally revolves around the following questions: what are the key features of civil wars? Why do some conflicts turn violent but not others? Under what conditions do civil wars emerge and what explains their durability? Yet these questions do not look at the relationship between territory, state, and people in the Turkish–Kurdish context.

2.4.1 Causes of civil wars. Several approaches explain how civil wars arise. In general, structural theories explain the causes of war with reference to factors such as economic inequality and political grievances, while rational-choice (or individualist) theories explain the same causes in terms of political actors, deploying agency-based arguments.

The primary theory that makes a structure-based argument is related to the economics of the conflict and is known as the greed theory (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002). Greed theory is often compared with grievance theory and while the supporters of these theories differ on the source of the violent conflict, they agree on the argument that civil wars are primarily caused by people's deprivation, whether economic or political (and legal). The existing literature on greed theory highlights the relevance of economic agendas for the risk of civil war. Collier and Hoeffler (2002), the most well-known advocates of this theory, carried out a cross-national analysis of civil war onset on 161 countries between 1960, and 1999, and concluded that the probability of civil war is conditioned primarily by economic factors: poverty makes countries more prone to violent conflict in general, especially to insurgency. Other studies (e.g. De Soysa, 2002; Sambanis, 2004; Hegre,

Ellingsen, Gates & Gleditsch, 2001) reach a similar conclusion. This approach also assumes that the economic motives of armed conflict give motives to rebel groups from resource-poor regions when these groups find opportunities to organize into an armed movement (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). In certain cases, these economic motives are also open to elite manipulation (Kaufman, 1996), in which cases actor-based arguments come to the fore.

By contrast, grievance theories address people's deprivation and group disadvantages—with groups usually defined by class, religion and ethnicity—as the drivers for civil war and violence. A number of authors (Horowitz, 1985; Gurr 1993; Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Murdoch & Sandler, 2002; Korf, 2005) have recognized that civil wars are more likely to emerge in countries where a particular group experiences discrimination and continuously suffers from grievances against the state.

Although these approaches are still relevant in explaining why civil wars emerge, neither greed nor grievance theories, nor individualist, elite manipulation arguments, can sufficiently explain the spatial (i.e. territorial) variation of violence and control in conflict-prone divided settings, which is the focus of the present research study. This kind of research requires pursuing a sub-national or local analysis of control and violent conflict, because sufficient evidence for the relationship between the role of territorial factors (e.g. location of conflict zone; distance from the capital; proximity to borders; geographical features of the conflict zone—whether it is mountainous and remote, for example; whether the territory has forests) and level of violent conflict cannot be derived from national and global studies. In this way, this study also challenges the state-centered scholarship where the state remains the main unit of analysis.

With their focus on group deprivation, either economic or political, neither grievance nor greed theories are sufficient to explain why wars break out in some countries but not in others, why ethnic conflicts turn into violent civil wars in some contexts but not in others, or why wars last so

long in some places but not in others. These significant questions remind us that groups must also have the opportunity to organize rebellion and initiate civil war. Though these theories frame the discussion on the subject, they do not address the central theme of this study: why did the Kurdish Opening fail to mitigate violence and bring peace in Turkey? Why did this violent conflict resist settlement and why has it lasted so long?

Both greed and grievance (i.e. motive-based) theories have their origin in relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970; Sambanis, 2002) that sees the eruption of political violence and civil war as a rational means to redress economic and political grievances (Østby & Urdal, 2014). Deprived groups who have been suffering from horizontal inequalities (Stewart, 2003), such as ethnic and religious minorities, rebel against the state when they see that rebellion is feasible for either money-making or justice-seeking.

The literature on the opportunity argument concludes that, regardless of motive, rebellion will only occur if it is feasible. Rebellion is only feasible when: 1) the rebellious group has popular support (Gates, 2002; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008); 2) the group has no problem with financing (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003; Ross, 2004) and 3) the state is weak (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Herbst, 2000). As Denny and Walter (2014) clearly shows, states are considered weak when they have less capacity to effectively police those areas far from the capital and located in rough terrain (Buhaug & Rød, 2006; Buhaug, Gates and Lujala, 2009) and also when they have less ability to monitor the activities of rebellious groups (Moore, 1998; Gupta, Singh & Sprague, 1993). All else being equal, rebellion is more likely to occur when the state lacks capacity to assert control in mountainous terrain.

Taken together, both opportunity and greed vs. grievances arguments provide a framework for this study, yet do not address my question. Greed vs. grievances scholarship is partially relevant to my analysis of violence and civil war in the context of Turkish–Kurdish relations. Although the

questions of why certain groups rebel and how they mobilize against the state to begin with are not central to this study, these existing arguments about the causes of civil war and violence tell us that state–minority relations are likely to become unstable and violent when a minority is relatively deprived of political and economic opportunity in deeply divided settings. This, of course, is not irrelevant. But local analysis of this matter shows the relevance of the spatial component in the study of violent conflict and in particular its duration and tractability.

In sum, the aforementioned theories all miss: 1) the role of geography in the presence of violent conflict and; 2) the role that the spatial component plays in the recurrence and duration of violence. These gaps in the existing literature are filled by this study.

Another important point to stress is that Turkey's protracted conflict with the PKK has not in fact turned into civil war. In addition, it should be noted that the Turkish army is generally accepted to be the second largest military force in NATO (Mortimer, 2017). It is an army that can pursue PKK guerrillas in rough terrain, and that has armed drones that it can use to carry attacks against them. Nevertheless, the fight between the PKK and Turkish army continues, and the PKK continues to have influence in Turkey's borderlands. The question then is not why there is insurgency and guerilla warfare in Turkey, but why the two sides cannot negotiate a settlement. In other words, the question here is not about the causes of guerilla wars, but about the conditions and dynamics that pervade the process of conflict perpetuation and progression, which are heavily affected by local dynamics overlooked by all of the existing approaches.

2.4.2 A brief discussion of the micro versus macro-analysis debate. Although civil wars and violence have been studied both qualitatively and quantitatively (Gleditsch, 2007; Salehyan, 2007; Gurses, 2012, 2015), quantitative approaches have dominated the field since the 1990s. In the study of violence and civil wars, quantitative analyses are based on national units of analysis and cross-national comparisons, and a range of other aggregated concepts (Newman & DeRouen,

2014, p. 4). These studies measure the impacts of economic inequality and grievances (e.g. lack of political rights) through statistical analysis. Although the existing quantitative literature has its own merits, questions about local patterns and dynamics remain unaddressed by that literature because statistical analysis/regression is not suitable to that kind of research.

This study therefore also fills a gap that was left by macro-level approaches to the study of violence and civil wars. Macro-level studies use aggregate variables. In contrast, this study disaggregates the democratization–violence nexus in Turkey by exploring local patterns of territorial control in the Kurdish-populated borderlands. Attending to local patterns is crucial especially since there is a dearth of such studies on the Middle East, and new analyses are much needed.

In undertaking this approach, I investigate theories of civil war that have an element of geography, through a disaggregated approach at the sub-national or local level. In addition to the aforementioned advantages, these sub-national levels of analysis also offer more detailed evidence in support of the relationship between conflict and geography (such as natural resources).[21] Moreover, the lack of accurate data from conflict zones is a common problem, for which in-depth sub-national analysis is an important step toward a remedy.

Buhaug and Rød offer similar insights in their work on African civil wars between 1970 and 2001, in which they explore the local determinants of those wars, such as the role of periphery, demography, development, terrain, ethnicity and resources (Buhaug & Rød, 2006, p. 318). As they have demonstrated, local factors, particularly the geography and location of the conflict zone—whether it is far from the capital city and close to the state border; whether the local road density is high or low; whether there are valuable natural resources; whether it is a mountainous and

[21] For more details, see Newman & DeRouen (2014).

forested terrain—and its demography (whether the local population density is high or low) have varying influences on the risk of civil wars. Yet this argument has been applied to only a few regions (e.g. Africa) and needs to be extended to other regions as well.

To sum up this section of the chapter, it is important to re-emphasize that previous quantitative research on violence is an initial step toward a more profound understanding of cross-national comparisons. However, as discussed above, such approaches have serious shortcomings. This literature is useful for assessing the impacts of various factors on the relationship between territory and conflict at a national level of analysis. However, these theories have problems when applied to the micro (i.e. sub-national) level of analysis because they can lead to wrong (and inaccurate, or at least incomplete) conclusions about the role of geographical elements in armed civil conflict. There is a need to go beyond macro-level analysis and incorporate micro-level analysis (sub-national studies) into the study of control and violence/war. This is the way to shed light on the local dynamics that have previously been assessed only to a limited extent (in terms of time period and regional focus).

2.4.3 Geography of civil wars and territorial control. A growing literature on the relationship between geography and civil war examines the influences of geographical factors on conflict proneness. It poses questions such as: Why are there some ethnic conflicts that turn violent but not others? Under what conditions do conflicts become violent? What is the role of geography on civil war/violence emergence and recurrence? This literature is beneficial for this study for two reasons. First, it shows that geography influences conflict (e.g. there are geographical components explaining the rise and recurrence of conflict). Second, as previously mentioned, because there are strong indications in this literature that sub-national analysis of violent conflict gives more accurate (and detailed) results in general, as well as to the research question of this study.

This specific scholarship on the geography–conflict nexus refers to the conflicts and civil wars that are related to the control of physical geography, natural resources and human geography of identity (Johnson & Toft, 2014; Kalyvas, 2006). Broadly, as Toft (2003) notes, there are material and non-material approaches that answer the above-mentioned questions differently. The former focuses on economic calculations and strategic values of territory, while the latter addresses the relevance of attachment to ethnic identity and its deep connection to territory and people living in that territory.

The role of territory[22] is reflected in the relationship between states and people. Territorial factors here range from the geographical location—whether it is close to the borders and far from the capital city, etc.—to the characteristics of the conflict zone. Fearon and Laitin (1999) for instance, argue that mountainous rough terrains and forests are the measures of onset and duration of civil wars. Collier and Hoeffler (2001) complement Fearon and Laitin's argument and claim that there is a link between natural resources and conflict (the former increases the likelihood of the latter).

Providing inaccurate results is not the only problem in the existing literature. As mentioned earlier, the majority of macro-political accounts put the state at the center of their analyses while examining the intensity of civil wars. But, as shown in this study as well as others, the violence involved is not evenly distributed across the space of the states concerned. Even villages that are located in remote areas have contrasting experiences concerning the spatial distribution of violence. Likewise, control is not evenly distributed across the space either. In order to tackle these problems related to the spatial unevenness of violence and control in civil wars/armed conflicts, the

[22] There is also a growing literature on territory. Here the term is used as a political shorthand to refer to the relations of power over a given place. For conceptual and theoretical debates, see O'Tuathail (1996), Paasi (2003) and Moore (2015).

explanations for differential violence and control must account for the differential characteristics of particular regions or localities. Kalyvas (2006), in his pioneering work on civil war in Greece, has put local variation and territorial unevenness of violence and control at the center of his explanation of conflicts.

Cederman and Gleditsch (2009) also explore sub-national patterns of distribution and diffusion of violence. In parallel with this, some scholars (Wimmer, 2013; Wimmer & Feinstein, 2010) have addressed the salience of the contextual political factors situated at the local and regional levels while exploring the proliferation of the nation-state across the world. In short, all of the existing literature on the geography–conflict nexus demonstrates the two important points that I put forward in this study. First, spatial variation and territorial agendas and boundaries lie at the heart of the study of violence and control. Second, sub-national or local studies of control and violence provide evidence for the geography–conflict nexus that global and national studies fail to address. Local studies offer data to identify and classify mechanisms of territorial control that macro-level analyses simply cannot provide. I expand on this literature by examining the relationship between a peace process and territorial control in a divided setting and in addition, I apply the literature's theories to a specific territorial context: the Kurdish borderlands of Turkey.

2.4.4 Territorial control. In the aftermath of WWII, 165 territorial conflicts have broken out across the globe; only 60 percent have been resolved by negotiated peace settlements. Given the drastic consequences of a high number of territorial conflicts, a growing body of scholarship has emerged on the causes and types of territorial conflict (Forsberg, 1996; Huth & Allee, 2002; Toft, 2003) as well as on settled negotiations, models of resolution and post-conflict management (Samuels, 2005; Lundy & McGovern, 2008). The common pattern in these cases is that the conflict arises between the state center that aims to protect its borders and hold its population together, and a mobilized minority challenging the state's project by pushing for some sort of territorial self-rule

(Keating, 1996, 2013; Gagnon & Keating, 2012; Horowitz, 2000; Coakley, 2012; Cordell & Wolff, 2009; Wolff, 2011; Haklai & Bertrand, 2013).

Considering the immense impact of territorial conflicts, the number of scholarly works related to a theory of territory and its empirical analysis in different contexts has been increasing. Theoretically, most of the relevant scholarship focuses on the concept of territory (Elden, 2013; Paasi, 2004) and the scope of territorial rights (Miller, 2012; Simmons, 2001). These debates are held mostly among philosophers (Nine, 2008; Kolers, 2009; Moore, 2015) and some political geographers (Elden, 2010; Yiftachel, 1998) as well as IR scholars who are interested in the conception of territory (Murphy, 1996, 2010; Agnew, 1994). Although this set of literature is not directly linked to the question of this research, these pieces have informed the theoretical background of this study and its emphasis on the connections between territorial factors and the reform process in Turkey.

The disputes over territory or territorial control have a prominent place in the IR scholarship because these topics have figured in virtually every major inter-state war of the past hundred years (Agnew, 1998; Mackinder, 1904). For constructivists, however, the notions of state, sovereignty and territoriality (Dressler & Guieb, 2015) are not fixed, and therefore analyzing the changing conceptions and forms of these three phenomena is essential for political scientists, given the influence these notions have in shaping contemporary events. Thus, for instance, Biersteker (2002) argues that with regard to changing conceptions of territoriality, the degree of attention to physical control of territory and/or the porosity of borders would itself be indicative and constitutive of change thereof. This line of thinking is in keeping with the approach that I pursue in this study, as I show that the direction of change in Turkish–Kurdish relations is informed by the mechanisms and narratives of territorial control in the borderlands.

Lustick introduced the term "control regime" to describe the superior power of one segment that is mobilized to enforce stability by constraining the political actions and opportunities of another segment or segments of society (Lustick, 1979, p. 328; see also Lustick, 1980). The author approaches control as a process by which a majority maintains superordinate power over a minority through various combinations of the three main mechanisms of segmentation, co-optation and dependency. In Lustick's model, these three mechanisms are examined on institutional, structural and programmatic levels, thus generating nine analytical categories. Although I do not directly adopt Lustick's categories, his work on control as an analytical approach provides me with the necessary framework to identify and conceptualize the various subtle mechanisms and policies that permit a web of control to operate in deeply divided nations/settings.

Lustick's model of control falls within the spectrum between consociationalism, on the one hand, and violence on the other. Consociationalism, as developed by Lijphart (1977), emphasizes cooperation among sub-national elites, but fails to address the implications of asymmetrical power relations and the subtle impacts of various oppressive policies on the population. The typology of control, which I develop out of Lustick's model in this study, enables me to address the latter. In brief, this study fills the gap in this literature by: 1) partially adopting Lustick's approach to explore certain mechanisms of territorial control in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands (adjacent to Iraq and Iran); 2) nuancing the approach by adding new categories and mechanisms to Lustick's account (as interview data suggests) and 3) showing the impacts of control on the lived experiences of Kurds in the borderlands.

Lustick's framework was adopted to the study of control in Estonia (Hallik & Vettai, 2002). This study is also inspired by Lustick's work and I find his framework analytically useful for developing strategies to unpack the exercise of state control in Turkey. But I contribute to the growing literature on control by going beyond state-centered perspectives. In parallel to Lustick,

there are also some other prominent scholars (Herbst, 2000; Hallik & Vettai, 2002; & O'Leary & McGarry, 1993, 2010; Newman, 1989) who have paid close attention to the state's control mechanisms. O'Leary and McGarry (1993, 2010) extend the scope of hegemonic control and apply it to a different setting. In their approach, hegemonic control is a coercive and co-optive rule that successfully manages to make an ethnic or nationalist challenge to the state order unworkable (O'Leary & McGarry, 1993, p. 109). In their analysis of relations between Northern Ireland and Britain, the authors make a distinction between the mechanisms and symptoms of control in divided societies. Mechanisms of control refer to the state policies that underpin the symptoms of control (McGarry, 2010). There are various forms of control mechanisms, such as demographic control, electoral control, territorial or spatial control, legal control and control of political institutions (McGarry, 2010, p. 35). These mechanisms, as articulated by McGarry and O'Leary, constitute an important component of my theoretical framing. In Turkey, the state has used these methods in different forms, which I detail in Chapter 5.

There are also comparative examples that show the complexity of local processes of territorial governance (military and environmental territoriality) shaping state–society relations at the margins (Vandergeest & Lee Peluso, 1995), and exacerbating people's vulnerability (as well as structural violence) in these highly politicized zones (Dressler & Guieb, 2015). This literature speaks to the core of this study, as will be seen in Chapter 5, where I introduce the typology of what I call "territorial control" and detail their corresponding narratives. To foreshadow briefly, this typology includes five mechanisms—control of movement across borders, securitization, nationalizing the landscape, demographic and administrative control and expulsion and expropriation. Although I use different terms to identify these mechanisms, this study also offers evidence that supports the argument that military and environmental territoriality has both material

and discursive impacts on state–society relations, but also goes beyond this literature by unpacking mechanisms of control and displaying the lived experiences of Kurds in Turkey.

2.4.5 Negotiated settlements and peace processes. The literature on civil war termination and conflict resolution is categorized into two main camps. The first is the rational-choice approach; the second is the conflict-resolution approach. The former is based on the idea that whether or not warring parties negotiate depends on the expected costs and benefits of the outcome of the process. The latter, on the other hand, is focused on the idea that the interaction of certain conditions during the process will bring a negotiated solution. This second body of literature investigates the combination of underlying factors that explain the success or failure of peace processes (negotiated settlements) in civil wars. Such factors include the *identity of the warring parties* (McSweeney, 1996; Soetendorp, 2002); the *divisibility of stakes* (Hassner, 2003; Sosis, 2011; Toft, 2003, 2013) and the *presence or absence of outside mediators* (Kuperman, 1996; Blaydes & De Maio, 2010). Walter (1997) also addresses the lack of commitment and combatants' unwillingness to continue negotiations when they think that they are being asked to make serious concessions.

If Walter's theory is adapted to the Kurdish Opening, including the Turkish state–PKK talks, then the failure of the Kurdish Opening would be explained by the hypothesis that both sides were asking for "too much", and believed that the process would leave them vulnerable in the end. By contrast, conflict-resolution theorists might say that the absence of external mediators in Turkish–Kurdish negotiations doomed them from the start.

More importantly, there is no one-size-fits-all model for third-party interventions (Fisher, 2001). The emphasis on third-party interventions points to other noteworthy peace processes, including the Dayton Accords (1995); the talks ending the 30-year civil war in Sri Lanka (2002) and the Burundi peace talks (1995–2000), which succeeded thanks to the presence of external

intervention (Anderlini, 2004). However, there are also cases where peace talks failed even if there was a facilitator.[23] Additionally, the theories of third-party intervention are not testable when applied to the Turkey–PKK peace talks because the violent conflict persists, and the process failed to move to the next stage even though the PKK demanded to have international mediators (Ekurd Daily, 2017).

The other prominent explanation of eruption of civil war is the (in)divisibility of the stakes: This view approaches the rise of violence as a function of the expected utility of fighting for control over a given territory (Toft, 2003, 2009). To put it differently, war makes victory possible, while negotiation means certain defeat, when both the state and the ethnic group in question view territorial control as an indivisible issue (i.e. as something that can be won or lost, but not shared). According to this interpretation, the Kurdish Opening failed because the main negotiators continued to perceive the territory over which they fought as indivisible. This study offers strong empirical evidence in support of Toft's argument and shows that the Turkish state's interests over the control of a specific territory contradicted its stated intention to settle the protracted conflict and accommodate Kurds. Although it is inspired by Toft's work, this study goes beyond that framework by generating a new typology of territorial control and applying that to the case of Kurdistan. In the next part, I will expand on bargaining theory, which is widely discussed in IR.

2.4.6 Bargaining theory. The growing literature on bargaining in intra-state conflicts revolves around two principal questions: what are the fundamental prerequisites of civil war resolution? And under what conditions could negotiated solutions work (Johnson, 2007; Walter,

[23] For example, during the peace talks in Sri Lanka (2000–2006), where the Norwegian government assumed the role of facilitator.

1997)? The former addresses the timing of conflict resolution while the latter looks for an opportunity to effect it.

Bargaining theorists also address the relevance of negotiations, both in terms of the process of negotiation, but also how to engage in negotiations in different contexts (Gardner, 2013). Zartman and Berman (1982), in their seminal work, present a model of the international negotiation process. Given that there is no one-size-fits-all model of international negotiations, their model involves differing forms of negotiations between state and non-state actors. Asal et al. (2005) likewise provide a perspective through which negotiations can proceed and mediation can happen in the case of international conflicts and crises. But how far can bargaining theories go in framing the discussion on intrastate conflicts? What are the benefits and limits of these theories when applied to intra-state conflicts such as the Turkish–Kurdish conflict?

The bargaining literature is useful and relevant for this study because it offers insights into the challenges of terminating conflict or war and suggests guidelines for the prospects of long-term peace. Specifically, this literature shows the variation in the duration, recurrence and resolution of civil war (Walter, 2013, p. 662). Moreover, what is striking for this study is that bargaining theories offer a perspective on why the Turkish state and the PKK do not come to terms with each other even if they know that the conflict is too costly. This literature in fact offers a plausible explanation as to why the Turkish–Kurdish conflict escalated to violence, but it remains limited to exploring mechanisms and narratives of territorial control as a consequence rather than one of the drivers for the failure of the Kurdish Opening (reforms and peace process) in this conflict.

2.5 Border Studies

The central focus of this study is on the Kurds territorially located along the borders of Turkey and Iraq (and also partly of Iran), historically known as Kurdistan (Bozarslan, 2000; Zeydanlioglu, 2008). But the Kurds being a "borderland people" (Evans, 2010) in Turkey is only one element of

their situation, for they are also partly dispersed within and across the country. Thus, on one level, a significant portion of the Kurdish population is internally displaced. They are dispersed within Turkey because of forced migration (Celik, 2005; Kurban et al., 2007; Ayata, 2011), violence (Bozarslan, 1999) and also economic reasons.[24] On another level, the Kurds are dispersed within a territory spanning over Turkey's borderlands with Syria, Iran and Iraq, which also become kin-states (Caspersen, 2007; Csergő, 2005) for the Kurds of Turkey. These characteristics make this empirically grounded case study of the Kurds still more important, given that the case can be used as a model for others with similar features and vice versa (as these other cases inform the depth of this study).

Some of these cases in Europe and the Mediterranean include the Basque people in the Franco–Spanish borderlands (Mansvelt Beck, 2008); the Irish people in the Irish borderlands (Donnan, 2005; Nash et al., 2010; O'Dowd, Corrigan and Moore, 1995; O'Dowd 1999); Cyprus (Loizides, 2002; Yakinthou, 2009; McGarry, 2017) and civilian and military control in Israel–Palestine (Newman, 1989; Yiftachel, 1991, 1996; Haklai, 2004, 2008, 2011). Further afield, there is the case of borderland people and stateless rebels (insurgency versus counter-insurgency) in the Southeast Asian borderlands (Gellner, 2013; Farrelly, 2013). Country cases include Nepal (Sharma, 2006), Sri Lanka (Araratnam, 1986), the Indian sub-continent (Sluka, 2000; Duschinski, 2009; Suykens, 2013; Gates & Roy, 2016) and Southern Thailand (Abraham & Nakaya, 2007; Askew, 2010). In Africa, we can note competing sovereignties between state and non-state actors in the borderlands of South Sudan—including its borders with Kenya and Ethiopia (Johnson, 2003;

[24] Before the 1990s, many Kurds moved to the more economically developed, Turkish-populated western part of Turkey seeking educational and economic opportunities. From the 1990s on, Kurds were compelled to move outside of their homeland due to the ongoing violent conflict and war.

Vaughan et al., 2013)—as well as the debates on cross-border peace, conflict, and security in African borderlands more generally (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013).

These cases speak to the different aspects of this study. Some are included because they are cases of ethnic conflicts in which there is a border effect—the zone of the conflict also covers border zones. Others are included because they are the examples of a control system where the political setting of the country privileges ethnic majority.

The literature on border studies is pertinent to the present thesis because border control is necessarily an element of territorial control in Turkey. I therefore engage with scholars who have examined the study of borders from an *ethnographic* (Reeves, 2014, 2016); *comparative* (Newman, 2003, 2006; Bringa & Toje, 2016; Simonyi & Pisano, 2011) and *international* perspective (O'Dowd, Anderson & Wilson, 2004; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2012). The interdisciplinary literature on the topic lies at the intersection of IR, border studies, and conflict analysis—thereby pointing to the connection between power (governance), territory, and state formation.

The salience of this question is reflected by various debates (i.e. geopolitics of post-conflict recovery; geographies of peace; comparative analysis of territorial politics) related to political and geographical configurations of power, control (i.e. domination) and territory in war and conflict zones. Recent literature about conflict, for example, has noted the growing complexity of political constellations in borderlands, which are shaped by (among other things) new and often violent modes of transnational economic accumulation, displacement, and identity construction (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013). When applied to the case of the Kurdish borderlands in Turkey, this growing literature is helpful for describing borders conceptually, and for seeing the complexity of border zones as sites of ongoing contestation and negotiation among local, national, and transnational actors.

Herbst (2000), in his seminal work, examined the theory and practice of power expansion in pre-colonial Africa. Specifically, he traced certain patterns of state consolidation in Africa, such as the nature of boundaries and the nature of state systems and the costs of extending power. He concluded that these patterns made it difficult to extend the power of the state in pre-colonial Africa. Because of that, unlike Europe, pre-colonial Africa reflected multiple state forms and the complexity of shared sovereignty (Herbst, 2000; Clapham, 1996). Although Herbst's framework offers insights into the patterns, challenges, and variations of state consolidation from a comparative perspective, his analysis is not applicable to the Turkish–Kurdish context mainly because the Turkish state is a modern nation-state that emerged with the demise of a multi-ethnic empire. Also, the emergence of the Turkish nation-state led to demarcated borders and consolidated single-state sovereignty in which borders are much less porous than the pre-colonial African states of Herbst's study.

The border studies literature is situated within an emerging literature that conceptualizes borders not only as symbolic spaces evoking past memories and generating effects of anxiety (Navaro-Yashin, 2012), nor simply as passages for cross-movement, but rather as living-spaces enfolded with experiences of life and death, dwelling and migration, and endurance and resourcefulness (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013). Understanding the ambiguities and challenges of making and remaking state sovereignty at the margins (Das & Poole, 2004; Reeves, 2014) has invited scholars to deeply engage in alternative ethnographies of borderlands. Here, borders are understood not only as lines of separation but also as sites of cooperation and interaction (Brandell, 2006; Gavrilis, 2008; Simonyi & Pisano, 2011; Donnan & Wilson, 1998; Donnan & Wilson, 1999) between conflicting sides. This rising interest in the literature helps us theorize borders and classify them according to the specific features that characterize each particular instance—for example, whether they are more or less secure or still in transition, and whether they are limiting or restricting

zones or resourceful places. In doing so, this growing body of literature emerges as a response to the Westphalian realist paradigm and offers a venue in which we can pursue a nuanced understanding of the complexities and contradictions of state practices as well as the lived experiences of these practices. The approach employed in this study does not falsify any of these conceptions. Indeed, it adds to the border literature with its in-depth examination of Turkey's policies and practices, and of the local population's perceptions and patterns of resistance on Turkey's eastern border.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to show how the present study intersects with a number of academic literatures—namely, those dealing with divided nations, democratization and violence, territorial control, civil wars, and border studies. This study engages with these bodies of literature thoroughly and shows the limits of the state-centered view to identify the factors and mechanisms that are profoundly related to the failures of the Kurdish Opening.

While the central focus of this thesis is the failure of Turkey's Kurdish Opening, I have argued that this subject raises deeper questions about the role of territorial factors in the prospects for peace in the divided world. This study intersects with the Kurdish Studies literature because the focus of my research is on the Turkish–Kurdish context. And it intersects with the democratization and conflict literature because the scholarly debates on the failure of peace process and return of violence in Turkey are also components of the ongoing debates on the prospects for democratizing the hegemonic state in Turkey. It also adds to this literature by reemphasizing the link between geographical factors and conflict proneness in democratizing yet divided settings.

This study also intersects with the literature on territorial control and civil wars because it explores state mechanisms of territorial control and the lived experiences of these mechanisms on people in the borderlands. It also emphasizes the importance of micro-level analysis (i.e. analysis

of this nexus at the sub-national level) for the study of control and violence in Turkey. This is not only to address the spatial variation of violence when the relevant focus of analysis moves from national to local but also to get a more accurate display of control mechanisms in Turkey where there are serious restrictions on data collection regarding the Kurdish issue. This study also intersects with border studies because the analysis rests on the data collected during my 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Turkey's Kurdish-populated borderlands.

Having identified the limitations of the existing literature and laid out this study's contributions, the next chapter will explain and justify the methods that were used for data collection and data analysis. It will also briefly introduce the actors and the sites of research and discuss the challenges of conducting ethnographic research in a war zone.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology I use to address why the policies of liberalization introduced by the Turkish government in 2002 in relation to the state's Kurdish minority population failed to pacify ethnic mobilization and armed struggle in the Kurdish-populated borderlands. Thus, minority mobilization constitutes the main dependent variable in this study. Democratization, and more specifically minority policy reform, is an intervening variable, while territorial control is analyzed as the main explanatory (or independent) variable. Other explanatory factors also receive attention in the study, primarily the role of party politics and elite political action, and external influence by Kurdish organizations and actors across the border. These factors are examined in the sequence of minority responses to policy reform in Chapter 4. The analysis indicates, however, that the impact of these other factors is shaped by the overarching effect of extensive territorial control exerted by the Turkish state.

Because my research focuses on how policy change introduced over a particular time period affects state–minority relations on the ground, and also how conditions in the borderlands affect the implementation of policies in practice, there are two pillars of my theoretical framework: institutionalism and political ethnography. The former offers an analytical framework to understand institutional change over time in the sphere of policy-making and political contestation between state and minority parties and organizations. The latter provides a methodology that enables me to show people's perceptions of the process. It is necessary for us to understand perceptions on the ground about the intent and impact of state policies if we want to account for the failure of the Kurdish Opening.

Thus, this chapter discusses two components of my methodological framework. The first part (Section 3.1) focuses on my application of institutionalism and the methods of data collection and analysis (primarily process tracing), which I employed in the study of policy reform and state–minority political contestation. The second part (Section 3.2) focuses on political ethnography and the interpretive method, which I used to collect and analyze data about perceptions among actors in the borderlands. In my discussion of political ethnography, I first describe my research sites and provide descriptive profiles of actors on the ground. Next, I describe my methods of ethnographic data collection (e.g. interview strategies and participant observation), as well the methods I used to analyze the ethnographic material. In the conclusion of this chapter, I discuss the challenges of field research in conflict zones.

3.1 Institutionalism and Process Tracing

Institutionalism is a broadly employed analytical framework for analyzing institutional change. Scholars operating in the institutional tradition (Immergut, 1998, 2006; Pierson, 2000; Pierson & Skocpol, 2002; Steinmo, 2008) focus on institutions, policies and norms to trace the sequences of political, social and economic patterns and variations across time. In this approach, scholars look at the effects of institutional constraints on behavior and outcomes from a historical perspective. Hence, institutionalism provides an appropriate lens to examine the emergence of entrenched conflicts between a state's majority and minority populations, as well as to identify turning points in the evolution of conflict.

In my analysis, I rely on historical and sociological institutionalism. Historical institutionalism is used to highlight the way formal institutional structures (state institutions and policies) have shaped Turkish–Kurdish relations and generated the deep conflict prior to the reforms. Sociological institutionalism is incorporated in my analysis of the impact of reforms—namely, the reform and response sequence I am presenting.

In Chapter 4, this thesis is squarely situated within the institutional tradition, employing both its historical and sociological variants. Historical institutionalism is used to conceptualize the relationship between institutions and individual behavior (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Historical institutionalism offers a framework to understand how institutions affect people's preferences and political outcomes. I have incorporated two main components of historical institutionalism into my research: *path dependence* and *critical junctures*. The former provides a means to understand and explain institutional and/or policy change (Greif & Laitin, 2004; Pierson, 2004; Thelen, 2003). Path dependence refers to a set of patterns developed by institutions in a particular context and traces the impact of previous sets of institutions on the present conditions of change (or failure of change). According to that understanding, through these paths, institutions affect people's perceptions of political affairs. Another important component of institutionalism is the critical juncture, defined as moments when substantial institutional change takes place, thereby creating a branching point where historical development moves onto a new path (Hall & Taylor, 1996). By using these two important elements, historical institutionalists demonstrate differences between institutions and the ways that they shape state–society relations.

Sociological institutionalism is part of a larger group of new institutionalisms that share the basic understanding that institutions matter in social processes (Saurugger, 2017) and global social change (Meyer, 2010). In contrast to approaches that focus on rational individuals and their capabilities, sociological institutionalists are interested in tracing the impact of world culture, international institutions, and transnational associations on individual identities and state structures across the globe (Schofer, et al., 2012). Sociological institutionalism enables me to highlight interaction between structure and agency (i.e. actors) and to stress the relevance of institutional cultures with a particular focus on the role of actors in shaping these institutions.

To collect the empirical material necessary for my institutional analysis, I relied on existing case studies, archival documents, statistical data, briefs, policy reports and newspaper articles. I also analyzed surveys and reports published by local and international agencies, think-tanks and NGOs, including the reports by the Helsinki Citizenship Foundation, the Human Rights Association, the Human Rights Foundation, the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, as well as the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV). I also examined policy documents, political party materials, as well as articles and editorials published in major Turkish newspapers (*Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Hürriyet Daily News*); the major international media outlets (*Reuters*, *The New York Times; The Washington Post*) as well as local newspapers distributed in Van and Hakkari, such as *Baskale News*, *Doğu News, Yuksekova Haber*, and *Wan Haber*. I also had online access to PKK resources such as *Serxwebun* and *HPG online*. The Kurdish press, such as *Yeni Ozgur Politika* and *ANF English* was also a fruitful resource for collecting empirical material.

My primary method of institutional analysis was process tracing, which is used in comparative politics to identify changes and continuities in policies and practices over time (Bennett, 2010; Bennett & Checkel, 2014; Collier, 2011; Wood, 2007). I created a historical chronology of reforms and responses based on data gathered from secondary resources, scholarly articles on the subject, and newspaper articles. For the interpretation of these data, discourse analysis provided me with the necessary toolkit. In addition to the content analysis of policy documents, analysis of the speeches of politicians and other political elites have been crucial for my research. With the method of process tracing, I identified trends and ruptures in the evolution of contestation between the Turkish state and Kurds throughout the process.

Another benefit of using process tracing is to identify causal mechanisms between the main variables (i.e. independent, intervening, and dependent variables) and to increase the viability of

my small-N analysis (Collier, 1993; Mahoney, 2010). A detailed analysis of the unfolding of policy shifts over time, together with the analysis of Kurdish responses to those policies at critical moments, enabled me to assess the role of politics in the failure of Turkey's minority policy reforms, and the ways in which territorial issues featured in those dynamics.

3.2 Political Ethnography and Interpretation

My second analytical approach is political ethnography, which is, after all, the reproduction and transformation of daily lives that are observable, not "structural change" (Allina-Pisano, 2009; Baiocchi & Connor 2008; Fujii, 2010, 2015; Kubik, 2009; Pachirat, 2011; Schatz, 2009; Wedeen, 1999, 2007). Political ethnography enabled me to collect and interpret narratives of territorial control on the ground in the Kurdish borderlands.

Ethnography is used both as a ground-level method, i.e. immersion into one's place of research, and sensibility on the part of the researcher—namely, attention to people's perceptions and the meanings they attach to their social and political reality (Schatz, 2009, p. 6). Despite the popularity of ethnography in sociology and anthropology, scholars of politics have only recently started to integrate the method of political ethnography for the study of local politics and its implications in diverse contexts (Auyero, 2001; Baiocchi, 2005; Schatz, 2009; Wood, 2007). These new developments enable researchers to grasp a detailed understanding of variations and continuities along certain parameters from the perspectives of local actors across regions.

3.2.1 Research sites and actors.

***3.2.1.1 Research sites*.** Today, the area[25] called Kurdistan,[26] or the "homeland for Kurds," consists of large plateaus expanding over the entire region. This region is rich and fertile, making it well suited for farming both livestock (mostly cattle) and other agricultural products such as grains, sugar beet and potatoes. In the bottomlands, located beside the Turkish–Iraqi border, which are characterized by heavy rain, rice and a variety of fruit such as pomegranates are also grown. As one gets closer to Çukurca, located beside the Turkish–Iraqi border, the landscape features rolling hills dotted with groups of walnut trees. Such abundant land means that Kurdistan's agricultural products are diverse and highly profitable, making the land itself highly desirable.

Spanning approximately 518,000 square kilometers (200,000 square miles), the Kurdish borderlands start from the north of Agri and Van, extending to the mountains and plains of Hakkari and Sirnak in the south and are adjacent to Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Two prominent border cities in Turkey are Van and Hakkari (formerly known as Colemêrg) and are located along Turkey's eastern borderlands. Van is the second largest city in the borderland region, spreading across 2,739 square kilometers and is home to a population of 1,096,000 (Culture and Tourism Ministry n.d.). Hakkari has a total area of 2,237 square kilometers. Both Van and Hakkari are surrounded by mountains. Due to the mountainous terrain in this area, the state capacity to maintain a rigid control of territory,

[25] Here, the notion of landscape can be used interchangeably with the concept of territory in certain cases despite the fact that the latter is an encompassing term with connotations of state authority and sovereignty. Briefly, territory can be thought of as a layered concept as follows: the right to property and its violation including restriction of access to land and property; demands for territorial autonomy; and emotional attachment to land. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

[26] In my discussion of the Kurdish landscape, which is also referred to as Kurdistan, I adopt two distinct notions: hinterland and borderlands. The former refers to the Kurdish cities located in the hinterland of the Kurdish region while the latter includes the cities along the borders, such as Hakkari, Van, Sirnak, and Ağrı. Yet it is also important to remember that there are internal and external borders and some cities in the hinterland can be seen as marking an internal border as well.

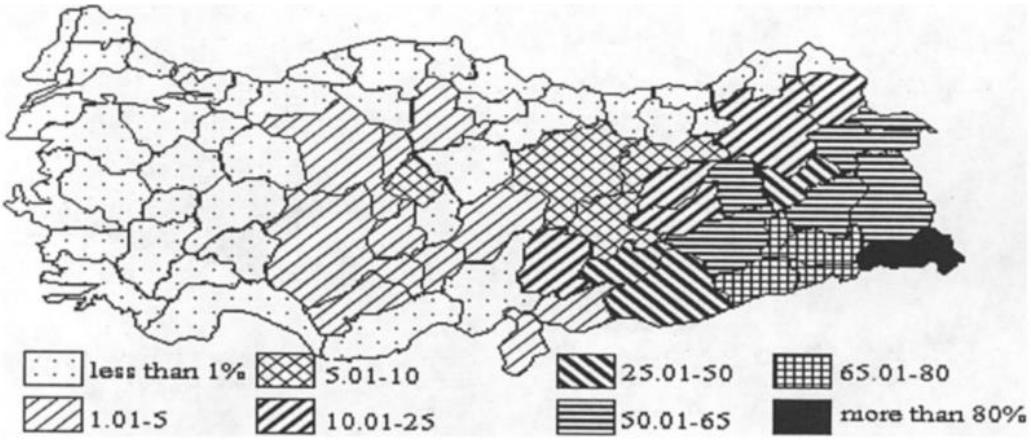
including borders, is difficult. The state's lack of control over the region is the main reason why it has become an important site of contestation between military and guerilla forces.

The selection of the research sites had methodological and practical reasons. I visited two urban sites, Van and Hakkari, and one rural site, Çukurca. Methodologically, I selected two sites (Van and Hakkari) along two different borders to gather diverse, yet comparable, narratives, experiences and perceptions of policies in the midst of the democratization and peace processes. Practically, these two main urban sites are border cities with varying size and population. Compared to Van, Hakkari is much smaller in terms of geography and population size, yet both are Kurdish-majority cities. Unlike city centers, Çukurca is a rural settlement right on the zero line between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan.

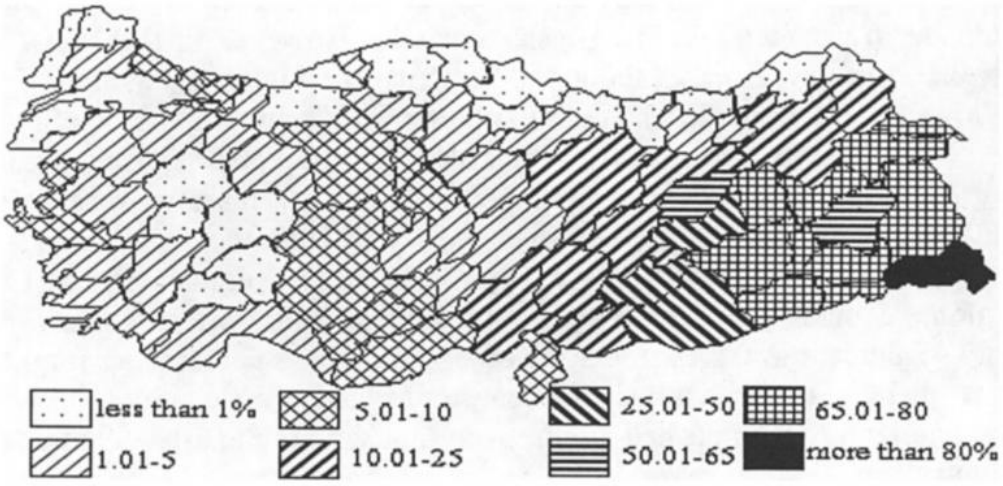
I also visited many surrounding villages and towns in the province to see the effects of the urban–rural divide and to keep my sample balanced. In Van, I chose to visit the districts of Başkale, Saray, and Özalp. All of these places are situated along the border of Turkey and Iran. In these three districts, smaller villages and towns were also chosen in order to uncover varying effects of the urban–rural divide on people's views, narratives and life experiences from a comparative perspective.

While Van and Hakkari have historically hosted a number of different ethnic and religious groups, today the ethnic composition is less diverse. The ongoing conflict between the state and the PKK has changed the demographic composition of both cities drastically. Between 1990 and 2000, the population rose by 31.6% in Hakkari (Culture and Tourism Ministry n.d.). Similarly, the estimated number of Kurds living in other Kurdish-majority cities of Turkey rose from approximately 2.5 million in 1965 to 4.5 million in 1990 (Sirkeci, 2000). Moreover, the Kurdish

population in Hakkari and Van increased rapidly in the year 2000 due to forced migration.[27] Today, Kurdish population density across the regions of Turkey reveals that Kurds can be identified in at least 14 different cities.



The Kurdish population of Turkey by province in 1965



The Kurdish population of Turkey by province in 1990

Figure 3.1. Cross-regional distribution of Kurds in Turkey, 1965 and 1990. Source: Sirkeci (2000, p. 157).

[27] Some scholars (i.e. Koç, Hancioglu & Cavlin, 2008) take high fertility–low mortality rates as an explanation of population increase in favor of Kurds. However, I disagree with this statement mostly because of the fact that many Kurds have died in the protracted conflict between the Kurdish guerrilla movement and Turkish armed forces.

Van and Hakkari began to expand during the 1990s. This growth was due to a huge influx of people from towns and villages during the peak times of "low intensity war" in the 1990s. In these new settlements, the majority of people were internally displaced Kurds who had to escape from rural areas where they were trapped in the war between the Turkish army and the PKK. In Van, some of these new settlements included Sabaniye, Xacort and Serefiye. While in Hakkari, a few of the most recent settlements included Keklikpinar and Medrese. In most of the Kurdish-majority cities, the number of new settlements grew because of the protracted conflict and its effects on demographic composition and settlement patterns.

3.2.1.1.1 Van (Turkish–Iranian borderlands). The city center of Van is demographically heterogeneous. Kurds and Acems are the majority. During the period covering the height of displacement in the region, the urban population of the provincial center (Van Municipality) increased from around 155,000 in 1990 to around 285,000 in 2000 (Kurban & Yukseker, 2009). Between 1990 and 1994, 3,000 villages and hamlets were evacuated, displacing a quarter million Kurdish farmers and villagers (Human Rights Watch, 2002b). With the recent changes in the Law on Municipalities, Van has become a metropolis.

3.2.1.1.2 Hakkari and Çukurca (Turkish–Iraqi borderlands). The provincial center of Hakkari is demographically more homogeneous than Van. The city has become one of the centers of displacement and forced migration since the majority of its towns and villages were evacuated. There are 32 villages and towns in Hakkari.[28]

[28]See İl Özel İdaresi Genel Sekreterliği [Secretary General Of Provincial Administration]. Retrieved from http://www.hakkari.gov.tr/il-ozel-idaresi-genel-sekreterligi

Çukurca is a village on the zero line of the Turkish–Iraqi border with the population of 6,000 civilians and approximately 20,000 security personnel.[29] Most civilian inhabitants make a living from animal husbandry and agriculture. They live in houses in the winter, and they move to the prairies during the summer. The *aşiret* (tribe) is the social unit of organization in Kurdish society and it is decisive in many aspects of social relations in everyday life. The local population of Çukurca consists of seven families, related by kinship ties and the same ancestor. According to the narratives of these families (i.e. the Budakbeyoğlu, the Mirzabeyoğlu, and so forth), they are the owners or "aghas" of this village. Despite having less power than in the past, the aghas still regulate most of the issues related to everyday life, such as land disputes, inter-family and inter-asiret problems and clashes, as well as marriages. Before the evacuation, bombardment and abolition of the village center by the Turkish military in 1992, Çukurca had 32 villages.[30] Today, only five (i.e. Çigirli, Geçimli, Üzümlü, Ormanlı, and Güzeldere) remain while the rest were evacuated and destroyed in the first half of the 1990s.

Many military bases surround Çukurca. There is a military base at the top of almost every hill-mountain. The village is like a bunker where soldiers and police forces can monitor every action from a distance. The militarization of everyday life is sutured into social relations and perceptions via high-tech surveillance mechanisms, such as thermal cameras, various policing vehicles.

In Üzümlü, one of the towns of Çukurca that is still standing, a border gate is about to be opened for safe travel and trade between Turkey and Iraq. It is the only border gate in the area. In

[29] According to the latest census undertaken by the TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute) in 2010, the population was 5,280. Between 1990 and 2000, the population dropped by 50% from 20,351 to 11,080. I received this data from TUIK myself in person 2013–2014.

[30] *Bajari* is the Kurdish term used for those born in the center whose families have inhabited the area historically; others who live in the towns are called *gundi*. The effects of this distinction were also apparent even in today's social relationships (i.e. friendships, marriages and so forth).

addition, Üzümlü is known as one of the guard villages in Çukurca because most of the men were recruited as village guards by the Turkish military in its fight against the PKK. Most of the houses in this village were in better condition than those in other villages. Smuggling has also become one of the main sources of subsistence and income of the villagers. They know the area well and travel between both sides on foot even if it is covered with landmines previously placed by the Turkish military and Saddam Hussein's Iraqi soldiers.

3.2.1.2 Actors: The human landscape of the Kurdish borderlands. In this section, I describe the actors who populate the Kurdish borderlands of Turkey, offering shorthand categories created as descriptive profiles of the different kinds of actors. These shorthand categories describe the social context and human landscape in which the narratives I present in Chapter 5 are articulated.

3.2.1.2.1 Military and police forces. Military and police forces are also known as security actors. These actors share varying levels of authority and are authorized with different tasks within the security apparatus of the state, which is composed of military and police forces. District governors also served as top-level military commanders during these times.

3.2.1.2.2 Village guards. The village guards are paramilitary groups used by the state in its fight against the PKK. The majority of these people were forced to serve as village guards who turned into an effective war weapon/machine since the late 1980s. During the so-called low-intensity war, which started in 1984 and escalated in the 1990s, Kurdish villages became the main location of battleground between the two sides. Both the state and the Kurdish movement approached Kurdish villagers for logistical and intelligence reasons. In 1985, the state armed some Kurds and recruited them as village guards in their fight against the PKK. Turgut Özal—Turkey's then prime minister and later president—nurtured the idea of a village guard system. In the 1990s,

the state recruited more village guards and co-opted a majority of people in strategically critical locations, such as Hakkari.

Most of the village guards recruited from the border cities of the Kurdish-majority region also joined the cross-border operations of Turkey into Iraq.[31] Co-optation of people was a common strategy used by the state. Confiscation of land was another. In line with that, different forms of manipulation have also been deployed. The state recruited some tribes and convinced tribal leaders to work with it against the PKK (the Bucaklar ["Family"] and the Jirkî are well-known examples of large tribes aligning with the state). This increased tension among different tribes and fueled internal conflict among Kurds. As Balta (2004, p. 2) writes,

> From 1992–93 on, as the army moved from the requirements of external war making to internal war making, the state changed its strategy and began to use not village guards per se, but the system itself, as a means of rural pacification and identification of pro-state peasants. This is the period in which state repression reached a peak, and in which the main method of repression used in rural areas was village evacuations upon the decision of villagers not to become a guard village.

In the 2000s, the estimated number of village guards was 70,000 and the government recruited more people over time (Balta et al., 2014). Essentially, village guards became paramilitaries, serving as additional forces against the PKK. There are two types of village guards: temporary and voluntary. Some people chose to become village guards for economic reasons due to extreme poverty and were paid monthly salaries in return. Some, however, were compelled by the state to become village guards and were accused of being PKK supporters or traitors if they refused to join.

[31] During the fieldwork, I spoke with a few village guards still on active duty. An interviewee who preferred to remain anonymous shared his stories with me during a personal conversation. He complained about the status of village guards and described them as being caught between the state and the PKK: "To the state, we are still Kurds, meaning that they cannot trust us whereas for the PKK we are traitors, hence disposable" (Interview # 44).

3.2.1.2.3 Kurdish villagers and internally displaced persons. The majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Turkey are Kurds (Ayata & Yükseker 2005). They have been forced to migrate from their hometowns in the wake of clashes between the TAF and Kurdish guerrilla movement. Internal displacement has different causes in different contexts. For instance, "in Cyprus, people fled their homes to escape conflict and communal violence. In Turkey, they were displaced by internal armed conflict between the security forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party, village raids and forced evacuations by the authorities" (NRC/IDMC, 2015, p. 44). The eviction of villagers constituted a violation of a number of constitutional rights including the right of all citizens to protect and develop their lives (Article 17), respect for private and family life (Article 20), respect for domicile (Article 21), the right to property (Article 35), the right to the protection of basic rights and freedoms (Article 40), the right to education (Article 42), and the right to just compensation for expropriation of private property (Article 46) (Kurban, et al., 2007). In 2004, after the release of Article 5233, some families received compensation for having been displaced. Nevertheless, this compensation did little to ensure that families could make a new life in urban settlements nor did it assuage psychological damage done (Kurban & Yegen, 2012).

The 1980s witnessed a new wave of demographic domination, which can be considered as the final stage of the whole project of social engineering, started at the beginning of the century. The escalating conflict between the PKK and the state generated an "environment of insecurity."[32] Lasting 15 years, a state of emergency (Olağanüstü Hâl, OHAL) was enforced in the ten provinces of eastern Turkey that make up Turkish Kurdistan. Under this rule, the State of Emergency Regional Governorate (Olağanüstü Hâl–Bölge Valiliği, OHAL–BV) could suspend basic political,

[32] Icduygu, Romano and Sirkeci (1999) use this phrase to describe the circumstances in which the Kurdish Question has emerged.

civic and social rights. Almost 905 villages and 2,523 hamlets were evacuated as of 1997 in the provinces under emergency rule (TESEV, 2005, p. 8). The inhabitants of many rural settlements were thus permanently removed during the OHAL.

Articles 119, 120 and 121 of the current constitution also clarify the conditions under which a state of emergency can be declared. According to these rules, an OHAL can be enacted in two cases: 1) natural disaster and serious economic crisis, and; 2) escalation of violence threatening the security and stability of the existing regime. Under OHAL, the OHAL–BV can suspend basic political, civic and social rights. Almost 905 villages and 2,523 hamlets were evacuated as of 1997 in the provinces under the OHAL–BV (TESEV, 2005). Under the current OHAL, 19 such decrees have been issued, most of which paved the way to severe human rights violations such as torture and killing. In this token legal regime, the commander of the regime (who has the final word) had excessive authority. For instance, soldiers did not need any permission from the prosecutor in order to forcibly enter houses occupied by civilians. These all imply that OHAL was one of the main control regimes which is highly abused by Turkish authorities for their personal interests and it was a clear attempt to legitimize, and even normalize, anomalies and a "state of exception" before the law. The state of emergency was finally lifted in November 2002, but the OHAL–BV remains in power today.

3.2.2 Ethnographic data collection. For data collection, I used semi-structured interviews and participant observation on the ground. I conducted 115 semi-structured interviews with both state and non-state actors (of these, I mainly drew upon data from 20 primary interviews but analyzed a total of 44 interviews for the present study, as I explain and justify in Chapter 5). I prepared a set of questions for my interviewees. My first round of interviews was conducted in three locations: Van, Hakkari and Çukurca. This first group of people included males and females, aged 27 years or older, who identified as villagers and farmers. The second round of interviews

included lawyers and journalists. Some lawyers in the sample were politically engaged and had been imprisoned in the past. The third round of interviews was conducted in a small border town where I lived for six weeks toward the end of my fieldwork. In this small town, I interviewed farmers, villagers, politicians and a few public officers.

While conducting participant observation, I was regularly making notes of what I saw in the first couple of months of my fieldwork. I was basically trying to collect evidence of military control or warfare and to confirm how many villages had been evacuated. I was also trying to corroborate the evidence that I gained from interviews and to interpret what the state-enacted policies—sometimes reported in the Turkish press and in government reports—actually meant in practice. Once I had been to towns and villages, I had to change strategy and take voice recordings due to safety concerns for my participants as well as myself.

Based on the sample selection for similar studies from previous literature (Belge 2008), the sample size is large enough to be representative of the reported situation in the region. In addition, I was the first person who stayed at the border town along the zero line for research purposes and I was working under conditions of severe surveillance. The increasing level of control and intimidation prevented me from living in the area longer and interviewing more participants. In doing so, I did not put the lives of my participants at risk.

The following points also briefly summarize my choice of research sites. First, the sites included a dense, ethnically homogeneous population (i.e. Kurds) with a high participation rate in the regional guerrilla movement. Here, I was looking for a large share of households having lost family members, with every household having at least one family member who joined the guerrilla movement. In such sites, destruction and loss of private property is common.

Second and just as important, the sites chosen had Kurds in this region enduring a strong state presence, and powerful military installations in particular, as the ratio of both is

disproportionately high in relation to the Kurdish population. Given these two special characteristics of the region, the research sites enabled me to explore the challenges faced by both the state and the guerrilla movement in the Kurdish borderlands particularly well.

The majority of my interviewees have been relocated or internally displaced at least once—some more than once. The first serious wave of state attacks against those villages and towns occurred between 1991 and 1996. From that period to 2013, most families whose hometowns were evacuated did not have any access to pasture areas that were used for feeding (grazing) livestock. Given the significance of agriculture, and cattle farming in particular, as a major source of income, many were forced to move to areas where they could continue farming.

Additionally, some participants revealed that in these villages their homes were burned to the ground two or more times, thus forcing them to relocate. A number of the IDPs I interviewed (mostly elderly ones) visit their hometowns on a seasonal (summer) basis and return to city life in the fall and winter. Although some IDPs started returning to their hometowns after the initiation of the so-called "peace process" in 2013, I still categorize them as IDPs given the prevalence of itinerant, seasonal movements between cities and the countryside.

From the beginning, I was conscious of the desirability of striking a gender balance among my interviewees. Initially, I was not sure whether I could achieve gender balance, because I assumed that men were more visible in the public space and thus more readily available for interviews. However, the high degree of mobilization among Kurdish women permitted unanticipated access to these women irrespective of the urban–rural divide. As a strategy for approaching women, in urban centers I preferred to go to the offices of political parties and find people who were relatives of my friends. Through these connections, I could visit and stay in different houses and speak to women of a wide range of ages. Gaining people's confidence was a real test because many have faced serious trauma, witnessing many brutal incidents. Neighbors,

relatives, and friends, moreover, have frequently become state informants, thus causing considerable reluctance among potential interviewees. To gain access to locals and familiarize myself with their everyday life, I chose to stay in rural sites and talk with as a wide range of people as possible. Despite ongoing peace talks, people were still cautious and skeptical. Hence, it was difficult to ask questions about their grievances unless I had established strong enough party links, networks and references on the ground.

To find people who had experiences of displacement and violence during the 1990s, I had to approach those who were adults at that time, and this skewed the sample somewhat. Past research and my own interactions with them indicate that their encounters with the state were harsher than those who have not experienced displacement. To get a broader grasp of the political effects of the process of democratization and to investigate local perceptions of reform policies during the peace process, I extended the representation of my sample as much as possible. In this way, I could compare across time and speak about Kurdish perspectives on the state's policies (both at the center and in the borderlands).

Ethnicity was another criterion for the selection of my participants. To fit research data well with my question, I made sure that all of my participants were self-identifying Kurds. While some of them were affiliated with the pro-Kurdish party, I tried to make sure that there were also other Kurds who support the ruling party. However, my access to the second group was limited and, therefore, the majority of the interviewees were probably supporters of the pro-Kurdish party.

3.2.2.1 Interview strategies. Considering the sensitivity of my research topic for both the state and Kurds, I applied to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the governorships of Van and Hakkari through the freedom of information act. I introduced my research and asked for statistical data. At the same time, I visited the offices of local authorities and explained the purpose of my visit. I had some obvious advantages such as having some background information about the region

and people as well as being an insider, as I am a member of the Kurdish community. My proposal had gone through a long (approximately eight months) process of ethics approval from both departmental and university board of ethics. In addition to that, I sent a brief description of my research to the Ministry of Interior Affairs alongside with the governorship offices of Van and Hakkari.

A main feature in developing my strategies for conducting interviews was to ensure that I had access to a gatekeeper or key informant at each site. For instance, when I visited the peripheral neighborhoods of Van, I first found a reliable person who had been living in the area for a long time. In time, I got to know the person better, visited his or her family house many times, introduced myself to the family and built a measure of trust. This was crucial for my research: due to its sensitive nature, I had to be attentive to people's safety. Often the presence of researchers poses a threat to people who engage in illegal acts.

Once I had gained enough trust within the network, I then conducted semi-structured interviews with different actors. For instance, with Kurdish villagers and farmers, I started with questions about the plight of living in an urban space that laid the groundwork for further conversation. I also made slight changes in the order and content of questions according to the features of the setting: whether it was an urban or rural area; whether it was close or far from the border and; whether it was known as an epicenter of violence and evacuation.

The first part of the interview questions focused on people's memories about the past and how they remembered "the 1990s", shorthand for how people talk about the period when the conflict reached a peak. I asked a range of questions about past memories of violence, grievances and control-surveillance, such as: What happened here in your hometown in the 1990s? How was your life in the past? How would you describe your life in the 2000s? Have you ever lost your property, animals, or orchards in the war? Did you get compensation for any of your loss? Do you

have access to your property and plateaus to graze your animals? For how long did you have a lack of access to these lands? How was your life in the 1970s and 1980s? What is "the state" for you? What is "homeland" for you? Do you think that Kurds have property rights and/or the right to own a piece of land? Do you feel that your property right and right to life have been protected? Can you please compare the past and present of Çukurca with other places in terms of state control and people's mobilization? How did you cope with the state's policies of violence and control?[33]

The second part of the interviews was mostly about the loss of property, compensation, militarization and control of various aspects of everyday life. The main reason for the second set of questions was to understand how territorial control of the state operates in war-prone borders and to explore the mechanisms of the state's operation. Since the archives of the Turkish Army are inaccessible to researchers, state violence, including violations of property rights, is difficult to document. To protect my participants and maintain their anonymity, I turned the voice recorder off whenever they mentioned names and addresses while talking about sensitive issues, such as who cooperated with the state or supported the Kurdish side.

Although the interviews had a general structure, the use of open-ended questions generated the richest possible data, because the topic was very sensitive, and I had to give more space to people to exercise agency over their own narratives. Leaving the questions open-ended meant that I could tackle a wide range of topics such as people's understanding of the state, homeland, and memories of the past to their perceptions of state policies and expectations of the future. In the second half of the conversation, I asked questions about the contemporary situation in the region, as well as their demands and expectations from democratization and peace process. Some of the interview questions were: What are the effects of policies and how do these people perceive policies

[33] Given the range in backgrounds of the interviewees, I adjusted the words that I used to talk about these concepts in the interviews accordingly.

and respond to them at the local level? Who are the people affected by violent conflict? What options do these people have? What choices do they make? Why are they affected by violence and how? How do perceptions of violence, territory and presence of extensive militarization of landscape shown by checkpoints, rigid border controls shape their economic options and political choices? Are they part of the conflict and what are the sources of their commitments and motivations? What do they expect from the peace process and democratization? In order to answer these questions, I looked specifically at perceptions and meanings attributed to the state and to borders (as well as to life in borders—namely, the emotional and psychological meanings attached to borders). How would they describe their lives in the borderlands? What do they think about border crossings?

The data revealed greater diversity of positions when participants' views on the Kurdish Opening were included. Toward the end of every conversation, I asked each participant about the reform process and their opinions about its future. While it was often not possible to obtain fully coherent and consistent accounts from a group of people who have experienced severe trauma, the interviews reflect unique, context-specific and fresh data that is central to this kind of study: Both because this was a qualitative study and also because this was the most suitable way to gather data for the inquiry of territorial control in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands.

3.2.2.2 Identification and selection of interviewees. A non-randomly selected, representative sample was used in this study. During the fieldwork, I chose the initial group of participants non-randomly, then reached out to subsequent groups mostly through the snowball sampling technique.[34] The first few participants were chosen from among my acquaintances, while

[34] This is a sampling technique in which each participant partakes in the recruitment process by reaching out to members of their own social network. See: Goodman, L. A. (1961). "Snowball sampling". *Annuals of Mathematical Statistics, 32*(1), pp. 148–170.

others were found through suggestions of the initial participants and determined according to my personal judgments. Participant selection was not random mostly because circumstantial factors put constraints on identifying and selecting interviewees during the fieldwork. Circumstantial factors ranged from difficulties in accessing influential people in state-connected circles to putting in extra time to gain the trust of people who provide care-giving in conflict-affected communities within the constraints of the wider conflict environment. Since "an understanding of who wields power and the local dynamics of conflict is an essential starting point for informed decisions" (Goodhand, 2000, p. 13), I was constantly taking notes in the first couple of weeks. In so doing, I sought to map the human landscape of the research site, and also to be more cautious of potential selection biases, such as selecting a group of people with similar characteristics or excluding any group that deviated from these characteristics.

After sorting the population into different strata based on participant observations in the field, I used the advantage of being an insider and approached people suggested by my friends and relatives. Because I come from a politically engaged Kurdish family that is known in various groups, ranging from party politicians to intellectual circles, this affected the extent to which people engaged with me. For instance, when people were sympathetic toward the political figures in my family, study participants were friendly and respectful. Yet when people were suspicious or critical of the views of my family members, it was harder to engage with them and convince them to talk. In such cases, I had to either find new study participants or put extra energy into explaining to people my role as a researcher, rather than as a member of my family or any political organization.

One strategy to this end was to spend more time with people and engage in further dialogue to build trust and acquire more information. Using my networks to access other influential people, such as community leaders or spokespersons in various stratum of the population, proved another effective strategy. While allotting additional time to obtain upfront information was sometimes

expensive and hard to afford, it did lead to higher quality outputs and more detailed, richer accounts. Another strategy that enabled better access to the group in efforts to create the most representative sample was to organize conferences (i.e. panels) for certain associations, such as the Bar Association,[35] where the number of registered lawyers exceeded 300 in 2013–2014. In extremely risky cases, I also adopted alternative, low profile strategies such as meeting people in their homes.

Depending on the site of research, I used various criteria to select participants. Firstly, and importantly, I was looking for people who could attest to the effects of what took place in the relevant period, which increased the likelihood that these people had had traumatic experiences of state violence, forced displacement and expropriation. For this reason, in the first round of interviews, I preferred to speak with people aged 50 years and over. These interviews provided background information for each subsequent interview. I was then able to build upon my questions based on the information gathered in previous interviews. For instance, during the earliest interviews, I explored certain events that participants identified on a number of occasions. Through analysis and review of my notes taken in the field I was able to identify events that played a key role in shaping people's collective memory. I then was able to target these events in subsequent interviews.

Second, in highly politicized locations, I searched for the spokesperson of the neighborhood. In the pro-Kurdish party, a co-chair system of governance had been in place since 2013. Broadly, this system shares responsibilities and creates a new system of checks and balances. In this model, there are two co-chairs for each neighborhood, one man and one woman. Getting in touch with these people helped me build trust and gain the trust of the neighborhood. Despite such

[35] I prefer to keep the name anonymous.

advantages, rumors still circled about me. The rumors about me differed according to the site of research. For example, when I was at the courthouse and the office of governorship, performing research, judges were dubious of me and thought I was a member and supporter of the PKK. In another instance, the civil police interrogated me for 15 minutes. Such interrogation was a sign that they felt threatened by my presence. On another occasion, the head of the police force asked me about the date of my departure, suggesting that they wanted to keep track of me. Among Kurds, my presence caused suspicions about what I would do with the information gathered. To overcome this problem, I visited the party bureaus of the pro-Kurdish HDP and DBP in peripheral neighborhoods, described my research and asked them to refer people to me who they felt fit well with the criteria for interviews.

As part of my efforts to ensure sample diversity, I clustered the interviewees (participants) into three groups during the fieldwork, according to who I felt helped shape the dynamics of the conflict in Turkey: state actors, non-state political actors and civilians. I then categorized the interviewees into sub-clusters. State actors consisted of state officials (judges and prosecutors) and village guards; journalists, lawyers and members of civil society groups[36] made up the non-state political actors; and villagers–borderlanders and IDPs comprised the civilians cluster. This enabled me to see that there was overlap in the experiences and events conveyed by the interviewees in the various clusters, and gain a better understanding of the events and periods that had been influential in the history of the region. I was then able to ask about them in new interviews and in some cases, sought out new resources as needed. Of the 115 interviewees, five were state officials (state actors);

[36] The included representatives from GÖÇ–DER, as well as the organization Mesopotamia Assistance and Solidarity for Families with Missing Relatives (*Mezopotamya Yakınlarını Kaybedenlerle Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği*, MEYA–DER), the Prisoners' Families' Solidarity Association (*Tutuklu Hükümlü Aileleri Hukuk Dayanışma Dernekleri*, TUHAD–FED) and the Human Rights Association (*İnsan Hakları Derneği*, İHD).

13 were lawyers, three were journalists, 15 were civil society members and five were activists (non-state political actors) and 74 were villagers and IDPs (civilians).

Despite the constraints related to the research site still being a war zone, the sample is as diverse as possible. Although a detailed explanation is provided in the next paragraphs, let me address one point clearly about the political orientation of my respondents: The majority of people in Van and Hakkari (and its surrounding towns and villages) vote for the HDP (Ekmekci, 2011; Sarigil & Fazlioglu, 2014). In the 2015 elections, the HDP received 74 percent of the votes in Van and 83 percent in Hakkari (Gunes & Lowe, 2015).[37] To strengthen trust among potential study participants, I also used my connections in the pro-Kurdish HDP that was running the local municipalities in 2013–2014. The borderlands are mostly pro-movement,[38] and even some of the village guards voted for the HDP. I also spoke with and interviewed several village guards, but due both to safety concerns and the fact that village guards are considered pro-government—hence spending time with them was not conducive to building trust among pro-movement study participants—these are few in number.

It must be noted that the destructive physical and emotional outcomes of war were still tangible amid the ongoing peace talks at the time, which occasionally restricted the number of options for potential study participants. In rural areas, for instance, the landscape was still marked with remnants of the past war. In certain remote villages and towns, there were burned trees, abandoned and destroyed homes, abandoned military bases, abandoned checkpoints, and military trenches at hilltops. Most of the abandoned towns were not close to borders or strategically important locations. In towns close to the borders, remnants of former homes were reduced to

[37] The data were drawn from SecimHaberler.com (2015). See also, Gunes (2015).

[38] The term "Kurdish political movement" simply refers to the ongoing mobilization along the political line represented by the PKK that began in the 1970s.

rubble, and stones from these houses were used in the construction of military bases on the same fields. In other towns that were located in the vicinity of border cities, the landscape was redesigned from a military standpoint, meaning there were recently built high-security military bases, checkpoints for village guards, surveillance mechanisms and so forth (please see visuals from the fieldwork in Appendix C). While the reminders of war and violence were intense, the entire region also continues to be the epicenter of ongoing conflict, which effects all sorts of relationships in the region and did in fact affect my efforts in identifying study participants. A case in point is that some village guards were reluctant to speak to me, because public officers are banned from giving their opinions on political issues. Although I explicitly said I would not use their names, some village guards remained distrustful. My research was under surveillance from the very first day of my presence in the region, and the pressure increased as I traveled to rural areas. Given these constraints, the sample size and its characteristics were determined by the realities of my research sites.

To compensate for some of these limitations, I decided to talk to more people in each stratum. In the first round of determining potential study participants in urban centers, I talked to the most influential and powerful people—such as the head of the bar association and the city mayor—who gave me information about the political, economic, historical and social climate of the relevant city and its neighborhoods. They also helped me with identifying and reaching out to lawyers, activists, representatives of local councils in neighborhoods[39] and party members who might know what cases/examples could be information-rich. In the interviews, I asked participants if they knew other reliable people in Group A (i.e. villagers, lawyers, activists, village guards and

[39] While I was conducting my research, a number of party-affiliated (i.e. HDP) people in the neighborhoods where I was doing fieldwork were elected as local municipal representatives. This was considered an initial step toward reclaiming the territory and declaring autonomy for the people, as one of the study participants reminded me in our daily conversation.

so forth) who would know most about the focus of my study. Through these webs of networks, I managed to expand the size of my sample and attain the richest data.

Among the various strata of the population, village guards were the hardest to access, mostly because they were reluctant to talk; it was also emotionally and practically challenging for me to approach public officers. Whenever I succeeded in doing so, they asked me personal questions including questions about my ideological stance and if my research was directly about the Kurds. In such moments, I felt like I was being interrogated by these people. This intense feeling of fear emerged not only during these conversations but was a constant of my experience as a Kurdish PhD student studying this sensitive topic in a divided territory that is still a battleground. I felt even more anxious while interviewing people on violence, loss and dispossession under the watchful eyes of others. For example, when I visited one of the offices of village guards in one of my research sites, the interview took place in the office of the head of the guards, and although more than 10 village guards were present, each pointed to the head as their representative instead of talking to me directly. Moreover, because the majority of the village guards were in pro-government circles, efforts to speak with them began to plant seeds of suspicion among other potential participants in the village, which created a big challenge for my study. To prevent further problems, I had continuously to reconsider the sensitivities of the research site and act in accordance with the boundaries set by these conditions.

Let me offer another, haunting example: During the first half of my fieldwork while I was staying in an urban center, in an effort to obtain numerical data on population changes in urban and rural areas within the research site since the 1990s from one of the institutes led by the government, I reached out to someone who was a friend of another friend. This person was working as one of the project managers at that government office. When I arrived at the office, I had an opportunity to talk with the head of the institute for almost 20 minutes with the help of my connection there. In

the middle of the conversation, the head of the institute turned to me and asked something like: "you say that you work on state–society relations in this area, is there anything related to Kurds in your conception of society?" When I said yes, a bitter expression came across his face, and he began to make references to the army. As soon as I realized I was in an awkward situation, I asked him if he had any connection with the military, and he answered yes. Such encounters were obviously problematic because as was the case here, some people were reluctant to share information with me after hearing that my research concerned Kurds.

For interviews, the first criterion was to find people aged over 40, because these people experienced the 1990s and had memories of the past. The second criterion was to achieve gender balance in the study. To avoid gender bias, it was crucial to talk to women as well as men. Another criterion was to access people who lived in towns and villages in the 1990s or who owned land in rural areas. The other criterion was to have access to a broad range of diverse positions.

3.2.2.3 Identification and selection of the interview data for analysis. To determine which of the 115 interviews to include in the analysis and which to exclude, I worked in stages. I began this process once I had interviewed 75 participants; I first transcribed these interviews and uploaded the data into atlas.ti, which is a qualitative data analysis and research software to store, process and analyze interview data. For storing data, atlas.ti provided me with a safe space to keep the transcriptions of interviews after fieldwork ended in 2014. For processing and analyzing data, atlas.ti offered me a set of tools by which I coded and created coding groups so that I could have effective data management to mitigate biases in data selection, which is usually a challenge in data-rich research.

Once the 75 interviews were transcribed (the remaining 40 were collected and transcribed later), I began to code the answers to certain questions that were directly related to territorial control and the peace process. Some of these questions were: Did you lose any property in the 90s? How

would you describe those days? What do you think about the peace process and the Kurdish Opening (or reforms)? Responses to questions on territorial control were more elaborate, detailing various aspects of territorial control and violence, compared to those pertaining to the peace process and reform process, perhaps because the former had a tangible impact on the lives of the participants while the latter was both more abstract and still very recent. Hence, I had to code the material on territorial control in great detail; for instance, I sometimes had to use different codes for the same paragraph when the material spoke to more than one category of territorial control. I ended up having more than 200 codes during this initial round of coding, some of which were: state violence, village evacuations, confiscation of land, compensation problems, co-optation mechanisms, difficulties of living along the borders and so forth. Coding the interview data under these titles in atlas.ti was helpful to identify patterns, avoid repetition and differentiate significant, relevant and loaded/insightful interviews from other interviews. In later stages, after going over the titles in atlas.ti, I read the transcriptions of the 75 interviews and grouped the data under relevant titles.

In the second round of coding, I went over the existing list of codes and decided to create code groups under which the most similar codes could be classified together. Some of the titles from atlas.ti were about loss of property, landmines, military prohibited zones, military roads, building center-villages,[40] village guards and their problems and so forth. I brought conceptually-linked categories together under distinct code groups. For example, landmines and military prohibited zones are labeled as the instruments of securitization for the state, whereas people's lived experiences of these policies are called militarization.

[40] In 1998, the government launched a project to merge scattered towns and villages in the centres in order to encourage displaced people to return to their hometowns. However, the "central villages" project failed. For more details on this project, see Human Rights Watch (2002b).

At this point, I also listened to the remaining 40 interviews from the last few months of my stay in the Turkish-Iraqi borderlands and completed the transcription of these interviews in a separate word file. I read this file twice and cross-checked with the transcriptions of 75 interviews. This enabled me to distinguish the richest and most useful interviews from ones that were repetitive or incoherent. After creating these two large clusters (useful vs. non-useful) of interview data, I came up with a set of categories to classify data in each cluster. In the initial group—the useful data—I went over all of the codes and code groups in both atlas.ti and in the word document to identify the most similar and overlapping categories. I then created broader categories from these overlapping code groups, which became the mechanisms of territorial control in the typology laid out in Chapter 5.

By employing the atlas.ti software, I identified certain patterns that revealed predominant narratives, which also helped me to select 20 primary interviews that captured the perceptions predominant on the ground. The selected interviews, as I noted, include the most relevant, richest and highlighted insights pertaining to the study, and have also been confirmed by the remaining 40 interviews and field notes, with the exception of the 24 outlier accounts discussed in the last part of Chapter 5. In addition, I cross-checked data through multiple sources using triangulation (Bayard de Volo & Schatz, 2004), which not only boosted the quality of my data in terms of accuracy and reliability, but also made my argument more robust.

The interviews analyzed here offer the richest information and the most relevant accounts that directly speak to the core of the study. The selected data shed light not on a single category but on multiple categories in the typology of territorial control. The excluded interviews, on the other hand, were repetitive of those included; some were even incoherent. There were also some interviews that did not offer any insight into the question I was trying to answer through this study and so these were excluded from the analysis: Interviews that provided data related to one category

of territorial control were excluded, for instance, while interviews that offered abundant data on multiple categories in the typology of territorial control were included. The remaining data that were excluded offer deep insights on a number of new questions, such as: What are the Kurdish political demands for sustainable peace in the future? What are people's coping strategies against state control? What do these people expect from local governments, and what are some policy suggestions for building stronger and effective local governments in Kurdish-majority areas? What motivate people to mobilize? These are prominent questions for inquiry but turned out to be beyond the scope of this study. I will use this data in the expansion of my dissertation toward a book.

This sort of study demands attention to people's lived experiences (Edelman, 2001), precisely because the aim is to understand and explain the impacts of territorial policies on the ground in the Kurdish borderlands. For that to happen, collecting ethnographic data has been the most appropriate approach, especially for remote areas, such as those bordering Iraq and Iran. Yet analyzing and interpreting ethnographic data has its own challenges. Some interviews could include vague, inconsistent and contradictory narratives (Abu-Lughod, 2000)—exacerbating the problem of detecting patterns. To overcome such challenges, data analysis must accommodate contradiction and silence. Additionally, I began to develop certain methods to avoid interpretive challenges, and I started to interview certain people more than once to crosscheck their words and corroborate the ethnographic material. In addition, interpretation of data and development of themes were mutually reinforcing processes. Once I identified certain main themes based on data analysis, I inserted interview data under each category and wrote narratives upon the approval of participants (I communicated with some of them after fieldwork ended). While all study participants shared experiences related to at least one mechanism of territorial control, more nuanced positions or accounts were provided concerning the latter. I will refer to such experiences and accounts in the following pages.

3.2.2.4 A note on language. I conducted the majority of the interviews in Turkish. For instance, in the city center where I visited the offices of NGOs like the Migrants Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (Göç Edenlerle Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kultur Dernegi, GÖÇ–DER), all of the interviews were conducted in Turkish. Likewise, I had conversations with lawyers, mayors, municipality officials, judges and prosecutors in Turkish. However, when I traveled to the neighborhoods on the periphery of Van and Hakkari, I spoke in both Turkish and Kurdish. Even though my Kurdish is less fluent than my Turkish, the level of my Kurdish improved significantly as I conducted field research. My own advanced understanding of Kurdish from my childhood in addition to private lessons that I received in Istanbul's Kurdish Language Institute in the summer helped me to explain my research, ask some questions and communicate with people in their own language. Even if my Kurdish fluency was not perfect, my Kurdish participants recognized my efforts and appreciated my struggle. Whenever I had trouble communicating, they were very accommodating speaking Turkish or in many instances, using a Kurdish intermediary to translate. For instance, when I interviewed older Kurdish women, I always spoke in Kurdish but if there were communication problems, someone in the family or the contact person who came with me helped the conversation to proceed. Learning Kurdish was essential to gaining trust with my participants and collecting data.

***3.2.2.5 Accessing sites*.** During my stay in Van, I lived in a flat in the local TOKİ (public housing administration) apartment building. The neighborhood was 40 minutes away from the city center and I used public transportation every day. In this way, I gathered some more narratives and gained extra "social space" (Malkki, 1995) for participant observation. Whenever I traveled to peripheral neighborhoods, I also took shuttle services from downtown and learned more about the codes of the neighborhood. Through these daily and casual encounters, people gradually became

more familiar with me. It became easier for people to get more information about me as a researcher.

During my stay in the center of Hakkari, I stayed with a Kurdish family who was one of the well-known/oldest families in the city. This family was originally from Çukurca and lived in a peripheral neighborhood where the majority of residents were also from Çukurca. In Çukurca, I lived in various houses. In the first month of my stay there, I lived with a highly politicized family who lost many relatives during the war. During the second month, I stayed with another family whose father was a former KDP Peshmerga in Iraq. My contacts on the ground suggested that I stay with a family rather than staying at a local guesthouse because the former would be safer. Most of the families in the neighborhood were large families and had relatives in the Kurdish movement. These family-owned houses became central social spaces during the fieldwork. Similar to Malkki's (1995) experience in the refugee camps of Tanzania, narratives emerged not only in houses but also in diverse settings, such as courtyards when people were working, coffeehouses, shuttle and taxi drives, festivals and weddings.

Depending on the context, I gave different details about myself to the participants. However, the first introduction line was the same irrespective of context: I was a PhD student from Canada and came to the Kurdish region to do field research. When I described the focus of my research, I preferred to use broad and general terms to get the richest data possible on a wide range of topics. Given the difficulty of doing fieldwork in a conflict zone (and war-prone zone), I pursued a maximalist strategy in the collection of data and asked a number of questions in interviews. On average, each interview took 45 to 50 minutes, but I also had some interviews below and above this average. In some cases, women were more reserved in their response than men were. Initially many admitted to me that they were scared of me being a spy and "traitor" working for a Turkish or American/Canadian intelligence. As soon as they learned that I am a Kurdish woman, suspicions

decreased significantly. To overcome any barriers in communication, I started to visit women in their homes and interviewed some in groups. Doing so alleviated the women's safety concerns and provided a more comfortable context for speaking with a foreigner. However, the security forces did not welcome my presence in town, and I had to leave the region earlier than I planned.

In small towns and villages in Van where the army and police stations were in the vicinity, people, particularly those under custody, were shy and indecisive about talking to me out in the open. In the zero-level border town, for example, they explained to me that I was the first researcher in their village, and it was likely that I was under permanent surveillance. In those situations, we rather met at places where they felt safest, such as their homes.

In terms of accessibility to the research site, I had mixed experiences. During my first visit to the region, people were more suspicious of me than anywhere else during my trip. In Van, I had some contacts from the area but not enough to quell the suspicion. Often, I could see and feel people's hesitation on their faces when they heard about my research questions. On a few occasions, the participants had younger and more educated relatives around them. Once their younger more educated relatives were able to explain my research, participants would consent to interviews.

I encountered fewer barriers in the second half of my fieldwork after I moved to Hakkari and Çukurca. In the provincial centers, I had equal access to men and women despite the fact that accessing women required more labor. This added labor was because I first contacted men in certain neighborhoods. During daily conversations and meetings with male participants, I used purposive snowball sampling and asked the men to provide me with contacts of women. In the meantime, I introduced myself to the Bar Associations (both in Van and Hakkari), and Human Rights Associations.

The contrast between sides of borders was more visible and sharper in terms of territorial extraction. The high degree of militarization had imprints over the landscape. Unlike the city center of Van or Hakkari, Çukurca is a war zone where wires, landmines, prohibited military zones, land appropriation and other instruments and geographical/territorial representations of war are widespread.

3.3 Conclusion: Challenges to Field Research in the Kurdish Borderlands

During fieldwork, I experienced both practical and ethical challenges. When I stayed in two urban settings, I could travel in the most politically mobilized neighborhoods, thus facilitating an ideal sample size. Nevertheless, security concerns set absolute limits on my ability to approach many state officials, and those interviews with state officials I was able to secure were often highly circumscribed. Interviews with a few judges and a prosecutor, for example, were subject to stringent conditions such as anonymity, limited audio recording, and, demands for final approval by the interviewees themselves.

On some occasions during this research, I became partially trapped by certain cultural contours. By this, I mean being simultaneously a foreigner from a Canadian university and a Kurdish woman originally from Karakoçan, a village located in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Although I felt comfortable adjusting to the change in cultural milieu, mine is a well-known Kurdish first name and served as a clear identity marker during encounters with state officials, lawyers, politicians, activists and villagers in various locations in the field. My name played a prominent role in terms of not only how others understood me but also how I was able to understand and locate myself. Often, I felt trapped by my name and these traps sometimes created internal emotional conflict regarding my location/situatedness (Abu-Lughod, 2000) in the field. My name not only created suspicion and fear on the part of villagers but was also understood as a threat by

state officials. For instance, one state official (whose identity is withheld) I interviewed seemed temperamentally neutral toward me in our introductory meeting. However, the official's attitude changed when we met the next day for our interview, betraying an aloofness and obvious sense of suspicion. I was told: "you come here, speak to us, ask many questions on sensitive issues and use some English words in your speech, but we don't know who really you are." I thought about this conversation for a while and reached the conclusion that it was more like an act of denunciation and violence that was directed to me from the state official based on some form of internal intelligence, provided by those in a position to control everyday Kurdish life, even that of the flying bird.

Granting that my interpretation of the situation may be fallible in certain respects, statements of this nature did not come from an ordinary citizen and they had to be taken seriously. During the remaining days of my fieldwork, I was under regular surveillance by the police. Through such encounters, gazes and words, fear and violence were entrenched into my social practice during everyday encounters and observations on the ground. After a while, I started to realize what it meant to live in "routinized state of fear where the spectacles of torture and death, of massacres and disappearances of the recent past have become deeply inscribed in individuals and in the collective imagination through a constant sense of threat" (Green, 1995, p. 106).

Within the context of a routine state of intimidation and violence embedded into the everyday life and encounters of Çukurca, I considered the dynamics of the relationship between the researcher and those participating as active subjects. I thought about what it means to be an insider/outsider and how this translated into the researcher/participant position. What are the ethical and emotional challenges of such a position in the field? How would I deal with learning about the traumatic events of war, torture and death?

Even with these questions circling and despite the difficulties arising from the unpredictable and volatile life in the borderlands, speaking in Kurdish with the people and being a child of the same cultural reservoir helped me to ease the tension of the present and taught me a prominent lesson about the ways of overcoming the traps and conflicts of the insider–outsider dichotomy. Going through all these challenges of the fieldwork in Turkey's borderlands, I gained a broader perspective on the local manifestations of war, violence, and peace.

Chapter 4

Contradictions and Prospects: Turkey's Democratic Reform Initiatives and the Kurdish Peace Process

This chapter examines Turkey's Kurdish Opening, which was enacted during the initial phase of the AKP period (2002–2013). The Opening was a set of reforms initiated by Turkish authorities with the stated aim of reducing violence between the PKK and the state, producing thus a path to peace. These reforms were introduced against the backdrop of the Turkish government's desire to comply with EU norms on minority protection in order to begin accession negotiations. I do not examine which of these two goals was paramount or consider whether the Turkish state was genuinely seeking peace. This chapter does not focus on that question. Rather, I argue in this thesis that—both in terms of achieving peace and gaining accession to the EU—the reforms were a failure. I aim in this thesis to explain the causes of the failure, largely in terms of the contradictory policies of the Turkish state vis-à-vis territorial control at the borderlands. This chapter contributes to this thesis by assessing the effectiveness of the reforms introduced by the Turkish government. I explain the context in which the reforms were enacted, what the reforms entailed, and the Kurdish responses to these reforms.

One standard view of the failure is that the democratization attempt was insufficient. That is, the reforms were on the right path, but they did not go far enough (Yazıcı, 2010). A different, although not mutually exclusive, explanation is that the reforms were dogged by implementation problems; that is, they were the right kind of reforms, but they were not administered properly (Kubicek, 2005; Yılmaz, 2016).

While I agree with Kubicek and Yılmaz that the reforms were insufficient and not implemented fully, the present study reveals that this perspective cannot fully explain the failure

of the Kurdish Opening. To understand the failure, we must ask: "how have other dimensions of the Kurdish relationship to the state—in particular the state's policies with respect to the borderlands and its accompanying mechanisms of territorial control—undermined these reforms?" Before I can answer this question, it is important to be clear about the nature and content of such reforms, when they were designed, the categories they fall into and the response they evoked.

Ultimately, I will argue that the democratization reforms were an improvement over the pre-existing state of affairs, offering Kurds some concessions, including limited linguistic and cultural rights as a part of the Kurdish Opening. However, it would be too simplistic to say that they did not go far enough. This is because—as I will demonstrate in Chapter 5—the real problem was that the reform process was pursued at the same time as the state was committed to effecting territorial control along the borders.

Although many theorists of liberal democracy seem to assume that liberal rights and freedoms should coexist with a strong and effective state that has territorial control, this view fails to do justice to the complexity of situations such as existing in borderlands inhabited by ethnic or linguistic minorities in deeply divided settings. Indeed, I argue that the state pursued what I call a "dual strategy" during the Kurdish peace process, meaning that it pursued constitutional and legal reforms in the Turkish state, which gave increased rights and freedoms to the Kurdish population as a cultural and ethnic group, while it simultaneously pursued various policies of control in the Kurdish-majority region. This chapter focuses on the first dimension of these strategies: the democratization reforms and the Kurdish response.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I provide a brief account of the historical trajectory of Turkish–Kurdish relations from the collapse of Ottoman Empire to the rise of the AKP in 2002, which helps to explain the deep and long-standing divisions between the Turkish state and the Kurdish minority that this government set out to change through policy reform. I provide a

description of the context and incentives for introducing democratic reforms in Turkey at the beginning of the 2000s. I also describe key internal and external incentives behind the AKP's turn to democratic reform. Second, I lay out the chronological progression of democratization reforms, tracing the dynamics of policy change and the resulting Kurdish response.

4.1 Background: A Historical Trajectory of Turkish–Kurdish Relations in the Twentieth Century

Beginning in the early twentieth century, we witnessed the emergence of new nation-states with ethnicity as central to their existence. Turkey is one such case. As with many other states in the Middle East and North Africa, the Turkish nation-state was built after the demise of the Ottoman Empire. As the empire dissolved, the state's founders followed a military-led modernization path with territorial control at the heart of their political pursuit (Belge, 2017).[41] This path granted the Turkish bureaucratic (political) and military elites the authority to control the use of power so that they could guarantee the state's territorial unity, the boundaries of which were drawn in the last term of the Ottoman Parliament and laid out in the so-called "National Pact" [*Misak-ı Milli*] of 1920.

During the first two decades after the regime change, the founding cadres of the nation-state (the Committee of Union and Progress, hereafter CUP) enacted a number of policies and constitutional amendments in cultural, political, territorial, and economic realms as a part of what is known as the "Turkification process" (Ülker, 2005). This process included the unification policies on language and forceful attempts to spread the use of Turkish especially among the Kurds, such as "Citizen speak Turkish!" (Aslan, 2007; Bali, 2000); policies on geographical settlements, such as "geographical name changes in Turkey" (Öktem, 2008); and policies on the confiscation

[41] Similar examples of this model can be found in the Philippines, Indonesia and Bolivia. For further details, see Field (2012).

of properties belonging to Armenians as well as the imposition of heavy taxation on non-Muslims, such as the so-called "*Varlik Vergisi*" (wealth tax) levied in 1942 (Bali, 2001; Kocak, 2004). Through these various policies, the new state sought to create a society around a new Turkish identity based on a set of norms: specifically, the imposition of a national identity whose major tenet was Turkishness (Ünlü, 2016).

4.1.1 Turkish–Kurdish relations during the transition from empire to nation-state. During the transition period from empire to nation-state (1919–1924), Turkey adopted a new regime with a new administrative system. Two new legal texts—the aforementioned National Pact of 1920 (which laid the ground for the Constitution of 1921) and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1924—were the pillars of this new regime type. These documents also included information on defining the limits of the state's jurisdictional authority and its treatment of minorities.

In the aftermath of transition from empire to nation-state in August 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) was signed between the Allied Powers and the Ottoman Empire. Article 62 of this treaty envisaged a scheme of local autonomy to predominantly Kurdish areas (O'Leary, McGarry & Salih, 2005, p. 4; Oran, 2007; Zürcher, 2004, pp. 161–163), partitioning the Ottoman Empire into substitutive units, including Armenia and Kurdistan. Article 64 of the Treaty of Sèvres made provision for the creation of an independent Kurdish state if the population of the Kurdish areas in Turkey expressed their support for it in a referendum. It also allowed the Kurds of the former Ottoman province of Mosul to join the Kurdish state should they wish (Vanly, 1993, p. 146). The Treaty of Sèvres was never enforced. Instead, a new settlement was negotiated and on July 24, 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed. The new treaty between Turkey and the victorious Allied Powers (led by Great Britain), while still punitive in some sense, was on terms far more favorable to Turkey (Gunter, 2004). According to this treaty, there was no room for any sort of Kurdish self-rule, either autonomy or independence (Naamani, 1966; Ali, 1997).

The Turkish state's approach to ethnic and religious minorities has been strongly influenced by the Lausanne settlement to this day. The treaty guarantees only limited language rights to non-Muslim groups (the Greek, Jewish, and Armenian minorities are allowed education in their own languages). But the Kurds were not recognized as a minority at all in the Lausanne Treaty (in contrast to the defunct Treaty of Sèvres) and severe restrictions were imposed on the public use of the Kurdish language (Arslan, 2015). From then onwards, the state bureaucracy removed any references to the territorial and linguistic particularity of Kurds from the official discourse of the Turkish Republic.

According to this new scheme, the Turkish state was the only holder of territorial jurisdiction inside Turkish borders. The so-called "capitulations"[42] of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were terminated by the terms of Lausanne, thus abolishing the right of foreign authorities to exercise extra-territorial jurisdiction inside Turkish borders. Although the Constitution of 1921 and the Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed fundamental rights for minorities—including equality before the law, full-protection of life and property, equal civil and political rights, and freedom of religion and social customs (Earle, 1925, p. 83)—Turkification remained the foundational principle evident in the terms regulating the official language.

The main step toward the elimination of minority languages was the acceptance of Turkish as the sole official language in the 1924 Constitution. Moreover, on March 3, 1924, the state banned Kurdish publications. Following those changes, between 1924 and 1935, education was standardized, unified, and centralized with the enactment of the Law on Unification of Education (1924); The Law for the Maintenance of Order (1925); the Confidential Eastern Reform Plan

[42] Capitulations were grants of extra-territorial jurisdiction offered to foreign powers by the Ottoman authorities. For further details, please see Thayer (1923).

(1925); and the Settlement Law (1934)[43] (Öpengin, 2015). Meanwhile, the Turkish Language Institution was founded in 1932 as an official body, and still determines the state's language policy today (Bayir, 2013).

In 1934, the Surname Law came into force, mandating that all citizens adopt Turkish surnames; first names that were not "Turkish" were also banned. Likewise, all the district and location names in languages other than Turkish were replaced by new, Turkish names (Öney, 2015, p. 19). In addition to changing the names of settlements into Turkish (Öktem, 2004), boarding schools (Işık & Arslan, 2012) were built in Kurdish provinces starting in 1939 (Beşikçi, 1970, pp. 552–553) resulting in an isolation and alienation of Kurdish children from their families and community.

All these crucial changes for the creation of the Turkish nation were carried out in the first few decades after the emergence of Turkish Republic when the majority of the ruling elites were still being recruited from the army. Ever since, the Turkish military has played a prominent role in the political realm, including four military interventions (including two periods of direct military rule) between 1960 and 2000.

In 1960, the army intervened into the political scene, suppressed dissent and took control of the state to maintain stability and order. The coup led to a new 1961 Constitution, which resulted in the Turkish state having a double-headed system (Cizre Sakallıoğlu, 1997) with the military sharing power with elected officials at the judicial, legislative, and executive levels. Alongside political leverage, the army had extensive economic independence. Two more coups took place, in March 1971 and in September 1980. The latter led to the adoption of the 1982 Constitution, which saw the military's realm of authority extend even further by making it responsible for the

[43] With the enactment of these laws, the goal was to maintain unification, standardization and centralization at the administrative level of governance.

maintenance of national security (Akinci, 2013). The scope of the military's institutional role in the post-1980 regime was therefore expanded and, as will be discussed briefly, this has become a major obstacle/concern for Turkey's potential membership of the EU.

Following the September 1980 coup, there was an upsurge in the Kurdish armed struggle led by the PKK. The history of Kurdish resistance in Turkey is much longer and goes back to the aftermath of the well-known *Tanzimat* era (1839–1876)—which is also known as the Ottoman modernization period—during which a set of administrative reforms to centralize the empire resulted in the penetration of state power in the empire's peripheries (Barkey, 2008; Ozbek, 2008). The initiation of the *Tanzimat* reforms were resisted by the Kurdish emirates during the 1840s as it ended their autonomy. The elimination of Kurdish autonomy and bringing the Kurdish emirates under the direct rule of the empire was a long drawn-out process and started with the Bitlis Emirate in 1655. The Ottoman rulers were keen to avoid any challenges to their authority and were prepared to take drastic action in order to prevent the emergence of centers of Kurdish power (Eppel, 2016, p. 33). Some of the Kurdish emirates survived until the mid-nineteenth century (Köksal, 2006; Khatchatrian, 2003; Ghalib, 2011). The elimination of the autonomy of Kurdish emirates left a huge void in the region and increased the power of the tribal and religious elites. The importance of the religious elites became more visible with the Seyh Ubeydullah Nehri Rebellion (1877–78) (Celil, 1998; Soleimani, 2016) occurring at the heart of the Turkish–Iranian borderlands. This region has witnessed continuous strife between the state and Kurdish rebels ever since.

The Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925), Ihsan Nuri Pasa Rebellion (1926–1930), and Dersim Rebellion (1937–38) are other important Kurdish uprisings in the first half of the twentieth century (Olson, 2001). The Sheikh Said Rebellion was remarkable because of its dual Kurdish nationalist and religious character and was the first overt opposition to the Turkish secular identity of the new state (Kirisci and Sönmez, 1998; Olson, 2013). The Dersim Rebellion was also historically

important because the site of uprising was a mountainous area, the home of Kurdish Alevis who were seen as a genuine threat to the Turkish Sunni Muslim identity. This rebellion ended with defeat within a year, followed by exile and execution of rebels (as was the case in the previous rebellions). However, it also led to the Dersim genocide in 1938 (Bozarslan, 2003; van Bruinessen, 1994; Olson, 2000; Watts, 2000).

Against the backdrop of these Kurdish rebellions, the PKK emerged during the 1970s in the milieu of political oppression, restrictions on freedom of speech and organization, political instability evident in short-lived coalitional governments, the rise of Islamist political parties, and the war in the Kurdish territory. The signs of Kurdish discontent began to be seen from the late 1950s onwards when a new generation of Kurdish activist intellectuals began to challenge the state's oppression of Kurdish identity (Gunes, 2012, pp. 49–64). The 1960s were a very lively period for Kurdish political and cultural activism in Turkey and from the mid-1960s onwards, it began to take a more organized form. Kurdish activists took part in Turkey's newly emerging socialist movement as well as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (TKDP), which advocated autonomy for Kurdish regions and had a close affiliation with the KDP in Iraq. In 1967, Kurdish activists organized "Meetings of the East" in several cities and towns in the Kurdish regions, which managed to draw popular support from the Kurdish population (Alis, 2009; Gunes, 2012, p. 59). In 1969, the efforts of the Kurdish activists resulted in the establishment of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (DDKO) (Gunter, 1988).

Kurdish political activities came to a temporary halt after the military coup of 1971. Many of the Kurdish activists were arrested and most remained in prison until the general amnesty of 1974. Through the rest of the 1970s, Kurdish political activism continued, and several new Kurdish socialist groups and underground political parties were established. These included the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKSP) in 1974; Rizgari (Liberation) in 1976; Kawa in 1976; the

Kurdistan National Liberationists (KUK) in 1976; the Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations (DDKD) in 1974; and—most famously of all—the PKK in 1978 (van Bruinessen, 1984; Marasli, 2010; Akkaya, 2013). Other groups that broke off from these also emerged, including the Denge Kawa (the Voice of Kawa) and Ala Rizgari (the Flag of Liberation).[44] During the 1970s, the idea that armed struggle against the state was necessary to liberate Kurdistan became dominant and most of these groups advocated armed struggle (Gunes, 2012, pp. 77–78). Many of the activists of these political parties were arrested and subjected to widespread torture and ill-treatment after the September 1980 coup (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009).

4.1.2 Turkish–Kurdish relations in the 1980s and 1990s: Violence, resistance and the emergence of conditions for peace. From the early 1980s, the PKK established itself as the dominant Kurdish group. In 1984, it launched its guerrilla war against the Turkish state. During the rest of the 1980s and through the 1990s, it succeeded in its efforts to mass mobilize the Kurds in Turkey and to recruit fighters. This was visible in the popular demonstrations in support of the PKK during the early 1990s, which were known as Serhildan [Uprising] and took place in the towns and cities in Kurdish regions, including in Nusaybin, Cizre and Diyarbakır. During the years of active conflict, the PKK presented a significant challenge to the authority of the state in the Kurdish-populated regions of Turkey, particularly in the areas that bordered Iran and Iraq (Olson, 1996, p. 2).

During the 1980s and the early 1990s, the PKK was motivated by the desire to create an autonomous Kurdish state in Greater Kurdistan as a homeland for all Kurds. The PKK continued its armed campaign until August 1999, when it declared a unilateral ceasefire and started to pull its guerrillas out of Turkey following the capture of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in Nairobi, Kenya, by

[44] Belge (2011) also draws attention to the plurality of Kurdish resistance movements that have been prevalent in the history of Turkish Republic and the role of kinship in the development of Kurdish resistance.

Turkish intelligence agents. From the mid-1990s, it began to acknowledge that accommodating Kurdish rights within the Turkish nation-state model is a more realistic approach. From the mid-2000s onwards, it began to argue that an administrative system based on decentralization and development of Kurdish self-governments would be the appropriate way to realize Kurdish rights—the so-called "democratic autonomy" approach (Gunes, 2019, p. 14).

Not all Kurds support the PKK, however. A significant number of the Kurdish tribesmen were armed by the state and organized as part of the village guard system, as laid out in section 3.2.1.2.2. As noted, the system was established in 1985 and widely implemented in the provinces of Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Şırnak, Siirt and Van. To recall briefly, the village guards were a pro-state Kurdish militia tasked with defending their settlements against the PKK (Balta, 2004; Akca & Balta-Paker, 2010; 2013). They also took part in operations against the PKK with the Turkish army and have been involved in human rights violations against Kurdish civilians (Özar, Uçarlar & Aytar, 2013, p. 60). At the height of the conflict in 1995, the number of village guards was 62,286 (ibid., p. 56). In November 2012, according to Ministry of Interior figures, the number of village guards stood at 45,596 (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015). The village guards were officially an all-volunteer service and did in fact have many willing recruits. Nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter 3, those Kurds who refused to accept the offer of becoming a village guard were forcefully evacuated from their villages (Belge, 2016; Çelik, 2017).

In addition to the PKK's violent means, Kurds sought to find a remedy to their situation though the legal channels and a number of pro-Kurdish political parties have been active in Turkey. Legal Kurdish political parties enjoyed success at the ballot box. In 1990, the People's Labor Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi*, HEP) was established and won 22 seats in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT). Because these new Kurdish MPs were explicit in their cultural background, however, they made Kurdish identity more visible in the public sphere. As a result, these politicians

became targets and Kurdish representation in the GNAT was challenged in the courts (Muller, 1996). The HEP was closed down by the Turkish Constitutional Court on July 14, 1993. In its place, a new party arose—the Democracy Party (DEP)—established in May 1993. The HEP MPs switched to the DEP and continued the pro-Kurdish parliamentary group. However, the DEP was also closed down by the Constitutional Court in June 1994 and four of its MPs received 15-year sentences in August 1994. Six of its MPs escaped to Europe in order to avoid imprisonment (Gunes, 2017, p. 260). Following the DEP's closure and the elimination of the pro-Kurdish parliamentary representation, the People's Democracy Party (HADEP), established in May 1994, became the main pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey. During the late 1990s, Kurdish political activism evolved into a vocal social movement (Bozarslan, 1996; Barkey, 1998; Watts, 1999; Gunes, 2017) not only because of state oppression and Kurdish grief but also the improving capacity of Kurdish political actors to strategically use local and regional dynamics to create new alliances and to pursue their own political agenda (Romano, 2006; Tezcur, 2015). HADEP took part in the parliamentary elections in 1999 and won 4.75% of the national vote but was not able to win a seat in the GNAT as it could not pass the 10% electoral threshold. It obtained 3.8% of the votes in the local elections and won the control of 37 district and municipal councils, including the provinces of Diyarbakir and Van (Gunes, 2018, p. 261).

From the early 1980s until the AKP came to power in November 2002, there were two major threats on the agenda of the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK)—namely, the Kurdish movement and reactionary Islam. These two groups (both Kurdish and Islamist circles who are mobilized) have always been the principal drivers of what Jacoby (2011) calls a permanent crisis of the Turkish state. This is because both have traditionally been perceived as a threat to the territorial integrity and founding ideology of the Turkish state, which reflects a project of creating a Turkish Sunni–secular citizenry (Yavuz, 1996; Loizides, 2010). Because of

that, the Turkish state had a number of internal and external stimuli to launch democratization reforms. In particular, the state's treatment of ethnic and religious minorities had become a barrier to Turkey's aspirations to become a member of the EU. Additionally, the resilience of Kurdish mobilization had continuously challenged the monolithic structure of the hegemonic Turkish nation-state and caused policy-makers to reconsider the political approaches to manage the protracted conflict. Within this context, in an effort to address the EU's concerns and internal pressures, the AKP promised to launch reform packages, some of which were designed to benefit the Kurdish population.

Following the volatility of the 1980s, the 1990s became a period of excessive state violence against Kurdish politicians and activists (Muller, 1996; Bozarslan, 2000), as well as against Kurdish civilians. Life in Turkey's rural Kurdistan became the center of this warfare, with everyday life being affected by both direct and indirect use of violence and containment. (Bozarslan, 2000, 2001; Jongerden, 2010). The majority of the Kurds were living in rural areas until the 1990s and the existence of Turkey's death squads and stealth house bombings, which frequently occurred during those years, became routine in many rural areas of the eastern and southeastern borderlands, including Saray, Özalp, Kızıltepe, Nusaybin, Şemdinli and Cizre.

Direct use of violence was primarily the result of counter-insurgency strategies led by the Turkish security forces and paramilitary groups, and included basic control, military occupation, enforced disappearances, rape, abandonment of villages, forced displacement (the strategy of depopulation), curfews, extra-judicial killings, and collusion with right-wing groups. In addition to harsh violent instruments, indirect methods included the use of subtle forms of violence, such as

stigmatization, public humiliation, isolation, co-optation, psychological abuse, and the state-sponsored spying system (Aras, 2013).[45]

Even if both sides developed their capacities for warfare over the course of years, the cost of the enduring fight was too high. For instance, the PKK announced four ceasefires throughout the 1990s: 1993, 1995, 1998, and 1999. However, none ended with a durable peace. Meanwhile, the long-term consequences of the violence had also become too much for the state, which prompted more serious negotiations with the PKK.

4.1.3 The role of EU Conditionality on Turkish–Kurdish relations: A slow transition from violence to democratization? Turkey has had a long-standing interest in joining the European integration project. The relationship goes back to the early 1960s, when Turkey was accepted as a member of the European Economic Community (Kuneralp, 2017; Öniş, 2014). However, after Turkey's coup d'état in 1980, the relationship was suspended. It was reinstated in 1995, when Turkey was accepted for membership in the European Customs Union.

Following the Luxembourg meeting of December 1997, the EU Commission criticized Turkey for its failure in terms of the protection of minorities and respect for human rights.[46] This led to political unrest among the members of the coalition government, some of whom condemned the EU for what they called its double standards against Turkey (Radikal, 2004). On that occasion, 11 countries, including Cyprus, were accepted as candidates for membership of the EU. While

[45] During those years, the state's power was extensive in scope with its legal and extra-legal institutions, officials, methods and signifiers. Although people had both public and hidden transcripts (Scott, 1992), the language they use in public encounters and private encounters, the state endured in reality and idea through a set of habits ordinary people appropriated in their everyday lives. Navaro-Yashin calls these habits the "rituals for the state" and argues that state-as-reality prevails through borders, institutions and the rule of law while the state-as-signifier consolidates its power through submerged forces yet to be explored (Navaro-Yashin, 2002, p. 179).

[46] Milliyet (1997). For a detailed academic account, please see Bac-Muftuler (2000).

Turkey was included in the enlargement process, it was not given a pre-accession strategy as the other 11 candidate countries had been (Eralp, 2000, p. 2).

In 1998, in response to concerns raised by EU countries, the coalition government began the enhancement of the EU's "harmonization packages".[47] These packages envisioned "a gradual ending of emergency rule after fifteen years of power in the Southeast,[48] allowing television and radio broadcasts in Kurdish, making Kurdish language training possible, and removing the death penalty from the Turkish Criminal Code" (EU Commission, 1999, p. 45). As part of this process, the government also began to implement a policy of helping displaced Kurds to return to their villages, from which they had fled due to the political violence between the Turkish state and the PKK (Pusane, 2014, p. 84).

The turning point for the future of Turkey–EU relations and its influence on Turkey's democratization came in 1999. Despite institutional problems, Turkey's candidacy for EU membership was accepted at the Helsinki Summit in December of that year, following a new coalition government's election in April. Negotiations between Turkey and the EU began in the context of these sudden changes in the political and social climate. The Helsinki Summit was held in the same year and it became the official start of Turkey's path to democratization.[49]

[47] This process was accelerated following Abdullah Öcalan's capture in February 1999.

[48] As stated earlier, this rule is still current although its application ceased in 2002.

[49] Turkey's Europeanization and substantial democratization reforms officially started under EU conditionality in the early 2000s. With this pre-existing EU push, the AKP was given legitimacy and provided with appropriate circumstances to make a progressive policy shift in minority rights. In this early phase of the democratization process, the AKP was more inclined to accede to the Copenhagen criteria but less concerned with the protection of minorities. Nevertheless, the government took some critical steps toward demilitarizing political space (Insel, 2003). Reforms during the first term of the AKP government involved reducing the institutional representation of the army in various top decision-making bodies—such as the National Security Council (*Millî Güvenlik Kurulu*, MGK), Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*, YÖK), and the Supreme Council for Radio and Television (RTÜK)—and marginalizing the role of the military in Turkish politics (Günlük-Şenesen & Kırık, 2016).

In the 2000s, EU requirements for membership became a contributing factor to the rise of the AKP, which promised to launch further democratization reforms to achieve stability in the country. As part of EU membership conditionality, aspiring states are required to improve the level and quality of their democracy, including minority rights (Grigoriadis, 2008; Pridham, 2007a, 2007b; Sasse, 2005; Smith, 2003; Soner, 2005). Under these conditions, the AKP government had strong incentives to initiate a substantial reform process so that Turkey would comply with the conditionality requirements and act in line with the EU standards. The rhetoric of the state as well as the dominant perception of Kurds thus began to change along with the state's shift from violent repression to civic control of minorities. In this era, the AKP approached Kurds with a new language that did not imply that they were "pseudo-citizens." However, the changes in image and language had not yet been accompanied by wide-ranging legal reforms (Peleg, 2007; Yıldız, 2007).

4.2. Reform, Ceasefire and Return to Violence: A Chronology of State–Minority Relations

As mentioned, this study looks at state–minority relations during the Kurdish Opening and provides a relational account of reforms and response, in the Turkish–Kurdish context, which is a highly contentious setting (Tarrow & Tilly, 2009; Tarrow, 2011).

In this section, I will trace the democratization process through three different periods. I identified these periods because, in each of these years, there was substantive institutional and political change leading to a new path in terms of Turkish–Kurdish relations. As I noted in Chapter 1, the period between Turkey's formal accession in 2004 and 2009 is the first period that brought certain revisions to the relationship between the state and Kurds. As previously discussed in more detail, the ruling AKP came to power in 2002. Two years later in June 2004, the PKK ended the unilateral ceasefire that had been in place since September 1999. In 2009, the ruling AKP initiated the Kurdish Opening, which was the main package designed for improving democracy and

expanding fundamental rights. In 2013, both sides declared the latest ceasefire which was in place until July 2015.

This piece of analysis adds to my broader research question by showing the limitations of the Kurdish Opening and the intervening impacts of territorial strategies and concerns over the peace process. I have classified the peace process under three stages: reforms, ceasefire, and return to violence. The first reform was not specifically about the Kurdish Question, but about democracy in Turkey more generally. The reform period was followed by a two-year period of ceasefire (2013–15) and ended with a return to violence from then up until now. I will analyze these three stages of negotiations and peace process in the rest of the chapter. Table 4.1 below offers a summary overview of the state's reform initiatives (and regressive policies) in this period and the responses of the Kurdish movement, including the PKK. These matters will be discussed in full detail in Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 of the chapter.

Table 4.1

Democratization and the peace process: Turkish state policies and Kurdish political responses (2001–2015)

Period	Background	State Policies and Initiatives	Response of the Kurdish Movement
2001	EU accession preparations Democratization reforms Unilateral Ceasefire	GNAT amendments to the 1982 Constitution Attempts to eliminate undemocratic and ethnically discriminatory elements Strengthening the rule of law Restructuring democratic institutions Stringent restrictions on political rights loosened Constitutional guarantees for political parties strengthened Ban on political activities of associations and trade unions lifted	The PKK declares a unilateral ceasefire effective from September 1999. This came after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK in February 1999, in Nairobi, Kenya Restructuring of strategies, goals and governing units of Kurdish movement PKK guerrillas withdraw from Turkey at Öcalan's request Hundreds of guerillas killed by Turkish military during the withdrawal phase
2002		First Harmonization Package for EU accession Revisions to the penal code Revisions to anti-terrorism legislation	Unilateral ceasefire maintained The pro-Kurdish DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) obtains 6.2% of the national vote at the

		Expansion of political space Efforts made to widen political participation Loosening of restrictions to individual rights and freedoms *Security forces kill two Kurdish civilians at demonstrations during Newroz[50] (Kurdish New Year) celebrations	general election but gains no seats in the GNAT, falling short of the 10% electoral threshold Restructuring continues
2003		Draft Law on Principles of Public Administration amended in accordance with EU principles Law No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities Law on Provincial Special Administration Law No. 5393 on Municipalities *Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan refuses to ratify amendments granting autonomy to local governments	Unilateral ceasefire maintained Restructuring continues

[50] Newroz is the day set aside among Kurds to honor the coming of the spring—it has traditionally been treated as the Kurdish New Year. The Newroz Day is also politically symbolic. For more details, see Aydin (2013).

2004	Armed struggle resumes	Draft Law on Foundations introduced to the GNAT Capital punishment abolished as part of EU negotiations	Unilateral ceasefire maintained until June Armed struggle resumes in June
2005	Solution Process	Ministry of EU Affairs initiates project called "Support for the Solution of Economic and Social Integration Problems Major In-migrant Destinations" in the cities of Diyarbakır, Antep, Urfa and Erzurum Prime Minister Erdoğan announces "the Kurdish problem is my problem" Solution process begins	DEHAP replaced by a new pro-Kurdish party, the Democratic Society Party (DTP) PKK changes its military strategy from direct confrontation to guerilla warfare PKK reiterates willingness to legalize the movement in response to Erdoğan's statement
2006		Solution process continues at a slow pace	
2007		Solution process continues at a slow pace Ruling AKP wins 360 out of 550 seats (AKP popularity boosted significantly after TAF General Staff posts intimidating "e-memorandum" on its website in April	Pro-Kurdish party, DTP, wins 22 seats at the general election through supporting independent candidates in select constituencies in order to avoid the requirement to pass the 10% electoral threshold

	Kurdish Opening	pressuring the party in the lead up to presidential elections)	
2008		Solution process continues at a slow pace Law on Foundations passed by GNAT	Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) established in anticipation that DTP may be banned
2009		Solution process continues at a slow pace Public broadcasting agency (TRT) launches TRT-6—Turkey's first 24-hour Kurdish language channel—in January Government removes the ban on use of Kurdish language among inmates in Turkish prisons YÖK resolves to establish Kurdish language and literature departments in universities Minister of Internal Affairs declares the start of the Kurdish Opening (also referred to as the Democratic Opening) with the objective of ending armed conflict	Following the DTP's success in local elections, PKK declares ceasefire PKK takes solid steps toward reconciliation Demonstrations in Kurdish-majority regions to protest the closure of DTP; these are suppressed violently Öcalan proposed a three-stage roadmap, whereby in the first stage PKK would announce a permanent ceasefire, in the second stage the government would establish a truth and reconciliation commission and the last stage would be the introduction of a democratic constitution and legalization of the PKK

		34 people—8 guerrillas and 26 civilians living in the Maxmur refugee camp which was built by the UNHCR in 1994—crossed into Turkey at the Habur border gate (also known as the "Habur incident") 500 DTP members taken in custody on charges of terrorism Constitutional Court bans DTP on December 12, 2009	
2010	Solution process comes to a halt	The government drafts slate of constitutional amendments and calls a referendum, with substantial changes to 30 articles proposed Structure of the composition of the Constitutional Court changed Composition of the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors changed, introducing more civilian judges The government refuses to respond to Öcalan's call	Kurdish movement calls for boycott of the referendum In the light of government refusal, PKK decides to end the ceasefire in June. However, ceasefire resumes upon Öcalan's insistence in August

2011	War resumes	Turkish airstrikes kill 34 Kurdish unarmed smugglers in Roboski/Uludere[51] in Şırnak border, undermining democratization process Roboski incident followed by the arrest of Kurdish politicians (7,748 taken in custody and 3,895 charged over a 30-month period)	Öcalan proposes another roadmap in June, suggesting the establishment of three commissions, dealing with the new constitution, peace, and truth and justice (respectively) PKK accuse the state of canceling negotiations before 2011 elections. One leader reveals meetings have been ongoing in secret since 2009 PKK resumes its attacks against the Turkish army, killing 13 soldiers
2012	Stalemate in the peace process	Government continued to arrest pro-Kurdish BDP mayors, politicians and activists At end of December 2012, government indicates a new round of dialogue with the PKK leader will begin	PKK continues its attacks Hunger strike by PKK inmates in Turkish prisons between September 12 and November 18 A new pro-Kurdish political party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) established on October 15
2013		Turkish Intelligence Service (MIT) assassinates three women Kurdish activists in Paris on January 9	Öcalan asks PKK guerillas to lay down their arms during Newroz celebrations

[51] Roboski is the Kurdish name for the district, which is known as Uludere in Turkish.

	Democratization Package	In the aftermath, the peace process continues Detainees of the Kurdistan Communities Association (in Kurdish: Koma Civakên Kurdistan, KCK) released from jail AKP launches democratization package in October Legalization of schooling in Kurdish language in private institutions	PKK declares final ceasefire on March 23 PKK declares withdrawal of forces from Turkey
2014		Some KCK prisoners, including key politicians, released Erdoğan elected president in August Government continues positive stance Beşir Atalay[52] calls for Qandil Mountain (e.g. top commanders of the PKK) and third parties (e.g. Europe) to be brought into the process GNAT authorizes the Turkish army to carry out a military operation in Iraq and Syria	PKK welcomes government call for peace

[52] Atalay is a Turkish politician who was one of the leading figures behind the design and coordination of the Kurdish Opening reform program.

2015	Dolmabahçe Roadmap Ceasefire Collapses Heavy clashes	Öcalan's roadmap announced in a joint meeting of government ministers and HDP MPs on 28 February; The venue—Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul—lends its name to the new peace initiative AKP loses its parliamentary majority in June elections Erdoğan withdraws support from Dolmabahçe Roadmap and accuses the Kurdish side of betrayal Ceasefire ends in July	HDP passes the election threshold and wins 80 seats in the GNAT Öcalan declared another roadmap, summarizing the demands proposed by the Kurdish movement Öcalan calls for the PKK to end the armed struggle based on the mutually agreed principles

Note: The rows highlighted in yellow illustrate the periods of ceasefire, stalemate or democratization while the rows colored in orange indicate the periods of rupture.

4.2.1 The first wave of reforms (2002–2004). As part of the democratization process, the ruling AKP decreed eight harmonization packages between 2002 and 2004, in part in response to perceived EU imperatives. The first package, enacted in February 2002, included some revisions in penal law and the law on the fight against terrorism. According to this package, the government took some crucial steps toward the expansion of political space and the ease of political participation by limiting restrictions on freedom of expression, election reforms, and regulations of political parties (Nas & Özer, 2017). The government also launched some minor revisions in the law on freedom of the press, the law regulating acts of associations, and the law on freedom of demonstration.

The first wave of reform was democratic, but these proceeded alongside party bans. Ethnic party bans have been a prominent tool of institutional–political engineering in Turkey. Since the 1980s, the Turkish Constitutional Court dissolved political parties perceived as a "threat to the unity of the Turkish Republic" 18 times—half of these were Kurdish parties (Kogacioglu, 2004, p. 435 as cited in Bale, 2007, p. 145). The most notable examples were the pro-Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) and the pro-Kurdish HEP (Gülalp, 1999; Watts, 2010). These parties regularly changed and re-branded themselves to counter this political strategy, thus retaining some measure of continuity in the political realm. These institutional biases against allegedly non-secular and non-Turkish groups imply that the Turkish official ideology has viewed "the concepts of democracy, progress, and unity as intimately tied together such that the threat to one of these concepts almost simultaneously constitutes a threat to the other two" (Kogacioglu, 2004, p. 433).

This way of thinking explains the circumstances under which institutional engineering has produced persistent hegemonic control in Turkey.[53]

The aforementioned harmonization packages included important new legislation to eliminate laws violating the political rights of citizens and to limit the power of the Constitutional Court to ban political parties. The legislation covered a wide range of matters, including the right to petition, civil society freedoms, regulation of political parties, the right to vote, and eligibility to stand for election to the GNAT (Ozbudun, 2007, p. 190). The abolition of the death penalty and the status of military-led institutions, such as the State Security Courts and the MGK, were also prominent changes with implications for state–minority relations (Muftuler-Bac, 2005).

In 2001, the GNAT decided to amend the 1982 Constitution, which had been drafted by an advisory assembly that the Turkish army had appointed in 1981. The 2001 amendments[54] were the most serious attempt to eliminate undemocratic and ethnic elements of the 1982 Constitution (Gonenc, 2004) that had institutionalized the "control regime" in Turkey and forged assimilationist and exclusive policies against Kurds. The changes covered four categories: fundamental rights and freedoms (i.e. individual rights and freedoms); collective rights and freedoms (i.e. political rights and freedoms, social and economic rights and freedoms); state organization (i.e. administrative reform and institutional structure) and; civil–military relations (Gonenc, 2004, pp. 99–108). In total, 34 articles of the constitution were amended, covering a wide range of issues from improving human rights and strengthening the rule of law to restructuring democratic institutions (OECD,

[53] The term "hegemonic control" is used here in the same way as Lustick uses the term "control mechanisms". Both concepts draw attention to the systemic domination and control of society by the state. In this study, domination and control are sometimes used interchangeably.

[54] There are many reports and publications describing and examining the various aspects of the 2001 constitutional amendments in Turkish. See, for example, Özbudun (2001).

2002, p. 39; KHRP, 2006, p. 11). In particular, as Aknur (2012) has stated, the amendments improved:

> Freedom of thought and expression, the prevention of torture, the freedom and security of individual, the right to privacy, the inviolability of the domicile, the freedom of communication, freedom of residence and movement, freedom of association, the right to fair trial, the equality of the spouses in the family, reduction of detention periods, limited rules on the dissolution of political parties, and the strengthening of the civil aspect within the National Security Council (p. 294).

With the revisions, a number of stringent conditions imposed on political rights were loosened. Eligibility criteria to stand for the GNAT were more clearly specified (i.e. vague criteria allowing disqualification of candidates on the basis of "ideological activity" were tightened; now only those guilty of "terrorist activity" can be barred). Additionally, constitutional guarantees for political parties were strengthened after the revision of Article 69, according to which the prohibition of parties was limited to the decision of the Constitutional Court. Finally, the ban on political activity by trade unions and other associations was lifted, leading to the expansion of civil society (Tocci, 2005). All these improvements had a positive impact on Turkey's EU accession. In its 2003 Regular Report, the European Commission (2003) concluded that:

> In the past 12 months, Turkey has made further impressive legislative efforts which constitute significant progress toward achieving compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria. Turkey should address the outstanding issues highlighted in this report, with particular attention to the strengthening of the independence and the functioning of the judiciary, the overall framework for the exercise of fundamental freedoms (association, expression and religion), further alignment of civil–military relations with European practice, the situation in the southeast, and cultural rights. Turkey should ensure full and effective implementation of reforms to ensure that Turkish citizens can enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms in line with European standards (p. 45).

The European Commission (2003) also addressed the unevenness of the implementation of political reforms arguing judicial independence had yet to be achieved:

> In some cases, executive and judicial bodies entrusted with the implementation of the political reforms relating to fundamental freedoms adopted by the GNAT have narrowed the scope of these reforms by establishing restrictive conditions, hindering the objectives initially pursued (p. 43).

Concomitantly, the government adopted eight more harmonization packages within 18 months in an effort to democratize legislative and judicial systems in the aftermath of the Copenhagen Summit (Ünlü Bilgiç, 2009). These packages promised, first, fundamental rights and freedoms, including the prevention of hate crimes, the prohibition against insulting a segment of the population, toleration for critical thought and political opposition, and the abolition of capital punishment. Second, they strengthened cultural rights, such as the official recognition of hitherto prohibited languages and promotion of teaching in languages other than Turkish. Finally, they cemented civilian control over military—namely, that the general secretary of the MGK must be a civilian (Özbudun, 2006, 2007). Moreover, additional precautions were taken to prevent torture and mistreatment. For example, those convicted of torture could no longer plea-bargain to avoid prison time and testimony taken in the absence of a lawyer would no longer be admissible in a court of law.[55]

Meanwhile, the European Commission demanded that Turkey adopt the supranational model of regional governance and introduce administrative reforms as a condition of membership. It was argued that the reconfiguration of the state's territorial governance in a way that would give

[55] The AKP has also gone through the process of ideological change and attitudinal shift since 2001. Some party founders, such as Abdullatif Şener, Bülent Arınç and Abdullah Gül (Erdoğan's immediate predecessor as president), have seen fit to distance themselves from the party due to ideological and political disagreements. The AKP also pursued more assertive policy in domestic and international affairs. When talking about the democratization process, it is important to reconsider this shift in the AKP's domestic and foreign policy and its possible effects on democratization.

more power to regional and local institutions could increase efficiency and equality in the allocation of resources across regions (Loewendahl-Ertugal, 2005). This new model would in theory be more responsive to the demands of local populations who typically struggle to effectively access central decision-making bodies. To sum up, during the initial period of AKP rule, the government was willing to comply with the EU standards and launched reforms—albeit quite limited in scope—in that spirit.

4.2.1.1 The Kurdish political response (2002–2005): A dual response by Kurds. The dual strategy of military control along the border combined with reforms aimed at coming to terms with certain Kurdish demands, such as the liberalization of the Kurdish language, triggered a dual response by Kurds. Although, as I will ultimately argue at length, the Kurdish political response has to be situated in the context of the state's dual strategy of democratization and territorial control, in this chapter I will focus on the initial responses to democratization. However, the limited, confused and sometimes zigzagging nature of this response can only be fully grasped once we recognize that the Kurdish political movement responds not only to democratization and political reforms, but also to the state's ongoing policies and practices of territorial control in the borderlands. As I will elaborate further in the next chapter, the state continued to build a number of high-tech military bases and dams on strategically critical routes (mostly bordering Iraq and Iran) in the midst of the democratization reforms. As a response to this ongoing militarization, Kurdish villagers, members of Kurdish youth organizations, the BDP, and civil society activists started to organize vigils in various locations, such as Hakkari (Meskan) and Lice. This is also important in understanding the failure of the state's reforms.

The constitutional amendments proposed by the ruling AKP ignited massive debates within the opposition parties, including the CHP and the pro-Kurdish parties. These amendments served as the markers of the existing deep cleavages in Turkey's political spectrum. The government was

viewed by those in favor of democratization to be serious in their reforms, while the opposition viewed this skeptically, as a calculated political maneuver by the AKP to further its ideological goals. By the time the first group of harmonization packages were enacted, it was not clear whether these reforms would be taken as a sign of the AKP's commitment to democracy or its desire for political control.

Kurdish opposition was divided along ethnic and religious lines. Some Kurds continued to support the leftist secular path of the Kurdish movement while other Kurds persisted in keeping their strong ties with religion. Among Kurds, the conservative AKP received votes from the second group who self-identified as religious (Sarigil & Fazlioglu, 2013). Also, there were some liberal leftists supporting the AKP for its commitment to Europeanization.

As mentioned, the first pro-Kurdish party, HEP, was established in June 1990. This was a secular left-wing party advocating democratic principles in its party constitution, drawing the majority of its support from the Kurdish-populated region. It was established by Kurdish and Turkish socialists but many of the latter group left the party after it became the target of state repression. HEP supporters were mostly families whose relatives had joined the PKK or those who had suffered loss at the hands of the state. By 2002, the Kurdish constituency had realigned behind the DEHAP (founded in 1997), which became the main party representing the Kurdish opposition in Turkey (Somer, 2004). Its sister party, the HADEP remained under constant threat of closure during the early 2000s, and DEHAP was thus the main representative of the pro-Kurdish political movement (Gürbüz, 2016). The state and other key political actors assumed that DEHAP, like its predecessors, retained ideological and political connections to the PKK (Marcus, 2007).

From 2002 to 2004, the PKK remained committed to its unilateral ceasefire, a strategy adopted when its leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999. In those years, hundreds of PKK guerrillas died as they withdrew from Turkey on Öcalan's orders, as discussed in greater detail in

the next section. Meanwhile, the legal Kurdish party (i.e. DEHAP) struggled to win seats in the GNAT. On 21 March 2002, Turkish security forces killed two Kurdish civilians during demonstrations against the government's ban on Newroz celebrations. In 2003, the Constitutional Court banned HADEP on the grounds of its alleged support for the PKK (Moghadam, 2007). In those years, the Kurdish front was restructuring its strategies, goals and governing units (see table 4.1).

4.2.2 Reforms (2004–2009): Paving the way for the Kurdish Opening. The government introduced a second series of constitutional amendments in 2004. Similar to the previous period, most of these amendments were related to improving fundamental rights and freedoms, such as linguistic freedom and freedom of association, thus indirectly influencing the resolution of the Turkish–Kurdish conflict. The revisions of ten articles were made in line with the principles of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to give primacy to international treaties and courts concerning fundamental rights and freedoms over the national law. As noted earlier, in order to maintain civilian control over the military, the GNAT abolished the State Security Courts, which were established after the 1980 military coup and enjoyed supreme jurisdictional authority. Likewise, the government took initiatives to abolish capital punishment and eliminated the military's representation on the University Education Council (*Yüksek Ögretim Kurulu*, YÖK).

Meanwhile, the state made moves to improve the status of religious minorities—including Alevis, some of whom are Kurdish. In that regard, a key piece of reform legislation brought to the Assembly in 2004, with the aim of broadening religious freedoms in Turkey, was the draft Law on Foundations, designed to enable the country's non-Muslim religious minorities to regain their property rights (Ulusoy, 2011). The legislation passed in 2008 but its implementation together with the resolution of the outstanding property-related issues regarding non-Muslim minorities still remain a challenge.

In 2005, Erdoğan announced in a speech in Diyarbakır that: "the Kurdish problem is my problem" (Tharoor, 2015). This speech became the hallmark of a paradigm shift toward the Kurdish issue, marking the start of the so-called "solution process". The next crucial step came in 2009. Between 2005 and 2009, the process continued slowly albeit with some solid reforms introduced. In October 2005, Turkey's EU negotiations began, which gave a greater momentum to the process.

Meanwhile, the ruling AKP won 363 out of 550 seats in the 2007 elections (Sayari & Hasanov, 2008). Erdoğan was bolstered significantly by this victory, noting: "we have 75 Kurdish MPs in the party and so we are the real representatives of those people [the Kurds]."[56] In the same year, the Turkish army showed its disapproval of the authority of the ruling party and its ideals by issuing a warning on its website (Aydinli, 2011). Critics branded this intervention into presidential elections an e-coup (e-memorandum) (Tank, 2016). Following this incident, the army launched a cross-border military operation that it called "*Günes Operasyonu/Harekatı*" ("Sun Operation") in 2008. These negative incidents led to some controversies about the future of the resolution process, slowed down the pace of reforms, and widened perceptual gaps between the two sides.

4.2.2.1 Kurdish political response (2005–2009). After his capture in 1999, Abdullah Öcalan instructed the PKK to withdraw its guerrilla forces from Turkey and declare a unilateral ceasefire, which it observed until 2004. However, during the withdrawal phase approximately 550–600 guerrillas died because the GNAT had laid down no official guarantee and no legal framework existed to protect them (Vardar, 2013). Responding to this unexpected turn, approximately 5,000 guerrillas surrendered arms and retired to civilian life. Some of them who were former executive committee members expected to continue their political activities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, located in the north of Iraq, under a different party name, the PWD. Yet none of them achieved the

[54] HaberAktüel.com. (2007, November 26). *Kürtlerin gerçek temsilcisi AK parti!* [AK party is the true representative of the Kurds!]. Retrieved from https://www.haberaktuel.com/kurtlerin-gercek-temsilcisi-ak-parti-haberi-99092.html

goal of expanding the political space and ended up serving in the peshmerga army or making a family life.

The shock of Öcalan's capture led to partial deadlock in the movement until 2006. The first five years of the 2000s were the most critical period in the history of the PKK because the movement was faced with serious internal and external challenges. Between 1999 and 2005, the political, ideological and military units of the PKK went through a serious restructuring process. First of all, the PKK's armed forces, the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARGK), was replaced with a new organization called the People's Defense Forces (HPG) in 2000. (Uzun, 2014). Second, the PKK handed over its all duties to a new political body called KADEK in accordance with the decisions taken in its 8th Congress in 2002. In 2003, the KONGRA–GEL (the People's Congress of Kurdistan) was formed.

The armed struggle resumed in June 2004, bringing the five-year unilateral ceasefire to an end. A number of violent clashes between the Turkish army and the PKK soon followed. In this new period, the PKK changed its battlefield tactics and moved from direct confrontation with the army to the use of mines, snipers, and long-range strafing of military outposts, after which its units rapidly withdrew before the Turkish military could call up land reinforcements and air support (Jenkins, 2007).

Once Erdoğan took a step toward the recognition of the Kurdish Question in 2005, the PKK leadership reiterated its willingness to legalize the movement and began to adopt more democratic legal tools and discourses. In the same year, a senior PKK commander and the former head of the KCK, Murat Karayılan, stated that the PKK was focused as much on political and diplomatic relations as its guerrilla forces, adding that the movement was ready to step up its political work in democratic channels (Yeğen, 2009).

4.2.3 Reforms (2009–2013): The Kurdish Opening and its challenges. After seven years in power, the AKP took the most crucial steps in democratization in 2009. At the beginning of that year it launched a concrete initiative to tackle the Kurdish Question by expanding cultural and linguistic rights through Turkey's first-ever 24-hour Kurdish language channel, TRT-6 (Haberler, 2009a). Additionally, in the same year, the government removed the ban on the use of Kurdish language among inmates in Turkish prisons (İHD, 2009), and YÖK began preparations to establish Kurdish language and literature departments in public universities.

In the March 2009 local elections, the AKP's vote-share dropped from 40.16% to 38.8%. It lost some of its municipalities in the Kurdish region while the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, DTP) won 96 municipalities (Yeğen, 2015).

Table 4.2

Election results for the major Turkish parties, 2004–2009

	March 2004				March 2009		
	Provincial general council election	Mayorships won		General election	Provincial general council election	Mayorships won	
	Vote share (%)	Greater city/province	Districts	2007	Vote share (%)	Greater city/province	Districts
AKP	41.7	58	470	46.6	38.4	45	447
CHP	18.2	8	125	20.9	23.1	13	170
MHP	10.5	4	70	14.3	16.0	10	129
Other	16.4	1	120	10.7	5.9	1	45
DTP*	5.2	5	29		5.7	8	50
SP	4.0	1	12	2.3	5.2	0	23
DSP	2.1	3	5		2.9	2	10
BBP	1.2		3		2.4	1	3
Independents	0.7	1	17	5.2	0.4	1	15
	100	81	851	100	100	81	892

Note. Retrieved from http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/docs/2009MahalliIdareler/ResmiGazete/IlGenel.pdf (accessed on March 4, 2018).

In the following map, DTP-majority Kurdish cities in the 2009 local elections are colored in green, evidently illustrating the political representation and territorial distribution of votes in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands.

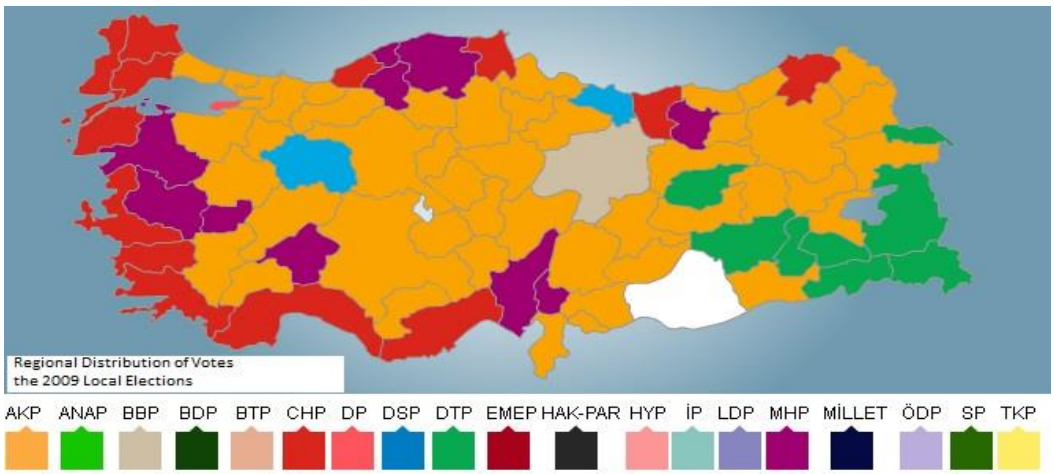


Figure 4.1. Regional distribution of votes, 2009 local elections in Turkey. Retrieved from https://readtiger.com/wkp/en/2009_Turkish_local_elections.

Since the pro-Kurdish DTP won in all the Turkish towns bordering Iraq and Iran, the most striking aspect of the March 2009 local elections is its disclosure of the territorial division of party support distribution along ethnic lines, reflecting the regional divisions of electoral support along the Turkish–Kurdish ethnic cleavage (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2009).

The electoral map of this election (see Figure 4.1) demonstrates two political outcomes that had a profound impact on the prospect of Turkish–Kurdish relations. First, the AKP began to lose political support within the time span of five years (from the 2004 to March 2009 elections). Second, and more importantly, the party system in Turkey was divided on a regional basis, meaning that the eastern and southeastern provinces emerged as the key regions where there was a concentration of votes for the pro-Kurdish DTP (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2009, p. 310). Both of these outcomes were not only representative of how ethnicity affects people's voting preferences, but also served to widen the Turkish–Kurdish cleavage. DTP's achievement in the borderlands

created a political atmosphere in which the AKP had to reshape its political agenda so that it could regain its lost political support.

4.2.3.1 Announcing the Kurdish Opening. Following the elections, the PKK declared another ceasefire. After the loss of votes to the pro-Kurdish party that year, the AKP returned to the discourse of democratization and proposed new cultural and political reforms to go some way to meet certain Kurdish demands. This was the moment the Kurdish Opening was born. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Beşir Atalay, officially launched the Kurdish Opening—later referred to variously as the Democratic Opening, the Democratic Initiative and the National Unity and Fraternity Project (Milliyet, 2009)—in the summer of 2009. From the perspective of the state, the primary objective of this initiative was to end the armed conflict and to transform the basic institutional infrastructure of the post-1980 regime. For that purpose, the government came together with the representatives of some NGOs and initiated a series of meetings to come up with resolution proposals (Haberler, 2009b).

In the aftermath of DTP's electoral victory, the PKK began to take solid steps toward reconciliation and showed its commitment to the ongoing process by announcing a ceasefire. However, the reform process was ruptured by the state's wave of arrests of Kurdish mayors, lawyers and politicians. By June 2009, around 500 DTP members were in custody, along with Kurdish lawyers, academics and NGO officials who were accused of being members of a terrorist organization (Christie-Miller, 2010).

Despite massive arrests of politicians, this round of the process kept moving and the PKK sent a group of guerrillas and refugees to Turkey across the Habur border gate along the Turkish–Iraqi border. The PKK justified this action as showing its commitment to the process. However, the returning militants were dressed in guerrilla clothes and were welcomed with cheers by the Kurdish masses at the Habur border gate. This enflamed Turkish nationalism and hence increased

the opposition of the CHP and the MHP, the Nationalist Party (Yeğen, 2014, p. 165). AKP voters also shared this increasing nationalist sentiment.

The Habur incident influenced the course of the peace process and triggered criticisms in national and international circles. Nationally speaking, this incident sparked reactions from the Turkish side as media coverage cast the act of guerrillas crossing the border as a message that the PKK had won some kind of victory over the Turkish state (Özcan, 2011). Interpreted as a gesture of bad faith, the Turkish state employed the Habur event as a justification for curtailing the democratization process and returning to repressive tactics. For example, toward the end of 2009, only 12 months after the declaration of the first round of the Kurdish Opening, the chief prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals succeeded in a two-year quest to have the DTP banned and dissolved (Özcan, 2011). Internationally speaking, the actors closely watching the peace negotiations re-emphasized the importance of bringing third-party actors into the process as mediators (Özcan, 2011). In the aftermath of the Habur incident, the government followed a harsher policy until the upcoming election.

Most critically, the Habur incident illustrates the territorial underpinnings of the dual strategies pursued by both sides. Although the Turkish state persisted in negotiating democratic reforms with Kurdish political actors, activity near the border proved too powerful symbolically and in public relations terms. The apparent openness and good faith of the process unfolding at the center was belied by a deep unease with which the state viewed any activity along the border. Ultimately, whatever democratic reforms could be contemplated at a distance, the state proved its willingness to employ rigid policing techniques in the borderlands. Likewise, even as Kurdish negotiators proved willing to remain at the table, the Habur event betrayed an awareness of the symbolic power of activity and gestures undertaken at the border. Kurds, in other words, continued

to deliver a strong message of territorial control in ways not otherwise available through the conventional negotiation process.

4.2.3.2 The September 12 referendum. The September 12, 2010 referendum on constitutional reform emerged as a turning point for the future of democratization in Turkey. The constitutional revisions, which opened political space to ethnic and religious minorities (Milliyet, 2010), was put to a national plebiscite. The AKP's package of amendments aimed at strengthening the rule of law in accordance with the pluralistic ideals of the EU.

From the outset, democratic reforms in the rule of law and judiciary were the primary concern of the EU Commission[57]. In line with the path to democratic norms, the government was determined to restructure the composition of the Constitutional Court as well as the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors (*Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu*, HSYK) by increasing the number of civilian judges. However, the party was accused of using this reform to pack the system with its own cadres. At the time, these were drawn primarily from established legal cadres linked to the Gülen movement. Moreover, there are said to be millions of Gülen's followers in Turkey, where they are believed to hold influential positions in institutions from the police and secret services to the judiciary and the AKP itself until early 2017 (BBC News, 2013b). These amendments to the composition of the HSYK laid bare the workings of the post-2002 AKP–Gülen Concordat (Watmough & Öztürk, 2018b; Watmough, 2019) and indeed, when the alliance broke down from 2013 it was in this domain that some of the most pitched battles between the erstwhile allies were fought.[58]

[57] Rule of Law: European Commission acts to defend judicial independence in Poland. (2017, December 17). *European Commission Press Release Database*, Retrieved from http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5367_en.htm

[58] The AKP made some further amendments in the laws regulating the functions of the Supreme Court and the Council of State—Turkey's highest administrative court—in 2014 and sent AKP-related lawyers to the HSYK.

In sum, the reform package essentially abolished the supremacy of the judiciary over the government in Turkey in 2010. Despite the disputes and contentions triggered by this reform, Turkey's democracy in principle strengthened with the institutional transformation and this contributed—at least in theory—to the consolidation of Turkish democratization. Turkey's Freedom House ratings in political and civil liberties increased in 2008 and remained constant until 2013 (Freedom House, 2008, 2013). However, Turkey's ratings have shown little stability over the years. Despite some progress toward a positive change, the European Commission's Turkey 2010 Progress Report complained about the DTP closure case and urged the government to change the legal framework, including the Constitution, adding that some demonstrations in the southeast of the country related to the Kurdish issue continued to be repressed by excessive police violence.

In the June 2011 general elections, the AKP took 46.66% of the national vote (Çarkoğlu, 2011). In July, a voice recording was released to the public confirming the ongoing face-to-face negotiations between the Turkish Intelligence Service (or MIT) and the PKK. This incident sparked serious debates about the future of the process because it was taken as a breach of trust. Although both sides seemed to share commitments for the resolution of ongoing conflict, the current situation created vacuum of power that had negative repercussions on the democratization process. For instance, only a few weeks later, the PKK ambushed many Turkish soldiers in Hakkari's border town Çukurca (BBC News, 2011). The process was once more ruptured by the vicious cycle of violence.

The worst happened when 34 Kurdish smugglers/villagers died in a Turkish airstrike while crossing the Turkish–Iraqi border in December 2011. This incident, known as the Roboski event, was one of the turning points in the history of the peace talks. On 27 December 2011, the Turkish army bombed the village of Uludere/Roboski based on intelligence provided by Turkish spy drones and "members of the Turkish Armed Forces acted in accordance with the decisions adopted by the

Council of Ministers and the law," the army prosecutor's office reported (Arsu, 2011). The Roboski incident occurred in the middle of the reform process. The state had pursued a violent approach in the Kurdish borderlands while the democratization process prevailed. This incident epitomized the state's spatial/territorial agenda on the Kurdish Question because it occurred while the state was openly negotiating individual legal rights pertaining to Kurdish ethnic identity with the Kurdish political actors. The contradiction between the top-down democratization process and the reluctance to offer any collective political autonomy in the Kurdish-populated region became starker with this incident.

Also, the Turkish state's dual strategy for dealing with the Kurdish Question became even more visible when the case had gradually received increasing attention from the international media. Journalists from all over the world traveled along the Turkish/Iraqi border and covered this bloody incident that culminated in the murder of Kurdish civilians in a Turkish airstrike with alleged accusations of terrorist activities. Meanwhile, the state denied any allegations of intentional attacks against Kurdish villagers, an event which brought international criticism. The report released by the European Commission in October 2012 condemned Turkey for not conducting a fair and open investigation into the incident:

Neither EU condemnation nor the widespread anger expressed in the Turkey-wide protests resulted in an effective investigation, much less a response to people's demands for justice (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Along the Turkish–Iraqi border, smuggling of fuel, sugar and cigarettes is widespread among some villagers who earn their living in this way. These borderlands may have also been a gateway for PKK guerrillas to smuggle arms. The day after the attack, then Prime Minister Erdoğan made his first statement concerning the air strike: "We have seen similar border activities where they were smuggling arms prior to massive terrorist raids. The public had demanded then why we had not intervened them. This is what we did now" (Bianet, 2012). Though

predicated on the notion of serving public interest, Erdoğan's slightly cynical statement revealed something of the arbitrariness with which the state exercised power along the border while otherwise engaged in a crucial period of democratization.

The imprints of Roboski incident on the political agenda became visible during the first half of 2012. The government continued to arrest Kurdish politicians. Peace talks continued amid the waves of mass arrests, yet the incohesiveness of the state structure became more palpable. In February 2012, the prosecutors asked the counselor of the intelligence service to give his testimony (BirGün, 2012). This created a crisis within the state and the government amended the relevant article in the constitution. Because of this crisis, the tension turned into violence and many clashes occurred in the summer of 2012. Zübeyir Aydar, who as president of the People's Congress of Kurdistan (KONGRA–GEL)—the parliament of the Koma Civakên Kurdistan (KCK)—is the de jure political leader of the PKK, asked the government to return to the table for negotiations.[59] Following his plea for peace and official recognition of Kurds, the prime minister of that time and current president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, announced that there had been an ongoing peace negotiation between the Turkish Intelligence Services (or MIT) and PKK's captured leader Abdullah Öcalan since December 2012 (The Economist, 2013). The ongoing efforts created a positive environment that is conducive to the resolution of Turkey's prolonged Kurdish issue.

The year 2013 started with a big crisis for the process: Three Kurdish PKK women were shot dead in Paris including Sakine Cansız, the co-founder of the PKK.[60] Kurdish activists organized many demonstrations to protest against the government for this incident and to urge the Kurdish side to stop negotiations. Despite these divergences, both sides reiterated their

[59] Aydar: Çözüm için müzakere masasına dönülsün [Aydar: Time to return to the negotiation table for the peaceful resolution]. (August 6, 2015). *Serbestiyet*, Retrieved from http://www.serbestiyet.com/Politika/aydar-cozum-icin-muzakere-masasina-donulsun-160040

[60] BBC News (2013a). For more details about her life, see also Cansız (2018).

commitments and continued to meet. In March 2013, during the Newroz celebrations, Abdullah Öcalan sent a message and asked PKK guerrillas to lay down their arms. With the declaration of that letter, the withdrawal of PKK guerrillas from Turkey started. Meanwhile, the government promoted to work closely with a group of academics and journalists regarding energy policies, Kurdish Question as well as foreign policy. "They will work with Erdoğan on important subjects in the presidential palace. You could call them wise men, an advisory council, a shadow cabinet," one senior figure in the ruling AKP said, adding that "the presidency's weight will be felt more in decisions" (Hürriyet Daily News, 2014). Following that, the actual/real peace process and ceasefire started with the PKK's official announcement of "withdrawal from Turkey" on May 8, 2013.

4.2.3.2 Kurdish political response (2009–2013): A critical period for the peace process.

The prospects for further democratization depended substantially on the future of peace talks between the state and the Kurdish movement, including the pro-Kurdish BDP, the PKK and the KCK, and its leader Abdullah Öcalan. There had been an ongoing mismatch between the Kurds' demands for political autonomy and the state's willingness to meet those demands. The main Kurdish demands were: 1) official status for Kurds—Kurdish movement contracted their demands from independence to autonomy within a decentralized political system in Turkey; 2) education in mother tongue; 3) constitutional recognition of non-ethnic (civic) citizenship; and 4) release of Kurdish political prisoners (Aljazeera Turk, 2015). In this setting, the demands of the two sides, their expectations, perceptions and limits determined the rules and the duration of peace process. The reflection on the prospects of sustained peace in the Turkish–Kurdish context also required reconsidering changes in PKK's ideology, future goals and methods/strategies.

The period from 2009 to 2013 was critical for the peace process. In 2009, the Kurdish movement took some important steps toward peace-making, including the declaration of a ceasefire in the aftermath of local elections held in March 2009. The pro-Kurdish DTP received 5.48% of

votes, won many municipalities, becoming the main party in the Kurdish-majority region (Bianet, 2009a). Following this victory, the PKK urged the government to sit at the peace table, stating that they hope for peace (Cemal, 2009). There was a positive atmosphere in favor of both sides in the summer of 2009, following the official announcement of the "Kurdish opening." Unlike in the past, many issues related to the Kurdish Question were in the headlines: academics, journalists, activists and politicians were talking about the resolution of the conflict and the prospects to move toward peace and reconciliation.

In the aftermath of the DTP's electoral victory, as discussed in the previous section, the PKK began to take steps toward reconciliation and showed its commitment to the ongoing process by announcing a ceasefire. However, as previously noted, the reform process was ruptured by a series of arrests of Kurdish mayors, lawyers and politicians by the Turkish state. By June 2009, around 500 DTP members were in custody, along with Kurdish lawyers, academics and NGO officials who were accused of being members of a terrorist organization (Christie-Miller, 2010). These developments signaled the end of this round of the democratization process, and a return to the vicious cycle of repression.

The Kurdish Opening seemed to be more ambitious in 2009 when it was launched. Öcalan proposed a three-stage roadmap, which included the following steps: in the first stage, the PKK would announce a permanent ceasefire; in the second stage, the government would establish a truth and reconciliation commission and the PKK would withdraw their armed forces; and in the last stage, a democratic constitution would be introduced; the PKK would disarm and become a legal political party. However, this set of reforms came to an end in the second half of 2009 after the closure of the DTP following the death of seven soldiers in a PKK-led ambush in Reşadiye, Tokat (Bianet, 2009b).

In February 2010, the main opposition party, the CHP submitted a parliamentary motion and condemned the ruling party for negotiating with the PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the EU. Likewise, the right-wing nationalist opposition party, the MHP, also called the process a 'trap' and warned people not to fall for these tricks. Since the tide has turned against the democratization process, in June 2010, the Office of the Attorney General issued a warrant for the arrest of the surrendered guerrillas crossing the Turkish–Iraqi border in 2009. In those days, Murat Karayılan, the head of the KCK executive council, stated that the PKK would be willing to disarm if the UN partakes in the process, adding that the government must also stop imprisoning Kurdish politicians/activists and attacking Kurdish civilians.

After the government refused to respond to Öcalan's call, the PKK decided to end the ceasefire in June 2010, but resumed after Öcalan insisted on another ceasefire in August 2010 (Yeğen, 2015). During this period, which lasted for a year until June 2011, Öcalan prepared another road map involving three protocols that suggested the establishment of three commissions: the Commission for the Constitution, the Commission for Peace, and the Commission for Truth and Justice. The first commission was supposed to be responsible for organizing conferences on constitutional amendments. The second commission had to be responsible for monitoring the peace process and the third one would work on the resolution of the Kurdish Question.

From the summer of 2010 to that of 2011, both sides stayed loyal to the terms of agreement. However, after the June 2011 elections, the PKK cadres accused the state of pausing the process by ignoring the principles that both sides agreed in the Oslo talks between 2009 and 2011. The events happening on the borders, such as the Roboski and Habur incidents, as well as the state's responses to these incidents showed that state territorial concerns to override its agenda on democratization. Also, the principles that both sides allegedly agreed upon were not being well-received on the ground—as I will detail in the next chapter.

Mustafa Karasu, one of the senior PKK leaders, told the press that they had been negotiating with the government for three years (since 2009), adding that they were expecting to have another Oslo meeting with the government before the 2011 elections, but the government canceled the meeting and did not reschedule any new meetings after the election. Karasu also stated that from that moment it was clear that the government would not agree with the protocols suggested by their leader Öcalan (Akşam, 2013).

After this, the PKK resumed the fourth stage of what they call People's Revolutionary War and killed 13 soldiers in an ambush in Silvan, a district in the Diyarbakır province of Turkey (Gurses & Romano 2014, p. 181). From the statist viewpoint, the ongoing peace process came to an end after the Silvan attack. However, the PKK argued that the state was unwilling to resume the Oslo talks and to move to the next stage in the process. The PKK continued its attacks in 2012; the government continued to arrest pro-Kurdish BDP mayors, politicians and activists and as a result, the existing stalemate prevailed.

As previously noted, the murder of three Kurdish women activists in Paris in 2013 overshadowed the process and the Turkish Intelligence Service was accused of extra-judicial killings. In the aftermath of this incident, both sides adhered to the democratization process. In those critical days, the AKP enacted a law enabling defense in one's mother tongue in the courts (Hürriyet, 2013) and eventually, Öcalan drafted a new proposal for peace and resolution. This new proposal was announced to the public on March 21, 2013 at the Newroz celebration of Diyarbakır, attended by hundreds of thousands of Kurds (Yegen 2015). In the letter, Öcalan called the PKK to "abandon the arms, pursue political channels" (T24, 2013a). Despite huge losses, re-launching the resolution process seemed to be an optimal choice for both sides. Yet, while both sides were very much capable and willing to fight (Tezcür, 2013), they chose to go back to the state of no conflict.

Many people with whom I talked on the ground raised their suspicions about the peace process; yet were insistent on the prospect of peace after fighting for almost four decades (Okcuoglu, 2015).

For the Kurdish side, the ceasefire was another attempt to solve the issue through political means. After Öcalan's call, the PKK declared its final ceasefire only two days later on March 23, 2013. Different segments of society, mostly women, received Öcalan's plea for peace positively. Until the Kobanê uprising of October 6–8, 2014, the two sides were careful not to engage in heavy clashes so that the democratization process could continue without any major disruptions. This positive atmosphere in favor of resolving the protracted conflict prevailed and in 2014, the judicial authorities released most of the KCK detainees who had been in jail since 2009. Despite these developments, the tide turned once again, the ceasefire collapsed and the number of heavy clashes between the PKK and the army gradually increased since July 2015.

4.3 Ceasefire (2013–2015)

As soon as the ceasefire began, the PKK continued to withdraw its guerrillas toward the Qandil Mountains in Iraq. In its aftermath, the government took another positive step and declared the members of the resolution commission in the official gazette. However, after only a few months, Murat Karayılan condemned the government for sabotaging the process by building new military bases all over the Kurdish-populated region (T24, 2014). In addition, Cemil Bayık told the government that the ceasefire would end if the government failed to convert the process from sheer dialogue to solid negotiations (Haberturk, 2013).

In October 2013, the AKP launched another set of initiatives. This democratization package included the following reforms: 1) legalization of education in mother languages in private schools; 2) ending recitation of "our pledge" by students at the start of the school day, which Kurds found discriminatory; 3) provision of state aid to political parties gaining at least three percent of the national vote (making the pro-Kurdish BDP and HDP eligible) and; 4) lifting of the ban on election

advertising in languages other than Turkish. Thus, "the letters x, q and w were now free to be used in official documents; politicians could speak languages other than Turkish in their election campaigns; and education in language other than Turkish was now allowed in private schools" (Kurban, 2013, p. 1). The package also included the permission for the reinstatement of (mostly Kurdish) names for villages and towns, and the formalization of the possibility of two co-chairs for political parties (a practice currently carried out only by pro-Kurdish parties). Along the way to the next stage, two important incidents occurred: first, the parliamentary commission that was in charge of the resolution of the Kurdish Question released a detailed report on the issue (T24, 2013b); second, the government let the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality place Turkish–Kurdish signs in their buildings (Ekurd Daily, 2013). Despite its ruptures, these incidents had positive repercussions for the process.

Meanwhile, the PKK decided to halt the withdrawal of guerrillas and stated that the Turkish side had been constructing military bases along the border for a while, accusing the state of adopting a two-tiered approach to the issue. Toward the end of 2013, Feyman Huseyin, one of the high-ranking commanders of the PKK, stated that "the PKK started to withdraw its forces from Turkey; took necessary steps to assure sustainable peace but there is nothing else the PKK can undertake. The government did not take any concrete steps. On the contrary, they accelerated their military attempts to another warfare. They are planning another attack similar to the 2011 Silvan attack" (DemokratHaber, 2013). Murat Karayılan, a KCK executive member, made a very important statement around the same time:

> Öcalan's 20-page-long letter offered the stage-by-stage roadmap for the resolution of the process. Everything was written in that letter: who should do what at which stage was in there. The same letter was also given to the government. The PKK approved the letter, and this is how the process has begun. The government also approved the letter. However, at this stage we have realized

> that the government has no mental/intellectual infrastructure. None of the numbers they gave about the withdrawal is correct. We stopped the war and withdrew our forces. In return, they promised to release political prisoners and arrested politicians, (starting with the ones whose health conditions were poor) and to promote democratic participation. But they did not do any of them…The Kurdish Question is a big deal; you cannot approach it superficially. If you say that 'there is no education in mother language/tongue,' then you cannot solve the problem. Our leader Öcalan cannot stay in solitary confinement as he has been kept for years; politicians cannot be kept in jail. We are people and we want our rights. The government has not taken any serious step towards resolution. The process is at a critical moment. And all democratic circles must warn the state about this situation. Why did not we withdraw all of our forces? Because they failed to build trust. The AKP forced us to halt the ceasefire (DemokratHaber, 2013).

While the Kurdish side made statements indicating their distrust in the government, the process continued with ups and downs. In the summer of 2014, some KCK prisoners, including prominent Kurdish politicians, were released. Following this positive step, the article on eliminating terrorism and fostering societal integration was passed into law. However, the PKK's jailed leader, Öcalan, recalled the deadlock in the process and urged the government to initiate official negotiations. Following a series of turbulent events, local elections were held in March 2014 and the ruling AKP won 43% of votes. As soon as Erdoğan was elected as president in August 2014, the government side took a positive stance. The first sign came from Beşir Atalay, the main official behind the process. He said that it is time to include the Qandil Mountains and Europe into the process. This call was welcomed by the PKK, as Cemil Bayık responded with the following words: "We are always open to communication. The dialogue can be maintained through media, committees, and international organizations" (Radikal, 2014b). In addition, Bülent Arınç, one of the AKP's founders, announced that they would form a new "council for resolution process" (Radikal, 2014c). However, in the same days the GNAT passed a resolution authorizing the army to carry out cross-border operations in Iraq and Syria (BBC News, 2014).

Meanwhile, the civil war in Syria spiraled out of control and the Kurdish city of Kobane had been under the siege of ISIS for four and a half months. Many Kurds crossed the border from the Turkish to the Syrian side in order to help their co-ethnics. People also organized uprisings in different cities of Turkey between October 8 and October 10, during which 34 people were killed. Cemil Bayik accused the government for this high death toll and said that they started to send all withdrawn guerrillas back to Turkey once the ruling party approved the resolution that would allow the state to send troops to the north of Syria also known as Rojava (Aljazeera Turk, 2014). The government blamed the PKK and the HDP for the escalation of violence in the country. Demonstrating the shaky infrastructure of the process, in those days, Bülent Arınç concluded that "the government is not dependent on the peace process" (DemokratHaber, 2014).

The first half of 2015 had continued with provocative events. The most important development for the process was the declaration of "Öcalan's Road Map" in the so-called Dolmabahçe meeting on February 28, 2015. This roadmap included ten profound principles: 1) the principle of the democratic nation; 2) the principle of the shared homeland; 3) the principle of the democratic republic; 4) the principle of the democratic constitution; 5) the principle of the democratic solution; 6) the principle of individual and collective rights and freedoms; 7) the principle of the ideological and independence-related liberties; 8) the principle of history and present; 9) the principle of the morality and conscience; 10) the principle of democratic self-defense (PKKonline, 2011).

These principles refer to a democratic future, but also one in which the people exercise collective self-government over a territory. This implies they enjoy not only the standard liberal individual rights and freedom—freedom of the press or freedom of religion or freedom of conscience—but that group rights are protected as well. These include some kind of territorial

control so that the Kurds could exercise forms of collective self-determination. As such, these principles were at odds with what the democratization process had offered.

This roadmap was the summary of the demands proposed by the Kurdish movement. Öcalan also called for the PKK to convene an extraordinary congress in the spring months to make the strategic and historical decision about ending the armed struggle based on mutually agreed principles. As a response, Erdoğan pointed out that he does not support the Dolmabahçe meeting and accused the Kurdish side of betrayal, asking, "under these circumstances, can we call it a consensual declaration?" The instability persisted until the ceasefire ended in July 2015.

4.4 Return to Violence (2015–present)

In the summer of 2015, both sides returned to violence. Turkey thus lost its democratic momentum. Between 2015 and 2017, ten thousand politicians from the pro-Kurdish HDP were brought in for questioning; 3000 of them have been imprisoned (Gazete Karınca, 2017). Between July 2015 and December 2016, people's access to Varto, Cizre, Nusaybin, and Silvan in Turkey's Kurdistan were blocked by the army under a curfew. This was because the PKK attempted to put its "democratic autonomy" project into practice in neighborhoods populated by the politically engaged Kurds (who were still civilians and members of the legal political party).

According to a report by the Union of Southeastern Anatolian Region Municipalities (GABB, 2016), curfews have to date been announced in 20 towns and seven cities, lasting for months, in several cities, including Cizre, Silopi and Sur (Cumming-Bruce, 2017). In the same period, the UN said that between 350,000 and 500,000 people were displaced and the fighting between July 2015 and December 2016 killed 2,000 people (Özkahraman, 2016).

On April 14, 2016, the EU criticized Turkey for democratic backsliding (Hürriyet Daily News, 2016). On July 15, 2016, a coup attempt took place in Turkey, leading to the loss of approximately 250 lives (Karmon & Barak, 2018) and following that, the government declared

emergency rule on July 21, 2016 and extended it until July 18, 2018 (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018). Although emergency rule ended in that year, state repression has prevailed (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Meanwhile, the escalation of violence in the Syrian civil war also influenced the domestic politics of Turkey. The coalition forces led by the US fighting against ISIS created a new army called the SDF in 2015. The majority of these forces are the Kurdish and Arabic militias of the YPG and YPJ, which Erdoğan has accused of being linked to the PKK and, thus acting as terrorist organizations.

This period has witnessed the presence of a de facto Kurdish-controlled autonomous area along the borders of Turkey and Syria that led Kurds to emerge as prominent regional actors (Gunes & Lowe, 2015). The Turkish state did not compromise with that especially after the Kurdish autonomous region emerged in Iraq (also known as the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG) since the creation of KRG in 1992. The history of Turkey–KRG relations dates back to the 1990s. The KRG became a valuable regional ally for Turkey over time, yet the stability of this relationship still depends on a series of factors, such as Turkey's internal balance of power, the role of the KRG as a mediator in the PKK issue, economic relations between the two sides and so forth (Charountaki, 2012).

The rise of another Kurdish-led political movement, which has both armed and political wings in Syria, gaining political advantage and enhancing its military power on the Turkish–Syrian borders became a security concern for the Turkish state. Until today, Erdoğan has continued to condemn the United States and other Western countries for creating a terrorist army beside the borders of Turkey (Wintour, 2018).

While ongoing negotiations with the PKK leadership failed and violence returned to Turkish–Kurdish relations, the marginal impact of the ongoing Syrian civil war on Turkish politics

has also increased because the current situation has intensified Turkish deep fears of Kurdish autonomy in Turkey in the long run (Hacaoğlu, 2013). Within the context of these fragile regional dynamics amid the rapidly changing domestic politics (and balance of power), the Turkish–Kurdish peace talks failed and violent conflict has surged again.

4.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of the second half of this chapter, I classified the peace process in three stages: reforms, ceasefire, and return to violence. In the initial stage (2009), both sides reiterated commitments to the process by taking positive steps. The AKP government launched a set of reforms while Öcalan publicized a roadmap to peace in the same year. From 2010–2013, the amendments continued with zigzags. This period witnessed further ongoing contestation between different state actors regarding Turkey's democratization, such as between the judiciary and executive. Also, these zigzags had not only highlighted the difference between the Turkish and Kurdish sides in terms of their expectations and perceptions of the process but also demonstrated that both sides were composed of multiple institutions and actors having conflicting interests in the success or failure of the peace talks. More importantly, as I discussed, the situation in the borderlands undermined the positive effects of the democratization process and revealed the duality that both the state and the PKK pursued in their respective strategies.

Despite some setbacks, both sides continued to preserve their commitment to the process. In terms of the PKK's approach to democratization and the peace process, there were four main critical agendas that caused some ruptures throughout: 1) the situation of Öcalan (if there was any improvement in the conditions of his imprisonment); 2) the Syrian war and its repercussions for the region; 3) the ongoing imprisonment of Kurdish politicians and; 4) the security and integrity of guerrillas during the withdrawal period.

In terms of the Turkish state's approach to democratization and peace process, the PKK's withdrawal and disarmament was the top issue on the list. Whenever there was a sign showing the lack of the PKK's commitment to withdraw and to disarm its armed forces, the reforms were interrupted, and the process was slowed down. In addition, realpolitik (both domestic, regional and global affairs) has been an important factor that has had significant influence over the process. For instance, there is a trend of violent cycles erupting in the aftermath of election periods.

This study details these ruptures and trends to map out reforms and policies; the political context and the actors who have generated these reforms and policies. Even if there was a gradual improvement of the constitution, many Kurdish politicians, mayors and activists—including lawyers, journalists and students—were detained on charges of membership in the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK) as of 2009. Meanwhile, the state continued to boost its heavy military investment along the borders: the number of military bases in the Kurdish region has increased to 253 during the same period. The gap between policies and actions also showed that, as seen in the failed coup attempt in 2016, the Turkish state was fragmented internally and there was no unified action regarding the process. This state fragmentation was reflected in the government's reluctance to take concrete steps, which, in return, kindled feelings of distrust in the Kurdish movement regarding the resolution of the issue. That is why some violent sabotage attempts happened at moments when the two sides had agreed on the terms of ceasefire—including the 2007 Reşadiye attack (seven soldiers killed) and the 2012 Silvan attack (14 soldiers killed).

In this chapter, I have traced the peace process by providing a brief background information and demonstrating the responses of both sides between 2002 and 2015. Because this was not a linear process, I also identified certain trends and ruptures that occurred because of actors' political decisions and actions. As I will show in the next empirical chapter, despite the negotiations and

contestations in the political domain, territorial control persisted on the ground and, hence, the peace talks could not lead to any effective political outcome in the end.

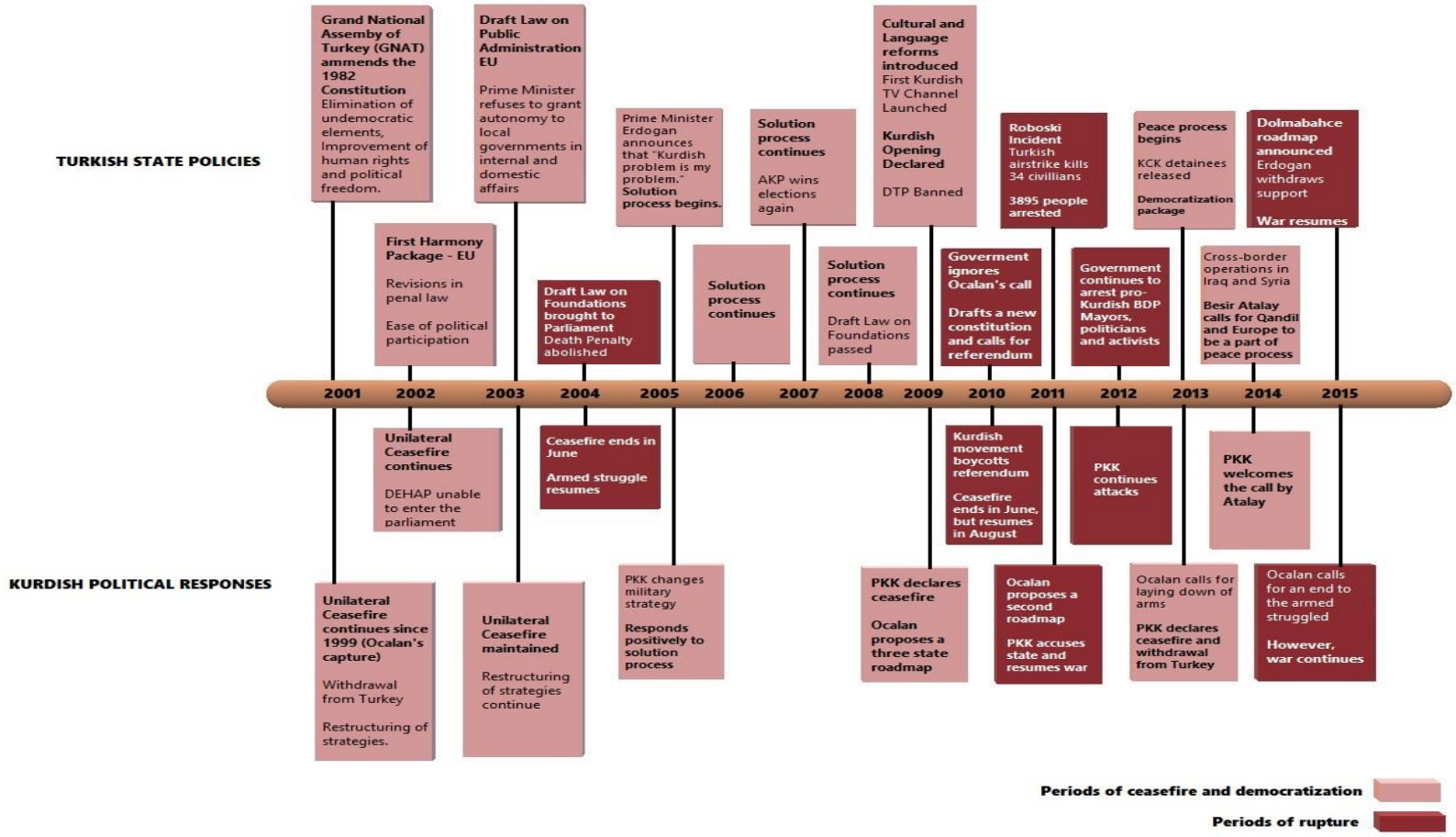


Figure 4.2. Timeline of democratic reforms and the peace process (2001–2015).

Chapter 5

Mechanisms and Narratives of Territorial Control in Turkey's Kurdish Borderlands

The Turkish–Iraqi borderlands are one of the most conflict-ridden zones in the world for a couple of reasons. First, the region is very mountainous with "blind spots" that make it difficult to track human mobility, especially that of insurgents and smugglers. Maintaining border control is thus a challenge for the Turkish military; at the same time, this terrain offers distinct advantages for PKK guerrillas. As one resident of the borderlands explains: "Both the state and the PKK want to control borders. The PKK wants to control the borders because, in doing so, it challenges state sovereignty and even shows its power and capacity to challenge the state's territorial integrity" (Interview #10). As a result, border zones tend to become the epitome of never-ending strife.

Second, the geographical proximity of these areas to the Qandil Mountains—the PKK's main base in Iraqi Kurdistan—has turned them into main supply routes for insurgents. Being adjacent to Iran also contributes to the appeal of the borderlands for insurgent groups because "once you control this area, you have a gate to the three separate areas of Kurdistan (i.e. Iraq, Iran and Turkey)" (Interview #10).

The previous chapter introduced and contextualized the various policies enacted by the ruling AKP after 2002 in its agenda of democratization and the Kurdish response to them. I argued that, to fully make sense of the failure of democratization, we need to examine the state's policies and practices of territorial control in play alongside the democratization process. This is the scope of my current chapter, in which my objectives are two-fold: 1) to describe analytically the practices of territorial control in the borderlands and create a typology of such practices and; 2) to illustrate the lived experience of the mechanisms of territorial control from the point of view of the people in the borderland.

I begin by setting out the five categories I use to analyze the Turkish state's policies aimed at achieving territorial control in Turkey's Kurdish-populated borderlands since 1984. These categories emerged from asking the following questions: What are the state's intentions in designing and implementing such policies? What mechanisms do policy-makers employ to achieve these objectives? And what are people's lived experiences of territorial control in the borderlands?

Specifically, in the first part of the chapter I discuss the following five mechanisms of territorial control (see Table 5.1, Column 2), identified as significant in the Turkish state's strategy toward the Kurdish-populated borderland: expulsion and expropriation; securitization; control of movement across borders; administrative and demographic control (gerrymandering and in-migration), and nationalizing the landscape.

In the second half of this chapter, to explore the impact of the state's practices of territorial control, I rely on narratives of people's experiences (Table 5.1, Column 3), as expressed by Kurds living in the borderland. I collected these data during my ethnographic research in the region from May 2013 to August 2014, when the peace process was still in place. In my analysis of people's experiences, I employ the following five categories of narratives: 1) displacement and loss of property and land; 2) militarization and violence; 3) disruption of minority cultural practices and intra-minority fragmentation; 4) disenfranchisement and violation of democratic rights and; 5) denial and loss of cultural heritage.

Table 5.1

Typology of territorial control in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands

STATE INTENTION IN TERRITORIAL CONTROL	**STATE MECHANISMS OF TERRITORIAL CONTROL**	**PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF TERRITORIAL CONTROL**
1. Establishing state sovereignty	EXPULSION AND EXPROPRIATION (with or without compensation)	DISPLACEMENT, LOSS OF PROPERTY AND LAND
2. Protecting state sovereignty	SECURITIZATION	MILITARIZATION-VIOLENCE
3. Protecting the state border	CONTROL OF MOVEMENT ACROSS BORDERS	DISRUPTION OF MINORITY CULTURAL PRACTICES; INTRA-MINORITY FRAGMENTATION
4. Right-sizing sub-state territorial units	ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL (Right-sizing and Gerrymandering) DEMOGRAPHIC CONTROL (In-migration of the favored ethnic group)	DISENFRANCHISEMENT -VIOLATION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
5. Nation building	NATIONALIZING THE LANDSCAPE	DENIAL AND LOSS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Note. Compiled by the author.

5.1 Analytical Framework

The Turkish state's main objective in implementing various policies of territorial control is to protect its sovereignty. In Weber's (1921) terms,[61] territorial control refers to the state's monopoly of organized violence within its geographical domain. The transformation of sovereignty into effective territorial control may be implemented by a variety of methods ranging from agreement or the tacit acceptance of norms, which require some form of accepted legitimization, to imposition, based on force (Newman, 1989, p. 215). In the case of a nationally heterogeneous state with a disaffected minority, there is a strong incentive for the state to implement a variety of relatively or severely coercive policies to exert territorial control. These include: moving people to gain control of the rebellious minority-populated area; policies to control the flow of goods and peoples across the border; and nationalizing the landscape in accordance with its constitutive ideology, which, in the case of Turkey, is Turkish nationalism (Kadioglu, 1996; Bora, 1993; Özyürek, 2006).[62] In this chapter, I discuss these policies in relation to the relevant literature on state control over minorities, as well as on state control over contested territory and borderlands.

In the comparative politics literature, some of these territorial strategies are grouped together as policies of *demographic engineering*, aimed at facilitating the state's control of the territory. McGarry and O'Leary (2001, pp. 40–41) discuss two policies of demographic engineering: (1) population redistribution and; (2) gerrymandering. I analytically separate them, as these policies have separable effects and are sometimes distinct. Yet I follow the authors in seeing these as a package of policies designed to gain territorial control. I also argue that these policies

[61] See Freund (1998).

[62] There are a few different versions of Turkish nationalism. The founding ideology of the Turkish state is known as Kemalism, which consists of six principles. Among these, Kemalist nationalism emerged as the most salient. For more details, see Deringil (1993).

have to be analyzed in conjunction with other policies—for example, the expulsion of people from a place is a form of demographic engineering, but it may also be an aspect of securitization—to facilitate army presence. McGarry and O'Leary note that population redistribution involves both encouraging settlers to invade the homeland of the targeted group and encouraging the emigration of the targeted group to other lands (pp. 40–41). In what follows, I discuss these practices under the category of administrative and demographic control.

5.1.1 Expulsion and expropriation. Throughout this study, the term "expulsion" (or forced migration) refers to the deportation of people from their homes and communities so that the place in which they used to reside can be more effectively placed under state control. The practices of forced migration typically occur in rural areas where the army sees minorities as a threat to its presence (Ayata, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2002a; Jongerden, 2005, 2007). In doing so, the state pursues change in the ethnic composition of its population to reduce the potential risks of territorial separation.

In the aftermath of the emergence of the armed conflict in 1984, the Turkish state approached the expulsion of people and expropriation of their property as effective warfare

techniques.[63] The number of Kurdish IDPs there were in the 1990s is open to debate, but figures show that it was between approximately 400,000 and 2–4 million.[64]

This process of forced migration—removal of people from their homes and property—was not only involuntary, but it also in many cases was imposed without fair compensation for the loss of property.[65] Additionally, the IDPs suffered an extreme loss of resources and rights to (home)land. Many states claim a right to expropriate property for, say, building infrastructure in the public interest. While the expropriation of property can be justified under such circumstances, if the public interest is violated then such expropriation morphs into an instrument to impose and maintain control. General rule-of-law principles require that any expropriation of property be both exceptional and fairly compensated. In the borderlands, my interviews revealed, the policy of expulsion and expropriation was dogged by criticisms of lack of fair compensation, no compensation, or arbitrary compensation. Moreover, and unlike the case of expropriation in the general interest, the exercise of territorial control in the borderlands is not a neutral act. It is not in the interests of the population in question: it is in the interests of state control over the population,

[63] Turkey has employed numerous policies to impose a hegemonic Turkish identity on its ethnically heterogeneous population. These policies have ranged from outlawing the expression of different identities (such as Kurdish) to the expulsion of ethno–religious groups (such as Greeks) from the newly formed state (Kuyucu, 2005, p. 364). In the Turkish context, both ethnic mixing and unmixing (Brubaker, 1998) of populations have been widely used against ethnic and religious minorities. The creation of a homogeneous population has led to the expulsion of all differences in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Some of these differences were eliminated by expelling some ethnic groups from the country (e.g. Armenians and Greeks) and allowing some (Kurds) to stay in the country to expose them to severe control mechanisms. The expulsion of Kurds occurred in three stages between 1916 and 1950. The first stage, which began in April 1916, was directed at any group considered a threat to the Turkish state. The second wave of deportations was rather used for the expulsion of prominent Kurdish families from the centers of the Kurdish opposition, such as Ağrı, Dersim, and Diyarbakır. With these expulsions, the Kurdish intelligentsia and chieftain class was definitively prevented from reviving as a ruling class so that the eastern part of the country would never again become a battlefield for Kurdish uprisings (Üngör, 2008, p. 40).

[64] See Human Rights Watch (1995). The NGO estimates the number of displaced around 2 million people at this time. According to GÖÇ–DER (2001, p. 12), 3,438 rural settlements have been evacuated and 4–4.5 million Kurdish people have been resettled.

[65] Resmi Gazete (2004). For further details on Law No. 5233 covering such compensation, see Sir et al. (2013). For a critique, see Ayata and Yukseker (2005).

as my argument will reveal. This makes it unlike property expropriation in liberal-democratic states but also explains why compensation would be inadequate in any case (though better than no compensation at all).

In 2004, the government enacted Law No. 5233 to compensate for losses resulting from terrorism or measures taken against terrorism. From 2004 to 2008—until the law became void—thousands of people sought redress under this law. However, the law was inefficient in compensating loss since: 1) it was limited in scope and did not include non-pecuniary damage and pain as a criterion for compensation, and 2) it suffered from implementation problems because the payments offered were far from fair or sufficient.

The redesign of Turkey's demography has been underway ever since expulsion and forced migration of targeted groups became state policy. This redesign was extensive, with many villages disappearing and the Kurdish population overwhelmingly bearing the brunt, without realizing the equivalent benefits associated with policies, which should theoretically be in the "public interest." From the beginning, non-pecuniary damage and pain was not accepted as a legitimate criterion for seeking compensation under the 2004 law (see Aydın & Gündüz, 2009). Moreover, the legal process was open to manipulation by state agents, as my participants frequently complained. Additionally, the state pursued policies for the in-migration of members of a favored ethnic group to strategic priority areas, such as securitization, in order to gain the demographic advantage. I discuss this category in the next part.

5.1.2 Securitization. Another significant state policy used to exert territorial control is "securitization". This policy is closely connected to the above-discussed policies because one of the main reasons why people were removed from certain locations was because it was deemed to be useful to the state's security policies, and, in particular, military control over the area. Nevertheless, we can distinguish them. Expulsion/expropriation applies to people who find

themselves disconnected from their home and property, whereas securitization policies affect the people who stay in the territory. This is a central mechanism of territorial control, largely performed by the army and the police.

Securitization refers to excessive militaristic presence and procedures on the territory, including restricting people's freedom by the use of various discursive and practical surveillance mechanisms, ranging from psychological warfare tools to actual militaristic instruments like thermal cameras. This understanding of "securitization" is consistent with its use in the IR literature, specifically the Copenhagen School.[66] More concretely, the term refers to the reframing of "normal" politics in the terms of emergency conditions, thus justifying extraordinary policy in response (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998; Roe, 2004, 2012; Huysmans, 2011). These extraordinary measures—which break the normal political rules of the game—limit fundamental rights and freedoms, pluralism and democracy (Cebeci, 2007, p. 1).

A highly visible example of securitization policies, and indeed a fairly intimidating building that dot the landscape, are the numerous "*kalekols*". These are highly fortified, high-tech security buildings. According to statistics provided by the Turkish Ministry of National Defense, the Office of Commander-in-Chief completed the construction of 253 new buildings between 2011 and 2015, 198 of which were *kalekols* (Sabah, 2015). In addition to the construction of more than two hundred new security buildings, the army declared a new recruitment policy according to which 25,000 new village guards would be hired between 2016 and 2017 (Kamu Personeli, 2016). In addition to the military bases, this program also included the construction of dams on guerrilla infiltration routes. Such policies and practices increased people's suspicion regarding the future of the peace process

[66] According to securitization theory, "securitization" occurs when various political actors formulate a set of discursive and practical processes that frame a certain issue as an existential threat to the state or to the society. State agents, media and NGOs thus use this threat frame to justify extraordinary measures that go beyond the rules of the game (Al & Byrd, 2016; Wæver, 1995; Williams, 2003; McDonald, 2008; Balzacq, 2011).

and caused violent street protests (BBC News, 2014a). The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that Turkey had the fifteenth highest military spending in the world in 2014, at 29 billion Turkish lira or roughly US$13 billion at 2014 exchange rates (Yentürk, 2014).

5.1.3 Border control. Another important component of territorial control is the *control of movement across borders*. Through putting restrictions on the flow of people and goods, both entering and exiting the area, this policy aims at protecting the state border. At present, the Land Forces Command and the Gendarmerie General Command divisions of the TAF are responsible for the security of Turkey's land borders (SETA, 2016). The former is tasked with guarding the border and preventing criminal acts in the first- and second-degree military prohibited zones established along the land borders. The latter has civil, military and judicial tasks, such as "crime prevention" activities for security and public order (SETA, 2016, p. 11).

Since Turkey began the EU accession process in the early 2000s, the country has had to revise its conception of border security. Based on EU rules of border security and management arrangements, Turkey has had to pursue a flexible model called "integrated border management" (Kaya, 2012). According to the "National Action Plan for the Implementation of Turkey's Integrated Border Management Strategy", the Turkish state has sought to reorganize its border management system and establish a single civilian border agency, in charge of controlling all borders of the country, currently managed by several separate bodies, i.e. the Land Forces along the land borders, the Turkish National Police at the border crossing points and the Coast Guard at sea (European Commission, 2016). With this change, the control of borders would shift away from soldiers toward a border management unit.

On March 17, 2016, a by-law requesting all law enforcement and border agencies to cooperate with each other entered into force (European Commission, 2016). Meanwhile, the changes in the geographical map of Syria and Iraq in favor of Kurds especially after 2011, and the

constant threat of Kurdish insurgency, have convinced the Turkish government to slow down the reform process and intensify the level of military precautions. Statistics offered by the EU confirm the tightening of border security measures, which was also a requirement of EU conditionality, according to which Turkey was obliged to carry out adequate border checks and surveillance along all the borders of the country (European Parliament, 2014). The Land Forces, Gendarmerie, and the police in the provinces located along the eastern borders of Turkey have jointly increased security measures. In accordance with that, the number of people caught crossing illegally along the eastern borders increased from approximately 7,000 to 12,000 between 2015 and 2016.[67]

In line with the Turkish policies in the realm of border control, there has been extensive co-optation of minority members as border guards. These are the areas where the distinction between the state and society are blurred (Watts, 2009). As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, the initial stage of the village guard system started following the rise of the PKK in 1984, broadened in scope in the first half of the 1990s, and consolidated in the second half of the 1990s (Özar, Uçarlar & Aytar, 2013). With these legally founded, centrally appointed, and state-paid security forces, the Turkish government created a paramilitary force in the Kurdish areas of Turkey (Balta, 2004). In the earlier phases of this policy, people had more economic reasons to accept the state's offer to work as village guards. However, with the escalation of violence in the Kurdish region, people were forced to become village guards in exchange for their safety. In those cases, people were trapped between either compromising with the state or evacuating their home town (Human Rights Watch, 2002b). When a family refused to compromise with the state, the entire village was labeled as PKK supporters. In some cases, the soldiers would attack the village after PKK attacks to the nearest

[67] Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe: January to December 2017 (December 2016). *UNHCR*, Retrieved from: https://www.unhcr.org/589497d07.pdf

police station (Belge, 2016) or following a clash between Kurdish guerrilla units and Turkish soldiers.

5.1.4 Administrative control: Right-sizing, gerrymandering, and in-migration.

5.1.4.1 Right-sizing and gerrymandering. The theoretical concept of "right-sizing the state" is developed from Ian Lustick's theory of state expansion and contraction as a process of institutionalization of territory and borders (O'Leary, Lustick & Callaghy, 2001). The Republic of Turkey came into existence by a grand project of right-sizing in 1919–1923, after the contraction of the Ottoman Empire (Cizre, 2001). Toward the end of this period of state-making, the scope of right-sizing in Turkey was narrowed down to some local practices of political redistricting (gerrymandering) and nationalizing the landscape.

Unlike expulsion and expropriation practices, gerrymandering is a form of control that aims at dispossessing people and disconnecting them from the land without expelling them from where they live. It involves changing the boundaries of the targeted area so that local people are weakened and prevented from engaging in collective political action (if a border dissects the land, the local government cannot represent the population who may feel that they represent a single group). It may also affect the composition of the area because "the area" is now defined differently. McGarry and O'Leary (2001) discuss this as a form of "demographic engineering" because it is frequently employed to maintain the demographic advantage in favor of the dominant state-holding ethnicity.

In Turkey's Kurdish-populated provinces of Van, Hakkari and Şırnak, gerrymandering has been implemented. This policy has empowered the groups favored by the Turkish state by eliminating or merging hamlets and changing the design of administrative areas. Three years after the military coup of 1980—but still under the prime ministership of retired admiral Bülent Ulusu, who had been appointed by junta-leader Kenan Evren—then Ministry of Village Affairs and Cooperatives drafted a Model Village Project [*Örnek Köy Projesi*] in which the costs were

calculated for the abolition of hamlets only (Jongerden, 2009). By this policy, the Turkish state has attempted to merge different towns and villages to create center–villages and village–towns. Konalga from Çatak, a district of Van province along the Turkish-Iranian borders, is a well-known example of this policy. This district remained the only modified or gerrymandered center in the area, since the policy has failed to achieve the state's goal to exert territorial control of mountainous villages scattered over the region by non-military means.

5.1.4.2 In-migration of members of the favored ethnic groups. The facilitation of forms of in-migration of the favored or dominant ethnic group is closely connected to the expulsion of the targeted group. The founding personnel were mainly concerned with the abolition of all the factors relevant to Kurdish national awareness, including culture and language. The Ministry of the Interior designed a project of total assimilation in which desired groups from the ethnic Turks were settled in the "critical" areas, such as the vicinities of natural resources, railways, and highways, while non-Turkish groups were severely restricted in their activities.

This policy is/has been pursued along some highly Kurdish-populated cities in different provinces of Turkey, where the state has undertaken policies or measures aimed at increasing the population of ethnic majority members while keeping the members of minority group (Kurds) away from certain locations and/or keeping them scattered from each other. This policy has been restricted to the Turkish army presence and police forces—in part because it is difficult to change the composition of the targeted area: most Turks do not wish to move to the borderlands; therefore, the state had limited capacity in this area. In some cases, other (non-Kurdish) ethnic groups were moved in, to change the demographic concentration of Kurds. An example is the case of the Laz minority from Trabzon, a city located along the northern Black Sea region, who were moved by the state to the border city of Van in 1965 (DemokratHaber, 2015). These people still reside in Dönerdere and Emek, two villages of Van's Kurdish-populated Özalp neighborhood.

Additionally, the refugee policies of the Turkish state have indicated a bias in favor of people considered to be of "Turkish descent and culture" (including Albanians and Bosnians), allowing asylum seekers of a similar background easy access to refugee status. This was the case, for example, with the more than 310,000 Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks who fled to Turkey in 1989. Kurdish asylum seekers who fled to Turkey in 1988 and 1991 were denied the same option (Kirisci, 2000, p. 4).

5.1.5 Nationalizing the landscape. In addition to reducing the Kurdish population relative to the Turkish population and attempts to block their presence in political decisions, there are other forms of tools used to "nationalize" the Kurdish borderlands in favor of long-term state strategies. These methods include changing geographic names and renaming cities and hamlets; destroying and replacing historic sites relevant to cultural reproduction of minorities as well as inserting images, flags and monuments of state-holding ethnicity over the landscape, especially in minority-populated areas. In doing so, the state imposes its language over the entire territory under its jurisdiction. This strategy of "linguistic territoriality" (Csergő, 2007, p. 6) serves as a powerful tool in (re)shaping people's imagination of the landscape.

Following the establishment of the "Special Commission for Name Change" in 1956, the Turkish state launched a nation-wide policy of "toponymical engineering" to accelerate the process of Turkification (Öktem, 2006). To illustrate, in total, the names of some 85,000 rural settlements (45,000 villages and 40,000 hamlets) were reviewed during the period 1957–78, and a final count of just over 25,000 (12,884 hamlets and 12,211 villages) changed (Tunçel, 2000, p. 28). This process was based on the appropriation of land through three clusters of administrative measures: 1) the appropriation of the material heritage of the other; 2) the transfer of capital to an emerging national Turkish bourgeoisie and; 3) the reconstruction of the other's heritage (Öktem, 2004, p. 561). The creation of a new identity entailed the control of both material and non-material heritage

of the past. The systematic exodus of the Armenians, at the beginning of the last century, was followed by Kurdish cultural and spatial displacement. All Armenian and Assyrian monuments were destroyed, and the deportation of the people was accompanied by the destruction of their cultural heritage. Both practices aimed at the replacement of minorities' historical identity with a new identity of Turkishness. The case of Diyarbakır, the capital city in the Kurdish imagination, can provide numerous examples of how space is a terrain on which hegemonic struggles occur. As such, spatial and territorial control is quintessential for the Turkish state to enforce its jurisdiction over contested territories. The destruction of the local history of Diyarbakir began immediately after the crushing of the rebellion of the Kurdish leader Sheikh Said by the Turkish forces in 1925 as discussed in Chapter 4. Following the execution of Sheikh Said and his comrades, many noble Kurdish families were expelled to Western Turkey. Consequently, Diyarbakir was divided into three settlement zones, and the most critical provinces nearby railways were closed to the resettlement of non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups (Gambetti, 2008, p. 6). "Spatial Turkification" has taken place through the exile of disloyal groups juxtaposed with the re-invention of the past and its appropriation through well-articulated stories of Turkishness. For instance, the former Municipality Square in Diyarbakır, which hosted the "Eastern Meetings" organized by Kurdish students in the late 1960s and early 1970s to raise political awareness among the Kurds, was converted into a space with glass pyramids used as a source of light for an underground shopping mall constructed by a former mayor from the religious *Fazilet* Party (Gambetti, 2008, p. 8).

5.2 Narratives from the Field

The state strategy of territorial control (its intents and mechanisms) discussed in the previous part have been deduced in part from government sources, newspapers and in part from my own travels to the area, where I could see these various methods at work. To understand the alienating elements of policy, it is important to assess people's lived experience under these state policies. The question

is not only whether these methods were successful as methods of control over the geographical domain in question, but how these methods have been *experienced*. People's narratives thus provide insights to the degree to which the tension between liberalizing reforms and territorial control affects the ability of the Turkish state to achieve pacification in the Kurdish borderland.

I group discussion of these narratives in five categories, which provide people's perspectives on the five mechanisms of control I analyzed in the previous section (See Table 5.1). As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, my method here was to travel into areas largely closed to outsiders, and to interview local people in these areas who could share their experience under these forms of territorial control in the region. Depending on the circumstances, at times I was able to speak to everyone in the vicinity, while at other times, my access was restricted, and I had to build trust and wait to be invited to conduct my interviews. Although many of the respondents were therefore not randomly selected, their narratives remain tremendously valuable, nevertheless. To compensate, I adopted a "triangulation strategy"; that is, I verified what I heard with what I saw and with the policies adopted by the state. To note, all names have been changed for the protection of participants.

From the summer of 2013 through the summer of 2014, I traveled in the Turkish–Iranian and Turkish–Iraqi borderlands to visit abandoned villages, to explore areas that were formerly militarized, and to interview the people living in this region. As I note in Chapter 3, throughout this research trip, I met people both formally, through party networks, and informally, through friends. Some doors were opened more easily than others, while some were closed altogether because of my identity as an insider–outsider researcher—someone living in Canada but of Kurdish origin.

During my journey, I used every opportunity to communicate with people. When I could not visit villages and towns around the urban centers—Van and Hakkari—due to harsh weather conditions, then I visited the outskirts of these cities, which are made up of unplanned

neighborhoods with poor infrastructure, and spoke with people in coffee shops, at their homes, and in party offices.

In the rest of this chapter, I draw from 20 primary interviews from a total of 115 conducted during my fieldwork in the borderlands to highlight various narratives found in the data, followed by an examination of 24 outlier accounts, which brings the number of analyzed interviews to 44. The interviews presented and analyzed here were selected to provide the reader with a rich understanding of the complexity of the lived experiences of territorial control in these borderlands.

5.2.1 Narratives on displacement and loss of property and land. In 2014, I traveled to the Kurdish region, where there are approximately 3,500 evacuated towns, and 3–4 million Kurdish IDPs. Among other provinces, Hakkari and Şırnak were among the worst cases of destruction with some towns having been evacuated and demolished more than once. This area is known as Behdinan (Cizîra Botan in Kurdish) and in addition to its historical importance, is known for its rebellious character going back to the Ottoman period (Ateş, 2013; Soleimani, 2016).

Almost every town in Hakkari has been evacuated at least once. The first round started in 1986–1987. People living in the hamlets moved to villages and towns as they could no longer stay in their hamlets because of escalating violence between the state and the PKK. In 1989, a serious wave of deportation and evacuation began in most of the villages of Hakkari's zero-level province Çukurca, which is located near the Turkish–Iraqi border. In the initial phase, the removal was only partial. For example, families of men who refused to serve as village guards were forced to leave their hometowns. In the early 1990s, the second wave started. All participants in my research sample told me that their life changed completely after 1992 and that they had to evacuate their hometown in 1994 (field notes, 2014).

The area had been a military restricted zone for more than ten years before my arrival, and it remains one of the most dangerous areas. It was important to see the area, to see the destruction

to corroborate their tales. In the summer of 2014, I traveled from one town to another near the Turkish–Iraqi border. I had rented a car with a driver so that we could visit many different places. On our way to a large plateau, 15 minutes from the Çukurca center, we saw an old Kurdish man, dressed in traditional clothing. I will call this man Uncle Tahsin. He and my guide, who was also my driver, knew each other well. We stopped the car and walked toward his land. Uncle Tahsin welcomed us in Kurdish as soon as he recognized my driver and his car.

Uncle Tahsin was tending to his orchards and making tea for himself. He greeted us warmly as soon as I greeted him in Kurdish. We sat on his land under a large tree, surrounded by steep hills each with a military base on the top. One of the biggest bases was built right across his land. He was telling me that he used to have a lot of fruit trees. I could still see the remnants of burned trees. He walked me around the property and showed me all these trees. As we stood, chatting in front of a burned tree, he suddenly turned to me and started to speak without hiding his anger: "Take a picture of everything gone. They [the Turkish authorities] did not pay the price for any of those crimes." (Interview #2). He then explained that he walks to his land every day, even if it takes 45 minutes.

Again and again, people pointed to the loss of their orchards, which was the loss of their property, but also of their way of life, as well as a symbol of life and renewal. In the words of a middle-aged woman who I met in this area, who was forced to migrate from a border village to the center and lost her home twice:

> They burned our hometown. It is very close to the border. They also burned all the fruit trees. We owned a large field and they burned the entire field. After that, we literally lost everything. Up until now, the field has been totally barren and produced nothing. It tears us apart (Interview #2).

These orchards are not only important to ensure the harmony of the natural landscape; they are also how locals make their living. Along the Turkish–Iraqi border, people owned very fertile land where

they could grow rice, fruits, and pomegranates. Many families also had 30–40 nut trees, which were quite old. In some cases, the village guards —who raided towns together with the soldiers— cut down the trees and turned them into fuel. As my interviewee lamented: "we would be rich if we could only sell our nuts in the market" (Interview #2). These narratives of displacement and loss of land offer an account on how expulsion and expropriation as a mechanism of territorial control works on the ground.

Uncle Tahsin insisted on making us tea on his land. He set the fire, put the teapot on, and started to tell his story. His narrative was quite intense; his town (called Sere Seve in Kurdish) had been leveled more than once, and he had experienced severe violence and harassment, in addition to losing his property and land.

> Our access to land was also prohibited until the state lifted the ban in 2001. They burned our town three, four times. In Hakkari, we plant grass seeds, they grow. When they saw it, they burned it. We also had hundreds of poplar trees. They burned thousands of our poplar trees. Not even one left behind. After we had to leave the town, the police station [or military base] moved to the top of a hill. They took the bricks of my house and built a military site. They did not leave any brick behind, burned all trees and houses to the ground. Now, whenever I come to my land, I see the stones of my house in the walls of the *kalekol* every day (Interview #1).

Other people also shared their experiences about both soldiers and village guards who uprooted their orchards, destroyed their homes, damaged the crops, and even tore out the windows from houses and used the frames for firewood in the winter. Many interviews revealed that uprooting, cutting, and burning trees was one of the common practices of control. It becomes clear from my interviews that, in these rural settings, trees were seen as "symbols of life and future" and that those I interviewed perceived their removal as the end of life (because, they explained, it felt like the

removal of hope and the future). By removing the trees, the soldiers were also removing people from the land and their feelings of belonging to a landscape that had a future.

During our conversation, I also learned that the land remains both completely useless and dangerous for people to grow plants because "the area is full of landmines". Because of these buried explosives, Uncle Tahsin was unable to visit the center of his hometown, where the cemetery belonging to his family is located: "We have graveyards in the military restricted zone, and we have had no access to that area since 1994. I wish I could show you the area. Lots of smugglers from Iraq died in this area and we had to bury them in the cemetery back in those days" (Interview #1).

The displacement of people from their homeland also included the stories of smugglers who sometimes make several border crossings a day to earn their living. They bring a variety of goods for exchange, such as clothing, food, and electronics (e.g. telephones). They pay their "taxes" to both sides: the PKK and the soldiers (field notes, June 2014). When they do not know the area well or they mistakenly step on landmines, these smugglers die (including their horses) and their bodies remain on the ground for days. People from the Turkish side bury Iraqi smugglers if their relatives do not claim the bodies.

When I traveled from the Turkish–Iranian border to the Turkish–Iraqi border, I listened to many narratives of dispossession and displacement. People did not just lose their land, but also the crops they were planning to harvest the next year. Losing their land was also losing their future because there was no enforcement mechanism to bring justice and compensate people for their losses. In the conflict zone, the highest authority was the commander and the policies could change rapidly, depending on the character of the person who is in charge.

During my first trip to a village known for its support for pro-Kurdish political parties, I began to make contact with the local population, for the purpose of conducting interviews, formal

and informal, by visiting the mayor's office and met with both male and female mayors. I introduced myself and explained the reasons of my visit. Next, I went to the main coffee shop where I could talk to several people from the village. Raşit, the owner of the coffee shop, was a man in his mid-forties who also occasionally worked as a freelance journalist. Raşit had been recommended to me before my departure. Several other people also directed me to him because he was known as a knowledgeable man who could tell me many stories from the past.

Rasit's hometown was very close to the Turkish–Iranian border. From the center of the village, I had to take a car to get there. In our conversations over two days, he told many stories of everyday encounters with both Turkish and Iranian border patrols. He described his precarious circumstances in the following words:

> I also own a large tract of land in the border region [talking about Van's borders with Iran], which is adjacent to Iran. I harvested wheat grain and the commander did not let me go to my land so that I can thresh and winnow the wheat. All the harvest was wasted for that year. When that commander relocated somewhere else, the new one was appointed here, and his attitude toward us was different. There is no rule of law here (Interview #3).

Again, and again, interviewees emphasized that life in the Turkish–Iraqi border was unpredictable in a way that made people feel loss of autonomy over their lives. In some places, it was possible to feel the strongest level of grief caused by the extensive military control of the landscape. For the majority of people from Çukurca, it was hard to speak about their memories because they were still living in circumstances where they felt like "everything can change in five minutes from positive to negative." In this area, the army had attempted to clear the population so as to operate almost unhindered against insurgents or "terrorists." Indeed, out of 32 (excluding hamlets) historic villages, there were only five left in this geographical region. The effects of people's losses and their enduring grievances were evident. One man in his mid-forties explained:

> Burning our houses and animal pens was the most [difficult thing] that I have taken to my heart. We had space for up to 600–700 animals and our house had two storeys. It was very difficult. They [Turkish soldiers, understood here as the representatives of the state] first evacuated the town and burned it one year later. We found one of our horses in Van [another city in the north of Hakkari]. Village guards brought it to Van from Hakkari and sold it in the market. We also found our dog in Van. Even our dogs had to live in exile [we are laughing] (Interview #4).

The narratives on deprivation let people complain about the state and express the *lack of trust* between the state and Kurds, which manifests in various ways. For instance, even some Kurds who were given arms and recruited as village guards lost their properties. When I came across some village guards, I asked them similar questions to those I asked my other participants. One village guard expressed his grief by telling me how much he lost in those years. He was forced to migrate more than once. Access to the land was totally restricted and whenever he tried to visit his hometown, he was even threatened by soldiers: "When we were in another place, we learned that the soldiers were burning our village. I was also a village guard by that time. I tried to enter my village, but soldiers stopped me: 'We will shoot you if you try to go again'" (Interview #5).

People could not find refuge in their new settlement, either. Some Kurds had experienced a chain of displacement. This is important to mention because it illustrates how displacement and loss are not isolated events, but rather become parts of an ongoing process that results in enduring injustices. People are not only detached from their property and land but also denied the prospect of hope for a new life and forced to live with the feeling of loss. When people asked for compensation, in some cases the prosecutors "denied the responsibility of the state" and accused the PKK of the alleged crime.

At the time of my visit, people were still living with the memories from the 1990s. In most cases, the past had never been wiped away. Many participants remember the 1990s as affluent, happy, and grounded, even if their everyday routine was interrupted by the bitter conditions of war.

The days before displacement and loss were more like the symbol of life and dignity while life after displacement was more associated with the loss of everything good: “Do you call it a life? It is hell” (Interview #6).

Drawing on interviews, I realized that the territorial control of everyday life became possible not only through the material loss of property and people’s displacement but also because of the effects triggered by the emotional burden on people’s psyche and leaving them uprooted. By experiencing displacement constantly, these people started “to live in a constant state of fear” (Green, 1995). In a nutshell, people experience expulsion and expropriation as a constant state of loss and displacement.

5.2.2 Narratives on experiences of militarization and violence. During my journey, people told me of the destruction, of the expulsions, but I wanted to confirm this for myself by traveling to villages that were now under military control. Some of these areas were under the control of the PKK and I had to get permission as well as an ID from them so that the guerrillas in every checkpoint throughout area, which they call a liberated zone, would recognize me. Because it was too dangerous to travel by myself, I had to walk with a guide who was highly likely to be a guerrilla. This was the only way to traverse this area safely. We were walking in the mountains for hours. It was much harder for me to walk up the rocky, steep mountains under the summer temperature of almost 40 degrees Celsius in July 2014, than it was for my guide. I was told that my speed determines how long it will take to arrive at my final destination: Ertus (or Uzundere in Turkish). Up until its evacuation in 1995, this village had almost 500 houses and a population of 6,500 (Millet, 2015). The village was large enough to have a municipality before it was evacuated and most of the houses were demolished. The villagers still cannot access their hometown.

After visiting this area, I was left haunted by the impact of excessive militarization. In addition to the careless use of landmines, I observed several other practices of territorial control

that emerged through people's narratives: the construction of *kalekols*; the use of high-tech surveillance techniques, including drones and thermal cameras; the creation of buffer zones (prohibited military zones); the construction of military roads and; the deforestation of certain areas. All these mechanisms contribute to the enhancement of militarization.

While interviews were important, particularly interviews of people who had lived in the place, I wanted to corroborate people's narratives by an eyewitness account of the landscape and to see if there is any visible evidence left. This was very difficult to do as this was an entirely military controlled area, where access was not permitted and which had been totally closed to civilians since 1995 when the Turkish military turned Uzundere and its surrounding area into a military zone in tandem with the PKK's declaration of the same area as a liberated zone. There was a vast distance of war-affected landscapes full of defoliated trees, battle sites, explosives, as well as houses and municipality building hit by bullets and bombs. This part of the experience was very difficult, because the contrast in temperature between day and night was extreme. Walking under the boiling hot sun was as tough as sleeping in the freezing cold. During the journey, we stopped every few hours in the shade of a tree or a rock. At one point, once we reached an open field after a couple of hours of walking, we noticed a drone flying over our heads. The guerrillas could recognize the type of drone from the tone of its engine, even from far away.

Even if I felt scared for some time, I was surprised to see once more how easily I adapted to the new environment, which was wild but sublime. When we realized that we would not be able to reach the final destination before dark, we decided to sleep on the roof of a demolished house in one of the evacuated villages. The house was totally destroyed, and its roof had been ruined during an airstrike in 2012. We slept on the roof from midnight until 5 am. As soon as we were done with our quick breakfast, we started again to walk toward our destination. On our way out at the end of the valley, we passed a bunch of defoliated trees, which were still black.

Eventually, I saw a very large, two-storey building at the edge of a valley, totally abandoned and pocked with bullet holes on every side. The building was also covered in graffiti and messages (i.e. poems, lyrics of songs). When I entered the building, I realized that there was no roof on the second floor and that some of the walls were also totally demolished. I kept taking photos and reading the messages on the walls: "*berxwadan jiyane*" "*biji azadi*" [viva freedom] alongside the names of people and cities. The place was like a museum of memory for those who lived in the vicinity for a while, presumably guerrillas.

When we arrived at our destination, we had a lunch break and met with new faces. They looked happy to see me in the area. As of 2001–2002, with the launch of the state's "return to villages" policy, some villagers made an official request to return to their hometowns and to receive fair compensation for their losses. Nevertheless, the committee for damage determination refused their demands, even though the violation of the right of access to their hometown persisted. When I was walking around, all the stories of IDPs from this area were at the back of my head.

After lunch, the guerrillas wanted to bring me to the Pirinççeken town, which is a zero-level town in the militarized zone next to the Turkish–Iraqi border that the local residents said had been demolished in the 1990s. On our way, following the stream bed, we passed more reminders of the war-affected landscape: a couple of fallen and rusted electricity posts, destroyed homes, and a completely abandoned military base. When we reached the end of the valley, I was standing by the last border stone between Turkey and Iraq.

I do not know how many times I saw lame people on my travels. One day, I could not suppress my curiosity anymore. While sitting together with a bunch of men in the main coffee shop beside the party office, I asked why there were so many people with prosthetic legs. The response was a clear sign of a harsh life:

> Because of *landmines,* many people lost their legs. Some of them were trying to cross the border through alternative ways while others were just grazing their animals in the field. You know, landmines can move beneath the soil [i.e. through subsidence] and we cannot know where they are now… (Interview #7).

In another story, people also told me that these landmines have blown up even animals: "the state was using the most effective soldiers on the ground…" (Interview #8).

There are many explosive remnants of war in Uzundere—unexploded shells, grenades, bombs, and landmines. This is a place even soldiers cannot enter. Many landmine explosions have gone unreported because people are afraid of being charged. If a person stepped on a landmine while smuggling, he would be charged. For instance, one person lost his toe after stepping over a landmine, and was brought to court and charged with crossing the border illegally. He was buying sugar from the Iranian side. He told us that he was kept in solitary confinement for four days despite his injured foot. The last time that I saw him, his trial was still ongoing. Such experiences of double suffering were not rare in the militarized borderland.

As mentioned previously, beginning in 2011, in the aftermath of Kurds' territorial gains in Iraq and Syria, the Turkish state began to build *kalekols*. Between 2011 and 2015, the Turkish military constructed 253 *kalekols* along the borders, amid ongoing peace talks (Sabah, 2015; Memurlar, 2015). As one participant explained, to be able to monitor a large territory, these high-tech *kalekols* were built in strategic locations and how strange it must be for simple villagers, farmers and shepherds to encounter thermal cameras, high-tech surveillance, and so on:

> There are many fortress-like military bases here. They also have night-vision systems in place near these military bases. There are also village guard checkpoints. They were abandoned for a while, but they are in use again. Imagine that villagers, farmers and shepherds come across thermal cameras, a shooting range, and barbed wire. Our village is now surrounded by all of these kinds of things. This is what they call a democratic state—who really believes that!? (Interview #8).

Building military roads was another, widespread form of military control. While the majority of roads connecting towns and villages were pathways, the army built military roads for themselves. In an interview with one of the mayors, he claimed, "All the sealed roads are military roads. There is no sealed road made for the Kurds. They are built for police officers. But soldiers built roads around 7m wide." (Interview #9). He continued:

> There are regular military controls at checkpoints, military bases in the hills surrounding villages, and surveillance via thermal cameras at the entrances and exits of Kurdish villages. Such tools mark out the landscape in these contested and controlled borderlands.
>
> The state has imprints in many places in Kurdistan. They declare certain areas as military prohibited zones every year. This is an entirely military mechanism, which was common in the 1990s. The Office of Commander-in-Chief releases the list of military prohibited areas in their website. The soldiers turned the roofs of houses into a military frontline in order to hunt guerrillas when they ambush the military bases. Imagine that the soldiers were based in one of the villagers' houses and will shoot guerrillas from there (Interview #9).

5.2.3 Narratives on border control: Disruption of minority cultural practices and intra-minority fragmentation. In the summer of 2014, I and three sisters from my host family were heading to a festival to celebrate the glorification of a famous Kurdish writer, Ahmed Xani. The festival was to take place in the valley, which is in a military prohibited zone. Before the ceasefire was declared in 2013, the entire area around the valley was blocked to civilians. At the corner of the main road, where the valley started, there was a military checkpoint. Everyone had to go through interrogation whenever they wanted to enter the valley. In the valley, there were ten villages and even those who were visiting their hometowns and harvesting their products were not allowed to stay longer than certain periods of time.

The valley was known as a guerrilla-controlled area in the second half of the 1990s and military personnel, judges, and other state officials could not enter the area. Airstrikes and the use

of drones were the only ways for the state to gain access. Thanks to the ongoing ceasefire, I was not obliged to show my ID to the soldiers who were waiting at the checkpoint or on patrol, even if they asked a few questions to my driver such as: "where do you go?" and "How long are you going to stay?"

Once you enter the area, you know that you are being monitored by the guerrillas. Even if you cannot see them, they find you at certain points during your trip. I entered the guerrilla-controlled valley several times. The first time, I visited six houses in six different towns and interviewed people who had to evacuate from their homes for more than 20 years. These people still had limited access to their towns because these towns were more like actual battlefields where the state and PKK clash and traverse. This valley at the heart of town was more like a "border within a border" (field notes, August 2014) where the fighting sides have been in constant negotiation/engagement for the distribution of sovereign power. The state's intention to protect its borders and maintain border control, as shown in table 5.1., coincided with the PKK's intention to expand over the same territory.

It was another hot day in August 2014. Because it was Ramadan, most of the stores were closed. There was only one coffee shop that was open in town and, apparently, it became the meeting venue for everyone who was not fasting. There was almost no sign of life during the day until *iftar* (the evening meal during Ramadan), because most people were fasting and keeping the activities of life on mute seemed to be an unwritten rule. In those days, it was difficult to access people and conduct interviews.

I met with an interviewee at the coffee shop in the late afternoon. He was not fasting, like the rest of us sitting there. Obviously, the residents of the area were trying to help me with my research in many ways. Some were trying to protect me by telling the soldiers that I was from their town and not a "stranger," because they knew that I would be in more danger if the security forces

thought I was totally alone during my journey. Some invited me to dinner at their house and others traveled with me and helped with translation during the interviews, when needed.

My interviewee was a middle-aged man who was originally from a village beside the zero line of the border but had to migrate to the town center because his village was destroyed after the army declared it a military zone in the early 1990s. There was another village of 400 houses adjacent to his town, but the state annulled its municipality status and turned the entire area into a military zone after the PKK demolished some military bases on the border.

In addition to the declaration of military zones, there were also some zero-level border villages where the border cut through the village center, leaving half of it on the Iraqi side. Both states use lines of stones along the borders to demarcate their sovereignties. While explaining the mechanisms of border control that were used by the state, this interviewee also indicated the restrictions imposed on his movement (and on those of other civilians) while living in his hometown because of the border line (stones) passing through the village center. He described how this *arbitrary and artificial* demarcation of borders led to the further problems of rights for a group of people: "illicit border crossings are seen as the violation of state's sovereignty (or territorial integrity) but they are integral to our ordinary lives here" (Interview #11).

The restrictions imposed on people's freedom of movement were mostly lifted as of 2013 when the peace negotiations began. At this time, this man was given the right to visit his hometown, but his words reiterated the gap between the rhetoric and its practice:

> They tell me that we are free to visit our hometown. Let's see whether they will allow me to go after the forty-ninth border stone. This is the end of Çukurca, and they do not let us go further down to the border. This state has a responsibility to guarantee my property rights...There is no life here in this place! (Interview #11).

For him, the militarized practices of rigid border control were fundamentally disabling because they destroyed his way of life and left many people without the basics of human existence (food, water, shelter and so forth).

On some occasions, people could cross the border and go to the Iraqi side for the exchange of goods and visit their relatives as a cultural practice they inherited from their grandfathers since the 1950s. One male participant described their journey to the other side of border:

> My mother is from Berwari in Iraq. We are their nieces. I had to bring my mother to the other side; my aunt was about to die. They did not let us cross the border. I had to bring my mother by hinny. Just think about it... Most of the roads we use are heavily mined with ordinances. We had to open new roads for ourselves. I am a disabled person. In this town, there are many people who were murdered due to landmines. If you go to the center of Çukurca, you will see many lame people (Interview #7).

Nevertheless, border crossings were also dependent on *contingent factors*, mostly the authority of local state officials and soldiers. In the words of another participant:

> If the district governor and soldiers let you go, you could cross the border and bring some stuff from the other side so that your family could make a living. But if someone reports or you step on the landmine, then there is no future for you (Interview #12).

This cluster of narratives on border control reveals the persistent use of territorial control as a mechanism for the state to exert its power over people and land.

5.2.4 Narratives on administrative and demographic control: Disenfranchisement and violation of democratic rights. Ethnic discrimination refers to targeting a group of people or individuals based on their ascribed ethnic identity. Forms of discrimination and harassment are used to complement violence and militarization. In most of these cases, discrimination is accompanied by people's exclusion from political, social, and economic spheres of life. The

majority of narratives on discrimination addressed the difference in terms of treatment by the state and military officials toward those who comply and who resist:

> What happened to those who are not Kurds? Did they see anything cruel? Some Kurds aligned with the state and they did not see any violence or discrimination. When I refused to become a village guard, they put me in jail for three days without any legal grounds (Interview #13).

In the legacy of conflict, *co-optation* is among one of the common practices used by the state to gather intelligence and divide the unity of dissidence. Here, co-optation can mean that the person who cooperates with the security forces gets rewards whereas those who refuse to benefit from the state's offer are not only deprived of rewards but also, in most of the cases, are penalized heavily for their trouble. My interview data revealed that this punishment ranges across a spectrum of harm from disenfranchisement, harassment, and discrimination to the violation of democratic rights to imprisonment and even extra-judicial killing. Remarkably, even those who accepted work as village guards often still did not escape from discrimination, harassment, and violence. As one village guard said:

> We did not have many options. They wanted us to be village guards. We are not allowed to leave the village. Even now, if you are a village guard, then you cannot go to the city center of Hakkari. The commander asked me: "who is going to protect this village if you move to the city?" (Interview #14).

I visited the peripheral neighborhoods of Van one freezing day in the winter of 2014. Since 1995, the majority of the residents of Çukurca have resettled here. An asphalt road cut through Van, dividing the neighborhood into two: north and south. Most of the dwellings were shanty houses, and there were no paved roads except the main one. We walked in mud for around ten minutes and arrived at the door of a shanty house. A man in his late fifties, whom I will call Mehmet, opened the door with a welcoming smile on his face.

After having tea with a few people I had met previously, I headed toward one of the houses located on the north side. The living room, which was prepared for the guests, held a wood-burning stove in the middle of the room. We sat on the floor together with the owner of the house, in a traditional setting. There were large pillows used by the guests to sit on and lean against the wall. His daughters brought a teapot and a couple of glasses as soon as we were settled. He knew that I had already spent some time in the neighborhood and started to talk before I introduced myself.

He told me that he began to serve as an active village guard in 1996 after his elder brother was assassinated by the PKK in Hakkari on charges of sharing intelligence with the Turkish security forces. He was a good example of someone being trapped in between the state and PKK. As a person of Kurdish origin, he complained about the hostility of soldiers toward the village guards. For him, compliance with the state's rule did not bring extra safety to his life. On the contrary, he believed that it merely resulted in different forms of punishment, such as humiliation and insult; being forced to attend cross-border operations without any safety gear; being forced to walk in front of soldiers; and being turned into an easy target during military operations. In his own words:

> Village guards were sent to military operations without any security. If the soldiers would see any fire set up, they would arrest most of the village guards. We were also sent to operations as a way of punishment. We were also tortured. The professional soldiers have never trusted us. For example, one day 40 soldiers died in an ambush. We were there to collect the bodies. All of a sudden, the commander yelled at us: "you, you will not touch these bodies! You are also traitors! You are one of these dogs!" We have gone through many difficulties. We did not want to move to Van. If we were Turkish, the Turkish army would not force us to carry arms and serve as village guards (Interview #15).

Ethnic discrimination is not only unique to people's interactions with state officials. It encompasses many fields, ranging from education to employment and reveals cases where people's democratic rights are also violated. For instance, Hakkari is among the worst cities where the

number of students entering university is the lowest. A middle-aged Kurdish farmer, Rubar, from Hakkari identifies the problem and claims that there has been no equality in terms of educational opportunities for the youth and this has serious consequences on people's future:

> They say that the level of education in Hakkari is low. The minds of children living in Köprülü[68] are occupied with the reality of war, whether the soldiers came or not. I have two children. When they see a soldier, they get panic. A 3-years old kid identifies the voice of helicopter when he hears it (Interview #16).

In addition to the lack of equal opportunity of education for everyone, Rubar was also addressing the impact of excessive militarization on children's psychology and made the connection between that and their choices in the future: "How can the children of Çukurca be identical with those children attending a prestigious school like Galatasaray, the French-language high school and university, in Istanbul?" (Interview #16).

Rubar argued that being subjected to discrimination was a systemic problem for them. Rather than understanding the problem as a discrete issue detached from its context, he explained that these people were approaching it as a part of the wheel that aimed at reinforcing a control regime based on the forced assimilation of Kurds taking place since the transition from empire to unitary nation-state. That is why, he concluded: "The children of this area were purposefully left uneducated and backward" (Interview #16).

Rubar was not the only person I spoke with who shared narratives of discrimination. Another interviewee said: "One day, I was traveling to Diyarbakır. Soldiers stopped the bus and checked everyone's ID. When the soldier saw my ID, he said: 'Commander, there is someone from Hakkari' and they took me into custody" (Interview #17). Hakkari was known as a pro-Kurdish city for a long time. Apparently, as shown above, people from some politicized cities were not

[68] Köprülü is one of the towns of Çukurca. There is a large military base in the area and every car travelling from Hakkari to Çukurca has to go through the checkpoint at Köprülü.

treated as human beings who deserve respect and equal treatment. Some of my participants explained that when soldiers stopped vehicles at the checkpoints, people from specific cities and/or towns received hostile treatment and their right to travel was arbitrarily violated: "For example, another time, when we wanted to visit our relatives living in Van's Gürpinar, the commander denied our entry stating: "people from Hakkari cannot enter this area." We were also banned from staying in hotels in Turkey's Izmir (a city on the West coast known to be pro-Kemalist)" (Interview #17).

As I conducted my interviews and fieldwork on abandoned villages and destroyed properties, a number of questions began to occupy my mind: Did the military pursue a specific logic in the abandonment of the area? Did it follow a particular pattern in terms of property expropriation? How do civilians perceive state policies regarding territory?

My interviews and observations in the field revealed that the military targeted certain villages, specifically those located on the guerrillas' transition path. Most of my interviewees were also accused of providing logistics to the guerrilla units. However, there were also people who claimed that the army imposed heavy restrictions on their movement. In some cases, the presence of villagers served as a "buffer zone" for the fighting parties because this would reduce the risk for soldiers to have direct clashes with the guerrillas on the ground.

In the words of an old Kurdish farmer from Çukurca:

> Soldiers tell lies. They burn our houses and then they deny it. The governors also believe in soldiers' words. All together, they pretend as if nothing terrible happened. One day, I spoke to the governor and told him that I would move to another country and become a citizen of their state. We starve to death in this country. The district governor replied: "No, no, you cannot leave this country. We do not know how others left this country. We will also pay you for your loss." Another day the high commander visited our village and told me that we should continue to live under military pressure. Then I objected to his words and said,

> "What are you talking about, Mr. Governor? I will not stay under fire." After my words, he held my arm and commanded me to leave the town (Interview #18).

From my interviews, it emerged that the army maintained demographic (and territorial) control by either compelling people to vacate the area or by preventing them from moving elsewhere. If the area was under the risk of the PKK's heavy bombardments and ambush, then the soldiers were more likely to keep Kurdish civilians in the vicinity and use them as shelter against the PKK's attacks. However, if the area was not located in the "risk zone", then the rulers preferred to keep the area free of Kurds.

On some occasions, people started to speak about their experiences of discrimination and security profiling by the state while answering other questions about borders and borderlands. They were targeted by the state for being a member of a particular group as a security threat. Toward the end of my conversation with a middle-aged Kurdish man from the borderlands of Turkey and Iran in May 2013, for example, he pointed to his Kurdish identity as a source of hostility toward him and his property:

> Q: Is it difficult to live in the borderlands? How would you describe your life?
>
> A: It is like walking on the "Sırat Bridge" [an Islamic word, describing a narrow bridge between hell and heaven]... It is a long route: The PKK on the one side and the Turkish state on the other. If there is a mobilized group of people called the PKK upsetting the state by demanding autonomy along the borders, is it my fault? If you are the representative of Turks, the PKK represents Kurds. PKK implanted potatoes along the border, 6 km far away from the Turkish military base and they harvested it. They accused us of supporting terrorism. Instead of coming after me, why cannot you go after them if you are a state? You see, it is enough for them to call you a terrorist and confiscate your properties if you are a Kurd and living in the Kurdish homeland (Interview #19).

5.2.5 Narratives on nationalizing the landscape: Denial and loss of cultural heritage.

The Kurdish-populated towns are now officially renamed in Turkish. Yet, in almost every conversation about towns and villages, people, regardless of their age and gender, continued to use

the Kurdish names of these locations. In some daily conversations, people warned me that if I used the Turkish names, my participants would not understand because people were still using the old Kurdish (or Armenian and Assyrian) version. During my visits to more politicized neighborhoods of both Van and Hakkari, I had the chance to stay in different houses where I could talk with many participants of varying ages and gender. In some of these houses, I saw a map on the wall hanging beside the picture of family members martyred with the PKK. When I asked about the maps, I learned that the Center for Kurdish Language Research and Promotion (KURDI–DER) prepared these maps showing the Kurdish names of all towns and villages in the area and distributed them to the people.

Why mapping? Why is it important to make these maps and distribute them in the original language to people living in this specific area? Maps are powerful geopolitical tools that serve to challenge state sovereignty. Place names, like borders, also inscribe geopolitics on maps (Culcasi, 2006). Not only do place names help shape our imagined geographies (Hagen, 2003, p. 491), but they are also powerful geopolitical tools used in asserting territorial claims and legitimizing geographical identities (Hagen 2003; Kadmon 2004; Monmonier 1996, 110).

By using place naming, maps create an alternative narrative against the dominant official discourse of Turkification and reinforce people to embrace their memories. By using maps, people develop strategies to revoke the state's policies of changing names because maps are powerful tools by which a nation's history and unity can be reinvented (Culcasi, 2006; Herb, 1997; Kashani-Sabet, 1998; Kosonen, 1999; Monmonier, 1997; Thongchai, 1994).

In my analysis, place naming not only serves as a mechanism of territorial control but also of spatial injustice (Alderman, 2013, p. 213). By renaming places, the state appropriates the right of people to space and deprives certain groups from inhabiting an environment that is reflective of their needs and demands. Spatial justice requires having equal distribution of resources, services,

and access (Soja, 2010) for everyone, regardless of their ascriptive identities. However, the state cuts the tie between people and place by changing place names, and people lose the meaning and symbolic value of the place from which they inherit their ancestors.

Such policies also put people's cultural reproduction under threat. In these contexts, remembering becomes resistance. In resistance against the state's policies of changing place names from Kurdish, Armenian, and Assyrian to Turkish, my participants were still using the original versions in their daily conversations.

Nationalizing the landscape has been commonly used by the control regimes to annihilate and assimilate markers of the past and to create a new geography. In Turkey, a similar pattern can be traced back to the formation of the nation-state (Öktem, 2004, 2008; Jongerden, 2007). Since then, people experienced the loss of cultural heritage and the denial of their rights to cultural reproduction in multiple ways: changing names of cities and hamlets, changing geographic names, as well as destroying and replacing historic sites relevant to cultural reproduction.

Hence, there are two moves at stake here: 1) Turkification of the space or homogenization attempt and 2) the changes in the Kurdish village names. The first wave of the politico-administrative work on geographical names started in the 1950s and accelerated with the establishment of the "Commission for Name Changes" in 1957. In the aftermath of the coup d'état in 1960, the commission, which was under the General Commandership for Maps, changed the names of almost 10,000 places. By 1965, 12,000 villages and 4,000 hamlets had been assigned Turkish names (Nişanyan, 2011). Meanwhile, the General Commandership for Maps in Turkey—which was given its current name after the military intervention in 1983—removed all maps showing the old names of places.

The second wave of the politico-administrative work on place naming was carried out following the September 1980 coup. Some streets and politicized neighborhoods were given new

names, which were mostly the names of the commanders who were the coup plotters. This second wave targeted Kurds and aimed at erasing the memory of the Kurds and disrupting the resistance as well as the ideal of homeland. For instance, 33 Kurdish villagers from Qelqeliya (Özalp in Turkish) in the city of Van were accused of smuggling across the Turkish–Iranian border and they were executed by gunfire by orders of the high commander of the third army, Mustafa Kışlalı, in 1943. To honor his work, the Ministry of Interior Affairs gave Kışlalı's name to one of the military bases in 2004. The grandchildren of those who were executed received it as an insult and launched a signatory against this decision (Özgen, 2003). Even though the decision was revoked in 2011, through assigning the name of the Turkish commander to the border patrol where these villagers were executed, the state ignored people's vulnerabilities and gave the message that they could still be executed if they continue to engage in smuggling and crossing the border illegally.

In 2001, as previously noted, the state raised an initiative— "the Village Return and Rehabilitation Project"—to promote return to evacuated hometowns, but the project failed to meet the demands and needs of displaced people. In some of the interviews, participants shared their stories of return after years of exile/disconnection. Almost all of them felt excited about the idea of return but they pointed to the same constraints: the absence of safety and the lack of basic infrastructure, such as the hospital, school, roads, and mosques.

During my visits to the peripheral neighborhoods of Van, I met with a man I will call Xelil, through a friend who was his relative. He was in his sixties. He had to escape from his hometown in the early 1990s and live as a fugitive for six years because his name was on the death list prepared by the paramilitaries. He moved to the city center of Van and started to live in a newly constructed neighborhood where there was no infrastructure at all. His relatives also moved from Hakkari to Van. The majority of my participants had to live in tents for a while and build their new shanty houses themselves.

I was invited to dinner at his family's house. They were very hospitable people who hosted me for a few days. Throughout my research, I continued to visit them from time-to-time and had long conversations with his wife and daughters too. Xelil was a very knowledgeable man, who read on a regular basis. After a couple of meetings, he walked around with me and introduced me to the people living in the neighborhood. To get there, I had to take a shuttle from the city center. If we did not have an appointment at a specific address, then I was to meet him at the party office. The further we traveled from the center, the more poverty I observed.

The return to the homeland was one of our repetitive topics because it was so apparent that people at his age were more likely to go back and continue their lives in their villages until their death. Some of my participants told me that, after 2001, they sometimes visited and stayed in their villages for few weeks, even if it was very risky to go and stay in the remnants of their destroyed homes. Despite the loss the way they described their visits to me seemed more like a revival:

> We went back to our hometown after the return project was launched in the early 2000s. There was not even single bird flying around. Nevertheless, I heard the voice of a cow. He followed my wife and me for a while. I saw that its udder was full of milk. I got that milk and made yogurt, cheese, even shared with our neighbors. That was a very happy moment for me (Interview #20).

Coming across a big, milky cow in front of the remnants of a destroyed and abandoned house was taken as a sign of a continuing life against loss and death. The revival and reconnection of this villager to his homeland had taken place through his encounter with a precious living being/animal in the middle of the remains of houses.

In February 2014, I met with one of the language instructors in downtown Hakkari. He was in his late twenties and had completed his graduate degree in Kurdish language and literature one year earlier. He was waiting for the state to appoint him so that he could start to work as a teacher. Meanwhile, he had voluntarily been teaching Kurdish at the KURDI–DER for few years. At the

beginning of our conversation, he went upstairs to the office of KURDI–DER to get a map, which he used to introduce me to the villages of Çukurca as we talked about evacuated and destroyed villages. During the entire conversation, he kept using Kurdish names and gave only few Turkish counterparts. In some instances, he was not even sure whether the Turkish version was correct.

This was not the first time I observed that people did not even know the Turkish names of these places or had already forgotten because they were not often using these names. The observations from the field taught me that the space between old and new names of villages serves as the linguistic terrain of contestation between state sovereignty and actors through their link to land and property. By using both old and new names, or only the old ones, people were also creating a space for their collective memories come to play and opening up a room against the state's policies of nationalizing landscape.

5.3 Discussion of Outlier Accounts

Given sample diversity and the huge amount of data provided by the 115 interviews I conducted, some variations in views were to be expected. While all study participants mentioned at least one mechanism of territorial control—the main focus of this study—there were nonetheless differing views with regards to the peace process in general and the Kurdish Opening in particular.

These differing views came forth with respect to the two-part interview protocol. The first part was about the political milieu of the 1990s, where study participants were asked about their everyday lives back then. Questions included whether they had lost property, experienced any restrictions on access to their land and if they had received compensation; how their relations were with the military; whether they experienced discrimination because of their ethnic identity; and whether the state offered them positions as village guards, used any kind of force to coerce them, and whether they accepted the state's offer for any reason.

In the second half of the interviews, I asked study participants if their lives changed after the AKP came to power in 2002. The semi-structured interviews continued with questions on how participants viewed the Kurdish Opening and the peace process; whether they were optimistic about the future of the peace process and what their demands were for long-term, sustainable peace.[69] After spending a couple of months with people in the research area, I also began to use certain events that had been mentioned by the study participants as examples during the interviews. By doing so, not only did I triangulate the data, but people also began to trust me more.

Primarily four views came to the fore in the interviews of 24 participants addressed here as outlier accounts: three study participants spoke well of the government's policies, seven were supportive of the pro-Kurdish movement (supporting either legal or armed wings of the movement), a further seven were neither pro-government nor pro-movement and the remaining seven were also not statist but reported positive views on the peace process. I will describe each of these four views separately and share interview data in the following section.

5.3.1 Group A. Group A includes the people with views in support of the ruling AKP. Due to the reasons mentioned above, there is the least amount of data on the views of this group of people concerning policies of territorial control and the peace process. Nonetheless, the underlying narrative of those I was able to interview was that everyone lost property and experienced discrimination at the hands of the army. Village guards who were in AKP-related circles repeatedly mentioned how they were denied access and recognition by army commanders for being ethnically Kurdish. One interlocutor's views on this matter are a case in point:

> The commanders were sending us to the outside of military bases where our washrooms were located. We were not allowed to use the soldiers' washrooms. They did not let us socialize with the soldiers. Once more than 40 soldiers died

[69] It is important to restate that the interview data was collected while a ceasefire was in place (2013–2015).

> in a PKK ambush, the commander turned and yelled at us, saying 'you, traitors. Do not touch these bodies. Your people killed them (Interview #31).

The same group of people who continue to support the government and the AKP still viewed territorial control as a legitimate means for the state to secure the area from insurgents. This view was expressed by one of the study participants who is still in active duty as a village guard:

> We were in the military trenches for days. When everyone left, we were still fighting in the frontlines. We had to maintain control and security. Otherwise, it would not be possible to live in safety. Terrorists were moving toward the city centers (Interview #31).

Furthermore, a few study participants in this group also noted that the state was taking concrete steps toward resolving the protracted conflict. Although the state continued to collect information on people during the peace process, it refrained from taking action based on this information until the peace process ended.

This came across in responses to various questions on the interview protocol. When asked whether they were hopeful about the peace process, one participant observed that:

> Of course, some things have changed. Both sides—the state and the PKK—are making concessions. Some steps are being taken while others are not; even in the face of the corruption probe and public investigations, we choose to overlook them so as to not harm the ongoing process (Interview #40).

In a similar vein, when participants were asked about people's claims regarding appropriate compensation for lands confiscated by the army, several respondents from this group claimed that people received sufficient payments from the state, adding that the state cannot make unjust decisions on such matters (Interview #44; similar views found in interviews #40; #41). Based on the collected data and participant observations in the field, it is important to note that the state was more akin to a care-giver for the majority of people in Group A was supposed to offer services, make investments and maintain order but was unable to do so properly due to "terrorist attacks."

5.3.2 Group B. Pro-movement views in open support of Abdullah Öcalan as the true leader or that are sympathetic to acts by the Kurdish movement (including its legal and armed branches). Unsurprisingly, people in this group were more willing to criticize the state presence and talk more about state practices geared to territorial control from a critical perspective. More than a quarter of the study participants in this group expressed commitment to the project put forth by the Kurdish movement, based on the idea of building autonomous entities in Turkey's Kurdish-majority region.

Group B supports the pro-Kurdish Opening but offered mostly conditional views on Öcalan's position. People in this group stated they would support the advancement of the peace process if the reforms continued in line with Öcalan's will. Were Öcalan to oppose it and disagree with the government, Group B participants said they would withdraw their support. When asked about their views on the reform process and peace talks, the common narrative of this group was: "We do not trust the state, but we support what Öcalan asks for. If he thinks that his process is crucial, then we also agree" (Interviews #24, #25, #26, #27, #28; #42; #43). More than half of the people in Group B were eager to talk and share their views but about a quarter found it difficult to trust me, for many had seen undercover intelligence officers who approached people under the guise of journalists, teachers, researchers and so forth. Almost every study participant in this group experienced more than one mechanism of territorial control: displacement, loss of property and land and militarization were the most common narratives, followed by narratives on the disruption of cultural practices and the violation of democratic rights. Looking at the data on territorial control in terms of Groups B and D reveals that while the two groups were motivated by different issues, their positions converged toward the same outcome, which was to support the peace process.

5.3.3. Group C. Group C is neither pro-statist nor pro-movement: views were critical of the state without using the jargon of the Kurdish movement or somewhat sympathetic to its legal or armed branches. The people in this group were the hardest to classify because their views on

both territorial control and the peace process were more diverse than any other group. Almost half of the study participants in this group voted for the pro-Kurdish party in the elections but were not as committed to the political cause of the Kurdish movement as the people in Group B. About one-quarter of the people in this group reported that they felt obliged to vote for the pro-Kurdish party because it was the only one that represented their rights as a separate ethnic group. There were others who stated that war and violence made their lives difficult, adding that Kurds could benefit from their democratic rights if the PKK would agree to disarmament.

Participants in Group C were critical of the reform process. Proponents of this view were further divided into two streams. One group did not believe that the peace process brought any positive change in the borderlands, while the other group went further and said that the peace process was another tool of warfare for the state to maintain its control over territory and people. The former view can be described in the words of the participant who said, "After the peace process, everything is the same here. Look at these mountains, do you think that the state of emergency ended?" (Interview #21; similar views also found in interviews #29, #30, #32), while the latter view may be seen in the words of another participant, who noted, "The peace process was just another tool for the state. Everything is about security when it comes to Kurds. The state prepared itself for the next stage of warfare" (Interview #22; also found in interviews #33, #34). This participant added that the state had already recruited over 500 village guards during the peace process, noting that it had also invested in new techniques of warfare. At the same time, the participant offered insightful comments on people's experiences of territorial control by drawing attention to the specific mentality that the state (in the conflict zone, the army was often seen as the representative of the state) had pursued during the peak years of the conflict:

> The army evacuated the entire area close to the Turkish–Iraqi border. There were 740 houses in the village called 'Uzundere.' There was at least one village guard

> in every house but, despite that, the state found the area difficult to control due to its location and turned it into a military prohibited zone from the early '90s onwards (1994–1995). You can see the same trend along the Turkish–Iranian border; there are border towns at the 'zero line' where civilians have had no access for decades. These areas were also heavily laid with landmines, and today not even the soldiers know where they are. This was the product of a very specific warfare mentality (Interview #22).

The views of people in both sub-groups converged on the issue of territorial control, marked by accounts on the multiple categories of such control in their vicinities. While people had diverse views on the reform process, they mostly agreed that territorial control, which manifested itself in multiple forms, was one of the main barriers to long-term sustainable peace. This can be seen in the words of a participant who noted, "The future of the peace process is dark because it is a regional issue that should go beyond the limits of Turkey" (Interview #22).

5.3.4 Group D. This group is not statist but pro-peace process: it shared views that pointed to minor changes from negative to positive because of the peace process. This group is also not homogenous—while almost half of the participants who were pro-peace process (and specifically pro-Kurdish Opening) were not optimistic about the future of the peace talks, almost half of them were suspicious of the government's intention to resolve the conflict by peaceful means yet stated that democratic struggle was the only way to actually do so. People in this group again shared a number of narratives on the loss of property, land confiscations and extra-judicial practices of the Turkish army along the borders. The major source of complaint for this group of people concerned state practices of expulsion, militarization and nationalizing the landscape.

Group D supported the peace process even though it was not composed of allegedly pro-government (or pro-statist) people. Although half of the study participants in this group were unsure about the future of the peace process, they underlined the positive impact of having no casualties in their villages since May 2013. This view came across in comments such as "We began

to return to our land after 20 years" (Interview #23) and "There are no casualties nowadays; it is hard to be optimistic if you live here but the current situation is better" (Interview #35; similar views also found in interviews #36, #37, #38, #39). However, participants in this group also added that the future was completely unpredictable especially for those who lived close to the borders.

Group D is one of the hardest to classify because it is composed of people who have different ideologies. Despite that, the common denominator was these people's views about the peace process and the Kurdish Opening: the study participants in Group D were speaking in favor of the process even if they were also distanced from the state. Half of the people in this group did not see the Kurdish Opening as a genuine step toward Turkey's democratization but they had a positive view of the reforms.

A participant in this group who was ideologically closer to the center stated that Kurds were dispersed in five different states and the best that could be done for Kurds in Turkey was to call for peace, demand integration, push for further democratic rights and come to terms with the reform process of the government (Interview #38). Group D was more diverse than A and B in terms of worldviews but all of these three groups supported the peace process with varying levels of commitment.

When I asked about the multiple mechanisms of control that are in place, participants in Group D presented a consistent narrative related to forced evacuation from their hometowns on orders from the state, and most of them also spoke fondly of the reform process when responding to questions about the Kurdish Opening. This came across in comments such as "The state would not be punished to pay fines to people if it was innocent" (Interview #37). Similar to participants categorized under Group B, the common experiences for this group of participants were displacement, loss of property and land, as well as militarization. Almost two-thirds of the study

participants in this group complained about discrimination and the disruption of spaces that are needed to preserve local culture.

The classification above illustrates that there are two main clusters in terms of the study participants' take on the peace process and the Kurdish Opening: Groups A, B and D in the first cluster and Group C in the second cluster. Group A supported the reforms of the ruling party based on stability and security, but also referred to displacement and loss of property in response to questions on whether they had to leave their hometowns for any reason in the 1990s. People in this group mostly complained about expulsion and expropriation—the first type of state mechanism for territorial control as noted earlier in this chapter —as well as a lack of sufficient compensation. But they rarely mentioned other types of territorial control such as securitization, control of movement across borders and so forth. While there might be various explanations for this, based on my field observations, I believe it could be because the people in Group A were mostly village guards who were still on active duty, as well as former village guards or people affiliated with the government and/or army-related circles through friends and relatives.

The diverse voices that arose from the fieldwork about the peace process lead to a prominent question about the core of this study: Are these accounts dissonant to the predominant view of this study that is stated throughout? Not necessarily. Although study participants had different views on the peace process and its future (positive, negative, neutral, positive but pessimistic), the narratives were less diverse when it came to territorial control (including multiple mechanisms and practices). As previously mentioned, even village guards paid by the state complained about losing properties in the 1990s, which was one of the most common experiences of expulsion and expropriation along the borderlands. This example may not be sufficient to conclude that everyone in the study area experienced multiple categories of territorial control, but it is enough to state that in the last two decades of war/violence, everyone from the area where I conducted ethnographic

research (Hakkari, Van and Çukurca) continued to experience territorial control amid the peace process.

5.4 Conclusion

It is widely recognized that the implementation of state reforms aiming to improve minority rights is a necessary condition for democratic governance. The accommodation of ethnic groups in politics is also required for building stable and functioning institutions. At the institutional level, reforms and policies to increase the social, political, and economic participation of major ethnic groups reduce the likelihood of conflict within ethnic groups and between the state and subordinate ethnic groups. This section of my study has explored the reasons why violent conflict against subordinate ethnic groups still occurs in a country, despite the country's democratization efforts.

I argue that, in Turkey, the main explanation for such failure is the *question of territorial control*. Mechanisms of territorial control undermined the trust of members of the minority group in the state's ability and political will to resolve the ethnic conflict. In this study, I specifically investigate the mechanism of territorial control in Turkey to shed light on the seeming intractability of the conflict between the Turkish state (represented by the government, since 2002 the AKP) and its Kurdish community (i.e. the key subordinate ethnic group in Turkey). Based on the data I collected during my fieldwork conducted in Turkey's Kurdish borderlands, I argue that the puzzling coexistence of the Turkish state's democratization process and territorial control over the Kurds in the post-2002 era has undermined the Kurdish population's trust in the Turkish state, resulting in a constant state of deadlock. This situation raises an important question: what are the political implications of the state's failure to accommodate this ethnic minority into its society and politics despite the undertaking of a series of democratic reforms?

Broadly speaking, the main implications of Turkey's territorial control over its Kurdish community involve the erosion of state legitimacy and the exacerbation of ethnic minority alienation. Within the analysis, the political outcomes are said to be "legitimate when the processes of decision-making and deliberation are democratic, meaning that they represent the interests and choices of different groups forming the demos."[70] Therefore, state legitimacy would be impaired if any of these conditions are violated. On the grounds of political decisions in favor of the ethnic group governing the state (in other words, Turks), Kurds believe that the ethnicity that holds state power takes advantage of the current inequality. The narratives of people concerning the multiple faces of territorial control (i.e. displacement, militarization, border control, nationalizing landscape) show that the constant state of control shadows the political discourse on democratization that is happening in other parts of the country.

In relation to the impairment of state legitimacy, territorial control policies deepen the alienation of Kurds living in the borderlands. To sum up, the excessive use of territorial control contributes to minority alienation in the borderlands and undermines people's ability to perceive and respond to democratization positively.

This chapter has shown that the local disaffection of Kurds in the borderlands continues to persist and more importantly, to shape Turkish policies targeting Kurds. The policies of territorial control have fostered Kurds' feeling of alienation and mistrust toward the Turkish state. This is because the impact of excessive territorial control on people's lives are to be seen everywhere in the borderlands. As shown in the previous chapters, people have experienced displacement, loss, death, and militarization in Kurdish borderlands. Under these circumstances, people have gained a very limited or no access to their land.

[70] For more information, see Peter (2016).

Three factors explain why this local disaffection matters for understanding how far democratization can go and how Kurdish locals' sentiments are tied to the peace process: existing social networks and kinship ties; political friendship and alliances, and increasing economic and military expenses of the state in the Kurdish-populated borderlands. First, the Kurds living in their perceived homeland are connected to those who have been internally displaced and moved to the urban provinces through *social and kinship networks*. The IDP Kurds continue to preserve their ties with the relatives back home through kinship networks and prefer to move to the urban provinces where they have already established some social networks (Çelik, 2005). Through these networks, newcomers get used to their new life in the city while those who have been settled there for longer continue to have exchanges with their people and homeland. These networks also serve as solidarity chains for newcomers because they help newcomers settle and find a job within these kinship circles. These ties keep memories of homeland alive and connect the rural to the urban centers.

Second, party politics is another factor explaining why local disaffection matters in the Turkish–Kurdish case. The fallout between the ruling AKP and the pro-Kurdish HDP over Kurdish votes in the region, including the borderlands, creates a fierce competition in the elections. Both parties offer various perks/ benefits to voters and promise to respond to their complaints and demands in exchange of their support. Through the extensive *networks of political friendship and alliances* that people build in political parties, the effects of local disaffection influence people's political preferences.

Third, as mentioned before, the Turkish army launched the *military construction program* in Turkey's Kurdish-populated region during the peace process. With this program, the army initiated the construction of 166 high-security, sophisticated military bases across the predominantly Kurdish region amid the ongoing peace process (Voice of America, 2014). The high

cost of building military bases on the Turkish economy sparked reactions among the members of the pro-Kurdish BDP, leading to the demonstrations in a number of places where these *kalekols* were built (Radikal, 2014a).

In sum, this chapter has presented the framework I developed for answering my research question, which consists of three dimensions of analysis: state intentions; state mechanisms, and; narratives of territorial control in the borderlands. The first half of the chapter unpacked and defined the Turkish state's mechanisms of territorial control, while the second half documented people's lived experiences of these mechanisms.

The categories used in this analysis emerged from the interviews and observations I made during my year-long ethnographic research in the region. Analysis of the data identified five categories of mechanisms of territorial control: expulsion and expropriation; securitization; control of movement across borders; administrative and demographic control (gerrymandering and in-migration); and nationalizing the landscape. Furthermore, analysis of people's experiences revealed the following categories of narratives: displacement and loss of property and land; militarization and violence; disruption of minority cultural practices and intra-minority fragmentation; disenfranchisement and violation of democratic rights; and denial and loss of cultural heritage.

My analysis concludes that: 1) while the mechanisms employed by the Turkish state were primarily designated to actualize the intentions of territorial control, they had far-reaching consequences, such as alienation and loss of state legitimacy for the Kurdish people and; 2) the excessive use of territorial control resulted in profound experiences of loss and violence, and contributed heavily to minority alienation in the borderlands. The persistent alienation of Kurds living in the borderlands and their control by the state's militaristic means posed barriers to the success of the peace process.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This dissertation has asked why the Turkish state's policy of democratization—which was partly aimed at engendering peace and stability—failed. With the democratization process that began in the 2000s, as detailed in Chapter 4, the AKP government intended to launch a number of reforms in political, cultural, and legal domains. The Kurdish Opening was a part of this broader reform package. With this process, the ruling party was trying to do three things. First, it aimed to address the armed insurgency in the Kurdish-majority region and second, foster moderation within the Kurdish movement by policies that were more acceptable to ordinary Kurds, such as Kurdish language rights and cultural rights, while at the same time attempting to disarm the Kurdish guerrillas infiltrating the borders. Finally, it sought to offer a general amnesty for some of the guerrillas. This dual strategy was supposed to create the conditions for a peaceful transition toward reconciliation and stability. The thesis is interested in why the Kurdish Opening failed. Most of the scholars writing on the failure of Turkey's democratization (Aydin-Duzgit & Keyman, 2017; Tezcür, 2010a) do not link this failure to the mechanisms of territorial control. As set out in Chapter 4, some scholars and practitioners claim that the process was poorly managed; others show that the process was incomplete. This thesis does not deny that some of these explanations—e.g. that the liberalization was insufficient or badly administered—may have played a role. However, I argue that an important, hitherto largely ignored, factor in explaining this failure is the state's parallel policy of territorial control. Stated more formally, then, the thesis is interested in explaining minority mobilization or armed insurrection: this is the dependent variable which the thesis seeks to explain.

The main explanatory factor—the independent variable—is territorial control. Of course, the thesis begins with the onset of the Kurdish Opening, and the Kurdish population in the southeast borderlands of Turkey were already mobilized. The thesis does not seek to explain the conditions under which they took up armed struggle. However, it does argue that territorial control is a key factor in explaining why minority policy reform failed to achieve success in minority accommodation.

This argument is important because, as I argued in Chapter 1, it is standard to assume that liberalization or democratization processes, understood in terms of increased rights, freedom of association, minority language protection, and so on, will help to achieve minority assent to the state. It is also standard to assume that the contemporary state needs to have control over its border: that as a legitimate state in the international order, it is entitled to put down, by force if necessary, armed insurrection, guerilla violence, and control the flow of people and goods across borders. These two policies were pursued simultaneously in Turkey. It is often not recognized that the second policy can undermine the first set of policies. After all, the Kurdish Opening was initiated to some extent in response to European pressure and there was little recognition that policies of the first kind (increased constitutional rights and liberalization) were undermined by the strategies of territorial control at the periphery, since these are largely regarded as justified. Indeed control over borders is regarded as a sine qua non of a justified territorial state. Yet, the argument of this thesis suggests that the two policies are contradictory and that indeed the securitization strategies negatively impacted the peace process itself.

One might respond that this result is hardly surprising, and that this is well known in the scholarship on conflict-ridden border areas such as Thailand, Vietnam, Israel–Palestine, Northern Ireland, Kashmir, Sudan, China and Latin America (i.e. the Amazon region, Colombia) (Frisch, 2012; Simmons, 2005; Vandergeest & Lee Peluso, 1995). It is true that there is increasing

recognition that borderlands present a unique challenge to state institutions that pursue centralized control within their political borders. However, my argument details a quite specific form of challenge: that the compartmentalized approach to minority pacification and security of the borders is inherently contradictory; that the securitization policies along the borderland will undermine the peace process itself.

In some cases, of course, it is possible to adopt a military or security approach to an armed insurrection: think of the Bader–Meinhof Gang (also known as the Red Army Faction) in West Germany in the 1970s, whose military campaign was addressed almost entirely through arrests of key leaders, imprisonment, and security measures. This may lead some to think that militants can be isolated and liberalization policies can be applied to the majority of the population. However, the two cases are disanalogous: one was an ideological group involving relatively few people, without deeper ethnic or cultural roots, whereas the Kurdish population along the border is politically mobilized, Kurdish identification is strong, and moreover there are many connections between people living in the borderlands and the Kurdish population that is dispersed in towns and cities throughout Turkey. Part of the point of analyzing people's lived experience of the security policies is to show the impact of these policies on people's everyday lives and attitudes. It also illustrated the deep problem with assuming that this dual strategy would operate independently of each other.

Each chapter of this dissertation unfolds a different aspect of this argument. The first chapter after the introduction reviews the literature on democratization, minority mobilization, and territorialization. It shows that the democratization literature, focusing on elite mobilization or grievance or resources, does not focus on the specific dynamic that can unfold in a divided society, where the majority population 'owns' the state—the state is seen as a state for them—and the minority population has engaged in counter-mobilization, particularly along the borderlands. This

specific context may engender its own dynamic of ethnic interaction, and its own challenges for democratization. Having outlined my research question, and the connections with different sets of literature, the third chapter describes the methods that I used for data collection and data analysis. Both of these chapters set the stage for the following chapters on policies (Chapter 4) and narratives (Chapter 5), which constitute the heart of this thesis. Chapter 4 contributes to the main argument by describing the policies of democratization and the zigzagging process of acceptance and contestation by the Kurdish population and the state. Chapter 5 then shifts focus to examine forms of territorial control that have been pursued by the state. This chapter shows that the Turkish state attempted to implement democratization as a top-down process while keeping the army and military infrastructure in place. Indeed, they continued to build military bases and recruit more people as village guards and soldiers during the democratization process. This chapter examines the five forms of territorial control that have been in place during the peace process, not only from the perspective of the state and the achievement of state security, but also how these policies impacted on and were perceived by the local population. One of the arguments of the thesis is that forms of control may give rise to resistance, and not simply effective domination, and that this can undermine other policies pursued by the state, such as democratization or liberalization.

The second finding of my research is the ways in which territorial control has distinct forms. Through examining the comparative literature on territorial control in this sort of situation, archival documents and newspapers in the relevant period, and through extensive interviews with a hard-to-reach local population, as Chapters 4 and 5 clearly showed, I develop a taxonomy of forms of territorial control and link these forms of territorial control with their effects on the local population. This is one of the most significant contributions of my research to the comparative politics literature. Although this taxonomy bears some resemblance to that of McGarry and O'Leary in their seminal book *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, this dissertation focuses,

as theirs does not, on the lived experience of the people living under the five forms of territorial control that I identify: expulsion and expropriation, securitization, border control, administrative control (right-sizing and gerrymandering) and nationalizing the landscape.

Although I see my study as situated within a broader literature on state control over minorities (Jamal, 2006; McGarry & O'Leary, 1993; Yiftachel & Ghanem, 2004), most of these focus on institutions and policies, with a wide range of examples. This thesis applies the theories of territorial control to a specific site—the Kurdish borderland in eastern Turkey. Thus, this study helps to test the validity of these theories on ethnic hierarchy and state control policies. Moreover, this thesis achieves a unique perspective that incorporates people's perceptions and sentiments with theoretical and analytical premises. By doing so, this thesis brings an actor-based approach into communication with the institutional and policy-oriented stance. As I develop an actor-based research project, as discussed in my methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the thesis contributes to the literature lacking in actor perspective and integrating people's voices within the existing literature on state methods to manage ethnic populations.

One of the main contributions of the thesis is the discussion of the impact of control policies on people's lives. The borderland region that I traveled to, talking to and interviewing people, has been largely closed to academics. It is dangerous to travel to the region, heavily securitized, and the population is generally distrustful of outsiders, not knowing whether the person who presents herself or himself as a neutral researcher is really in the pay of the Turkish state for example. This thesis uniquely draws on the sentiments and perceptions of the people living in the borderlands, and their narratives of displacement, loss of property, militarization, disruption of cultural practices, disenfranchisement, and denial and loss of cultural practices. This data shows the local feelings of Kurds from the borderlands but, as analyzed in the previous chapter, these sentiments connect with the effects on the broader peace process because there are relationships between

Kurds in these areas and Kurds throughout Turkey: there are existing political alliances, friendship, social ties, and kinship networks. The mechanisms of territorial control at the border led to the alienation of the Kurdish population and this was profoundly destructive to the nascent democratization and liberalization process that the central government was also pursuing at the same time.

Needless to say, every state pursues a level of control over its territory and implements certain policies to maintain that control. This may suggest to the outside reader that, in fact, Turkey was responding normally to a challenge within its territory. Yet if this response undermines the democratization process that the state is also pursuing, then we may need to re-think how the state might try to effect territorial control, and whether that is possible without alienating the very group that other elements of the state are seeking to pacify. Concurring with relevant scholarship that suggests this finding is generalizable to cases similar to Turkey—where there is a mobilized borderland minority—my analysis suggests that peace processes and reforms are likely to fail unless complemented with territorial provisions that address spatial injustices (Soja, 2010) and efforts to reconcile statehood with the mobilized group's aspirations to collective self-rule. If the argument of this thesis is correct, then it follows that a decentralized system will do a better job than the unitary nation-state in terms of minority accommodation. According to my analysis, Kurds need to be less dependent on the center and they must have more autonomy over the control of territory where they are the majority. This new model can combine decentralization with cross-border territorial links with the Iraqi Kurds living on the other side of the border. Whichever approach Kurds may as a group prefer, to be effective in accommodating minorities, all models must take their legitimacy from people's demands. Legitimacy comes with the design of an alternative institutional setting in which ethnic minorities would enjoy autonomy and fair representation.

In contrast to the regimes where relations of 'hegemonic control' are deeply rooted into the tradition of the unitary state, decentralization is a good starting point from which to manage conflict and local actors must be provided with incentives for the operation of decentralized government (Wibbels, 2006). I suggest that decentralization with the creation of new and loosely bounded multi-ethnic spaces is a feasible solution, which also contributes to democratization.

The initial step is to transfer power from the center to the regions, provinces, and sub-state units of governance. This process comprises the transferring/sharing/re-distributing of powers and authority, vested by the institutions and officers of central government to regional and local level of government institutions and officers (Yusoff, et. al, 2015). In a decentralized state, power is dissolved between multi-ethnic local units. These units should be ethnically heterogeneous, and they should serve different goals. Some of them can cater to the interests and needs of minorities while other units can serve the needs of a larger community. The relationship between the central government and constituent units determines the stability of this new arrangement. To make decentralization work, there is a need for the implementation of a set of additional accommodating tools because decentralization has become more successful in mitigating conflicts in more democratic countries like Belgium and Spain but has been much less effective in curbing conflict in Indonesia and former Yugoslavia (Brancati, 2005). Within this spectrum, Turkey is closer to where Indonesia and Yugoslavia stand, and decentralization is unlikely to succeed in the absence of additional measures.

The constitution of a decentralized state and devolved power in various multi-ethnic regions of varying size has both normative and empirical appeal. First, the new arrangements relying on minority empowerment can avert attempts to secede by exercising governmental power of minorities at the sub-state unit. The creation of sub-state units would keep tension in the limits of smaller units before it moves to the national level. Second, these measures allow for asymmetric

arrangements and provide a stimulus for interethnic coalitions (Gurr, 2000; Horowitz, 2007; Kaufmann, 1996). Thus, enhancing regional autonomy can bring the debate into equilibrium and respond to the needs of both majority and minority groups.

We need to consider the challenges and constraints as well. The realpolitik has a profound impact on the situation. By realpolitik, I mean the internal and external political dynamics and power structures. The former refers to the ethnic composition of the country, the presence of a mobilized ethnic group in a certain territory, and the presence of systemic territorial control resulting in the alienation of a minority group which is also suffering from a lack of fair representation. The latter includes the impact of the shifting borders of neighboring countries on Turkey's intra-state conflict with its Kurdish population.

Given these constraints, both nationally and regionally, neither a full-fledged ethno-federal approach nor a separate nation-state for Kurds is likely to succeed in Turkey. It is not feasible when the serious threat of four nation-states where Kurds are a minority (Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria) is considered. In addition, ethnically homogeneous units are less stable over the long run because they reduce the prospect of interethnic dialogue. Considering all these constraints, we need to come up with a *sui generis* model—one that speaks to reality but also relies more on egalitarian principles.

To sum up, my research shows that the politics of territorial control lie at the heart of the Kurdish case in Turkey. If we ignore the territorial aspect of the case, we also refrain from going deeper into problem-solving. The conflict will remain intractable even if all political actors—those on the side of the Turkish state and those representing the Kurds—ask for a durable peace, which would be in the interest of everyone involved. Hence, we need to create policies that address the repercussions of excessive territorial control, considering the voices of those living in the midst of the conflict to remedy its outcomes.

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Appendix A

Research Ethics Approval

September 10, 2013

Mrs. Dilan Okcuoglu
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Studies
Queen's University
Macintosh-Corry Hall, Room C321
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GPLST-092-13; Romeo # 6010581
Title: "GPLST-092-13 Strategies and Challenges of Minority Accommodation in Turkey's Borderlands (1990-2004 and 2004-Present)"

Dear Mrs. Okcuoglu:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled **"GPLST-092-13 Strategies and Challenges of Minority Accommodation in Turkey's Borderlands (1990-2004 and 2004-Present)"** for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson,
Ph.D. Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Margaret Moore and Dr. Zsuzsa Csergo, Faculty Supervisors
Dr. Andrew Lister, Chair, Unit
REB Dianne Flint, Dept. Admin.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Villagers and farmers living at the borders:

1. How was your everyday life in the 90s?
2. Land is a very important property for most people. Has the state, or the military, ever appropriated your land for any cause? If so, what was their reason?
3. Were you compensated for that? How?
4. Do you feel that it is hard to be a Kurd, especially if you are living at the border? How do you deal with any policies that you find discriminatory?
5. Have settlement and resettlement projects been purely motivated by economic considerations or have they had an underlying ethnic agenda? Can you explain little further by giving some examples?
6. Are you optimistic about the future of the peace process?
7. How do you think the protracted conflict would come to an end (i.e. what are your expectations from both sides)?
8. Do you feel any signs that your ethnicity makes a difference in your everyday life? Can you give me some examples?

Villagers internally displaced (living along the Turkish–Iraqi borders):

1. Why did you move to the city? Was it your decision?
2. How was your life at the borders?
3. Have you ever lost any property and land?
4. Did you have any problems with the soldiers? (i.e. How were your relations with them?) Can you please explain further?

5. How are your relations with the government officials in the city? How do they treat you? (i.e. Do you feel excluded or avoided?)
6. Do you have any additional problems that you want to explain to me? (i.e. how are your relations with those who are not internally displaced? Do you have any interaction with Turks?)
7. How do you deal with all these extra challenges of moving into a new place?

Appendix C

Photos from the Fieldwork

Figure C.1. Military prohibited zone at the Turkish–Iraqi border. Photograph provided by the author.

Figure C.2. A governorship building from the town in the zero line of the Turkish–Iraqi border. Photograph provided by the author.

Figure C.3. A stone marking the line of the Turkish–Iraqi border. Photograph provided by the author.

Figure C.4. The Turkish military installation near the Turkish–Iraqi border. Photograph provided by the author.

Figure C.5. Turkish military base on the hilltop in a town near the Turkish–Iraqi border. Photograph provided by the author.

Figure C.6. A discarded weapon encountered by the author within the guerilla zone near the Turkish–Iraqi border. Photograph provided by the author.