



Armed Social Movements and Insurgency

The PKK and its Communities of Support

Francis Patrick O'Connor

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

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Examining Board

Prof. Donatella della Porta,	European University Institute (Supervisor)
Prof. Olivier Roy,	European University Institute
Prof. Joost Jongerden,	Wageningen University
Prof. Jocelyn Viterna,	Harvard University

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Abstract

The supportive environments which sustain armed groups are arguably an understudied aspect of political violence; it is widely acknowledged that all armed groups necessitate a degree of popular support if they are to be successful but the relationship between armed movements and their supporters is often underdeveloped or considered self-explanatory. This project puts forth the argument that the relationship between armed groups and their supporters is of fundamental importance to how and where armed groups mobilise and the repertoire of contention they adopt. Making use of Malthaner's concept of "constituency" (2011a), the PKK's armed struggle from its foundation in the 1970s until 1999 will be analysed. The particular manner in which the PKK actively constructed and maintained extensive support networks across contrasting socio-spatial contexts ensured its ongoing legitimacy and the material resources necessary for its survival. Although a noted power disparity exists between armed and unarmed actors, the relationship between them is always characterised by degrees of reciprocal influence; influence that is often expressed in a variety of subtle and contextually specific fashions. The project will therefore examine the dialectic between the PKK and its communities of support and how this has evolved over time and space from rural Kurdistan to the urban centres of western Turkey, and consider how it has impacted on the nature of violence deployed by the PKK in the course of its insurgency.

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Francis Patrick O'Connor

Bijê Biratiya Gelan

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Introduction

The PKK was formally established in 1978 in the aftermath of the successful third world national liberation struggles, which witnessed the emancipation of most of the world's remaining colonies. The PKK's insurgent contemporaries of the time were amongst others, movements such the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in Ethiopia¹ and the IRA in Ireland all of which are long since ensconced in the halls of institutional power in their respective states and statelets. That is, of course, not to mention, all of the insurgent movements which have since been crushed and no longer even exist in any substantial terms, most notably the PKK's Kurdish and Turkish left counterparts. Furthermore, its birth came about in a period of dramatic regional change which would have seemed likely to disfavour a movement such as the PKK; it has been argued that in 1979, "the Middle East broadly speaking entered a new historical cycle determined by the extreme weakening of left-wing movements and an almost hegemonic domination of Islamism" (Bozarslan, 2014:5). Yet the PKK in 2014 remains one of the most significant actors, not only in Turkey but across the Middle East; bridging the chasm stretching from the Cold War period to the contemporary uni-polar epoch. The PKK retains significant armed capacity and its guerrilla forces were sufficiently potent to render 2011 and 2012² the conflict's bloodiest years since the 1990s. It has not become a parliamentary party but it boasts the strongest social movement in Turkey with the capacity to mobilise tens of thousands for demonstrations and celebrations.

The PKK neatly fits Goodwin's definition of a persistent insurgent group³ as one of "those that persist for many years or even decades without seizing power, but which maintain significant popular support" (2001:219). It also meets his quantitative qualification by fielding at "least one thousand armed guerrillas for at least a decade" (ibid: 220). The PKK has persevered in the grey area between success and failure, co-optation and annihilation

¹ Eritrea obtained its independence in 1991.

² See UCDP casualty statistics, available at: http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=158®ionSelect=10-Middle_East#

³ The term is also used by O'Leary and Silke (2004) but they do not precisely distinguish persistent from other forms of insurgency or conflict.

for almost forty years in the course of which it has undergone numerous ideological and political transformations. It was founded as a Marxist movement to liberate the colony of Kurdistan from the yolk of Imperialism, evolved into an autonomist movement limited to only Kurds in Turkey, and has subsequently reinvented itself as a post-nationalist social libertarian movement traversing Turkish, Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian state borders; all the while, with the exception of a five year period from 1999-2004, engaging the Turkish army in armed confrontation.

This project has not examined the long *durée* of the PKK until 2014, it has restricted itself to the period of the PKK's emergence and the first and most intense phase of conflict which stretched from 1984-1999. One could argue *ad infinitum* about the political achievements of the PKK and whether or not it has maximised the political opportunities available to it or not, but one cannot easily dismiss its notable military accomplishments. Turkey boasts NATO's second largest army which is extremely well equipped and experienced; while the PKK albeit bolstered by thousands of guerrillas has never had access to heavy weaponry or substantial external backing. Nonetheless, the PKK has inflicted grievous casualties on the Turkish armed forces, police and paramilitaries and has successfully absorbed the bloody exactions inflicted on it in return. This project sustains that the only explicable reason why the PKK has succeeded in resisting the Turkish state for as long as it has done, is because it has never lost the support of a large portion of the Kurdish people; this is the very aspect of the PKK that will be analysed throughout this thesis. The PKK has an extremely disciplined professional nucleus of guerrillas, urban cadre and full time activists which have varied in number from the thousands to the ten(s) of thousands. However, I argue that the real strength of the PKK is derived not from its core but its periphery. As Mitchell has discussed regarding the distinction between state and society; "the distinction must be taken not as the boundary between two discrete entities, but as a line drawn internally within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a social and political order is maintained" (1991:78). Accordingly, the boundary between the PKK and its supporters must not be considered as dividing two hermetic entities but rather like a tide, ebbing and flowing over time and space, but remaining ever present, in one form or another. It is precisely this ebb and flow of support that will be analysed in the subsequent

chapters; how the PKK harnessed this collective energy and where and against whom it was deployed.

Research Design

This project is based on a single case study, the PKK. Projects focusing on single case studies have been criticised for their lack of generalisability and it has been suggested that “little can be learned” from them (Rueschemeyer, 2003:307). An affirmation Rueschemeyer has himself categorically dismissed, by citing the ground breaking works of E.P. Thompson, Robert Michels and Theda Skocpol’s (ibid). When working on a single case study, “the challenge is to acknowledge and uncover its specific meaning, while extracting generalisable knowledge, actually or potentially related to other cases” (Vennesson, 2008: 226). Case studies are used “to develop and evaluate theories as well as to formulate hypotheses or explain particular phenomena by using theories and causal mechanisms” (ibid: 227). Given the hitherto patchy academic focus on the Kurds in general and even more acutely in relation to the PKK, this project has necessarily entailed a “configurative-ideographic” (ibid) component in order to clarify the empirical basis on which the subsequent theoretical hypotheses have been elaborated. Thereby reflecting Wickham-Crowley’s warning that “facts should be firmly established before attempts are made to theorise about facts” (1993:19). Nonetheless, due care has been employed to avoid a historical or more journalistic approach by the conversion of “historical information into a suitable analytical vocabulary that can be applied to other cases” (Vennesson, 2008: 230).

The project utilises a heuristic approach involving the generation and refinement of hypotheses in conjunction with an evaluation of the prevailing social science theories, in light of the case studies empirical findings (see ibid: 227-228). The project has made ample use of process tracing as a research method, which examines “the decision processes by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes” (George and McKeown in Tarrow, 2004:173). It is a “procedure for identifying steps in a causal process leading to the outcome of a given dependent variable of a particular case in a particular historical context” (George and Bennett in Vennesson, 2008:231). Process tracing is of particular value for

historical cases as it results in a step by step narrative reconstruction of particular phenomena.

Research Question

The central research question is: in what fashion did the PKK's relationship with its constituency influence the patterns of violence and mobilisation it advanced from its foundation in the mid 1970s until 1999? This principal question is contingent on two sub-questions; firstly how did the PKK develop its constituency? Secondly, how and to what extent was this constituency maintained across space and time? The core objective of this thesis is not to describe the PKK and its support networks *per se* but rather to consider if and how the relationship between the two impacted on the PKK's repertoire of contention. It has detailed this relationship, the manner in which it was forged and how it evolved in the various socio-spatial environments in which it was present. The concept of constituency has been used as per Malthaner's definition as "the real social groups in a society, whom the militants address and to whom they refer, with whom they are actually involved in some form of relationship, and who – at least to a certain degree – actually sympathise with and support the militant groups" (2011:29). Although this relationship between movement and supporters is the principle focus of the project, all social actors are inevitably engaged in multiple and overlapping relationships with a whole host of other actors be they individuals, institutions - in particular with the state - or other movements. This multitude of relationships varies dramatically over time and space and the relative importance afforded to specific interlocutors differs accordingly.

The diachronic focus of the project is of importance because as Goodwin has noted "the conditions that foster strong revolutionary movements by no means guarantee that such movements will actually seize state power" (2001:210); highlighting that changes in structural context over time can facilitate or inhibit revolutionary efforts. To give an example, the PKK's interaction with other Kurdish movements was of huge importance prior to the 1980 coup but much less so afterwards. As an example of spatial differentiation, the PKK was obliged to interact with other leftist organisation in certain neighbourhoods of

Istanbul in the 1990s but was to a large extent, with the exception of Dersim, the sole revolutionary force in the rest of Kurdistan. In addition, PKK sympathisers' engagement with the repressive apparatuses of the state underwent varying periods of intensity according to time and location. Therefore, the main theoretical focus of the book will not disregard the socio-cultural, political and personal context in which this relationship was articulated and rearticulated. The approach of this project will be relational (Bosi, Demetriou & Malthaner, 2014) but also constructivist as it recognises the "social construction of their experiential reality by the various actors participating in the social and political conflict" (della Porta, 2013:5).

Note on Terminology

The practises of naming and labelling in the social sciences are often controversial, especially in cases of long running armed conflict (see McAdam *et al*, 2001:125). The two most glaring examples in the case of the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state are the terms Kurdistan (see Pérouse, 1998) and terrorism. These terms are not merely descriptive, but are often used as a means to identify their users' political sympathies or in this case possible academic biases. Kurdistan is not usually found on standard maps because it is, in simple terms, not an internationally recognised country. It lingers in the category of stateless nations alongside Kabylie, Azawad and the nations of the indigenous populations of the Americas and Australia. As "all maps are abstractions of reality" (O'Shea, 1994:179) they merely reflect prevailing power relations. The borders of a putative independent Kurdistan were outlined at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference as:

"begin[ing] in the north at Ziven, on the Caucasian frontier, and continue westwards to Erzurum, Erzincan, Kemah, Arapgir, Besni and Divick. In the south they follow the line from Harran, the Sinjihar Hills, Tel Asfar, Erbil, Süleymaniye, Akk-el-man, Sinne; in the east, Ravandiz, Başkale, Vezirkale, that is to say the frontier of Persia as far as Mount Ararat (in Özoğlu, 2004:39).

In Turkey, the region populated by Kurds was referred to as the East (see Zana Gündoğan, 2011) and latterly as the South East following the 1980 coup (Jongerden, 2007: 29). Such appellations only make sense according to the territorial confines marked out by the Turkish state. The state borders which have divided the Kurdish nation between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey did not heed the natural confines of the Kurdish people, which were linked by tribal and familial solidarities. Although, Kurds in the borders areas were obliged to encounter the material realities of such boundaries in their daily lives, it has not necessarily led to a comprehensive internalisation of their validity. Trading patterns which crossed the borders - now classified as smuggling - continued and neither did the border completely alter their collective political imagination as Kurds. Kurds living along the border between Syria and Turkey did not refer to it as such, commonly describing themselves as either being *binxet* or *serxet*, (i.e. as above or below the line) and not as citizens of one state or the other (Interview 37, 2013). To give a concrete example, the city of Ceylanpınar (Serêkaniyê in Kurdish) is simply referred to by residents of the other half of the urban conglomeration that lies across the border in Syria, as *Serêkaniyê Serxet*. As Jongerden explained those of a Kurdish nationalist inclination would not view themselves as being in the South East of Turkey but rather in the North or North West of Kurdistan (2007: 30). As this project focuses on the PKK and its supporters, the term Kurdistan has been used to refer to the Kurd's homeland. However, as the PKK was active for the timeframe of this project almost exclusively in Turkish Kurdistan⁴, the use of Kurdistan will be limited to this and not the wider understanding of Kurdistan. On occasions where reference is made to events in the Kurdish regions outside of Turkey's borders, this will be specified.

If the external delineation of Kurdistan in this project is clear, the borders of Kurdistan within Turkey are much more ambiguous. Many maps put forth by certain Kurds "depict a wish-fulfilment of extreme Kurdish Nationalism" (O'Shea, 1994:180) while the Turkish state has obviously never delineated a territory whose very existence it has always denied. Furthermore, territorial delineation is a fraught process at the best of times and notwithstanding projections of immutability, borders are always in a constant process of slow evolution. As the peoples who inhabit Kurdistan have been heretofore denied the

⁴ In recent years the PKK's Syrian wing the PYD has come to the fore in Syrian Kurdistan or *Rojava* and its

possibility to agree upon its precise political extent, it remains best understood as a homeland. Homeland as a concept is “a blend of political discourses and individual wishes, conceptions, longings and experiences” (Alinia, 2004:219). It therefore drifts between the individual and the collective level. Some residents of cities such as Maraş and or Antep would define their place of origin as Kurdistan while others might not. It remains the prerogative of each individual to define their own social reality and not for external academic observers to ascribe one for them. In terms of a practical guide, when Kurdistan is mentioned in this thesis it refers roughly to the eastern and south-eastern corner of the Turkish state, ranging from Kars in the North-east passing westwards through Erzurum, on towards Sivas before turning south passing by Malatya and Antep.



<http://www.ezilon.com/maps/europe/turkey-maps.html>

In addition to the macro-debate regarding whether to use the term Kurdistan or not, there is the further issue of whether to use the Turkish or Kurdish names of cities, towns and villages. As well as large scale demographic engineering in the early decades of the Republic, the Turkish state launched an extensive campaign of “toponymical engineering” (Öktem, 2008:8). It has been suggested that “such toponymic strategies aim to

Iranian wing, PJAK was active for a period in Eastern Kurdistan or Iranian Kurdistan.

construct a new relationship between culture and space, and either subordinate or annihilate them from topographic representations” (Jongerden, 2007: 31). In a campaign of supreme symbolic violence (Žižek, 2008) thousands of places with non-Turkish names were assigned Turkish sounding ones (ibid: 9). This has led to immense confusion amongst Kurds, whereby the names of villages outside of one’s immediate environs are known only in Turkish or especially with the elderly only in Kurdish, generating huge geographical disorientation and confusion (Interview 2, 2012). In general, this project will use the place names most widely used for reasons of clarity. It will refer to cities which have been recently renamed like Urfa (Şanlıurfa) and Maraş (Kahramanmaraş) by their original names as that is how they are most commonly recognised (at least by Kurds). It will mention both the Kurdish and Turkish names of smaller villages and towns – when possible - to limit any ambiguity. The best known example is the case of Dersim which was renamed Tunceli in the 1930s (see van Bruinessen, 1995). The name change was a means to eradicate any memory of Dersim and the mass killing carried out there by the ‘nation building’ Turkish state. Yet, given the symbolic importance of the Dersim rebellion to Kurds and Alevis, the original name has taken on even greater significance and even its utterance is an act of counter hegemonic opposition.

As a sub field within the wider discipline of political violence, the study of terrorism has flourished in the wake of the September 11th attacks in 2001. There are countless journals dedicated to the topic most notably *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* and the *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter-terrorism*. It has been suggested that in terrorism literature “the brandishing of stark facts goes hand in hand with great leaps into discursive fantasy” (Aretxaga, Zulaika & Douglass in Aretxaga, 2003:402) and that the “construct of ‘terror’ employed by terroristologists was not developed in response to honest puzzlement about the real world, but rather in response to ideological pressure” (George in della Porta & Haupt, 2012: 312). As della Porta has commented, the scientific merit of much of terrorism studies is contestable with a large amount lacking originality (Silke, 2009), based on scarce evidence (Schmid and Jongman 1988) and is often ahistorical in nature (Breen & Smyth 2007: 260) (in della Porta, 2013 and see Goodwin, 2004). There are well grounded concerns that counter-terrorism studies are overly reliant on one-sided data provided by state agencies and are insufficiently critical in

how they use them (della Porta, 2013). Furthermore, the concept itself has proved rather elusive to define; Jenkins has suggested that it “is a generalized construct derived from our concepts of morality, law, and the rules of war, whereas actual terrorists are shaped by culture, ideology and politics – specific, inchoate factors and notions that motivate diverse actions” (in della Porta, 2013). As with a number of social science concepts, innumerable definitions of terrorism exist (Laqueur, 1986). An effort to fuse the seventy three definitions of it to its lowest common denominator resulted in a definition so bland as to be meaningless and applicable to almost all acts of violence “terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role” (Weinberg, Pedahzur and Hirsch-Hoefler in della Porta, 2013).

The use of the term terrorism always reflects power relations and disparities and most often serves as a tool of obfuscation and, as Tilly pithily stated, “terror always refers to someone else’s behaviour” (2003:19). It also bears mentioning that the charge of terrorism is most often levelled at non-state actors and is rarely used in the context of state violence (see Aras, 2014a: 23-26, Aretxaga, 2000, Asad, 2007 and Sluka, 2000). The strategic deployment of the term is best described by Kapitan:

“it is part and parcel of the war of ideas and language that accompanies overt hostilities; ‘terrorism’ is simply the current vogue for discrediting one’s opponents before the risky business of inquiry into their complaints can even begin. If individuals and groups are portrayed as irrational, barbaric, and beyond the pale of negotiation and compromise, then asking why they resort to terrorism is viewed as pointless, needlessly accommodating, or, at best, mere pathological curiosity” (2003:52).

Therefore, to avoid ambiguity, I shall avoid using the term to describe any of the warring parties. I will refer to the relevant actors as they call themselves, be that guerrilla or village guard, and I will not make use of politically loaded definitions such as terrorist or freedom fighter. I will describe the relevant PKK members variously as militia, militants, fighters, guerrillas and insurgents. Those fighting on the part of the Turkish state will be additionally described as members of the security forces or paramilitaries. Nonetheless, due to the pervasive presence of terms such as terror, terrorism and so forth in much of the

literature, they will on occasion appear in direct quotations in the text, but its use in such cases will reflect the choice of the original author.

Methodology

This project was based primarily on a series of fifty one qualitative interviews of sixty interviewees that were carried out between 2011 and 2013 and took place in a number of cities in Kurdistan, Istanbul and Ankara and in Western Europe in Germany, Belgium, and England. I also had countless numbers of informal discussions and attended several Kurdish cultural and political events in Denmark, Sweden and Italy, as well as in the other mentioned locations. The interviews took place on a number of different fieldwork trips to Turkey. I made four trips to Istanbul from 2011 to 2013 which altogether amounted to two months, plus another trip to Kurdistan in September 2012 of a month. My interviews in Europe took place on a regular basis over three years, the majority of which were in Germany where I spent a lot of time due to personal commitments. The interviews were, therefore, quite spread out in terms of time. Twenty eight of the interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed and the others were detailed in hand written notes. They lasted, on average, between two and three hours – due to the time consumed by contemporary translation – with the longest taking upwards of six hours over two days (Interview 24, 2012). The interviewees were mostly contacted by a process of snowball sampling along a number of networks. My very first contact was with a personal friend in Germany who is close to PKK circles; from this initial contact I established a number of different networks of friends and acquaintances who introduced me to further relevant people.

I conducted only qualitative interviews as it simply would not have been feasible to attempt any quantitative analysis. The data I was interested in centres on the PKK and its supporters, and how practises of insurgent violence and mobilisation were influenced by this relationship. The Turkish state remains highly authoritarian and repression of its Kurdish population remains significant. Accordingly, interviews could only take place, once sufficient trust in me and my research team had been established. In this context, the distribution of

surveys or other formal questionnaires would likely have unnerved interviewees concerned about repercussions from the state and provided data of a lower quality. There were further barriers to any quantitative research related to the linguistic diversity and low literacy rates of a number of my interviewees. The majority of them spoke Turkish, some were polylingual, others spoke Kurdish – either Kurmanji or Zazaki – and little or no Turkish and many were illiterate.

As the timeframe of the project dates from the foundation of the PKK in the mid 1970s until 1999, it is essentially a historical project; therefore all of the interviews were retrospective in nature. It was thereby impossible to conduct another mainstay of the qualitative research repertoire, participant observation. I spent much time with Kurdish activists and attended numerous commemorative ceremonies and demonstrations from which I learned much about how the earlier stage of the conflict is currently interpreted but this cannot be considered participant observation as I am not studying the contemporary PKK. As a non Turkish speaker, I was unable to make use of another prominent qualitative method, discourse analysis but I did make substantial recourse to the emerging secondary literature by a number of scholars who have made use of it (Jongerden & Akkaya 2011, Özcan, 2005 & 2006, Gunes 2012 and Ercan 2010 *inter alios*).

The interviews were all semi-structured and combined elements of oral histories, life histories and key informant interviews. The great advantage of such interviews is that “they provide great[er] breadth and depth of information, the opportunity to discover the respondent’s experience and interpretation of reality and access to people’s ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” but such richness of information comes at the risk of a “of a reduced ability to make systematic comparisons between interview responses” (Blee and Taylor, 2002: 93). Blee and Taylor further explain that interviews of this type facilitate “access to the motivations and perspectives of a broader and more diverse group of social movement participants than would be represented in most documentary sources” (ibid). As the objective of this research project was to identify the nature of the relationship between the PKK and its constituency, their capacity to delve beyond documented sources from either the PKK itself or secondary data was vital. Thereby, providing a relatively cost efficient remedy to one of the most

common critiques of political violence literature, that it is insufficiently committed to obtaining original primary source data (see Bosi, 2012:353; O'Leary & Silke, 2007:393; White 2000).

Qualitative research strongly overlaps with some of the philosophical underpinnings of ethnography. Ethnography's goal is "to understand behaviour in its habitual context, as opposed to abstract or laboratory setting" (Bray, 2010:300). Bray suggests that by "studying a phenomenon in its own dynamic context, more can be intrinsically understood about it than by simply examining it in isolation" (ibid:302). However, due to the mass population displacement and forced exile that the war has brought about, the interviewees own "dynamic context", is of itself, entirely unnatural. Whether it means interviewing a seventy year old displaced farmer in an office block in Mardin or a PKK militant in exile in his apartment in Germany, it is already a context long distant from what could be described as the interviewees' "own" context.

Della Porta has remarked that life histories are extremely time consuming and costly to carry out. She suggests that the collection of a life history be spread over a number of meetings with each interview no longer than two hours and that the interview transcript could typically run up to a hundred pages (1992: 184-185); conditions which were neither feasible for my research in Europe nor in Turkey. Nonetheless, I incorporated aspects of life histories into my interviews by suggesting that interviewees describe their childhood and family background. This served a dual purpose; it got interviewees talking and usually made them more at ease before approaching more sensitive issues. It also ascertained some family history which is crucial in determining political engagement (Bosi & della Porta, 2012 and Viterna, 2006). I made use of oral histories by focusing on the matters of greatest interest to me, primarily those within the timeframe of the project and more specifically their periods of political activism. As the PKK is an understudied phenomenon, especially when compared with other armed groups such as the IRA or ETA, the use of key informant interviews was extremely useful. Blee and Taylor have outlined the advantages of such interviews, explaining that they can result in "descriptive information that might be too difficult and time-consuming to uncover through more structured data-gathering techniques, such as surveys, or through conducting multiple semi-structured individual

interviews” (2002: 105). My interviews combined elements of all three interview techniques when circumstances permitted. In interviews with guerrillas or senior PKK cadres I undoubtedly focused more on the militant phase of their life than on earlier or later periods. Yet I also utilised life and oral history approaches as a means to contextualise their political trajectories.

In-depth interviews are a peculiar form of social interaction and vary dramatically from other methods of data collection. Interviews are “social encounter[s] in which knowledge is constructed” [...] and “the interview is not merely a neutral conduit or source of distortion, but is instead a site of, and occasion for, producing reportable knowledge itself” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 112). It must be acknowledged that they are collaborative processes in which “both parties to the interview are necessarily and ineluctably *active*. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, not simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter” (ibid: 113). If interviews are to be productive they “develop and build on intimacy” (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012:100). Yet, they are far different from conversation between intimates in that the “interviewer seeks to use the information obtained in the interaction for some other purpose” (ibid: 101). Although preparation for interviews is advisable, on some occasions it is next to impossible. I was introduced to interviewees by my “gate keepers” about whom I had absolutely no prior information and had to learn about them simply by listening and gently guiding them toward material relevant to my research questions. Some interviews of course proved to be a waste of time in terms of gathering material relevant to my project; but some were enriched by shared moments of interpersonal solidarity, where one person simply listens to another. Such encounters can lead to a researcher gaining a local reputation as empathetic or striking up friendships, which in the long term can have positive impacts on one’s ability to access people. I would argue that an overly structured mindset prior to an interview can on occasion be a negative factor. It can lead one to focus on obtaining data for one’s rigid categories and excluding potentially much richer information outside of these precise areas.

It is important for the researcher to try to remain as self-reflective as possible and cognisant of divergences in social capital which might lead interviewees to attempt to give

the answers that they think the researcher desires. The importance of self reflexivity is often easier to recall in certain situations; it is the least to be expected that a male researcher should recognise that his gender would have an impact on any discussion of sexual violence with a woman. It is more likely that as women are often the most common targets of sexual violence, that it is ignored when discussing or not discussing, such issues with male interviewees⁵. In the course of my interviews, particularly regarding the mass incarceration of the post-coup period, male rape was often hinted at but never expanded upon. Female respondents on the other hand discussed sexual violence, not personal experiences, but in a general fashion much more openly (Aras, 2014a: 104-105). It is thus important to concentrate on what is excluded as well as included in interviews and ponder the impact one's own presence as an insider/outsider or as a male/female might have had on it. Interviewing is a learning curve and it becomes clear that "race, age, gender, social class, appearance and even achieved statuses make one kind of differences with some informants and another kind of difference with other informants" (Johnson & Rowlands:103-104). It is important to treat one's interviewees with due respect and to empathise with their life experiences while at the same time not allowing the interview become a uni-directional monologue (see della Porta, forthcoming: 20).

Translated Interviews

As I do not speak Turkish or Kurdish, the majority of my interviews were translated. Relying on translated interviews is undoubtedly challenging. It presents a number of distinct disadvantages but also bears a number of positive aspects. In the first instance, there is the issue of time and financial resources. As I could not afford a professional translator, a number of Turkish friends and Kurdish friends involved in the Kurdish political movements assisted me on a voluntary basis. All of them could translate to English competently but, as they were not word-for-word translations I have avoided directly quoting my interviewees and have instead paraphrased them instead. I have included a few direct quotations from the interviews that were conducted in English or short quotes that I subsequently verified

⁵ The topic of males as victims of sexual violence is largely neglected in the literature on political violence. Viterna reports that 53% of all victims of sexual violence in El Salvador were male (2013:113).

with my translators from the Turkish and Kurdish interviews. There is of course the possibility that the interviewees' words have been distorted in course of the translation but if this occurred at any stage, it was the product of unintentional miscommunication and not any design to distort the views of any interviewee. It is also possible that certain interviewees felt overwhelmed by speaking with two people rather than one.

Conversely, there are a number of distinct positive aspects of a translated interview. Firstly, I was able to discuss the interviews with the translators afterwards. I typed up my notes as soon as possible after the interview and then discussed any points of confusion with the translator, thus acting as an ulterior validity check. Aside from the actual interview, working in a pair rendered the social aspects surrounding doing an interview much easier. The social formalities which accompany such interviews like the drinking of *çay* and the small talk with others present at the interview location are all less pressured if one is not alone. Given the often emotionally difficult material covered in the interviews, the presence of the translator anticipated some of the negative potential emotional consequences for the researcher (Wood, 2006: 384 and Romano, 2006b). In addition, in several cases my translators were friends and acquaintances of the interviewees and had in fact served as the "gate keepers" to bring me into contact with them. As they had the full trust of the interviewees and they vouched for me, I believe that I was able to discuss sensitive material which might not otherwise have been possible (see Malthaner, forthcoming: 7). On a few occasions however, close family members of my translators refused to be interviewed because of their familial links with the translators as they did not feel comfortable or were not willing to discuss certain issues in front of their relatives.

There is also the issue of insider participant research or that of an external perspective⁶. As an outsider it is probably easier to gain insights on "the taken for granted assumptions of social movement participants" which might be more difficult for insiders to question (Blee & Taylor, 2002: 97-98). Plus, outsiders are perhaps "better able than [...] participants to elicit full rationales of and extensive interpretive accounts" from movement activists. Outsiders especially to movements that operate in a clandestine or semi-

⁶ See Aras regarding the methodological advantages of an insider perspective (2014a:4-5).

clandestine fashion could be viewed suspiciously as potential state agents or as persons interested in exploiting the movement for their own ends, as happened on occasion in my own experiences. It is worth remembering though that “obstruction, evasion, refusals and other troubles can in themselves be significant sources of data” (Fielding in Malthaner, 2011a:34). However, as an Irish researcher with a left wing background and political orientation, I was almost always immediately welcomed as a “comrade” and asked about the ongoing situation in the North of my own country. It is difficult to say if I had been British or American if such an easy rapport could have been so easily established. Interestingly, two Turkish of friends of mine translated more than half of my interviews. At no point was their Turkishness ever considered a problem. It should be acknowledged that one has a past history of left wing activism and grew up among Kurds in Istanbul while the other is of possible Kurdish heritage and also of a pronounced leftist orientation. It is undoubtedly also a tribute to their interpersonal skills that they as Turks effectively navigated the often opaque cultural waters when discussing sensitive issues with Kurds.

One would also have to question why people would give up hours of their busy lives to facilitate a research project in a language they do not speak and will likely never read. Many thanked me effusively for taking an interest in the struggle of the Kurdish people and were convinced that if only more Europeans were to know the details of the question that international pressure would be exerted on the Turkish state. Others were undoubtedly flattered by the attention and enjoyed the ‘prestige’ of engaging with foreign visitors. Certain interviewees viewed the interviews as an opportunity to discuss matters which they could not speak about in the local environment. As one of Wood’s interviewees in El Salvador said “the people here are suffocating from the cries and shouts that we cannot speak. It suffocates. It does me good to talk to someone—I can’t speak to people here about these things” (2006:377). In this way the interviews served as a form of catharsis and a socially acceptable means to vent about issues that would, perhaps, not be possible in their daily lives. Malthaner also suggests that although “violent conflict can induce overwhelming distrust and closure in some places, it also can create openings and make people willing or even enthusiastic to ‘tell their story’” (forthcoming).

Interviews focusing on material, which in my case, dated back thirty or forty years present certain challenges. It has been said that “vocabularies of motive are often furnished ‘after the act’” and that it is thus “problematic to take at face value a respondent’s articulated reasons for joining a social movement” (drawing on Mills, Blee & Taylor, 2002: 105 and see Kalyvas, 2006: 408-410; Passy, 2003:29 and Viterna, 2006:6). Social movement or party militants often tend “to look for justifications for their behaviour which are in line with their political and ideological beliefs, and to link their own individual choices to an historical – class or generational destiny” and downplay non political factors in their decision-making (della Porta, 1992: 182 and see Polletta, 2006:142). As Bosi suggests this inherent tendency in historical qualitative interviews can be limited by rigorous triangulation with alternative data sources (2012: 353). Furthermore, Robert White’s decision to re-interview his IRA respondents on the same issues after ten years, led him to conclude that the “accounts in general were consistent across time” (2007:302). As he explained, although personal accounts are clearly subjective, they are centred “around documented political events and memorable social relationships that help make them consistent across time” (ibid: 301). Accordingly, in my own interviews I attempted to focus my questions on events which would have been particularly memorable. I typically asked interviewees, when they had first heard about or encountered the PKK? I asked specific questions about major and often traumatic events such as the 1980 coup, or when their village was evacuated/destroyed or events of huge familial import such as the arrest of a family member or events in the immediate lead-up to joining the guerrillas. On occasion, especially with younger interviewees, I suspected that some of their responses were less the fruit of their own memory rather than the family narrative surrounding particular events. However, the construction of such narratives is of massive social scientific relevance as the interpretation of political events is as important as any purportedly objective presentation of them as pure facts. In the course of my interviews, I encountered certain inconsistencies which, I can only presume, are derived from mistaken recollections. One respondent explained that he had as a teenager, in 1984, first heard about the PKK in a particular magazine *2000'e Doğru*, when in fact it was only first published in 1987 (interview 40, 2013). On another occasion, an interviewee explained that a prison cellmate of his was martyred at the battle of Bagok mountain before the start of the insurgency in 1984, when in fact the battle took place four years later in 1988 (Interview 36, 2013). Such small inconsistencies did

not detract from the overall worthiness of the data provided by them and were easily identified by triangulating the data with alternative sources.

Sampling

The issue of whom to interview and how many people to interview, is perceived to be of critical importance as regards a project's validity. In quantitative analysis the process of sampling is much clearer as it must be representative of the entire universe of cases in a proportionate fashion. In the study of social movements or insurgent organisations the universe of cases is rarely known, accordingly it is impossible to be representative of an unknown universe (della Porta, 1992: 182). There has been a shift "from a clearly defined, predetermined number of participants to a focus on the research process as informing the ultimate number of participants" (Beitin, 2012: 243). A general guideline as to how many interviews are enough has emerged around the principle of saturation. "You stop when you encounter diminishing returns, when the information you obtain is redundant or peripheral, when what you learn that is new adds too little to what you already know to justify the time and cost of interviewing" (Weiss in della Porta, forthcoming). Especially in subjects which are understudied, initial interviews can result in new insights which lead to a reassessment of previously held theoretical hypotheses thus requiring one to reconsider prospective interviewees. This "type of sampling is iterative: it involves moving backwards and forwards between sampling and theoretical reflection" (della Porta, forthcoming (a)).

My sampling method was very much of the 'snowball' variety, the downside of which, is of course that the researcher has only partial "control over the selection of respondents, and samples drawn in this way are obviously never statistically representative" (Malthaner, forthcoming: 9 and see Romano, 2006b:441). In practice, one's interview sample in qualitative research projects on contentious movements is heavily dependent on happenstance and macro-level developments completely outside of one's personal control. My intention was to select interviewees who I hoped had relevant information relating to my theoretical questions. My analytical focus was on how the key relationship between the movement and sympathisers changed across its different geo-spatial configurations

between Kurdistan and western Turkey; I therefore necessitated data from all of these different contexts. Within those broad parameters, I sought to interview a roughly even number of active PKK members (guerrillas, cadres, party activists) and supporters and sympathisers on the margins of the movement. As a further consideration, I wished to interview members of religio-cultural groups such as Alevis, Yezidis and Zaza speakers to ascertain the processes utilised by the PKK as it expanded its influence beyond the majority Sunni Kurdish population, as well as to non Kurds. I also strived to interview as many females as possible which regrettably was not entirely successful. I also attempted to interview non PKK supporting Kurds from other Kurdish organisations to discover the motivations underlying their political choice not to support the PKK.⁷

Field research is subject to the vagaries of political developments beyond individual control (see Malthaner, 2011: 34-35). Even though this project is retrospective in nature, contemporary conditions impinge heavily on potential interviewees' willingness to do interviews or share other forms of data. My second trip to Istanbul in March 2012 came unknowingly in the midst of an intimidatory state clampdown on the legal end of the Kurdish movement in western Turkey. Following sound practise (Weiss in della Porta, forthcoming (a)), I had intended to do work my way slowly into my interviews by starting with the less controversial and more easily available interviewees before subsequently engaging with the more radical elements of the movement. It was also intended that these interviews would facilitate further networks for more interviews. However, as soon as I had arrived in Istanbul, pre-arranged interviews with human rights agencies and politicians were all cancelled as many on the fringes of the Kurdish movement in Istanbul 'battened down the hatches' until the wave of arrests had ceased. It should also be acknowledged that several of my putative interviewees were heavily engaged in assisting their comrades who had been arrested so there were also logistical impediments to them taking an afternoon off to talk to me. In another instance, I had agreed to interview a PKK veteran of more than thirty years in Europe, but before we could confirm a date he had been arrested on terrorism charges, reinforcing researchers' powerlessness in the face of the unpredictable quotidian reality of radical movement activists.

⁷ See Wood on the challenges of sampling in conflict zones or authoritarian environments, (2006:375).

One is also dependent on “gate keepers” to organise interviews (see Bosi, 2012: 354). I explained my criteria as outlined above to a number of trusted people who, in turn, selected people who they believed would correspond to my interests. There is of course a real danger of having a biased sample because they could only provide interviewees of a certain perspective. This is countered by having a number of different ‘gate keepers’. It should be added that none of my “gate keepers” were senior PKK members but rather people with connections to the movement and thus not obliged to stick to any particular party line. My approach to the movement was not a top down approach but rather an outside-in one. I knew and got to know even more contacts on the margins on the movement and worked my way inwards rather than from an “institutional entry point” (Malthaner, forthcoming). Finally, one cannot underestimate the importance of luck (Wood, 2006: 377). While sitting in a café in Diyarbakir with my local contact - who was the cousin of my friend in Germany, so a person in whom I had a significant degree of trust – discussing which type of people I would like to meet, a noted PKK former prisoner and author entered. My contact then spontaneously explained my project to him and we organised an interview for the following morning (Interview 21, 2012). On another occasion in the neighbourhood of Gaziosmanpaşa in Istanbul, while waiting at a little restaurant for our contact there to collect me, a man who turned out to be a friend of our contact approached us in the knowledge of what we were doing there and proposed that we interview him. His awareness of who we were and what we were doing also highlights the strong presence of informal networks around contentious movements. He was simply in the area and thought that we might have been interested in his story so he stopped by and we ended up having a most worthwhile interview (Interview 40, 2013).

Authoritarian Research Environment and Ethics

The principle underlying all social science research is to “do no harm”. This is unambiguous in most cases, if understood as limited to “do no harm” to your interviewees. It is a little less clear when interviewees are exploiting people (Bourgois, 1991) or expound

racist or violent political views (Blee, 1996). There is an added onus to be cautious when interviews are conducted, as in this case, in an authoritarian state and are focused on a clandestine armed movement. Even PKK activists in the European diaspora have faced repression in their countries of residence. Therefore, all of my interviews with the exception of notable public figures and interviewees whose contribution to my research project is already available in published material will be cited anonymously. I have assigned pseudonyms to all of those interviewees. Interestingly, several of my interviewees laughed off my attempts to explain the principle of consent and the security measures I was taking to preserve their anonymity. As many of my interviewees had already served prison sentences and were known to the authorities they could have been re-arrested at any stage on spurious grounds, if elements within the Turkish state so desired. Their blasé view is likely rooted in the fact that they felt that their behaviour was detached from state repression and that an academic interview will do little to alter the state's perception of them. To give an example, my main contact in Diyarbakir was on trial for terrorism charges primarily because the police had photographic evidence of him dancing at a political demonstration. Another had similar charges against him which stemmed from his participation in a campaign for Kurdish language rights (Interview 25, 2012); both were completely uninvolved in any possible "terrorist" activities. Others, especially those who worked in the public service were appreciative of the measures taken as unlike the ex-prisoners they had more to lose if they were to encounter difficulties with the state.

I recorded the interviews when possible and made hand written notes⁸. I typed up the interview scripts as soon as was possible and saved them and the recordings in my university e-mail account. I then destroyed the handwritten notes and deleted the recording from my recording device. I never recorded their real names. I have also avoided excessive detail which could be cumulatively used to identify interviewees either in Turkey or in Europe and within the movement itself (Wood, 2007 139 & Malthaner, forthcoming). I deleted all interview transcripts and recordings from my laptop before returning on subsequent trips to Turkey. A number of the interviewees who we telephoned advised us

⁸ See Aras (2014a:6) in relation to the ongoing practical difficulties of conducting academic research on the conflict in Turkey.

that the calls could have been monitored and to be cautious in what we said and we remained cognisant of this when contacting potential interviewees.

I found that the procedure of obtaining consent was relatively unproblematic; it was agreed orally. I believe that many of them, particularly the more rural and older interviewees, had absolutely no understanding of what a PhD is and even lesser interest in it. I was presented to them by people whom they trusted, as someone who was working on the Kurdish conflict and in search of people's personal experiences of the conflict and they willingly co-operated on that basis. Co-operation on the basis of a mistaken understanding of what I was actually doing at the macro-level, does lead to some ethical concerns (see Wood, 2006:379). I am, however, satisfied that even if they were not entirely clear on the long term outcomes of my research that they were well aware of the possible short term consequences and the efforts I was taking to reduce them. I feel that it would be a form of patronising reverse "Orientalism" to second guess their decision to co-operate with the project. Many of them were veterans of many years of political struggle and much better informed of its risks than I was, and their agreement to participate in the research was subsequent to an informed calculation of the inherent risks.

The longest period I stayed in Turkey was from late August to October 2012. The period immediately preceded the mass hunger strike launched by PKK prisoners in November of that year. It was a tense period in Kurdistan and there were large scale clashes at that time in Hakkari and areas north of Diyarbakir. However, apart from the heavy deployment of police and soldiers and the tense calm which descended upon Diyarbakir at night, especially when fallen guerrillas were being returned to the city for burial I did not observe any direct clashes or signs of violence. My field research cannot, therefore, be considered in the same category as research conducted in actual conflict zones (Wood, 2006 and Bourgois 1991 *inter alios*). But there were a number of minor obstacles inherent in conducting interviews in such an atmosphere. We could only hold interviews in environments which were relatively private such as offices or private homes. In Istanbul it is relatively unproblematic to conduct interviews with a bit of discretion in cafes and restaurants. However, the presence of two 'foreigners' intently taking notes in a public place in Kurdistan could have attracted attention and would not have been a conducive

environment for an interview. With the exception of one interviewee in Diyarbakir it was not possible to record any of the interviews in Kurdistan whereas in western Turkey almost all of the interviews were recorded. This, of course, presents subsequent difficulties when analysing the data and deprives one off the possibility of cross checking the notes with the recording.

To return to the aforementioned insider/outsider dynamic, there is one notable advantage to researching conflict as a foreigner. Generally speaking in Turkey, outsiders are free to write what they wish about the conflict upon the pain of having one's visa revoked or being denied re-entry to the state⁹. There have been some cases of foreign academics and journalists being tried on ludicrous charges, the most notable being the trial of Reuters correspondent and academic, Aliza Marcus on the charge of incitement of racial hatred in 1995. More recently the Italian social scientist Thomas Benedikter was charged *in absentia* with promoting pro-PKK propaganda because of the recent publication of a book on regional autonomies in Europe (Sticcotti, 2013). Citizens of Turkey encounter far graver consequences for expressing dissent. Even writers of global renown such as Orhan Pamuk (BBC, 2005) and Yaşar Kemal (Onaran, 2013) have fallen foul of Turkey's limitations on the freedom of speech. Turkish academics of a lesser international profile have suffered immensely, the Kurdologist Ibrahim Besikçi has served seventeen years in prison on various counts of anti-national and pro-Kurdish propaganda long before the founding of the PKK (van Bruinessen, 2005 & Amnesty International, 1990). The atmosphere in Turkey is therefore highly restrictive on academics working on the Kurdish issue in general and the PKK in particular. I was advised by a number of more established Turkish and Kurdish scholars to be careful and to consider studying something less controversial. On one occasion, I contacted a Kurdish scholar who has written extensively and authoritatively on the PKK and he curtly responded that he could not offer me any suggestions for my research because "he did not know anyone in the PKK". A justifiable atmosphere of paranoia reigns in Turkish and Kurdish academic circles which, notwithstanding extremely courageous work done by academics working inside Turkey and those based abroad, has led to a degree of self-censorship which has restricted Kurdish studies. As a foreigner I am relatively immune

⁹ See Malthaner (forthcoming) regarding a similar situation in Egypt.

to any personal pressures exerted by the state but the fact that such an inauspicious academic environment exists in Turkey, renders the PKK a challenging subject matter.

Other Sources

This project's principal primary data sources are the qualitative interviews as outlined above. It also makes use of primary documents provided by the PKK that have been translated into English. The PKK has a number of websites¹⁰ for its various branches. I have also made use of the websites of the various radical left and Kurdish groups which moved in the PKK's political milieu as a means to balance the PKK's perspective¹¹ and to obtain external perspectives of the PKK. I have also utilized some of the thousands of testimonies submitted by Kurdish plaintiffs to the ECHR as a source of primary documentation. Naturally, these sources have ulterior biases but their validity can be confirmed or disavowed by cross reference with each other and the vast secondary literature.

Until relatively recently the Kurds were completely understudied. In the 1970s, the early Kurdish leftist movements put forth a "thesis of colonialism" as a means of conceptualising the status of Kurdistan (see Gunes, 2012 and Ercan, 2010). This paradigm has now been long discarded politically but it remains a valid argument if one considers Kurdish historiography (see Bozarslan, 2003a). As a non-state nation, the Kurds lacked any autochthonous institutions which could write the history of the Kurds or study its ongoing socio-political developments in a similar fashion to all colonial peoples. Aside from certain Orientalist research conducted by Western European and Russian scholars, Kurdish history was written by or rather denied by the Turkish state. As Fanon explained, "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (2004: 211). All through the early decades of the Turkish Republic such a situation prevailed and the rich and particular history of Kurdistan was ignored or misrepresented. By the 1950s, a Kurdish intellectual awakening slowly began

¹⁰ <http://www.pkkonline.com/en/>

¹¹ http://www.mlkp.info/index.php?kategori=1012&Who_we_are? and <http://kd.komkar.eu/>

to stir and by the 1970s had become a full blown wave of associations and publications engaging with Kurdish history and the ongoing political repression. Yet in academic terms, critical analysis of Kurdistan and all facets of its society, language and history was limited. The PKK's insurgency and the atmosphere of paranoia and Turkish nationalism in Turkey also hindered the consolidation of Kurdish Studies as a recognised academic field. Paradoxically, it was the violence of the coup and the forced exile of many Kurdish intellectuals in Europe, which begat the structural context which boosted Kurdish studies. Kurdish institutes were established by Kurdish émigrés in France in 1983 and Sweden, huge amounts of work was done on the Kurdish language in terms of standardising it and the publication of instructive manuals and so forth, all of which was financed either by the Kurdish diaspora itself or with European government support.

Currently, Kurdish studies are enjoying a veritable boon; the Kurdish Studies Association established in Sweden in 2009 now boasts over eight hundred scholars and academics. Even since I have begun my PhD in 2010 there has been an exponential increase in publications dealing with all aspects of Kurdish studies¹². Accordingly, there is an ever expanding mass of secondary literature which I have utilised in the realisation of this project. Naturally, much of the Kurdish studies literature is cross disciplinary and does not lend itself to my project. More of it, especially with the growth of the university sector in South Kurdistan is focused on the other constituent parts of wider Kurdistan. Additionally some of it is of a mixed quality; parts of it bear an ingrained Turkish nationalist or Kemalist perspective and more of it is blindly indebted to a Kurdish nationalist position¹³, neither of which facilitates their academic rigour or validity. The PKK is the most controversial of the subjects of Kurdish studies. A large body of counter-terrorism literature exist which is, of course, intent less on studying the movement as a sociological phenomenon than serving as the ideological legitimation for the forces of the Turkish state which militarily and judicially combat the PKK. There are a number of rich descriptive works on the PKK (Imset, 1992, White, 2000, Marcus, 2007 and Gunter 1997 *inter alios*) while others advance a more theoretical analysis (Özcan, 2006, Jongerden, 2007, Romano 2006a and Gunes 2012 *inter*

¹² See the KSN online bibliography <http://kurdishstudiesnetwork.wordpress.com/bibliography/>

¹³ See O'Shea's (1994:169) trenchant criticism of Mehrdad Izady's book (1992) as representative of this type of research.

alios). There are also a number of young academics who have produced marvellous works on the PKK and the wider Kurdish movement utilising previously untapped primary data, much of this remains in the form of unpublished Masters Theses or PhDs (see Ercan, 2010, Aydin, 2005, and Baser, 2012 *inter alios*). This project draws extensively on these various strands of the literature as a means to complement and triangulate my own personal primary sources because as Tarrow argues “triangulation is particularly appropriate in cases in which quantitative data are partial and qualitative investigation is obstructed by political conditions” (2004:178).

The third form of data I have utilised is the vast array of documentation generated by both Kurdish and Turkish NGOs and Human rights organisations and international ones, such as the Kurdish Human Rights Project¹⁴, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey¹⁵, Göç- Der¹⁶ Human Rights Watch¹⁷ (previously Helsinki Watch), and Amnesty International¹⁸. Many of these reports include first hand testimonies and analysis, importantly recorded during the course of the conflict and contemporary to many of the violent events of the period. They are of course limited in the fact that they mostly focus on events of violence and human rights violations and have a lesser focus on the quotidian realities of life in a conflict zone and the wider organisational structures of movements. They are nonetheless rich in empirical detail and complement the other sources. I have also made use of journalistic sources both contemporary to the period under study and retrospective articles. I have gone through the English language *Turkish Daily News* agency for reports of events mentioned in the thesis and also referred to other contemporary and latter sources in English and Italian such as the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Internazionale*, *New York Times* and many others. Due to ongoing trials related to conflict in the 1990s, there is a constant drip feed of articles focusing on the period in the Turkish, English language media which has greatly expanded in recent years. I have accordingly also referenced articles from the now defunct *Briefing*, *Today's Zaman* and *Hurriyet Daily News* plus the pan-Middle Eastern online newspaper *Al-Monitor*. As a final source, I have accessed the flourishing film and

¹⁴ <http://www.khrp.org/>

¹⁵ <http://www.tihv.org.tr/>

¹⁶ Its website seems to have been taken down but the organisation still exists.

¹⁷ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/turkey>

¹⁸ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/turkey>

documentary sector in Turkey which has a notable tradition of political documentary film making (Demirel, 2006 & 2009, and Arslan, 2012).

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is comprised of six chapters; a theoretical one and a historically descriptive one, followed by four empirical chapters. Although the empirical chapters follow a roughly chronological order, with the exception of Chapter III, they are structured around a socio-spatial dynamic; one located in rural Kurdistan, another in the Kurdish urban centres and the final one in western Turkey. Therefore, time periods overlap in the chapters and it cannot be read as a year by year evolution of the PKK. The theoretical chapter deals in an abstract fashion with the existing literature on political violence and social movements with a precise focus on the relationship between armed groups and their support networks. It explains and expands upon certain theoretical concepts and attempts to explain how this project locates itself in the wider literature. The historical chapter is somewhat briefer and gives a rudimentary description of Kurdish history with a greater focus on the twentieth century to give a degree of immediate background to the PKK mobilisation. It details the socio-economic upheaval of the post World War II period and the unprecedented rural to urban migration patterns. Chapter III spans a period of around fifteen years and discusses the Kurdish political awakening and the deep seated right-left polarisation in the 1970s. It details the early emergence of the PKK and its relocation from Ankara to Kurdistan. It also spans the immediate pre and post-coup period. It goes through the repression of the 1980 coup d'état and its impact on politics in the state of Turkey. Chapter IV recounts the return of the PKK to rural Kurdistan and the launching of the insurgency. It also delves into how the PKK established its support networks in the countryside. It also describes the establishment of the Village Guards and their clashes with the PKK. Chapter V analyses the urban-rural overlap of the conflict and goes into detail about how the forced evacuations from the rural areas not only completely re-configured rural life but also led to a complete re-formulation of urban society. It discusses the manner in which the PKK constructed and utilised its urban support networks. The final chapter VI, is focused on Kurds in what I have termed, the "internal diaspora"; the millions of Kurds that have migrated – or were forced to migrate -

to the urban centres of western and to a lesser extent southern Turkey in search of economic prosperity or refuge from the conflict. It necessarily elaborates on the socio-economic challenges inherent in mass migration and details the heterogeneous qualities of the Kurdish internal diaspora. It then expands upon political participation of Kurds in western Turkey and in particular how the PKK took root in the urban centres it had abandoned twenty five years previously. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the empirical findings of the project before offering certain theoretical reflection on the nature and evolution of the PKK's relationship with its support networks and how they have impacted on the strategies adopted by the PKK.

Chapter I: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The study of political violence integrates a number of academic traditions and approaches. It is also an element of academia that resolutely maintains the wider attention of the general public, policy makers and practitioners of violence, alike. Precisely because of its general relevance, it is a highly fragmented research area. It traverses studies of terrorism and criminality, international relations, nationalism, social movements, modern and ancient history, war studies and even psychological efforts to understand it at the individual level, before its further disaggregation into various, oftentimes hermetic area studies. It also varies in scale from focusing on incidences of civil or interstate wars featuring tens of thousands of militants to studying clandestine armed groups numbering no more than a handful of actors, with concomitant levels of casualties and injuries. It can accordingly prove difficult to remain academically focused with such a host of often contradictory explanations and understandings.

This project is decidedly influenced by the pioneering synthesising works of the Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam, who have attempted to forge a common conceptual language mutually comprehensible to all who work in the field of political violence. It is deeply beholden to the efforts of a variety of scholars too numerous to list, who make use of social movement approaches and concepts to the study of political violence. It is an approach that “emphasizes the emergent quality of political violence by locating it within broader political processes, relational fields, and repertoires of action” (Bosi, Demetriou & Malthaner, 2014:2). This project also reflects the distinct socio-spatial turn which has promoted the relevance of space as a concept and demands a rigorous attention to contextualisation in territorial and socio-cultural senses (see Gündoğan, 2011:393). All the while, it does not neglect wider rationalist and structuralist understandings which place varying ontological and methodological emphases on individual

agency and structural concerns. This research has sought to limit broad generalisations by focusing on the mechanisms and processes inherent to the practice of political violence and thus facilitate their comparative analysis both across different case studies and within the broad confines of the principal theoretical focus of this study: the relationship between armed groups and their communities of support. This chapter will begin by outlining the dependence of armed groups on civilian support before elaborating upon the conceptual organisation of this support in the form of a relationally defined constituency. It will continue by discussing the structuralising impact of the state on armed movements. The importance of space and how it conditions and is conditioned by armed actors will be discussed in detail. Finally, the minute workings of armed group – constituency relationships will be explained by focusing on the roles of networks, recruitment patterns and movements' sensibility and flexibility in relation to the norms and expectations of their constituencies. Thereby providing the analytical framework upon which the empirical content of the Kurdish conflict will be constructed in the following chapters.

Armed Groups and Civilians

This project focuses on the importance of armed groups' immediate social environments. It concentrates on the reciprocal, dialectic networks of relations between insurgents and their communities of support. The central theoretical premise of this work suggests that the oftentimes strained but nonetheless enduring dialogue between armed groups and their communities of support can be of crucial importance to the forms of resistance observed in insurgent groups. However, apart from some notable exceptions (Malthaner, 2011; Neidhardt, 2011 and Waldmann 2005 & 2008), this is an aspect of the field which has been for the most part neglected or oversimplified. The importance of armed groups' social embedding and their wider relations with their immediate social environments has been recognised in the extensive field of counter-insurgency. The doyen of French counter-insurgency Roger Trinquier described popular support as the "*sin qua non* of victory in modern warfare" (1964:8). A core tenet of the logic of counter-insurgency has been the deployment of bloody reprisals with the objective of discouraging civilian support for armed rebels. During the Nazi occupation of the Balkans in 1941 Field Marshall von

Weichs “instructed German troops in Yugoslavia that they were to shoot male civilians in any area of armed resistance, even in the absence of specific evidence against them. Guilt was to be assumed, unless innocence could be proven” (Mazower, 1993: 173). Kalyvas summed up the rationale of such practises by observing that “if the “guilty” cannot be identified and arrested, then violence ought to target innocent people somehow associated with them. The underlying assumption is that the “innocent” will either force the “guilty” to alter their behaviour or the “guilty” will change their course of action when they realize its impact upon the “innocent” - or both” (2003:112). This logic is of course predicated on an implicit recognition of the relationship between armed groups and their supporters and sympathisers. It is this very relationship that this project will proceed to analyse in its positive articulation and not simply as an insurgent weakness to be exploited by occupying forces. A focus on this relationship does not of course preclude engagement with the vast array of other features of political violence; it should be seen as supplementary rather than dismissive of alternative, more established approaches.

It must be recognised that armed groups are in a position of power relative to unarmed civilians in situations of political instability or armed conflict. As a Greek schoolboy quoted by Mazower bluntly put it “there was no question of refusing to provide food for the partisans; you do not argue when you are faced with men with guns” (in Mazower, 1993: 132). Nonetheless, unarmed populations are also holders of certain, if more subtle, forms of power. Non-combatants, as Weinstein suggests, are “able to shift their support from one side to another, to provide or withhold resources necessary for the group’s operation and to offer information to combatants about who is supporting the opposition” (2007:203). It echoes Malthaner’s suggestion that “in relationships, the actors are always interdependent and dispose of some degree of control over the other’s behaviour, which may vary in degree, can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, and may rely on different kinds of resources” (2011a:28).

It is a well-established fact that “the pursuit of irregular war relies on the ongoing support of at least some civilians” (Wood, 2008; 543, see Humphrey & Weinstein, 2006: 429; Wickham-Crowley, 1993:52; Kalyvas, 2006:92 and White & Falkenberg White, 1991:102). The importance of civilian support has also been acknowledged by practitioners

of revolutionary violence: “the guerrilla fighter needs full help from the people of the area. This is an indispensable condition” (Guevara, 2006: 68). This necessity has also been recognised in the counter-insurgency literature; Trinquier observed that “the *enemy* consists not of a few armed bands fighting on the ground, but of an organization that feeds him, informs him, and sustains his morale” (1964: 28). This dependence on a wider community beyond the armed units can result in the establishment of normative parameters regarding the nature of violence that armed groups can potentially deploy. In their discussion of IRA and *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA)’s armed campaigns, de la Calle and Sanchez-Cuenca observed that “terrorist organizations have to adjust their level of violence to the preferences for violence of their supporters. It is often the case that the community of support has more moderate preferences than terrorists themselves” and that if the armed groups wish to “conserve the support of less radical supporters, they will have to avoid some forms of violence” (2007: 7-8 and see della Porta, 2013: 175). These normative confines were articulated by a former senior IRA militant, Eamon Collins when he stated that when formulating its armed strategy, the IRA “knew they were operating within a powerful set of informal restrictions on their behaviour, no less powerful for being largely unspoken” (1997:295). It is therefore clear that the extensive range of relationships between armed groups and their communities of support is comprised of both material interactions and normative obligations.

Armed Movements and their Communities of Support

Modern asymmetrical warfare usually takes the form of insurgency, which has been described as a “technology of military conflict characterised by small, lightly armed bands practising guerrilla warfare from rural bases” (Fearon and Laitin, 2003:75) against the more ponderous, better-armed and numerous forces of the state. Most modern insurgent groups have aspired to emulate Mao Zedong’s axiom that “the guerrilla must move amongst the people as the fish swims in the sea” (in Keane, 2005: 91). The relevant literature conceptualises this “insurgent sea” in a number of fashions. It has been suggested that “the expectations of supporters and sympathisers define incentives and restrict conditions”

(Neidhardt, 2011: 431) that delimit how insurgent groups can act; thus the composition of an armed group's support community and their respective expectations plays a decisive role in limiting or expanding the group's potential repertoire of contention.¹⁹

Waldmann proposes the notion of a radical community, which he describes as “a territorially rooted ethnic or religious group which share a common past and identity and are under attack without protection by a state or some other potential entity” (2005:254). His concept stresses the importance of territory because it “lends continuity and stability to armed resistance and legitimates it much more than any ideology can” (ibid: 243). It holds that insurgent communities regress from a form of *Gesellschaft* solidarity to one rooted in bonds of *Gemeinschaft*²⁰ “as it helps them not only preserve their identity and social cohesion, but endure the sufferings and persecutions awaiting them as they are labelled supporters of terrorism” (ibid:240). This regression can result in the revival of “tribal or clan like forms of life” (ibid: 244) in the place of more individualised modern societal structures. The pseudo-primordial societal structures in those communities where ascribed rather than acquired identities prevail facilitate a situation where “a number of radicals skilfully manipulate the mechanisms of social control to dominate the numerically superior group of moderates by intimidating and marginalising them” (Waldmann, 2008:139 & see ibid, 2004:100).

Waldmann's theory's main merits lie in his important recognition of the symbiotic nature of relations between armed vanguards and their supporters (2005:249) and that the support offered is “limited both politically and temporally” (2005:250 & 2008:27). He also emphasises the spatially contingent nature of this relationship. However, it is conceptually vague and engages in sweeping generalities that even his own empirical case studies, the IRA, ETA and Hezbollah²¹, confirm to be weak and overstretched. The core weakness is that at no stage does he attempt to rigorously delineate the contours of the radical community,

¹⁹ A concept defined by Tilly as “not only what people do when they make a claim; it is what they know how to do and what society has come to expect them to choose to do from within a culturally sanctioned and empirically limited set of options” (in Tarrow, 1993:283).

²⁰ *Gemeinschaft* is generally understood as relations of personal and immediate interactions and is often translated as ‘community’; while *Gesellschaft* is taken to mean impersonal or formal interactions and translated to mean ‘society’.

²¹ There are numerous ways to spell Hezbollah. It will be spelled as such in this thesis aside from when it is spelled differently in direct quotations.

or radical milieu as he inconsistently refers to it in a 2008 article. A definition such as “the segment of a population which sympathises with terrorists and supports them morally and logistically” (2008:25) is ambiguous as it fails to detail what constitutes moral and logistical support. Furthermore, the confines of such radical communities are never clearly demarcated, neither between the armed vanguard and the radical community nor between it and the wider public.

Waldmann’s radical communities have been conceptualised in a number of less static and more nuanced fashions by a range of other scholars. The term “reference groups” derived from the school of Symbolic Interactionism has been used by Malthaner and Neidhardt. They have been defined by Malthaner as “groups with whom the militants identify, for whom they claim to fight, and whose attitude is crucial for the sustaining the militants’ self concept as well as their claim to legitimacy” (Malthaner, 2011: 39). Neidhardt demands that armed groups be distinguished “from the supporters who make terrorism materially possible and the sympathisers who symbolically affirm it, and both of them from the interested observers (bystanders)” (2011:439), thus confirming the need to draw distinctions between the composite elements of which Waldmann’s original radical communities are composed. Neidhardt further suggests that “if it is to succeed politically in the long term, terrorism must be able to generate a belief in the legitimacy of its struggle, and it can expect this to pay off in the currencies of material and symbolic support” (2011:437).

Such an understanding of reference communities is further developed in Malthaner’s work where he introduces the term constituency, described as “the real social groups in a society, whom the militants address and to whom they refer, with whom they are actually involved in some form of relationship, and who – at least to a certain degree – actually sympathise with and support the militant groups” (2011a: 29). The pointed use of “actually involved in some form of a relationship” clearly denotes a contraction of the concept of reference communities. It implies an existing relationship that must entail some form of material or political commitment or interaction between an armed group and its supporters and therefore, a more tangible relationship than one merely rooted in a shared symbolic universe. Malthaner drew up a taxonomy of four types of relations that predominate in such a relationship: relations of utilitarian social exchange; bonds of

solidarity endogenous to the processes of mobilisation itself; relations derived from pre-existing kin and family relations; and bonds rooted in a shared identitarian discourse. (2011a:46-51). He stresses that these “constituencies are entities constituted through their relationship with the militant group rather than predefined actors in their own right” (2011a:29). They are thus not hermetically distinct formations but rather better defined as an amorphous series of relations between actors. One can therefore, without reifying them, identify two distinct units of analysis - the armed groups and the elements of their immediate social environment that are sympathetically disposed towards them and engage in some or all of the listed forms of interaction with them, i.e. the constituency. To reiterate the central theoretical premise of this current paper, as proposed by Malthaner “[b]eyond repressive intervention by security forces and economic limitations, it is this relationship with their constituencies which may influence and constrain the violent campaign of militant groups” (2011a:14).

Unlike the territorialised “radical community” (Waldmann, 2005), this thesis proposes that the constituency exists within space but is not dictated by it. The constituency is defined by its relationship to the armed group and is not necessarily bound to any specific territory. This is not to dismiss the importance of geo-spatial settings to armed groups and their supporters. Interactions between armed groups and their constituencies are heavily conditioned by territorial concerns such as urban or rural settings and mountainous or desert landscapes. The advantage of a de-territorialised concept of constituency is that it facilitates an understanding of armed group and civilian relations across space. Population displacement, emigration, tactical withdrawals by insurgents and the destruction wrought by large scale campaigns of violence often result in supporters and sympathisers of armed groups becoming physically disconnected from the locations of their habitual interaction. Armed groups’ relations with their constituency are thus radically reconfigured, for instance, public rural visits by armed insurgents are transformed into clandestine urban encounters with unarmed militants, even taking place perhaps in a foreign country. Interactions can also be temporarily interrupted. The notion of constituency is sufficiently pliable to allow one to conceptualise the transformation of these relations over time and space.

The State

An oft cited shortcoming of more orthodox social movement approaches is their marginalisation of the role of the state (McAdam *et al*, 2001:74). Events of recent times across North Africa and the Middle East such as the Arab Spring and its aftermath have brought into question a significant portion of existing theories of the state and have highlighted the dangers of reifying a static unitary understanding of it. Numerous definitions of the state have enjoyed periods of dominance in political thought, ranging from the classic Weberian understanding to the state as a Gramscian hegemonic complex (see Ayubi, 1995, Migdal 2009, Tripp 2001 and Anderson, 1987). However, the state has in recent times become increasingly disaggregated as a concept and has become more commonly understood as a “contradictory ensemble of practises or processes” (Aretxaga, 2003:395) or as a “site of conflict and contestation” (Tripp, 2001:213 and see Johnston, 2011:16). The state is a problematic concept and one which continues to be vigorously debated in the wider literature; a debate which largely lies beyond the confines of this project’s theoretical concerns. Nonetheless, it is impossible to study armed groups and their communities of support without reference to its overarching presence because, as Lenin observed, “the basic question of every revolution is state power” (in Goodwin, 2001:42). As Goodwin pithily put it, “there could be no revolutions, in the modern sense of the word, before there were states” (2001: 40-41) and logically neither could there be revolutionary movements – successful or otherwise – outside of the context of the modern state. It plays a significant role in the shaping of armed groups, the timing of their emergence and the strategies they adopt, as well as civilian perspectives toward them. Accordingly, in order to avoid a de-contextualised analysis of the subject matter, the state will herein be discussed in two main ways. Firstly, in regard to how the state and its political opportunity structures influence the emergence of armed groups; secondly, the manner in which the state conducts counter-insurgency, with a particular focus on how state violence and repression impacts insurgent support.

It has been argued that the success or failure of revolutionary movements is not limited to their own efforts or prevailing social conditions but rather the nature of the

regimes they attempt to overthrow. As Trotsky succinctly summed up, “in reality the mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection; if it were, the masses would be always in revolt” (2008:353). A structuralist perspective holds that the “structures of states and armies, as well as the political relations between states and various sectors of society, provide the keys to explaining revolutions in the Third World” (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989:505). Numerous taxonomies have been drawn up regarding the forms of states and varying permutations of factors such as their openness, loyalty of the military and reliance on foreign aid, which offer explanations for the resilience of certain regimes in the face of revolutionary contention. For instance, Wickham-Crowley explains that collective military regimes “have shown a consistent ability to face down regimes” (1989:514), while patrimonial praetorian states which exclude large swathes of the upper classes from the spoils of governance are more vulnerable to revolutionary upheaval, such as in Nicaragua (ibid:529). In Latin America, with the exception of the military coup in Bolivia in 1952, all other cases of successful revolutions deposed personalistic dictators in Mexico, Cuba and Nicaragua (McClintock, 1992: 226).

It has also been acknowledged that states which operate even rather imperfect forms of democratic electoral procedures tend to be more resilient in the face of armed opposition (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989:495). Others have focused on the importance of particular state institutions, most pertinently the military. It has been suggested that “loyalty to the government is the most critical qualitative characteristic of armed forces, for the outcomes of rebellions and revolutionary wars hinge on that loyalty” (Wickham-Crowley, 1992:64). In his later works Goodwin has condensed the larger structuralist debate into five key factors which facilitate revolution. He contends that revolutions are most likely if the culpability for popular grievances is assigned to government, if the government excludes mobilised groups from state power, engages in indiscriminate repression, has insufficient policing capacity or if it takes a Sultanistic or patrimonial form (2001: 45-49).

This wider structuralist approach has much to recommend it, in particular its focus on deep contextualisation. Its broad strokes explain rather well those instances where revolutions are successfully repressed or when they succeed in seizing state power but it is less convincing in cases of “persistent insurgency” (ibid:220). In cases of insurgencies which

endure for many years, the dialectic between the state and the forces which oppose it becomes of greater importance than in briefer confrontations. If one is to accept Goodwin's self-criticism of the statist approach that insurgency and counter-insurgency are reciprocally formative forces (ibid: 51); it becomes clear that closer attention needs to be paid to the agency of insurgent forces and how they adapt to and impact upon the structures of the state which can neither defeat them nor be defeated by them. This point is also relevant in relation to revolutionary situations with multiple insurgent actors. It is often the case that one particular group engages in insurgent contention much longer than other groups who either turn to practises of unarmed contention or are simply defeated. For the purposes of this project, it is this mutually formative aspect of armed groups and the state's interactions with them which will be considered at greatest length, with particular focus on the role state repression has on insurgent mobilisation.

State Repression

It is well established that the relationship between repression and rebellion is much more nuanced than a uni-directional causal factor whereby the repressed rise up in rebellion (Hafez, 2003:71). Yet state violence in response to non-violent contention is in the majority of cases a precondition for insurgent mobilisation. In relation to an array of Central American states, Goodwin explains that various revolutionary groups were:

"effective mobilizers because the brutal and indiscriminate violence with which exclusionary and infrastructurally weak states greeted attempts to bring about change through electoral and other nonviolent means backfired, unintentionally convincing substantial numbers of groups and individuals that armed struggle aimed at overthrowing the state was legitimate and even necessary" (168-169).

Indiscriminate state repression in response to non-violent contention facilitates insurgent mobilisation in a number of ways (Kalyvas, 2006), including by rendering armed insurgency the only remaining method to contest a de-legitimised state. Furthermore, state terror triggers emotions of anger and fear and a desire for revenge, which generates the

momentum necessary to fuel insurgencies. It is often the decisive turning point in individual insurgent trajectories wherein acts of violence directed against themselves, loved ones or in their vicinity transform latent sympathies to active participation in armed groups (Viterna, 2006 & 2013; Bosi 2012; Bosi & della Porta, 2012; della Porta 2013 and Wood 2001 *inter alios*). The most tangible example of such processes is the use of torture, which links the corporeal and individual realms with those of the abstract and the collective. In relation to torture in Northern Ireland Feldman explained that “the practise of torture [...] was a production that detached the body from the self in order to transform the body into a sectarian artefact, an abstraction of ethnicity” (1991:64). The corpses of victims of state violence “mediate [...] between the state and the people in a process that seems intrinsic to the materialisation of the state” (Aretxaga drawing on Taussig & Siegel, 2003: 403). This phenomenon will be discussed in the subsequent chapters in relation to the Kurdish case and how specific instances of state brutality led to individual radicalisation and consequently wider collective mobilisation.

Mitchell’s (1991) rejection of the previously dominant state-society distinction and Abrams’ (1988) suggestion that the state be considered as an illusion are useful in conceptualising how the state utilises the ‘no man’s land’ between its own institutions and civil society as means to advance repression. Aretxaga described the state as resembling “an all-pervasive ghostly presence, a threatening force shaped by the collective experience of being overshadowed by an unfathomable power which can shape social life as a dangerous universe of surfaces and disguises” (2000:43). The state appears to be simultaneously everywhere and nowhere and exists as “a surreptitious power that uses certain apparatuses to penetrate subjects’ very bodies, memories and forms of life” (Aras, 2014a:24). A climate of fear is generalised by the unpredictability of the behaviour of the state; an unpredictability that takes the structural form of the “perpetual state of emergency” (Agamben in Aras, 2014:25). Therefore, when considering the dynamic between the state and opposition forces, it is not sufficient to limit oneself to the dialectic between recognised institutions of state power (such as the judicial system and the police), but rather to acknowledge the more comprehensive nexus between them and more tenebrous informal ones such as clandestine security forces and supposedly forbidden practises like torture and the impact they have on generating an atmosphere of fear and generalised insecurity.

It has been affirmed that “no simple distinction between ‘insurgents’ and ‘forces of order’ can possibly capture the complex social interactions that generate collective violence” (Tilly, 2003:40). In this regard, Goodwin’s views on state constructivism are rather relevant. He defines it as “the ways in which states help to construct or constitute various social forces and institutions that are (falsely) conceptualised as wholly exterior to states” (2001:39). However, while it is undeniable that the state, in possession of much greater cultural, military and political resources is at a distinct advantage vis-à-vis insurgent movements, the decisions and agency of armed groups also impact upon the state and its strategic decisions. As Johnston explained “popular protest and the structure of the state are in a dynamic and mutually influencing relationship, each pushing and constraining the other” (2011:16). McAdam *et al* have contended that the state and the forces of opposition reciprocally define “threats and opportunities, mobilise[s] existent and newly created resources, undertake[s] innovative collective action in response to other actors’ manoeuvres and in some cases transform[s] the course of interaction” (2001:74). The impacts of government initiatives on insurgent groups are in many cases easily identifiable. It is well documented in the literature that closure or opening of political access or introduction of limited democratic reforms can trigger mobilisation or de-mobilisation in insurgent ranks (Wickham-Crowley, 1989).

However, beyond such reaction and counter-reaction there are more subtle and less immediately evident processes of interaction at work. Aretxaga identified the process of “organised mimesis” (2000: 48) in the account of the *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* (GAL) established by elements within the Spanish state ostensibly to combat (ETA). GAL operated from 1983 to 1987 murdering up to 30 people and injuring as many more; the extra-judicial targeting of state enemies is not unusual but the noteworthy aspect of GAL was its wholesale adoption of the symbolic practises of ETA. In direct juxtaposition to the “sign-things such as an acronym, a seal, [and] communiqués” which endowed ETA’s campaign “with the materiality of a political subject by providing a permanence and continuity”, (ibid: 47) GAL adopted mirror image ‘sign things’. They chose an acronym, released communiqués in the same fashion and even forged a seal which was an inverted replica of the ETA one (ibid), all of which were superfluous to the strategic goals of their

stated goal of destroying ETA. It is therefore clear that the state and its opponents are mutually constitutive forces, undeniably at the strategic level of action and counter-action, but also in a less conscious fashion where mutual morbid fascination leads both to internalise elements of one another.

Space and Territory

As Ó Dochartaigh has explained, “there is a radical spatial unevenness to violence that defies explanation at the national level” and that most “violent conflicts extend across less than one quarter of the area of the states in which they take place” (2013:120); accordingly one cannot therefore generalise at the level of the state in terms of the diffusion of insurgency. It can be added that generalisations at the sub-state level can be equally misplaced as the intensity of violence differs across often very geographically similar areas and changes drastically over time. In recent times, the conceptualisation of space as “quantitative, to be measured in square metres, and as isotropic, essentially everywhere the same and conceptualized as a residual of time” (Gambetti & Jongerden, 2011: 375) has become viewed as redundant. As Bosi has explained “space is not a ‘natural’ unit to which individuals adjust but a social artifact, structured through the interactions of people, groups, and institutions that are embedded in specific social relations” (2013:82 and see Gambetti & Jongerden, 2011:376, Jongerden, 2007:10, Martin & Miller, 2003 and Sewell, 2001). Although physical geographic elements remain integral to understanding space, emphasis has shifted to the ‘spatial agency’ of social actors and the manner in which they shape their socio-spatial environments. Focus lies on the “fashion in which spatial constraints are turned to advantage in political and social struggles and the ways that such struggles can restructure the meanings, uses and strategic valence of space” (Sewell, 2001:55). Arguments have been put forth that insurgencies thrive in areas with particular geographical features such as high mountains, islands, forests, proximity to roads and particular natural resources (Cederman, 2008; Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; O’Sullivan, 1983; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Buhaug & Gates, 2002; Zhukov, 2012; Kalyvas, 2006:316 and Hendrix, 2011). Yet there are numerous states such as Switzerland, Sweden or Canada which boast these geographical characteristics but have negligible levels of political conflict; so clearly

geographically deterministic explanations of conflict are unsatisfactory. It has also been suggested that “the availability of cover to fade into is the principal guerrilla requirement” (O’Sullivan, 1983:148); but it must be acknowledged that some form of cover is to be found in most environments, including urban ones. Therefore it is more relevant to consider the social appropriation of space by armed groups, which Gambetti defines as “the potential of social movements to alter power structures in a given polity” (2009:44), rather than the physical qualities of these spaces.

The distinction between urban and rural environments is an issue of continuing interest for academics and military practitioners alike. Fidel Castro asserted that the “city is the grave of the guerrilla” (in de la Calle & Sanchez-Cuenca, 2012:581). Yet the dichotomy between urban and rural movements is a false one. Developments in the countryside impact on the cities and vice versa. Even the most referenced and arguably paradigmatic rural insurgent victory in Cuba in 1959 was dependent on the massive contribution of the urban-based elements of the July 26th Movement. Conversely the Tupamaros rebellion in Uruguay is put forth as the most striking example of an urban insurgency, yet its roots were in the rural trade union struggle of *Movimiento de Apoyo al Campesino/Peasant Support Movement* in Northern Uruguay (see Porzecanski, 1973). The noted theorists of rural guerrilla warfare Guevara and Debray, both profoundly influenced by its success in Cuba, appear to be unwilling to “place[d] primary emphasis on the vital importance of close linkages between rural and urban guerrilla elements” (Russell, Miller & Hildner, 1974:36), thereby contributing to the sacralisation of this “mountain mystique” (Petras in Russell et al, 1974:35).

It has long been held that “insurgents tend to be universally weak in cities” due to the ease with which incumbent forces can “police and monitor the population” (Kalyvas, 2006:133). Yet, as Staniland has identified, there have been numerous prolonged urban insurgent campaigns across the globe (2010:1627), most recently the ongoing civil war in Syria. He identified two necessary conditions for urban insurgency, namely a constrained state limited not by its armed capacity but in the extent that it can deploy that capacity, and the presence of an insurgent group that has deep social roots and legitimacy (ibid:1626). Le Blanc has provided a thorough examination of the advantages and disadvantages of urban

insurgency at a more tactical level. He has noted that urban environments guarantee an attractive list of proximate targets and that transport infrastructure facilitates easy access to them (2013:804). It is also easier to consolidate resources for insurgents in cities by means of 'appropriations' or criminality, (ibid: 805) thus rendering urban armed groups less dependent on their constituencies than their rural counterparts (ibid: 799). However, there are also considerable downsides to urban insurgency; it involves targeting the state where it is strongest (ibid: 806), and it almost totally precludes the establishment of a 'safe territory' and the operation of a counter-state (ibid and see Bosi, 2013). In addition urban insurgency hastens the intensity of interactions with the state, thereby limiting the time available to insurgents and exposing armed groups to better state surveillance (ibid: 805). Also, given the heightened population density, any insurgent action is likely to result in civilian casualties with the attendant consequences for maintaining popular support (ibid: 801). It is thus incumbent upon students of political violence to consider spatial and geographic conditions as enabling or disabling factors but not as the determinative factor in insurgent mobilisations.

Spatiality is the key concept underpinning territorial control, which in turn is deemed critical to insurgent success or failure. Kalyvas defined control as "obtaining the exclusive collaboration of civilians and eliminating defection" (2006:196); however he has seemingly not elaborated on the distinction between territorial control and other forms of social, political or less tangible forms of control. As Malthaner has convincingly highlighted in the case of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, its considerable influence is less a "function of military control [...] but rather the result of support relationships with local communities and the enforcement of norms of loyalty and non betrayal through mechanisms of social control" (2011a:253). Territorial control on behalf of the state is strongly correlated to state capacity; regimes which boast comprehensive state capacity are considered to have greater territorial control. Various indices have been utilised to measure state capacity (Hendrix, 2001; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; McAdam *et al*, 2001:78-81; Tilly, 2003: 41-53 and Fearon & Laitin, 2003), and yet in the wider literature state territorial control itself is considered self-explanatory and left largely undefined.

On the other hand insurgent territorial control has been described as the capacity of insurgents to set up camps and bases within the borders of the state, interrupt the flow of goods by forming semi-permanent road blocks, rule and be recognised as rulers by civilian populations, and permitted to extract rents from and administer justice to the communities over which they reign (de la Calle & Sanchez-Cuenca, 2012: 597). Kalyvas is of the view that control “spawns collaboration independently of pre-war patterns of support” (2006:118) but that “control and collaboration are self-reinforcing” (ibid: 112), leading to a degree of chicken and egg logic regarding which comes first - control or collaboration. Nevertheless his control-collaboration model is commonly used as the measure by which insurgent influence or control is assessed. In brief, his appealingly coherent model divides territory into five different zones of varying control by insurgents and incumbents (ibid: 196). Zones two and four are defined as being primarily controlled by incumbents and insurgents respectively but remain contested areas with incursions from opposing forces. Kalyvas’ model is somewhat undermined by his categorisation of zones two and four as areas of comparable regimes of control (ibid), simply under opposite banners. Insurgent areas of partial control (zone four) are neither fully comparable nor the symmetrical opposite to those of incumbent control (zone two). Some state institutions almost always, to one degree or another, continue to function often even in areas of full insurgent control (zone 5) and certainly in areas of incomplete control (zone 4). Schools, banks, hospitals and other state institutions usually do not simply shut down upon the onset of violence, but instead remain a lingering, structural presence across the insurgent front line of which there is absolutely no parallel example in zones of incumbent control in zone two (Bosi & Malthaner, 2013)²². Accordingly, if one utilises a territorial approach to assess insurgent control, and thereby also its influence, particularly in relation to urban contexts with an existing preponderance of state institutions, one could arrive at a mistaken understanding of the extent of insurgent power.

Although territorial aspects of control are necessarily central to any consideration of political violence, over-emphasising them at the expense of less tangible manifestations of control or collaboration is problematic. Armed conflict has historically been one of the

²² These insights are drawn from a forthcoming paper presented at the Typologies of Violence Conference at

principal stimuli for mass migration; populations typically flee to temporarily or permanently escape warzones, and forced migration has been commonly utilised as a counter-insurgency tactic or as a punitive measure against suspect communities.²³ Bearing that in mind, it seems prudent to also focus on the social aspects of control, as populations in the course of armed conflict often become divorced from their habitual territories. Indeed the very process of this dislocation can result in them becoming more supportive of insurgent groups or lead to greater engagement with armed groups.

Social control is tightly bound to legitimacy and in fact cannot exist in its absence. Legitimacy is – similarly to charisma – not an innate quality but rather an interactive and incessant process (see Demetriou, 2007:174). Malthaner explains that legitimacy is a form of “social relationship that translates into particular forms of social interactions, with tangible effects. Legitimacy enables – or is enacted in – forms of social control and it represents a symbolic resource that both sides can use to influence the other” (2014). Armed groups enjoy popular legitimacy when there is recognition that they represent a particular community with the concomitant understanding that they are also responsive to said community. Legitimacy can emerge because of armed groups’ behaviour or attitude toward civilians, ranging from the micro-level of insurgents’ manners to the macro-level of organisational demands on civilians or practises of violence toward them. It can be derived from the provision of services and relations of utilitarian social exchange (Malthaner, 2014). It can also be facilitated by the presence of social capital (Demetriou, 2007: 177), shared communal background and past histories of social contention and when armed groups’ “demands for political change or the values they propagate resonate with the population’s grievances, experiences, or religious beliefs” (Malthaner, 2014). The fundamental distinction between territorial control and social control is that the former is largely perpetrated by armed actors themselves while social control for the most part pre-empts the necessity of coercive measures. In other words, compliance is derived from “subjects’ individual belief in their own duty to obey [insurgent commands]” (Malthaner, 2014). Compliance is maintained by the collective imposition of mechanisms of social sanction

the European University Institute, 13-14 May, 2013.

²³ For e.g. the Briggs Plan employed by the British Army in Malaya in the 1950s relocated 500,000 ethnic Chinese into villages as a part of its counter-insurgency strategy; it became a model emulated in multiple

upon those which stray from the orientation of the community. Such mechanisms of control are founded on “mutual surveillance by community members” and include “forms of social ostracism, public shaming, and exclusion and isolation” (Malthaner, 2014). It bears recalling that these social sanctions are in the context of the implicit threat of imminent or future insurgent violence, should they be ignored. Behaviour is conditioned by the threat of insurgent punishment but over time the internalisation of norms expounded by insurgent organisations leads to even greater compliance. It should be added that social and territorial control are not mutually exclusive concepts, in areas of territorial control there is likely to also be social control, especially if the situation endures over time. Importantly, territorial control is not a pre-requisite of social control thus explaining cases where insurgent groups maintain the support of communities in the absence of the capacity to coerce civilian compliance.

The concept of safe territories neatly weds aspects of social and territorial control in areas of insurgent presence. Bosi defines a safe territory as a “physical space, whether concentrated or extended, in which social networks develop over time and shape formal and informal infrastructures of support that maintain dense affective, familial, and personal relations between armed activists and their local constituencies” (2013: 81). The concept of a safe territory complements Polletta’s works on “free spaces” which she defined as “small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization” (1999:1). Within safe territories, armed groups “first confront the legitimacy of the state; they challenge the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”, yet short term territorial control understood as having a monopoly on violence in the area is not necessarily a primary insurgent objective. Insurgent organisations instead strive to legitimate their presence within a safe territory “in terms of common identity and/or implicit and explicit coercion” (Bosi, 2013:81). They consolidate their presence by forging a “constituency indoctrinated with counter-hegemonic attitudes but also bound to the organization via formal and informal infrastructures of support that maintain relations between armed activists and

instances in following decades (see Goodwin, 2001:115 and Kalyvas, 2006:122).

their local constituency” (ibid). Although these safe territories are facilitated in many instances by their geographic location, such as being found in remote or inaccessible areas or protected by their immersion in densely populated disadvantaged neighbourhoods, it is the socially constructed element of these safe territories that ensures their resilience. Notwithstanding that their territorial bases can be eradicated by physical destruction or forced migration, many armed groups have simply re-adapted to their new found spatial circumstances to re-organise their constituencies and continue the struggle in a different, often far distant, spatial context.

Criticisms of the prioritisation of territorial control should not however be interpreted as a dismissal of territory as a relevant aspect of the study of political violence. “Protest does not just take place in territories, structured and shaped by the territorial context within which it operates; it also seeks to challenge those territories and make ‘new’ territories, redefining the relations of power in the process” (Ó Dochartaigh & Bosi, 2010:406). This project shares the contention that “space and place are not physical entities with pre-established identities, but are socially produced, not only through relations, but also through power geometries” (Gambetti & Jongerden, 2011: 381). Accordingly, an awareness of the mutually constitutive impact of the physical and social environment and the actors with which it is populated will be maintained throughout the subsequent chapters. The evolution of armed groups in terms of their repertoire, strategies and discourse will be considered in respect of their immediate socio-spatial environments.

Forms of Interaction between Armed Groups and their Supporters

It has been suggested that “micro-level processes of mobilization are often ignored in the social movement literature in favour of more macro- and meso-level analyses” (Viterna, 2013:40 and see Arjona & Kalyvas, 2012 and Gates, 2002). This contextualised micro-level mobilisation and interactive processes will be discussed in this section, with a focus on the question of timing and networks.

Interactions between armed groups and wider civilian communities, whether they are sympathetic toward them or not, are multi-faceted and characterised by layers of social, political and cultural subtleties much more nuanced than the simple logic of the barrel of an insurgent rifle. A fact often neglected in the study of armed conflict is that guerrillas and armed insurgents have not fallen from the sky in an alien land, but are instead sons and daughters of its very soil. In addition, although relations and responsibilities within armed movements often predominate and become insurgents' primary fields of socialisation and reference (see della Porta, 1995:129 and Wasmund, 1986). Many armed actors, and even more so the non-combat units of armed organisations which do not require as complete a commitment, maintain pre-existing or generate new social networks external to the armed movement (see della Porta & Diani, 2006:127-131). Armed actors and civilians physically come together in what have been termed as "moments of encounter" (O Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming); these moments occur in real concrete social environments, which although characterised by inevitable power discrepancies are laden with an array of reciprocal social and political obligations.

Wickham-Crowley has outlined a taxonomy of attachments that link civilians to armed movements. They include common membership in formal and informal social organisations such as political parties or religious fraternities. These linkages are cut across by vertical relations such as "pre-existing hierarchical attachments between guerrillas and peasants" or horizontal "patterns of lateral friendships" (1993:139-140). It is the contention of this paper that the nature and timing of these moments of encounter, particularly initial ones, are of critical relevance to the consolidation of civilian support. Interactions between insurgents and others in their immediate social environments can be ordered across a spectrum, ranging from active participation in insurgent ranks through unsolicited support, denial of support to opponents, periodic solicited material support, begrudging tolerance, and all the way to active opposition. It should be kept in mind however that although popular support is massively important, "it is not the be-all and end-all of a guerrilla failure or triumph, and it cannot be the sole focus of our analysis" (ibid: 86). Patterns of popular support or disaffection must be contextualised in the specifics of local settings and in respect of other actors in the immediate social environment.

Insurgent Dependence

The logistical challenges and practicalities of maintaining an insurgency are in most cases enormous and heavily dependent on local popular support. It has been estimated that “it takes ten rural supporters to maintain one guerrilla fighter” (ibid: 55). In order to be successful, movements need to coherently organise these supporters so as to best meet the needs of movement. In El Salvador, the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*'s (FMLN) support committee were tasked with the provision of:

“[...] clothing, shoes, medicines, materials for explosives, and other needed supplies for the combatants. They were encouraged to form small workshops where they could make mines and other explosives. They were provided with typewriters and mimeograph machines to create and disseminate propaganda. They were to keep a careful eye on the movements of the enemy, not only for the security of their own village but also to provide that information to the FMLN guerrillas. They were to take advantage of their legal status to run mail between FMLN camps, linking each base into a national network.” (Viterna, 2013:73 and see Wickham Crowley, 1993:52-55)

Insurgents' dependence on civilian support renders relations between them of central importance to understanding the nature of the insurgency itself. Insurgents are obliged to recognise that there are limits to what they can demand from supporters before they become disillusioned and defect to state or other forces, or by simply fleeing. It has been suggested that FARC's dislodgement from its former strongholds in the 1980s like Puerto Boyacá was a result of its over-taxation of locals in order to fulfil quotas determined by upper ranks of the hierarchy located elsewhere and thus unaware of local realities (Guitérrez Sanín, 2008:224). Similar processes occurred in what had been Islamist strongholds in urban centres in Algeria (Martinez, 2000:94). In Peru, the over-exacting demands of the Sendero Luminoso led to the formation of pro-state paramilitaries, the *Rondas Campesinos* (Degregori, 1998). Insurgent dependence thus grants a degree of leverage to those on whom they depend, re-emphasising the interactive and reciprocally formative nature of relations between armed groups and civilians.

Timing

It is undeniable that “different logics of participation may co-exist in a single civil war” (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008:437 and see Arjona & Kalyvas, 2012:159, Kalyvas, 2006:95). One way in which it differs is according to timing (Bosi, 2007 and Bosi *et al*, 2014); participation varies drastically over time and across generations of recruits. Time in this sense is less a question of the “abstract historical processes” critiqued by Sewell (1996:247) but rather relates to particular events in time. Sewell has put forth the concept of transformative events, which he has described as “the relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transform structures” (ibid: 262). Furthermore, “events not only mark, but to a significant degree constitute, the emergence of new possibilities for the conduct of contentious politics” (McAdam & Sewell, 2001: 120). An “eventful conception of temporality” (Sewell, 1996:262) will therefore be utilised in the following chapters.

Aside from large-scale structural events such as coup d'états or restoration of democratic procedures, in the case of insurgent groups a significant temporal change is marked also by the adoption of violent, or perhaps more precisely, more violent repertoires of contention.²⁴ This does not necessarily occur in as dramatic a fashion as the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional's* (EZLN) surprise uprising in 1994 (see Marcos, 2001), because there are always continuities with previous patterns of activism which are maintained contemporarily with more violent practises. Yet in most cases there are significant turning points where a marked strategic radicalisation can be observed in movements' repertoires of contention. It should of course be recalled that such developments do not usually occur autonomously but rather as a result of interaction with opposition forces and potential allies, and are dependent on regime type and a large degree of happenstance (Tilly, 2003: 44-50 and McAdam *et al*, 2001:49 & 140-141).

Initial phases of mobilisation are of critical importance because this is when incipient

²⁴McAdam *et al's* understanding of repertoire of contention will be used in this work. They defined them as “the culturally encoded ways in which people interact in contentious politics. They are invariably narrower than all the hypothetical forms they might use or those that others in different circumstances or periods of history employ” (2001:16).

insurgent forces are at their weakest and most vulnerable to dismantlement by the state. It is also the period when core movement structures are elaborated and a form of “movement habitus is clarified [...] which delineates how subsequent militants behave in ritual and discursive practices” (O Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming). It is also during this stage in mobilisation when leadership patterns are established, ones which often endure irrespective of the leaders’ subsequent political or military achievements, as in the cases of Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK, Guzman and the Sendero Luminoso, Pirabakaran and the Tamil Tigers and arguably also Subcommandante Marcos and the EZLN (ibid). While one needs to remain cognisant of overly path-determinant explanations (Tarrow, 2007), Weinstein’s observation that “differences in how rebel groups employ violence are a consequence of variation in the initial conditions that leaders confront” highlights the importance of the phase of initial mobilisation (2007:7). At the risk of over-simplification, insurgent mobilisation patterns are characterised by the drastic variance between mobilisation prior to the adoption of violent insurgent practices and afterwards, wherein numerous endogenous aspects such as “territorial control, polarization and the restriction of non-violent political alternatives” impinge on mobilisation (O Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming).

The generational differences in movements are often significant. Moyano draws a distinction between movement founders and followers, with the former defined as “those who actually launch the organisation but also [...] those who join the group in its formative stages” (1992:111). Founders establish an organisation at considerable personal risk, arguably at greater risk than followers because by the time the latter join, a variety of questions regarding the likelihood and nature of the state’s response have been resolved. Founders are also likely to have a greater “emotional involvement” with the movement and to be motivated by political convictions not always present in subsequent generations of recruits (ibid: 111-112). Politically motivated recruits predominate in earlier phases of mobilisation; in the case of the FMLN its first recruits had been generally active in non-violent political associations prior to the war and had gradually slipped into clandestine politics and ultimately armed contention (Viterna, 2013: 82 & 89). As made clear by della Porta in the case of Italian leftist radicals, “the threshold of clandestinity was often passed involuntarily and sometimes even unconsciously” (1988:165).

This drift into armed contention is often derived from the necessity of self-defence from either political rivals or the security forces (ibid, 2013:80; and Alper, 2014). The recourse to violence usually arises upon the closure of conventional means of political contention and wider processes of political opportunity structures (see McAdam, 1982: 40-43; Alimi, 2009; Goodwin, 2001; Kriesi, 2004 and Goodwin, Jasper & Khattrra, 1999), although this is not always the case, as evidenced by the Sendero Luminoso's uprising which coincided not with an increase in state repression but rather with the return of democracy in Peru in 1980 (Goodwin, 2001:233-234). Accordingly, many first generation activists in armed groups tend to bear a degree of uneasiness about the use of violence; a reluctance that is absent in subsequent waves of recruits socialised in a milieu where violence has become normalised (della Porta, 2013: 123). As in the case of the FMLN, it was also noted in regard to the Irish Republican movement that those whose militancy pre-dated the re-eruption of the conflict in 1969 tended to come from strongly politicised backgrounds and family networks previously immersed in the struggle (White, 1993:38). It is also a tendency confirmed by those who took an ideological path to armed groups, as outlined by della Porta and Bosi in their taxonomy of paths to mobilisation, such as for instance in the case of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Red Brigades (2012:362).

Finally, it is worth recalling the class dynamics of early movers in insurgent organisations. Wickham-Crowley observed in the Latin American context that "the leadership [usually the founding generation] of guerrilla movements was, with few exceptions, drawn from the urban middle and upper classes and from rural elites" (1993:23). This has been rejected by Waldmann, who holds that ethnically motivated groups such as the IRA or ETA enjoy greater cross-class support and that their leaders did not come from the upper strata of their respective societies (1992). In sum, the early movers of armed groups are generally motivated by strong political convictions; a personal history of activism often bolstered by familial roots in radical politicised milieus, and have a certain reluctance when it comes to the use of violence.

Networks

Networks are a nebulous concept and varying definitions of them abound (see Diani, 2003:4-7). At the most basic level they can be viewed “as sets of nodes, linked by some form of relationship, and delimited by some specific criteria” (ibid: 6). For the purposes of this project, a minimalist understanding of networks will be used which considers them as series of socio-spatially contingent relationships between groups or individuals. They will accordingly be understood as relational practises rather than categories in themselves and considered as the ties which bind armed groups to their constituencies.

It is well established in the literature that collective action is “significantly shaped by social ties between participants” (Diani, 2003: 1; and see Passy 2003: 22, della Porta, 1988, 2013, & 1995; Diani, 2004; Gould, 2003:236; McAdam, 2003; Viterna, 2013; Kalyvas, 2006:95 and Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). It behoves academics then to focus on the question of how they matter, rather than if they matter (Passy, 2003). Passy suggests that networks impact on mobilisation in a diachronic fashion, “at the beginning by building or reinforcing individual identities that create potential for participation, and at the very end when individual preference and perceptions (e.g. individual costs of action, chances of success, the risk involved) eventually prompt people to take action” (ibid: 22). Belonging to networks facilitates the elaboration of “systems of meaning that render collective action both a meaningful and a feasible undertaking, to perceive certain issues as socially relevant and worthy of collective efforts” (della Porta & Diani, 2006: 119). In a similar understanding Kitts breaks down the importance of networks into three forms of mechanisms: information, identity and exchange (2000). Accordingly, networks serve as reservoirs of meaning and as instrumental mechanisms through which political sympathies are translated into active engagement.

Networks also serve as a conceptual bridge between structuralist and rationalist accounts of individual participation (Passy, 2003: 26). One must be wary of acquiring a reified conceptualisation of networks, because once individuals become embedded in them “they find themselves in an interactive structure that enables them to define and redefine

their interpretive frames”, as well as one which “facilitates the process of identity-building and identity strengthening” (ibid: 24). This evolution and constant processes of articulation and re-articulation are generated by interaction with other networks and overlapping membership with them (della Porta & Diani, 2006:127 and Diani 2004: 348). However, it is also a result of macro-structural developments, the impact of which is best grasped “by examining how a particular event or action may reshape the meanings of individuals’ identities and the memberships of individuals’ networks” (Viterna, 2013: 43). The importance of networks is contingent on the type of political regime or civil society in which they are present (Passy, 2003: 27) and of course on the type of network and its political – if any – objectives.

A distinction is commonly drawn between formal and informal networks. Informal networks range from friends, family and sub-cultural milieus (Diani, 2003: 7) to neighbourhood associations (Gould, 1995). It should be recalled that the distinction between formal and informal is not always rigid. A tribe for instance can be no more than an informal and inactive network, however on occasions of political or inter-tribal conflict in what has been referred to as “network based escalation” (Tilly,2003:119), such a network can be called upon to entail a more comprehensive commitment. A convincing example of network based mobilisation is to be found in the case of Hezbollah’s emergence in the Beqaa’ valley in Lebanon; wherein early militant leaders made use of their family and clan connections (Malthaner, 2014). Sporting or other cultural associations are more often than not mere facilitators of innocuous pastimes but on occasion they can be mobilised for political ends such as the use of Basque cooking circles and hiking groups as recruitment networks for ETA (Waldman, 1992:241). A further function of networks is how they facilitate the diffusion of repertoires and ideas. Diffusion can occur directly or indirectly and networks are key to the former as “ideas diffuse most rapidly when individuals are in direct and frequent contact” (Soule, 2004: 295).

The role of networks in clandestine groups or insurgent organisations is even more critical. Recruitment to radical groups entails great risk to the recruit and recruiter, as well as to the integrity of the wider organisation. Accordingly, in such movements recruitment is generally through close networks of friends and families. As della Porta has noted, “the

presence of reciprocal affective ties is therefore essential for the reducing of risks a clandestine organization takes in contacting a potential militant” (1988:160 and Viterna, 2006:5). Numerous studies have highlighted the role of family and kin relations and the attendant presence of dense emotional bonds in militant trajectories (White, 1993:42; Bosi & della Porta, 2012; Bosi, 2012:349; Viterna, 2006:15; Wasmund, 1986:204 and della Porta, 1988: 158). Although pre-existing networks greatly facilitate recruitment, their absence does not necessarily exclude militant recruitment. As useful as kin networks were to Hezbollah in the Beqaa’ valley their absence in South Lebanon did not prevent the movement’s consolidation in the area. Hezbollah established local legitimacy as a result of the repressive actions of the occupying Israeli forces. In the wake of successful Hezbollah military operations, local youths tended to join the movement. It also utilised nascent Islamist networks to also attract recruits. The fact that the conflict was between an external force of occupation, Israel, and the local Shia’ population undoubtedly also enhanced communal identification and solidarity (Malthaner, 2014). Therefore, networks can also be created and expanded endogenously to militant mobilisation.

A crucial aspect of networks’ role in insurgent recruitment is the emotional imbrication of the self in the collective. Contrary to wider rationalist approaches, individuals do not simply act according to selfish, individually oriented interests but also as their beliefs, which are collectively stabilised within certain structural limits and norms. Beliefs “are socially or inter-subjectively constituted” (Ross, 2006: 200-201) in what is an inherently emotional process. The inclusion of an “emotional dimension” to the analysis of political mobilisation can explain “activists’ determination in the face of high risk and their willingness to endure suffering and self sacrifice, including torture and death” (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001:21). The emotional intensity of belonging to armed movements or even indeed circulating in their milieus was cogently expressed by an unnamed Montonero militant. He explained that “... life was lived to the fullest because you could die tomorrow. Besides you had people around you whom you knew would be ready to die in order to save you. All our emotions were very intense because there was not time” (in Moyano, 1992:121).

Emotions are difficult phenomena to analyse due to their “ambivalent, unstable and processual character” (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001: 16); they are generally held from a constructivist approach to be “cognitive beliefs rather than bodily states” (Ross, 2006:200)²⁵. It has been suggested that “many emotions can exist only in the reciprocal exchanges of a social encounter” (Harré in Ross, 2006:201), thus rendering them a subject of sociological analysis rather than merely one of psychological interest. Ross suggests that “interests are primarily governed by beliefs about appropriate goals” (2006:205) and the appropriateness of such goals are always collectively defined. It is a point reinforced by Polletta’s critique of the conventional tendency “to picture activists juggling commitments to ideological consistency and strategic effectiveness, thus missing the role that ideology plays in activists’ very definitions of what counts as strategic” (2006:29).

Wood discusses the emotional benefits inherent in mobilisation, described as “emotion-laden consequences of action experienced only by those participating in that action” (2001:268). These benefits sustain mobilisation in periods of repression and displacement and when the likelihood of any success seems remote. Peasant participation in the FMLN rebellion was derived from a variety of motivations, including the relative safety of belonging to an armed group with its specific resources for avoiding incumbent security forces (Wood, 2000:47 and Viterna, 2006:24 & 2013:99). However, many adhered because “participation per se expressed moral outrage, asserted a claim to dignity, and gave grounds for pride” (Wood, 2001:268 & 2009:120). Thus, mobilisation far from serving as the means to realise a rational interest was in fact an affirmation of dignity, which was an objective in itself.

Interestingly, the contradictory emotion of shame was also a catalyst for mobilisation. FMLN male “guerrillas overwhelmingly reported that they ‘felt forced’ to join the rebel army” (Viterna, 2013: 108) rather than being actually forced. Although a subtle distinction, the collective values shared by the communities broadly sympathetic to the FMLN demanded that men take up arms, and those who failed to do so would have been classed as cowardly - especially in light of so much female participation (see Viterna,

²⁵ See Jasper (2011) for an extensive debate and categorisation of emotions.

2006:6). The manipulation of gender identities and masculine insecurities was a tactic specifically adopted by the FMLN, evident in its sending of generally young and beautiful female recruiters to the villages with the specific intention of eliciting male recruits (Viterna, 2013 & 2006).

Other emotions such as a desire for revenge and rage are commonly provided as explanations for commitment to militant groups. Feelings which were often triggered by personal experiences such as the death of loved ones or violence against co-militants (Malthaner, 2011: 135-6, della Porta, 2013:188 and Viterna, 2013:110). Fear (Green, 1994; Aras, 2014a and Johnston, 2014) can, contrary to the reaction anticipated by the purveyors of violence, often lead to further mobilisation rather than discourage it. It has also been observed that one's emotional commitments to others outside of insurgent ranks can play a major role in insurgent outcomes. Goodwin observed that "certain effectual relationships can corrode the strong solidarity and strict discipline that some collective endeavours demand" (1997:55). In the case of the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, guerrillas' onerous obligations to their families rendered them reluctant to remain away from them for long periods (ibid: 58). The engagement by married guerrillas in extra-marital affairs in the insurgent camps provoked such disquiet amongst their families that the Huk leadership was forced to initiate revolutionary marriages which could only occur with the consent of their original wives (ibid:61). It is therefore clear that emotions such as jealousy and adherence to prevailing social norms can also impact on the relationship between constituencies and insurgent movements.

Contrary to explanations which incorporate the social aspects of mobilisation and identity construction, the fundamental premise of rationalist explanations for participation is rooted in an "ontological individualism" (McAdam *et al*, 2001:22). According to this approach, collective behaviour is primarily considered as an expression of the sum of individual interests. Although Kalyvas recognises that combatants are "usually motivated to fight *not* by ideology or hate or fear but by peer pressure and processes involving regard for their comrades, respect for their leaders, concern for their own reputation with both, and an urge to contribute to their success of the group – in short, what is known as 'primary group cohesion'" (2006: 46), he seems to subsequently disregard the interactive collective

stabilisation of these motivations. He suggests that “people caught in the whirlwind of violence and war are, more often than not, less than heroic: they seek to save one’s job, house, family, and, above all, life” (ibid: 45). In his treatment of the processes of control or collaboration, he provides a grotesquely memorable example of a Norwegian woman in the village of Telavaag, who denounced contacts between the Norwegian resistance and the Allies to the Nazis because she believed that goods brought in by the British agents had been unfairly divided amongst the villagers (ibid:179). It serves as an example to reinforce his hypothesis of individual rationality prevailing over collective solidarity; however, the minimalisation of collective solidarity as a relevant factor in the calculation of mobilisation or defection is undermined by an inevitable bias in the selection of confirmative evidence.²⁶ It is likely that other villagers may have felt similarly in relation to the goods’ distribution but chose not to act on that emotion but rather according to their collective bonds of solidarity. It has been observed that “explaining a non-event is, by nature, more complicated than trying to account for something that occurred” (Gupta, 2014:160). Consequently, rational, individualised motivations are arguably more easily observed than their ideologically informed counterparts, thus resulting in an over-representation of rationalist motivations in the literature.

Recruitment

Notwithstanding the density of emotional ties within social networks, their socialisation capacity (Hedstrom, 1994:1176) and ability to concretely link a propensity for mobilisation with actual participation differs. The vast majority of individuals in mobilising networks do not in fact mobilise (Viterna, 2013:44). Although certain networks facilitate participation, inclusion in other overlapping networks can actually inhibit it. The issue of biographical availability is a key determinant in insurgent mobilisation; one’s “education, gender, income, age, marital status, and occupation affects participations decisions” (ibid, 2006:6).

²⁶ It is ironically a tendency he critiques in others work but fails to observe in his own work (Kalyvas, 2006, 48).

Viterna highlights a number of factors which impacted upon female guerrilla recruitment in El Salvador. Age was a primary consideration. “The FMLN argued that all youth had an obligation to join the guerrillas because they were not burdened with family responsibilities” (2013: 91). A further disincentive to mobilisation was if families were intact as units. Complete families replete with inherent reciprocal obligations lessened the possibility of insurgent participation. On the other hand, youths who had already moved away from the family home, were orphaned or had lost family members in the course of the conflict were less likely to encounter obstacles in joining (ibid, 2006:17). Mothers with young children to care for, while not completely absent in guerrilla ranks, were less prevalent and indeed female insurgents who fell pregnant often used their impending maternal responsibilities as a reason to leave guerrilla life (ibid: 2006:27). However, though less frequently, having children in the guerrilla ranks can also be a mobilising factor for mothers (ibid: 8).

Gender is also an issue in relation to the contestation between insurgent forces and state armies for young males as conscripts and guerrillas. It is common that male youths of a certain age are forced to accept enrolment in the military or join insurgent forces who also on occasion impose practises of forced recruitment (Viterna, 2013:71 and Aras, 2014a: 86-87). One can be thereby biographically available to more than one side, thus forcing one to actively choose sides (see Viterna, 2013:109). A further aspect related to biographical availability is the collective fears surrounding the vulnerability of young women to sexual predation by armed groups. Paradoxically, perceived female sexual vulnerability is often a motivation for women to avoid over-ground supportive activities typically associated with women and join armed units instead as a form of protection. In El Salvador, the FMLN camps were seen as one of the few places where women’s “sexual integrity would be protected” (Viterna, 2013: 91). Similarly in Kurdistan, some families tolerated young women joining guerrilla units rather than participating in legal activities where issues of unsupervised gender interactions could impugn family reputations, with the additional benefit of forestalling the sexual abuse doled out to female detainees by the police (Darici, 2011).

A final consideration is that one’s ‘biographical availability’ is not determined on an individual basis but is rather a decision taken by or in conjunction with the wider family.

Particularly in rural contexts where sufficient manpower is required to harvest crops and work the land, decisions are reached whereby one son or daughter is permitted to join the guerrillas while the others remain at home. Or on occasion, enrolment is delayed until after crops are harvested or seasonally specific practises are completed. The danger of an overly structurally determinist understanding of networks (see Passy, 2003: 22-23) can be avoided by recognising the agency of those immersed in networks and thus also explain the non-mobilisation of others in the same networks. It should be kept in mind though that agency is rarely expressed at the purely individual level but rather in conjunction with one's place in a variety of other formal and informal networks.

A number of notable efforts have been made to comprehensively combine the impact of structural aspects, the effect of time and networks, and ideological considerations as a means to understand militant trajectories. Bosi & della Porta have identified three specific routes: ideological, instrumental and solidaristic paths (2012:362), while Viterna has highlighted three categories of guerrillas: politicised, reluctant and recruited (2006 & 2013). Ideologically motivated and politicised guerrillas bear much in common. In the cases examined by Bosi and della Porta, ideological militants generally come from politicised families firmly located in "local traditions of counter-hegemonic consciousness that made the passage to armed struggle appear as a normal evolution" (2012: 371). In Viterna's case, the issue of timing is also relevant in how she defines politicised guerrillas as "those whose path into the FMLN began in pre-war, peaceful political activism" (2013: 87). As mentioned above, the drift into more radical or violent politics was often gradual. The importance of past histories of rebellion impinges on such militants, many of whom have a self-identity as bearers of a millenarian responsibility as the most recent of generations of insurgents or resistance fighters. The role of kin networks is highly important in these cases; as White explained they were "the dominant conduit through which this message [of Irish republicanism] was passed" (White, 1993: 42). Family networks do not only reproduce narratives of opposition but also serve as the most reliable means to acquire trustworthy recruits (della Porta, 1988:158 and Bosi & della Porta, 2012:372).

The second categories of reluctant and instrumental militants are heavily impacted by factors endogenous to processes of conflict and need not necessarily have been

previously very politicised. Instrumentally minded recruits are generally triggered into more radical contention because of first-hand experiences of repression, such as internment in Northern Ireland (Bosi & della Porta, 2012:373). A cognitive transformation occurs which leads one to lose hope in the conventional means of politics and to seek a more efficient strategy in more militant methods (ibid: 374). There is also a strong presence of spatiality in the recruitment processes, whereby due to the ongoing conflict one almost casually encounters territorially rooted militant networks, such as local defence groups or local demonstrations which are generated by the conflict itself. In the case of reluctant guerrillas, the spatial aspects are even more pronounced. Reluctant recruitment derives from a “crisis as a result of living in a war zone, and guerrilla participation seemed their only option for survival” (Viterna, 2013: 82). As a former FMLN guerrilla named Lulu explained, “the Armed Forces would always accuse you of being a terrorist, just for living in the village where you had always lived. And you had to join [the guerrillas] because you didn’t have any other alternative” (ibid: 97). Both instrumental and reluctant categories are processes of recruitment generated purely from the circumstantial context generated by the conduct of the conflict itself.

The final types of militant trajectories found in later stages of armed conflict are those motivated by emotions of solidarity (Bosi & della Porta, 2012) or recruited guerrillas (Viterna, 2013 2006). The former militants are motivated by developments in their immediate social environments. In a rather politically unmediated fashion, they become mobilised to protect their neighbourhoods or to avenge wrongs, personal or familial, committed against them. Little consideration is given as to which group to join or its ideological underpinnings but rather to whichever is best suited to achieving the recruit’s particular ends (Bosi & della Porta, 2012: 375). Given the generally high degree of losses suffered by insurgent forces to death, prison and injury, there is a constant need for new recruits. Ergo, they seek recruits, preferably according to the characteristics required for insurgent life. In the case of female FMLN recruits “recruiters sought (1) young, (2) victimized, and (3) skilled women for recruitment, and worked to mobilize them with narratives appealing to their youthful need for adventure, their victimised need for revenge, and their ability to contribute needed skills to the movement” (2006: 101). The spatial dimensions of such processes are paramount. The presence of refugee camps or prisons can

serve as abundant reservoirs for such recruits. In the Salvadorean case, the residents in refugee camps grew up “in tight-knit, physically confined communities where solidarity was built on shared victimisation stories” (ibid, 2013: 103) and in the later stages of the conflict their youths flocked to the FMLN ranks. In Northern Ireland similar trajectories of radicalisation in prison or internment and subsequent insurgent mobilisation have been widely observed (Bosi & della Porta, 2012: 376).

Periods of armed conflict are not only characterised by social upheaval and tragedy but also present opportunities for social mobility, especially for youths (Wood, 2008:545). As has been highlighted in the previous paragraphs, war and political violence are predominantly the preserve of the youth. Generational social orders²⁷ are recalibrated and unimaginable power and prestige can befall young militants in very short periods of times. Notwithstanding the grave risks, joining armed groups can also be seen as an attractive proposition to younger generations. For refugees and displaced persons, joining a guerrilla army is a viable means of escaping the frustration and monotony of daily life. As Weinstein has pointed out, “studies of participation in high-risk collective action in diverse contexts point to nonmaterial benefits as well, such as prestige, acceptance, and the opportunity to exercise agency” (Weinstein, 2007:40). These non-material benefits go a long way to explain why people not immediately involved in conflicts, such as spatially distant communities like diasporas or those living in areas unmarked with violence, choose to participate. Although Kalyvas has suggested that survival is the primary concern in conflict areas (2006: 138-139), one could argue that such critical life and death moments are not always abiding and that the wider spectrum of emotional factors, material and non-material social benefits, ideological and collective solidarities need to also be factored into questions of mobilisation. Viterna manages to combine this wide array of factors in her identity theory of mobilisation. As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, identities are generated in the context of an individual’s multiple and overlapping networks. She explains that “identities become salient when a significant number of important social ties with others depend on that identity, when cultural norms give one identity more status than another, or when enacting an identity brings especially positive feelings of self evaluation” (2013: 51). Her view of salient

²⁷ See McAdam *et al* regarding the relevance of the reconfiguration of generational hierarchies in the case of

identities echoes McAdam *et al's* discussion of embedded and detached identities (2001:135). A salient participant or insurgent identity is what ultimately leads to participation. Viterna's understanding of identities supports the constitutive relations of communal solidarity and interpersonal networks identified by Malthaner in the formation of insurgent constituencies (2011a). Yet a salient participant identity is of little relevance if it remains untapped. Participation only occurs when an individual with such an identity is actually "recruited for activism" (Viterna, 2013: 57).

A lot of academic attention is rightly focused on processes of individual agency but one should be wary of dedicating insufficient attention to the collective agency of armed groups. A central priority of insurgent movements is the replenishment of their ranks given the high rates of attrition in armed conflict. Recruitment strategies are heavily influenced by wider structural developments and the dialectic processes of violence between them and their opponents. Nonetheless, it is ultimately the movements themselves that select which strategies to employ in order to facilitate recruitment. In the early phases of mobilisation, its dimensions are usually restricted in numbers and tend to contain a large number of politicised recruits. Che Guevara described the guerrilla fighter as someone who "must have a moral conduct that shows him to be a true priest of the reform which he aspires" (1997:73). Armed groups usually have a list of criteria for potential recruits. The IRA listed physical dexterity, adaptability and political awareness as desirable characteristics. Interestingly, it also considered aspects beyond individual features such as a candidate's interpersonal support networks and support for him/her amongst the local population (White and Falkenberg White, 1991:107). The FMLN for example preferred ideologically aware recruits but accepted those who were not politically motivated in the knowledge that they would become ideologically committed in the course of the conflict (Viterna, 2013: 68). In the case of the French resistance, Kedward observed that "far more maquisards became communist through maquis experience than were communist by motivation at the outset" (in Kalyvas, 2006:45). The intensity and extent of recruitment varies over time but also according to movement structures. When the IRA altered its structure in the mid-1970s, it led to greater compartmentalisation and thus rendered it less vulnerable to infiltration and

the Mau Mau in Kenya (2001:95).

arrests. As a result it had a lesser demand for recruits and was able to select them more discerningly.

Unless immediate successes are realised, insurgent numbers inevitably start to decline due to a high attrition rate and new methods are required to replenish insurgent ranks. Weinstein suggests that armed groups rich in economic endowments are capable of paying participants to enlist (2007:47). This is not without inherent problems though, because the payment of fighters generates distributional conflicts and it discourages combativity as fighters concentrate on maintaining their economic interests (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2008b: 229). Other insurgent movements have tried to coercively recruit civilians. However, such an approach is rather risky and usually detrimental to armed groups' long term prospects, as it runs the risk of provoking the ire of the wider civilian population upon which armed groups are dependent on for a range of other forms of material, political and moral support (see Aras, 2014a: 86-87; Viterna, 2013:72 & Marcus, 2007). Forced recruits generally make poor fighters, lacking in motivation, oftentimes even the physical characteristics required for guerrilla life and they are prone to defection. Accordingly most armed groups, particularly those that have proven to be relatively successful, strive to avoid patterns of coercive recruitment.

As has been discussed, recruitment particularly in early phases occurs through pre-existing formal and informal networks imbued with strong affective ties and mutual trust. While these initial networks are sufficient to launch an armed campaign, they are not sufficient to maintain an extended one. Groups therefore need to generate and extend further networks. This is a difficult task given that many groups have limited material resources and are thus unable to construct patronage structures. Armed groups have two principal means available to win over popular support: by offering services (not necessarily material ones), which are lacking amongst their target communities, and by a careful crafting of their discourse to render it resonant with local cultural norms. Put in other terms, armed groups organise "moments of encounter" which over time facilitate the forging of affective bonds of respect, trust and even friendship between them and their putative supporters and potential future recruits. These include the provision of specific skills lacking in local contexts, like organisational experience and literacy. However, groups' sincerity is

also evident in their willingness to participate in tasks of a more humble nature, such as when the EZLN partook in the collective harvesting of the *milpas* (corn fields) and constructed houses and basketball courts (O Connor & Oikonomakis, forthcoming). Another low-cost means of consolidating local consensus is the provision of security against criminal elements (Guitérrez Sanín, 2008b:233 and Gomez, 2005). The incorporation of issues of local importance, even if not directly related to the long term objectives of the armed group is another well trodden path for insurgent movements seeking to expand; ETA's campaign against the construction of a nuclear plant in Lemoniz is an illustrative example (della Porta, 2013:191). It reflects Kalyvas' understanding of the complex overlap between master and local cleavages (2003, 477-480). However, this is also a strategy not without risks because coming down on one side or another in a local conflict inevitably results in triggering the enmity of another segment of the community. Engagement of such a fashion can also facilitate bloc recruitment (see della Porta & Diani, 2006:120).

Revolutionary movements typically launch their insurgencies from the most disadvantaged areas of society, be they areas of regional neglect or urban peripheries. In many cases their targeted recruits are from communities with limited literacy capabilities²⁸, low social capital and often bearing very traditional outlooks on life. Accordingly, urban intellectuals may find that an overly academic and abstract, particularly leftist or socialist approach can often arouse the suspicions if not outright hostility of targeted communities. It has been argued that "Marxist groups in the third world have generally been more successful when they have de-emphasised class struggle and stressed the goal of national liberation instead – or at least, when they have tried to mobilise different types of people through the selective use of both nationalist and class appeals" (Goodwin and Skocpol, 1989:493). In order to avoid ideological dogmatism insurgent groups need to present their political message to potential supporters in a comprehensible fashion, in what has been referred to in the social movement literature as the framing process (Benford & Snow, 2000 and McAdam *et al*, 2001:16-18). Frames have been described as "interpretative schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events" (Wiktorowicz, 2004:15). They are utilised by movements to "fashion shared understandings

²⁸ The question of literacy is of lesser relevance to insurgencies in more developed countries such as in the

of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996:6). In order for a movement to succeed its frames “must resonate with the salient beliefs of potential recruits” (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003:52). In the cases where a group’s frames do not resonate with their target audience they have the option of persevering regardless and falling into the trap of dogmatism, or to reassess and re-articulate them in light of prevailing local norms by engaging in frame bridging, which is defined as “the conscious effort to merge the ideology of the movement with an existing cultural framework” (McAdam *et al*, 2001:118-119). However, an orthodox understanding of framing is arguably somewhat overly uni-directional. As movements present their frames to particular communities or networks of people, they are inevitably influenced themselves by the process of communicating them; there is thus a degree of reciprocal influence in the framing process (McAdam *et al*, 2001:44).

The EZLN provides a sterling example of such a development. As a group of Marxist intellectuals, they strove repeatedly in the 1970s and early 1980s to gather support amongst the indigenous population of Chiapas but it was only subsequent to the re-framing of their political discourse that they managed to gain a foothold amongst the locals (O Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming). The EZLN Subcommandante Marcos calls the process of realising that the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric the FLN/EZLN²⁹ had prepared for all other sectors of the Mexican society did not work for the indigenous the “first defeat” of the EZLN (O Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming). Over time, the non-indigenous founding members had become indigenised to the extent that “the EZLN was no longer what we had conceived when we arrived. By then we had been defeated by the indigenous communities, and as a product of that defeat, the EZLN started to grow exponentially and to become “very otherly [...]”(Le Bot and Marcos 1997). Therefore, in order to expand beyond their initial networks and establish a broader constituency armed groups must be flexible about the form and nature of their ideological arguments. This flexibility and careful consideration of which ideological emphasis to apply and to which people, is not limited to the national or macro level but also down to the individual community and neighbourhood, and even to the single

cases of the PIRA and ETA.

²⁹ The EZLN was a regional branch of the FLN which later became largely autonomous and overshadowed its mother organisation.

person whom they tried to mobilise. It should be recalled when reflecting upon the agentive capacity of armed groups that there is a strong spatial element. These interactions occur in specific geo-spatial contexts, most commonly within the bounds of a safe territory. It is within these safe territories that armed groups “exploit the services they provide to create a constituency indoctrinated with counter hegemonic attitudes but also bound to the organization via formal and informal infrastructures of support that maintain relations between armed activists and their local constituency” (Bosi, 2013:81). Armed groups make use of the emergent networks surrounding practises of utilitarian social exchange and subsequently generate bonds of communal solidarity endogenous to the mobilisation itself, altering the practises, discourse, and identities of both armed actors and their constituencies.

Conclusion

The main theoretical arguments of the thesis have been outlined in this first chapter; its principal focus is on the relationship between armed groups and their supporters, which is conceptualised as a constituency. It argues that this relationship is relational and mutually constitutive. Armed groups pay heed to demands and normative limits of the constituency, while the constituency in turn actively supports insurgent organisations and by so doing legitimises it to wider audiences and inevitably internalises certain insurgent political values, particularly if they resonate to some degree with prevailing cultural norms. However, this relationship does not exist in a vacuum; it is conditioned by its immediate social environment which is populated by a varying array of other actors and institutions. The armed movement – constituency relationship is also subject to spatial vagaries and changes over time. Within this broad horizon, on occasions certain features are of greater relevance than others. The state always looms in the background but its presence is felt inconsistently; state institutions are intensely present in the city and but can be felt only intermittently in marginal rural areas. At times, there can be a number of different armed groups which can lead to processes of escalation. On other occasions insurgent movements are confronted by conventional state forces while on others, paramilitary and pseudo-state groups are also involved. Armed groups’ own repertoires of contention varying according to chronological

and spatial contexts. Jasper has explained “strategic choices are made within a complex set of cultural and institutional contexts that shape the players themselves, the options perceived, the choices made from among them, and the outcomes” (2004:5). The capacity and processes of choosing which strategy to adopt can be understood as movement agency. Oftentimes, strategic decisions are undertaken under duress or intense state pressure while other times movements are have the possibility to choose from a number of potential options thereby reflecting movement agency. Naturally, their agency is restricted by the relative strength of their adversaries but it is also conditioned by their dependency - be it symbolic or material - on its constituency. Movement agency is also circumscribed by its access to and construction of robust support networks and the availability of resources. Such environmental factors led to situations where armed group – constituency relations take on different forms, in terms of recruitment patterns, provision of services, and practises of violence. All of which are also subject to endogenous developments such as external conflicts, acquisition and loss of allies and large scale happenings such as the end of the Cold War. In the case of the PKK, these factors have all on occasion had greater or lesser impacts and will be developed accordingly in the following chapters.

Chapter II: Historical Context

Introduction

In order to facilitate an informed understanding of the PKK, this chapter will outline the social, ethnic and political contours of the Kurdish people. Even a brief description of the tortured history of the broader Kurdish nation is beyond the remit of this paper and it will, accordingly, concentrate on the Kurdish community in Turkey and make reference to the vicissitudes of their fellow Kurds only when it is of specific importance to the focus of the project. In light of the overall analytical interest of this project, this chapter will emphasise the socio-cultural and historical features which are more relevant to the modern day struggle of the PKK. It will predominantly concentrate on the Kurdish rebellions of the early Republican period and the Kurdish revival of the 1950s and 1960s, which served as the foundation upon which subsequent Kurdish movements were established. However, prior to engaging with these historical processes it will concisely summarise the ethno-religious and linguistic characteristics of the peoples of Kurdistan.

Brief History

The Kurdish people were divided following the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 between the Ottoman and Saffavid empires (see McDowall, 2004: 26-29), a division that engendered new and accentuated existing religious and linguistic divergences. Notwithstanding, their partition by the neighbouring powers Van Bruinessen remarked that “long before the age of nationalism there already was a sense of common identity among tribes whose cultures were ‘objectively’ quite diverse” (1994:6). A sense of Kurdish identity was reflected in a written history of the Kurds, *Sharafname* completed by Serafettin Bitlisi in 1597 and the epic poem *Mem û Zîn* written by Ahmad-e Xhani in 1692 (Imset, 1996). It was an arrangement

that persisted until the nineteenth century when Ottoman *Tanzimat*³⁰ reforms undermined the prevailing balance of power in the region and destroyed the hitherto, de facto independence of the “area under Kurdish rule (*Kurt hukumeti*)” (Gürbey, 2000:58, & see Van Bruinessen, 2003: 168-169).

A Kurdish *ethnie*, as per Smith’s understanding (1989), can be seen to have existed, even if it was one riven by intra-religious and intra-ethnic cleavages, divisions that were cut across by a rigid, tribal “‘aşiret or simply *Kurd*” and non tribal “*ra’yat*” social divide (Van Bruinessen, 1994: 13 & 2003). A Kurdish tribe can be understood as “a socio-political and generally also territorial (and therefore economic) unit based on descent and kinship, real or putative, with a characteristic internal structure (van Bruinessen, 1992:51 & 1989:617 and Andrews, 1989: 113). It is then composed of a number of hierarchical ordered sub-categories ranging from clan, lineage and sub-lineage to the household (ibid: 52). However, van Bruinessen notes that “actual political allegiance to a lineage becomes more important than real kinship (ibid). Tribal structure although bearing some ascriptive characteristics is in fact socially produced and maintained and “the fictive and real boundaries of tribes have become harder to assess” (Yalçın-Heckmann, 1989:625). Van Bruinessen further suggests that “the degree of complexity and internal stratification of the tribes seems to have depended primarily on two external factors: the available resource base and the extent of state interference in the region” (2003: 167).

A combination of the experiences of tribal resistance to the ‘modernising’ state of the late Ottoman period and the early Turkish republic and the impact of competing local nationalisms, most notably that of the Young Turks and the Armenians (Bozarslan, 2004:25), shaped the emergence of Kurdish nationalism in its modern form. The Kurdish national awakening was a gradual and uneven process, one that was dramatically undermined by the delimitation of artificially conceived state boundaries by the Allied powers in the wake of World War I. Although pan-Kurdish nationalism has, until recently, been impeccably respected at the rhetorical level, in the political arena it has fallen by the wayside of the irrepressible prerogative of the nation state which has enveloped into its embrace even the most ardent of Kurdish nationalists. It has thus disaggregated the Kurdish national struggle

³⁰ For an extensive treatment of the Tanzimat period see Mardin (2000).

into a number of distinct units defined by state borders and not by the confines of the Kurdish nation.

Kurdish Ethnic and Religious Heterogeneity

It has been estimated that the Kurdish population within the borders of Turkey is around thirteen million (McDowall, 2004:3) while Gunter suggests a figure of twelve to fifteen million or 18-23% of the Turkey's population (2003: xxix)³¹. As a result of its central location which for centuries bridged historic empires and the fact that Kurdish lands give rise to numerous religions which pre-dated the monotheism of Islam and Christianity; it has always boasted an ancient, and extremely mixed ethno-religious profile. In order to understand contemporary historical and political developments the heterogeneous nature of Kurdistan's ethno-religious composition needs to be briefly mapped. Firstly, there is no unanimity regarding Kurdish identity and its boundaries (van Bruinessen, 1989:613). In addition, to being informed by the Turkish-Kurdish dichotomy, Kurdish identity draws upon the variety of ethnic and religious communities that have historically resided in the Kurdish region. The history of the region, as has been pointed out, "is a history of cultural encounters; each community preserves in its cultural heritage a memory of encounters with other cultures, other religions, other languages" (van Bruinessen, 2011).

Externally formulated ethno-religious categories often fail to coincide or represent the nuanced inter-communal relations of the region, whereby communities maintained collective historic memories of having adhered to other religions (ibid). Additionally, practises such as *kirvelik* – upon circumcision each young Yezidi or Muslim male obtains a *kirîv* or in Christian terms, a form of godfather – which have immense social importance in terms of establishing non familial ties of social obligation, often crossed religious and ethnic divisions wherein Christians often took on the role of *kirîv* for Yezidis or Muslims (Van Bruinessen 2011; Kudat Sertel 1971 and Magnarella & Türkdoğan, 1973). Notwithstanding the epistemological caveats of communal categorisation and its pitfalls in the region, it can

³¹ Andrews provides a list of various estimates from 1949 to 1984 (1989:111).

be said that the majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'ite *madh'hab*³² in contrast to the neighbouring Sunni Turks and Arabs who adhere to the Hanafi tradition (Kreyenbroek, 1996:93 and van Bruinessen, 1989:615). The Kurds regional singularity in adhering to the Shafi'ite *madhab* is a "testimony, presumably to the independence their amirs enjoyed vis-à-vis the sultan" (McDowall, 2004:11), thus even if of a limited theological importance, it attests to a period of historic Kurdish autonomy. There are also a number of strongly rooted *Sufi* confraternities, most prominently the *Qadiriyya* and the *Naqshbandiya* (McDowall, 2004:50-53) that in spite of the heavy repression they endured in the early period of the Turkish Republic, continue to exert significant political and cultural influence.

There is also a small community of Yezidis that practises a syncretic form of Islam that draws heavily from the pre-Islamic religions that were once dominant in the region (see Kreyenbroek, 1996; Andrews, 1989:119; Langer 2010 and Van Bruinessen, 1994). Of greater significance is the large Kurdish Alevi community, to be found on the western margins of the Kurdish region (see Shankland, 2003; Jongerden, 2003; Soekefled, 2008; van Bruinessen, 1996a; Bumke, 1989 and Olsson, Özdalga & Raudvere 1998). The Alevi are widely understood to be Shia Muslims, however, their practises differ greatly from orthodox understandings of Shia Islam, and they are considered by some Islamic scholars as "an extremist split from Shia Islam, which is heretical in its attribution of divine powers to certain humans" (White, 2000:41). Alevi Kurds, as Van Bruinessen writing in 1994 pointed out, "are only a minority among the Alevis of Turkey, and they often feel closer to their Turkish-speaking co-religionists than to the Sunni Kurds" (1994:7 & 1989:615, Andrews, 1989:117 and Shankland, 2003:18). However, the mid to late nineties marked an Alevi revival across Turkey, provoked by the Turkish-Islamic synthesis³³ advanced by the state and state involvement in Alevi massacres, most notably in Sivas in 1993 and in the Gaziosmanpaşa quarter of Istanbul in 1995 (see Jongerden, 2003). Alevi alienation from the state was compounded by the army's brutality in its counter-insurgency in the

³² A *madh'hab* is an Islamic school of jurisprudence or *fiqh*. There are four principal Sunni *madhāhib*; Hanafi, Shafi'ite, Hanbali and Maliki.

³³ The Turkish-Islamic synthesis has been described by Van Bruinessen as "a confused doctrine combining fervent Turkish Nationalism and Muslim sentiment that was first formulated by a small group of right-wing intellectuals as an answer to socialism" (1996:4).

Dersim/Tunceli³⁴ region; developments which have led to the strengthening of Alevi Kurds' identification with a Kurdish identity (Van Bruinessen, 1999, Nigogosian, 1996 and Leezenberg, 2003). There are also a number of Christian communities in Kurdistan, particularly in the Mardin district (see van Bruinessen, 2011) which, although "they speak non-Kurdish tongues as their first language and generally would not call themselves Kurds, most speak Kurdish as a second language and Christian and Kurdish communities have lived together in symbiotic relationships for centuries" (Kreyenbroek, 1996: 91-92).

It has been noted that "ethnic terms generally tend to be applied imprecisely in Turkey; people often combine elements of religious and linguistic identification in assessments of ethnic identity" (Nyrop *et al* in White, 2000: 47 and see Andrews, 1989:19). Yet, it can be asserted that a considerable ethno-linguistic division exists in the form of the Zaza who have historically resided to the west of Diyarbakir, from Elazig in the north to Urfa in the south. The Zaza speak a Kurdo-Iranian dialect which is largely mutually unintelligible to Kurmanji speakers (Andrews, 1989:122). It is linguistically close to Gurani which is spoken for the most part in south east Kurdistan in Iran (Van Bruinessen, 1994:5). White posits that the Zaza migrated from the area of Dailam south of the Caspian Sea to Anatolia between 800 and 1000AD, thus leading him to surmise that "there can be no doubt we are speaking about an ethnically distinct people" (2000:43-46). He is of the view that from this original Zaza language, two distinct dialects have emerged; Zazaki and Kirmanc which roughly correlate to a Sunni – Alevi cleavage. These ethno-religious distinctions have led him to conclude that no self perception of the Zaza as Kurds exists (*ibid*: 48). While it must be admitted that no firm consensus exists regarding the linguistic relationship between Zaza and Kurmanji or even the regarding the nature and diffusion of the sub-dialects of Zaza, within the field White's position is rather singular. Van Bruinessen has stated that "virtually all Zaza speakers consider themselves [...] as Kurds" (1989:613). An interview carried out with a male in his fifties involved in the PKK from the Bingöl area directly contradicted White's contention. He pointedly rejected any religious correlation between Kirmanc and Dimili speakers and attributed the minor differences to geographical reasons. He referred to his native language as Dimili and claimed that it has a corresponding dialect he named as

³⁴ The Turkish government renamed Dersim province Tunceli in 1934, prior to its military campaign in the area.

Kirmanc which is mostly spoken in the Dersim region. In an interview White conducted with a Kurdish dissident communist figure Seyfi Cengiz³⁵ in 1996, the latter suggests that “Kirmanc people as a whole belong to a faith called the Kizilbaş or Alevi religion, whereas the Zazas are Sunni Muslims, adhering to the Şafii school of Islamic law” (in White, 1996:12). This paper suggests that Cengiz is being grossly simplistic in this instance or deliberately mischievous in his description. Furthermore, White’s position has been convincingly criticised as essentialist because it conceptualises Kurdishness in purely linguistic and religious terms (Güneş, 2011:262). My own fieldwork amongst Sunni, Zaza Kurds also clearly confounds White’s contention. Interviews with Zaza activists of KOMCIWAN³⁶ clearly showed that their primary identity was Kurdish (Interview 5, 2011). The interviewees were of the view that the Zaza revival was the work of the Turkish security services as a means to foster Kurdish disunity (see Leezenberg, 2003: 201 & Neyzi, 2003). This project will follow Van Bruinessen’s lead by using the term Zaza to collectively refer to the groups White distinguishes as Kirmanc/Kizilbaş and Zaza. It will refer to their precise religious persuasion or dialect only if it is of specific relevance to the discussion at hand. However, that is not to suggest that tensions between homogenising trends within Kurdish nationalism and the Zaza have not existed. A Zaza revival of sorts has occurred since the 1980s which included a short lived anti-Turkish and anti-Kurdish journal (Van Bruinessen, 1994: 25). However, it was of very marginal importance and failed to resonate with its target community. In conclusion, it is from across this, at times, overlapping but occasionally, mutually exclusive, smorgasbord of ethno-religious and linguistic identities, in a state context that promotes an aggressive Turkish nationalism, that a contemporary Kurdish nationalist identity has emerged.

³⁵ Cengiz was a member a number of radical Communist groups in the 1970s; he set up the Kurdish Communist Movement while in exile in 1983 and most recently founded the party *Serbestiya Dersimi* – The Dersim Liberation Party (Mosokofian, 2011). He therefore, has quite specific political views on the distinct identity of the Dersim region, the Zaza and Alevi peoples.

³⁶ KOMCIWAN is the youth wing of KOMKAR and is active exclusively in the diaspora.

The War of Independence and the Early Turkish Republic

The notorious Sykes-Picot agreement reached by France and Britain in 1916 proposed to divide the remains of the Ottoman Empire into zones of their control with the connivance of Czarist Russia. However, such plans were undermined by the Turkish resistance led by Mustafa Kemal, initially in conjunction with the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul; but his dismay at the supine position adopted by the Sultanate at the Peace Conference in 1919, subsequently led Kemal, in September 1919 to repudiate Istanbul's authority (McDowall, 2004:129). He then set about rallying the forces necessary to repel the French, British, Italian, Greek and Armenian forces from what was to later become Turkish state territory. All the while, the Kurdish position was incoherent and ambiguous, weakened by the lack of any legitimate leadership and internal rivalries (see the view of the British High Commissioner in McDowall, 2004:132) . Furthermore, the Kurdish people had endured enormous depredations during World War I, including up to 300,000 deaths in battle and 700,000 forced from their homes, as well as multiple foreign occupations (cited in White, 2000:68). Notwithstanding, that the Sultanate had been politically marginalised by the Kemalist forces and the Grand National Assembly, based in Ankara, it signed the Treaty of Sevres with the victorious Allied powers in 1920. Article 62 of the Treaty granted autonomy to the Kurdish region in the south east with the subsequent possibility of full independence. The Treaty was spectacularly divorced from realities on the ground and Kemal ignored its provisions and successfully mobilised a significant proportion of the Kurdish population in opposition to it.

Kemal's calculated deployment of Islamic rhetoric; for example, that the Muslims of Turkey, the Kurds, Circassians, Laz and the Turks "are genuine brothers who would respect each others' ethnic, local and other rights" (in Yeğen, 2009: 68) gained traction amongst the Sunni tribes who were heavily influenced by local *Sufi* confraternities, particularly the *Naqshbandiya*. In a 1921 missive to some Kurdish tribal leaders, Kemal wrote that the "the Kurds have always been a valuable help to the Turks. One can say that the two peoples form one" (in McDowall, 2004:188), and that "Turks and Kurds will live as brothers and equals" (in Ismet, 1995). The Kurds were particularly fearful of the establishment of an independent

Armenian state that would have encompassed large swathes of Kurdish territory and necessarily entail subjection to Christian authority, as well as potential retribution for the Armenian massacres of the preceding decades (McDowall, 2004: 125). Kemal's discourse studiously emphasised Pan-Islamic solidarity, as was clear in the ten-point resolution of the congress in Erzerum in 1919 (see *ibid*: 127). The Congress delegates, twenty two of the fifty six of whom were Kurdish, "focused on the need to resist Allied efforts to create Armenian and Greek states in Anatolia. Islam and Ottoman patriotism constituted an important bond between the Kurds and the other delegates" (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997:79). In short, this alliance was militarily and politically successful and managed to repel the occupying forces. Kemal signed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 which overrode the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres (see Mango, 2004:387). The new Treaty drew on the Ottoman religiously defined *millet*³⁷ system and at the insistence of the Western powers, recognised and guaranteed protection for non-Islamic minorities such as Christians and Jews, but made no such provision for largely Islamic minorities like the Kurds.

Following the abolition of the sultanate in 1922, the Turkish republic was established in 1923 with its capital in Ankara. Its founding, however, quickly ruptured the "multicultural sense of solidarity [that had] fuelled the national liberation movement and carried it to victory" (Ergil, 2000b:124). It became readily apparent that the envisaged Turkish state was to be modelled on an ethno-culturally defined nationalism, heavily influenced by the precepts of thinkers like Ziya Gokalp³⁸, Nihal Astiz and the wider Turanist movement; and it was to be one which did not concede space to any contending expressions of ethno-cultural identity. The first portents of the massive Kurdish resistance to the state emerged in 1920 when an Alevi tribe of Western Dersim, the Koçgiri rose against Kemal's troops demanding the implementation of autonomy as stipulated in the Treaty of Sevres. Its demands were thus thoroughly nationalist in character (see McDowall, 2004: 184 and Mango, 2004:330), but the rebellion proceeded to develop along tribal and religious fractures. It was not supported by the wider population of Sunni Kurds, reflecting their suspicions and hostility to the Alevi community. It was not even backed by most of its Alevi brethren; many cautiously

³⁷ The Ottoman *millet* system permitted the various confessional minorities to adhere, in terms of personal law, to their own judicial systems.

³⁸ Gokalp's origins have never been clarified but it is widely believed he was a Zaza. Olson unambiguously

refrained from moving against the Kemalists until the balance of military forces became clearer (White, 2000:71).

Sentiments of Kurdish nationalism gradually emerged in the latter stages of the Ottoman decline but had largely been confined to the notable Kurdish class resident in Istanbul. However, once the exclusively Turkish and secular nature of the newly founded Kemalist state began to become apparent, Kurdish nationalism started to take root in Kurdistan itself. Kurdish intellectuals “gained a separatist character, gradually, as a reaction to Turkish nationalism and the nationalist, secular and severe assimilationist policies of the new Turkish state” (Aras, 2014a:44). A nationalist organisation *Azadi* set about launching the first major uprising against the Turkish state. The movement gained rapid support through the dismayed Sufi orders, former *Hamidiye*³⁹ regiments and even within the ranks of Kurdish battalions in the army (McDowall, 2004:192 and see van Bruinessen, 1992:279-281, Strohmeier, 2003:86 and Mango, 2004:425). In order to consolidate its support base it appointed a prominent *Naqshbandiya*, Sheikh Said as its leader, thus it was a modern nationalist movement headed by an unmistakably traditional leader. It rose in widespread rebellion in the spring of 1925 and it was eventually quelled only by the deployment of aerial bombardment and after Sheikh Said was hung⁴⁰. The rebellion foundered once again on ethno-linguistic and religious divisions. Sheikh Said was a Sunni but significantly Zaza, and as a consequence, the Alevi tribes (mindful of distrust which existed between the two communities and, in particular, with the *Naqshbandiya*) did not mobilise in his favour; neither, for the most part, did the Kurmanji speaking Sunni tribes. The historic tensions between the tribal confederations and the non tribal urban dwellers also led the latter to not participate, thereby, highlighting the social, ethnic and religious disunity of the Kurds in the early stages of the Turkish republic (see Van Bruinessen, 2003 and Aras, 2013: 50-51).

describes him as a Kurd from Diyarbakir (1991:398).

³⁹ The *Hamidiye* were Kurdish cavalry units formed by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in the 1890s to defend the border area from Czarist Russia (McDowall, 1996:60).

⁴⁰ The continuing symbolic importance of the rebellions of this period is evident in Öcalan’s contention that the date of his arrest had been selected to coincide with the starting of Sheikh Said’s uprising, as an additional humiliation for the Kurdish people (Öcalan, 2011:163).

It is unclear how one should conceptualise these revolts; as the early incarnations of a nationalist conscience or as the futile efforts of a pre-modern society to fend off the tide of modernity. The religious fraternities and Sufi orders, according to Bozarslan, “refused to legitimise the Turkish state not because it was Turkish but because it was state. Still their “massif (*sic*) refusal reinforced the position of the Kurdish nationalist intellectuals and military officers, who rejected the state not because it was state but because it was Turkish” (2000:17). A report on the situation in Kurdistan, drawn up by a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Abdulhalik Renda on the other hand, asserted that the Sheikh Said rebellion “was a national movement under the cover of religion and reaction” (in Mango, 1994: 982); even the then Prime Minister, Fethi Okyar acknowledged that the political purpose of the rebellion was Kurdish separatism or *Kürtçülük* (in Mango, 2004:423). Jwaideh has concluded that “...the Kurdish rebellion of 1925 was the outcome of both nationalistic and religious causes” (2006:209). He further suggested that “it was quite obviously in the Turkish government’s interest to emphasise the reactionary and religious rather than the national aspects of the rebellion” (ibid: 207). It is arguably impossible given the variegated nature and objectives of the involved parties to retrospectively classify specific rebellions as either religiously or nationalistically motivated. However, oppositional awareness to the Kemalist state was clearly emerging and was consolidated by the state practises of repression and assimilation advanced from the mid 1920s.

The nationalism of the state underwent dramatic re-configuration after the stabilisation of the country’s external frontiers. “...it switched rapidly from a cultural nationalism toward a social-Darwinist one that explained the relations between Turkishness and Kurdishness as an eternal fight between a positive, progressive, and civilised culture and a negative, reactionary and barbarian atavism” (Bozarslan, 2004:29). A vast array of government legislation was enacted with the objective of first pacifying the region and then turkifying it. Article 88 of the Turkish Constitution stated that the “inhabitants of Turkey shall be deemed to be Turkish irrespective of their religion and race” (in Özcan, 2006:78)⁴¹. The Turkish political leadership’s volte face was clearly exemplified by the Prime Minister, İsmet İnönü who had vaunted the heroic role of the Kurds in the War of Independence at

⁴¹ For a more extensive treatment of Government’s legislative policy to the Kurds in that period, see Yegen,

the Lausanne negotiations in 1923; to only two years later assert that “in the face of a Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. We must Turkify the inhabitants of our land at any price, and we will annihilate those who oppose the Turks or ‘le Turquisme’” (in Özcan, 2006:81). In September 1930, the Minister for Justice, Mahmud Esad Bozkurt, announced that “both friends and enemies must know that the masters of this country are the Turks! People who do not have pure Turkish blood in their veins and are living in this country only have one right: the right of slavery and service” (in Aras, 2014a: 52 and Besikçi, 2004: 35). The term Kurd vanished from public discourse and “the Kurdish question became in the eyes of the Republic, no longer an ethno-political question, but a question of reactionary politics, tribal resistance, and regional backwardness” (Yeğen, 2009:599). As a means to the end of bringing modernisation and the remit of state control over the Kurds, the Settlement Act No. 2150 was passed in 1934 which entailed mass deportation of Kurds to the West and their exchange with Turkish peasants from central Anatolia, and the settlement of Turks in the vacant properties of the former Armenian population. It should be noted that this law was not solely applied to the Kurds and that it “was equally concerned with the settlement and assimilation of Muslim migrants from former Ottoman territories” (Jongerden, 2007:177). However, it was applied with greater rigour in the Kurdish region. The Kurdish language was banned in public (see Zeydanlioğlu, 2014), positions in the civil service were to be reserved for Turks and the Kurdish region was to remain closed to foreigners and under military rule (see Mango, 1994: 981-984 and Yeğen, 2009: 605). It should be noted though, that the repression of the Kurdish people was implemented at the collective level, and those many individual Kurds who chose to renounce their Kurdish heritage and identity were permitted to assimilate into Turkish society. Indeed, İsmet İnönü, Kemal’s right hand man and his successor as President of the Republic was himself of Kurdish descent (see Mango, 1994:986).

Kurdish resistance persisted until it was inevitably quelled in a definitive fashion by the superior forces of the Turkish army. The last great revolt was amongst the Alevi, Zaza speakers in the Dersim region from 1936-1938. After the crushing of the 1930 Xoybun rebellion; Dersim was the last remaining outpost resisting state authority. In a 1936 speech,

(2009) and Oran (2000) specifically for its policies of linguistic assimilation.

Atatürk⁴² declared that “our most important interior problem is the problem of Dersim. We have to remove and cleanse this wound, this terrifying abscess from its roots. In order to remove it from its roots everything should be provided whatever it will cost” (in Aras, 1914: 58). The Dersimlis ethno-linguistic particularism proved to be their undoing as none of the (admittedly at that point) militarily enfeebled Sunni Kurds rose in solidarity with them and the Kemalist forces crushed them with massive brutality. (White, 2000:88). The women of the Kureysan and Bahtiyar reportedly threw themselves from cliffs into the Munzur and Parcik ravines to avoid being raped by the Turkish army (in Aras, 2014a: 60). The extent and intensity of the violence is clear from the statistic that, in the course of only seventeen days in 1938, 7,954 Dersimlis were massacred (Besikçi in White, 1995: 82). The unwarranted nature of this brutality is reinforced by the fact that the rebel forces numbered only around 4,200 fighters and that the phase of active resistance had been quelled by November 1937 with the hanging of the revolt’s leader Seyt Riza (Watts, 2000: 18-23). The final death toll is estimated at up to 40,000 deaths (White, 2000:88).

There were a total of twenty seven Kurdish rebellions in the first two decades of the Republic (Kiliç, 1998:97). This paper has dedicated a significant amount of space to this period of history because one can clearly observe the progressive consolidation of a sense of shared Kurdish conscience and identity provoked by alienation from the state (Donmez, 2007:51). It was also in this period that the structural weakness of the formerly dominant ethno-religious and tribal formations in respect of the state was confirmed. The Dersim revolt was “a prime example of a Kurdish identity being assumed by these non Kurmanji (Kizilbaş and Zaza) minorities” (White, 2000:81) and is thus perhaps evidence of the slow consolidation of a Kurdish national identity. In the case of Dersim, “a familial and collective memory of this central event in the history of the province was passed down; a narrative distinct from (and opposed to) the national narrative” (Neyzi, 1999:9); thereby the lived collective memory of Dersimlis contradicts the state narrative. Furthermore, although two decades of political quiescence ensued from 1938 until the 1960s, state brutality had led to “armed struggle” becoming “an ingrained part of individual and collective memories” and “the very high casualties [...] linked this memory of rebellion to the duty for revenge”

⁴² In 1934 Mustapha Kemal took the honorific name Atatürk which meant ‘father of the Turks’.

(Bozarslan, 2004:32). It was these experiences of political failure that inspired the next generation of Kurdish nationalists in the 1960s and 1970s, to avoid the errors of their forefathers and stress the necessity of Kurdish unity. A unity rendered easier by marginalising the importance of religious and tribal affiliations and by endorsing an egalitarian leftist ideology.

Kurdish Revival

The Kurdish revival was brought about by a number of structural developments. The Turkish state underwent extensive industrialisation and concomitant mass migration from rural areas to the rapidly expanding urban centres (Landau, 1974:20). It was a tendency arguably more noted in the predominantly rural Kurdish region where a series of land reforms led to a rupture of the moral economy which had bound Kurdish Aghas to the Kurdish small holders and agricultural labourers together in a nexus of relations of mutual dependence for centuries (see Natali, 2005:100). This rupture was facilitated by the mechanisation of agriculture and particularly the spread of labour saving tractors,⁴³ compelling hundreds of thousands of Kurds to abandon the land (McDowall, 2004:403, see Zürcher, 2004: 224 & Natali, 2005:94). Furthermore, the application of compulsory military service and the presence of boarding schools (see Alış, 2009) which proliferated in the Kurdish region as a means of assimilating promising young Kurdish scholars led to the consolidation of an urbanised class with the linguistic and intellectual resources to question the prevailing social hierarchies and the official denial of Kurdish identity.

The second major development was the abolition of one party Kemalist rule and the introduction of multi-party politics in Turkey in 1946. A proposed land reform in 1945 dismayed the landed element within the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*/Republican People's party (CHP) and it was these dissenters who went on to form the Democrat Party - *Demokrat Parti* (DP). They "presented themselves as the party of private property, and made agriculture the cornerstone of their electoral appeal" (McDowall, 2004:400 and see Romano, 2006:39 &

⁴³Between 1948 and 1953, government distribution of tractors rose from 1,750 units to 30,000 (Natali, 2005:94).

Zürcher, 2004: 222). They considered the Kurdish aghas and tribal leaders as a crucial “bulk vote generators” (Barkey & Fuller, 1998: 77). The Kurdish peasantry which remained “deeply subservient to their landlords” (McDowall, 2004:400) represented hundreds of thousands of votes. They also opposed much of the secular reforms by “openly advocat[ing] religious freedom” and making use of the *Qadiriyya* and *Naqshbandiya* confraternities to consolidate their vote (ibid: 398). Thus, the Kurds became an electoral resource for the principal political parties and were crucial to the *Demokrat Partisi* electoral victory in 1950.

The late 1950s marked the return of Kurdish nationalist agitation. Musa Anter, an exemplary case of the unintended consequences of mass education, and others of a similar ilk, founded the journal *Illeri Yurt* in 1958 that included “snatches of Kurdish” in its articles and “dealt largely with the poverty of local people” (Mango, 1994:979). The journal was promptly shut down and Anter and his colleagues were imprisoned. The military coup d’état of 1960 and the new constitution of 1961 “significantly enhanced civil liberties and allowed for a greater freedom of expression, association and publication” (Taspinar, 2005:89 and Zürcher, 2004:246). It ushered in a political environment which permitted the first stirrings of Kurdish self-awareness and nationalism. The constitution guaranteed “a greater degree of freedom than ever before. People had more civil rights, the universities greater autonomy, and the students the freedom to organise their own associations”(Ahmad, 1993:136, Landau, 1974:9 and Mello, 2007: 218). However, the institutional openings also corresponded with periodic state brutality toward the Kurdish people; demonstrations in May 1961, organised in response to President Gursel’s denial of the Kurds’ existence in the foreword of a book were viciously suppressed⁴⁴. Gursel’s oft cited declaration “there are no Kurds in this country. Whoever says he is a Kurd, I will spit in his face” (Kiliç, 1998:97). He further threatened in November 1960 that “if the Mountain Turks [Kurds] give us no peace, the army will not hesitate to bombard and destroy their cities and villages. There will be a bloodbath of such dimensions that they and their country will no longer exist” (in Jongerden, 2007:58), exemplifying the continuing hostility to any deviation from the prevailing Nationalist discourse.

⁴⁴ The book was M. Sherif Firat’s *Dogu Illeri ve Varto Tarihi* (McDowall, (2004:406).

The early 1960s witnessed an unprecedented political resurgence with the establishment of eleven new parties (see Zürcher, 2004:245, Landau, 1974:14-21 and Giritli, 1969). The most important development for the focus of this project was the founding of the *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* / Workers Party of Turkey (TIP) in 1961. It was led by 1962 by the veteran Marxist, Ali Mehmet Aybar (see Karpat, 1967; Alış, 2009; Lipovsky, 1992 and Giritli, 1969). TIP was “heterogeneous to the point of populism, campaigning openly and energetically, and for a short time capable of linking socialist arguments to the concrete problems of the masses” (Samim, 1980:67). It fared reasonably well in the 1965 elections winning fifteen seats in parliament and over 300,000 votes (Harris, 198:25); four of which were won by Kurds⁴⁵ (Bozarslan, 2012:3) but its vote declined in the 1969 election (Lipovsky, 1992:67). TIP was remarkably open by the standards of the time; while it did not endorse the Kurdish struggle, it at least acknowledged that a Kurdish issue existed. In a 1963 speech, Aybar remarked that “there are millions of people in the Eastern and Southeastern region of Turkey speaking Kurdish, Arabic and/or belonging to Alevi sect [...] This issue has different dimensions on historical, ethnic, judicial grounds, in addition to interests of Turkey and humanity which prevail over these dimensions” (in Ercan, 2010:86). Mehdi Zana explained that “we decided to join the movement [TIP] because it was the only one that was not hostile in principle toward the Kurds” (1997:5).

TIP was not the only prominent leftist actor at that time. Trade Union membership had rocketed from around 250,000 members in 1960 to 2,000,000 in 1970 (Samim, 1980:69). An influential Marxist journal *Yön* founded in 1961 embraced leftist Kemalists and noted Kurdish actors such as Sait Kirmızıtoprak wrote for it (Bozarslan, 2012:3, Landau, 1974:50 and Zürcher, 2004:254). The Turkish Communist party/*Türkiye Komünist Partisi* (TKP), although still illegal, also commanded limited support in certain circles. In addition to these groups, socialist students formed the *Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*/Federation of Debating Societies. Student activism⁴⁶ rapidly expanded in parallel to the wider student activism in Europe and the United States focusing on the presence of the American Sixth Fleet which periodically docked in Istanbul (Alper, 2014:260). As clashes with the police and opposing fascist opposition movements intensified, the student left gradually fell under the

⁴⁵ In the provinces of Diyarbakır, Kars, Şanlıurfa and Malatya (Ercan, 2010: 101).

influence of a broad tendency centred on a former TKP member Mihri Belli and *Yön* magazine, which called for a National Democratic Revolution/ *Milli Demokratik Devrim* (NDR) (see Samim, 1980:70; Alper, 2014:270; Landau, 1992:110 and Zürcher, 2004: 255). A majority of students in the debating societies broke away from TIP's approach, aligned themselves with the NDR tendency and formed Dev-Genç (Revolutionary Youth) in 1969, which Samim described as a "hybrid organisation, which was part student movement, part revolutionary association" (1980:71). The NDR sought to trigger sufficient popular unrest to force presumed revolutionary allies within the military to seize power and establish a Marxist regime. It was in direct contradiction to the policy of incremental mass participation and parliamentary politics endorsed by TIP (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012:4). Changes to electoral legislation in 1969 (Samim, 1980:71 and Orlow, 1982:63), factionalism, student radicalisation (Alış, 2009: 141) and the concerted pressure by the government to curtail leftist activism (Zürcher, 2004:251) undermined TIP even before it was banned in 1970 because of a declaration it made recognising the Kurdish people at its Fourth Party Congress in 1970⁴⁷ (Bozarslan, 2012:3; Landau, 1992:78 and Olson, 1973: 202). The harsh repression of a 1970 trade union demonstration by the military after the demonstrators had overwhelmed the police and the imposition of martial law in April 1970 in a number of urban centres and Kurdish provinces exposed the fallacy of any proposed student-military alliance. With the brutal clampdown on leftist activists after the 1971 coup any hope of the realisation of the NDR were finally extinguished. Dev Genç had in any case begun to splinter by 1970, with the foundation in 1970 of two clandestine militant groups the People's Liberation Army of Turkey/*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu* (THKO) led by Deniz Gezmiş and the Turkish People's Liberation Front/*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi - Cephesi* (THKP-C) headed by Mahir Çayan. They were inspired by urban guerrilla groups like the Tupamaros in Uruguay and the various Palestinian movements and many of them had undergone military training in Palestinian camps in Jordan and Lebanon (Olson, 1973: 198 and see Candar, 2000).

The Kurdish movement – in the broader sense of the term – was not, however, simply a product of the Turkish left (Bozarslan, 2012:2). Around fifty young Kurds, subsequently known as the 49ers including Musa Anter had been imprisoned in 1959

⁴⁶ For a broad discussion on the role of student activism in the Turkish Republic see Szyliowicz (1970).

accused of Communism and Kurdist activities (Gunes & Zeydanlioğlu, 2014:10; Gundogan, 2011: 406; Zana, 1997: 6 and Alış, 2009: 56) and many more Kurds had been deported from Kurdistan to Western Turkey after the 1960 coup (ibid). Efforts by Kurdish intellectuals led to the spread of an array of journals dealing with the Kurdish issue including *Dicle-Firat*, *Deng* and *Anter's Doğu* amongst others (see Alış, 2009: 76). The 1959 rebellion by Mustafa Barzani in Southern Kurdistan in Iraq also led to an awakening of Kurdish consciousness (Gundogan, 2011: 391) and many Kurds within the borders of the Turkish state were firm supporters of it with some even participating in the fight. Kurdish underground political party the Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (TKDP) was founded in 1965 which operated on a clandestine basis as the Turkish constitution prohibited ethnic based parties. And it was directly modelled on Mustafa Barzani's conservative KDP in Southern Kurdistan in Iraq (McDowall, 2004: 408).

With the exception of the TKDP, emerging popular Kurdish nationalism was of a very red hue. Turkish leftist organisations ranging from TIP, to the trade unions and student groups quickly attracted large numbers of Kurdish supporters (McDowall, 2004:409 & Zürcher, 2004:246). TIP included a number of Kurds who were subsequently to the forefront of the Kurdish struggle such as Kemal Burkay and Mehdi Zana (Alış, 2009: 101). The leftist opening according to Bozarslan generated massive political opportunities for young Kurds such that “the Kurdish movement [...] [became] a part of a wider Turkish leftwing contest, which [...] [recognised] the autonomy of the Kurdish Issue. So from 1961-1969/70 the Kurdish movement can by and large be considered a part of or an extension of the Turkish Left” (2012:2). It was Kurds such as Kemal Burkay and Mehdi Zana in TIP, who were to the forefront of the Kurdish mobilisation of the late 1960s, known as the Eastern Meetings (Ercan, 2010: 101). They were a series of mass rallies organised between 1967 and 1969 in a number of Kurdish cities to “protest the backwardness of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (Gundogan, 2011: 390 and see Alış, 2009:135) and in response to articles in two right wing journals, *Milli Yol* and *Ötüken*, threatening Kurds with deportation like the Greeks and the Armenians (Gundogan, 2011: 409-410; Gunes, 2012:62 and Ercan, 2010:102). McDowall reported massive figures of 10,000 in Silwan and 25,000 in Diyarbakir (ibid: 410) at their

⁴⁷ The full declaration is cited in Alış (2009: 141-142)

rallies. The rallies also introduced innovative mobilisation strategies such as public rallies, poster campaigns, radio broadcasts and pamphleteering (Ercan, 2010: 100).

In 1969, taking advantage of the momentum generated by the Eastern meetings, Kurdish activists established as legal organisations until they were banned in 1971 following the coup, the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* /Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East (DDKO). It was a loosely bound network of students and youths which sought “to raise Kurdish consciousness” (Yavuz, 2001:10) and offered a class based analysis of the problems of the day (Gunes, 2013:252) in seminars and discussions. The DDKO was “profoundly pacifist” and “extremely reformist” and membership and participation overlapped with other groups like Dev Genç and TIP (Bozarlan, 2012: 6). The establishment of the DDKO marked an important turning point in the emergent Kurdish movement as it was “a new stage in the separation of Kurdish socialists from the Turkish socialist movement” (Gunes, 2012:43).

The state had become increasingly concerned with the murmurings of discontent in Kurdistan and reacted accordingly. Leading organisers of the Eastern meetings were imprisoned in 1968 in relation to a pamphlet they had published (Zana, 1997:6) and the discovery of a cache of weapons along the border with Iraq was used as a pretext to deploy troops in rural Kurdish areas (Olson, 1973:202). The weapons had, however, not been intended for use in Turkey but across the border in Iraq by Barzani’s forces. Commando units were sent to the Kurdish region in 1970 and engaged in mass violence that involved the torture, sexual humiliation and rape of Kurdish villagers. (McDowall, 2004: 411, and Ercan, 2010: 101). Repeated efforts to quell the growing political upheaval (Zürcher, 2004: 257-258) had failed and, as a consequence, the military decided to launch another coup d’état on March 12th 1971. The official motivations proffered by the military for its intervention were the need to counter militant left and right groups, those who favoured a dictatorship and Kurdish secessionists (Olson, 1973:202). Martial law was declared and hitherto legal leftist and Kurdish movements such as DDKO and Dev-Genç were outlawed and trade unions were heavily restricted. The Demirel government was deposed and legislation limiting civil liberties and granting further powers to the military, was enacted (Zürcher, 2004: 261). In practise, “the restoration of law and order was equated with the

repression of any group viewed as leftist” (Ahmad, 1993:148); hundreds of leftist activists were imprisoned and tortured. Furthermore, the regime turned a blind eye to the activities of right wing militants in their harassment of people identified with the left, notably school teachers and TIP member (ibid:149 and Zürcher, 2004:259). In the short term, the coup succeeded in restoring a semblance of order, especially following the capture and deaths of Çayan and Gezmiş in 1972. The period of martial law and military rule – admittedly by civilian proxy (Narlı, 2000:113 & Erim, 1972) – effectively “marked the temporary end of an organized left” (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012: 5). However, in the long term it served only to highlight the illegitimacy of the state amongst leftists and Kurds. There was a widespread belief in the promise of the 1961 constitution which had granted such unprecedented political rights but the coup served to confirm the futility of any reformist strategy (Bozarslan, 2012: 6).

Conclusion

This chapter is relatively brief in comparison to the others; it does not purport to offer even a minimalist summary of twentieth century Kurdish history. It rather provides a degree of background information and historical context for the emergence of the Kurdish movement in the 1960 and 1970s which subsequently begat the generation of radical Kurds and the PKK under analysis in this project. The Kurdish mobilisation in Turkey has also been formed and influenced by its interactions with the Turkish state and its oftentimes brutal assimilationist policies. It has been forged in conjunction with, and opposition to an array of right and left wing Turkish political actors. The contemporary Kurdish movement, in contradistinction to earlier examples of tribal and religious vertical leadership patterns, came about as a direct consequence of broader structural developments such as the diffusion of education, the mechanisation of agriculture and urbanisation. The political openings of the 1960s and the willingness of the Turkish left, to remain open to considering Kurdish issues and not *a priori* dismissing them, provided a pioneering generation of Kurdish activists and intellectuals the platform from which the Kurdish movement emerged. However, the Turkish state’s unwillingness to tolerate the claim making practises of institutional political parties such as TIP and moderate organisations like the DDKO ensured

that subsequent Kurdish movements would be of a much more radical and violent disposition. The following chapters will deal with these more radical organisations - the PKK in particular - which emerged from the marginalisation and repression of more institutionalist and non-violent Kurdish and leftist movements.

Chapter III: Pre-conflict Mobilisation (1974-1984)

Introduction

Although armed groups often only come to popular attention once they launch campaigns of violence, the preceding non-violent, or perhaps more aptly less violent periods of mobilisation are of formative importance. Periods of pre-conflict mobilisation are crucial because it is often in this incipient phase that armed groups' structures are determined, leadership patterns are established and a form of movement *habitus* is clarified which often informs the behaviour of subsequent generations of recruits by the formalisation of a particular "recruitment narrative" (Viterna, 2013: 42 and see O'Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming).

The founding generations of armed movements have been conceptualised in various ways in the relevant literature. Distinctions have been drawn between founders and followers (Moyano, 1992), initiators and spin-off movements (McAdam, 1995) or classified as early risers (Tarrow, 2011). The differing qualities of early mobilisers and their militant trajectories have also been analysed extensively (Bosi & della Porta, 2012; Bosi, 2012 & 2007 and Viterna 2006). There is a general consensus that activists which mobilise in the earlier phases do so in a distinct fashion to those in subsequent stages, who are conditioned by a series of endogenous factors to the conflict. Pioneering early risers "can expose opponents' points of weakness that may not be evident until they have been challenged. Their actions can also reveal unsuspected or formerly passive allies both within and outside the system" (Tarrow, 2011: 167). They therefore often operate under unclear sets of constraints and opportunities which have become more evident by the time subsequent recruits become involved. It is also the period when the initial core of founding members are obliged to expand and obtain recruits and support amongst the wider population. In short, it is when militant groups begin to establish their constituency. It is also worth mentioning that this is a period when armed groups are most vulnerable to repression due

to their inexperience, small numbers and limited support and logistic networks.

There is also however a danger of over-emphasising the importance of the period; Weinstein has argued that the “differences in how rebel groups employ violence are a consequence of variation in the initial conditions that leaders confront” (2007: 7). An overly structurally determinist view runs the risk of dismissing endogenous aspects of conflict mobilisation (see Tarrow, 2007) and of dedicating insufficient attention to other actors present and broader structural changes through the course of conflict. Nonetheless the initial phase of mobilisation is worthy of careful attention and so this chapter will detail the early period of the PKK’s mobilisation, dating from the mid-1970s to the launch of its insurgency in 1984.

The chapter will be roughly broken into two chronological periods: the phase prior to the 1980 military coup and the subsequent period leading up to the PKK’s insurgency in 1984. The period of mass social and political conflict which predated the 1980 coup remains remarkably understudied; a significant portion of this chapter will therefore be dedicated to empirically laying out the broader socio-political context and the smorgasbord of various actors which populated it along with the PKK. It will then consider the PKK’s emergence in detail, outlining their recruitment strategies and interactions with rival movements and the state prior to the coup and in its aftermath. Following the relative calm of the early 1970s in the wake of the 1971 military coup, there was a notable spike in violence between 1975 and 1980. In that time there were around 5,000 casualties and innumerable injuries as a result of armed political clashes in Turkey (see Sayari 2010 & 1985; Gunter, 1989; Harris, 1980; Zürcher, 2004:263; Mardin 1978; Ercan, 2010 and Orlow, 1982). To put that in a comparative context, this five year period claimed a larger number of deaths than those accrued from almost forty years of violence in the struggles in Northern Ireland and the Basque country combined.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the period can be best understood as a cycle of contention. Tarrow defines a cycle of contention as:

“a phase of heightened conflict across the social system, with rapid diffusion of collective

⁴⁸ The figures usually cited vary from 3,500 for Ireland to 1,100 deaths in Euskal Herria and Spain.

action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors, a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention employed, the creation of new or transformed collective action frames, a combination of organized and unorganized participation, and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities” (2011: 221).

Cycles of contention are characterised by an array of interactive escalatory mechanisms and processes of mobilisation that have been ably analysed by a variety of authors (McAdam *et al*, 2001; Tilly, 2003; della Porta 2013 *inter alios*). This chapter will discuss the manner in which competitive escalation and violent outbidding within the contending forces of the radical Kurdish movement led to intra-Kurdish violence as they competed with one another for recruits, resources and recognition. It will also focus on the processes of interaction between the Kurdish and leftist movements, their right-wing opponents and with the forces of the state. This intense series of actions and counter-actions led to collective polarisation and radicalisation. However, this multi-actor political environment was abruptly ended by the military’s seizure of power, thus radically reconfiguring the broader political opportunity structure. The second part of this chapter will accordingly detail how this impacted on the various movements and how the PKK, unlike both its allies and its rivals, managed to re-organise and to launch its insurgency in 1984. It will show how the PKK utilised the opportunities afforded by the partially democratic structures of the pre-coup period and how it re-constructed its repertoire of contention in light of the impossibility of unarmed contention after 1980.

The Rise of Violence in the Late 1970s

The political violence of the late 1970s can be categorised in three sections: clashes between left and right-wing militants; communal clashes which culminated in wholesale campaigns against the Alevi minority in central and eastern regions of the country; and the initial phase of armed Kurdish mobilisation from 1978. However, all three were reciprocally formative and interlinked in various ways, most notably by the reaction of the state to the violence.

The underlying reasons for this return to violence are multifarious. They can be surmised as deriving from, in the terms of McAdam et al (2001), environmental, cognitive and relational mechanisms. Environmental mechanisms are “externally generated influences on conditions affecting social life” (ibid: 25). The political environment was altered by Prime Minister Ecevit’s decision to release almost all political prisoners in a general amnesty in 1974 and by the far right’s institutional implantation in positions of coercive power following the coming to power of a right-wing coalition in 1975⁴⁹ (Samim, 1981:75 and Gunter, 1989:66). In addition, the broader political context was conditioned by persistent parliamentary instability and a succession of volatile coalition governments throughout the 1970s (Gunter, 1989:64 and Zurcher, 2004: 261) and the worsening financial crisis of the 1970s when Turkey endured “crippling shortages of important consumer items, raging inflation, and rising unemployment” (Gunter, 1989:65 and Tonge, 1979). There was a dramatic dearth of oil imports leading to factories running on 30% capacity, the absence of fuel for central-heating and even general transportation (Birand, 1987:45). All of which was exacerbated by a rapidly growing population, ceaseless rural to urban migration and universities that were overcrowded, insufficient and served merely to provide thousands of graduates with little employment prospects (Mardin, 1978 and Birand, 1987:51).

Cognitive mechanisms can be understood as “alterations of individual or collective perception” (McAdam et al, 2001:26). The left had undergone a widespread cognitive transformation in the wake of the 1971 coup. Although the armed campaigns of the first generation of leftist radicals had utterly failed, their ideological mainstay, the necessity of overthrowing the state by military means, emerged reinforced by the conduct of the state during the coup. The legalist institutional strategies of the TIP had not borne any fruit and had resulted in its dismemberment as a party (see Lipovsky, 1992: Chapter 9). The radical left milieu had recognised the infeasibility of realising their objectives within the prevailing institutional framework and had broadly accepted that the status quo could only be altered by seizing power either through another coup d’état or through armed struggle (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012:4).

⁴⁹ This coalition was composed of the *Adalet Partisi*/Justice Party (AP) whose leader Demirel served as Prime Minister, the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*/National Action Party (MHP) and the *Millî Selâmet Partisi*/ National Salvation Party (MSP).

Finally, there were the relational mechanisms between the Turkish left, the Kurdish movement, the right and the forces of the state, which were embroiled in an ever escalating series of actions and reactions. The contours of the main groupings of the period will be briefly outlined in the following paragraphs in order to facilitate a more substantial empirical picture of the most relevant movements.

The Left

In the wake of the 1971 coup a period of stability was established, albeit a stability facilitated by an onslaught of state violence which resulted in widespread imprisonments, torture and executions. However, in 1974 the Ecevit government⁵⁰, bolstered by what was popularly viewed as its successful handling of the Cyprus crisis (Zürcher, 2004:261), in the wake of a judgement of the Constitutional Court released all remaining political prisoners detained in the aftermath of the 1971 putsch (Samim, 1981:75). The government was convinced that following the deaths of many of the senior members of the armed leftist groups of the early 1970s THKO, THKP-C and TKP-ML⁵¹ the danger presented by the radical left had dissipated. Accordingly, thousands of leftist prisoners were released. These former prisoners promptly reassumed the gauntlet of the struggle initiated by their comrades in the late 1960s. These released militants emerged “into a situation where the mass youth following of the left had grown enormously” (ibid: 73). A plethora of legal and extra-legal leftist movements competed with each other to take up Çayan and Gezmiş’ revolutionary mantle. Sayari estimates that there were three dozen leftist groups (2010: 202) while one newspaper listed forty nine different left wing party manifestoes including around a dozen Kurdish ones in 1979 (Birand, 1987:50).

The radical left was hopelessly fragmented but aligned in two major tendencies: a Maoist one exemplified by the (TKP-ML) and its armed wing *Türkiye İşçi ve Köylü Kurtuluş*

⁵⁰ A coalition composed of the CHP and the MSP.

⁵¹ *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu*/ People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO), *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi – Cephesi* /Turkey People's Liberation Party - Front (THKP-C) and *Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist*/Turkish Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (TKP-ML)

Ordu/Workers'/Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (TIKKO)⁵²; and a larger Marxist spectrum containing groups of varying radicalness, most notably represented by DEV-YOL⁵³, DEV-SOL⁵⁴ and Kurtuluş. The start of the academic year 1974-75 witnessed a return to left-right violence on university campuses. However, unlike the relatively contained clashes of the 1969-71 period, the violence spread beyond the university campuses, first to the larger cities before reaching by 1980 even small towns and villages (Sayari, 2010: 202 & 1985:9). The organisations of the left had huge numbers of followers in this period, as evidenced by the famous May Day demonstration in Taksim in 1977.⁵⁵ 200,000 protesters attended, of which Dev Yol alone boasted 40,000 supporters, while the smaller Kurtuluş had up to 10,000 adherents (Samim, 1981:61). There was also a marked transition from the almost exclusively middle class groups of the earlier generation to ones which encompassed all social classes (Bozarslan, 2012:7). According to the statistics of the Turkish Armed Forces cited in Sayari, only one fifth of those detained on terrorism charges in the aftermath of the coup, were either university students or university dropouts (1985:10).

The Right

The rise in the violence of the right in the 1970s was correlated to the political fortunes of the MHP⁵⁶ founded in 1969 by Alparslan Türkeş, a former senior military officer who played a prominent role in the 1960 coup d'état. Although it enjoyed relatively limited electoral success in the 1970s, polling only 3.4% in 1973 and 6.4% in 1977 (Arikan, 1998:121), it garnered massive political influence by its participation in the right-wing government coalition headed by Demirel and the conservative Justice Party from 1975. Sayari suggests that the MHP's "ideological orientation and strategies bore a striking resemblance to the neo-fascist parties which emerged in several European democracies in the post-World War II era" (2010: 203). It was remarked that "the MHP always defined itself by evoking 'fear' in opposition to either real or imagined 'enemies'", and that in 1973-80,

⁵² *Türkiye İşçi ve Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu*/ Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (TIKKO)

⁵³ *Devrimci Yol Hareketi*/Revolutionary Path

⁵⁴ *Devrimci Sol*/Revolutionary Left

⁵⁵ It ended in violence when gunmen opened fire from nearby rooftops and resulted in 39 deaths.

⁵⁶ The MHP was essentially the former *Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi*/Republican Farmers Nation Party (CKMP) renamed and repackaged in 1969.

“the MHP saw the Turkish state as having a clear enemy: the Soviet Union and its local extension, the Turkish Left and the Left-leaning Alevi community” (Yavuz, 2002:206).

Aside from its parliamentary party, the MHP had an organic relationship with an array of right-wing ‘Idealist’ associations which had been involved in the campus clashes of the late 1960s; principal among these were the Idealist Clubs Association (*Ulku Ocaklari Derneği*), the Idealist Path Organization (*Ulku Yolu Birliđi*), and the Idealist Youth Organization (*Ulku Genç Derneđi*), generically known as the Grey Wolves (Sayari, 2010:203). Although in absolute terms the extreme right boasted smaller numbers than their counterparts on the left, “under the leadership of Türkes, [it] was a unified movement with a single command, that [...] successfully combined legal and illegal methods” (Samim, 1981:80).

The situation of the late 1970s has been repeatedly described as a period of anarchy; this is however a misleading simplification expounded by the military regime, determined to retrospectively legitimise its 1980 coup as an unpalatable necessity to restore a semblance of order. The endorsement of such an understanding denies the decisive roles played by elements within the wider parliamentary right and nefarious groupings within the military in strategically fomenting the violence and instability (Sinclair-Webb, 2003:220, Kara & Kum, 1984:24 and Bovenkerk & Yeşilgöz 2005:590). It would be equally mistaken to contend that in the absence of these sinister manoeuvrings of the right no social unrest would have occurred. The radical left contained a significant core that was ideologically convinced of the necessity of an armed struggle and would have most likely advanced projects of violence regardless of the presence of right-wing forces. Nonetheless, the coming to power of the ‘Nationalist Front’ government between 1975 and 1978 triggered a quantitative and qualitative escalation of the violence.

After Demirel assumed the position of Prime Minister, his government “set about colonizing ‘their’ ministries in an unprecedented way: thousands of civil servants were discharged or demoted and replaced with party loyalists” (Zürcher, 2004: 261), thus ensuring that not only was government in the hands of the right, but that significant branches of the state’s bureaucratic and repressive apparatus were under the control of

individuals ideologically aligned to the right as well. Türkeş, as one of two deputy prime ministers from 1975 to 1977, was in charge of internal security and secret services (Gunter, 1989: 66 and Patmore, 1979). Samim described the changeover not as a taking of power but as the plundering of the state and concluded that “the main beneficiaries of this official piracy were the fascists, whose Grey Wolves commandoes now acquired state protection and official sinecures”(1981: 75 & see Ahmad, 1993: 166 and Birand, 1987:50). Therefore, notwithstanding the disparity in numbers, “the struggle between left and right was an unequal one. [...] the police and the security forces had become the exclusivist preserve of Türkeş’[MHP], and even under Ecevit’s government of 1978-79, they had remained heavily infiltrated by fascists who shielded and protected the Grey Wolves” (Zürcher, 2004: 263 and Patmore, 1979: 478).

Communal clashes

The left-right polarisation took on sectarian undertones upon the alignment of the Alevi minority with the wider left and the large segments of the Sunni Turkish and Kurdish populations with the right. A central ideological tenet of the far right as developed in the early 1970s was the forging of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis (*Türk-Islam sentezi*), which essentially held that “a good Turk must be a good Sunni Muslim and a good Sunni Muslim must be a good Turk” (Jongerden, 2003:79). The implicit exclusion in such a view was that as Alevis were not Sunni Muslims, they could not therefore be proper Turks. This polarised understanding reinforced a longstanding perception that Alevis had an inherent sympathy for the left, initially as strong exponents of Kemalist secularism and later through the forces of the radical left (Vorhoff, 2003: 94, Bozarslan, 2003, Shankland 2003 & White, 2003). This viewpoint is evidenced in the common saying, “We are Alevi, that is we are leftists” (*Biz Aleviyiz, yani solcuyuz*) (Sinclair-Webb, 2003:217). These sectarian tensions were an ulterior schism along which the state’s destabilisation progressed. Violence initially followed the similar pattern of tit for tat killings between members or perceived sympathisers of opposed political groups but rapidly escalated into mass killings, most notably in the case of

Kahramanmaraş⁵⁷ in December 1978 where 111 people, the vast majority of whom were Alevi were massacred by the Grey Wolves (ibid, 2003 and Birand, 1987:59-61). There were also other sizeable massacres of Alevis in the towns of Sivas and Çorum in the period preceding the coup (Jongerden, 2003:83 and Birand, 1987:147). The violence was of such an extent that it led Ecevit, then in opposition, to admit that “civil war has broken out in several provinces”⁵⁸ (in Briefing⁵⁹, June 9 1980). In the trial which followed the Maraş killings, the perpetrators of the violence explicitly stated that the victims were selected on the basis that they were allegedly communist and Alevi and not on the alternative division between Kurdish and Turkish (ibid: 231). This however has not inhibited the hagiographers of the PKK and the wider Kurdish movement from including the massacre as an ulterior incident of Turkish state fascism against the Kurdish people. In a discussion with a member of the Kurdish National Congress/*Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan* (KNK),⁶⁰ it was earnestly explained to me that the massacre was a direct state response to the formal establishment of the PKK a month earlier. It is a dramatically skewed opinion because the PKK did not have any significant presence in the area prior to the attack it was a Kurdish group of arguably lesser importance in contrast to more established groups at that time (see Özcan, 2006:88), and it is highly probable that the state was not even aware of the formal establishment of the group.⁶¹

A precise breakdown of the motivations underpinning the violence and the selection of ‘legitimate’ targets of the period is clearly unfeasible. The brutal nonchalance of the violence of the period is chillingly captured in the testimony of a sixteen year old Grey Wolf named Ferhat Tüysüz (in Birand, 1987: 54-56). In his account he explained that he strafed a cafe with bullets because he felt the owner had been rude to him, injuring two people. In concert with a friend of his, he admitted to murdering a youth called Mustafa Yaşar because

⁵⁷ Kahramanmaraş is a largely Kurdish city in the south east with a sizeable Alevi community. It is popularly referred to as Maraş.

⁵⁸ He was referring to Çorum, Sivas and Merzifon in the Black Sea region.

⁵⁹ Briefing was a political and economic weekly publication in English from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. It was pro-business and Kemalist in outlook, therefore rather sympathetic to the putschist regime.

⁶⁰ The KNK according to Akkaya and Jongerden is “a pan Kurdish umbrella organisation comprising representatives from the Kurdish diaspora in the Middle East, Europe, North America, Australia and Asia as well as representatives of political parties from all parts of Kurdistan, religious and cultural institutions, independent political entities and intellectuals and non-Kurdish ethnic groups” (2011a:159)

⁶¹ Informal conversation 2011.

he “turned out to be a member of an association hostile to us” (ibid). Individual acts of violence could have been triggered by the fact one was Alevi, a member of a left-wing organisation or perceived as having left-wing sympathies, for being Kurdish, or any combination of those reasons. Sayari bluntly asserts that the dead of the period were mostly left or right-wing militants (2010:204) along with some innocent bystanders. He further asserts that both left- and right-wing groups “after igniting religious sectarian hostilities, [...] sought to position themselves as the ‘protectors’ of the embattled communities to gain political support and manpower for their organizations” (ibid). His view has an overly organisational focus. It is undeniable that rival organisations targeted each other’s members in the classic model of mutual escalation, selecting ever more high profile targets such as the prominent trade unionist Kemal Türkler and MHP Vice-President Gün Sazak (ibid). However, many of the dead were selected less on the certain basis of their formal association with one group or another but rather according to the perception that the victims bore left- or right-wing sympathies, thus expanding the parameters of what constituted a legitimate target. It is also somewhat contentious to assert that both left and right “ignited religious sectarian hostilities” (ibid). My research has not revealed any incidences of Sunni massacres by Alevis or collective killings of Turks by Kurdish groups. Such expressions of mutual equivalence are a misrepresentation of the patterns of violence of the right-wing paramilitary groups.

The patterns of violence adopted by the Grey Wolves inadvertently consolidated Alevi support for the radical Turkish and Kurdish left. Abdullah explained that following fascist attacks on Alevi neighbourhoods in Bingöl in 1976-1977 all of the Kurdish groups active in the town organised joint nightly armed patrols to protect these neighbourhoods (Interview 14, 2012). These gatherings served as ideal moments’ of encounter between the incipient radical Kurdish associations and potential supporters. Interactions between the militant groups and civilians can be regarded as relations of ‘utilitarian social exchange’ and engendered personal links and emotional bonds between them, as well as serving as the initial steps toward the consolidation of a constituency. Such links would have been more difficult to establish in the absence of the fascist threat. Analogous developments were observed with leftist radicals assuming the responsibility of protecting the besieged Alevi communities in non-Kurdish areas. Samim describes how Dev-Yol in particular, due to its

size and organisational capacity, greatly extended its links with the Alevi community by its position in the forefront of these defensive campaigns (1981: 77), while TIKKO acted as the defensive bulwark of the Alevi communities in the Gazi neighbourhood in Istanbul (Wedel, 2002:63).

The Kurds

As discussed in Chapter II, until the 1970s most Kurdish political activism took place within the framework of Turkish leftist parties, primarily the TIP. However, in the early 1970s Kurdish leftist activists had become disillusioned with the Turkish left's commitment (or lack thereof) to Kurdish issues and underwent a distinct cognitive transition. They began to reinterpret the conditions prevailing in Turkey. A consensus slowly gained traction across the Kurdish political spectrum that advanced the notion that Kurdistan was in fact a colony of the Turkish state. This marked a significant breach with the Turkish left whose view was clearly expressed in a Dev-Yol publication in 1978, which adhered to the view that:

“Marxist theory of colonialism shows that in the age of imperialism a dependent country which is not capitalist by its internal dynamic but has a kind of distorted capitalism (such as Turkey) historically cannot establish a colonialist relationship” (in Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012:8).

Ergo, Turkey as a dependent state itself could never be a colonial state. Unsurprisingly, this theoretically blinkered understanding of the socio-political situation in Kurdistan was rejected by many politically conscious Kurds.

The logical implication of the paradigm switch to anti-colonialism was that the long-term objective of the Kurdish movement became the pursuit of national self-determination. The majority of Kurdish groups shared the view that “the ‘colonialist’ division of Kurdistan was presented as one of the main reasons behind Kurdistan’s fragmentation and lack of

national unity” (Gunes, 2012:84). This view first appeared⁶² in a book in 1973 called ‘Salvation Struggle of the Kurdish People in the Conditions of Turkey’ penned by Kemal Burkay under the pseudonym Hidir Murat (Ercan, 2010:138). This view has been made further explicit in later publications where it was explained that the colonisation of the region dated back to the division of the spoils of the former Ottoman Empire in the wake of World War I (PSK,⁶³ 2001). As Burkay explained in 1974, “force is used to keep Turkish Kurdistan under control and to suppress the Kurdish people’s democratic revolution. The Turkish bourgeois governments reduced Kurdistan to the status of a colony” (in Gunes, 2012:72). It subsequently became the paradigmatic understanding of the wider Kurdish movement and was advanced by all the major Kurdish socialist groups such as the DDKD, TKSP, Rizgarî⁶⁴, and Kawa and of course the PKK.⁶⁵

This anti-colonial discourse had implications for intra-Kurdish societal dynamics. “Since Kurdistan’s feudal classes were incorporated into the Turkish system and took part in the perpetuation of the Kurd’s oppression” (Gunes, 2012: 89), they were considered integral to Kurdistan’s exploitation. The struggle for national liberation thereby necessarily maintained its radical leftist focus because its successful realisation demanded the extirpation of local agents of Turkey’s capitalist yolk, the class of powerful *aghas*. The adoption of a discourse of national self-determination came about in a specific global context of successful anti-colonial armed campaigns such as Algeria in 1962 and the ongoing struggle in Angola and Mozambique (see Ercan, 2010: 137 and Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012: 4). National liberation was therefore, seen not only as a desirable political goal but also a thoroughly realisable one. By the mid-1970s, the wider Kurdish movement had evolved to fuse nationalist and leftist concerns and it was willing to set about achieving these objectives with or without the support of their Turkish comrades.

⁶² Ercan explains that this might not have been the very first time such a hypothesis occurred but that it was the first to be widely diffused (2010:138), while Bozarlan (2012:6) attributes the colonial understanding to Sait Kirmizitoprak. He was killed in 1971, so it is plausible that he had advanced the national liberation discourse prior to Burkay but his death ensured it became popularly associated with Burkay.

⁶³ TKSP was renamed the PSK in 1993.

⁶⁴ See Ercan (2010: 141) for selected extracts on the topic from the first issue of their eponymous publication in 1976.

⁶⁵ In the PKK’s party programme of 1998, even after the movement had moderated much of its more radical demands, it reiterated the view that Kurdistan was a colony (PKK, 1998).

The Kurdish revival of the mid-1970s, taking place after the wider Kurdish movement had begun to detach itself from the Turkish left, emerged within a rigidly ideologically polarised environment, rendering it almost impossible to remain agnostic on the left-right divide. And it firmly located itself amongst the ranks of the left. It found a sort of “legitimization in leftist discourses” because “‘Marxism-Leninism’ [...] insist[s] strongly on the rights of the oppressed nations to determine their own future” (Bozarslan, 2012: 3). Its left-wing orientation was further ensured by the fact that the majority of Kurdish activists (who had militated in the Kurdish political resurgence of the late 1960s) had been active in left-wing parties, most notably TIP. In addition, some of the more radical Kurdish elements such as the PKK had served their political apprenticeships in the movements of the radical Turkish left. By the mid-1970s, the Turkish state was increasingly under the sway of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis and this informed its approach to the Kurdish question, thereby diminishing the possibility of any shared centrist ground or compromise between the Kurdish movements and the state. Accordingly, the broader Kurdish movement had limited political opportunities to obtain right-wing political allies or supporters, so it was obliged to orient itself to the left. In addition, the discourse of national liberation was firmly rooted in an international ideological terrain, which was resolutely left-wing. Finally, as Gunes suggests the socio-economic “demands of the most populous section of Kurdish society – the landless peasantry [...] – could be reflected in a socialist discourse” (2012:77). The Kurdish movement by the 1970s can for the most part be characterised as having shed the traditional models of political organisation constituted by vertical patrimonial systems rooted in tribal, religious and localised identities, in favour of a left-wing, national liberationist Kurdish identity.

As discussed in Chapter II, the first Kurdish national movement was the TKDP which was an extension of Barzani’s KDP in Turkey. It was established in a “conservative ambience” in 1965 and was “purely nationalist and unwilling to examine the inherent tensions between ethnic nationalism, social traditionalism and social development” (McDowall, 2004:408). It was the first nationalist Kurdish party in Turkey since 1938 and was accordingly of great symbolic importance (Marcus, 2007:20). Although Barzani’s KDP enjoyed massive support across the region, particularly along the Iraqi-Turkish border, its mobilisational potential in Turkish Kurdistan was never realised. The TKDP was limited to

acting as a supplementary resource to bolster the struggle south of the border and was never seriously engaged beyond the hosting of southern Kurds and the furnishing of financial support and aid. Barzani elicited almost reverence amongst the Kurds in Turkey and was “viewed as the father of their own nation, thereby challenging the moral and historical authority of Mustafa Kemal” (Bozarslan, 2008: 345 & 2012: 4). A Kurdish Islamist interviewee from Siirt explained that his family carefully wrapped up a framed portrait of Barzani that had hung in their house and buried it in the garden in the wake of the 1980 coup. When the immediate wave of repression had passed they unearthed it and restored it to its original position of honour over the fireplace (Interview 26, 2012). However, the TKDP never capitalised on this latent support and disintegrated into internecine violence until they were decisively weakened by the breakaway of a leftist fraction led by Sait Kirmizitoprak in 1969.⁶⁶ After 1969, it had for the most part ceased to have any meaningful political importance.

Notwithstanding the limited impact of TKDP, many of the activists at the forefront of the Kurdish movement after 1974 had experience in the party or became active in movements genealogically derived from it. The Siwancilar⁶⁷ and former DDKO activists established the DDKD (*Devrimci Demokratik Kultur Dernekleri*/Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations) in 1974, which served as a legal umbrella front for a wide array of Kurdish activists. By 1978 it boasted 50,000 members across forty branches (Bishku, 2007: 85 and Van Bruinessen, 1984:11). Its main purpose was “to include different segments of the Kurdish movement actors in terms of nationalists, leftists and patriots who were struggling as different political groups” (drawing on Güçlü & İbrahim; Ercan, 2010:117). The DDKD was to serve as point of departure for a whole gamut of Kurdish groups which split into separate movements according to how they interpreted the vagaries of the Kurdish situation and the precise practical strategies to adopt. The Maoist Kawa split from the DDKD

⁶⁶ This splinter confusingly bore the same name as the original TKDP, but they were also commonly known as the Siwancilar, after Kirmizitoprak’s alias Dr. Siwan.

⁶⁷ For an extensive breakdown of the intra-Kurdish politics of this period, one can consult Imset, 1992, Van Bruinessen, 1984, Gunes, 2012, Ercan, 2010, Laizer, 1996 and Jongerden and Akkaya 2011. However, there is often contradiction even within these sources on precise dates and origins of groups.

in 1976 due to its opposition to the Soviet betrayal of Barzani and adopted a pro-Hoxha⁶⁸ line; it in turn later split into a number of sub factions. The core group of Siwancilar formed the KIP (*Kürdistan İşçi Partisi/Workers Party of Kurdistan*) in 1977. The pervasive dominance of the leftist discourse across the Kurdish movement was clear when the rump of the more conservative TKDP regrouped and founded the KUK (*Kurdistan Ulusal Kurtulusculari/Kurdistan National Liberators*) in November 1977 and also adopted a Marxist stance (Ercan, 2010: 146). Another Kurdish group, Rizgari, emerged around the publishing house Komal in 1977, followed by the inevitable formation of a splinter group Ala Rizgari (Van Bruinessen, 1984:10). The largest Kurdish party of the period was the TKSP (*Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi/Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan*) which was also widely known by its legal journal's name *Özgürlük Yolu*. It was founded by Kemal Burkay in 1974 and was initially composed of Kurdish members of the TIP.

Jongerden and Akkaya categorised this confusing array of groups in three tendencies: those groups such the KIP and KUK with antecedent links to the TKDP, and in the case of Kawa and Rizgari, origins in the DDKD; the TKSP which originated in the institutional Turkish left, most significantly the TIP; and those such as the PKK whose genesis was in the radical clandestine Turkish left (2011:126). Gunes, on the other hand, categorised them according to the strategies they advocated; he suggests that the TKSP and KIP/DDKD favoured co-operation with the Turkish socialist movement, while the PKK, Rizgari, Ala Rizgari and Kawa were determined to plough their own revolutionary furrow, apart from the Turkish socialist groups (2012:82).

The PKK

Although the PKK began to transfer the locus of its activities to Kurdistan in 1975, it was viewed by existing Kurdish movements as a newcomer as it did not derive from the amalgam of Kurdish movements discussed above. It was accused of being a party without

⁶⁸Certain Kurdish and Turkish radical leftist groups eulogised the Albanian regime for its independent Communist stance. On the Turkish left, the Maoist Halkın Kurtuluş (HK) were noted Hoxha supporters (Samim, 1981:78)

history (citing Güçlü, Jongerden and Akkaya, 2012:3). On the contrary, “it was not a party without history, but [one] born from the revolutionary left in Turkey” (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2011:126, see Özcan, 2006:88). It should also be borne in mind that the DDKD was also first established in Istanbul and Ankara before setting up branches in Kurdistan. Nonetheless, as the movement did not contain luminaries of the Kurdish political realm present in rival movements, it suffered from a perception of extraneousness. Gupta argues that groups lacking a “historical legacy, or favourable reputation are more likely to turn to radical claims as a method of distinguishing themselves from their more well known competitors” (2014:140), which seems a convincing argument for the PKK’s subsequent radical trajectory.

The PKK emerged from the radical student milieu in Ankara and its origins are inextricably linked to the person of Abdullah Öcalan. He first came to the attention of the authorities for organising a campus demonstration following the Kızılder incident in which Mahir Çayan and number of THKO and THKP-C cadres was killed. Prior to his arrest in 1972 he had been active in Dev Genç circles, more particularly with elements sympathetic to Çayan’s THKP-C. After his release he launched himself into radical political activism and formed a coterie of both Turks and Kurds who engaged in extensive political debate. Members of the banned Dev Genç formed a student organisation named ADYÖD (*Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği*/ Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association) in 1973, of which Öcalan and a number of other subsequently leading PKK figures became board members (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2012:6). It was banned by the authorities the following year in December 1974, but Öcalan’s group declined to re-join its successive iteration⁶⁹ and began to detach themselves from the arena of semi-legal student activism. It then engaged in a period of intensive political debate in order to establish a coherent ideological stance. It distanced itself from its comrades of the Turkish left by espousing the view that Kurdistan was indeed a Turkish colony (as discussed above) but it nonetheless considered the “reunification, or better, reestablishment of the left, a reestablishment envisaged in both organizational and ideological terms” (ibid:4) as a secondary goal. At a

⁶⁹ The confusingly named, AYÖD (Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği/ Association for Higher Education in Ankara).

decisive meeting in Dikmen⁷⁰ in early 1976, the decision was taken – although not fully implemented until the following year – to transfer their activities to Kurdistan as it was “the most appropriate area to start a political and armed struggle for revolutionary change in Turkey” (ibid, 2011:129).

PKK’s Social and Ethnic Composition

It is worth recalling that by 1977 Turkish society was in a state of upheaval and a group of political radicals estimated to number at most between 250-300 adherents (Marcus, 2007:37) was not of major national import.⁷¹ If one further considers that it was a group without any wider tribal or institutional support, without a viable support network and with limited capacity to protect itself from rival groups in the early stages, the PKK’s success in establishing itself in Kurdistan prior to the coup was an extraordinary feat of organisation. The group centred on Öcalan remained without an official name until after its founding meeting in late 1978, prior to which it was known as the *Kurdistan Devrimcileri* or Kurdish Revolutionaries. However, they were commonly referred to as the *Apocular* or followers of Apo – the name by which Öcalan had come to be known – but to add to the confusion they were also known by many as the UKO (*Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu*/ National Liberation Army). Although these latter names were officially rejected by senior PKK defendants in their 1981 trial (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2011:140), the PKK first attracted popular attention (both positive and negative) under these names in Kurdistan from 1974/1975 onwards (Interview, 2012 & Interview 24, 2012).

It has been suggested by a number of authors that “PKK members were drawn almost exclusively from Turkey’s growing proletariat” (McDowall, 2004: 420), while contrastingly Metelits’ sustains that their ‘elite’ origins served as a barrier to mobilisation amongst the rural peasantry (2010:136). Both interpretations grossly oversimplify the class composition of the movement. It is argued that “the most easily mobilised elements are

⁷⁰ Dikmen is a neighbourhood of Ankara.

⁷¹ It should be noted that many successful revolutionary groups were started by small numbers of militants. The movement for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) had only six members in 1956, while the Chinese Communist party had but twelve founding members (Chaliand, 1987:46).

often the young city dwellers; semi-intellectual or semi-educated, *déclassé* or marginalised, [which] [...] have no prospects and are seething with latent discontent” (Chaliand, 1987: 47). Marcus’ view reflects this tendency and she provides a more accurate interpretation of the movement’s early supporters and activists, describing them “as those who had actually lifted themselves out of their poverty stricken, uneducated ‘lumpen’ surroundings” (2007:37). The PKK closely aligns to Wickham-Crowley’s understanding that “guerrilla movements do not begin among peasants in the countryside but among urban based intellectuals” (1993:30). However, he elaborates and states that the subsequent “number and proportion of peasants acting as combatants” in relation to the initial wave of urban intellectuals is indicative of the movements’ support in a region (1993:53). In the case of the PKK, the movement steadily gathered local sympathisers and supporters and in the words of Perwer, a PKK sympathiser from Mardin, it quickly came to be comprised of both ‘students’⁷² and locals who knew the area (Interview 31, 2012).

The PKK launched its insurgency in 1984 with the generation of militants that had been mobilised prior to the coup. However, by 1985-1986 it had started to successfully mobilise the rural communities in the Botan area⁷³ and due to the brief life expectancy of an active guerrilla, some of these local recruits had risen to become commanders by 1988 (Interview 38, 2013). Thus, according to Moyano’s distinction between movement founders and followers (1992:111, see also della Porta, 2011 Chapter 7), the followers - recruits who joined after the movement had established itself - had significantly altered the socio-economic composition of the movement.

The PKK’s other factor of note in terms of composition was the significant proportion of non-Kurds in the movement. After Öcalan’s release from Mamak prison in 1972, he moved in with two Black Sea Turks in Ankara, Haki Karer and Kemal Pir who sympathised with the THKO and the THKP-C respectively (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:127). This pair, aside from Öcalan himself, occupy the most vaunted of positions in PKK’s historiography (ibid, 2012). In addition to Pir and Karer, some of the other founding members at the 1978

⁷² General label for the non-local recruits of the group but that does not necessarily mean that they were or used to be actual students.

⁷³ Botan is the name given by the PKK to the mountainous provinces of Hakkari, Siirt and Şırnak (Gunes,

meeting, Duran Kalkan and Karer's brother Kemal, were also Turkish (ibid:2011:138). The notable presence of non-Kurds in the movement distinguished it from rival Kurdish groups which for the most part had exclusively Kurdish members. Interestingly, the non-Kurdish portion of the movement did not decrease over time but continued to grow and was boosted in the 1990s by the decline of the Turkish radical left.

The ethnic heterogeneity of the movement had a number of consequences in terms of discourse and in practise. Even after the decision had been taken to relocate its activities to Kurdistan, the Kurdish Revolutionaries first publicly introduced themselves to the parties of the radical Turkish left before presenting itself in Kurdistan (ibid:129).⁷⁴ Although the PKK had distanced itself from the radical left milieu over divergent views on the status of Kurdistan and castigated it for its social chauvinism, it sought to maintain good relations with it. The periodic fruit of such efforts was evident in a number of short-lived armed alliances through the 1980s and 1990s (see Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:133, Marcus, 2007:65). The PKK's links with the radical Turkish left were not definitively ruptured when it relocated its activities to Kurdistan, with the memory of shared struggles in the 1970s, interpersonal bonds of trust and friendship persisting in spite of certain ideological contrasts and inter-movement competition (see della Porta & Diani, 2006:127-131). This enabled the PKK to continue to frame its liberation discourse in more universal terms that were not limited by ethnic boundaries. Its ethnic heterogeneity fostered a degree of cosmopolitanism within the movement, which acted as a counter-veiling force to any tendencies to social detachment and maintained a broad outward-looking perspective which was often sacrificed in the name of military expediency or imperatives of security by other armed groups.

Mobilisation and Organisational Repertoires

The painstaking arduous efforts of constructing and expanding a political movement

2012:106).

⁷⁴The meeting took place at the headquarters of the TMMOB (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects /*Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği*) and was arranged by the Kurtulus organisation (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012:16).

are often ill-served by macro-descriptive terms such as mobilisation, networking and brokerage. They are terms which fail to explain the micro-context, the interpersonal and emotional aspects of such interactions. The first moments of encounter between movement activists/insurgents and potential supporters can occur in a number of settings, within formal organisations like political parties or trade unions, or in the context of informal organisations like cultural associations or university dormitories. As discussed in Chapter 1 these encounters can emerge in situations of hierarchical or non-hierarchical attachments and are bolstered by repeated contact in day to day interactions (Wickham-Crowley, 1992:139-140). The PKK reached out to potential supporters in formal settings such as trade union activism⁷⁵, in municipal electoral campaigns, and in institutions such as professional associations, particularly in teachers' groups. Although it is a point that the movement has not cared to emphasise, it also made use of hierarchical arrangements – notwithstanding its opposition to the *aşiret* system⁷⁶, it bloc recruited from particular tribes it deemed patriotic (Imset, 1992:18).

In a more extensive fashion the PKK recruited horizontally in a non-hierarchical fashion, slowly establishing relations with single individuals and constructing a network of communal houses, which in a domino effect multiplied these interpersonal linkages; bonds reinforced by religious, class and ethno-national bonds of solidarity. A first point regarding the PKK's recruitment in Kurdistan is related to the importance of spatial proximity (drawing on Gould, Viterna, 2006:4). It may seem self-evident but the PKK managed to engage in mass recruitment because it was physically present in Kurdistan and thus in quotidian contact with its potential recruits. After the PKK's return to Kurdistan, it recruited individuals or small groups of people on an incremental basis that often followed lengthy attempts at individual persuasion. As Marcus explains "recruitment methods [...] focused on one-on-one debates to win people over. Supporters thought nothing of sitting with someone for twenty four hours straight to argue for the new group" (2007:35).

The PKK, as befitting a movement of its socio-economic profile, initially focused on

⁷⁵ See Margulies & Yildizoğlu (1984), Pfeifer (1984), and Ahmet & Pfeifer (1984) for a brief summary of trade union activity in Turkey in the 1970s.

⁷⁶ Tribal system.

expanding the movement via individual networks of personal acquaintances and family links before actively recruiting from the wider Kurdish masses. The importance of networks for recruitment is incontrovertible, “network ties are critical for how individuals interpret and act upon their political and cultural environment” (Viterna, 2013:43). Even more so in the case of extra-legal associations, della Porta observed “participation in clandestine groups is more likely when it’s strengthened by previous effective ties” (1988:158). To this end, professional associations such as TÖB-DER served as a conduit by which personal acquaintances were transformed into political loyalties; it was a leftist teachers’ association founded in 1971 which was active across the Turkish state and had a strong Kurdish presence.⁷⁷ At its 1978 congress, it passed the radical motion that the initial years of all children’s education should be in their mother tongue (Van Bruinessen, 1984: 12). Paradoxically, expansion of the state school system in the 1970s to incorporate vast areas of Kurdistan which had been hitherto neglected facilitated the diffusion of a radical critique of the state rather than fostering sentiments of appreciation or integration. In the early 1970s when the wider Kurdish movement was still in a state of disarray, TÖB-DER did much to harness and generate radical leftist politics in Kurdistan (Ercan, 2010: 119). In one concrete example, TÖB-DER and other educational associations⁷⁸ played a central role alongside the emerging Kurdish groups in the organisation of a protest against Alparslan Türkeş’ attempt to make a public speech in Diyarbakir in 1975.⁷⁹

Leftist associations also engaged in less confrontational activities such as the organisation of seminars and conferences on the situation in Kurdistan in high schools, cinemas and teacher training colleges. It was via these events that many young Kurds first came into contact with revolutionary politics. In the case of Abdullah, as a *lise* (high school) student he had acquired a reputation as a rebel after being expelled from his school in the Genç for repeatedly clashing with his teachers over political issues. He moved to a new school in the Bingöl area, where his teacher Mehmet Karasungur, who later went on to

⁷⁷ TÖB-DER was reported by to have had 150,000 members “including village teachers in the remotest corners of Turkey” (Briefing, March 23 1981).

⁷⁸ The Cultural Higher Education Association of Diyarbakir (DYÖKD) also participated. The peaceful demonstration resulted in Türkeş’ speech being cancelled but it was repressed violently by the police, resulting in numerous injuries and the death of Mehmet Aytekin (Ercan, 2010: 126).

⁷⁹ See Ercan for greater detail on the preceding mobilisation and the demonstration itself (2010: 124-126).

become one of the founders of the PKK, was the head of the local TÖB-DER branch.⁸⁰ Karasungur actively sought out Abdullah because of his notoriety; they quickly became friends, before moving beyond a student-teacher relationship to becoming comrades (Interview 14, 2012). Understandably, given the political and spatial environment they occupied and existing interpersonal networks, these teachers' associations and the wider trade union movement became appropriated by the consolidating Kurdish movements (Ercan, 2010:167). The overlap between teachers and the PKK was extensive; Faqi, a former PKK guerrilla, recounted that immediately prior to the coup his teacher in a village in Dersim was a PKK member. On a number of occasions his teacher invited PKK guerrillas to sing PKK songs, much to the delight of the pupils (Interview 35: 2013).

In addition to serving as routes of individual recruitment due to the fact that they remained legal, non-clandestine associations also served a mediatory function between the rival Kurdish groups. Oftentimes, members of rival Kurdish groups had developed personal relationships within these movements and their subsequent membership movements in opposition to one another did not preclude continuing participation in association activities. Overlapping memberships "facilitate the circulation of information" and "in the absence of formal co-operation between organisations, mobilisation becomes possible through informal links among activists" (della Porta & Diani, 2006:128-129). Abdullah attributes the absence of the fratricidal violence in Bingöl, which characterised inter-Kurdish movement competition elsewhere in Kurdistan, to the personal linkages between groups formed within TÖB-DER which allowed them to overcome ideological differences (Interview 14, 2012). These patterns of recruitment confirm Marcus' description of PKK's initial cadres as members of the lower middle classes and not of the *lumpenproletariat* (2007:37). The PKK's patterns of recruitment in the aftermath of its relocation to Kurdistan therefore followed a conventional path. The PKK militants relied on kin and pre-existing professional networks and recruitment was rooted in affective bonds and acquaintances. The PKK's new members of the period very much coincide with Viterna's description of 'politicised recruits'; people who derived certain "enjoyment [...] from being politically active, and felt impelled by their

⁸⁰ He was not present at the meeting in Lice because he was directing the clashes in the Hilwan and Siverek region against the Bucaks.

responsibility as ‘people who understood injustice’ to participate in bettering their societies” (2013:88).

PKK Escalation

Until the founding congress on 27-28 November 1978 the PKK was popularly known as the *Apocular*, UKO or the Kurdish Revolutionaries.⁸¹ The congress marked the culmination of its slow evolution from an ideological group to a political party (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012:4). A document entitled “The Way of the Revolution in Kurdistan” was adopted as the party programme (ibid: 2011: 136). The long-term objectives of the movement were outlined and consisted of achieving Kurdish national self-determination, which would lead to a unified socialist Kurdistan and “a reunification, or better, reestablishment of the left [...] in both organizational and ideological terms” (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012: 4). The reunification of the left was of course to develop under the leadership of the PKK. In addition, the obstacles to the revolution were also outlined: fascists, social–chauvinists [Turkish left which did not accept the thesis of Kurdish colonialism], the agents of the state and the feudal landlords (Ismet, 1992: 16).

Until this point, the PKK had existed as little more than a form of political debating society with certain rhetorical flourishes which promised armed revolution, thus differing little from any of the plethora of other Kurdish movements. However, armed violence soon became an integral part of the PKK’s repertoire through a variety of escalatory mechanisms. As della Porta has pointed out, escalation is a relational process (2013:68) and varies chronologically across cycles of contention (2014:94). She further elaborates that “competitive escalation” is triggered “during competitive interactions not only with political adversaries but also with potential allies” (ibid: 2013:71). Competition with potential allies is derived from the scarcity of resources and most importantly, “participation and approval from constituencies, supporters and bystander publics” (Bosi et al, 2014:8). Competition is more acute in periods when there is an intensification of mobilisation as it demands a

⁸¹ The First Party Congress is covered in detail, in terms of the immediate context and its participants by Jongerden & Akkaya (2011 & 2012) and Ismet (1992).

concomitantly greater share of limited resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977 and Gupta, 2014: 142). In such situations, groups engage in political outbidding and adopt increasingly more radical positions in order to 'outbid' their rivals, thus generating a mutual escalation of tactics and repertoires (de Fazio, 2014 and Gupta, 2014). Escalation is also fuelled by interactions with the forces of the state; "popular protest and the structure of the state are in a dynamic and mutually influencing relationship, each pushing and constraining the other" (Johnston, 2011:16). And it also comes about by reciprocal adaptation of opponents' repertoires (Alimi, Bosi & Demetriou, 2012:10), leading to the phenomenon of violence as a defensive imperative (della Porta, 2013:81).

The escalation of the PKK's repertoire must accordingly not be simply analysed as the result of strategic reasoning on its behalf but by understanding it as the outcome of relational interactions shaped by developments in the broader political environment. "Although the PKK is usually seen as the main advocator of violence as political practise, the necessity of armed struggle was part of the general debate that took place within the Kurdish national movement" (Gunes, 2012:92). The increasing role of violent contestation in the PKK's repertoire was not without parallel in other Kurdish groups such as KIP, KUK, and even elements of the TKSP (ibid, 2012:82). There was, however, one notable distinction: the PKK held that violence could be used as a tool of mobilisation and the violent stage of the struggle was something which would contemporaneously complement the political mobilisation. This closely echoed the Guevarist *foco* theory which held that "it is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them" (Guevara, 2006:77). The other Kurdish movements for the most part held the view that a broad-based mobilisation would necessarily have to predate armed mobilisation. A former KIP/DDKD member Vildan Tanrikulu explained that only:

"after realizing a really powerful political mobilization relying on alliance of workers and peasants and also youth mobilization, an uprising would be possible with civil disobedience actions followed by the armed support campaigns from rural to urban areas" (in Ercan, 2010: 147).

It was this sense of urgency related to the immediate deployment for violence that led other groups to condemn the PKK's strategy as adventurist (Gunes, 2012:95), as they feared that the premature escalation of the conflict would lead the Turkish state to clamp down on the numerous legal political openings which still existed in the late 1970s. The PKK's deployment of violence in the early days was extremely cautious. Öcalan had taken note of the fate of Mahir Çayan and his comrades when they overstretched themselves by confronting ambitious targets before they were in a military, political or logistical position to do so.⁸² Of the PKK's listed enemies, violence was rarely used against the 'agents of the state', and rather deployed defensively or in a way which garnered it further support. In fact, the first occasion when PKK's commitment to using weapons came about after Haki Karer, one of its senior militants, had been killed. In circumstances that are still unclear, in May 1977 Alaattin Kaplan, a Beş Parçacılar⁸³ militant, executed Karer in a coffee shop in the Düztepe neighbourhood of Antep. According to the PKK's understanding, Kaplan was close to elements of the already defunct TKDP (Öcalan, 2011:133, Interview 36 – 2013), but in 1984 Baki Karer, Haki's brother and a founding member of the PKK claimed that the killing was undertaken on the personal orders of Öcalan (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012:14) in order to consolidate his grip on the movement. The PKK's incapacity to protect its own senior militants led a number of them to join Têkoşîn⁸⁴. The killing led the PKK to recognise that "it was impossible to do political work without armed protection" (ibid, 2011:130) and in cognisance of this weakness resolved to militarily confront its rivals. It subsequently assassinated Kaplan, and after a revolutionary tribunal executed two of the deserters to Têkoşîn, Mehmet Uzin and Ali Yaylacık (Ismet, 1992:18). The decisive passage from political group to armed group was thus taken not necessarily of its own volition but rather in response to what can be considered as an effort at "violent outbidding" by a group which could ordinarily be understood as a potential Kurdish ally.

⁸² The PKK's cautious incremental strategy closely resembles the strategy used by the Viet Minh in the earlier stage of its insurgency against the French. It also avoided direct clashes with the French, consolidated local support and eliminated rival nationalist organisations (Goodwin, 2001:109).

⁸³ Beş Parçacılar was a small Kurdish movement with roots in the radical Turkish left. It was Maoist and openly opposed to the USSR and it believed that Kurdistan was divided in five parts, the fifth being in Soviet Armenia. It was also known as Stêrka Sor.

⁸⁴ Têkoşîn was a Kurdish breakaway of Kurtuluş led by the contemporary Zaza nationalist Seyfi Cengiz.

Mobilisational Strategies

In the late 1970s there was a plurality of Kurdish groups all struggling to consolidate themselves in terms of number of adherents, political power and prestige. This broad field of social mobilisation was characterised by the presence of overlapping legal and extra-legal movements. To give an example, the TKSP was illegal but the journal that they published *Özgürlük Yolu* was legal and they used that as a legal front for their activities (Watts, 2010:43). Many of the other groups had analogous legal structures to complement their extralegal networks, apart from the PKK which remained a strictly underground group. In order to expand their respective networks of members and supporters the wider Kurdish movement focused on increasing the number of interactions it could establish with Kurdish society. Ercan (2010, 167-169) highlights a number of non-institutional mobilisation strategies advanced by the broader Kurdish movement.⁸⁵ All of the Kurdish groups including the PKK made use of their cultural capital, derived from generally possessing a higher educational standard than the local population, to serve as an intermediary between lesser educated and non-Turkish speaking Kurds and the Turkish state. Activists wrote petitions and assisted in a wide array of bureaucratic interactions with the state. They also mediated and attempted to resolve non-political conflicts related to the abduction of women or family disputes.

A further non-institutionalised mobilisation strategy was the transformation of social rituals into politicised events. Selim Çürükkaya, a PKK member, gave a detailed explanation of their attendance at the funeral of a migrant construction worker from the Bingöl region that had died in a workplace accident in Ankara:

“It was surprising for them; some of us were teachers and others were students who had come [all] [...] of the way for the funeral. Then we gave a speech there. We told [of the] reasons [...] why we [the Kurds] could not find jobs in our lands and why we had to work in metropolises without job security. [...] In addition to this, we told that we were

⁸⁵Ercan included labour activism as part of these non-institutional mechanisms; however, I hold that their utilisation of trade union activism is an example of formal and legal activism closer to the institutional involvement in electoral politics.

revolutionaries and struggling for emancipation of our people” (Çürükkaya, 2008 in Ercan, 2010:169).

Activities of this nature can be understood as the generation of “moments of encounter” which portrayed the various movements in a positive and unthreatening light. They served the dual purposes of fostering bonds between the PKK and the wider depoliticised Kurdish society, and of politicising the understanding of the socio-economic and political situation prevailing in Kurdistan. These efforts varied from region to region and group to group but they were present all across Kurdistan (Ercan, *ibid*). These interactions neatly coincide with Malthaner’s taxonomy or relations outlined in Chapter 1, ranging from bonds of utilitarian social exchange by the provision of intermediary services with the state to the emergence of interpersonal and interfamilial bonds with the movement itself, thereby, establishing a nascent constituency.

Institutional and Legal Mobilisation

Notwithstanding Demirel’s Nationalist Front government’s⁸⁶ reign from 1974 until 1977 and the increasing political violence, a degree of institutional democratic processes - however imperfect - still endured. The wider Kurdish movement sought to take advantage of it to varying extents, until such point that all institutionalist opportunities were removed (see Ercan, 2010, Dorronsoro & Watts, 2009 and Watts 2010). Although the Kurdish movement was too weak to make an impact in the national elections, it made a significant breakthrough in the local elections of December 1977. Widespread “social and political changes [...] had undercut[...] the power of local notables, who had been an important part of the party structure in the southeast and the usual intermediaries for voter mobilization” (Dorronsoro & Watts, 2009:463), thus depriving the national parties of their former channels of accessing Kurdish votes en masse. Therefore, institutional opportunities that had hitherto been inaccessible became available to the wider Kurdish movement.

⁸⁶ The *Milliyetçi Cephe* contained the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*) and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*).

There was also an escalatory dynamic to the fashion in which the various groups chose to engage with these opportunities. Alimi has pointed out that “since [political] opportunities are external to the movement and can be used by other, not necessarily friendly, political actors, it is critical for movement activists to seize the moment [...]” (2009:216). Accordingly, in order to pre-empt other Kurdish groups obtaining crucial supporters and resources, even groups with a more revolutionary agenda such as the PKK were compelled to also participate in institutional forms of political contestation, at the risk of their rivals consolidating ever broader constituencies at their expense.

The TKSP placed a notable emphasis on participating in municipal elections and enjoyed a certain degree of success in this regard with the election of Mehdi Zana as mayor of Diyarbakir in 1977. The TKSP was illegal so it could not openly nominate electoral candidates, so its candidate formally contested elections as independents. Zana remained a member of TIP and active in the DDKD; he was a senior figure in the TKSP but his support crossed a number of party and movement lines. Yet tensions within the TKSP regarding the leadership style of Kemal Burkay and Zana’s unilateral decision to run in the elections ensured there was division within the TKSP itself. Furthermore, TIP and DDKD also ran a candidate against him, Yahya Mehmetoğlu (Watts, 2010:47 and Watts & Dorransoro, 2009), thus highlighting that although the various movements were in competition with one another, there was still a degree of overlapping memberships and fluid movement boundaries. Zana did not enjoy the universal backing of the movements and parties to which he belonged; he gained much external support, reinforcing della Porta and Diani’s observation that inter-movement networks - personal, formal and informal – “influence opportunities for cooperation between organisations” (2006:129). As well as facilitating inter-group collaboration, they can also alter intra-movement dynamics. External allies can be utilised to re-configure internal power dynamics between rival sub-factions and personalities. Zana was backed by KUK and he obtained support from a number of tribes⁸⁷, student groups and *hemşehri* networks⁸⁸ (Watts & Dorransoro, 2009:473). Kurdish

⁸⁷ He was supported by the Botan and Omeriyan tribes.

⁸⁸ *Hemşehri* networks were associations based on hometown or regional provenance amongst immigrants found throughout Turkey. See Chapter VI for an extensive discussion of them.

candidates also notably won office in Urfa, and in the 1979 elections in Batman and Ağrı⁸⁹.

The different movements attributed different importance to participation in these electoral context; the TKSP's view that these municipal centres of power could be used as "castles' of Kurdish Nationalism," (Watts, 2010:47) was not shared by all. The TKSP mayor of Ağrı, Urfan Alparslan became disillusioned with the limits of democratic contention and took to the mountains to found a small guerrilla group called the Ordiya Rizgariya Kurdistanê (ORK). They were all killed in mysterious circumstances soon afterwards (Interview 24, 2012).

The possibility of extending its networks of supporters through institutional channels was also grasped by the PKK. A PKK member Edip Solmaz in fact won mayoral office in Batman in 1979 before he was killed, only 29 days after assuming power. Solmaz was a former military officer who left the army and only joined the movement in 1978.⁹⁰ Although it may seem somewhat of a paradox that an avowedly revolutionary group such as the PKK would participate in elections it provided distinct long-term benefits. Its participation in municipal electoral campaigns was a means to expand its network of supporters in preparation for its campaign of armed insurrection. Contrary to Mehdi Zana's accusation that "leftist intellectuals, [...] with their dreams of the great revolution, did not want to dirty their hands managing the reform of capitalism [taking municipal office]" (Zana, 1997:8), the PKK did engage in such political strategies not to "reform capitalism" but to bring about the great revolution. However, it should be stressed that in the brief window between the PKK sufficiently establishing itself in the region to be able to mount popular political campaigns and the shutdown of such institutional openings by the imposition of martial law and growing state repression, it succeeded in electing only one of its people to municipal office. Electoral participation was thus evidently, just one of many mobilisation strategies adopted by the PKK.

⁸⁹ Ercan states that the PKK also won control of the municipality of Hilwan but does not provide further information (2010: 198). I have been however unable to find further corroborating evidence.

⁹⁰ Although doubts prevail as to his relationship to the party, it is clear from the entry in the PKK Martyrs Album 1978-1984 (PKK, 1984:85) that he was undoubtedly a part of the movement and its candidate in the 1979 election.

Trade Union Activism

Although the lack of industrialisation in Kurdistan did not provide a structural environment that was propitious for labour mobilisation, the PKK actively took advantage of the limited possibilities to appropriate supporters by engaging in trade union activities. As Serdar, a senior KNK member originally from Urfa explained, the Kurdish 'proletariat' was employed mostly in the informal sector in construction, carpet making and as agricultural labourers (Interview 36, 2013). PKK militants took up positions as labourers in these sectors in order to interact with the workers on a daily basis. According to Serdar, Haki Karer - notwithstanding alternative job possibilities a person of his education might have reasonably expected - worked in construction in Antep. Serdar's own brother, a PKK activist, took a position as a private bus driver that ferried construction workers from Antep to a large reservoir that was being built in the area in 1978. The role as driver guaranteed him a captive audience for the duration of the trip and proved an ideal platform to mobilise the workers. He quickly rose to become the site representative of DISK⁹¹, a national trade union, before serving as representative for the wider area of Antep for eighteen months between 1978 and 1979. During this time a strike was launched and lasted forty five days before the workers' demands were conceded. In the wake of the strike, the union activists were all fired but in a legal fashion and awarded suitable compensation; Serdar explains that every one of the activists fired were indeed PKK cadres (Interview 36 - 2013). In a further account of PKK labour activism, Berfin - a man involved in legal Kurdish party activism, currently active in the BDP, and father of a two guerrillas - recounted how the PKK organised what he remembers as the first ever strike in the Mardin area in a local tractor factory in 1978 (Interview 20 – 2012). In that period the PKK also unsuccessfully put forward a candidate in the election of a chairperson for the trade union active in the oil industry in Batman.⁹²

As numerous groups adopted this strategy of recruitment, the field of labour activism became a locus of tension between rival Kurdish groups. The most egregious

⁹¹(*Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*/Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey)

⁹² Email communication with Ahmet Akkaya, 7th of March 2013.

example of this inter-movement competition took place at the state-owned Ceylanpınar development farm in Mardin, close to the border with Syria. The KUK had widespread support in Mardin and as such viewed it as their territory and the PKK's activities there as an encroachment. Deathly clashes broke out between the two groups before escalating to encompass the wider Mardin area, with clashes particularly intense in the area around Derik and Kiziltepe. The conflict lasted eight months from early 1980 to August of the same year and resulted in a number of deaths for both sides (Ercan, 2010: 203, White, 2000: 148). This once again highlights the fact that although the PKK's had at that stage long committed to violence at the rhetorical level, the actual adoption of violent tactics was less a unilateral decision but rather the fruit of inter-relational tensions.

Intra-Kurdish Violence

A significant number of Kurdish groups emerged in Turkey in a very short period of time,⁹³ which led to fierce inter-movement competition. There was contestation on an ideological basis, as well as an intense rivalry for resources in terms of recruits and material needs. All of this was underscored by pre-existing political and personal enmities. These tensions resulted in intermittent physical violence and a notable number of killings, up to 400 that can be attributed to inter-movement violence (Bozarslan 2012:8 and Aras, 2013:70).⁹⁴ While hostility existed between several groups, notably the schismatic Kawa and Rizgari groupings, the most deadly violence frequently featured the PKK. This was in part due to its determination to be the foremost Kurdish group, as Çürükkaya asserted: “[T]he 1920s were our model, how the Russian Communist Party forbade all other parties and got rid of the cliques. We saw this as all positive and we wanted to do the same” (in Marcus, 2007: 42). However, it would be mistaken to reduce the PKK's belligerent attitude towards rival groups to just ideological factors. The most intense episodes of intra-Kurdish violence were in areas of greatest movement contestation, such as in the example from Mardin or in

⁹³ The exact founding dates of the groups are subject to debate and in some cases serve as guideline rather than definite fact. The following are some of the estimated founding dates of a number of Kurdish movements: PKK 1978, TKSP 1974, KUK 1979, DDKD 1974/1975, Rizgari 1977, Kawa 1976, Denge Kawa 1977, Red Kawa 1978 and Ala Rizgari 1979.

⁹⁴ Similar inter-movement violence was also witnessed amongst the radical Turkish left at the time, for example between Halkin Kurtulus and Dev-Yol in Antalya (Interview 47, 2013).

Antep. Antep was an interesting case because it was populated by groups of the radical Turkish left⁹⁵ and the Kurdish groups which originated from this environment, the PKK, Têkoşîn and Beş Parçacılar.

The necessity of the PKK defending itself and protecting its perceived interests came about in a context where “killing was a part of everyday political life” (Interview 36 – 2013). Political violence was endemic across Turkey, with a number of shootings occurring on a daily basis. The PKK’s recourse to violent means was a result of interaction with rival Kurdish groups which also used violence, and it cannot be reduced to the PKK’s alleged Fanonian advocacy of violence (Bozarslan, 2004: 48) or simply its ambition to be the largest Kurdish movement. Neither can it be asserted that violence against its rivals was a policy uniformly adopted by the movement; it very much depended on local conditions and interactions, the initiative of specific members and the period when it occurred. Notwithstanding the intensity of the wider violence in the Bingöl area, deadly intra-Kurdish violence never occurred there (Interview 14, 2012).

The shared history of political activism of many of the Kurdish militants from collaboration in the DDKO, TIP, DDKD or the radical Turkish left, generated personal bonds which crossed ideological divides. These relations served as a counter veiling factor to the factional violence. As was clear in the case of Mehdi Zana, multiple memberships of movements was common and many Kurds saw no inconsistency in organising events and even violent attacks on a cross-movement basis. Abdullah explains that as youths with a group of friends with mixed political sympathies, they procured dynamite from a local mine and used it to improvise bomb attacks against a teachers’ institute and the police barracks which housed a despised policeman accused of torturing children (Interview 14, 2012). Although group identities became less flexible over time, interpersonal bonds not only reduced the possibility of conflict between movements but also permitted the co-organisation of a wide variety of actions against their shared enemies.

⁹⁵ According to Serdar the strongest groups were Dev-Yol, Halkin Kurtulus, and Emeğin Birliđi (Interview 36, 2013).

PKK's Aşiret Campaign

In addition to the PKK's use of defensive violence in the context of mutual escalation with its Kurdish allies, the PKK also proactively conducted armed campaigns against certain *aşirets*. In principle, the PKK viewed them as an enemy because in most cases they functioned as the de facto representatives of the state. The *aşirets'* economic and political interests mostly coincided with those of the state (Van Bruinessen, 2003:174-179), thus ensuring that they were viewed by the PKK "to be as much the enemy as the state itself" (Marcus, 2007:44). Individual *aşiret's* power and reputations varied from area to area, from enjoying massive strength in areas like Siverek and Hakkari, to being of little more than nominal relevance in Dersim. Opposition to their overbearing economic and political influence had been growing, and Kurdish left-wing groups tried to take advantage of this popular disaffection.

Clashes between the PKK and the tribal elite first erupted in the Hilvan area in May 1978 when the prominent PKK militant Halil Cavgun was killed by a member of the locally powerful Suleymanlar *aşiret*. The PKK decided to launch a revenge attack that would highlight their "opposition to those wealthy landlords who oppressed the local people" and "underscore their commitment to armed struggle" (ibid: 45). They assassinated the tribe's leader Mehmet Baysal. Such actions generated local popularity for the movement. It showed that unlike the other groups who pontificated against the exploitative landlords without ever taking action, the PKK "had another method of dealing with the enemy class" (McDowall, 2004:423).

After its official establishment in November 1978, the PKK decided to announce its existence by assassinating the head of the Bucak *aşiret* in Siverek. In addition to his local power, Mehmet Celal Bucak was an MP of the Justice Party and thus an actual representative of the state. The Bucaks "symbolised both the Kurdish branch of 'feudalism and collaboration with Turkish 'colonialism'" (Bozarslan, 1999:12). It "was not only a spectacular example of the propaganda-of-the-deed to announce [its] existence, but also revealed much about the PKK philosophy and modus operandi" (Jongerden, 2007:55). It also

demonstrated to the disaffected but diffident peasantry that there was an effective way to deal with the landlords [...], shoot them dead” (ibid). The attack adheres to an established mobilisational tactic amongst rural populations used by insurgents across the globe: because “peasants have specific local grievances, especially against the landlords [...], and are willing to join any group that will further the redress of such grievances” (Wickham-Crowley, 1992:138 and see della Porta, 2013:191). Armed groups which succeed in resolving local concerns gain credibility which substantiates their broader, less immediate claims. Although the assassination attempt failed, it successfully consolidated the PKK’s reputation as the most radical and daring of Kurdish groups. It led to prolonged clashes between the PKK and the Bucaks, leading to an unofficial figure of ninety one deaths on the Bucak side. As Selahattin Çelik, a PKK militant of the period explained, “Apo believed that if a big fight broke out, then support for the PKK would grow. [...] Even if one hundred people were to die, then their children would become PKK supporters to take revenge” (in Marcus, 2007:46).

The attacks thus served a number of purposes for the PKK. They brought the PKK a degree of public notoriety which distinguished it from its rivals (see Gupta, 2014: 139-140) and they served as tangible examples of what the realisation of their ideological propaganda would bring about: a degree of social justice. In addition, the campaign engendered bonds of trust with its newly acquired supporters; the PKK was willing to risk the lives of its members for the collective good of the downtrodden Kurdish peasants. With the families directly involved in the clashes, it led to the development of emotional ties of gratitude, respect and in certain cases a thirst for revenge against the landholding classes. Finally, it also served as a training ground to develop armed strategies against a strong but not overwhelming military opponent and sated the demand for armed attacks amongst those members impatient with the failure to immediately launch the insurgency.

PKK Expansion

The PKK incrementally expanded the numbers of its supporters; from an initial position where it mostly recruited amongst a more educated swath of Kurdish society

through professional organisations, it spread throughout wider society by participating in trade union politics, municipal electoral campaigns and by launching campaigns of armed resistance against selected landlords. It began to attract adherents from disadvantaged socio-economic groups and its exponential growth began to embrace the hitherto politically non-mobilised classes which the other Kurdish groups had failed to successfully mobilise.

The PKK's communal living experiments that had proved so successful in Ankara in strengthening intra-group solidarity were also transplanted back to Kurdistan. They set up communal houses where party militants would live together in order to be best able to organise party activities. These houses became key nodes in the organisation of solidarity networks throughout Kurdistan, public discussion groups were organised there and more committed activists took up residence in them. Salih Sezgin, a renowned author and PKK prisoner of more than twenty years explained his transition from a non-politicised, self loathing Kurd to party activist. He moved as an illiterate non-Turkish speaking teenager from a village close to Birecik to one of these communal houses. As he recounted, "I started frequenting these houses and the people there started taking care of me. I was not able to read, so they were telling me what my language was, where the Kurds came from and about their contemporary situation [in Kurdistan]" (Interview 21, 2012). Salih would have represented a typical uneducated Kurdish youth, a group which was to become the principal fount of PKK recruits in the period. He admits that his involvement with the PKK was not ideologically motivated:

"I myself did not have any ideological engagement, I was not able to read and write." [...]
"What affected me most, what aroused interest in me towards PKK, what pulled me to the movement was their lifestyle. The sharing in the communal houses, love and friendship [...]. That environment of friendship attracted me" (ibid).

The PKK developed a tangible organisational structure from which it spread its political message; these houses served, in the case of Salih and other like him, as the sites of cognitive liberation which McAdam holds to be "the prerequisite for mobilisation" (in McAdam et al, 1996:5). Each of these new activists became a bridge to further recruits, introducing family members and workmates into these circles. The density and overlap of

personal and political connections is of particular note in light of della Porta and Diani's contention that "the more costly and dangerous the collective action, the stronger and more numerous ties required for individuals to participate" (2006:117). The development of these processes can be clearly identified in Salih's case, when he observed that although there was a mix of people and professions in the group, young labourers quickly became the largest component in Birecik. The PKK was therefore able to tap into a socio-economic stratum that rival Kurdish groups had difficulty accessing.

The PKK recognised the "mobilisational potential" (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987:519) of the disadvantaged swathes of Kurdish society; however it is also true that "willingness is a necessary but insufficient condition of participation" (ibid: 520). It is also necessary for movements to create durable structure to facilitate recruitment (ibid: 520 and Viterna, 2013:64). It was by its recruitment networks and the socio-economic characteristics of those recruited that the PKK distinguished itself from its rival Kurdish groups, becoming popularly renowned as the one which "represent[ed] the most marginal sections of society" (Van Bruinessen, 1988:42).

In summary, from the beginning of its return to Kurdistan the PKK engaged with its supporters in a number of different fashions. It defended them from right-wing attacks, particularly the Alevi community. It advanced an understanding of Kurdistan's social and political predicament, which in light of the violence which was engulfing the region seemed reasonable; according to this view, Kurdistan was a colony of the Turkish state and only an armed struggle would bring about self-determination and national liberation. In contrast to other groups, it actually organised and effected armed attacks on the tribal elites which were held to be a key component of the state's governing apparatus and guilty of traitorous exploitation of their fellow Kurds. It defended itself from the attacks of other groups and initiated attacks against its rivals in order to carve out areas of dominance, in specific workplaces and even in certain towns and cities. Contrary to certain erroneous understandings of the movement which have suggested that "the PKK had no popular base" prior to the 1980 coup d'état (Kocher, 2002:96), the evidence presented above confirms that the PKK had successfully mobilised large swathes of Kurdish society. It did so through the use of legal and extra-legal strategies to actually encounter potential supporters and to

make that decisive break from an insular political group to one with a broad constituency strongly rooted in Kurdish society. It advanced an organisational practise of shared living spaces which allowed it to consolidate group solidarity and convert shared political principles into reciprocal relations of loyalty, trust and friendship amongst its members. And unlike other Kurdish movements, or at least to a much greater degree, it breached class barriers to create a movement that encompassed all societal groups. Although Özcan reckoned that the Sivancilar⁹⁶, the TKSP and Rizgari had arguably larger support than the PKK prior to the coup (2006:102), it was the PKK which emerged as the only credible vehicle of Kurdish resistance in its aftermath. In light of the evidence presented, it is clear that the foundational work done in the late 1970s in establishing a fledgling constituency was key to facilitating its successful re-organisation in the 1980s.

State Repression

In periods of political instability, the environment in which relationships between armed groups and their supporters develop is heavily influenced by the activities, strength and cohesion of the state (Goodwin, 2001:133). In the wake of the 1980 coup Imset cites up to 650,000 arrests nationwide (1996:60). The massive repression in the Kurdish areas was evidently disproportionate if one considers that only 2% of the armed actions between 1978 and 1980 were carried out by Kurdish separatists (Romano, 2007:47, see Imset, 1992: 5).⁹⁷

However, concerted state repression in Kurdistan predates the coup. On the 26th of December 1978 in the wake of the Maraş massacre, martial law was declared in thirteen provinces⁹⁸ and later extended to twenty including Istanbul, Ankara, Kurdistan and the adjoining provinces which had large Alevi populations (Sinclair-Webb, 2003; 223 & Zürcher, 2004:263). The martial law regime decreed that almost any expression of political activity,

⁹⁶ He presumably means the KIP/DDKD grouping.

⁹⁷ It is likely that the lesser state capacity in the Kurdish region, especially in the rural areas - could have led to a lower rate of detection and investigation of instances of political violence than in the West of the country where the majority of the urban left-wing violence occurred, thus skewing these statistics.

⁹⁸ Adana, Ankara, Bingöl, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kahramanmaraş, Kars, Malatya, Sivas and Urfa were the initial districts. In April 1979 martial law was extended to the Kurdish districts of Tunceli, Diyarbakır, Siirt, Adıyaman, Mardin and Hakkari (Ercan, 2010: 185).

including those which had been hitherto legal, were liable to suffice as grounds for arrest. All space for contained contention (McAdam et al, 2001:10) was closed off, thus according to Ercan marking a turning point whereby institutionalist strategies were perceived as futile and the path of armed insurgency became an increasingly credible alternative (2010:184 and see Dorronsoro & Watts, 2009, Watts 2010). Martial law severely restricted the wider Kurdish movement's capacity for mobilisation; notable PKK leaders such as Kemal Pir and more than a thousand of its activists were arrested.⁹⁹ The security forces harvested extensive intelligence networks in this period which were later used to devastating effect after the coup (Zurcher, 2004:279). It was this environment of insecurity which led Öcalan to flee to Syria in the summer of 1979 (Marcus, 2007 & see Akkaya, 2005).

The repression was not limited to Kurdish movement activists; politically unmobilised civilians in the Kurdish region also bore the brute force of the Turkish state. Ahmet, a self-defined second generation PKK supporter, recounted one of the first clashes between the PKK and the forces of the state in the hamlet of Şikestûn/Yayıklı,¹⁰⁰ close to Derik in Mardin. He explained that three PKK activists were intercepted by soldiers after receiving a tip off. After a car chase and a gun battle, the three would-be guerrillas¹⁰¹ and three soldiers were killed in Şikestun on the 28th of March 1980. In order to avenge their fallen colleagues, the soldiers forced a number of the villagers to climb into large pits they had been excavating to store hay and pelted them with stones, resulting in a number of serious injuries, including to two of Ahmet's brothers. The following day, some curious locals from a neighbouring village came to see for themselves what had actually happened. Three of these villagers were then killed by a Turkish army officer who had remained at the scene of previous day's fighting. In light of the killings, Ahmet commented that his village

⁹⁹ Jongerden suggests that prior to the coup 3,177 Kurds were arrested, 1,790 on the accusation of PKK membership, 667 from the PSK and Têkoşîn combined, 459 from Kawa and 1,261 from the remaining Kurdish groups (2007:59).

¹⁰⁰ In a microcosm of the challenges facing students of Kurdish issues, it has been extremely difficult to establish the actual name of this village. It was referred to as Şikesun in a *Cumhuriyet* article on the incident, <http://www.cumhuriyetarsivi.com/katalog/192/sayfa/1980/3/29.xhtml> and Ahmet spelled it at the time of the interview as Cikestin. However, after consulting the Kurdish Studies Network it was suggested that Şikestûnê/Şikestun was the most likely spelling. Ahmet Akkaya kindly confirmed for me that the village is called Yayıklı in Turkish.

¹⁰¹ Ahmet Kurt, Mehmet Kurt and Salman Doğru were the three PKK militants that were killed (*Serxwebûn*, 1983)

had already experienced September the 12th (date of the 1980 coup) before it had even occurred (Interview 18, 2012). Such indiscriminate brutality was merely a precursor for what was to come a few months later, only on a much grander scale.

The importance of the timing of state repression has been analysed by Hafez (2003), who suggests that if the state clamps down prior to significant opposition mobilisation, the successful quelling of insurgent movements is probable. Drawing on Brockett, he contends that pre-emptive repression seeks “to strike at the movement before it has had an opportunity to gain organisational momentum” (Hafez, 2003:72) and has a reasonable possibility of quelling possible dissent. Re-active repression, on the other hand attempts “to demobilise an already organised and politically active segment of the population” (ibid) rendering it likely to aggravate rather dissipate opposition. The Kurdish case both confirms and contradicts such a hypothesis. Turkish state repression was overwhelmingly reactive; the groups the state sought to repress had already become large in number and had varying degrees of support and popular legitimacy. Nevertheless, the coup successfully demobilised or forced into exile all of the Kurdish groups so as to render their continued activities inside Turkey of negligible importance for a number of years. The PKK was severely weakened; the majority of its cadres who escaped arrest fled into exile, whilst those who could not seek refuge abroad retreated into isolated mountainous areas or went underground (Interview 14, 2012 and Aras, 2014:168). However, within two years the PKK had begun to re-infiltrate across the Turkish border and lay the foundations for the upcoming insurgency. In fact “the 1980 coup and its oppressiveness helped to create a siege mentality among Kurds, compelling them to think that their future was constrained and contained by the Turkish state” (Yavuz, 2001:12).

Hafez’s hypothesis on timing fails to explain how the same reactive repression successfully repressed the majority of Kurdish groups but strengthened the appeal of the PKK. His analysis focuses on the dynamic between the state and armed groups, but it does not pay sufficient attention to the dynamics between the different armed groups themselves and the effect repression had on these sets of relationships. His approach also disregards the impact such extensive repression had on the relationship between armed groups and their supporters. The state’s humiliation and calculated brutality towards

thousands of Kurds lay the emotional foundation of a shared resentment, a longing for dignity and in many cases a thirst for revenge which transcended the previous distinction between militant and civilian, thus creating a resentful mass of Kurds awaiting a movement that would offer the opportunity to vent their personal grievances against the state.

Military Coup – September 12th 1980

If one draws on Sewell's understanding of events as the "relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transform structures" (1996:262), the coup d'état as it developed in Kurdistan (comparably indiscriminate collective punishments were not conducted elsewhere in Turkey) was certainly one such transformative event. The most decisive impact of the coup d'état was its transformation of the "emotional landscape" (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001:33) of the Kurdish movements and wider Kurdish society. The anticipated military intervention occurred on the 12th of September 1980 (Birand, 1987:173-190). A cabal of military officers led by General Kenan Evren announced that they had seized power on the pretext that civilian government was unable to bring the social and political unrest under control. In reality, the intervention was motivated less by instability, as it had been elements within the state which had been generating this same instability, and more by a perception that Kemalism itself was threatened. The military viewed the ongoing social tumult "as an attack on the core Kemalist values of national and territorial integrity by subversive leftist and Kurdish nationalist movements" (Zeydanlioğlu, 2009:6). Thus, a core underlying concern of the intervention was the supposed peril of Kurdish nationalism. A state of emergency was declared, the constitution was suspended, Parliament was dissolved, all political parties were banned, municipal governments were disbanded, newspapers were shut down and a wave of arrests swept the country (Zurcher, 2004: 279-281, Sayari 1985 & 2010, Zeydanlioğlu, 2009:6-7, McDowall, 2004 415-417, Imset, 1996:60 and Zana, 1997:9). In the short term, political violence declined by 90%, which is of course only a valid statistic if one chooses to ignore the violence committed by the state. The unprecedented scale of the state crackdown is quantitatively evident in Imset's description:

"A total of 650,000 people were detained and most suspects were either beaten or tortured.

Over 500 people died while under detention as a result of torture; 85,000 people were placed on trial mainly in relation to thought crimes by association; 1,683,000 people were officially listed in police files as suspects; 348,000 Turks and Kurds were banned from travelling abroad; 15,509 people were fired from their jobs for political reasons; 114,000 books were seized and burned; 937 films were banned; 2,729 writers, translators, journalists and actors were put on trial for expressing their opinions” (1996:60).

The cumulative quantification of the state brutality does not do justice to the socio-psychological trauma of the immediate post-coup period on collective and individual levels but neither can it explain the long-term reaction it provoked. Aras has explained that “contrary to the aims of a politics of fear, state violence and terror do not necessarily have the effects of pacifying and completely controlling a subjugated people. The dynamics of fear can operate conversely, producing powerful counter-reactions and diverse forms of resistance” (2013:82). Fear is “an emotional state that influences cognitive processes, such as perceptions and interpretations of costs, benefits, and their relative weight” (Johnston, 2014:34) and can lead to cowed quiescence as exemplified in the phenomenon of *susto* present in certain central American societies (Green, 1994), or conversely, determination to resist in spite of its inherent dangers (Wood, 2001). Johnston puts forth the notion of “anger spiral mechanisms” wherein “long term anger, variously distributed beforehand in the quiescent population is the emotional link between structural injustice and the causative force of immediate reflexive anger” expressed in militant political mobilisation (2014: 45). The presence of fear transformed into anger as a mobilising catalyst can explain the anomalous aspect of successful movement re-organisation in authoritarian settings with limited to non-existent political opportunities (see Alimi, 2009).

In the case of “ordinary Kurdish subjects”, they have consistently “experienced the Turkish nation-state as the most powerful object of fear in their lives” (Aras, 2013:79), particularly during the state onslaught after the coup. As Perwer, a PKK sympathiser from a village adjacent to the Syrian border in Mardin, observed, after the 12th of September not even the leaves on the trees could be heard, such was the terror that gripped Kurdistan (Interview 32, 2012). Those Kurds who had been active in the various movements and could not escape abroad drifted from one safe house to the next, awaiting their inevitable arrest

and torture. Serdar, a fifteen year old PKK activist, awoke on that day in a communal house in Nizip and saw tanks on the street. However, the PKK had not arranged any contingency plans in anticipation of a military putsch, so Serdar was forced to improvise his own means of escaping the dragnet. He moved from one safe house to another in the Urfa district, ever more isolated as the PKK's support network was slowly dismantled, until he was inevitably picked up by the army in his home village. Due to the huge number of prisoners, the army did not have adequate space to detain him, so Serdar was taken to the cellar of a high school in Nizip where he was held with 130-140 other prisoners, the majority of whom were PKK sympathisers. Notwithstanding the army's appropriation of the basement, daily school life continued overhead, oblivious to the detainees in the cellar. He was tortured for two and a half months, usually in the company of his brother, before he was eventually transferred to a permanent detention facility, the 5th Zirhli Tugay military prison in Antep (Interview 36, 2013).

The military's ambitions overextended their logistical capacity, so innumerable Kurds who had not been identified as particularly perilous were temporarily detained in makeshift camps for shorter periods of time. As Perwer's village was located on the border, it was a focus of military attention. The army gathered a large number of suspects – being a young man was sufficient to render you a suspect - from the surrounding villages, confiscated their weapons and detained them in one central village. All the men were tortured, with particular severity meted out to those believed to be politically active and to local religious figures. Perwer was tortured to the extent that he fell into a coma. At the insistence of his relatives who convinced the soldiers that it would be better for him to die at home rather than in their custody, he was released. It took him several weeks to recover from his injuries, at which point to escape further police attention he fled to Ankara to work in the construction industry. There was no PKK-organised presence in his immediate area and during that period Perwer, apart from some latent sympathies for Barzani, was completely disengaged from politics and more concerned with living a good Islamic life. However, he stated that if there had been contact with the PKK in his area after his torture he would have gone immediately to the mountains (Interview 32, 2012), thus highlighting a strong correlation between support for the PKK and the desire to seek revenge.

Analogous large-scale collective interrogations, torture and ritual humiliation took place across the region. Nijdar, a young TKSP supporter in Silwan, recalls how every man over the age of sixteen was gathered in the local football stadium and that individuals were chosen at random and tortured publicly. Those that confessed to some crime or other were moved to a permanent detention centre (Interview 30, 20). Violence was not confined to the male Kurdish population; he implied that female members of his family were also tortured, raped and subsequently bore children. He observed that “after the rape and pregnancy of young girls there was no desire for peace. It was these family assaults that led people to go to the mountains. It was a strong emotional reaction” (ibid).

While it would be incorrect to attribute the PKK’s subsequent uprising to the impact of the coup d’état, as the PKK had already ideologically committed to armed insurgency and began preparations to that end, it is clear that the nature of the indiscriminate repression, cruelty and targeting of Kurdish cultural identity, as well as the de-legitimisation of the Turkish state and the emotional reactions it triggered, were key to the scale and speed of support the PKK subsequently obtained. Furthermore, it bears reconfirming that emotional solidarity or positive disposition to the PKK alone cannot explain its resurgence and expansion. The PKK’s success must be attributed to its campaigns of resistance in prison and the publicity they attracted, its careful use of culturally resonant symbolism and the strategic manner in which it framed its political message and recruited militants, as outlined in the sections below.

Prison

The detainees perceived as most dangerous to the Turkish state were transferred to permanent detention centres, most notoriously Diyarbakir prison¹⁰² (see Demirel 2009, Zana 1997, Zeydanlioğlu 2009, and Whitman & Laber, 1987, Amnesty International 1984, amongst others, for a treatment of the conditions there).¹⁰³ “*Diyarbakir cehennemi*”, or “the

¹⁰²Diyarbakir prison has a long renown as a site of brutality and torture of political prisoners dating back to the Ottoman period. Nationalists from the Balkans were detained and tortured there in the 19th century.

¹⁰³These websites in Turkish also provide extensive documentation of the period: <http://www.diyarbakirzindani.com/> <http://www.78liler.org/78web/default.asp>

torture of Diyarbakir” (Zeydanlioğlu 2009:7) as the period has become known, lasted until 1984 when conditions improved with the return of civilian government. Torture was a certainty in the prison and death a strong likelihood; unofficial sources cite sixty seven deaths in the prison (Whitman & Leber, 1987:96). The torture took an incredible variety of forms; in Mehdi Zana’s book he refers to thirty two different types to which he was personally subjected or of which he had first-hand evidence (1997). The types of torture most resented by the prisoners were those which, aside from the unimaginable pain, had the objective of deliberately humiliating the prisoners. Zana recounted a collective form of torture which involved prisoners sodomising fellow prisoners with a baton. Prisoners that refused to comply were then brutalised by the guards. Zana detailed one such occasion:

[...]They sodomized him with the club, in front of us, and when they took it out, all covered in blood, they shoved it in his mouth to make him suck it. Those who underwent this test were broken for months, their virility destroyed. We tried to boost their spirits. In order not to undergo this dreaded torture, the prisoners submitted. So they were forced to shout, ‘I am so proud to be Turkish... (1997: 18-19)

The occasional visiting hours that were conceded were heavily supervised and it was strictly forbidden to speak Kurdish, even though many of the visiting family members were completely unable to converse in Turkish. Mazlum’s mother could only speak Kurdish and accordingly could not communicate during visiting hours with her son. These silent visits went on for a year or so, when they could only “communicate with their eyes” until one day Mazlum said to her in Kurdish “Don’t worry about me, I am fine. How are you?” Visiting hours were immediately cancelled and he was tortured for hours for the mere act of uttering half a dozen Kurdish words (Interview 24, 2012). Visiting hours were also exploited by the prison authorities to play perverse psychological tricks, presumably for their own amusement, on the visiting families. As Salih explained:

“Once, they forced us to say ‘how are the lentils?’ We did not have any lentils in the village. I asked my father the question, and my father started crying. I repeated the question over and over again ... My father thought I was gone mad (Interview 21 - Salih, 2012).

Torture is usually applied as a means to an end: the extracting of information. A torture expert, Murat Paker, cited in Zeydanlioğlu, argues that it is more correct to consider the Diyarbakir prison as a form of concentration camp (2009:9). The 'end' or objective of the torture that took place in Diyarbakir was not to gather intelligence and/or dismantle certain political organisations. It was rather the mental and on occasion physical destruction of the prisoners who were viewed as the leaders of the Kurdish movements and thus the vanguard in the burgeoning revival of Kurdish identity. Mazlum pointedly compared the prison to a laboratory, with prisoners in the role of laboratory rats (Interview 24, 2012). Human guinea pigs in a remorseless Turkification experiment. The physical and psychological devastation of these prisoners was viewed as key to the annihilation of the Kurdish identity itself, an identity which had of course no place in the Turkey envisaged by the generals. Thus, the torture regime in prison was a de-ethnicising project, a grand design of Turkification which would extirpate any lingering roots of Kurdish identity (Zeydanlioğlu, 2009: 10). However, just as the oppression in the wider region had fostered the favourable environment that would nurture the PKK, the brutalisation of the Diyarbakir prison shaped the militants that would become its central cadre.

The strong emotional bonds that formed in the bowels of the barbarism of the Turkish state proved to be enduring. Salih, while awaiting his execution even though he was legally a minor, recounts:

We were not given bread all the time, and not everybody would get it when it was distributed. Mazlum Doğan was given a quarter [piece] of bread, and he did not eat that bread. In the night, he struggled to throw the bread tied to a rope, to my cell, which was four cells away from his. That was very risky, because after the doors were closed by midnight, we were all under surveillance and any contact with other prisoners could result in heavy torture and even death. He struggled for one hour and by throwing my pyjamas on the bread, I took it. It was not bread that would ease my hunger; it only changed the taste in my mouth. I always say that, from the age of 17 until now, 50, my ideology, my politics and everything is hidden in that bread or a glass of water that was shared ... Apart from the fear and all other feelings, I have got to know the real Turkish state and the real PKK in prison. In a way what made me a real PKK sympathizer and what gave me my real identity was the

state and its applications in Diyarbakir prison (Interview 21, 2012).

Salih's experience was far from unusual. Another prisoner, Selim Dindar, observed that "they made militants out of people in the Diyarbakir prison. Almost 80 percent of these people went to the mountains [took up arms]. It was very difficult for someone to pursue a normal life after having experienced such brutality" (in Zeydanlioğlu, 2009: 8). The families of the prisoners subjected to this treatment were similarly radicalised, they became "resilient and political" (Salih, Interview 21, 2012). It was this nucleus of former prisoners and their families that emerged as the key movement actors in the period when the PKK was consolidating itself inside Turkey in the late 1980s.

The Post-Coup Period

As stated, the increased repression in the lead-up to the coup had induced Öcalan to flee to Syria in the summer of 1979. By means of the acquaintance of some Lebanon-based Kurds, he got in touch with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and they agreed to help train a number of PKK militants in camps in Lebanon. As Mamdoh Nofal, a former DFLP commander explained, "we accept[ed] the Marxist-Leninist groups because we are Marxist-Leninist" (in Marcus, 2007:56). Thus in early 1980 the PKK joined the plethora of other revolutionary groups receiving military instruction from Palestinian groups based in Lebanon and Syria. In addition to training in basic warfare techniques, the importance of a civil militia was also impressed upon the PKK by the DFLP, advice that the former subsequently used to great effect in Kurdistan (ibid: 57). Immediately after the coup, Öcalan passed word to the rest of the PKK militants to flee Turkey (ibid: 52) and by 1982, up to 300 militants were receiving military instruction in Lebanon. A number of PKK members fought the invading Israeli forces in Lebanon in 1982 and a founding member, Abdullah Kumral, was killed in these clashes (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:18). This period after the coup was one of a regrouping; "it was a period of reorganisation, extensive political and military training and preparation in exile" (Imset, 1992:33). Most importantly, almost all PKK activities inside Kurdistan ceased and the movement was forced to bide its time abroad before re-starting its initiatives inside Turkish borders.

There is however, some debate as to whether all of its active militants fled abroad. Abdullah explained that in the Bingöl area a small contingent of militants withdrew to an inaccessible mountainous zone where they studiously avoided contact with the forces of the state but had intermittent contact with surrounding sympathetic villages (Interview 14, 2012). Nonetheless, the coup successfully, if but for a short period, destroyed the PKK's operational activities within Turkish borders. The climate of state terror even led many politically active Kurds to actively distance themselves publicly from their previous allegiances. Ahmet explained that in his village Cikestin, certain Kurds began ostentatiously drinking alcohol in public to show their distance from the PKK; prior to that the PKK had banned the consumption of alcohol as it was viewed as a distraction from the revolution (Interview 18, 2012).

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, Kurdish activists from all the groups that escaped immediate arrest fled abroad, mainly to Syria because of its proximity and long and relatively porous border. In the previous years of frenetic mobilisation the main groups within the wider Kurdish struggle gained a degree of public profile, even those clandestine groups who operated through front organisations. Although this public presence was necessary to recruit members and succeed in municipal elections and trade union politics, it had a downside: it brought the movement actors to the knowledge of the authorities (Ercan, 2010:165-166). Although the PKK had engaged in legal mobilisation, it did so to a lesser extent than its Kurdish rivals, as it was primarily concerned with preparing for the anticipated insurgency and thus largely remained within the extra-legal realm of mobilisation. Rival groups such as the TKSP and KIP's activities were located somewhere in the grey area between legal and extra-legal and their more public presence ensured that their activists were easier tracked down by the authorities after the coup. Accordingly, although the PKK suffered enormous personnel loss in the period, it maintained a degree of structural cohesion which allowed it to re-group fairly rapidly in Syria, unlike the other groups which rapidly fragmented (Ercan, 2010: 207-208). However, the PKK was sufficiently aware of its weakness to reach out to its erstwhile Kurdish rivals and the radical Turkish left. Through the mediation of Jalal Talalbani, Kemal Burkay agreed to meet with Öcalan regarding a potential détente and future co-operation. Burkay demanded that Öcalan publicly denounce the PKK's past attacks on fellow Kurdish groups (Marcus, 2007:65). At a

PKK party conference in 1981 in Lebanon, Öcalan offered such a public apology for the PKK's past mistakes (ibid) but nonetheless failed to convince any Kurdish groups of its good intentions and so no alliance was ever formed. This period of negotiations remains unclear, and it has been suggested that Öcalan even offered the leadership of any future alliance to Burkay (Interview 24, 2012). The TKSP has since represented its refusal to co-operate in an alliance as rooted in a principled stance against violence, which is contradicted in its own party programme that conceded the possible necessity of armed struggle (in Gunes, 2012:93). It is much more probable that the mistrust generated in the period of inter-movement violence made any such alliance at that time unthinkable for the TKSP and other Kurdish groups.

The radical Turkish left, which had not suffered from a similarly intense rivalry with the PKK like the other Kurdish movements, agreed to form an alliance with the PKK, the FKBDC (Unified Resistance Front Against Fascism/ *Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi*) (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:133 and Marcus, 2007:65).¹⁰⁴ The most important and only other group with significant military capacity was Dev-Yol. In 1981 the PKK sent a number of senior cadres to Germany, subsequent to which Dev-Yol and the PKK established a coalition called Bir-Kom (Common Committee/*Birlik Komitesi*) in order to mobilise the waves of politicised Turks and Kurds fleeing Turkey. Germany also had the additional advantage of a large pre-existing migrant community of *gastarbeiter* who provided an ulterior pool of potential recruits (Van Bruinessen, 1998:45). Zar from Dersim was one such non-politicised *gastarbeiter* who moved to the Frankfurt area in Germany in the late 1970s, a time when he still self-identified as a Turk. He frequented socialist circles organised by the TKP and TIP, however his political awakening as a Kurd was triggered at a Bir-Kom seminar organised at the University of Frankfurt in 1982. A panel discussion of a wide array of groups was present, representing KOMKAR, Dev-Yol and the PKK, amongst others. He recalls that the PKK speaker referred to Kurdistan, and it was the first time Zar had ever heard anyone make public reference to Kurdistan; he describes the moment as a turning point in his life. From that point forth, he considered himself a Kurd and began frequenting Kurdish community centres that were rapidly springing up all over Germany wherever Kurdish migrants were to

¹⁰⁴ For a full list of participating organisations see Jongerden and Akkaya (2011:65).

be found. He subsequently discovered that the community centre in his nearby town – a town with a large refugee camp thus ensuring the presence of a sizeable politicised cohort from Turkey - had been actively recruiting for the upcoming insurgency, and the PKK speaker which had triggered his political awakening took part in the 15th of August attacks in Şemdinli in 1984 (Interview 34, 2013). The PKK thus rapidly took root in the Kurdish diaspora, which served as a form of “free space” (Polletta, 1999) or a “safe territory” (Bosi, 2013) whence the PKK obtained financial support and recruits. Europe was a secure organisational environment when mobilisation on the ground in Turkey proved impossible. In addition to the diaspora mobilisation in Europe, it also gathered strong support amongst Kurdish migrant workers in Libya, a number of whom travelled directly to Lebanon for military training (Imset, 1996 & Interview 37, 2013).

The other significant development of the interim period between the coup and the launch of the uprising was the Second Party Congress in August 1982, held on the Syrian-Jordanian border. It marked a point where the PKK had regrouped sufficiently to begin plans to resume the struggle inside Turkey (McDowall, 2004:422) and the three anticipated phases of the struggle were laid out: strategic defence, strategic balance and strategic offence (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:136, Imset, 1996 & 1992:33). The HRK (Kurdistan Freedom Brigades/*Hêzên Rizgariya Kurdistan*) was also established as a distinct formation within the PKK solely concerned with the military campaign (Gunter, 1997:47). The structural realignment of Turkey’s domestic political environment under the generals, as predicted by realms of literature related to political opportunity structure, rendered guerrilla warfare the only plausible option for the PKK. Thereafter all of the PKK’s activities were focused on realising the armed struggle and side projects such as labour activism and municipal politics, which could have had a moderating influence on the movement, were discarded.

Somewhat ambitiously, the launch of the insurgency was set for autumn 1983, but was subsequently postponed to the following summer for logistical reasons. The civil war in Lebanon had rendered it too unstable a location to maintain as the PKK’s primary base. An accord was struck with Barzani and the KDP in 1982 which allowed the PKK to set up permanent camps in KDP territory in the mountainous area of southern Kurdistan along the border with Turkey (Marcus, 2007:68-71). It was the perfect geographical base from which

to launch attacks across the border inside Turkey, and from 1983 onwards PKK fighters began to slowly infiltrate Turkey. According to Sari Baran, a former PKK militant, the purpose of these infiltrations was to “learn the geography, figure out where the guerrillas could hide, find out the views of the people to the PKK struggle and learn where the Turkish soldiers were based” (in Marcus, 2007:76).

The profile of the PKK was inadvertently boosted by the ongoing show trials of PKK prisoners in 1981 which were truly Kafkaesque in nature (Demirel, 2009). Judicial protocol was applied on an *ad hoc basis* and the evident signs of torture on many of the defendants were ignored. However, the PKK unlike other Kurdish groups used the trials to their advantage by converting them into political platforms. The prisoners who realistically knew that they had little or no chance of release launched impassioned defences of the PKK. Mehmet Hayri Durmuş announced from the dock in 1981 that “by making a prolonged people’s war [we] will be able to liberate our country” (in Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:131), while Kemal Pir declared that “the revolution in Kurdistan is a revolution of national liberation”. He defiantly continued “our aim is to do it. We will do it. After ten years, after twenty years [...]” (ibid). Aside from some Kawa members, the other Kurdish groups on trial such as the TKSP, KUK, Rizgari or the KIP/DDKD “either short-circuited the political dimensions of the trials by presenting their groups as only a periodical [...] or not defending the movement at all” (Gunes, 2012:99). The PKK was also strategic in its manipulation of the courts, and not all prisoners blindly defended the movement to their individual detriment.¹⁰⁵ As Serdar explained, he was tried with 515 other PKK prisoners in April 1982, and prior to the trial a strategy had been adopted according to which prisoners with the strong likelihood of release did not offer a political defence, while those almost certain of condemnation proffered eloquent political discourses intent on inspiring the Kurdish masses (Interview 36, 2013). The movement took a pragmatic approach to principled defence as it needed the manpower outside to prepare for the insurgency.

¹⁰⁵ The PKK’s calculated use of its court appearances is in contrast to a number of other ideologically blinkered left wing movements. To give but one example, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) preferred its imprisoned members to condemn themselves to years of torture and prison rather than make use of a strategic denouncement of the party, under the Metaxas dictatorship of the late 1930s (Charitopoulos, 2012).

The PKK's court appearances thus compounded the popular belief that the PKK was the only Kurdish movement still actively engaged in resisting the Turkish state.

Although PKK guerrillas began to organise on a systematic basis from 1983 inside Turkey's borders, it began to reassert itself in Kurdistan in subtle ways prior to that date. Ahmet explains that in his village in Mardin smugglers started to bring PKK publications across the border from Syria in late 1981. PKK supporters then clandestinely distributed them amongst families known to be sympathetic to the movement. As he was a car owner, he describes himself as living at night in this period as he was regularly called upon to ferry people from the mountains to the border and vice versa. It was also at this time that he first encountered a uniformed guerrilla. He claims that by 1982 the fear was over (Interview 18 – 2012). The PKK's presence was ever more substantial along the border, and only seven days after his release in April 1982 Serdar was approached in his village Çiftlik in Urfa by three armed guerrillas who asked him to prepare reports about Kurdish prisoners who had been released, the general political atmosphere in the area and which families they should or should not approach (Interview 36, 2013). It should be noted however that Çiftlik had been an area of notable PKK support prior to the coup.

In preparation for the armed campaign, the PKK necessarily needed to go beyond its former networks of supporters and engage with elements of Kurdish society with which it had previously enjoyed little or no contact, particularly in the rural areas. It concentrated its efforts on the small villages close to the Syrian border and in the Botan area, where the first clashes were to later occur. At this point the guerrillas avoided any military clashes and their only concern was in organising reliable networks of contacts in the villages. The PKK was extremely cautious about the topics it broached with potential supporters. In the villages around Bingöl, it spoke of the past Kurdish heroes of the area such as Seyt Rıza¹⁰⁶ and of the natural rights that the Kurds deserved to have comparable to those of the Turks, but they never spoke of Marxism or ideologically convoluted theories (Interview 14, 2012). According to Sari Baran in that period:

¹⁰⁶ Leader of the Dersim resistance in 1936-1938.

“if we met someone who was interested we would talk about Marxism-Leninism, otherwise, we would speak of the national struggle. That is what people were interested in. Either they really were not able to understand anything about socialism, or else they opposed the socialism because they saw it as anti-Islamic” (in Marcus, 2007:77).

Perwer, who also lived close to the Syrian border, remarked that in spite of the fact that he was very religious, he had sympathy for them just because he saw them as a way to overcome the state reprisals and the depression of the period. He explained that people “did not know about Lenin and Marx, socialism or communism. They just knew that these people are fighting for me, a poor ordinary Kurd that wants freedom” (Interview 32, 2012). This marked a divergence in PKK strategy from the pre-coup period where it delivered eighteen books on communism to Ahmet’s village in 1979 and demanded that whoever was educated read them (Interview 18, 2012). Consider the Marxist rhetoric in the leaflet that the PKK distributed after the initial attack on the Bucak family in 1979:

Forward to an independent, united democratic Kurdistan!

Down with Imperialism and Colonialism!

Long live Independence and proletariat Internationalism!

Long live the PKK! (in Marcus, 2007:46).

It is clear that the PKK had adopted a more nuanced ideological approach to win over the vast swathes of the population that was Islamic and unfamiliar with or opposed to left-wing ideals. It used a dual framing strategy according to its target audience. The PKK continued to use official Marxist discourse in its publications until the mid-1980s but after 1986 it almost completely disappeared (Interview 37, 2013). However, as their publications in this period had only a restricted distribution – primarily amongst pre-existing networks of PKK supporters - the average Kurdish villager’s interaction with the PKK was through their face-to-face contact in personal encounters. Therefore, the impression of the PKK rural Kurds developed was of Kurdish rebels fighting the state, the latest addition to the pantheon of national heroes, and not that of a Marxist group. The PKK for all of its rhetorical Marxist flourishes to the Turkish left and the wider international revolutionary community such as the Palestinian movements was inherently flexible in the manner in which it

presented itself. According to an interviewee, the PKK never attempted to impose doctrinaire Marxism on the wider populace (Interview 37, 2013).¹⁰⁷ Its cautious use of Marxism also distinguished itself from the radical Turkish left, which to this day makes use of very orthodox Marxist rhetoric.

Notwithstanding, the PKK's reluctance to indiscriminately preach the tenets of Marxism to wider Kurdish society, it was still Marxist in orientation and all new recruits were indoctrinated in the theories of the left.¹⁰⁸ The PKK was cognisant of the contrasting cultural and political norms of those whose support they sought to obtain. That they actively avoided rather than confronted these ideological chasms supports the hypothesis that the normative tenets of the populace dictated the PKK's strategic decision making. That is not however to accuse the PKK of duplicity, but rather to recognise that it adopted different registers when engaging with different audiences. It addressed the wider revolutionary community (national and international) as Marxists and its incipient rural support base as national rebels fighting the repressive state. The PKK was not undermined by this apparent contradiction but strengthened by having the strategic capacity to emphasise whichever aspect of their discourse resonated more with their particular audience in specific socio-spatial environments.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the PKK's ten year pre-conflict gestation period, which traversed arguably the most tumultuous period of modern Turkish history, characterised by unprecedented social upheaval, violent street politics and the sadistic brutality and radical political transformation of the 1980 coup d'état. In the course of this decade the PKK evolved from an introspective and rather unremarkable leftist student group in the university milieu of Ankara to a rural based guerrilla army. In the pre-coup period its

¹⁰⁷ Unlike for example the Sendero Luminoso which hung dogs from electric cables in response to internal feuds in the Chinese Communist Party.

¹⁰⁸ In my own personal experience, even today, twenty years after the hammer and sickle has been removed from the PKK's flag, a large portion of the movement cadre furiously refute any suggestion that the movement has drifted from its leftist founding principles, arguing that they have simply evolved in reaction to the changing international environment.

emergence was in concert with a wide variety of leftist and Kurdish movements with which it had inconsistent relationships, ranging from collaborative to hostile. Its bellicose transition was accordingly neither the result of a strategic decision nor of a Fanonian idealisation of violence but came about due to processes of competitive escalation with its allies and reciprocal escalation with its opponents, all conditioned by the changing political structural environment. Prior to the coup, its repertoire of contention embraced much of the political opportunities available to it by engaging in conventional practises such as municipal politics, trade unionism and quotidian interactions of a more mundane quality with its putative supporters. Accordingly, it rapidly consolidated a robust constituency, bolstered by kin and associational networks, bonds of emotional commitment and a network of houses and spaces which facilitated relations of utilitarian exchange and moments of encounter with ever-expanding swathes of Kurdish society.

The coup rapidly transformed the political environment and in simple terms the PKK reacted better to the altered political opportunities than its erstwhile Kurdish rivals who for the most part were relegated to political marginality. Certainly, the PKK had been less publicly exposed than some of them due to its lesser engagement with conventional politics but it too suffered enormously in terms of losing members and senior cadres to imprisonment, death and exile. The PKK distinguished itself by re-assessing its previous mobilisation strategies and its hostility towards other Kurdish movements. It adopted a dual framing strategy whereby it emphasised its Marxist credentials to better-educated and politically mobilised elements of society and its Kurdish nationalism to its largely rural and politically less literate audiences. It organised courageous resistance inside the prison system and manipulated its court appearances to its advantage. It also benefitted from its links with the radical Turkish left to reorganise in the diaspora, as well as a degree of external support from the Syrians and the Kurds in Southern Kurdistan. The PKK's decision to remain in the vicinity of the Turkish borders and reject the greater security on offer as political exiles in Europe proved a wise choice in the long term.

However, the PKK's post-coup mobilisation strategies would most likely not have come to fruition so quickly were it not for the fact that, in addition to its antecedently mobilised constituency, almost the entirety of its "mobilisation potential" (Klandermans &

Oegema, 1987) had been emotionally traumatised by the military takeover. Large parts of Kurdish society were simmering with sentiments of fear, humiliation, resentment and rage. And the PKK successfully presented itself as a vehicle to channel this potent emotional mix into a determination to wreak vengeance on the state. Such were the developments that ensured that the PKK was the only group in a position to adopt the mantle of Kurdish resistance and its attack on the 15th of August transformed, in the words of Ahmet, “the darkness into light” (Interview 18, 2012), thereby launching the longest insurgency witnessed in modern Turkish and Kurdish history.

Chapter IV: PKK and Rural Insurgency

Introduction

By August 1984, the PKK had infiltrated three units of its armed forces, the HRK into Kurdistan, thus exposing itself to the full military wrath of the Turkish state. Armed groups are most vulnerable in their early periods of mobilisation. Guerrillas' inexperience, lack of local knowledge, absence of geographically and socially proximate constituencies and the unpredictability of state responses renders it the most dangerous phase of an armed group's existence. Innumerable rebellions, those that are never usually lauded in the history books or about which songs are never sung, have been dismantled before they actually ever really started, from the local example of the Ordiya Rizgariya Kurdistanê led by Urfan Alparslan prior to the coup, to more well known examples such as Che Guevara's failed uprising in Bolivia in 1967. The PKK had followed the classic urban to rural trajectory, relocating to a drastically different socio-spatial environment. They had shifted to an area where they had at best an incipient constituency, and in order to avoid immediate dismantlement by the state, obliged to urgently establish a relationship with the residents of the rural communities. As Wickham-Crowley observed:

"how could it [an armed group] survive without a peasantry willing to protect guerrillas from army patrols with silence and misdirection; without peasants willing to join the band and give to the group s familiarity with local conditions and persons otherwise impossible to achieve; without peasants willing to provide at least a modicum of food and other resources? If the peasantry turns against the guerrillas, there is no way for them to survive except as bandits" (1992:52).

The PKK's first challenge was, therefore, the consolidation of its physical presence in the region or the realisation of a safe territory. By the early 1990s, the PKK had undeniably achieved such a safe territory and expanded from its initial three armed units to a guerrilla army of more than ten thousand fighters spread across eleven distinct geographical regions

(see Gunes, 2012: 106-107), mobilised a rural militia or *milis*, and a Turkey and Europe wide popular political front, the ERNK (*National Liberation Front of Kurdistan/Eniye Rizgariye Navata Kurdistan*). This rapid expansion occurred notwithstanding the massive opposition of the Turkish armed forces directed against the guerrilla forces themselves and the communities which supported them. It was achieved in spite of local armed opposition from Kurdish pro-state Village Guard militias, the organisational difficulties posed by the rapid expansion of the PKK's ranks, hierarchical tensions within the movement and destabilising regional developments such as the Anfal campaign and the Gulf War.

In chronological terms, this chapter will detail the PKK's period of rural insurgency from 1984 until its peak in 1993 and will focus spatially on its activities in rural areas. The importance of structural factors has been argued to varying degrees by a range of authors (Goodwin, 2001:25 and Wickham-Crowley, 1993). However the limitations of the structuralist approach are evident when insurgent movements' successes confound structuralist expectations or in cases where structures impact on similar actors in different fashions. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on movement agency (Jasper, 2006) and how the specific strategies enacted by insurgent movements can reconfigure the broader socio-political environment to render it more favourable to the realisation their revolutionary objectives. The chapter will remain cognisant that movement agency is influenced by its cultural and institutional context (ibid: 5). It will also maintain the interactive approach in the process oriented perspective as previously outlined (Bosi *et al*, 2014).

The PKK followed a Guevarist *foco* strategy (see Guevara, 2006 and Debray, 1967) which, in its most basic understanding, held that a small insurgent vanguard could trigger a revolution notwithstanding unfavourable structural conditions. The chapter will discuss the manner in which the PKK adopted and adapted this *foco* strategy for the Kurdish context. It will elaborate on the contrasting challenges of immediate survival and the subsequent organisational tensions inherent in the movement's rapid expansion. It will attempt to explain the role of figure of Abdullah Öcalan and how he established almost uncontested control of the movement. It will then discuss the main theoretical paradigm of this project, armed groups' constituencies and how the PKK managed to forge one in the unpropitious environment of rural Kurdistan. Its constituency was facilitated by a form of cognitive

liberation that dismantled the popular understanding of the state's impregnability and was bolstered by the PKK's construction of a form of "state-in-formation" (Goodwin, 2001: 12). It will further explain how the PKK's practises of violence affected this incipient constituency and in turn the role its constituency played in enabling the extension of the PKK's repertoire of contention.

Rural Insurgency

The PKK as discussed in Chapter III moved from the urban spaces of Ankara to Kurdistan in the mid 1970s. It expanded its presence in Kurdistan by means of political and personal networks of acquaintances and it had been most active in urban environments, enjoying significant degrees of support in cities like Antep and big towns like Kiziltepe and Mardin. However, that is not to say, that it was exclusively an urban organisation, it made strenuous efforts to mobilise in the rural areas, most notably in campaigns against the *aşirets* in Urfa and Hilwan, but it remained for the most part an urban oriented movement. This changed utterly in the lead up to 1984, and the guerrilla forces henceforth became deeply rooted in the countryside with a lesser presence in urban areas. The PKK insurgency developed in the rural periphery, in areas with minimal state presence. Its guerrilla units, as per the understanding of Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh, represented the revolutionary vanguard but were not themselves the centre or guiding force of the revolution, which as befitted orthodox Communist dogma remained the preserve of the party itself (drawing on Moreno, 2010: 400). The adoption of a strategy of rural insurgency seems to have been born of necessity rather than a conviction that "the countryside and the countryside alone, can provide the revolutionary bases from which the revolution can go forward to final victory" (Mao Zedong in Alroy 2010: 257).

The PKK encountered a number of specific challenges in its rural mobilisation, not least the lack of resonance its socialist discourse generated in rural areas - as already discussed in Chapter III - which they overcame by a calculated framing of the conflict when interacting with potential supporters. As Faqi, a former guerrilla from Dersim pithily explained, PKK members were very aware which kind of issues should be addressed, in

which contexts and to whom (Interview 35, 2013). Nevertheless, the ideological gap remained an issue. Karsaz, a religious Kurd active in the Azadi movement remarked that the “Marxist jargon” utilised by the PKK and its “ideological structure” was problematic for many Kurds. He opined that were it not for this ideological gap, that the Kurds of Turkey by this stage would enjoy at least the same degree of autonomy as the Kurds in Southern Kurdistan in the contemporary KRG (Interview 26, 2012 and see Aras, 2013:86-87).

Aside from this specific challenge there are a number of other difficulties in mobilising peasants. Unlike urban workers, agricultural labour is often carried out on an individual basis thus reducing the potential of solidarity derived from collective labour (Wolf, 2010:291). “The tyranny of work weighs heavily among the peasants: their life is geared to an annual routine and to planning for the year to come” (ibid)¹⁰⁹ thus rendering them inflexible in terms of commitment. In addition, “peasants’ interests [...] often cross-cut class alignments. Rich and poor peasants may be kinfolk [...]” (ibid and Kalyvas, 2003: 478). This specific social structure ensures that many poorer elements of rural society bound by blood obligations are often reluctant to engage in mobilisation that would oppose their kinsmen. In short, horizontal solidarities are often more difficult to forge in rural areas because they are inhibited by historic, vertical solidarities.

The more developed “formal and informal infrastructures” and “dense affective familial and personal relations” that would have facilitated the construction of a PKK “safe territory” (Bosi, 2013:81) were located in urban areas, off limits to the guerrillas. The insurgents relocated their theatre of activities to the mountainous Botan region, a geographically favourable location because it skirts the Iraqi and Syrian borders. Although space is indeed “a social artifact” (ibid: 82), it necessarily takes shape in a specific geographical space.

¹⁰⁹ Zapata and his ‘Army of the South’ overcame this issue by alternating its soldiers on a three monthly basis between military service and agricultural labour (Milton, 2006:35).

And the geographical space in which the insurgent mobilisation occurred was characterised by a variety of favourable characteristics, most notably its imposing mountains, limited state presence, transport and communications infrastructure (see Chaliand, 1987: 53-54, Hendrix, 2011, Cederman, 2008, Collier & Hoeffler, 2000, and O’Sullivan, 1983). Indeed, the terrain in Kurdistan provides the three geographic features outlined by Clausewitz for a successful guerrilla campaign, it is in the interior of the country; it is an extensive area; and is characterised by irregular countryside (in O’Sullivan, 1983: 140). It also overlaps with a further condition listed by Clausewitz, “a national character [...] favourable to war” (ibid). Rural Kurdistan is in this regard, a more favourable location for insurgency than its urban centres. In addition the routine physical hardship of rural life, perpetual inter-tribal conflicts and the practise of blood feuding (see Van Bruinessen, 1992), the widespread possession of arms and the collective historic memory of resistance and rebellion of the early Turkish Republic arguably favour an insurgent mentality. Notwithstanding these factors in its favour, the decisive aspect of the PKK’s nascent insurgency was to hinge on its capacity to win the support of the locals; as Chaliand observed “a guerrilla movement can only survive with the support of that part of the population on which it depends for information, communications, food and recruits” (1987:48). It is to this nexus of relations between the PKK and its immediate social – rather than physical – environment that this chapter will focus.

Attacks on Eruh and Şemdinli

On the night of the 15th of August, two units of between ten and thirty PKK fighters launched attacks on the army barracks in Eruh and the gendarmerie base in Şemdinli¹¹⁰. The assaults had been meticulously planned; the particular locations were chosen because they were deep in mountainous territory thus providing a number of escape routes for the guerrillas. They were small villages and accordingly did not host large numbers of soldiers or policemen. The sites were not, however, selected for exclusively strategic reasons. The PKK shunned targets closer to the border - from which it would have been easier to flee to cross

¹¹⁰A third attack was planned for Çatak but for some logistical reasons was never carried out. The commander responsible for the failed mission, Terzi Cemal was later arrested by the PKK prior to its Third Congress in 1986

border safety of Iraq or Syria – “because clashes there might either be blamed on smugglers or dismissed by both Kurds and the state as not a serious challenge” (Marcus, 2007:79). Sari Baran, a guerrilla commander who participated in the attack explained that the objective of the attack as not “to kill a lot of soldiers” (in Marcus, 2007:79) but rather to serve as a clarion call for the conflict which was to come; its value was primarily symbolic rather than strategic.

The PKK was of the understanding that there would be popular support for the armed struggle but that the brutality of the coup period had demoralised large portions of the Kurdish population. As Baran asserted “we understand (*sic*) that if we started the armed struggle, and gave the image that we are (*sic*) growing and strong, then we could win the support of the people” (ibid:78). The PKK believed that it was not necessary to have an extensive movement to start an armed campaign and that recruitment would derive from the practise of violence itself, thus echoing its pre-coup approach whereby violence of a lesser intensity had proven to be a successful mobilisational strategy. The structural conditions were not opportune for armed struggle; the state had penetrated Kurdish society to an unprecedented extent and many of the PKK’s senior cadres were in prison or dispersed abroad. Yet, the PKK’s perceptive reading of the long term insurrectionary potential of the Kurdish people convinced them to embark on a *foco* strategy which holds that “it is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them” (Guevara, 2006:66). Johnston has explained that the initial acts of rebellion in authoritarian settings are central to a process that he has called “fear abatement”. The first steps of resistance have as their “primary audiences – and this is crucial to the mechanism [fear abatement] – those citizens who were more timid and quiescent” thereby “offering affirmation that there are many who are dissatisfied with regime and, if you are too, you are not alone” (2014: 37). The attacks can therefore be viewed as directed toward wider Kurdish society rather than as a means of communicating with the state. It was thus, the PKK that took the initiative to launch the struggle against the Turkish regime, instead of waiting for the perfect storm of structural conditions that would have facilitated rebellion.

and questioned because of the failure (Marcus, 2007:110).

Notwithstanding the fact that the PKK carried out a number of further attacks with a significant degree of success throughout the autumn of 1984 (Marcus, 2007:82), the revitalised PKK was not yet viewed as a major concern by the vertices of the Turkish army. As Marcus observes “the ban on Kurdish-related activities was so complete that the ruling powers could be forgiven for having forgotten that there was, in fact, a Kurdish problem in Turkey” (ibid: 85). The Kurdish question, from a military perspective, was viewed as resolved because the militant groups were dissolved or dispersed in exile. The regime’s enactment of a series of legislation, such as the notorious Law 2932¹¹¹ passed in 1983 (see Oran 2000:153 & Aslan 2009); with the objective of re-configuring the Kurdish cultural landscape was seen as the ultimate guarantor of long term re-establishment of Kemalist hegemony in the region. Indeed, the regime was more concerned by the daring attacks carried out by Armenian radical groups than it was with any nascent Kurdish revival (see Dugan *et al*, 2008). Accordingly, the PKK’s attacks consequences were of more immediate relevance to PKK supporters and wider Kurdish society than to the Turkish military. The uprising was an assertion of resistance, concrete proof that the Kurdish people had absorbed the wrath of the regime and had re-emerged scathed, but intact. In the absence of any other channels of political expression it was via the weapons of the guerrillas that a modicum of collective dignity was restored, redolent of Sartre’s take on Fanon:

When the peasant takes a gun in his hands, the old myths grow dim and the prohibitions are one by one forgotten. The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a European¹¹² is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a national soil under his foot (1963:22).

Although the impact of these initial attacks has undoubtedly undergone a degree of retrospective embellishment, they marked a turning point for those sympathetic to Kurdish

¹¹¹ Law 2932 stated that “No language can be used for the explication, dissemination, and publication of ideas other than the first official language of countries, recognized by the Turkish state” (in Aslan, 2009: 6). The law was subsequently repealed in 1991.

¹¹² Fanon’s ‘Wretched of the Earth’ focused on the Algerian War of Independence, hence the reference to ‘Europeans’.

nationalism. Ahmet, a PKK sympathiser from Mardin, eloquently described the attacks as comparable to “the rising of the sun”, re-triggering hope for the Kurds after the unremitting desperation of the preceding period (Interview 18, 2012). While Mazlum, who had been a TKSP activist prior to being imprisoned after the coup, admitted that the attacks excited even him and that it had the same effect with all Kurds. People started to believe that they could fight the state once again (Interview 24, 2012). It has been observed that in order “to gain the support of the population, [...] insurgents seek to show, [...] that the adversary, though usually seen as unbeatable, is in fact vulnerable,” (Chaliand, 1987: 49). Abdullah, a PKK activist based in Europe explained that prior to 1984 that Kurds were indeed of the view that the army was invulnerable. Prior to the attacks, he claims that the presence of even one individual soldier was enough to terrify an entire village but that afterwards Kurds started to slowly re-establish their self belief (Interview 14, 2012).

However, communications networks in Kurdistan were underdeveloped and the Turkish media would not have recounted the attacks, if they would have reported them at all, in a manner flattering of the PKK. Accordingly, the guerrillas engaged in concerted campaigns of propagandising across the small villages of the region, as PKK commander Baran explained “we told them [the fight] was necessary, that there was no other way except through arms” (in Marcus, 2007:81). The publicising of the struggle amongst the rural communities was time consuming and geographically inconsistent but it was crucial in the establishment of the PKK’s constituency in the area. The PKK’s violence thus directly contested the state presence in the region and catapulted the movement into the role of the vanguard of the Kurdish struggle.

Short Term Survival

This thesis has asserted the primary importance of the relationship between armed groups and their constituency; however, civilian support for insurgents is not the absolutely definitive aspect of armed groups success or failure (Wickham-Crowley, 1992:96). While this relationship always remains relevant, its importance varies in relation to other contextual factors. The PKK’s initial successes of the late summer and early autumn in 1984 did not

continue into winter. The following months were a period of desperate struggle for survival in the face of an intense clampdown by the armed forces of the state, severe weather conditions, and the overwhelming sense of fear internalised by the local population. Fear of the state induced some locals to denounce the PKK presence to the military and a number of guerrillas were arrested and killed (Özdağ, 2003:20). Although some of the militants had been tempered in battles with the Israeli army in Lebanon, they were for the most part inexperienced in any form of guerrilla warfare. This inexperience was compounded by the lack of hardiness required to cope with the physical hardship of life in the mountains. The Turkish army responded to the attacks by sending in extensive reinforcements to the region and military outposts were established in the vicinity of mountain villages “on which the PKK relied for food, information and new recruits” (Marcus, 2007:97). The guerrillas struggled to avoid unfavourable encounters with the military and suffered a number of casualties (ibid) and many more were arrested including a number of senior militants, most notably Mustapha Güneş (Interview 37, 2013). Furthermore, the concentration of soldiers in the area, as Baran explained limited the PKK’s ability “to enter villages ... we couldn’t make our propaganda very easily, which hurt our ties to the people” (in Marcus, 2007:97). The PKK continued to have difficulty to publicise its activities and its political message in a comprehensive fashion for a number of years. A Mazlumder activist from Mazıdağı in Mardin explained that in 1988 four years after the insurgency had begun, the PKK had kidnapped the wealthy head of a local phosphorous mine. Although this occurred in his village’s immediate vicinity, locals believed that he had been kidnapped by some leftist revolutionaries rather than the PKK, thus highlighting the information challenges the PKK confronted (Interview 28, 2012). The PKK was endangered in a number of ways; the hostility of physical environment, local ignorance of their struggle and its motivations, the clampdown by the army and the lack of a wider support network to attenuate these factors.

The Turkish state also passed a ‘Repentants Law’ (*Pişmanlık Yasası*), after the PKK’s first attacks in order to draw militants away from the movement before they would become battle hardened fighters. The law did not convince a large number of militants to switch sides but it did achieve some notable individual successes. After a senior guerrilla commander, Abdülkadir Aygan was captured; he betrayed his erstwhile comrades under the repentant legislation, and began to work for the JITEM (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle*

Mücadele), a notorious branch of the Gendarmerie (Interview 37, 2013). The intelligence garnered from defectors and prisoners was used to further weaken the armed units. The outlook for the guerrillas was poor, as Selahattin Çelik a guerrilla active at the time admitted, “people [guerrillas] were betraying us, they were giving themselves up” (in Marcus, 2007:98). He estimated that around ninety people between guerrillas and supporters were killed in this period (ibid). However, the resilience of the PKK fighters convinced the locals of their commitment. The fact that the state – given all its advantages in manpower, materials and military experience – could not annihilate the scattered fighters led to growing support amongst the local population. Çelik explained, “in the end the military was unsuccessful because we were able to hang on to the areas where we were” (ibid). Although it suffered serious setbacks, the PKK’s continued presence on the mountains was in itself a victory. Marcus cites an unnamed guerrilla who observed that “whenever a gun exploded, whenever an attack took place, right afterward there would be new recruits” (2007:98). The winter of 1984-1985 was a crucial period for the PKK as a guerrilla movement. Its sole objective was short term survival and maintaining its tenuous foothold inside Kurdistan. The PKK’s success in surviving this period of insecurity laid the necessary foundations to realise its long term objectives of consolidating its presence inside Kurdistan and broadening its constituency.

Internal Structural Reform – Öcalan as a Charismatic Leader

The social movement literature due to its systemic focus often overlooks the role of leaders and their effects on movements (Erickson Nepstad & Bob, 2006:1). They have been considered “as intermediaries, facilitators, and motivators, as tacticians and foci of events, rather than as independent shapers of the course and outcome of contention” (Aminzade et al, 2001: 127). Structurally determinate approaches often neglect that “between environmental pressures and individual responses there lies a good deal of latitude for personal ingenuity and agency” (ibid: 138). Models of leadership are often divided into task oriented and people oriented styles. Charismatic leaders are associated with the second of these styles and have been defined as those which:

“evoke emotions that create a community of feeling, revoke emotions by creating affective dissidence that leads followers to rethink their worldviews, and reframe emotions by introducing new meaning structures that reshape their followers’ interpretations of the world and emotional responses to it” (Aminzade et al, 2001: 130).

It must, however, be acknowledged that no consensus has emerged on what charisma itself is actually composed of (see Den Hartog, Koopman & van Muijen, 1995:36 and Popper, 2000:729-730). Innumerable charismatic leaders have been identified (Popper, 2000:730) but the very nature of that charisma itself has been more difficult to precisely define. Erickson Nepstad and Bob have disaggregated the notion of charisma and elaborated a concept they refer to as leadership capital; a “broad term that has cultural, social and symbolic aspects” (2006:4). Leaders that boast a significant quantity of symbolic capital are likely to be viewed as charismatic leaders. However, as they note “the designation and acknowledgement of leaders within a movement occurs through a dialectical interaction with a mass base” (2006:2). Therefore, even charismatic leaders are subject to external validation by their supporters. Drawing on Weber’s ideas, Erickson Nepstad and Bob suggest that “without followers’ recognition of their leader’s special ‘gift’, charisma does not exist” (2006:5 and O’Gara, 2001:82). As charisma is therefore not an innate quality of the leader but rather a socially defined projection of his/her perceived leadership qualities, the question which arises is related not to personality but rather one of the processes of social recognition within a movement (see Jermier, 1993: 221).

The consolidation of a charismatic leader’s role in a movement is thus derived from social processes which institutionalise his/her control. Although leaders’ charisma often renders their elevated status as self-explanatory, the rather more mundane explanation is that it is usually derived from interactions between prominent figures within movements and a large degree of historical good fortune and coincidence. Abdullah Öcalan has been convincingly considered as a prototype of a charismatic leader (Özcan, 2006:187, 2005 & 2007b and Kutschera, 1999b). The PKK from its origin as a small clique of young militants through its development into a large guerrilla army and social movement numbering its supporters in millions has always been inextricably linked to the figure of Öcalan. In the early period of the PKK when it was still known as the *Apocular* or the Kurdish

Revolutionaries, Öcalan “was a first among equals”. A group of senior militants debated relevant matters before Öcalan would usually have the final word; but importantly there was a degree of debate (Interview 37, 2013). However, after 1986 “he became the absolute power, no longer the first among equals” (ibid). Many senior figures of the movement had been killed by rivals as in the case of Haki Karer and Mahsum Korkmaz, or died at the hands of the state such as Kemal Pir and Mehmet Hayri Durmuş in Diyarbakir prison. These deaths accordingly, deprived the movement of many of its more respected militants who could have potentially presented a leadership challenge to Öcalan.

Party Education and Öcalan’s Consolidation as Leader

In addition to the deaths of the other prestigious cadres of the PKK, Öcalan benefited from the saturation of party literature and education with his own charismatic presence. The routinisation of charisma (Weber, 1964) has always proved to be a difficult in revolutionary movements - if not an impossible process - as witnessed in the cases of Prabhakaran in the Tamil Tigers or Guzman in the Sendero Luminoso. The PKK is notable because Öcalan’s charisma was institutionalised long before his arrest through the party education system. Öcalan’s spatial detachment from the actual theatre of the struggle, allowed blame for controversial developments in the course of the armed conflict to be shifted onto commanders on the ground, thus preserving his projection as a great leader (Marcus, 2007: 108-109 & 240-242). This routinisation of charisma was brought about by the much vaunted party education system. The PKK has always viewed itself as a “collective education movement” (Westrheim, 2014:140); the PKK’s focus on individual self-improvement and its role in the revival of Kurdish national consciousness has been central to the forging of a coherent collective identity (della Porta & Diani, 2006: chapter 4). It has also at a more mundane level facilitated the acquisition of basic literacy skills to vast swathes of Kurdish society neglected by the Turkish educational system (Westrheim, 2010:108). Yet, it is this informal educational system which has consolidated the movement structure which has entrenched Öcalan’s grip on the movement.

Party education was entirely structured on the copious works of Öcalan, collectively known as *Önderlik çözümlmeleri*¹¹³. At the core of Öcalan's understanding of the Kurdish question is his firm belief in the collective debasement, *düşürülmüş* of the Kurdish people; "other than the Kurds, no people exist in the world who have become the soldiers of others in such a disgraceful way" (Öcalan in Özcan, 2005: 391). Kurds, as per this understanding are prone to fratricidal violence and the slavish imitation of others (Özcan, 2005: 392). The second pillar of PKK education is a rigorous doctrine of individual self-improvement to overcome the self-loathing inherent in recognition of personal debasement, as can be seen in the letters written by Kurdish activists who conducted suicide attacks or self-immolated (Grojean, 2012). Membership in the PKK is a totalising commitment:

A party member is one who acknowledges the programme of the party and is responsible for its implementation; who takes the will of the party as fundamental and gradually attaches himself to the party's will; who joins in party life and tactical application [daily practical activities] all day in an organ of the party; who exuberantly works for the party's fundamental aims in the manner of not making concessions, of not following self-advantage and of unlimited self-sacrifice by embracing the party's demeanour, tempo, and style through undoing oneself [analysing/remoulding one's personality]; and who devotes his/her life to the cause of the party. (Öcalan in Özcan, 2005:393)

Accordingly, the Kurds only hope is their collective reconfiguration by rigid adherence to the party programme (see Özcan, 2005:398), into the model of what Öcalan has delineated as the 'New Man' or 'Free Woman' (see Grojean, 2008 & 2012, Çağlayan 2012, Özcan 2005 & 2006 and Bozarslan, 2004). Therefore, in the educational sphere "Öcalan's leadership work lies in 'producing' individuals appropriate to the 'organizational life' of the party by an education of which he is the primary source" (Özcan, 2005: 394). Education is not viewed instrumentally as a means to an end but rather as integral to the end in itself. Party education was provided on a smaller scale in urban safe houses and on a larger one in guerrilla camps.

¹¹³ Özcan estimates that the sum total of all of these speeches is around 144,000 pages dating from 1979-1999 (2005: 399).

It became more systematic with the foundation of two party schools based close to Damascus, operational from 1994 until they were fully shut down in 2002 (Interview 37, 2013). There were two schools, one in Kurdish and the other in Turkish, based in austere compounds, one of which was an old chicken farm (ibid and see Marcus, 2007: 254-255 and Özcan, 2006: 146). In theory the PKK's curriculum covers a range of material ranging "from Zarathustra, to Socrates to Marx and onwards" (female coordinator of PKK school in Southern Kurdistan in Westrheim, 2010:110) but in reality it seems that it is limited to a synthesis of these materials as interpreted by Öcalan himself. As a teacher cited by Westrheim explained "as a starting point for further studies on specific issues we read a book or statement written by our leader. [...] Then we read alternative literature" (in 2010: 110). Özcan - who personally attended these courses in Syria and in Europe - explained that an entire subject, "The Fundamental Features of the Party Leadership" is dedicated to the person of Öcalan himself and includes an extensive list of his personal qualities (2005:397-398). Therefore, it is evident that the content of the PKK's education serves to consolidate Öcalan's exclusive vision of Kurdish society.

This, however, does not still explain how Öcalan used the education system to completely dominate the movement. The turnover of students was extremely high in the Turkish speaking school, estimated to be up to 1500 between 1994 and 1999 (Interview 37, 2013). Attendance at the school and personally meeting Öcalan was considered a great privilege and used to reward long serving guerrillas and to educate party activists from across Turkey and the diaspora¹¹⁴. Subsequent to their party training, militants would be sent back to their previous roles or dispatched to the mountains (ibid). Prior to fleeing Syria in 1998, Öcalan took a very hands-on approach at these schools. He would frequent them on an almost daily basis and interact even with low ranking party militants. He would question them as to their background, interrogate them regarding their failings and admonish them to strive to become better individuals and to display even greater determination to the cause (Interview, 37, 2013, Marcus, 2007: 255, Westrheim, 2010:114 and Özcan, 2005:396).

¹¹⁴ See Chapter VI

The repetitive content of Öcalan's speeches thus pales in significance in comparison to the ritualistic interactions between the leader and the student. The mere act of interacting with the Öcalan imbued militants with specific social capital which was then subsequently utilised to create an indirect but emotionally vigorous connection back to the Öcalan himself; thus linking the centre of the movement – Öcalan – to the periphery. Upon receipt of party education, all militants are obliged to share it within the movement and with sympathisers and potential recruits (Interview 9, 2012). Özcan sustains that “the organizers of these educational activities make every endeavour to imitate the atmosphere of the party central school” (2006: 147) thus ensuring consistency in the party education. One interviewee compared the schools to the *Ka'aba*, in the manner in which it bestowed prestige on those fortunate enough to encounter Öcalan (Interview 37, 2013). It is in such a fashion that the reverence and exalted status of Öcalan or the routinisation of his charisma is maintained, notwithstanding his absence from the battlefield and incarceration after 1999. In brief reference to the central focus of this project, the PKK's constituency; Öcalan's charismatic leadership role served as an ulterior consolidating factor in linking its constituents to the movement. The four sets of movement-constituent relations as outlined by Malthaner (2011) were underpinned by the shared universe of symbolic references linked to the person of Öcalan.

It should be briefly acknowledged, however, that the party's education did not always function as the movement desired. The PKK demanded not simply recruits, but individuals willing to recreate themselves according to the party model. Arguably, the party's education system worked better outside of Kurdistan than within it. Miniature recreations of the Damascus schools were created in bland suburbs of European cities and across western Turkey thus providing the movement with militants who had at least been broached with the fundamentals of PKK thought. However, in Kurdistan itself recruitment occurred in a more haphazard fashion as dictated by the ongoing counter-insurgency of the Turkish state. Opportunistic recruitment of tribes as discussed in chapter III was most unlikely to have furnished the movement with ideologically malleable recruits as desired by the PKK. A former guerrilla Aram was determined to join the PKK after he participated and witnessed the violence at the funeral of Vedat Aydin in 1991. He eventually joined the guerrillas in May 1992 when he was around fifteen years old. He described himself as having

forcibly joined the movement which did not want to accept him because of his youth. However, his persistence paid off and he took a bus with his cousin to a village close to Diyarbakir where he was escorted to the mountains by a detachment of guerrillas. On his second day with the guerrillas, they were involved in a clash with the army which left three PKK guerrillas dead. He was thus immersed immediately in the armed aspect of the struggle with minimal time for military or political training. He was based in an area of heavy combat and his unit usually marched for three days with one day of rest. He described the training as mostly military and practically oriented (interview 27, 2012). It is thereby clear that, as efficient as the PKK's educational structures actually were, they operated according to the vagaries of the armed struggle which oftentimes prevented any form of organised education.

Intra-Movement Tensions

Öcalan also consolidated his grip of the movement by undermining the reputations of a number of potential rivals within the movement. Blame was apportioned to certain senior figures for military setbacks or failure to reach different objectives. The militants accused in such a fashion were often forcibly detained and obliged to engage in humiliating public self-criticism which, if falling short of irremediably besmirching their character, at least ensured that they suffered a period of opprobrium within the movement. This process of marginalisation of key cadres in the lead-up to the Third PKK Congress in October 1986 has been analysed in detail by Aliza Marcus (2007:89-96 and see Kutschera, 2000). Cetin Güngör - codename Semir - had been a militant in the movement since 1975 and was dispatched to Germany in 1981 as general co-ordinator of the European Committee. Güngör began to broach questions of Öcalan's increasingly unfettered control of the PKK from 1982 and by May 1983 felt that he had no option but to leave the movement. His public departure unleashed a wave of paranoia in the movement about the danger of an impending split, just as it was preparing to start the armed conflict. He was eventually tracked down by the PKK and executed in Stockholm at a meeting of Kurdish activists in November 1985. According to Marcus the violence did not stop there, she suggests that

between 1983 and 1985, “Öcalan ordered or encouraged the murder of at least eleven high level former or current PKK members” (2007:94). She bluntly states that “PKK members who abandoned the group and publically criticised it [...] should expect to be hunted down” (ibid). Taner Akçam, a former Dev-Yol activist and political prisoner has asserted that in this period “they kept killing people within their group” as well as targeting members of other Turkish and Kurdish groups, such as KUK, PSK and Kurtuluş. He suggests that “they [the PKK] committed around 20 political murders in Europe” (2012). This period of internal rivalry remains a highly contested and controversial period in the history of the movement. It seems likely that some of the deaths were rooted in Öcalan’s paranoia regarding rivals to his leadership and control of the movement. It also seems probable that internal divisions between those favouring more horizontal decision-making and those who felt that a vertical command structure was essential in preparation for the clashes would have likely led to internal discord. Furthermore, Marcus’ rather black and white understanding of the treatment of dissenters within the movement is not shared by all. One interviewee suggested that if you split and tried to form your own group and attack the movement then you could become a target” but that if no attempt was made to remain in politics or set up a rival movement that it was unlikely that deathly retribution would have been enacted. In addition, he explained that it depended on the relative strength of the movement; in periods of weakness or disarray any dissenters could potentially face death. On the other hand, when the PKK was/is enjoying a period of strength it can afford to allow members to quit without the likelihood of violent consequences (Interview 37, 2013).

Third Party Congress 1986

The decisive point in Öcalan’s consolidation of power came about at the Third Party Congress in 1986. The PKK had survived two years fraught with danger in Kurdistan as a fighting force; it had begun to recruit local supporters and was expanding rapidly. Internal rivals in the movement had been marginalised thus allowing Öcalan to receive all the plaudits for the success even though he had a limited role in the armed campaign. As Jongerden and Akkaya remarked, it was this congress in which “the PKK was transformed

from a Leninist organisation into one in which Öcalan gained special status.” He was hereafter referred to “as the party Leadership (*Önderlik*)” (2011:137). It has been very common for Marxist movements to adopt authoritarian leadership strategies. In relation to the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, Gorriti has opined that “what distinguishes Sendero from other Communist Parties is that it had an autocrat at the helm from the very beginning of the armed struggle, while the goal of power was very distant in the minds of even the most optimistic activists” (1992:150). The PKK developed very similarly to the Sendero Luminoso in this regard. A reasoned debate on the role of Öcalan in the PKK, particularly in this early period has yet to take place. This is undoubtedly due to the exalted status he has acquired during his lengthy incarceration in İmralı since 1999. His every utterance is thoroughly analysed and for the most part obeyed by the wider Kurdish movement.¹¹⁵ It seems that his vaunted status has also had a profound impact on the man himself. He has declared that “I never ordered the PKK or the Kurds as a whole to follow me. But [...] they [the Kurdish people] assigned to me a duty that was almost impossible to fulfil. Some compared me with Kawa¹¹⁶, the mythical Kurdish smith, others attributed me with the holiness of the prophet Abraham and yet others even regarded me as some kind of new messiah” (Öcalan, 2011:127 and see White, 2000:137, Kutschera, 1999).

Aside from the confirmation of Öcalan’s control over the movement, the Third Party Congress marked some notable developments in the structure of the party. The HRK were transformed into the ARGK (*Arteshen Rizgariya Gelli Kurdistan/People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan*) which worked in coordination with the ERNK (*Eniye Rizgariye Navata Kurdistan /National Liberation Front of Kurdistan*) which had been founded in March 1985 by Mazlum Korkmaz as a popular front, in order to systemise and structure its expanding number of recruits and supporters. The ERNK’s responsibilities as outlined in a PKK documents seized by Turkish police ranged from dealing with the press to generating financial resources. It was also charged with more logistical tasks such as: finding and training new recruits; general logistic support; providing intelligence; maintaining contact with other armed

¹¹⁵ A large prisoners’ hunger strike was ended in November 2012 as soon as Öcalan ordered it to be abandoned.

¹¹⁶ Kawa is a Kurdish mythological hero, who liberated the Kurds from a child eating tyrant Zahok, a feat celebrated every year at Newroz.

groups and organising in Europe and Syria (in Özdağ, 2003:22). Initially the divisions between the ERNK and the military units were not very pronounced but gradually the ERNK gathered momentum and served a critical role in mobilising wider Kurdish society. It concentrated on “organising the peasantry, the youth, the women’s section, the tradesmen, the workers, the people who are abroad, even the old people, the mosques, and developing organisations that take the characteristics of different national and religious denominations as their basis” (in Gunes, 2012:109). It also served as the legal front of the PKK in Europe and replaced the defunct Bir-Kom initiative of the pre-1984 period. It served as an umbrella front for a number of sub-organisations founded in 1987; the YKWK (Union of Patriotic Workers of Kurdistan/*Yekîtiya Karkerên Welatparêzên Kurdistan*), the YJWK (Union of Patriotic Women of Kurdistan/*Yekîtiya Jinên Welatparêzên Kurdistan*) and the YCK (The Union of Kurdish Youth/*Yekîtiya Ciwanên Kurdistan*) (see Gunes, 2012:110¹¹⁷, Özcan, 2006: 199 and Gunter, 1997:31-32). The structural apparatus of the ERNK became the practical means by which the PKK consolidated itself as a mass movement. It was through this network of sub-organisations that the PKK stabilised and expanded its constituency. As Gunes noted, it was these multiple organs of the movement that “enabled the PKK to articulate their specific demands within its discourse in a chain of equivalence as part of Kurdish political demands and transcend the religious and tribal divisions and fragmentation” (2012:110).

It was also decided at the 1986 Congress to implement a military draft whereby all Kurdish families were required to send some to participate in the guerrilla forces (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:137). A further decision of immediate military relevance was also taken, whereby the locally levied Village Guards (*köy korucuları*) re-established by the state in 1985, were identified as military targets (Gunter, 1997:47, Özdağ, 2003:24 and Imset, 1992: 47). The Third Party Congress reflected the reality that the PKK had succeeded in gaining a foothold inside Kurdistan. The PKK had achieved its first objective of survival inside Turkey and it was in a phase of rapid expansion which necessitated the founding of the ERNK in 1985. Öcalan alone formulated the macro objectives and strategy of the movement. However, the application of these strategies on the ground was necessarily far removed

¹¹⁷These sub-organisations continued to expand at an exponential rate, in 1993 a number of religious ones

from Öcalan's idealised plans whose complete lack of experience as a guerrilla fighter led him to impose unworkable demands upon his field commanders. Fighting units were, in fact, almost completely autonomous in how they went about applying the PKK's objectives. It has been explained that guerrilla commanders left the mountains, and went to Damascus to receive instruction from Öcalan and the PKK only on a yearly basis. In the very early stages of the conflict it happened even less regularly. One interviewee explained that he was aware of one commander who was active for four years without receiving precise instructions from the leadership in Syria. Technological improvements did lead to improved communication between the guerrillas and the higher vertices of the movement. Walkie-talkies were introduced in 1991 and satellite phones were used from 1993 (Interview 37, 2013). Therefore, although Öcalan had cemented a role for himself as the movement's incontrovertible leader, he had a relatively limited concrete impact on relations on the ground between the movement and its emerging constituency. Guerrilla units were largely autonomous in how they governed relations in their social spatial environments, the decision to deploy violence against civilians or specific Village Guard units was usually related to decisions taken by field commanders themselves rather than sanctioned from above. Interactions between the ERNK and Kurdish society were dictated by the immediate realities and necessities of the armed struggle. In short, Öcalan based in Syria, dictated the macro-policy of the PKK, and on occasion where he gave more precise orders such as forced recruitment or the targeting of Village Guards, they were re-interpreted and applied according to local conditions.

Village Guards

The foundation of pro-state militia or paramilitaries is a long established strategy to combat insurgent groups (see Kalyvas, 2006:107). It was used extensively in colonial contexts as in the case of the *Harki* forces in Algeria (Horne, 2006: 254-255) and the pro-British Kikuyu militia in Kenya (Branch, 2007) and also utilised in more recent civil wars in Colombia (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2008) and in Algeria (Martinez, 2000:152 and Kalyvas, 1999). It

were founded, including ones for Yezidis, Alevi and Muslims.

has been and remains a widespread counter-insurgency strategy; Hangzo and Kaur estimate that of 2007, there were 373 such groups worldwide (2011). In Turkey, there is a long history of semi-autonomous Kurdish militia. In the late 19th century Sultan Abdul Hamid established the Hamidiye regiments to patrol the Sultanate's frontier with Czarist Russia (Özar, Uçarlar & Aytar, 2013: Chapter II and McDowall, 2004:59). The presence of a locally recruited militia in Kurdistan was continued in the early period of the Republic and given legal standing with the Village Law (No. 442) of 1924 (KHRP, 2011:4 and Özar *et al*, 2013:9). Its function was to combat brigandage in a region where state policing presence was minimal, if not inexistent. Given the progressive expansion of state capacity, the maintenance of the militia was considered unnecessary until the eruption of the PKK insurgency (*ibid*). Amendment 3175 to the 7th article of the Village Law, passed on March 26 1985 (Balta Paker, 2009:3), revived the system that had hitherto fallen into disuse. In practice “the Village Guards are irregular militia units, commanded by a local chieftain but supervised by the nearest army post, who are paid and armed by the government to keep the PKK away from the district” (Van Bruinessen in Jongerden, 2007: xxi). The Village Guards can be distinguished into two broad types, temporary and voluntary. The former “acquire[d] licensed guns, a monthly salary in which they are obliged to join the guard duties and operations in return.” While the latter “do not receive any payment. They own a licensed gun provided by the gendarmerie and are charged with the protection of their own villages” (Özar *et al*, 2013:10).

The Village Guards proved to be militarily advantageous to the military for a number of reasons. The system “offered the benefits of localization—access to information about rebels’ identity and better ability to react quickly to local intelligence—and allowed the state to avoid a radical transformation of army’s structure” (Balta 2007: 129), which was oriented toward international conflict and a potential conflagration with Greece. It was also relatively cost effective – initially at least - as the first generation of recruits were for the overwhelming part, voluntary Village Guards and accordingly unpaid. However, the Village Guard system as it took shape in Kurdistan developed local characteristics rather different to how it had been idealised by the military vertices or even permitted by law. The Village Guards became an active armed force in their own right rather than mere guides and providers of local intelligence (Balta, 2007: 129-130).

Kalyvas has proposed that the presence of such locally recruited forces be viewed as what he terms “ethnic defection”. Ethnic defection “is a process whereby individuals join organizations explicitly opposed to the national aspirations of the ethnic group with which they identify and end up fighting against their coethnics” (2008:1045). However, in the case of the Village Guards such an understanding is misplaced. It makes use of what has been described as “ethnic common sense” which is “a tendency to partition the social world into putatively deeply constituted, quasi-natural intrinsic kinds” (Drawing on Hirschfeld, Brubaker, 2002:165). Brubaker suggests that “...ethnicised or ethnically framed conflict [...] need not and should not, be understood as conflict between ethnic groups” (ibid: 166). The conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state was rooted in a multitude of ever evolving dichotomies and local level power cleavages of which ethnic identity was but one example. Contrary to Kalyvas’ assertion (2008:1051) the PKK had a large and disproportionately senior number of Turkish militants (Çandar, 2012:40). Furthermore, his view that ethnic defection is a process wherein the prominent dimension of ethnic identity is bolstered, by another dimension which in this case is one’s loyalty or disloyalty to the Turkish state is overly simplistic (2008:1051). Kalyvas’ hypothesis privileges ethnic identity as the primary identity in Kurdistan which is not necessarily the case. Kurdish society, as discussed in chapter II, was riven with ethnic, religious, linguistic and tribal divisions, any number of which could have superseded ethnic identification at any particular time. It is indeed correct that the wave of oppression that followed the coup had polarised Kurdish and Turkish identity at the macro-level, but this should be seen as a structuralising rather than a determining feature. It created a specific set of environmental conditions which defined the wider arena in which Kurdish politics developed but it did not channel all political developments into juxtaposed ethnic blocs. The PKK utilised the sense of popular outrage to strengthen its organisation while other forces – namely a number of *aşirets* - in Kurdistan made use of the newly available resources associated with participation in the Village Guard system to obtain relative political and military advantage at the local level. This was the principal reason for the spread of the Village Guard system rather than any notion of ethnic defection or macro ethno-political strategising.

The Village Guard system¹¹⁸ was established in 1985 and endures to this day but according to the period of recruitment, the Village Guards had very different characteristics. Broadly speaking - there are of course exceptions in each case - early phase recruitment in the 1980s was voluntarily, largely unpaid and effected in tribal blocs. While in latter stages, especially from the early 1990s, individual villages were forced by state forces to become temporary Village Guards, as a means to polarise the local populace into distinct camps supportive of either the PKK or the state. The reasons for joining the Village Guards were extremely varied. The first recruits were *aşirets* based north of the Iraqi-Turkish border in the Şırnak and Hakkari area that were heavily involved in the extensive smuggling business that dominated the local Kurdish economy. In lieu of payment of the state they were permitted to engage in unrestricted smuggling and accumulate wealth (Balta, 2007:130, Balta Paker, 2009:4). Others were *aşirets* that had clashed with the state on previous occasions. “One of these tribes was the semi-nomadic Jırkan¹¹⁹, whose chieftain Tahir Adiyaman, a TKDP supporter, had been living for years as an outlaw after killing several soldiers in an armed encounter. He was pardoned on condition that he prevented PKK fighters from passing through his tribe's territory” (Van Bruinessen, 2003:174 and Balta Paker, 2009:4). Accordingly, their motivations and others like them were completely unrelated to identity or even politics. However, some tribes did indeed join for political reasons but ones far distant from those identified by Kalyvas. In Hakkari a tribe described as “not being in good relations with the state” which had been active in the TKDP, joined the Village Guards. They choose to take up weapons to protect themselves from the PKK, not because they viewed the state favourably but they feared attack due to historic tensions between the PKK and the TKDP (Interview DISA researchers, Diyarbakir 2012). In some rare examples there is a correlation between Village Guard and association with the MHP, but this occurred in Mersin and Hatay long distant from the location of the actual insurgency and in areas with small Kurdish populations (Özar *et al*, 2013: 109).

¹¹⁸ The information in this section is mostly derived from an interview with two DISA researchers in Diyarbakir in 2012. DISA has completed an extensive report on the Village Guard system referenced on numerous occasions in the text (Özar *et al*, 2013).

¹¹⁹ These sub-organisations continued to expand at an exponential rate, in 1993 a number of religious ones were founded, including ones for Yezidis, Alevis and Muslims.

There was also a small but significant presence of minority communities in the Village Guards. In a village on the outskirts of Malazgirt, an Arab *aşiret*, the *Malbati* who were Village Guards in the surrounding area seized the land after its owners were expelled for refusing to join the system (Interview 44, 2013). Arab *aşirets* were also present in the Lice district (Özar *et al*, 2013: 155); yet in other instances Arab tribes refused at great cost to join the system, such as in the Samandağ area of Hatay (*ibid*:109). A number of Kyrgyz villages which had been relocated from Afghanistan by General Evren also participated in the system (Kaye, 2012). One should not, however, conclude that there was an ethnically determinate aspect of minority adhesion to the system, but rather that certain non-Kurdish groups utilised the system as a means of obtaining relative power advantage vis-à-vis their local rivals.

Another factor facilitating recruitment was ignorance of its purpose. Abdullah a Kurd from Bingöl explained that when the village guard system reached his village in 1988, ten individuals joined up because they were under the impression that it was some form of local policing initiative. They only realised that it was specifically focused on fighting the PKK when they were taken by helicopter into the mountains to confront the guerrillas. Immediately upon realising this, they relinquished their weapons (Interview 14, 2012).¹²⁰ On other occasions, it was explained to prospective Village Guards that they would be required to protect oil pipelines passing through their areas (Özar *et al*, 2013: 150). Many Kurds joined the Village Guard system on the basis of mistaken information and further refuting the ethnic defection hypothesis.

It would be misleading to dismiss any political factors in the rise of the Village Guards. The most notorious case of opposition to the PKK came from the previously discussed Bucak tribe who were historic participants in the Hamidiye regiments (Özar *et al*, 2013:21). In the late 1970s the PKK had identified the land holding *aşirets* as the de facto representatives of the Turkish state and launched an armed campaign against them.

¹²⁰ This was unusual because it was ordinarily impossible or extremely difficult to leave the Village Guards. In one instance, thirty three Village Guards in the village of Tiyzan, Mardin were tortured when they tried to return their weapons (Özar *et al*, 2013:99). They were permitted to do so in this instance only under the condition that they did not let this story become known in the wider area.

This opposition was not couched in ethnic terms. They were not viewed as less Kurdish or more Turkified, but rather seen as agents of the state. Accordingly, the PKK fought a number of *aşirets* prior to the coup, most notably against the Bucak tribe in Urfa. As a consequence of their previous hostility with the PKK these tribes were enthusiastic participants in the Village Guard scheme, as a way to forestall or discourage any further targeting by the PKK. Although the PKK rhetorically opposed the entire *aşiret* system, viewing it as a key structure in the socio-political and economic underdevelopment of Kurdistan, it drew political distinctions between them. According to a senior PKK figure later turned repentant Sahin Donmez, the PKK even recruited prior to the coup on a tribal basis. “Whenever we managed to win one person from a family or a tribe at that times, the whole family or tribe came to our side” (in Imset, 1992:18). This is most likely overstating the role of tribes in supporting the PKK; it is undeniable that, on an ideological basis, the PKK rejected them but it does highlight a strategic denouncement of the tribes on its part. Indeed, many prominent Kurdish nationalist figures with some sympathy for the PKK were prominent landlords, including the former leader of the DTP (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*/Democratic Society Party) Ahmet Turk from Mardin.

The Bucaks were a relatively small tribe numbering around 20,000 people but they had close ties with Demirel’s Justice Party and its latter incarnation, the *Doğru Yol Partisi*/True Path Party (DYP). The minor war they fought with the PKK until 1980 resulted in ninety one deaths on their side and accordingly left a deep scar on the tribe’s “collective memory” (Bozarslan, 1999:12). The Bucaks’ joined the village guard system, ostensibly to protect itself from the threat of the PKK (ibid) but participation also brought a number of other tangible benefits. Sedat Bucak, once he ascended to the role of tribal head, utilised his connections with the Turkish military to strike up a murky network with right-wing criminal elements leading the Bucaks to become deeply rooted in the cultivation and sale of drugs (ibid: 14)¹²¹. However, even a tribe such as the Bucaks’, synonymous with deep rooted antagonism toward the PKK, did not always act as political opponents of the PKK might have

¹²¹ The extent of the imbrication of the Bucak family, organised crime and the state came to light after the Susurluk incident. In November 1996, a car containing Sedat Bucak who had been elected as a deputy for the DYP, a right wing militant Abdullah Çatlı and a former Istanbul police Chief Hüseyin Kocadağ killing the latter two. Thus revealing the extent of collaboration between right wing criminal elements, the police and national politicians (see Bozarslan, 1999, Bovenkerk & Yeşilgöz, 2005, and Turkey Human Rights Watch 2000).

been expected to act. In the 1980's, its leader Hakki Bucak "decided to stop the conflict with the PKK, opting for a non-war/non-peace solution" (Bozarslan, 1999:12). It was upon Sedat Bucak's leadership of the tribe in the 1990's that it realigned itself unambiguously with the state against the PKK (van Bruinessen, 2003:171). Although at first glance, the Bucaks appear to represent a clear example of politicised opposition to the PKK, it becomes clear that their position vis-à-vis the movement is much more nuanced, dependent on internal balances within the tribe as well as the allies and resources it acquired endogenously in the course of the conflict, again reflecting the multi-level aspect of political opportunities (Alimi, 2009).

Another factor motivating Village Guard participation was due to the behaviour of certain PKK units. Many Village Guards have explained that they voluntarily joined in order to forestall the excessive demands of the PKK. A Village Guard from Mardin explained that "terrorists would come to the village, pushing people to give food, guns and men and to build a shelter. That's why we became village guards and defended our village" (in Özar *et al*, 2013: 155). In other cases locals joined as a response to PKK attacks (*ibid*: 154). An interviewee gave the example of a village in Kiziltepe which joined the system en masse after a brutal and what was understood as unwarranted, massacre in the village (Interview 22, 2012). It is also probable that self-defence against the unreasonable exactions and violence of the PKK is a convenient legitimising pretext for voluntary Village Guards who might have had less valorous motivations for joining. As the Village Guards utilised their armed capacity to pursue personal matters unrelated to the main conflict between the state and the PKK; it is also likely that the PKK fighters or units engaged in similar micro-conflicts. Once again, this emphasises the distinction between how conflicts are idealised at the centre and realised in the periphery.

An ulterior explanation for the spread of the Village Guard system was that once the system had been established it took on a momentum of its own, beyond that envisaged initially by the state. Kalyvas (2003) has explained how local political actors can appropriate the discourse and opportunities at the macro-level of civil wars to further their own distinctly local ends. As Spencer explained in the case of Sri Lanka "villagers did not simply have politics thrust upon them; rather they appropriated politics and used them for their

own purposes” (in Kalyvas, 2003:479). A similar dynamic of mutual instrumentalisation between the actors at the centre and periphery can be observed in this case. If a certain tribe or village enrolled in the Village Guards and acquired the weapons and power that came along with it, it decisively changed local power relations with other neighbouring tribes with which there were inevitable pre-existing tensions and feuds. Accordingly, surrounding tribes or village would also need to recruit in order to avoid being comparatively disadvantaged (Interview 22 DISA, 2012 and Özar *et al*, 2013: 89). Village Guards “enjoyed virtual immunity and could use their arms for the exercise of private violence as well. They revived old feuds and took revenge at old enemies, killed and looted, and took by force the land, property and women that they desired” (Van Bruinessen in Jongerden, 2007: xxi, Van Bruinessen, 2003:175 and Balta, 2007:149). Therefore, participating in the Village Guard system was often triggered by defensive motivations, not from attack by the PKK but to protect themselves from predation by other Village Guards.

A further contributing factor was that the Village Guards provided a steady and relatively high income in comparison to local alternative or nonexistent employment options. The system was described in 1988 by the *Olağanüstü hal* (OHAL)¹²² governor Hayri Kozakçioğlu as being “factories without chimneys (Özar *et al*, 2013:91). Aside from the wider structural environment which offers little in the way of steady employment, there are a number of disadvantages that applied specifically to Village Guards. Seasonal migration and jobs in the transportation sector became no longer viable options due to threats to their physical safety if they travelled beyond their protected strongholds. Additionally, many were obliged to abandon agriculture upon taking up as Village Guards due to the onerous duties inherent in participation often far from their villages. They were thus rendered dependent on the Village Guard system (ibid: 180-181). Although the system provided a certain degree of paid labour, it mostly benefited powerful tribal figures rather than individual members. For example, the salaries of the village guards bloc recruited on a tribal basis were paid to the tribal leaders who dispensed the wages to their subordinates as they wished, and not directly to the individual village guard. Bozarslan explained that of the 10,000 Village Guards of the Bucak tribe, only 400 were paid directly by the state with the

¹²² OHAL was a Regional State of Emergency Governorate established in Kurdistan in 1987 (Yavuz, 2001:13).

tribe paying the others from its own resources, greatly enhanced of course by the economic and criminal opportunities inherent in participating in the system itself (1999:12).

The Village Guard system was a result of the inherent weakness of the state and its incomplete penetration in Kurdistan. The Village Guards were revived not “so much to the fight the PKK’s guerrillas directly, but rather to constrain the PKK’s room to manoeuvre and to deprive it of potential allies” (Bozarslan, 2004: 83-84). The state viewed it as a low cost means to resolve a military problem which in the mid 1980s was not viewed as particularly acute. Lieutenant General Kaya Yazgan who was based in the area at the time remarked that “the politicians in Ankara did not believe that this event was the first sign of a big start. It was being evaluated as the remnants of what took place before September 12th [the military coup]” (in Marcus, 2007:83). The long term consequences of its revival were not really considered by the state (Interview 22, 2012). On the part of the tribes it was perceived as a possible means to access resources from the state and to consolidate power locally. Others joined as a pre-emptive defensive measure to counteract the growing strength of local rivals and often to protect themselves from attack from historic tribal enemies. Many adhered to the system as a simple means of acquiring a locally based livelihood in the absence of any alternatives, and some were even Kurdish migrants returned from the hardship of life in the cities of western Turkey¹²³ to permit them to live in their villages of origin (Özar *et al*, 2013:94). The political motivation of certain tribes or villages should not be dismissed, however, it is of a much more nuanced and variegated nature than the macro-level cleavage of being in favour or opposed to the Turkish state. Much of the political motivation was related to local Kurdish politics. In many cases, the mutually beneficial relationships between tribes, elements of the army and police, the criminal underworld and politicians facilitated by the freedom to engage in projects of criminal accumulation during the period acquired an ideological colour over time, but that is not to say that such pre-existing pro-state convictions triggered the adherence to the Village Guard system. The contingent relationship between the Village Guards and the state and its limited ideological commitment is clear in declarations such as those by the former mayor of Cizre Kamil

¹²³ This is a common metaphor used to refer to the tourism industry in Turkey in general.

Atak¹²⁴ of the MHP and Village Guard leader that “if the state abandons us [Village Guards] we will serve those who give us weapons” (in Bozarslan, 2004:73). In sum, “it is quite possible to see the Village Guards as individuals having many identities and belongings, who became Village Guards for different reasons, in different times and continued their duties for different time periods” (Özar *et al*, 2013: 141).

PKK and the Village Guards

The extent of the Village Guards’ expansion completely altered the PKK’s immediate social environment. It added an ulterior armed actor, significantly a Kurdish one, to the context. It presented the PKK with a number of logistical and symbolic challenges. By 1994, in addition to the huge influx of soldiers and police to the region, there were 67,000 Village Guards (Balta, 2007:137 and Jongerden, 2007: 65) which was many times larger than the biggest number of guerrillas ever mobilised by the PKK. They presented a specific military challenge because they knew the local territory well, had abundant intelligence on the residents in the region and on occasion were highly motivated to fight the PKK. Some of them possessed notable military capacities and were organised into special battalions (Özar *et al*, 2013: 163). A number of these battalions had gained particular notoriety for their involvement in criminality and violent excesses in conjunction with JITEM and other security forces (*ibid*: 187). Importantly, the Village Guards also posed a symbolic challenge to the PKK. The presence of large numbers of Kurds mobilised against the PKK delegitimised, to some extent, the movement’s status as representatives of Kurdish society, thus undermining the PKK’s external perception as a national liberation movement. Nonetheless, the Village Guard system also was an inadvertent factor in the PKK’s expansion. Balta notes that it was “the PKK’s ability to use the village guard system as the basis for selective violence resulted in the state’s rapid loss of its monopoly over violence in the region” (2007: 133).

¹²⁴ Atak has also run for election for the Refah party, again highlighting the instrumental approach to party politics of many Kurdish based politicians.

In a similar to fashion to how the state used existing local micro-conflicts to swell the ranks of the Village Guards, the PKK expanded its forces in an analogous fashion. When a party in some enduring feud joined the Village Guards, it was also common for the other to align with the PKK if possible, thereby adding a political luster to a tribal conflict. Although many of the Village Guard units were formidable enemies, others were less military capable and served as viable targets for the expanding number of PKK militants. The arrival of the Village Guards marked an escalation and polarisation of the conflict, rendering it much more difficult for any actor, be it tribe or even individual, to remain neutral. At the Third Party Congress, the PKK announced that Village Guards would become a primary target of their armed units. While in September 1989, General Recai Uğurluoğlu at a meeting of tribal chieftains in Van declared that “those who take the guns are on our side. Those who do not are on the side of the PKK” (in Imset, 1992:109). The forces of the state obtained compliance with the Village Guard system by collective and individual torture and the threat of destroying those villages which refused to participate. On the other hand, the PKK actively campaigned against the Village Guard system and struck remorselessly against those villages which actively participated in it or had declined to discuss joining it beforehand with the PKK¹²⁵. The lines of engagement were thereby drawn, dividing up the forces siding with the state, which were Kurdish and Turkish and those which sympathised with the PKK which were for the majority Kurdish but with a significant proportion of Turks inside the movement.

Growth of the PKK

The PKK underwent a period of continuous growth in the latter part of the 1980s. It expanded its region of activities from Botan across Kurdistan. Its growth was to such an extent that the PKK was obliged to rearrange its military structures on a sub-regional

¹²⁵ Countless examples of state violence against those who refused to participate in the Village Guard system (Amnesty International 1992 and Human Rights Watch 1994 *inter alios*) or on the other hand by the PKK against villages that did participate (Amnesty International, 1992:17 and Human Rights Watch, 1992) are discussed in minute detail in the various human rights reports and extensively engaged with throughout the relevant academic literature (Jongerden, 2007 and Aras, 2013 *inter alios*).

basis.¹²⁶ Öcalan claimed that in September 1989 they boasted a military brigade – usually of four to five thousand soldiers – in the Botan region alone (Gunes, 2012: 106). It was accordingly able to ratchet up the intensity and frequency of its attacks, inflicting significant casualties on the Turkish forces.¹²⁷ The Turkish state imposed Emergency law initially in eight provinces of the South East, before expanding it to thirteen. Emergency law, known as OHAL was intended to better co-ordinate military strategy in the region and granted the state appointed governor, extensive powers (see Gunes, 2012:104; Laber & Whitman, 1987:107 and Seda Yüksel, 2011:445). The governor had “extraordinary powers to censor the press, exile people who were thought to present a danger to law and order, remove judges and public prosecutors, limit the right of assembly, and suspended the trade union rights” (Balta, 2007: 173). It also provided the overarching legal framework which subsequently facilitated the mass expulsion of Kurdish villagers from the countryside. Notwithstanding the state’s efforts, the PKK continued to grow and by 1990 controlled vast swathes of territory which Jongerden categorised as semi-liberated zones (2007:62)¹²⁸. These were areas that Kalyvas would consider as areas of “secure but incomplete control” (2006:211).

The PKK’s guerrilla forces were characterised by poly-centricity and consisted of “innumerable relatively independent units, clustering with and separating from other units whenever deemed necessary” (Jongerden, 2007:50). They were permanently mobile “giving the impression of being able to attack at any time and any place” and multi dimensional as they overlapped with participation in a wide variety of popular front organisations (ibid). In addition to the guerrillas, the ERNK was ever expanding and as Imset observed “it is very difficult to distinguish between militants of the ARGK and those of the ERNK, since all are or can be involved in armed activities” (Imset, 1992:132).

¹²⁶ See Gunes (2012:106-107) for a detailed breakdown of these divisions.

¹²⁷ Gunes (2012) has done extensive analysis of the PKK’s publications and how they reported these attacks. The figures proffered by the PKK are undoubtedly inflated but they nonetheless mark a dramatic escalation of violence (ibid: 104-106).

¹²⁸ These zones were referred to as Serhat, Garzan, Botan and Amed and also crossed over the state border into Iran and Iraq.

In addition to these units which were composed of professional cadres, the PKK successfully mobilised a huge militia (*milis*). The movement cadres were subject to stringent party discipline and were dedicated on a full time basis to the movement. The *milis* on the other hand operated secretly on a part-time basis in the “rural settlements and urban centres and could shift swiftly between the roles of fighter and civilian” (Jongerden, 2010:84). The *milis* according to Azad a former guerrilla from Bismil served a mediatory function between the guerrilla and the people; in terms of logistics and by providing intelligence reports. Essentially, they dealt with all the things that the guerrillas were unable to do themselves (Interview 35, 2012). As Ayhan Çiftçi, a former guerrilla explained “wherever we went, we would inform the *milis* and they would get us food” (in Marcus, 2007:160). Herro, the son of a militia member from close to Malazgirt, reported that although *milis* members were not necessarily ERNK/ARGK members that in practice their lives were often similar to the guerrillas, requiring long periods away from their families (Interview 10, 2012). A guerrilla active in the Garzan area confirmed that on occasion, the local *milis* used to even participate in armed actions in conjunction with the guerrillas (Interview 38, 2013). It is difficult to ascertain with any degree of precision how many *milis* members were ever active at any one specific time. White cites a figure of 75,000 part-time militia members (2000:143), while Ergil somewhat arbitrarily distinguishes between 10,000 armed militia and 500,000 active supporters (in Jongerden, 2010:84). The issue of quantification is derived from the difficulties of effectuating empirical research during the period of the conflict but also from some conceptual ambiguity on the behalf of the militia members themselves. Many do not identify as members of the militia, preferring rather more ambiguous terms, referring to themselves or others as being “close to the movement” or “having a long term relationship with the movement” or simply as “*waled pares*¹²⁹”. Furthermore, the huge socio-spatial upheaval resulted in the majority of rural PKK supporters being forced from their villages of origin; consequently participation was contingent on a number of factors outside of the PKK’s control. The *milis* served as an important means to connect with local populations (Gunes, 2012:105), serving as a point of contact between the PKK and the local communities.

¹²⁹ *Waled pares* means patriotic in Kurdish, in Turkish the expression used is *yurtsever*. It usually denotes sympathy or support for the Kurdish movement in general and the PKK in particular.

One can imagine the relationship between the PKK and its constituency as a series of concentric circles emanating outward from the core of the movement. The core can be understood as the full time PKK cadre in the ARGK and the ERNK. Their lives were dedicated entirely to the movement as discussed above (see Özcan, 2005: 393). Beyond the movement cadre, the *milis* was committed to the movement to an extent which varied according to the region and its geographical characteristics, changed over time and the intensity of the conflict, and also in line with individual members' personal circumstances. Herro the son of a *milis* member explained that after his house was burned down and his family were forced to flee their village - first to Malazgirt and subsequently to Istanbul - his father was entirely focused on the immediate material needs of his family and did not engage in any political activism for more than two years, until their economic situation stabilised (Interview 10, 2012). This freedom to engage and disengage is the principal difference between cadre and *milis* members.

The PKK constituency consisted of the huge numbers of Kurds who not only identified with or were positively pre-disposed toward the PKK but also interacted with the movement in some fashion or other. Some took part in activities organised by the PKK's sub-organisations' such as student groups or its Alevi association, while others, particularly in areas characterised by a strong PKK presence or a degree of insurgent control, interacted on a more informal basis. Farhad described how he first began to do little errands for the movement. When he was in middle school he was tasked with distributing leaflets under businesses shutters during the night which demanded that they remain shut for strikes or *kepenkler*, organised for the following days. As he grew older he clandestinely distributed movement newspapers¹³⁰ to particular people in Bitlis (Interview 44, 2013). Other errands were even more mundane. Besna remembers as a young girl taking food prepared in the villages up to the guerrillas in the mountains close to Kulp (Interview 49, 2013). While Herro remembers being given what he considered to be a hugely important role of minding the guerrillas' weapons, which were left as a matter of respect outside the mosque, when they held meetings and resolved local disputes (Interview 10, 2012). At the individual level these tasks could be viewed as being of marginal importance. Yet, it was through these

¹³⁰ He mentioned delivering *Ozgur Gundem*, *Tiroj* and *Karamlik*.

interactions that bonds between the guerrillas and their constituency were consolidated. Besna described how much her family enjoyed the guerrillas' visits to her family home, remarking that even now she recalls them with a smile (Interview 49, 2013). While an interviewee from Bingöl has fond memories of one good humoured guerrilla who was a university student. He used to play with all the children in the village on the occasions he passed through it and the children eagerly awaited his return (Interview 22, 2012). In such a fashion, insurgent-constituency relations became laden with bonds of affection generated endogenously to the conflict (Malthaner, 2011:46-51). Aras observed a pointed shift in terminology correlated to the consolidation of these bonds. He argues that "the shift in naming of the guerrillas, from *telebeyan* (students) to *hevalan* (friends) can be interpreted as an indication of achievement and development of a positive relationship between the guerrillas among significant strata of the local population" (2013:87).

Mutual Trust

The concept of constituency is not an existing hermetic social category, but rather an epistemic concept that serves to clarify the vast range of social interactions that occur between armed groups and their networks of support. Constituencies as has been discussed should be understood as nexuses of communication and interaction that take place in specific chronological and geo-spatial contexts (Malthaner, 2009:29). This relationship between armed groups and their constituency is predicated on the basis of mutual trust. Trust is intangible, difficult to observe and of course emerges only with time. Accordingly, the PKK were extremely cautious about the fashion in which they initially approached villages. In the early stages, the guerrillas "intentionally presented themselves as both fearsome and approachable" (Aras, 2013:83); fearsome in order to ensure that their presence was not immediately betrayed to the authorities and approachable so as to not inhibit the longer term objective of winning popular support.

PKK guerrillas usually approached certain individuals with whom they had pre-existing relationships, both politicised and non politicised ones. These links were often

derived from inter-familial connections, from networks established in prison or simple acquaintances. Perwer, a PKK sympathiser from a village in Mardin, explained that the guerrillas that secretly infiltrated his village in 1986 first came to his house as one of the guerrillas had known him from a period working in construction in Ankara. Initially, they used to come only at night and in small numbers. He kept these intermittent contacts with the guerrillas secret even from his wife and family (Interview 32, 2012). Farhad described his first encounter with the PKK as occurring in a similarly cautious fashion. His father had been heavily involved in Rizgari and subsequently Ala Rizgari in the Muş area, but while in prison after the coup he had become active in the PKK¹³¹. In 1987, two guerrillas approached Farhad's family home in the middle of the night and arranged to meet him and his father a little later outside in a field close to their house where they enquired as regards other potential recruits, even amongst the then eleven year old Farhad's friends. Farhad described the guerrillas as extremely pragmatic and militaristic in manner, which he recalls as being in stark contrast to his father's Rizgari contacts that would visit the family home and stay for days on end. He remembers the PKK at the time had an elusive image and enjoyed local admiration because they had managed to obtain weapons even if the wider community was not fully aware of its objectives aside from the fact it was fighting the state (Interview 44, 2013).

Although the PKK moved tentatively at first, as the insurgency started to spread, the PKK managed to successfully map the political sympathies of the various villages and towns and were thus able to safely intensify their contacts with the wider civilian population. These contacts were usually mediated by the *milis*. Rojan, a guerrilla that operated in the Garzan area, explained that the guerrillas went to villages only if they had a specific purpose to go there. *Milis* based in the village would contact the guerrillas, exchange material necessities and pass on intelligence to them. On the basis of the knowledge of the *milis*, the guerrillas would know whether or not it was safe to visit a village and for how long it was advisable to stay and so forth (Interview 38, 2013). The establishment of sufficient trust necessary to forge a constituency was a slow process due to the power disparity between armed groups and civilians.

¹³¹ His father's switch of allegiance to the PKK was heavily criticised by his erstwhile comrades in Rizgari and Ala Rizgari (Interview 44, 2013).

Although this disparity is undeniable, the collective agency of the civilians can be underestimated (Masullo Jiménez, 2013). Azad, a guerrilla active in the Amed region, explains that after 1993, when many of the PKK supporting villages had been destroyed, the guerrillas were obliged to adventure into less sympathetic villages. On occasion, when the guerrillas approached these houses and knocked on the door, the residents simply refused to open the door. The guerrillas, cognisant of the necessity to avoiding provoking the ire of such villages, were thus obliged to leave empty handed (Interview 35, 2013). While it seems somewhat incongruous that armed militants could be dissuaded by villagers pretending not to be at home, it serves as a concrete example of the types of mundane but effective agency possessed by civilian groups (Interview 35, 2013). The above thus provides an empirical example of the interdependence between armed actors and their constituencies as discussed by Malthaner (2011:17).

In the case of rural Kurdish society, a perception of non-combatants as defenceless would be misleading. Firstly, it was possible to denounce the presence of guerrillas to the forces of the state. This could be done by informing on an individual basis to the authorities (Kalyvas, 2006:104). Informing or denouncing in such a fashion could be done on a collective or an individual basis, secretly or publicly and comported varying degrees of risk of reprisal (ibid: 105). A further option was the collective and public establishment of a Village Guard unit. This involved much greater risk but also furnished the relevant parties with the means with which to defend one's community. Secondly, most families possess arms of some kind, and are well capable of mounting active resistance to small groups of guerrillas. Although many private arms were seized in the wake of the coup, the region remained awash with weapons, due to its position as a transit point for smugglers and because of the availability of weapons in Southern Kurdistan. To give an example, when a child of a tribal chief was kidnapped from his high school in Bitlis by contra-guerrilla forces¹³², his father appeared at the school to demand his return with a large contingent of armed men (Interview 44, 2013)¹³³. While a village in Malazgirt due to its access to weapons smugglers actually furnished the PKK with arms themselves (Interview 10, 2012). Accordingly, the contrast

¹³² See Chapter V.

¹³³ The child was eventually released by the contra-guerrilla forces but he was so severely tortured in a freezer that he was left paralysed. He currently lives in Izmir.

between powerful armed insurgent and helpless unarmed civilian is not entirely accurate. This situation did not pertain in a similar fashion across Kurdistan. It was contingent on the relative strength of tribes, their relationships with the state, the guerrillas and involvement in smuggling and differed between urban and rural areas.

Revolutionary Counter State

Popular legitimacy cannot be maintained exclusively through the barrel of a gun. Revolutionary violence needs to be supplemented by a myriad of non-violent relations in order to establish solidarity between constituency and armed groups. In the early stages of armed conflict when insurgent groups are still consolidating their presence in a given area, they are often particularly dependent on the goodwill or at least benign neglect of local civilians (see Wickham- Crowley, 1992:54-55). However, once a safe territory has been forged, the relationship needs to evolve to one of mutual support. Safe territories often facilitate the establishment of putative counter-states which necessarily encompass more than an armed dimension. Insurgent counter states have historically proved enormously successful at both eroding the legitimacy of existent states and bolstering that of insurgent states¹³⁴. Grynkewich explains that “by providing social services, terrorist or guerrilla organizations threaten to supplant the social contract between the population and the state, thereby undermining a key source of state legitimacy” (2008: 351). As Wickham-Crowley has observed the “wedding of power to beneficence is crucial to understanding the magnetic power of guerrilla movements” (1990:217). A further advantage for insurgent groups’ is that the provision of social services generates moments of encounter which portray them in a favourable light in the eyes of previously uncommitted civilians. The guerrillas become popularly associated with more than simply armed violence. In areas of state neglect, like vast swathes of Kurdistan, the provision of insurgent social services can be amongst the first occasions where civilians gain access to such services. Finally, the provision of services provides two further advantages. It renders peasants or civilians who take advantage of the insurgent services partially complicit in the activities of the armed

¹³⁴ See Hopkinson (2002) for the case of the Irish War of Independence and Porzecanski (1973) for the case of the Tupamaros in Uruguay.

group and thus gives them an additional incentive to not betray them. It also allows insurgent groups to better enmesh themselves into their immediate social environment, allowing them to gather local intelligence, usually of a much more extensive and reliable quality than that of incumbent forces (see Wickham-Crowley 1990:217), with which to police their territory and to both pre-empt and punish defections.

Widespread civilian coercion by the PKK was, for the most part, impractical, if not superfluous as they did enjoy widespread support. The PKK could thus concern itself with consolidating this support by providing services needed and desired by its constituency. Aside from its military campaign which fulfilled an evident political desire – an independent Kurdistan – and a collective psycho-social urge for revenge and the restoration of dignity, its incipient counter-state also provided many collective goods needed in the area. It should be noted though that the PKK's capacity to operate such a counter-state varied across the region. In mountainous areas where the state presence had always been weak if not totally absent, they had relative freedom to establish a frequent presence in various villages. Faqi, a former guerrilla explained that his village in Dersim was six hours march from the nearest military outpost and any military forays would have been recognised far before they would pose a danger to the guerrillas. He explains that until the mid 1990s, guerrillas in big groups of up to fifty or seventy fighters would come and spend the day in the village. Smaller groups of four or five would break up and go and spend time in the different houses speaking about politics and giving the guerrillas a chance to recuperate (Interview 35, 2013). In a village in Malazgirt which was also in the mountains, the guerrillas used to come on a systematic basis and stayed for a number of days at a time (Interview 10, 2012). While Besna's village close to Kulp, the guerrillas would leave in the evenings if they were in a large group but if their numbers were less, they would stay overnight (Interview 49, 2013).

The PKK did not possess enough resources, nor did it ever enjoy sufficient control so as to be able to invest in the establishment of concrete projects such as schools or medical centres. As per Kalyvas' model of control (2006:211), the PKK apart from some very remote rural settlements, could at best only boast of controlling "semi-liberated areas". Malthaner identifies a number of ideal type "relationships" which bind armed groups to their supporters. Key amongst these relationships, drawing on Migdal (1974) is "relations of

utilitarian social exchange". They have been defined as "stable and mutually rewarding relationships of exchange of benefits and support, and the gradual institutionalisation of these exchange relationships which include mutual trust and obligations of reciprocity" (Malthaner, 2011:46). These interactions gradually lead to Migdal's process of "internalisation" whereby a certain proportion of the supporters offer more profound commitment and they adopt the revolutionary objectives of the armed groups (ibid: 47).

Similarly, as to how they made use of their social capital, prior to the coup d'état in 1980, the guerrillas furnished less tangible services to those in their immediate social environment. Kurdistan had long been an area of state neglect, lacking any state apparatus for the resolution of local disputes. This was especially pertinent in settlements of less than 150 people, the minimum required for official recognition as a village. These had been "administered according to local customs without interference of the state. The PKK was able to benefit from this administrative vacuum and establish some kind of administration in these settlements" (Jongerden, 2007:145). Conflicts were ordinarily resolved by blood feuding or by seeking the judgement of local imams or aghas. The PKK provided an extensive judicial apparatus whereby its guerrillas held public popular courts where relevant aggrieved parties could advance their cases prior to a definitive judgement being served. Disputes ranged from clashes over access to water and marital disputes to common criminality such as theft and rape.

The court sittings were usually held in the local mosque which was viewed as communal and neutral space. Guerrillas used to leave their weapons at the door as a mark of respect for the mosque but also to symbolically reaffirm their 'soft power' as dispensers of impartial justice rather than imposing it militarily (Interview 10, 2012). Marcus reports that in the area skirting the Cudi Mountain in Şırnak the PKK quickly established a reputation for honesty and garnered the respect of the people (2007:119). A man who stole money from the PKK was forced to pay it back, while four rapists were captured and executed by the guerrillas (ibid). In Idil – close to Cudi Mountain- Governor Kasim Esen in 1992 went on record as stating that "we have not had a single application to the courts in the past six months. The people prefer to go to the popular tribunal instead. Only when they have complaints about officials do they apply to the real courts and that is only to have the things

on record” (in Imset, 1992: 270). In areas of more contested control, the actual trials were held in the relative security of the guerrilla camps rather than in the villages themselves (Interview 38, 2013). Farhad explained that in his area – close to Malazgirt – that the *milis* used to receive the complaints from the locals. They then reported them to the guerrillas who passed a judgement which the *milis* then explained to the involved individuals. However, as the *milis* were often biased in how they summarised the complaints, there was popular discontent with some of the judgements. Accordingly, at the Seventh Party Congress, the PKK removed these intermediary duties from the *milis* who were subsequently tasked with simply accompanying the complainants to the closest guerrilla unit (Interview 44, 2013). The experience of the PKK courts was arguably the first time that many Kurds had access to a form of justice that was not heavily biased in favour of powerful local tribal figures. The cases were often held in Kurmanji which allowed the relevant parties express themselves to the best of their abilities and the trials themselves marked not only the actual rejection of the Turkish state but the symbolic validation of a more just Kurdish one.

The PKK also provided medical services when possible, often in areas that had never seen a medical professional. Imset details the presence of a PKK doctor in the village of Işıkveren close to Şırnak (1992:56-57). The PKK also provided rudimentary oral education to many rural villages, promoting a Kurdish historical perspective and emphasising themes of social justice (Interview 10, 2012). While such politicised education might appear self serving, it was nonetheless viewed by many Kurds as the provision of a collective good. It also promoted a massive Kurdish cultural revival. The PKK’s cultural organisation *Hunerkom* (Association of Artists), although based in the diaspora, made Kurdish music recordings which were widely distributed on cassettes (Gunes, 2012:112 & see Saritaş, 2010). In addition to the PKK’s own publications *Serxwebûn* and *Berxwedan*, the movement was involved to some degree – the extent of which remains hotly debated – in the foundation of a number of publications such as *Özgür Gündem*, a monthly magazine *Özgür Halk* and even a Kurdish language newspaper *Azadiya Welat* from 1994 (Gunes, 2012:112). Arguably the PKK’s cultural contribution of greatest impact was the foundation of Med-tv in 1995 which was based in Belgium (see Hassanpour, 1998). These cultural developments although not uniformly accessible for linguistic and technological reasons to all Kurds enhanced the

credibility of the movement that tide had decisively turned in its favour, bestowing the PKK with ever more credibility.

Forced Recruitment

Notwithstanding the positive ties emerging between the PKK and its constituency, it cannot be ignored that the PKK was an armed movement with strategic imperatives which did not always coincide with Kurdish society's immediate interests. At the Third Party Congress in 1986, it was specified that the guerrillas were expected to expand territorially and in terms of recruits. To this end, a resolution was passed that declared "from now on, the recruitment of peasants into the fighting units needs to take place not on the voluntary basis but on the basis of a compulsory conscription law" (in Gunes, 2012:105). It was a decree communicated from the externally based leadership and was grossly detached from realities on the ground. According to Sari Baran, a PKK commander at the time, "The people [who made the decision] at the congress, didn't really know fighting. I knew the military conscription law would turn people against us, You would take people and then the village would react, then the people you took would run away, and then you had to kill them" (in Marcus, 2007:117). The PKK was expanding its recruits in any case and the coercive character of such a law created many unnecessary difficulties between the PKK and the local population (Aras, 2013: 86-87)¹³⁵. In order to avoid family members being press-ganged into the guerrilla forces, many sought protection by joining the Village Guards (Marcus, 2007: 111). Gunes is of the view that "it is highly unlikely that the PKK would have managed to recruit large numbers without compulsory conscription, especially during the critical years of its early guerrilla war" (2012:105). Yet, notwithstanding the influx of recruits which it guaranteed, it is clear that the PKK calculated that the negative consequences of the system in terms of the dissipation of its constituency's support out-weighed its positive aspects. And it recalibrated its recruitment strategy accordingly.

¹³⁵ The FMLN in El Salvador also experimented with forced recruitment but it quickly abandoned it for reasons analogous to the PKK (2013: 71).

The application of the PKK leadership's directive on forced conscription was extremely uneven and depended on a variety of local conditions such as the degree of support for the PKK or the individual decisions of local commanders. In certain cases it merely gave a formalistic gloss to processes already occurring. There was a symbolic relevance to young Kurds refusing to do their service in the Turkish military and taking to the mountains to join the Kurdish forces. Processes of PKK recruitment bestowed legitimacy on the PKK as representatives of the Kurdish people. At the same time, these processes served as an act of resistance to and detracted from the legitimacy of the Turkish state. The threat of impending military service in the Turkish army was often the immediate motivation for many Kurds to leave for the guerrillas. Faqi, a former guerrilla from Dersim, explained that he had already decided for about two years to join the guerrillas and he had been merely waiting for the most opportune moment. Although his family was extremely sympathetic to the PKK, his parents' natural protective inclinations led them to encourage him to stay with his family for as long as possible. However, once the decision had to be made to fight in the ranks of the Turkish state or those of the guerrillas, the decision was apparent for Faqi, and he left for the mountains (Interview 35, 2013). Furthermore, as the existence of the PKK's military conscription law became known it provided a convenient defence for the families of guerrillas when questioned by the military about their whereabouts. Accordingly, the "PKK did not necessarily force the local youth to join the organisation but gave the impression it was abducting the recruits for their own safety as well as that of their families" (Imset, 1992: 85).

Forced conscription in any case soon became unnecessary due to the massive influx of recruits from the cities in Kurdistan, from Istanbul and further afield in Europe, to the guerrillas by 1989. Rasul from Nusaybin, explains that of twenty four youths that played with his football team in 1986-87, only four of them are still alive, all the rest having died as PKK guerrillas in the mountains (Interview 33, 2013). Other anecdotal accounts describe tens of recruits flocking to the guerrillas. Farhad recalled in the early 1990s that the *milis* arranged for sixty students from his high school in Bitlis to go to the mountains on one occasion. While Mehmed was part of a thirty strong contingent of youths in Adiyaman which were headed for the mountains close to Malatya before coming under attack from

army helicopters¹³⁶ (Interviews 44 & 48, 2013). Although these personal accounts are likely inflated to some degree, they depict an unambiguously upward curve of PKK support. Given the PKK's mass popularity and the discontent the compulsory military service directive was raising amongst its constituency, it was suspended by the PKK in 1990 at its Fourth Party Congress in Lebanon (Marcus, 2007: 119). It is argued here that the PKK's re-adjustment of its recruitment practises in light of pressure from its constituency is a credible example of the exertion of constituent influence on an armed movement, notwithstanding the discrepancy in power resources.

Violence against Civilians

Given the extent of the PKK's growth and increasing intensity of the conflict, it became inevitable that tensions between the PKK and civilians would ensue. The first killing of civilians by the PKK happened in late 1985. A guerrilla had been killed close to a particular village and some of the deceased fighter's comrades went to avenge him, resulting in three or four deaths. It was an event that was neither planned nor sanctioned by the movement and was simply the emotional response of bereaved armed guerrillas free to act with a degree of impunity (Interview 37, 2013). The rise in violence against civilians by the PKK was due to a number of developments within the movement. Firstly, the composition of fighters in the ARGK had undergone a dramatic change. The first generation of militants had been trained in Lebanon and imbued with ideological and political discipline. Many of the subsequent recruits from the rural areas of Kurdistan did not receive extensive political or military training and by the late 1980's they had acceded to local command positions. The Third Party Congress had made it clear that greater territorial coverage was expected and mobile guerrilla units were established in 1987 and 1988 (Interview 37, 2013). They accordingly covered more territory and would have had lesser knowledge and inter-personal connections with the communities with which they inter-acted thus, arguably, hastening recourse to violence.

¹³⁶ The first group of would be recruits were all killed even after they surrendered according to Mehmed and the group he was in managed to escape back to the city. He was subsequently moved to Istanbul by his parents in order to distance him from the movement.

In more conceptual terms, they were operating in areas where their constituency was less consolidated thus the infrastructural networks and emotional solidarity present in other areas was lacking¹³⁷. In addition, the order had been passed to attack the Village Guards but without precise indications of how to go about realising such a campaign. The guerrilla units implemented the general directions of the PKK leadership but in a manner, they viewed as most appropriate for local conditions. On several occasions this resulted in bloody massacres which, although latterly repudiated by the movement, were an integral element of the movement's repertoire, which reflected the PKK's organisational inconsistencies at that period. It brings to mind the observation that "the process of violent contest can become autonomous from the agenda and will of a political and/or military leadership" (Bozarslan, 2000:27).

The year 1987 marked the start of a bloody campaign against Village Guard villages. Numerous bloody attacks were launched in order to deter further villages from adhering to the system. It was announced in a 1987 edition of *Serxwebûn* that "collaborationists will be completely wiped out" (in Marcus, 2007:115). The brutality of the attacks provoked widespread shock as not only were the Village Guards targeted but so too were their families. In one notorious instance, PKK fighters surrounded a village called Pinarçik in Mardin on the 20th of June 1987 and called on the Village Guards to surrender. The ensuing assault resulted in around thirty deaths including a number of women and children¹³⁸ (Marcus, 2007:115, Imset, 1992:99, Mango, 2005:36)¹³⁹. Such attacks continued throughout the summer of 1987 across Mardin, Şırnak and Siirt (see Laber & Whitman, 1987: 102-103 and Özar *et al*, 2013: 42 & 86) and the massacres were reportedly used by the guerrillas to intimidate other villages contemplating becoming Village Guards (Marcus, 2007:116). Contrary to how these attacks were represented in the Turkish press, the violence was not indiscriminate. Villages were usually warned a number of times about participating in the Village Guards – as Pinarçik had been (Marcus, 2007:114) - and then they were attacked. "As

¹³⁷ See Mkandawire (2002) for a discussion of spatial mobility and its impact on insurgent practises of violence.

¹³⁸ The actual numbers of deaths cited varies; Imset refers to only seventeen civilians killed without specifying if they were women or children, Marcus references sixteen dead children and six dead women, while Mango only speaks of eight women and five children.

¹³⁹ Remarkably, the Village Guards which survived the attack were subsequently arrested by the army on suspicion of collaborating with the PKK because they had not used all of their ammunition and no PKK guerrillas had been killed (Özar *et al*, 2013:90).

far as the local Kurds were concerned, they knew that PKK attacks were directed not at ordinary people but villages with state connections” (Imset, 1995). The PKK’s strategy was also successful in that it led many Village Guards to return or attempt to return their weapons and opt out of the system (Özar *et al*, 2013: 92 and Balta Paker, 2009:6). The PKK’s offering of amnesties in 1991 and 1998, in addition to informal local compromises with Village Guards coerced into participation reduced hostilities between them (Özar *et al*, 2013:95 & 120).

The attacks were thus examples of selective violence. Kalyvas has explained that “selective violence personalizes threats and endows them with credibility, for if people are targeted on the basis of their actions, then refraining from such actions guarantees safety (2004:105). The attacks delivered a clear message that villages which refused to comply with the PKK were potentially running fatal risks. The attacks were “primarily proactive in its goal to deter a particular action in the future”, and “simultaneously retrospective in its intention to punish a similar action that has already taken place” (ibid: 99). Humphreys and Weinstein have surmised that the targeting of civilians is often derived from a lack of structural coherence within armed movements. They suggested that “factions with tight disciplinary structures are likely to be less abusive of civilian populations” (2006:433). Although the PKK at the time of the killings was a disciplined movement, its leadership and particularly Öcalan in Syria did not have day to day control over its fighting units. Yet, the killings were directly in line with the strategy outlined by the movement. Accordingly, the killings cannot be attributed to ill-discipline. The brutality of the killings also questions Weinstein’s argument that activist rebellions and in particular those which depend on their supporters for material sustenance are less violent in their treatment of civilians (2007).

An alternative explanation can be largely categorised under the heading of the “brutalisation” hypothesis. Bourgois has argued that those “who confront violence with resistance - whether it be cultural or political – do not escape unscathed from the terror and oppression they rise against” (2001:30). Brutalisation has been described as a process of habituation (Kalyvas, 2006:56), wherein a degree of de-sensitisation sets in and violence is almost unthinkingly integrated into quotidian practises. Civil war undermines the “psychological mechanisms of self sanction” and it lowers the cost of violent activity (ibid:

57). Furthermore, armed conflict usually entails a reconfiguration of generational hierarchies. “By transferring power from elders to youth, it eliminates what in many traditional societies counts as the most effective informal means of conflict resolution” (ibid). It also generates alternative routes of social mobility irrespective of age or status, whereby actors with violent skills can obtain power and demand respect (ibid: 58). In the case of the PKK, Bozarslan has described the movement’s use of violence in the early stages as “a means of construction of a field of socialisation” (2004:57). It was an alternative field of meaning that was quickly embraced by large numbers of Kurdish youths who “had been raised with the accounts of the sufferings of their elder brothers and sisters in prison, [they] welcomed guerrilla action as an honour restoring means of revenge and as an end to their silent and largely introverted socialisation” (Bozarslan, 2008: 351). Accordingly, violence was a means of personal and collective redemption. It is redolent of Fanon’s view that “violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (1963:94).

The brutality of the violence has been also explained as a by-product of Kurdish culture (Marcus, 2007:116). Van Bruinessen has detailed that “in the tribal milieu a murder is not primarily an individual affair, but one between groups” (1992:65). Leading revenge to be traditionally wrought on a collective basis; consequently the mass killing of women and children did not provoke as much outrage as it might have done elsewhere¹⁴⁰. This culturally reductivist view is interestingly also proffered by elements of the Kurdish society which it denigrates. This type of behaviour has been severely critiqued by Öcalan himself on numerous occasions (2011 and see Özcan, 2006: 288-289). Ahmet, who comes from a relatively wealthy rural family, derided the “rural revenge culture” common amongst Kurds. Although, he himself was dismayed by the savagery of the attacks, he claimed that most supporters of the PKK were rural and ignorant and pleased that these villages were punished (Interview 18, 2012). It would be unwise to wholly attribute the wider Kurdish reaction to their cultural habituation to violence. As practises of violence were not

¹⁴⁰ Van Bruinessen explained that the practise of collective revenge was much less common amongst Southern Kurds, thus highlighting the dangers innate in broad cultural explanations of complex social phenomena (1992:65).

distributed homogenously across Kurdistan, the differentiation is reducible to factors other than an atavistic predisposition to violence.

Adiyaman, which had been a Kawa stronghold prior to the coup, proved to be an area where the PKK found it difficult to mobilise significant support. This was likely due to the strong presence of the Bucak, the Sabri¹⁴¹ and Firat *aşirets* in the area. However, as Bahoz a school teacher from the area explained, it was also due to the actions of the local PKK commander Terzi Cemal. He had executed a number of PKK fighters on spurious grounds and after inadequate internal disciplinary procedures. These events were known to locals and it played a large part in reinforcing their reservations about the PKK leading to lesser support for it in the area and concomitantly less violence. Precisely, because of the lesser intensity of the violence in the area, local Village Guards do not bear the same negative connotations as they did elsewhere. From Bahoz's own personal experience, a Village Guard is the type of person who drives a sick person to the hospital or who is a honey maker (Interview 23, 2012). It should be admitted though that a further interviewee from the area suggested that there was less guerrilla activity in the area because there are no mountains (Interview 43, 2013). However, the absence of mountains did not prevent it from being an area of much violence between Kurdish groups and with the state, prior to the 1980 coup (Interview 23, 2012; Interview 44, 2013 & Interview 48, 2013). The evidence from Adiyaman also reinforces the fact that certain patterns or instances of violence varied according to the initiative of individual senior commanders. Bozarslan suggests that many of them "considered the war both as a national duty and as a means of establishing their own 'territorial' zones where they had an absolute autonomy" (2004:53).

Many Kurds were disturbed by the PKK's violence and apparent disregard for the distinction between combatant and civilian and this provoked discontent within the movement itself (see Marcus, 2007:149). It led to widespread criticism from other Kurdish groups, most notably the KDP.

¹⁴¹ The Sabri tribe were described by Bahoz as being close to the state notwithstanding that one of its members Osman Sabri had been a noted Kurdish intellectual and member of the Syrian KDP.

The KDP were purportedly so outraged by the killings that it led to the dissolution of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' that had been operative between the two movements since 1983. Barzani was reported to have declared that because of the civilian massacres "the PKK is earning the hatred and disgust of all the Kurdish people" (in Imset, 1992:49). However, any declarations from Barzani, or indeed Talalbani and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) should be considered carefully. Beneath Barzani's apparently humanitarian concerns for Kurdish civilians it is also likely that the criticism was the product of a more instrumental concern about the expansion of the PKK¹⁴² support into areas traditionally loyal to his family. In addition, many Kurds more distant from the Botan area where most of this violence occurred simply did not believe it. It was reported by the Turkish media and many in Kurdish society systematically disbelieved any information broadcast by it or else presumed it was simply a strategy to besmirch the reputation of the PKK. For others, so blinded were they by their hatred of the Turkish state and loyalty to the PKK that, even today, they refuse to recognise that the PKK engaged in such practises (Interview 20, 2012). The killings in any case did not seem to affect the overall growth trajectory of the PKK (Marcus, 2007:119).

There are numerous reasons why the PKK halted - for the most part - these attacks. Firstly, it had reached a position of such strength so as to enable them to focus on more ambitious military targets and had even begun to raid certain towns in region by 1987¹⁴³. Its efforts at discouraging voluntary participation in the Village Guards had also proven successful. After the initial period of growth, new recruitment to the Village Guard system did not cease but it slowed significantly. The take-up had trailed off to such an extent that the army soon resorted to forcing villages to join at the cost of losing their land and immediate expulsion if they refused; thus giving rise to a second wave of, this time, forcible recruitment to the Village Guards. It was clear that while violence against some civilians was not a practise appreciable to the PKK's constituency, as long as it remained coherent and discriminate that it was tolerable. By the late 1980's it became evident that the PKK had taken root in Kurdish society. It moved beyond being a simple guerrilla organisation to

¹⁴² Barzani has been quoted as saying that "the PKK have a self-righteous regard for themselves as the sole representatives of Kurds everywhere. We will not accept the dictatorship of Öcalan. He has not been to Kurdistan in years. He has not seen a battle in his life" (in Rugman & Hutchings, 1996:47).

become something else (Interview 37, 2013). Öcalan had become a figure of national renown, one which attracted the interest of journalists, most notably by Mehmet Ali Birand for the *Milliyet* newspaper in 1988. A further turning point, according to Ahmet was the electoral success of the SHP (*Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti/Social Democratic People's Party*) which saw five Kurdish candidates elected in the 1987 general election. The success brought a degree of recognition to the Kurdish movement and closer attention to the PKK. In particular this ensured that the PKK no longer had to judge the tenor of its violence by its constituency in Kurdistan but also its constituency in the wider Kurdish population in Western Turkey and the diaspora (Interview 18, 2012).

Therefore, the PKK reined in the excesses of its campaign against civilians to render it less controversial amongst its wider supporters. However, that is not to suggest that this was a decisive point wherein the PKK adopted a politically oriented path in place of the armed struggle. Rather the PKK realised that certain of their tactics were discrediting it further afield and potentially discouraging the expansion of its constituency. Accordingly, Öcalan distanced the PKK from these killings in his interview with Birand in 1988 (Seçme Röportajlar, 1994). It was communicated to the mountain units that "in our attacks on these targets [Mukhtars and senior tribal figures], violence will be dominant but methods such as punishment, forced exile, neutralisation and forcefully servicing our struggle will be used on secondary targets" (PKK internal communication cited in Imset, 1992:52). The strategy of violence against civilians was officially repudiated at the Fourth Congress in 1990. As Öcalan had apportioned the responsibility for the slow progress of the insurgency on individual field commanders prior to the 1986 Party Congress, he also deflected the blame for the violent excesses of the campaign on to other leading figures in movement which he declared to be out of control or rogue elements. "The style of activities in 87-88 are not approved by the PKK and were under the control of doubtful elements" (Öcalan in Imset, 1992:345). Halil Kaya – code name Blind Cemal – was executed for his brutality and his role in the failings of mandatory conscription (Marcus, 2007:145). Cemil Isik – code name Hogir – was harshly criticised for the killings of civilians. Hogir, fearing for his life managed to flee to KDP controlled territory in Southern Kurdistan and later Germany where he was executed by the

¹⁴³ Tunceli/Dersim, Karakoçan, Uludere and Hozat (Gunes, 2012:106).

PKK in 1994¹⁴⁴ (Interview 37, 2013 & Marcus, 2007:137). Culpability was thereby limited to individual behaviour and the structural weaknesses or the detached leadership of the PKK was not identified as the root of the phenomenon. Hussein Topgider, a former PKK militant at the time explained how developments were analysed within the party:

“If something was done correctly, then it was because of the party, and if something was done wrong, then it was an individual mistake, never the party’s. Of course, sometimes the mistakes were because of the strategy [which Öcalan devised], but the strategy was not debated. Because if you debated this, it meant you were questioning the party, which meant Öcalan, and it was forbidden to question Öcalan” (in Marcus, 2007:145).

However, the flexibility that the movement exhibited in the period prior to the launching of the insurgency was again in evidence. The movement recognised that specific practises of violence or strategies were having a negative impact on its growth, and they reversed these decisions, thus exhibiting self-reflexivity often absent in other insurgent groups (O Connor & Oikonomakis, forthcoming). It is clear that the PKK adopted its repertoire according to the exigencies and normative objections not just of its constituency in Kurdistan but also to its emergent de-territorialised constituency further afield in western Turkey and in the diaspora.

Conclusion

The PKK managed not only to establish its military presence inside Kurdistan but to expand its support base to the extent that it had a degree of territorial control across the region. Its success was of the bounds that by 1990 the “liberation of Kurdistan by the PKK had become not at all unthinkable” (Jongerden, 2007:43). The PKK had also become the incontrovertible vanguard of the wider Kurdish movement; many figures of other groups renounced their efforts at reviving their moribund movements to throw in their lot with the PKK (Interview 14, 2012 and Interview 44, 2013). It achieved this, notwithstanding the reinforced military presence in the region and the imposition of repressive OHAL rule. The

¹⁴⁴ In this interim period he was allegedly recruited by JITEM (Interview 37, 2013).

state had also reanimated ghosts of the past by setting Kurds against Kurds, the formation of the Village Guards was the embodiment of an age old state strategy to have Kurds kill Kurds or *Kurdu Kurde Kirdirmak* (Imset, 1995), but even that failed to limit the PKK's growing support. The PKK also complicated matters for itself by the consolidation of control of the movement in the hands of a single man, Abdullah Öcalan whose detachment from the actual conflict often led him to propose unfeasible military strategies and fostered internal disunity and far reaching paranoia.

The PKK's success was however not reducible to good fortune, external backing, Turkish complacency or even favourable structural conditions. The PKK as per the strategy of *foquismo* created the conditions necessary to launch the insurgency. The consolidation of the PKK's presence was obtained by the calculated deployment of brutal violence against those who actively opposed the guerrillas and by the active cultivation of relations of solidarity between the movement and its constituency. The mutual exchange and ever growing interdependency of the guerrillas and their supporters took multiple forms. As PKK recruitment expanded, so too did its web of familial connections with wider Kurdish society. Innumerable Kurdish families had sons or daughters in the mountains or participating in the ERNK, the militia or any of its front organisations, thus cementing the bonds between the two. PKK deaths were no longer distant martyrs of a noble cause but rather sons and daughters, known by all. The emotional investment of the families of PKK militants and the symbolic resonance of local martyrs further melded the PKK to its support networks. The strength of its radication across rural Kurdistan thus allowed the PKK to also expand in urban centres which will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Insurgency and the City

Introduction

The vast majority of the PKK's military initiatives were conducted in the countryside against military targets and what were deemed as state collaborators. Throughout the 1990s, until the Turkish military began to gain the upper hand following a large-scale military reorganisation in 1993 (Özdağ, 2003:52), the PKK was primarily concerned with expanding and strengthening its rural guerrilla campaign. Its rural orientation was both pragmatically and ideologically informed. The inherent difficulties of armed struggle in urban environments were well-known to the PKK, but it was also allegedly "somewhat disdainful of the cities" (Marcus, 2007:143). Nonetheless, the PKK did manage to establish a constituency in cities across Kurdistan starting from the late 1980s. Urban centres were consolidated as centres of recruitment and wider political support but they never became a primary theatre of insurgent violence. The growth in the PKK's urban support was evidenced in a number of *serhildans* or popular uprisings from 1990 onwards, and the mass demonstrations on the occasions of Newroz celebrations, funerals of guerrillas and other symbolic dates. The PKK's nascent constituency's manifestations of support highlighted the movement's expanding strength and popular legitimacy beyond its rural strongholds.

The expansion or diffusion of PKK support from semi-liberated rural territories to urban areas is difficult to clarify in a comprehensive empirical fashion. Diffusion is "a multidimensional dynamic that involves the strategic spread of tactics, ideas, social and cultural practises, and so forth, across time, borders and cultures, engaging different actors, networks and mechanisms" (Bosi *et al*, 2014: 15). It can occur via "embracing contagion, mimicry, social learning, organized dissemination, and [via] other family members" (Strang & Soule, 1998:266). In relation to political violence, Schutte and Weidmann have proposed that patterns of violence in civil wars can be diffused through re-location and escalation (2011:144). Re-location occurs when armed actors move from one territory to another, while "escalation diffusion is the expansion of the geographic scope of violence to new

locations during the course of the conflict” (ibid: 245). Although there is an element of indirect or non-relational diffusion (Soule, 2004: 296) in both re-location and escalation diffusion, it is clear that in relation to armed contention, direct or proximal diffusion through personal interaction predominates as the main channel of diffusion (ibid). The diffusion of patterns of violence is difficult to ascertain in the case of the PKK because it did not channel its urban support into campaigns of proximate urban insurgency but rather re-directed it into the rural insurgency. Yet episodic public displays of support and intensified recruitment from the cities confirm that the PKK did indeed mobilise a constituency in these areas and that it then chose to strategically deploy it beyond urban confines.

There are three principal factors which facilitated the formation of the PKK’s constituency in the cities. The first reason is the dramatically altered structural environment which flooded the cities with masses of displaced rural dwellers with firsthand experiences of the conflict. It was thus the huge rural population displacement which re-configured and radicalised the urban population and environment. An ulterior reason is a result of the agency of the PKK. Mass displacement does not necessarily lead to mass mobilisation – on the contrary, the fragmentation of established social structures and geo-spatial residence patterns can often lead to disorientation and passivity. The PKK prevented this from occurring by utilising its popular front the ERNK and its subsidiary organisations to maintain pre-existing mobilisation networks and establish new ones amongst the recent arrivals from the countryside. In addition, it consolidated networks in schools and universities, thus accessing hitherto politically inactive swathes of society.

Finally, the PKK’s constituency also expanded due to a dynamic of reciprocal escalation between the PKK and the counter-insurgency efforts of the Turkish state¹⁴⁵. State repression and the PKK’s responses to it can be viewed as a mechanism of territorial diffusion of violence, wherein practises of violence spread to areas which had hitherto remained relatively peaceful.

¹⁴⁵ See Malthaner (2011a: 125) for an interesting description of the reciprocal escalation between Islamist movements and the police in Cairo.

The state organised an extensive deep-state contra-guerrilla network and utilised the radical Islamist movement Hezbollah¹⁴⁶ to carry out an extra-legal campaign of targeted assassinations in the urban centres. Practises of state repression such as forced migration, assassination campaigns and mass torture not only generated collective resentment, they also forged a form of organic solidarity between the PKK and urban populations. This led to a form of urban territorialisation, whereby the PKK was no longer perceived as a group of mysterious and fearsome terrorists in the mountains, but rather recognised as one's neighbours and classmates¹⁴⁷; a familiarisation necessary to permit the PKK expansion.

This chapter will analyse developments in the urban contexts during the period of the PKK's greatest strength from roughly 1990 to 1993 and elaborate on the urban consequences of rural population displacement. Although much of the state violence was inflicted in rural areas, its consequences were subsequently evidenced in urban centres by the increase in PKK support. Accordingly, the traumatic impact of internal displacement will be detailed in some depth. It will then discuss the nature of the state's counter-insurgency practises in the urban context. The fashion in which the state made use of proxy forces such as Hezbollah to conduct gruesome murder campaigns against PKK supporters and wider Kurdish civil society figures will be analysed, and the specific impact which such shadowy violent actors had on generating opposition to the state will be further considered. In light of these findings, it will then proceed to discuss the meso-level organisational initiatives of the PKK such as its recruitment strategies, its strategic reluctance to militarily confront the state in the cities and its manipulation of events of symbolic importance such as Newroz celebrations and guerrilla funerals. The chapter will conclude by summarising the extent and importance of the PKK's constituency in the urban centres of Kurdistan to the wider insurgency.

¹⁴⁶ The Hezbollah movement referred to here is completely separate from its Lebanese namesake. It will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

¹⁴⁷ See Malthaner (2011a:225) for a similar process of territorialisation by Hizbullah in south Lebanon.

Urban – Rural Interconnectedness

The logistical advantages for rural insurgency have been sufficiently documented elsewhere to not necessitate further elaboration here (*inter alios* Hendrix, 2011, Gates, 2002, O’Sullivan 1983, Cederman, 2008 and Collier and Hoeffler 2000). As urban and rural are understood as a binary in much of the studies of violence, the advantages of rural insurgency implicitly suggest that these factors are for the most part absent in urban contexts. It is indeed undeniable that where state presence is stronger, usually in urban environments, it is more difficult to engage in legal or clandestine contentious mobilisation. Yet it is not impossible to conduct urban insurgencies and the likelihood of their success or failure is derived from the strategies adopted by armed movements themselves, as opposed to fixed socio-spatial determinants (see Le Blanc, 2013). However, given the well-established urban preponderance in the monitoring of civil conflict, from an academic, journalistic, NGO or intergovernmental perspective (Kalyvas, 2006: 39), state forces have more liberty – arguably to a lesser extent now with technological improvements in communication - to engage in practices of violence and brutality in rural areas that would be more difficult to realise in better-connected urban environments. From a state perspective there is a form of pay-off between rural informational asymmetries and the capacity to conduct repressive campaigns far from the national or international spotlight. In short it consists of the fact that while the state can better monitor urban dwellers, it is also to a degree more restricted in the forms of violence it can deploy against them.

As has already been discussed in Chapter I, the strict dichotomy between urban and rural movements is a false one. Staniland has argued that there are two distinct conditions necessary for the realisation of urban insurgency, a constrained state limited not by its armed capacity but in the extent that it can deploy that capacity, and the presence of an insurgent group that has deep social roots and legitimacy (Staniland, 2010:1626). Both of these conditions pertained in the cities of Kurdistan; the Turkish state’s use of violence was extensive but constrained in a number of ways and the insurgents had a degree of popular legitimacy. Their legitimacy also increased over time in correlation to the violence of the state.

On the other hand, a key factor militating against urban campaigns of violence is that urban dwellers “are often recent arrivals [which] [...], lack a strong sense of attachment to the land they occupy” (Toft in Staniland, 2010:1626). However, the Kurdish case is similar to the cities in Iraq where processes of migration had essentially ruralised urban settlements, especially in their peripheral zones where “village migrants clustered [...] and reproduced rural customs and practices” (Marr in Staniland, 2010: 1638). Due to the mass arrival of displaced villagers, the PKK could draw upon relocated village and familial networks which sufficed to serve as the robust networks necessary for urban insurgency (2010:1628). Nonetheless, for a variety of reasons sustained armed insurgency did not develop in the Kurdish cities as it did in contemporary Syria, Iraq in the 2000s or Algeria in the 1990s.

The cities of Kurdistan were historically the most Turkified centres in the region, due to a stronger state administrative presence, trading networks with other Turkish cities and the stronger police presence which limited any overtly politicised Kurdish initiatives. All of the significant Kurdish rebellions of the early Republican period were rurally based. In the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, Diyarbakir-based Kurdish notables did not rise in solidarity with Said, notwithstanding the close proximity of his troops and the extent of the revolt which succeeded in occupying one third of “Kurdish Anatolia” (Robins, 1993:660). The cities and towns therefore lacked the collective memory of revolt so present in many of the rural areas of Kurdistan. However, the divisions between the urban and rural realms had begun to diminish over time to such an extent that it was said that “in Turkey the peasantization of the city had proceeded faster than the urbanisation of the peasant” (Mardin, 1978:243). Rural to urban migration had already begun by the 1950s, related to the mechanisation of agriculture (Erturk, 1980:73, and Taspinar, 2005:86), the concentration of land ownership fostered by agricultural reforms in the hands of a minority of aghas (Natali, 2005:100, and Kucukozer, 2010:206) and the wider context of Turkey’s industrialisation (Jongerden & Gambetti, 2011: 382, Zürcher, 2004:226 and Betül Çelik, 2005:139). Although much of this migration was to Turkish rather than Kurdish cities, it rendered many of these rural settlements less insular places than they might have otherwise been. Therefore, the confines between the urban and the rural were already disintegrating long before the dramatic intensification of rural displacement in the 1990s.

As discussed in chapter IV, certain cities had a strong revolutionary heritage such as those in the area around Cudi Mountain close to the Syrian border, in the PKK Botan area. This area had always strongly identified with Barzani rebellions in Southern Kurdistan and had been a stronghold of the earlier TKDP. Many men of the area had even fought as *peshmergas* under Barzani (Interview 1, 2011). Apart from its historic commitment to Kurdish – in the wider sense, not simply in the Kurdish region of Turkey - revolutionary politics, it was also favoured by the positioning of its towns Şirnak, Cizre, Nusaybin and Silopi between the mountains and the Syrian border. Therefore, from a purely strategic perspective it was comparatively easier to organise and maintain a trans-generational culture of resistance in the area. The population composition of Cizre was one of the first cities to undergo radical change by the forced migration of a number of villagers in its hinterland already in 1987-88. These newly arrived migrants had organic ties with the guerrillas in the mountains as their home villages had been the location of the earliest PKK mobilisation after the coup. They thus brought immediate and personalised notice of the struggle to urban residents who would have remained otherwise lesser informed (Interview 37, 2013).

In modern times the use of forced population removal was “pioneered by the British and the United States” Republic (Kalyvas, 2006:122). The British used it during the Boer War, while the Americans made ample recourse to it the occupation of the Philippines and the Dominican Republic. Notwithstanding that it generated “considerable grievances”, the tactic appears “to produce collaboration with incumbents” (ibid: 123). It has been widely used in counter-insurgency strategies throughout the 20th century in anti-colonial struggles and by various regime types across the globe (see ibid). It is however important to note that the policy of forced migration had long been a default tactic of the Turkish state. In the early period of the Republic, the Turkish state had forcibly expelled tens of thousands of rebellious Kurds to Western Anatolia as punishment and as a means to turkify them by immersing them in wholly Turkish cultural contexts. In the aftermath of the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, Jwaideh cites figures of 500,000 deportees to the West and 206 villages destroyed (2006:206). This national and nationalist experiment in demographic engineering was given institutionalised sanction with the passing of the Settlement Law 2510 in 1934 (see Ülker, 2008 and Schechla, 1993:249).

The Settlement law should not be “understood as an instrument to quell insurrection in the Kurdistan region, but must be analysed as part of a larger positive objective of creating a homeland of the Turks” (Jongerden, 2007:174). Nevertheless, it was the Kurds who bore the most deleterious brunt of its application. The legislation was utilised to forcibly relocate innumerable Kurdish families mostly to the Western Anatolia (see chapter II). Although, these deportations decreased in frequency after the quelling of the Dersim rebellion in 1938, they continued on a periodic basis. The BDP spokesperson for Diyarbakir, Zübeyde Zümrüt explained that immediately after the 1980 coup, her family was exiled from Genç to the Black Sea region because her father, an imam, used to deliver his sermons in Kurmanji or Zazaki, which was illegal (Interview 29, 2012 & see Schechla, 1993:250). Accordingly, the practise of forced exile remained an integral if somewhat informal element of the Turkish state’s policy when interacting with its Kurdish population (see Whitman & Laber, 1987: 117-118). The practise was formally renewed under Decree 285 in 1987 which gave the OHAL governor the power to evacuate villages at his discretion (Yildiz, 2005: 17).

Village Evacuations

As discussed, forcible evacuations and population exchanges had long been a common occurrence in Kurdistan. However, the intensified renewal of the practise from 1990 was unprecedented. Firstly, it was no longer a part of a broader campaign of national demographic engineering but as a specific strategy to counter the PKK insurgency (see Jongerden, 2007:91). The centrality of the spatial aspect of the Turkish counter-insurgent strategy was made evident in the pronouncements of a number of its senior political and military figures. General Osman Pamukoğlu went on record as stating “where there is sea there are pirates. In this province [Hakkari] are 6674 villages and hamlets. These settlements form the spider’s web in which the PKK feeds itself. [...] [W]hy don’t we concentrate all [villagers] in two or three settlements” (in Jongerden, 2007: 43). While in 1993 the former President Turgut Özal suggested in a private letter to the then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel that, “with the evacuation of mountain settlements, the terrorist organisation (PKK) will have been isolated” (ibid).

The strategy did not outline where the displaced villagers should seek refuge. They were not obliged to relocate in the west of the country where they would be “Turkified” but simply ordered to leave their villages under pain of death. They usually fled to the nearest small town before resettling in neighbouring Kurdish cities or fleeing to the large metropolises of western Turkey and Europe.¹⁴⁸ Thus it was not simply the social landscape of rural Kurdistan which was transformed but also that of its cities. The absolute size of the rural population in the OHAL provinces plunged by 11.9 per cent from 1990 to 1997, despite overall population growth of 14 per cent” (Kocher, 2002:98). Furthermore, the displaced tended to settle in larger towns rather than the towns which lay closer to their villages. In the province of Diyarbakir, its two largest towns Bismil and Diyarbakir accounted for 83% of urban growth from 1990-1997 (ibid: 99). The Turkish census in 2000 reported that Kurdish cities such as Van, Şırnak and Hakkari had urban growth rates which outstripped those of traditional migration destinations such as Istanbul or Izmir (Sirkeci, 2006: 56-57 and see HRW 1994, Jongerden, 2007:88-89 and Kirişçi & Winrow, 1997:134), notwithstanding the reality that economic opportunities in the former are extremely limited. As Seda Yüksel observed, “internal displacement has inevitably imposed a huge burden on not only the villagers who were evacuated, but also on the municipalities and inhabitants of cities [...] which went through a rapid urbanization” (2011:443).¹⁴⁹

The statistics on forced migration vary drastically. It is commonly acknowledged that around 3,000 settlements have been depopulated, while the state acknowledges the migration of 350,000 villagers. A 2006 University of Hacettepe report cites a figure of between 950,000 to 1,200,000 million, while the think tank TESEV declared the figure to be closer to 1.5 million and Human Rights Watch cited a figure of up to two million (1994). In October 1994 Minister for Human Rights Azimet Köylüoğlu asserted that “in the [Southeast] there are two million without a house or a place to call home who live in the open and on the street” (in HRW, 1996). Other NGOs suggest even greater figures (in Jongerden, 2007:223 and see Van Bruinessen, 1995:8).

¹⁴⁸ This trajectory of step by step forced migration was reported in every single interview of forcibly displaced rural inhabitants.

¹⁴⁹ See Doğan & Yılmaz (2011) for an excellent analysis in this regard on the neighbourhood of Demirtaş in Mersin and Darıcı (2011) in the case of a neighbourhood in Adana.

There is no consensus as to the precise extent of the phenomenon but it is widely accepted that the government figures are vastly underestimated. Accordingly, this was the principal transformative factor in the urban environments of the 1990s which naturally impacted on the nature of the PKK mobilisation.

The process of forced migration was tightly correlated to participation in the Village Guard system. As discussed in chapter IV, the system functioned as an identificatory means of rendering selective violence on behalf of both the army and the PKK. Those who participated were understood as being opposed to the PKK, while “local state officials considered refusal to participate in the system to be an indication of support - either active or passive – for the insurgency” (Balta Paker, 2009:11, Balta, 2007: 133 and Özar *et al*, 2013: 99 & 148). Upon the adoption of a new counter-insurgency strategy in 1993, Turkish armed forces systematically and forcibly demanded that villagers become Village Guards or face imminent evacuation and the destruction of their villages (Van Bruinessen, 1995; 1). Accordingly, many of those who refused and were forced to flee their villages were those with the strongest PKK convictions. Their forcible relocation to the cities and towns thus transformed a hitherto weaker area of PKK mobilisation into an area of potential radicalised support. However, that is not to suggest that all recruitment to the Village Guard system in the 1990s was of the forced variety. Some of it was also in response to PKK attacks on villages and its behaviour toward civilians (Interview 22, 2012).

Furthermore, the extension of the Village Guard system conferred economic opportunities on its adherents while further restricting these in non-participating villages. For instance, much of the Şırnak and Hakkari border areas were heavily mined by the army, thus rendering vast swathes of land unusable for pasture (*ibid*). An OHAL decree banned access to summer mountain pastures, which along with the evacuations led to a “sudden drop in animal husbandry and live stock production” (Jongerden, 2007:89). The Society of Agricultural Engineers in Diyarbakir suggested that the meat industry in the area underwent a contraction of 2.3 billion dollars from 1990-1999 (*ibid*). Therefore, the traditional means of sustenance and employment were denied to the Kurds living in the area. While on the contrary, accepting to become a Village Guard, aside from the weapons, prestige and salaries involved, also granted a number of additional economic privileges (see HRW, 1994).

The military imposed a strict food embargo on upland villages suspected of sharing food with the guerrillas. Village Guards were given a monopoly over the transport of goods to and from the market towns, thus enriching themselves at the expense of non-Village Guard families (Balta, 2007:147). Logistical contracts for food and heating were also assigned by the military to the heads of Village Guard units (Özar *et al*, 2013: 120). On other occasions, the military tolerated the sale of Mekab boots – the preferred footwear of the guerrillas – by the Village Guards to guerrilla units on the condition of receiving a cut of the profits (Interview 38, 2013). Therefore, the diffusion of the system endogenously produced a number of inducements which would have encouraged adhesion to the Village Guards by the provision of legal and illegal economic incentives, as well as by denying the traditional economic livelihoods to non-participants.

In the 1980s the relationship between the PKK and the Village Guards had been relatively clear. The Village Guards were for the most part voluntary and accordingly declared enemies of the PKK. However, upon the mass forced participation in the system the PKK was obliged to once again reassess its position in relation to them. As Rojan, a former guerrilla explained, in the eyes of the PKK there were three types of Village Guards: those who were fully committed to the state,¹⁵⁰ those who were divided in their allegiance and were friendly with both the state and the PKK, and finally those who were coerced by the state (Interview 38, 2013). At the PKK's Third Party Conference in 1994, which followed the reconfiguration of the military balance of power in favour of the state, the movement reconsidered its military targets. It was announced that "the entire army [...] all the special units, special teams and counter guerrilla units and village guards [...] all the internal security units, the police force, the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) and civilian defence units" (in Gunter 1997:50) were to be considered as legitimate targets. However, it was once again clear that directives from the externally-based leadership were interpreted according to prevailing local dynamics.

¹⁵⁰ In the area between Bitlis and Siirt, Rojan explained that the most committed of the Village Guards were members of Arab tribes, most notably the Şêrgoyî (Interview 38, 2013).

Aram, a guerrilla in the Amed region, explained that many of the villages forced to join the Village Guards went to the local PKK commander to discuss the issue with the movement before accepting or rejecting the offer. On many occasions, the PKK accepted that under the circumstances it would be best for the village to accept to participate but not to take part in any armed initiatives against the guerrillas. Such an arrangement was necessary for the guerrillas as they remained dependent on the material support of these villages, a dependency ever more acute given the progressive evacuation of their rural support base. These villages continued to be viewed by the PKK as *yurtsever/waled pares* because they continued to collaborate with the PKK, providing intelligence and logistical support (Interview 27, 2012). The pro-PKK sympathies of certain Village Guards were publicly evidenced on innumerable occasions; to give one documented example, Village Guards attended the funeral of a slain guerrilla in Siirt in 1996 (Özar *et al*, 2013: 96). There are also countless instances of the collective punishment of Village Guards by the military for reportedly collaborating with the PKK in Derik and Bismil (*ibid*: 107). It is thereby evident that relations between the second wave of Village Guards and the PKK were rather nuanced and not consisting of a simple polarised opposition.

In the many instances where the Village Guards put up resistance to the guerrillas or actively pursued them, the PKK was capable of deadly violence. Usually it was one or two respected individuals in a village such as a Mukhtar or Sheikh who ultimately decided to accept or reject the military's ultimatum to participate in the Village Guards on behalf of the entire community. Rojan explained that usually a guerrilla delegation went to meet with these figures and attempted to convince them to reverse their decision. If the relevant persons were unwilling to bend to the will of the PKK, then a decision would be taken to execute them. The objective was not to kill as many state supporters as possible but the minimum required to convince the others to desist (Interview 38, 2013). Aram explained that once the movement had a degree of certainty that an individual was collaborating with the state, they were publicly hung in the village and their mouths stuffed with money to emphasise what the guerrillas understood as the greed which underlay their betrayal (Interview 27, 2012). This practise of public executions and symbolically desecrating their corpses was also reported in Rugman and Hutchings (1996) and Marcus (2007:115). Suran, a Kurd from a village near Kulp, described how the neighbouring village of Hamzali, which had

joined the Village militia, lost twenty three men in clashes with the PKK in the course of 1995 alone (Interview 25, 2012 and see Özar, *et al*, 2013: 106 and Haberturk, 2013). Therefore, it is clear that the PKK was willing to deploy merciless violence against its local opponents; however, in light of how the killings of civilians in Village Guard communities had been received by wider Kurdish society in 1987-88, the PKK had become much more scrupulous in the selection of its targets (see HRW, 1994 for a report on PKK killings).¹⁵¹

The nature of the Village Guard system also varied topographically. Forced recruitment to the system in low-lying areas was not organised with the intention of depriving the PKK of logistical or military support but rather in an attempt to lead communities into explicitly rejecting the PKK, thus further polarising Kurdish society. This strategy was not particularly successful. A young female Kurdish activist in Germany explained that even though her uncle was a PKK militant based in Europe many of her cousins living close to the border with Syria in Mardin joined the Village Guards. As it was low-lying territory far from the mountains, there was very little possibility of them having to ever confront guerrillas. This apparent internal family schism had no impact on intra-familial relations and participation was seen as a distasteful but necessary means to avoid the forced evacuation of their villages (Interview 1, 2011).

Even in regards to interactions with committed Village Guards, the conduct of the PKK units on the ground differed greatly from the official party line. Aram recounted that instead of confronting them as per official movement policy; they simply avoided these villages, usually trying to keep at least three kilometres away from them. Although he claimed that the PKK possessed the armed means to militarily confront them, they avoided it as any such attacks on Kurds that were not strictly necessary would have spread a negative impression of the group amongst wider Kurdish society and would have been used by the Turkish state to undermine the PKK's legitimacy (ibid). Rojan explained that they also usually limited their interactions with convinced *yurtsever/waled pares* villages in order to avoid attracting the attention of the military to them.

¹⁵¹ Van Bruinessen (1999) has asserted that the PKK also engaged in the destruction of villages, a claim long put forth by the Turkish state but one which remains hitherto largely unsubstantiated.

They avoided Village Guard villages to limit confrontations and usually frequented those villages which strove to strike a balance between the PKK and the state. They used these visits as a chance to engage in political propaganda and as a means to convince the locals of the righteousness of their cause. But there was also a coercive aspect to the visits; the guerrillas' very presence there would arouse the suspicions of the Turkish military, so in order to pre-empt any open collaboration with the state the guerrillas insisted on taking a small portion of their supplies from every family. In so doing, all the villagers were implicated in offering support to the PKK, rendering it less likely that anyone would denounce the guerrillas' presence or operations to the state (Interview 38, 2013).

The PKK's multiple and differentiated interactions with the Village Guards highlight the inherent danger of macro-theorising about such conflict dynamics and the fact that relations even with avowed enemies proceeded in a fashion that reflected localised iterations of the conflict rather than any declared macro-cleavages. It was this myriad of overlapping solidarities, alliances and ambiguous loyalties that informed the concerted evacuation of much of rural Kurdistan, which in turn irrevocably altered the urban dynamics of the conflict.

The use of terms such as forced migration, village evacuation and displacement arguably confers an almost sterile procedural impression on what were extremely violent processes. In addition to their violence, the sheer scale of the phenomenon merits particular attention. Van Bruinessen explained that "by the end of 1993 entire districts such as Silopi, Şirnak and Eruh all north of the Iraqi border had lost all their villages with the exception of a single *korucu* [Village Guard] village" (1995:8). The slopes of the Ağrı and Tendürek mountains were declared forbidden military zones (*askeri yasak bölge*) in June 1994, leading to the evacuation of fifty settlements and the displacement of 10,000 villagers (ibid). In the spring of 1994 the PKK launched a concerted military campaign in the Dersim region, which had hitherto been an area of comparably lower PKK presence.¹⁵² In response the military launched a concentrated evacuation campaign in the region. It began by igniting huge forest fires to denude the hillsides of any potential cover for the guerrillas. It has been reported

¹⁵² It remained a centre of mobilisation for the TIKKO, which maintained a number of periodically active

that incendiary chemicals were sprayed from helicopters to fuel the fires, thus resulting in inestimable environmental damage to the oak forests of the region, which had been declared a nature reserve by the state in 1987 (Van Bruinessen, 1995:15). A 1996 report by four CHP deputies decried that of 417 villages in the region, 287 had been evacuated (Leezenberg, 2003:207). In specific areas such as Ovacik, up to 80% of villages were evacuated. The displaced villagers were ordered to leave, given no place to go and not offered any form of compensation (ibid). The patterns of village evacuation and destruction thereby completely altered the geo-spatial and demographic composition of rural Kurdistan and consequently also its cities.

The brutality of the evacuations was acknowledged even at governmental level. After a visit to the Dersim region in October 1994, the Turkish Minister for Human Rights Azimet Köylüoğlu was so appalled by developments there that he condemned them as acts of “state terrorism” (in HRW, 1995:23).¹⁵³ However, such recognition neither brought a halt to the campaign nor led to the urgent needs of the displaced being addressed. It did however confirm that, notwithstanding the secretive and almost autonomous behaviour of the OHAL regime vis-à-vis the central state, knowledge of atrocities in the region had filtered through to the ministerial level.¹⁵⁴ The evacuations were carried out by a variety of state agents. They were conducted by both regular army units and the gendarmerie. The gendarmerie was “a rural police force organised along military lines” and bore a “feared and hated reputation” amongst the local population (Jongerden, 2007:65). They were complemented by the presence of an array of notorious special operation teams, such as the *Özel Harekât Timler*, who were under the authority of the regular police, and the *Özel Tim*, who were under gendarmerie command. JITEM, the anti-terror and intelligence department of the gendarmerie¹⁵⁵, generally “operated [...] death-squads, identifying and killing alleged PKK cadres” (ibid: 70). The above units were often assisted by local Village Guard units who had specific local intelligence on suspected PKK sympathisers.

guerrilla units there.

¹⁵³ Shortly after this declaration he recanted his statement – presumably under political pressure - and claimed that it was not state terrorism but rather the PKK that was destroying these villages.

¹⁵⁴ It was reported that the then Prime Minister Tansu Ciller was denied permission by the army to visit areas of concentrated military action in Lice and Hozat (Van Bruinessen, 1995:9).

¹⁵⁵ JITEM is the acronym for *Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele* or *Jandarma İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, or in English the Gendarmerie Intelligence Unit.

As outlined above, the policy of forcible evacuation was elaborated at governmental level, stemming from diffuse historical patterns of population exchange and engineering, but its local level realisation was delegated to a variety of military and police agents. Consequently, patterns of displacement, evacuation and violence differed greatly according to individual commanders, local cleavages, geographic location and the intensity of the ongoing conflict. The threat of evacuation and the related violence can be viewed as an incentive to collaborate with the Turkish state in order to prevent “the threatened harm” (Kalyvas, 111:2004). According to Kalyvas’ ontological understanding, “economic considerations and survival are usually the main motives” (2006:104) for collaboration or non-compliance with locally dominant forces. He understands the psycho-social process underlying this decision-making as individualistic and rationally calculating. “Civilians are boundedly rational; they are reward-sensitive and seek to maximise a personal or political utility subject to their likelihood of survival” (ibid: 196).

Kalyvas’ approach struggles to explain the cases where civilians do not behave in a utilitarian fashion, especially if one considers the fortunes of the three villages of Kocadağ, Pazarköy and Aksoy, which straddle the administrative division between Şırnak and Mardin not far from the Syrian border. They lay in extremely close proximity to one another and in the shadow of the mountains. Karan, a former Kocadağ resident, explained that PKK guerrillas used to visit the village on a regular basis and even successfully resolved a long-running feud between two rival clans there. In 1993 the Turkish army demanded that all three villages join the Village Guard system. The village of Kocadağ refused, as did Pazarköy¹⁵⁶, while Aksoy accepted and in so doing, gained access to the property and land of the departed villages. Given such a clear set of incentives and knowledge of the certain outcome of the decision, why did two of the three villages refuse to co-operate? According to Kalyvas’ hypothesis, they should have selected the option which promised the best chances of their survival and potential material enrichment; but only one village made such a choice. The three villages were closely geographically clustered; there is no suggestion that any of them would have been territorially more vulnerable to PKK reprisals (Interview 1, 2011). Accordingly, one has to consider the likelihood that the villagers of Pazarköy and Kocadağ acted according to sentiments of collective political and interpersonal solidarity. The villagers of Kocadağ identified with the movement and can be considered as part of the PKK’s constituency. Bonds of solidarity and identification fostered by the interaction between the guerrillas and the villagers over the course of their numerous encounters, strengthened by familial and personal associations with the movement, bound them to the PKK. It had therefore become extremely difficult for them to consider betraying the PKK,

¹⁵⁶ Pazarköy was a Yezidi village and it has been suggested that non-Muslim villages and Yezidi ones in particular were specifically targeted in a form of coercive religious homogenisation of the region.

which had become so deeply intertwined with their daily existence.

The impact of the displacement and the destructions of Kurdish villages resulted in deep collective trauma. The aggregation of these separate instances of violence meant that a huge number of deeply aggrieved Kurds were subsequently available to constitute the wellspring of the prolonged guerrilla conflict of the 1990s and the wider Kurdish political mobilisation that continues to this day. Botan is a gentleman of around seventy years old from a small village in Mardin. He had absolutely no political involvement until the 1990s when PKK guerrillas and the army struggled to gain control of his village; the guerrillas controlled it by night and the military by day. After he refused to join the Village Guards he was detained and tortured for two months, which led his eldest son who was still at the *lise* to join the guerrillas in the mountains. Botan's son was "martyred" - as he described it - within seven days of joining the guerrillas and his family was subsequently forced to flee the village. The military burned his house to the ground, destroyed his two hundred bee hives, shot his two dogs, his turkeys and donkey, thus reducing him and his family to destitution. They moved to Mardin, where this previously politically disengaged farmer became active in the legal Kurdish party and in a Kurdish martyrs' foundation - but more pertinently his other children also became active in the PKK. Another son was killed as a guerrilla and two of his daughters are currently imprisoned for PKK activities (Interview 19, 2012).

Suran, an activist for Kurdish language rights from close to Kulp, recalled the process of his village's evacuation. It was located in an area of regular clashes between the PKK and the army. As a child he recalls the presence of the guerrillas in the village and how they interacted with the villagers. He recounts that the soldiers came on three occasions. They first burned a handful of houses, before returning in the winter time for a second time and setting the majority of the remaining houses alight. The fact that the houses were burned in winter served as a double punishment, exposing the villagers to the harsh winter conditions. Eventually, they returned a third time and destroyed the few houses that had been left intact, forcing his family to seek refuge in Diyarbakir. He vividly recalls the helicopters hovering overhead and the collective belief that they were all about to be killed. He witnessed his father being severely beaten and the attempted rape of his neighbour, as well as the meagre belongings they had salvaged from the houses being thrown back into the burning buildings. As he was only around ten at the time, he was much too young to join the

guerrillas as many of the other youngsters in the village did, but he explains that it remains even to this day an option which he refuses to discount (Interview 25, 2012).

Herro was of a similar age when his village close to Malazgirt was destroyed. They were woken from their beds at around five in the morning in the dead of winter and forced out of their houses by some *Özel Tim* units; many of the villagers were barefoot even though there were sizeable snowdrifts outside. He recalls two aspects of the experience as particularly traumatic. One was the bellowing of the cattle chained in their sheds as they burned to death. The latter was the sight of his aunt locked into her burning house after she had tried to retrieve some personal belongings, although she was rescued before she was overcome by the flames (Interview 10, 2012). There are literally thousands of analogous accounts, thus generating a trans-generational reservoir of emotionally traumatised Kurds.

The cases discussed above illustrate the limited efficacy of indiscriminate violence as a means of limiting insurgent support. As Lyall has suggested, it triggers “a spiral of action and reaction that facilitates insurgent mobilization while widening the war’s geographic scope and destructiveness” (2009:332). Although there is nearly always a degree of discrimination when selecting targets, even if it is simply a question of location (Kalyvas, 2006: 148), this is not necessarily how it is perceived by its victims. The villages listed above were targeted because of their proximity to the mountains and/or suspected PKK sympathies. Their residents were punished collectively and not according to individual responsibility. Although admittedly in the third instance the interviewee’s father had actually been a *milis* member, his family was targeted in the same way as the others who may or may not have had similar inclinations. On occasion indiscriminate incumbent reprisals or violence can succeed in demobilising opposition by depleting insurgents’ resource base, as in the cases of the Boer War (Lyall, 2009: 336), or by simply convincing insurgents of the disproportionate suffering it would cause civilians, as in Norway (Kalyvas, 2006: 158). But in the vast preponderance of cases it simply results in consolidating and legitimising insurgent support, as outlined by Kalyvas (2006: Chapter 6). It has been suggested that “fear and anger are not the same emotions, but they are closely related in the fight or flight response” (Johnston, 2014: 45). In the cases discussed above, there was an overlap between the two; masses of Kurds fled to the cities before re-grouping and resisting the state by either joining the guerrillas directly or supporting them in other ways.

The Turkish state's strategy was premised on the belief that the strategic military advantage derived from the expulsion of the PKK's actual and potential supporters and sympathisers would outweigh the increased sense of collective grievance generated by such an action. The long-term outcome of the strategy remains as yet – more than twenty years later - unclear, but in the short term it generated a greater number of committed PKK supporters and relocated them to the urban centres of Kurdistan and western Turkey. It has been asserted that the fact that the majority of Kurds fled to government-controlled territory can be interpreted as an expression of their desire to distance themselves from the PKK and that the emotional grievance of the Kurdish masses never transformed into a “nationalist explosion” (Kocher, 2002:100). However, such a view is rooted in a simplistic understanding of territorial control. It is also dismissive of the material exigencies which demanded that the impoverished and stranded masses seek shelter and employment in areas free from continued police repression and where there were some limited possibilities of finding work. The reality was that the only relatively proximate cities where this was possible were in western or southern Anatolia, and this should not be understood as an expression of political preference but rather a decision shaped by the immediate imperative of survival. The brutality of these expulsions has been integrated into the narrative of modern Kurdish resistance, which fuels the continued and expanding success of the contemporary PKK and the BDP.

Urban Mobilisation in Kurdistan

The 1990's witnessed a huge influx of aggrieved rural Kurds, deprived of their land and livelihoods, amassing in peripheral *gecekond* neighbourhoods¹⁵⁷ or sharing overcrowded dwellings with extended families. As explained, many of these displaced rural inhabitants were those with pre-existing PKK sympathies, while many of those who had been agnostic about the PKK became PKK supporters after the ordeal of violent displacement. In addition to this mass of internally displaced people, the PKK's organisational efforts had also started to bear fruit amongst the pre-existing urban

population. The student networks of the ERNK generated massive flows of university students from western Turkey to the PKK's ranks (Interview 37, 2013) but it also led to masses of local recruits from high schools and Dicle University in Diyarbakir. In urban areas where there was little or no consistent guerrilla presence, these organisations linked the PKK to wider Kurdish society and in so doing further reconfigured the class composition of the movement by re-incorporating local middle classes into it.

In the cities there was a form of Kurdish revival triggered in part by the presence of a large number of refugees from Southern Kurdistan who had fled following the Hallabja massacre in 1988 and the outbreak of the first Gulf War in 1990. These refugees unabashedly spoke Kurdish and brought Kurdish music cassettes which became popular amongst the local Kurds (Interview 24, 2012). As a female DISA researcher explained, this cultural revival resonated with many more educated Kurds who would have had less direct personal experiences of the conflict. She described this creeping politicisation of her hitherto politically disinterested friends and classmates at the prestigious Anatolian High School in Diyarbakir. On one occasion, she and a group of classmates burned their history books in the school yard because they recognised that they [the Kurds] were excluded from them, they repeatedly damaged and spat at the portrait of Ataturk and began to wear yellow, red and green hair clips. These subtle acts of rebellion, redolent of practises of everyday forms of resistance (Scott, 1990) or subaltern politics (Bayat, 1997), escalated and by the time she graduated she was one of only four students in her entire class who had not gone to join the guerrillas in the mountains or fled the conflict with their families to the west of the country.¹⁵⁸ According to her, the participation of so many economically well-off youths belies any interpretation of the root causes of the conflict as primarily socio-economic (Interview 22, 2012). The appeal of the PKK's counter-narrative became cross-class in nature and its recruitment structure enabled it to harness this latent support.

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter VI

¹⁵⁸ See Seda Yüksel regarding the impact the emigration of Diyarbakir's middle classes had on the local economy (2011:445).

Bismil is a large town located in the plain between Diyarbakir and Batman. Its distance from the mountains rendered it a difficult location for guerrilla activity and PKK mobilisation was mostly confined to the presence of *milis* members rather than actual guerrillas. Nonetheless Azad, a former guerrilla from the area, recalls that by 1990 the PKK had a tangible presence in the town. As high school students, Azad and his classmates had organised a student committee in support of the PKK under the tutelage of PKK supporters from Dicle University. They distributed PKK magazines and attended an illegal Newroz demonstration organised in the town in 1989 or 1990. Aside from their relations with the university-based PKK activists they also established direct links with a guerrilla who used to visit Bismil from time to time. He used to give them precise instructions to organise demonstrations at specific times or on occasion, to gather material support such as medicine or food (Interview 35, 2013). Azad explains that during one of the guerrilla's forays into town, he was arrested with members of Azad's high school committee. Azad was immediately forced into clandestinity and his family house was raided repeatedly by the police. After a period of hiding at a family member's house he fled to the relative safety of the guerrillas in the mountains and his family, under intense pressure from the police, relocated to Istanbul. Faqi, another former guerrilla, described a similar process of interaction with the movement; at his high school in Bitlis, their committee was guided by more experienced university students from the movement (Interview 35, 2013).

The pace with which relatively constrained student activism could be rapidly transformed to such an extent that joining the guerrillas was viewed as a safer option, highlights the importance of endogenous escalatory and radicalising trajectories within conflicts. These escalatory mechanisms exist at the individual level and at the broader movement level. At the individual level the final step from above-ground activism to full-time clandestinity or becoming a 'professional' guerrilla often comes about through happenstance or coincidence, as in the case of Azad (see Viterna, 2013:82; Lyall, 2009: 335 and della Porta, 2013: Chapter III). It has been suggested that radicalisation is a result of the combination of state-movement interactions, intra-movement competition, meaning formation and transnational diffusion (Bosi, Demetriou & Malthaner, 2014: 5). Della Porta suggests that "radicalisation is in fact activated by competition between movement activists and opponents, especially in the form of escalating policing" (2014:94). In the PKK's case in

the 1990s, the radicalisation of its repertoire was primarily due to hostile interactions with the state in the form of escalating counter-insurgency. Bjørgo highlights the importance of radicalisation over an extended period of time by explaining that “terrorism tends to be the product of a long process of radicalisation that prepares a group of people for such extreme action” (2005:3; see also della Porta, 2013:73 and Smelser, 2007:52). It is therefore of little surprise that this radicalised mobilisation of PKK supporters emerged in urban contexts up to ten years after the launch of the rural uprising.

Yet it is worth recalling that “radicalisation is not a process of infinite regress. Once set in motion, it does not continue in perpetuity” (Gupta, 2014: 138). Gupta further elaborated that “choices about radicalisation must be filtered through organizational structures where the demands of a group’s members and allies have to be weighed against the strategic merits of radicalization” (ibid: 140). The PKK astutely navigated the problematic balance of harnessing individual radicalisation and the need to channel it to where it was most needed without dissipating it, by failing to take advantage of it immediately. The PKK was helped in this restrained approach to striking back against the state by the absence of other rival groups which could have provided an outlet for a less cautious violent response. In the late 1970s the violent outbidding (de Fazio, 2014) by the PKK of rival Kurdish groups had led to a general escalation in the scale and extent of violence. In the 1990s, given the absence of other armed options, the PKK successfully managed the popular radicalisation generated by state violence through its multiple layered networks in high schools and universities, directing it to its areas of greatest impact in the rural insurgency.

The State and the Urban Environment

This chapter has purposefully presented the forced evacuations of rural Kurdish areas in the context of their impact on the urban centres in the region, in order to highlight the rural-urban imbrication of the conflict. It is not an attempt to downplay the dramatic and arguably decisive impact the reconfiguration of rural demographic patterns had on the military decline of the PKK. It is rather an effort to overcome the perception of the PKK as simply a rural guerrilla organisation which overlooks the radical impact developments in

rural areas had on the urban centres and vice versa. It must be acknowledged that armed movements and states are both constrained and enabled in various manners in relation to the practises of violence which can be deployed in urban and rural contexts. Both the PKK and the forces of the state were represented by often distinct structural elements in urban and rural areas. The Turkish police force is divided on a geo-spatial basis between the gendarmerie which polices the rural areas and the national police which is responsible for security in urban centres (Jongerden, 2007: 64). The PKK's active guerrilla forces were almost exclusively based in the mountains or outside of the Turkish borders and its urban presence consisted of *milis* members, ERNK militants and the extensive gamut of subsidiary organisations (see Özcan, 2006:172). Therefore, although these different actors were occasionally deployed in other spatial contexts, there is a significant difference in their respective presences and as a corollary, the practises of violence to which they sought recourse.

As has been discussed above, the Turkish state can be understood as a “constrained state” (Staniland, 2010) which limited the practises of violence it was able to employ. Accordingly Hezbollah, an Islamist paramilitary movement, was overwhelmingly utilised in urban contexts, whereas “in rural areas, hundreds of extrajudicial executions were carried out by gendarmes, village guards paid by the government, and ‘special teams¹⁵⁹’” (HRW, 2000 and see Yavuz, 2001: 14). The calculated constraining of the full extent of the state's violent capacity was clear in the declaration by the head of MIT (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*/ National Intelligence Agency) Altan Tokat in 1989 that “the State applies the same law in Istanbul and [in the Kurdish areas].¹⁶⁰ We could have exterminated them in a short time if we [applied] my system. [...] Our southern neighbour [Iraq] has exterminated the people who fought it for fifty years. We can exterminate them in a similar way if we wish so” (in Bozarslan, 2001: 50). When elements of the state developed the view that it was necessary to ratchet up the campaign against both the PKK and the broader Kurdish movement, they preferred an external agent with which any institutional links could be plausibly denied to carry out murderous campaigns in urban areas on their behalf. To this end, a relationship (as

¹⁵⁹ The special teams alone were thought to number up to 23,000 members (Bozarslan, 2001:48).

¹⁶⁰ This is patently untrue as the OHAL region was governed by a different legal system to the rest of the country.

of yet contested and unclear) with a pre-existing Islamist group known as Hezbollah was established.

The Deep State

The shadowy nature of Hezbollah's links to the state is related to the fact that this relationship was mediated by elements of the army which existed outside of the control and often even the knowledge of the civilian government. In the wake of World War II, NATO organised a trans-continental network of 'stay behind armies' in order to serve as guerrilla forces against a potential Soviet invasion, "as well as the coming to power of communist parties" (Ganser, 2005:69). In Turkey this force was founded in 1952 (Bovenkerk and Yeşilgöz, 2005:594), and it underwent periodic changes of names (see Çelik, 1994) but is widely referred to as the counter-guerrilla. "In order to guarantee a solid anti-communist ideology of its recruits, the CIA and MI6 generally relied on men of the conservative political right" (Ganser, 2005:70); accordingly, the Turkish counter-guerrilla strongly relied on authoritarian tendencies within the armed forces and developed an organic relationship with the MHP and its Grey Wolves youth wing (see Bovenkerk and Yeşilgöz, 2005:591). The existence of this counter-guerrilla force was only officially acknowledged after its counterpart became public knowledge in Italy in 1990. General Kemal Yılmaz, the then Chief of Staff of the Turkish special forces admitted the force came under his command and that its purpose was "to organise resistance in the case of a communist occupation"(Ganser: 73). The secrecy of the unit was such that Prime Minister Ecevit claims that he first heard of it when he was approached in 1974 by a general, Semih Sancar, who requested funding for it. Ecevit was quoted in *Milliyet* (28 November 1990) as saying that "up until then I had never heard of any such organisation when I was Prime Minister or Minister [...] or party chairman," (in Bovenkerk and Yeşilgöz, 2004:596).¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ It is possible that Ecevit's claims of ignorance are false and a means to distance himself from any recriminations of involvement with it.

It was explained to Ecevit by a military briefer that "there are a certain number of volunteer patriots whose names are kept secret and are engaged for life in this special department," [...] "They have hidden arms caches in various parts of the country" (in Komisar, 1997). The counter-guerrilla had been active in Turkey at the time of the 1971 coup. Journalist Uğur Mumcu, who was subsequently killed by suspected counter-guerrillas in 1993, was openly told by his torturers that they belonged to the force and that "even the President of the Republic cannot touch us" (in Komisar, 1997). The counter-guerrilla also played a central role in the 1980 coup and was deeply engaged in the state's counter-insurgency against the PKK. It was through this matrix of illegality underpinned by an uncompromising right wing ideology, as well as an immense criminal network with massive profits at stake, that the murkier and more nefarious counter-insurgency practises were organised. The Susurluk scandal in 1996 (see Bozarslan, 1999 and Bovenkerk & Yeşilgöz, 2005) revealed the full extent and reach of the so-called Turkish 'deep state' but its precise details have yet to be ascertained and the responsible parties have yet to face justice. The exposure of these secret armies across Europe in 1990 provoked a clamour for a full and thorough investigation but only Italy, Switzerland and Belgium of the implicated countries¹⁶² actually attempted to hold judicial proceedings to further investigate the affair (Ganser, 2005:69). It is therefore of little surprise that Turkey, a state in thrall to the military, has refused to engage with calls for greater transparency. The boundaries between the counter-guerrilla and Hezbollah and the killings they carried out are in many cases indistinguishable and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, it is clear that Hezbollah existed as a separate organisation and that its own objectives often differed from the wider counter-guerrilla complex - but our capacity to attain a greater empirical understanding of it is restricted by its overlap with the classified and sensitive information pertaining to the wider counter-guerrilla.

¹⁶² The other countries were Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland and Sweden. (Ganser, 2005:69).

Hezbollah and the State

Although the precise nature of the relationship between Hezbollah and elements of the state remains to be clarified, there is overwhelming and publicly available material as to its existence. Accordingly, the sub-conflict between the PKK and Hezbollah, contrary to the narrative espoused in many articles on them (Nugent, 2004, Uslu 2007, Ozeren and Van de Voorde, 2011), is best understood not as a self-contained intra-Kurdish issue but rather a proxy campaign co-ordinated by the state to carry out specific violent acts which it did not want to carry out itself. “The Commission on Unsolved Murders of the Turkish Parliament” revealed that a Hezbollah training camp [close to Batman] had been operated with Turkish military assistance” (HRW, 2000). It has also been confirmed that the governor of Batman imported \$2.8 million of arms which subsequently disappeared and are widely thought to have ended up in the hands of Hezbollah (HRW, 2000 and Aris & Bacik, 2002:153). The relationship was regularly exposed in independent media outlets, however a number of the journalists which dared to publicise it, such as Halit Güngen who worked for *2000'e Doğru* and Hafız Akdemir who wrote for *Özgür Gündem*, were subsequently assassinated in 1992 (HRW, 2000 and HRW 1992:15-17). It was also openly discussed, even by parliamentary deputies who could not be described as being well-disposed to the Kurdish struggle. In 2000 Eyup Asik, an ANAP deputy, stated “previously the state denied its [Hezbollah’s] existence because it was using this group against the PKK. During this period the Hizbollah did a great deal of damage to the PKK” (in Aris & Bacik, 2002:154). In conclusion, the ties binding Hezbollah to elements within the state were an open secret, justified by Hezbollah’s utility in combating the PKK and the wider Kurdish movement (see Mango, 2005:64).

Before discussing Hezbollah in greater detail, it is necessary to call into question how the Turkish state and its forces should be understood in the context of the war in Kurdistan. It has been suggested that it is mistaken to discuss a singular Turkish state when referring to the region under OHAL administration because for its duration (1987-2002), the rule of law which pertained there was of a different order to that of the wider Turkish state. “OHAL regions [...] [were] subject to special decrees of the government and these decrees [...] [were] not subject to the supervision of the Constitutional Court. The OHAL region has been

subjected to a different legal and administrative rule from the rest of the country” (Yavuz, 2001:13). Accordingly, two notably different legal regimes pertained for most of the conflict. “The modern state is an amorphous complex of agencies with ill-defined boundaries, performing a great variety of not very distinctive functions” (Schmitter in Mitchell, 1991:77), a situation undoubtedly exacerbated in a fragmented and war-torn country such as Turkey. It has been proposed by Mitchell that former understandings of the state as a unitary set of institutions distinct from a non-state sector represented by civil society are an illusion. He suggested that “the distinction must be taken not as the boundary between two discrete entities but as a line drawn internally within the mechanisms through which a social and political order is maintained” (ibid, 1991:78).

Furthermore, the Turkish state in the period under study can be arguably best understood as a form of weak democracy (Bozarslan, 2001:49), where the remit of the army undermined any efforts at government accountability or democratic legitimacy. The army via its control of the MGK (National Security Council/*Millî Güvenlik Konseyi*)¹⁶³ and the extended powers afforded it to it in the 1982 constitution formulated by the military junta, has become “the most decisive leg of a dual system of executive decision making, the other leg being the council of ministers” (Sakallioğlu, 1997:158). Upon its original establishment in 1961 the MGK “was designed to serve as a platform for the military to voice its opinion on matters of national security” (ibid: 157). However since 1982 its jurisdiction has extended far beyond what could be reasonably understood as matters of national security and has reached into sectors as varied as the formulation of school curricula and the closing of particular television stations (ibid: 158), as well as deposing the Islamist government of Necmettin Erbakan in the so called ‘soft coup’ of 1997 (see Narlı, 2003). The state was accordingly shrouded in secrecy¹⁶⁴ and completely opaque. The Turkish state and how its presence materialised in the Kurdish region closely fits the state model advanced by Aretxaga, as “an all-pervasive ghostly presence, a threatening force shaped by the collective experience of being overshadowed by an unfathomable power which can shape social life as a dangerous universe of surfaces and disguise” (2000:43).

¹⁶³ For a description of the component members of the MGK, see Heper (2002:138-139).

¹⁶⁴ See Taussig (1997) regarding the role of secrecy in bestowing a form of sacredness on the state and thus augmenting its power.

Hezbollah - the Movement

The theoretical focus of this research project lies on the relationship between the PKK and its supporters and sympathisers rather than alternative, more comprehensively studied aspects of the PKK. The following section will be dedicated to Hezbollah as it was of central significance to how the conflict developed in urban environments in the early part of the 1990s, and hence important to the ways in which the relationship between the PKK and its constituency developed in these areas.

Hezbollah's particular selection of targets marked a diffusion of practices of violence not only spatially, in urban areas, but also in terms of class as it often targeted members of the middle classes and Kurdish intellectuals. Hezbollah focused its violence, especially from the early 1990s, predominantly on alleged PKK supporters and prominent Kurdish public figures.¹⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch affirmed that more than a thousand people were killed between 1992 and 1995 alone (HRW, 2000), while other sources cite figures of at least five hundred killings of suspected PKK or Kurdish movement activists (Aris & Bacik, 2002:150). Given the nature of the violence and the ambiguous divisions between Hezbollah and ulterior state-supported counter-guerrilla forces, it is unlikely that any accurate statistics will be confirmed. In cities where Hezbollah was particularly active, such as Batman, Diyarbakir, Silwan and Nusaybin (Özdağ, 2003:40) all of my interviewees referred to the fear evoked by the brutality of Hezbollah's actions and its almost complete liberty of operation free from any police or army interference, if not enjoying the active collaboration of the security forces. The liberty to mobilise enjoyed by Hezbollah was in part derived from the "penetration of pro-Islamic elements" of the state security apparatus under the auspices of Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu from 1989-91 (Karmon, 2003:47 and see Imset, 1992:125) and the multiplicity of often rival state security forces based in Kurdistan.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Mango describes Hezbollah's violence as targeting four distinct categories: internecine killings of other Islamists, contract killings (including Iranian dissidents at the behest of Tehran), people associated with the PKK and secularists (2005:62).

¹⁶⁶ Çelik lists six different secret services organisation (1994).

Existing academic research on the group in English is for the most part confined to a handful of counter-terrorism articles (Nugent, 2004, Uslu 2007, Ozeren and Van de Voorde, 2011). As is often the case with the wider counter-terrorism literature, these articles uncritically reference police sources and largely study the movement in a socially de-contextualised or overly simplified fashion. They thus, intentionally or not, reproduce the state narrative of Hezbollah and its relations with the state and fail to recognise the role of the state in engineering and facilitating Hezbollah's murderous campaign. Other sources deal more creditably with the group, such as Cinoğlu (2008), Mango (2005), Aydıntaşbaş (2000), Aras and Bacik (2002) and Karmon (1998 and 2003), and Hezbollah's activities were also documented in human rights organisations' reports (HRW, 2000).¹⁶⁷

A number of contradictory explanations have been put forward regarding the origins of Hezbollah. It first came to public attention in the early 1980s but occupied a very low profile as it took the form of discussion groups centred around a number of publication houses and book shops. Karsaz, a Kurdish Islamist currently active in the *Azadi*¹⁶⁸ movement who lived and studied at a Hezbollah mosque in Diyarbakir in the early 1990s, explained that after the 1980 coup the Kurdish youth wing of Erbakan's MSP went underground after becoming convinced that party politics was pointless (Interview 26, 2012). Its numbers were swelled upon the arrival of former militants of the MHP who had been incarcerated in 1980 (see Karmon, 1998:104). Many of the MHP recruits had felt betrayed by the state after having militated on its behalf against leftist movements in the street violence of the late 1970s. They "were already professionals in the field of terrorism and street fighting and represented significant operational support" (Karmon, 2003: 43) for the emergent movement. The group split into two distinct factions, *Menzil* and *Ilîm*. The latter was led by Hüseyin Veliöğlü who had been active in right-wing circles in Batman prior to the coup. Tensions between the two tendencies led to widespread violence resulting in hundreds of deaths¹⁶⁹ and culminating in *Ilîm* becoming the predominant of the two groups.

¹⁶⁷ A series of journalistic reports on their activities also exist, notably Huggler (2000) and Mater (2000).

¹⁶⁸ *Azadi* are a legal Islamo-Kurdish nationalist movement.

¹⁶⁹ Four hundred deaths according to Aras & Bacik, (2002: 151) and more than three hundred according to Mango (2005:62).

Ideologically speaking, Hezbollah was, notwithstanding the Sunni-Shi'a divide, sympathetic to the regime in Iran and there is also some evidence that they received material support and military training from it (see Aras & Bacik 2002, Aydıntaşbaş 2000 and Karmon, 1998). Karsaz explained that Hezbollah's primary objective was the foundation of an Islamic state regardless of its ethnic character but given the prevailing circumstances of an apparently weakened Turkish state, they believed that a Kurdish Islamist state was a more feasible option in the short term than an Islamist takeover of the entire Turkish state. They were thus Islamists from Kurdistan rather than Kurdish Islamists (Interview 26, 2012).

At some point in the early 1990s open conflict erupted between Hezbollah and the PKK. Karsaz described it as taking the shape of a blood feud that arose from the PKK's determination to exert control over all groups in Kurdish territory. He did however question why only Hezbollah's *Ilim* faction clashed violently with the PKK, as numerous other Islamist groups, including the *Menzil* faction, successfully co-existed with the PKK without recourse to violence. An attempt at reconciliation between the groups in 1991 failed when the PKK's Garzan commander pistol-whipped the Hezbollah representative and presented the group with three options: join the PKK, exile or death (ibid); instead Hezbollah chose to fight the PKK. The conflict subsequently escalated, resulting in hundreds of deaths on both sides. It seems most probable that it was at this point that the relationship between Hezbollah and the state was strengthened so that the vastly weaker Islamist group could wage war against the PKK. Karsaz estimated that in that period Hezbollah could boast around 8,000 supporters but with no more than fifty of them actively involved in the armed campaign (ibid). The Islamist narrative of a tit-for-tat series of murders is undermined by the fact that its targets were for the most part not PKK cadres, consisting rather of "pro-PKK political parties, newspapers, and leading Kurdish nationalist political figures" (Aydıntaşbaş, 2000).

As previously affirmed, Hezbollah was primarily urban-based and its presence was most keenly noted in cities such as Diyarbakir, Batman, Nusaybin, and Silwan. Silwan was a PKK stronghold in the early 1990s, to such an extent that the Tekel district of the town was completely out of bounds for the security forces due to the presence of PKK armed patrols. Nonetheless according to Welat, a school teacher from the town, Hezbollah also had a considerable presence in Silwan. It was reported that in 1992 Hezbollah killed thirty people

in Silwan in only four months (Imset, 1992:124), which gives an idea of its operational capacity in the city in that period. Welat recalled that the town was strongly polarised into PKK and Hezbollah sympathisers, to such an evident extent that rival karate courses were organised by the respective movements. Even wedding parties were popularly understood to belonging to one camp or the other (Interview 11, 2012). In a similar fashion to the PKK, Hezbollah utilised the dramatic socio-spatial and economic re-structuring of society to bolster its ranks. The masses of impoverished rural migrants, often from religiously conservative families, living in often desperate conditions in the peripheries of Kurdish cities served as an ideal structural environment for recruitment.

Rasul, the brother of a Hezbollah prisoner convicted of numerous murders, explained his brother's gradual immersion in the movement. As a young child Rasul and his family moved to Nusaybin in the mid-1970s from the adjoining countryside due to some killings that arose from a family feud. Separated from their land, Rasul's father undertook the same journey as countless other rural Kurds and migrated to the cities of Western Turkey and Lebanon to work in construction. When Rasul was thirteen he took a similar path along with his older brothers and sisters, leaving his mother, younger sisters and youngest brother behind in Nusaybin. His family by chance lived close to a renowned Hezbollah¹⁷⁰ member. In addition, some of his brother's friends were also linked to Hezbollah and overtime he got sucked into the circles of the movement when he was about thirteen or fourteen years old. Rasul pointed out that his brother was in fact the least religious of the family and rarely prayed. Rasul's family strongly opposed this development because they, although not being politically active, viewed themselves as *waled pares*. They tried to distance his brother from Hezbollah by forcing him to live in the west with older family members, but he simply ran away back to Nusaybin. On one occasion, the elder brothers beat him severely but to no avail, and he subsequently abandoned his family to stay with the movement. Rasul explained that he went on to commit several murders of "other poor Kurds" and is currently imprisoned (Interview 33, 2013). The profile of Rasul's brother can be considered fairly typical of many Hezbollah recruits, usually young, poorly

¹⁷⁰ Interestingly Rasul did not use the term Hezbollah to describe the movement, referring to them as either the *Sufis* or the Muslims. It was only upon the subsequent clarification by his neighbour who was present during the interview that it became clear that he was referring to Hezbollah.

educated and from an impoverished background (see Karmon, 1998:104). The structural conditions of poverty, societal and familial disintegration due to migration both forced and economic, and the lack of a father figure rendered many youths particularly vulnerable to the manipulation of movements like Hezbollah.

The killings occurred in urban contexts, which had hitherto escaped the diffuse violence and brutality present in the rural areas and smaller towns. Violence had until that point not been a quotidian reality in the bigger cities. Furthermore, the killings were not just carried out in the *gecekondü* neighbourhoods of the periphery but also in the heart of middle class neighbourhoods and city centres. The presence of such violence in urban environments highlights the futility of an overly rigid urban-rural compartmentalisation of the conflict. In light of the fact that many of its targets were middle class intellectuals, journalists, members of HEP (*Halkın Emek Partisi*/People's Labour Party) and its successor parties, and women dressed in what Hezbollah deemed inappropriate attire, the immediate reality of violence was brought home to elements of Kurdish society which would have been relatively unaffected by it at that point. Hezbollah particularly targeted journalists who worked for newspapers close to the Kurdish movement, in particular *Ozgür Gundem*, *Yeni Ülke*, *Yeni Politika*, *Ozgür Halk* and the leftist *2000'e Doğru*.¹⁷¹ A Human Rights Watch report in 1993 cited a figure of eleven journalists and four newspaper distributors suspected to have been killed by Hezbollah (1993: 6). According to the anecdotal impression of many of my interviewees, the number of street sellers of the above newspapers assassinated was indeed much higher than even that reported by human rights organisations.

Hezbollah assassinations were often carried out in broad daylight, when individuals or pairs of generally young men calmly approached their targets before shooting them dead. Welat lived in a somewhat more affluent neighbourhood of Silwan, in comparison to others which contained many displaced Kurds from the neighbouring villages. He personally was in the immediate proximity of six or seven killings and he believed that the reluctant police response to the crimes was confirmation of the fact that the police and Hezbollah were

¹⁷¹ See the Committee to Protect Journalist's website, available at : <http://cpj.org/killed/europe/turkey/>

“fighting shoulder to shoulder” (Interview 22, 2012).¹⁷² The extent of collaboration between Hezbollah and the security forces led many to simply refer to it as Hizbol-Contra (Karmon, 1998:107).

Aside from its targeting of the Kurdish movement, Hezbollah also killed women because they were dressed in an apparently immodest fashion and there were also numerous reports of acid being thrown on such women (Interview 26 & 22, 2012). Hezbollah were also reputed to engage in kidnapping simply to obtain ransom. Rasul recounted that in Nusaybin they kidnapped an elderly man he knew named Hajji Şemso. Şemso’s family were convinced that the Nusaybin police were in cahoots with local Hezbollah militants, so they travelled the considerable distance to Mardin to report the kidnap to the police there, who eventually managed to locate the man. The anecdote, serves to highlight the localised nature of the links between the police and Hezbollah (Interview 22, 2012). Hezbollah’s campaign had little or no impact on the functioning of the PKK, as its guerrillas were in the relative safety of the mountains and its more important functionaries were either abroad or living in clandestinity. Their campaign resulted in the extension of the war to realms of Kurdish society which had been hitherto affected to a lesser degree. It created a generalised context of fear, a belief that death was possible whether you were politically active or not. Almost every Kurdish person with whom I discussed Hezbollah listed politically inactive family members assassinated by them and there was a widespread belief that some of the killings were subject to financial reward.

It is most probable that these wider array of family narratives have become somewhat distorted over time as it is highly unlikely that I could possibly have encountered such a large proportion of Hezbollah’s victims’ families. Nonetheless, the diffusion of the Hezbollah narrative indicates the enormous collective fear that their campaign provoked. It might seem unusual in the wider context of violence which beset the Kurdish region that a comparatively minor sub-conflict could generate so much fear. Wright’s notion of representative violence is specifically formulated for communal tensions with clearly defined inter-communal boundaries (in Wilson, 2013:65) which were not present in the

¹⁷² Collaboration between Hezbollah and the state in Silwan in particular is covered in HRW (1992:14).

Hezbollah and PKK sub-conflict. Wright understood representative violence as based on the premise that “anyone of a great number of people can be “punished” for something done by the community they come from” (ibid). Such a fear prevailed amongst those elements of Kurdish society which self-identified as *waled pares/yurtsever*, but it was not only restricted to them. Precisely because the targeting criteria were not as clearly identifiable as the historically rooted boundaries detailed in either Wright’s (1987) or Wilson’s (2013) cases, the sense of fear was multiplied as there were no means to establish how to navigate the dangerous waters of avoiding becoming a target. It was this ambiguity in Hezbollah’s target selection and the belief that they were motivated less by political criteria than by financial rewards or particular religious understandings which generated the most fear.

However, this collective anxiety did not simply result in a marked retreat from political life. In the case of the aforementioned interviewee who attended one of Diyarbakir’s most prestigious *lise*, amongst her classmates it did indeed lead to flight in several cases but also to mass recruitment to the guerrillas (Interview 22, 2012). Hezbollah’s armed campaign continued until the mid 1990s where it appears that some kind of accord was reached with the PKK. This agreement was signed according to some sources in 1993 (Karmon, 1998:108 and Mango, 2005:65), or as late as 1997 (Interview 22, 2013). Hezbollah subsequently extended its activities to the west of Turkey before being targeted by the very state that once supported it, which resulted in the almost complete dismantlement of the group’s armed element in 2000 and the death of its leader Velioğlu (Aydintaşbaş, 2000, Aras & Bacik, 2002 & Mater, 2000).

In conclusion to this section, Hezbollah’s armed campaign, which lasted for only a few years, had deep consequences on the Kurdish political struggle. It brought the conflict to big cities; furthermore it brought it to parts of the city which had been less affected by violence, to the Kurdish middle classes and to the intellectuals. It paradoxically consolidated a *waled pares/yurtsever* Kurdish identity by rendering it as dangerous, or perhaps more dangerous, to be active in cultural campaigns or in democratic politics as it was to be directly engaged in the armed campaigns of the PKK. The state’s blatant utilisation of such a brutal proxy force to achieve its objectives in urban settings highlights the imbrication of the rural and the urban in understanding how the conflict developed.

PKK Activities within the Urban Confines

The PKK guerrillas never exerted sufficient control to hold sizeable cities for any duration of time. They did temporarily seize some smaller towns such as Lice, Cizre, Şırnak and Çukurca (Jongerden, 2007:62) and even exerted considerable control over specific districts within larger cities for certain periods such as Tekel in Silvan. However, the PKK's urban territorial presence functioned, as Perwer explained, not as a question of where in the city but with whom. PKK influence spiralled outwards from initial contacts that the PKK trusted and spread not in terms of spatial but through social geography, along ever expanding networks of trusted sympathisers (Interview 33, 2013).¹⁷³ Nonetheless, it orchestrated a series of displays of strength through *serhildans*, Newroz celebrations, funerals of guerrillas and party militants and repeated urban strikes or *kepenks*, particularly in the early 1990s. These actions generally provoked a harsh clampdown by the security forces which almost inevitably resulted in deaths, thus ensuring further cycles of violence centred on the victims' funerals.

In contrast to its success in the countryside, it was much more challenging for the PKK to provide counter-state services to its supporters in urban environments. There are known cases of insurgent groups having successfully established themselves in this way, such as the case of the militant Islamic group *al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya* in the Imbaba neighbourhood in Cairo, which although it did not have territorial control in a conventional sense was sufficiently spatially and socially entrenched in the neighbourhood to establish a counter-state, the Islamic Republic of Imbaba, replete with a broad range of social services (Malthaner, 2011a:127-130). The PKK was unable to provide counter-state services in urban areas in such a systematic fashion due to a stronger state presence in the cities. Yet it attained certain spatially and chronologically limited achievements, particularly in relation to its revolutionary courts system.

¹⁷³ I originally interviewed Perwer in 2012 (Interview 32) but he was also present at my interview with Rasul and occasionally interjected with observations, such as this one.

A Nusaybin store owner reckoned that “between 1989 and 1993, the region was under the complete control of the PKK. For instance, if there was an incident that required a judicial process, the parties had to first see the regional administrator of the PKK. If they went directly to the official court, then the PKK punished them for that wrongdoing” (in Kalyoncu 2007:600 and see Marcus, 1994:19). Furthermore, it also managed to operate a revolutionary taxation regime (see Marcus, 2007:182), provided after-school services to help children with their studies (Interview 33, 2013) and policed common criminality, which decreased dramatically (Imset, 1992:270).

It was these encounters with the PKK, as well as the radicalising impact of the rural influx, that gradually led to the emergence of an urban PKK constituency. The repeated brutality of the security forces also served as a reminder of what was perceived as the state’s engrained hostility to the Kurdish people. Subsequently, the network of PKK sub-organisations and thickening inter-familial relationships with the movement acted as efficient conduits to direct new urban recruits to the guerrilla organisation in the mountains.

Serhildan

Serhildan is the term given to a popular uprising in Kurdish and can be reasonably compared to the Arabic term *intifada* (Özcan, 2006:237). The first *serhildan* occurred in the town of Nusaybin in the early spring of 1990. Guerrilla funerals had yet to become the popular emotive focal point into which they latterly evolved. There were a number of reasons for this; in many cases family members were simply too afraid to claim their dead guerrillas for fear of attracting the attention of the Turkish army (Marcus, 2007:141). The other issue was that the PKK did not have a sufficiently sophisticated system for tracking their dead. The widespread adaption of *nom de guerres* ensured that in many cases the guerrillas’ immediate comrades or commanders did not even know their real names (ibid). The problem has persisted in the organisation; Berfin, the father of a guerrilla who was killed in 2005, only discovered his son’s death via a public announcement on Roj-TV (Interview 20, 2012).

The trigger of the *serhildan* was the ambush of a guerrilla unit and the deaths of thirteen guerrillas after it crossed the border from Syria. One of the slain guerrillas, Kamuran Dundar was from a noted *waled pares* family from Nusaybin. His family went to reclaim the body but because they needed to wait for Dundar's mother to return from Izmir prior to the burial, word about the impending funeral had spread throughout the city (Marcus, 2007:141). Perwer, who was present at the events that subsequently unfolded, explained the guerrillas had been killed by chemical weapons (Interview 33, 2013)¹⁷⁴ thus perhaps adding to the sentiments of collective outrage. Marcus also reports an account of the event wherein the guerrillas drank some drugged *ayran* that rendered them unconscious but surmises that they were most likely killed in a conventional armed clash (Marcus, 2007:140). It was the conjuncture of the death of an identifiable guerrilla of a patriotic family, the delay in the funeral, the outrage over such a large number of dead guerrillas, the date's proximity to Newroz and its location in the heartland of PKK support that led to the *serhildan*. The family chose to bring the body to a more distant mosque across the town thus giving the chance for thousands to row in behind the mourners. At a certain point the mourners clashed with the police and the violence escalated to such an extent that a curfew was imposed on the town. It was promptly ignored by all and sundry (ibid: 42-43), leading to the deaths of four civilians and 149 arrests (Aydin, 2005:86 and see White, 1997:232). The PKK then called for mass participation in a 'Week of National Heroism' to commemorate the deaths of two renowned heroes of the movement, Mazlum Doğan and Mahsun Korkmaz from the 21st (Newroz) to the 28th of March (Gunes, 2012:111).¹⁷⁵ This led to the violence spreading to other neighbouring cities, notably Cizre, and as Marcus affirmed "it seemed like the PKK's war had finally come down from the mountains and entered the cities" (2007:1142). It was a significant moment in the struggle because it was the first occasion when the urban masses publicly and violently asserted their solidarity with the PKK. It marked a decisive point of cognitive liberation when in a *Turkish Daily News* report in December 1991, Imset commented that "only a year ago, not even the strongest of tribal families could dare to claim the body of a member accused of being a terrorist and killed during a clash. Today, the people act en mass" (in Imset, 1992:254). Street clashes between

¹⁷⁴ See footnote 22.

¹⁷⁵ The anniversary of Korkmaz's death in 1986.

for the most part unarmed demonstrators and the security forces became henceforth commonplace throughout the 1990s, particularly centred on Newroz celebrations and funerals.

Newroz

Newroz¹⁷⁶ is a celebration of the spring equinox on the 21st of March and has been widely celebrated in parts of the Middle East for three thousand years. It combines pre-Islamic elements heavily influenced by Zoroastrianism with certain Islamic aspects (see Aydin, 2005:45-49 & 2014:71). Newroz is celebrated by many nations with historic Iranian influences across central Asia and it is accepted by Kurds across Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq as a common national festival (Bozarslan in Aydin, 2005:45). Twentieth century Kurdish nationalist movements and intellectuals merged the more widely diffused Newroz celebrations with the specific Kurdish founding myth of Kawa the blacksmith and his historic resistance to the Assyrian king Dahhak and how his bravery liberated the Medes, who are widely considered as the ancestors of the Kurdish people (Aydin, 2005:59). Newroz was thereby consecrated as “an ethno-genesis and resistance myth for the Kurds” (ibid: 57). It was given further contemporary resonance by the resistance of Kurdish prisoners in Diyarbakir prison after 1980. The PKK prisoner Mazlum Doğan specifically chose March the 21st 1982 to commit suicide. The subsequent self-immolation of four other prisoners¹⁷⁷ in May of that year bore a symbolic relevance because the decision to die by flames held deep resonance with the massive bonfires lit to celebrate Newroz (see Bozarslan, 2003:25). These deaths helped “the movement [PKK] to establish itself as the contemporary representative of the Kurdish struggle from the ancient past to the present and to make calls for self-sacrifice” (Çağlayan, 2012:15). Accordingly, public celebrations of Newroz became highly politicised affairs, were often violent and utilised by the PKK as opportunities to test its popular support.

¹⁷⁶ The spelling of Newroz is subject to much politicised debate; see Yanik (2006) for an analysis of some of these arguments. I have chosen to use Newroz because it is simply the spelling which I feel is the mostly widely accepted.

¹⁷⁷ The names of the four dead were Mahmut Zengin, Esref Anyık, Ferhat Kurtay and Necmi Öner (see Zeydanlioğlu, 2009:11).

The *serhildan* triggered by Dunder's funeral in Nusaybin overlapped with that year's Newroz celebrations and led to demonstrations and outbreaks of violence across Kurdistan and even in western cities such as Ankara and Istanbul. Political prisoners in Diyarbakir and Antep prisons went on hunger strike and cities like Idil and Silopi engaged in *kepenkler* which closed the vast majority of business in those towns (Aydin, 2005:86). Newroz celebrations proved a repeated site of contention and political socialisation for many young Kurds, particularly in urban environments. Aram, a former PKK guerrilla and political prisoner, recalled that at the Diyarbakir Newroz celebrations in 1990 he and his friends erected barricades and threw stones at the police. He described the experience as a key to the growth of a kind of "infantile political consciousness". They did not even know any PKK slogans so they invented their own "*varimiz yogumuz apo abimiz*" which roughly translates as 'oh brother Apo, you are all we have' (Interview 27, 2012).

The most violent Newroz occurred in 1992 after the PKK called for mass public participation. Huge clashes broke out across Kurdistan and according to a SHP report led to the deaths of twenty nine protestors in Cizre, twenty six in Şırnak and fourteen in Nusaybin, and hundreds more injured and arrested (in *ibid*: 88); while a Helsinki Watch report into the killings cited a figure of around eighty dead across Kurdistan, including fatalities in the cities of Van and Yuksekova (1992:3). The same report detailed that the PKK managed to mobilise hundreds of armed *milis* members in the cities, pointedly not guerrillas from the mountains, thus giving an impression of the PKK's urban mobilisational capacity at the time (*ibid*). Nevertheless, it suggested that in the cases of Cizre and Nusaybin "all or nearly all of the casualties resulted from unprovoked, unnecessary and unjustified attacks by Turkish security forces against peaceful Kurdish civilian demonstrators" (*ibid*).

One of the outcomes of these *serhildans* was that they "prompted an influx of new recruits into the organization. Thousands of men and women from the rural and urban populace, particularly from among the high school (*lycée*) and university students of both Kurdish cities and Turkish metropolises, joined the party's frontal and military bodies" (Özcan, 2006: 175). The consolidation of links with high schools was particularly noteworthy, as only 9% of children in the South East completed their second level education (Robins, 1993:663); it is implicit that many of these recruits were from higher social strata. It was

therefore clear that the PKK had consolidated its presence in many cities across Kurdistan and although incomparable in terms of numbers to the deaths in the countryside, clashes between its supporters and militants with the state resulted in significant numbers of casualties. Casualties which in turn generated stronger emotional bonds with the movement and motivated many Kurdish youths to join the guerrillas.

Funerals

Once the stigma and fear surrounding political funerals had been broken, they became key sites of political and often violent confrontation between the wider Kurdish movement and the forces of the state. The PKK's mobilisation strategies prior to 1980 and its utilisation of funerals as opportunities to mobilise huge swathes of society has already been discussed in Chapter III. Khalili described how various Palestinian factions' transformation of funerals into major political events was predicated on borrowing non-political ritual elements from quotidian [...] lives and transforming these elements into symbolically loaded political practices which resonated with a wide public (2007:125). Thus, Kurdish political funerals, aside from the personal suffering of grieving family members also became occasions of political theatre. Mass funeral processions "acted as both mobilizing and pedagogic tools" (ibid: 124). They functioned as mobilisations tools by "disseminating a unified nationalist narrative" (ibid) and by physically bringing Kurds who had not been hitherto mobilised or were less involved into a shared space of great collective emotional intensity. The PKK recognised the huge mobilisational potential of funerals and began to use them as platforms for political propaganda and recruitment.¹⁷⁸

Farhad explained the process through which the first politicised funeral in Malazgirt took place. A guerrilla from the local area was killed and the PKK publicly announced his funeral and demanded that people attend.

¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, Hezbollah (Lebanese version) was also using funerals as opportunities for mobilisation at the same time; most notably the funeral of its then secretary general Abas al-Mussawi in 1992 (Malthaner, 2011a:216).

Subsequently thousands of mourners gathered, many of whom attending out of a sense of solidarity but many more participating only due to pressure exerted by the PKK. They marched to the local military base to reclaim the corpse of the guerrilla. At a certain point the military opened fire, wounding a number of the cortège but the sheer mass of people forced the army to give the body to the mourners. After such a display of PKK popular support, all further funerals in the area passed off without incident (Interview 44, 2013). Accordingly, it is clear that the PKK recognised the importance of funerals as occasions of political theatre and demonstrations of force, and that it was willing when necessary to coerce reluctant supporters to attend them.

Politicised funerals were not necessarily just the preserve of fallen guerrillas but also of others involved in the broader the movement. Vedat Aydın was the chairman of the Diyarbakir branch of DEP and the head of a local human rights organisation. He was abducted from his home on the 5th of July 1991 by men claiming to be police officers and his bullet-ridden corpse was found in Elâzığ province and hastily buried¹⁷⁹. His body was exhumed on the demand of his family and his subsequent funeral in Diyarbakir attracted a huge crowd of up to 150,000 people. His political sympathies were a matter of public knowledge and pro-Kurdish graveside orations were made which denounced state abuses of civilians, while his coffin was wrapped in an ERNK flag (Gunes, 2012:111). After the burial the remaining mourners, which numbered in the tens of thousands, had gathered around the *Mardinkapi* in the historic town walls close to the city centre (Interview 24, 2012). At that point they were attacked by “heavily armed security forces, supported by armoured vehicles and helicopters, leaving 21 dead and hundreds wounded” (Özcan, 2006:14).

Aydın’s funeral was a turning point in a number of ways. It was the first such mass killing in Diyarbakir and it also marked the point where civil society actors began to be frequently assassinated (Interview 24, 2012). His funeral serves as a perfect example of the mobilisational potency of such occasions. Aram, who lived with his widowed father in the city, was only fourteen at the time of the funeral and he describes it as the turning point in

¹⁷⁹ *Şükran Aydın and Others v. Turkey* (Application no. 46231/99) ECHR 26 May 2005. Available at: <http://echr.ketse.com/doc/46231.99-en-20050526/view/>

his political development. Until then he had never knowingly met anyone from the PKK and his political consciousness, as has been discussed above, was a “spontaneous” one; he only heard the PKK slogans of “*Biji Öcalan*” and “*Biji Kurdistan*” for the first time during the cortege. The morning of the funeral he had wandered aimlessly around the city for a while before encountering some of the mourners gathering at Çift Kapi, another city entrance. He went to the funeral as if it were a game of some sort and only realised the seriousness of it once he was there. Aram was towards the front of the masses¹⁸⁰ when the police opened fire and he recalls immediately throwing himself to the ground to take cover. He witnessed several people, including a child even younger than himself at the time, bleeding from gunshot wounds. In the aftermath of the shooting he was seized by the police and severely beaten and after returning home he discovered a bullet hole in the sole of his shoe. His cousin, with whom he ran a small shoe repairs outlet, had also attended the funeral and left shortly afterwards to join the guerrillas. Notwithstanding his age, he began to search out a contact in the movement so that he too could enrol in the guerrillas, which he managed to do in May 1992, after some reluctance on the PKK’s behalf because of his age (Interview 27, 2012). Aram’s unthinking attendance at the funeral brought him in physical proximity to the movement for the first time and led to his subsequent radicalisation. This almost casual drift into the movement is representative of the narratives of many militants, whereby a conjuncture of a number of elements such as sharing a physical space with the movement, collectively experiencing a moment of emotional intensity and exposure to the brute face of the state can lead to irrevocable radicalisation.

¹⁸⁰ His photograph close to the front was in some of the following day’s newspaper coverage of the massacre.

Non-escalation to Urban Uprising

The motivations as to why the PKK did not seize on what seemed like a propitious moment to escalate the conflict during the *serhildans* by ordering a mass uprising remains a matter of great contention. Certain authors are of the view that Öcalan opposed a mass, locally controlled mobilisation because “a sustained uprising, whether violent or not, could cause new actors and interest groups to emerge, challenging [...] [his] authority and the PKK’s hegemony” (Marcus, 2007:181). It is a view that attributes the priority given to the continued focus on the organised armed guerrilla campaign in the mountains as derived from Öcalan’s own egoism. Marcus contends that Öcalan “refused to let PKK guerrillas direct the demonstrations and turn them into a mass uprising” (ibid: 180) comparable to the Palestinian *intifada*. It is indeed true that the guerrillas never took a lead in co-ordinating the *serhildans* but that is not to confirm that the PKK as a wider organisation was not behind their emergence.

The first *serhildan* in Nusaybin was characterised by a generous dose of happenstance and it was understood by many of its participants as a spontaneous event. The tendency to retrospectively interpret political actions as spontaneous is widespread, as seen in Polletta’s work on the American civil rights campaign (2006:42). It is likely derived from a desire to project political actions as authentic, as opposed to it being the fruit of strategic instrumentalisation by political organisations. Rasul, who participated in the first *serhildan*, described his memory of it as people just starting to walk in the funeral cortege and others joining them, without any specific instructions or co-ordination by any external actors (Interview 33, 2013). There is no reason to doubt his recollection but it does not countenance the importance of the preceding socialisation and organisational efforts of the PKK. The killing of Dunder was clearly an unanticipated event but it occurred in a context of fervent PKK mobilisation in the cities. The PKK’s broader efforts resulted in increased recruitment to the guerrillas and fostered a form of impatience in those sympathetic or mobilised in the non-guerrilla ranks of the movement to be active or participate in the struggle in some fashion. It was a situation of smouldering tension which was going to be

inevitably ignited by a particular event, which was in this case the death of a guerrilla well-respected in his home area.

It is clear that the first *serhildan* was not ordered by the PKK but it immediately seized the opportunity to guide the events that followed it. After the outbreak of disturbances, the PKK called for a 'Week of National Heroism' (Gunes, 2012:111). Ahmet, a self-declared second generation PKK supporter, explained that the social space that the PKK had carved out in the cities with their burgeoning networks of contacts were the underlying mobilising structures of the *serhildans* in the early 1990s. He boldly states that they had been long-planned and organised by the movement and were not in any way spontaneous (Interview 18, 2012). Local knowledge of impending clashes was available on the ground thus again disproving the spontaneity hypothesis. Omar, the nephew of a prominent Kurdish politician, recalls that in the lead-up to the *serhildan* of the 15th of August¹⁸¹ 1992 in Kiziltepe, his mother sent him away to stay in the safety of relatives living in Western Turkey, precisely in the knowledge that clashes would have erupted that day (Interview 18, 2012). The orchestrated nature of the *serhildans* is also evident in the manner in which after three successive extremely bloody Newroz celebrations from 1990 to 1992, the one of 1993 after Öcalan called for a peaceful celebration as befitting the PKK's ongoing ceasefire passed with little incident. It unfolded peacefully with only one recorded death in Adana, in comparison to the tens of deaths of the previous years (Aydin, 2006: 102). The experience was repeated the following year, when Öcalan called on Kurds to celebrate Newroz inside their homes rather than with public demonstrations (ibid). It seems illogical to deduce that the violence of the preceding years was unrelated to any commands given by the PKK, when its explicit plea for calm in the following years was almost impeccably observed.

It can be tempting to retrospectively interpret events in light of subsequent revelations. However, in the early 1990s the PKK and many of its supporters were convinced of their imminent victory. The PKK's confidence and self-belief was such that in late 1993,

¹⁸¹ The 15th of August, the date of the launch of the insurgency in 1984, had become a day laden with symbolic significance for PKK supporters and sympathisers and has been publicly celebrated in Turkish and Kurdish cities, as well as in Europe.

ironically just after its power had begun to decline, it released the following audacious announcement in its publication *Berxwedan*:

The resolutions adopted by the PKK, which are formed in concrete proposals such as 'political parties will shut [their offices in Kurdistan], all their administrators and members will resign, the newspapers serving the Turkish special war will not be distributed, TVs will not be watched, the schools serving as colonialist assimilation institutions will be shut down, teachers will resign, gambling will not be allowed, all the officers of the TC [Turkish Republic] will leave Kurdistan, no one will attend the courts of the TC, no one will join the Turkish military service, taxes will not be paid to the TC, journalists will be allowed to come to Kurdistan only with permission' are implemented in perfect order. Our people have been devoting all their efforts towards implementing these resolutions (Berxwedan, 15 November 1993 in Özcan 2006:176).

It was clear that the PKK had complete faith in its prevailing approach. It would have been perceived as an unnecessary risk to potentially weaken its successful guerrilla campaign by launching an urban uprising which would have mostly likely resulted in an unprecedented military crackdown and the displacement of the supply chains to the guerrillas in the mountains. As it was, the urban centres were a source of recruits, material resources and the terrain of an emerging legal Kurdish movement centred on the Kurdish political party. It must also be recognised that the PKK's external leadership was not in everyday contact with its guerrilla units (see Chapter IV) and that such an extensive co-ordination between semi-autonomous forces in the mountains and urban militia would have presented significant logistical challenges.

Finally, it is indeed tempting to attribute the decision to the boundless ego of Öcalan, whose determination to preserve his role as the messiah-leader of the movement was evident in the brutality with which he dealt with internal challengers (Imset, 1992: 77-78, Marcus, 2007: 134-140, and Akçam, 2012). Yet it must be acknowledged that Öcalan was perceptive enough to recognise on occasion that when unauthorised initiatives of others within the PKK proved popular with the broader PKK universe of supporters, he was not hesitant to re-adjust his position to that of the masses. An example of this was when in May

1993 a commander, Şemdin Sakık broke the PKK ceasefire in direct opposition to the party line by assassinating thirty three unarmed Turkish soldiers and four school teachers on a bus in Bingöl (Özcan, 2006: 179). Shortly afterwards Öcalan, fearing a split between the external leadership and the commanders in the mountains, formally announced the end of the ceasefire. Therefore, it is clear that Öcalan's alleged megalomaniacal tendencies were often checked by the realities on the ground. In addition, instances of urban insurgency in Turkey's recent past by the radical left had been a decisive failure and the bloody fates of Çayan, Gezmis and their cohort served as a reminder of it (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011:127). Plus, if one considers Öcalan's political socialisation in the era of successful national liberation struggles and its veneration of the practise of rural insurgency, his reluctance to rush into urban rebellion is understandable. In light of this, the attribution of what was at the time a military coherent decision to Öcalan's vainglorious personality does not seem convincing.

Conclusion

The common misconception that the PKK had little or no presence in the cities of Kurdistan and that it was a rural phenomenon has been dismantled in this chapter. Admittedly certain cities underwent periods of greater conflict than others; cities like Diyarbakir were notably stable until the 1990s, whereas cities in the Botan area were beleaguered by almost constant violence. It should be recognised that the PKK made use of the cities in a different manner to that in which they utilised the rural areas. Cognisant of the logistical difficulties of urban-based insurgency, they channelled urban resources to the insurgency in the countryside where the guerrillas suffered a lesser comparative disadvantage.¹⁸²

Notwithstanding the greater state presence in urban centres, there were certain elements which favoured the formation of an urban based constituency. Violent acts of state repression in the countryside attracted lesser media attention and the putative PKK

¹⁸² See Vargas (2009:113) for an analysis of similar patterns of violence in Barrancabermeja in Columbia in the early 1990s.

support triggered by acts of state violence in the countryside, in particular the forcible evacuations, was often dissipated by the fragmentation of familial and village networks inherent in relocation. However, state atrocities in urban areas resonated with the larger numbers of city residents and their relative spatial stability rendered it easier for the PKK to systematically recruit from them. The spatial concentration of military attacks, as in the case of Şırnak in August 1993 (White, 1997:238) or Hezbollah assassinations, led certain cities to become furnaces of resentment and resistance; furnaces that were repeatedly fuelled by the incessant flow of horrors that accompanied many of the displaced rural families.

The PKK's mobilisational repertoire should not be analysed as occurring in different, disconnected universes. In structural terms, the boundaries between the cities and the countryside had already been weakened due to increased urbanisation, seasonal migration and the decline of traditional agricultural practises. The onset of forced migration further hastened the undermining of this distinction; the majority of urban dwellers had personal or close family roots in the countryside. The dividing line between the PKK's urban and rural activities reflects this and they should be seen as amorphous and complementary, ensuring that developments in one realm had formative consequences in the other. The PKK's primary concern was to forge and protect a consistent flow of young militants to serve as guerrillas. In this regard it was extremely successful, to the extent that its obligatory military service law patchily applied in rural areas was eventually abandoned. Following the *serhildan* of March 1990, the PKK periodically began to use occasions such as Newroz and the funerals of guerrillas to ascertain the extent of its urban support. Mass gatherings of their supporters confirmed their popular legitimacy, particularly in the eyes of the international public. Cities served as platforms to address the wider world in a way that rural villages and towns never could.

In conclusion, the PKK's armed campaign was mostly fought in the countryside, but the struggle there only endured due to the mass support of its urban constituency. Upon the forced migration of millions of peasants to the cities the divisions between the urban and the rural became increasingly blurred and the rural peasants were transformed into an urban proletariat. The PKK harnessed its urban support and re-directed to where it was deemed to be most likely successful, the mountains. In the course of the conflict the cities were politicised in an unprecedented fashion by the influx of internally displaced Kurds, the

calculated mobilisation strategies of the PKK and the atrocities of the state and its proxies. Nowadays, the rural zones are largely in the maw of the Village Guards and it is primarily the cities that serve as the strongholds of the Kurdish movement. This turnaround is arguably due to the politicisation of the urban centres in the period discussed in this chapter.

Chapter VI: The PKK in Western Turkey

Introduction

The PKK has always been present wherever Kurdish communities are to be found. Naturally, their strongest support base has always been in Kurdistan but the PKK established connections with Kurdish migrant communities in Lebanon and Libya in the early 1980s and has taken advantage of the burgeoning Kurdish diaspora in Europe. Unsurprisingly, it has also actively mobilised amongst Kurds resident outside of Kurdistan in western Turkey. As has been discussed in the preceding chapters, the PKK has over time constantly adapted and re-adjusted its repertoire of contention according to its immediate socio-spatial context, as well as its long term priorities and objectives.

Its efforts to establish and subsequently consolidate a constituency in western Turkey presented it with a number of challenges distinct from those in Kurdistan. A first factor was that the Kurds which had immigrated to the west of the country were overwhelmingly resident in urban areas; urban mobilisation entails both difficulties and advantages in comparison to rural mobilisation (see Le Blanc, 2013 & Chapter V). In an even more pronounced fashion than in Kurdish urban centres, the PKK had no territorial control, thus rendering it reliant on social control and legitimacy to mobilise popular consensus. In an ulterior contrast to its mobilisation in Kurdistan, Kurds in western Turkey form a sizeable (albeit discriminated) minority amongst a majority Turkish population. Additionally, the Kurdish community resident in the west was spatially fragmented and for the most part socio-economically marginalised, thus rendering its mobilisation even more difficult. A final difference was that unlike in Kurdistan where the PKK enjoyed a monopoly on revolutionary politics, in western Turkey a number of radical left-wing groups also sought to channel Kurdish resentment into their own revolutionary projects. Notwithstanding the competition these rivals posed - in terms of accessing resources and popular legitimacy - the PKK for the most part utilised a less confrontational strategy in their regards than the one it adopted in

respect of its Kurdish contemporaries in the 1970s. Accordingly, it is clear that in western Turkey the PKK was obliged to mobilise in a very different environment demanding alternative approaches and strategies to those used with success in Kurdistan.

Kurdish migration to western Turkey has been the subject of significant research in regards to the socio-economic challenges of rural migrants, issues of integration and assimilation. It has however, been rather understudied from the point of view of political participation, with some notable exceptions (Doğan & Yılmaz, 2011 and Darıcı, 2011). However, any analysis of Kurdish political participation beyond their homeland in the south east of the country is conceptually challenging. It is, in fact, much too broad a phenomenon to broach within a single chapter. The Kurdish community in western Turkey is not homogenous; it is comprised of multiple generations of historic labour migrants, distributed across many different districts and class positions. It is divided linguistically and religiously and riven with localised sub-Kurdish identities that have been reproduced in the west. Over time this amorphous mass rapidly expanded to include a large proportion of forcibly displaced Kurds following the violent expulsion of millions of rural Kurds (see chapter V). As a means to conceptually organise this heterogenous community, this chapter will put forth the argument that a large portion of the Kurdish population can be understood as a form of internal diaspora. Although conventional understandings of diaspora usually emphasise its international dimensions, the lived experience of many Kurds corresponds with the experiences of transnational diasporas in terms of socio-cultural marginalisation, displacement from a homeland and the maintenance of boundaries vis-à-vis the majority community (Brubaker, 2005).

As has been elaborated in the previous chapters, the PKK made use of different organisational structures according to the context of their deployment. In western Turkey, the movement was present in the form of the ERNK and its subsidiary movements, with extremely rare deployment of its guerrilla units. Accordingly, it engaged in rather different contentious practises than it did in Kurdistan. Notwithstanding the preponderance of Turkish state institutions, such as the army and police, all of which were considered as legitimate targets in Kurdistan, the PKK did not systematically deploy violence against them in the west. In fact the PKK deployed a range of violence that was well beneath its armed

capability. Violence in western Turkey increased for a brief period following Öcalan's arrest in 1999, but for the most part it was restricted to bombing campaigns focusing on Turkey's tourist industry (Lakmi, 1993), a short lived suicide bombing campaign (Ergil, 2000:51) and light or unarmed clashes arising from the escalation of small demonstrations. Two of the most notorious violent PKK incidents were fire bombings of shopping centres in 1991¹⁸³ and 1999¹⁸⁴ which ignited fires, resulting in mass civilian casualties rather than targeted bomb attacks.

Similarly to the preceding chapters, there will be a significant configurative-ideographic element to this chapter due to the limited research on militant political participation in western Turkey. It has proven necessary to critically engage with the prevailing statistical sources regarding the dimensions of the Kurdish community beyond Kurdistan in Turkey. The chapter will then lay out the argument that there is a distinction within this broader community between a politically engaged internal diaspora and a broader migrant Kurdish community. In order to supplement some of the rich research done on the socio-economic challenges of Kurdish migrants in western Turkey, it will incorporate a number of qualitative personal narratives as means to explain how these existent socio-economic structures influenced individual political trajectories. It is worth recalling the eloquent observations of Amartya Sen that poverty in itself does not necessarily lead to violence and that it often leads to mass inertia (2008:11 and see Trotsky, 2008). It is therefore important to consider how the PKK succeeded - while other radical movements failed - to generate a popular understanding that the Turkish state was the cause of the collective grievances of the Kurdish people and how it directed this discontent into participation in the movement.

This chapter will discuss how the PKK managed to forge a rearticulated revolutionary Kurdish identity, which was cross-class in composition and traversed the array of Kurdish sub-identities, and awakened Kurdish sentiments in younger generations of assimilated

¹⁸³ A small demonstration of around fifty people targeted a shopping centre owned by the OHAL governor Necati Çetinkaya's brother in Istanbul's Bakırköy neighbourhood. In the resulting fire, fourteen people burned to death.

¹⁸⁴ In the wake of Öcalan's arrest, a shopping centre in Göztepe was set alight and thirteen shoppers were killed (BBC, 1999).

families. Its success is even more notable if one considers that it occurred as the PKK's better established leftist revolutionary rivals were slipping into decline. The last part of the chapter will explain the concrete processes and mechanisms involved in the establishment of the PKK's constituency in western Turkey. It will examine the agency of the PKK and its selection of contextually informed recruitment strategies and modes of interaction with potential supporters and sympathisers and how incipient sympathies were converted into actual support.

Note on Kurdish Migration Statistics

There is a glaring dearth of reliable statistics on the ethnic composition of the Turkish state. Kurdish movements tend to exaggerate the Kurdish population, while the contrary is true for Turkish nationalists. The lack of credible data can be attributed to a number of reasons. Many Kurds are reluctant to publically assert their Kurdish identity to official bodies because of lingering fears and past memories of discrimination. The internalisation of the state-promoted Turkish nationalist discourse that holds Kurdishness as the epitome of backwardness and ignorance (Zeydanlioğlu, 2008) has led many Kurdish people to disavow their own ethnic origins. In other cases Kurds of certain generations scarred by the horrors of state repression, most strikingly in the Dersim massacres, have tended to actively project an exaggerated sense of Turkishness on subsequent generations as a form of protection. Accordingly, there are intergenerational discrepancies in the recognition of Kurdishness and differences exist even within families regarding their ethnic identity.

For many Kurds, particularly those born in the West, the capacity to speak Kurdish has ceased to be the definitive marker of Kurdishness. The 1965 census, which is itself considered highly deficient (Mutlu, 1996:520), was the last census to enquire as to the population's mother tongue. The utilisation of a rudimentary linguistic proxy to determine identity is itself fraught with many difficulties (ibid: 1996:518-519), but it remains in this case the most useful, if imperfect indicator of ethnicity. Mutlu calculates that, due to a

higher birth rate¹⁸⁵, the Kurds grew from 9.98% of the population in 1965 to 12.6% in 1990. In terms of geographical distribution, he contends that while only one fifth of Kurds lived outside their historical Southeastern homeland in 1965, that figure had risen to one third by 1990 (ibid: 532-533). In the particular case of Istanbul, Mutlu asserts that its Kurdish population grew from 2.77% to 8.16% in 1990 (ibid: 526 & 540). Sirkeci provides a detailed table from a variety of different sources and estimates of the Kurdish population in Turkey in the 1990s, ranging from 6.2% to 22% (2000: 155). Using data gathered from a 1992 Turkish Demographic Health Survey (TDHS), which estimates ethnic identity by a series of mother tongue questions, he concludes that the Kurdish population as a percentage of the overall state population was 15.8%, of which 70% resided in the southeast (ibid:155-156). He also observed growth of the Kurdish population in all Turkey's geographic regions (ibid: 156). The TDHS figures are from 1993, prior to the campaign of forcible evacuation in Kurdistan which was at its most intense between 1991 and 1995, reaching a peak in 1994 (Gambetti & Jongerden, 2011:384); therefore one can reasonably conclude that these numbers have further increased in the ensuing years. This is a proposition which seems to be supported by Wedel's 1997 estimate that between half and two thirds of the Kurdish population was to be found in the west of the country (in Grabolle-Çeliker, 2012:15).

Notwithstanding the difficulties in obtaining empirically certifiable statistics, for the purposes of this project it is important to note the ever increasing proportion of Kurds living outside of the traditionally Kurdish region. As stated before, this project is not an analysis of the wider Kurdish population but rather a study on a precise subset of it, those that supported or sympathised with the PKK. The statistics outlined above merely give an idea of the structural demography within which these support networks were established. Finally, this chapter will also engage with the non-Kurdish supporters of the PKK, who were understandably, disproportionately present in non-Kurdish majority areas.

¹⁸⁵ The higher Kurdish birth rate is in spite of the Kurdish population's higher rates of infant and child mortality and an all around inferior performance in all socioeconomic indicators in respect of the Turkish population (Icduygu *et al*, 1999).

Kurds in Western Turkey – an Internal Diaspora?

It must be acknowledged that population mobility and dramatic urbanisation has affected Turkey as a whole and is not confined to the Kurds (Karpas, 1976). The huge outflow of internally displaced people due to the conflict and forcible village evacuation in Kurdistan has simply added to a pre-existing urban to rural population re-organisation in Turkey. Turkey's urban population grew from 8.8 million (32% of the total population) in 1960 to 26.8 million (54%) in 1985 (Balaban, 2011: 2164 and see Yilmaz, 2003:2). Accordingly, the conflict should not be mistakenly understood as the principal agent of demographic transformation across Turkey but rather an ulterior element exclusively affecting the Kurdish region¹⁸⁶.

The figures vary as to the dimensions of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe but a generally accepted estimate is around 850,000, although numerous Kurdish associations assert much higher numbers (see Baser, 2011:8). Eccarius-Kelly cited a figure from the Kurdish Institute in Paris which suggests that there are one million Kurds in Europe, of whom 85% have a Turkish passport (2002:115). Immigrants on arrival in Europe are registered by the relevant European authorities according to their passport and not according to ethnic affiliation, so Kurds from Turkey are recorded as Turks. Furthermore, there is the issue of second and third generation Kurds who have European citizenship (see Baser, 2011:8) and there is also the thorny issue of multiple identities even within the same family. A German born YXK (*Yekîtiya Xwendekarên Kurdistan/* Kurdish Student Association) activist explained to me that he had no idea that he was Kurdish until he was sixteen years old. He further affirmed that he had never knowingly met a Kurd until that time. Yet he now describes himself as being from Erzincan even though he has never been there and his parents identify themselves as Alevis and Turkish Kemalists, thus highlighting the complications surrounding the quantification of the Kurdish population (Interview 7, 2012).

¹⁸⁶Forced evacuations occurred almost exclusively in the Kurdish provinces with the exception of Sivas which has a mixed Alevi, Kurdish and Turkish population and would usually not be considered part of Kurdistan (Leezenberg, 2003:207).

This politically important Kurdish diaspora in Europe has been the subject of much academic analysis (Baser, 2011& 2012, Alinia 2004, Leggewie 1996, Lyon & Uçarer 2001, Sirkeci, 2003 and Van Bruinessen, 1998 *inter alios*). Yet, even if one were to accept the larger estimates of the Kurdish diaspora, it remains much smaller than the Kurdish population living in Turkey outside of the traditional Kurdish homeland, dispersed across the cities of Western and Southern Anatolia. If we accept Sirkeci's (2000) estimate that thirty percent of Turkey's Kurdish population lived outside of its tradition homeland in the southeast in 2000 and that the Kurdish population as a whole numbered twenty million (Icduygu et al, 1999), it confirms that around six million Kurds live in predominantly Turkish – from a cultural and a linguistic perspective – areas. It is a number which dwarfs the wildest estimate of the Kurdish diaspora across Europe but receives a disproportionately smaller proportion of the academic attention.¹⁸⁷

Gambetti and Jongerden's affirmation that until relatively recently space was largely ignored as a concept in social theory (2011:375) is largely correct but with one notable exception; the notion of diaspora. Spatial dislocation is the very essence of the condition of diaspora. The three main criteria for a community to qualify as a diaspora as per Brubaker's understanding are all undeniably spatially delineated qualities: dispersion in space, orientation to another homeland and boundary maintenance (2005:5). However, the concept of diaspora has proven resilient to any attempts to authoritatively define it. Clifford has "suggested that it is not possible to define diaspora sharply, either by recourse to essential features or to privative oppositions" (1994: 310) but this ambiguity has resulted in a proliferation of ill-defined uses of diaspora and to it becoming a glaring example of "concept stretching" (see Sartori, 1970). If "everybody is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so. The term loses its discriminatory power" (Brubaker, 2005:3).

Notwithstanding, the danger of over-extending the concept of diaspora, the Kurdish population dispersed across western Turkey has many of the qualities of a diaspora. Indeed,

¹⁸⁷ I would suggest that the preponderance of studies on Kurdish immigrant communities is due to the disproportionate number of Kurdish intellectuals in exile and the academic freedom and safety present for the most part across Europe and the US. The feared dangers and alleged criminality thought present in the Kurdish migrant community has also captured the attention of other European scholars.

the notion of the Kurds as an “internal diaspora” has emerged in certain academic circles (Ahmetbeyzade, 2007 and Gunter, 2004:42). Many Kurds have begun to appropriate the term diaspora to describe their condition. Baran, an academic in his thirties born in western Turkey whose family hail from Dersim, described himself as living in the diaspora. An additional factor which betrays the nuances of the back and forth between western Turkey and Kurdistan, he does not even speak Kurdish, yet it is only during his trips to Kurdistan that the uneasiness he experiences as a Kurd in Turkey is temporarily alleviated (Interview 8, 2012). This orientation toward an often idealised Kurdish homeland – as opposed to having a different place of origin - distinguishes Kurds in the west of Turkey from other rural-urban migrants with whom they share many of the same socio-economic challenges inherent in migration.

Earlier classifications of diaspora “usually presuppose[d] long [...] distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future” (Clifford, 1994:304), and were centred on the *telos* of return, a physical reunification of a land and its people (see Safran in Clifford, 1994: 304). Diasporas dispersed from stateless nations present further conceptual confusion as “the category of diaspora is an extension of the nation-state model, in that it assumes a congruence between the territorial state and the national community” (Soysal, 2000:4). In the absence of a defined state or at least a collectively recognised demarcated territory as a destination of return, the amorphous homeland is cited as the locus of return. The notion of homeland is “imbued with an emotional, almost reverential dimension” (Conner, 1986: 16) and defies “exposition in rational terms” (ibid: 18). There appears to be no academic consensus on how a ‘homeland’ can actually be defined. Conner lists a number of different types of homeland: homeland states, multi-homeland states, immigrant states and sub-homeland states (1986), conceptualising the homeland in conjunction to how it relates, positively or negatively, to the existence of the state. On the other hand, Alinia in a more nuanced approach suggests that the homeland can be understood in an individual sense, as one’s place of birth or an area to which one bears particular emotive bonds and personal memories, as well as in a wider political sense. As it is understood subjectively, it generates an array of different constructions and notions of where and of what the homeland is actually composed (2004:212).

In the Kurdish case, there is a strong longing for return to an understanding of Kurdistan; however it is not so straightforward as to suggest that this is the aspect which confirms the diasporic condition of Kurds in western Turkey. Ahmetbeyzade cites at length a Kurdish woman living in Istanbul:

[...] we always think of going back to Kurdistan. Our roots are in Kurdistan. We will go back. We will all go back. The Mother Soil calls us. I don't know when, but I know we will. I am now looking for brides for my sons, not from the city but from our villages, so that I can take our sons and brides back to our land (2007: 166).

Yet many Kurds, especially Kurdish youths, are distinctly ambivalent about any possible return to Kurdistan. As one youth in Adana explained, “there are too many old people there. To be honest, I can't go and live there. I can't go and settle down in the countryside; I can't live in a village” (in Darıcı, 2011:474). Ambiguous feelings in relation to returning to Kurdistan exist even amongst those involved in the PKK; an ERNK cadre Sefer, admitted that as a Kurd raised in western Turkey, he found it difficult to fully internalise the notion of an independent Kurdistan (Interview 9, 2012). The myth of return for many Kurds takes on the qualities of “an eschatological identity” (Falzon, 2003:664) rather than a concrete personal objective. Therefore, although the notion of a return to a liberated Kurdistan is central to many Kurds' identity and self-perception, it varies across generations and individual experiences and cannot be considered as a definitive aspect of their identity as a diaspora within Turkey.

A defining characteristic of Kurds living in western Turkey is that “they experience living in two separate spaces simultaneously; because they are spatially away from their homeland, [and] they bring their old place to the new one” (Ahmetbeyzade, 2007:164). This duality of experience correlates to Brubaker's understanding that boundary maintenance is crucial to the status of diaspora. He explains that “boundaries can be maintained by deliberate resistance to assimilation by self enforced endogamy or as other forms of self-segregation or as an unintended consequence of social exclusion” (Brubaker, 2005: 6 drawing on Armstrong 1976, Smith 1986 and Laitin 1995). Furthermore, these boundaries must necessarily endure over an extended period of time (Brubaker, 2005:7 and see

Bauböck, 2010:315). In the Kurdish case, these inter-communal boundaries were buttressed by repeated waves of migrants relocating - forcibly or otherwise - to western Turkey, thus providing a tangible reinforcement of ties with the homeland.

An ulterior aspect of diaspora is put forth in the suggestion that “decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin” (Clifford, 1994: 306). These ties and connections emerge and are consolidated in specific spatial and cultural environments within western cities; environments which have served as the spaces wherein collective memories are formed and constantly reformulated. The collective memory of the conflicts dating back generations serves as a form of epistemic basis which “constitutes exiled Kurds as a political collectivity with a differentiated historical experience and voice, a collectivity that has been excluded from majority discourses through various government practices” (Ahmetbeyzade, 2007, 177-178).

The maintenance of a Kurdish identity is bolstered by housing practises; in many western Turkish cities it is common to find neighbourhoods populated by migrants from specific areas of Kurdistan, such as the neighbourhoods of Kasımpaşa and Tarlabası in Istanbul which host large populations from Mardin (Interview 50 and Yılmaz, 2003:14 and Secor, 2004:358). Kurdish residential patterns in a certain fashion bring the village and its attendant socio-cultural bonds and reciprocal norms to the city (Wedel, 2001:60). In addition, there are a number of social institutions called *hemşehri* or hometown associations, which serve as a fulcrum around which the coherence of many migrant communities, not exclusively Kurdish ones, is maintained. *Hemşehrilik* is a sense of shared solidarity derived from people originating from the same village, city or region (Betül Çelik, 2003:141). In simple terms these *hemşehri* associations “unite immigrants from the same territory in their place of immigration” (Toumarkine & Hersant, 2005:3). These associations serve as sources of mutual solidarity and collectively render access to housing and labour market easier (see Grabolle-Çeliker, 2012: 117-216 and Betül Çelik, 2003:144). Furthermore, linguistic barriers, particularly amongst Kurdish women, many of whom speak little Turkish, do not facilitate integration or even sustained mixing with non-Kurdish people (see Betül Çelik, 2005 and Wedel, 2000). Finally, the boundaries of the Kurds in the west are reinforced

by endogamous marital patterns wherein spouses are sought within kin networks or at least from their areas of origin. It is true that the greater possibility of interaction with Kurds from different regions or indeed Turks has led to a decline in endogamous marriage amongst Kurds in the west. Nonetheless marriage and the social intrigues and gossip surrounding it, remains a unifying feature of Kurdish life. It should be noted though, that although inter-communal marriages have increased, marriages usually remain within confessional confines (Grabolle-Çeliker, 2012: 160 and Seufert, 1997:160).

Arguably the most definitive aspect of Kurdish identity in western Turkey is the shared experiences of communal exclusion or feeling of extraneousness from the Turkish majority (Secor, 2004:359). Ethnic or national identity construction and maintenance are undoubtedly of a “deeply relational nature” (Harrison, 2003:343), but mutually formative identities can co-exist with limited tangible or interpersonal reactions between them. Many Turks lived in blissful ignorance of the realities of a sizeable Kurdish co-presence in the country, until the vast waves of migration from the post-war period onwards brought masses of Kurds to the urban centres of the west. Although Kurds had always been present in western Turkey, their identity was most often concealed or downplayed, and accordingly large numbers of Turks had never, at least knowingly, encountered Kurdish people. The same cannot be said for the overwhelming majority of Kurds even in Kurdistan who have always been confronted on a daily basis with state institutions such as schools, the army and the police and thus possessed an awareness of the ‘other’ and all its symbolic and practical implications. By the 1990s, a perception emerged among Turks that the waves of “ignorant” Kurdish migrants unversed in the ways of the city, constituted a Kurdish invasion of Turkish cities (see Saraçoğlu, 2009: 648). A spatial division of residential quarters usually distanced recently arrived migrants – with the exception of the wealthier ones – who lived in peripheral or marginal neighbourhoods, particularly *gecekondu* ones and inner city slums¹⁸⁸, from established urban neighbourhoods (see Karpat, 1977 & 2004 and Pérouse, 2004, & 2006).

¹⁸⁸ Bediz Yılmaz explains that “slums differ from the shantytowns [which is what essentially *gecekondu* are] in that they are spaces of poverty in the city centers where the type of habitat is not a self-help construction but an apartment in a degraded old building, mostly portioned into many rooms/flats so as to acquire the maximum number of dwellers” (2003:13).

However, inter-communal encounters did occur in shared public spaces. Turkish fears were rooted in their hitherto unprecedented, quotidian encounters with Kurds in public spaces like “cheap vegetable and fruit markets, discount supermarkets and public transportation” (Saraçoğlu, 2010:245) wherein they witnessed firsthand the poverty of many of the Kurdish migrants. The migrants’ indigence was evident in their impoverished living quarters, particularly notable in the central neighbourhoods of Istanbul such as Tarlabası in Beyoğlu (Bediz Yılmaz, 2003), and by the very visible presence of Kurdish children as seemingly unsupervised street vendors of tissues or bottles of water (Bediz Yılmaz, 2006:33 and Müderrisoğlu, 2006). This perception was exacerbated by the hysteria generated by the media in relation to the criminality associated with the Kurdish migrants (Saraçoğlu, 2009:653 & 2010: 255; Yılmaz, 2006:34 and Sumer, 2003:50). Additionally, these diffuse socio-cultural prejudices were bolstered by opportunistic political discourses which collectively relegated the Kurdish population at large to the status of pseudo-citizens (Yeğen, 2009 and Saraçoğlu, 2010) or even characterised them as terrorist supporters¹⁸⁹. A conclusion that was seemingly validated by the public displays of support for the PKK, which began to impact on Turkish popular opinion in the wake of sizeable Newroz celebrations and other Kurdish demonstrations from the early 1990s (Saraçoğlu, 2009: 648-649). These types of encounters were compounded by the fact that many Turks, dependent on a heavily censored and partisan media and drip-fed calculated nationalist propaganda, were completely unaware of the extent of the suffering of the Kurds during the conflict (Müderrisoğlu, 2006:60). One could argue that Turkish society in general terms constituted a form of counter-epistemic community to the Kurdish one, as described by Ahmetbeyzade (2007, 177-178); one based on total ignorance or misinformation about the ongoing conflict. Unsurprisingly, these factors rendered the cities of western Turkey, hostile environments for Kurdish migrants.

¹⁸⁹ See for example the recent pronouncements of the ostensibly leftist İşçi Partisi/Workers party <http://www.turksolu.com.tr/sehit/16.htm>

Internal Diaspora and Political Participation

Much of the literature on diasporas has pointed to their malign influence on conflicts in their homelands as proponents of “long distance nationalism” (Anderson, 1991 and Demmers, 2002). It has been asserted that “some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations” (Clifford, 1994; 307). Kaldor has described diasporas as “disaffected groups living far away [...], who find solace in the fantasies about their origins which are often far-removed from reality” (1999:85). The radical underpinnings of diaspora are facilitated by the fact its members live far removed from the remit of the state to which they are opposed. This freedom is thought to embolden them to make unrealistic demands free from their possible deleterious consequences (Anderson, 1992:11). This is of course, not the case for the Kurdish internal diaspora. It is equally, if not more exposed to state repression than Kurds in their homeland. Even legal activism in institutional political parties, human rights organisations and media outlets has resulted in massive state repression, torture and imprisonment. As the internal diaspora is as likely to suffer from any escalation in the conflict and is perhaps more vulnerable as an ethnic minority surrounded by an at times hostile local population and a suspicious state, it is unlikely to put forward demands more radical than their compatriots in Kurdistan. One could therefore legitimately expect that internal diaspora demands would reflect those of the community at large in its homelands, which appears to be the case with Kurds in western Turkey.

The Kurdish internal diaspora bears two similarities with the classic international diaspora. Collier and Hoeffler have argued that diasporas serve as “potentially important source of start-up finance for rebellion” (2000:11). This is not the case in terms of providing start-up capital because, as will be explained later in the chapter, the PKK did not mobilise amongst the Kurds in western Turkey in any concerted fashion until the conflict was well consolidated in Kurdistan. Nevertheless, once the decision was taken to fully harness the support of Kurds all over Turkey, particularly middle class and wealthier Kurds did become an important source of finance for the movement which undoubtedly facilitated the

protraction of the conflict. It is also true that international diasporas can serve as “free spaces” (Polletta, 1999) which can be used as international platforms to launch publicity and propaganda campaigns, as well as *loci* of cultural renewal free from the strictures of an oppressive state. The Kurdish diaspora in Sweden for example has been to the forefront of the revival and standardisation of the Kurdish language and book publishing (see Baser, 2012 & van Bruinessen, 1998). In the case of the internal diaspora, this “free space” does not exist. It is bound by more or less the same legal restrictions as if it were in Kurdistan and at the everyday level it is perhaps even further limited. One can at least speak Kurdish with one’s neighbours in Kurdistan whereas any public utterance in Kurdish in Istanbul, contingent on who is in earshot, can lead to confrontation and violence. Nonetheless Kurds in the west played an important role in bringing knowledge of the conflict to the national level. Their very presence as internally displaced people attested that something was happening in the east of Turkey. Their political campaigns served to chip away at the hegemonic discourse of the conflict as being a clash between terrorists in the pay of Turkey’s historic enemies and the good offices of the state. Public campaigns by groups such as the ‘Saturday mothers’ (see Baydar & Iveyen, 2011), undermined state efforts to depict all voices of Kurdish opposition as gun-toting, baby-killing monsters.

These aspects of the internal diaspora exist alongside similar political engagement by the international Kurdish diaspora. It should be recalled that internal diasporas are perhaps less virulent in their claim-making precisely because many of the more radical voices have sought refuge abroad. The Kurdish diaspora(s) should not be considered as some collective of different Kurds distinct to those in Kurdistan but rather as part of a continuum of Kurdish migrants, some of which have migrated for economic purposes while others were forced to migrate by the state. Almost without exception, Kurds departing their villages, whether for Bochum or Bursa, did it on a step by step basis, leaving first for a Kurdish city, then Istanbul or Ankara, and then Western Europe. The duration of these stops varies from hours to years. The boundaries between the categories of diasporas and migrants blend into each other, given that some migration is permanent, some temporary and some more seasonal. One must remain cognisant of these differences and the varying political repertoires advanced by Kurds in their differing socio-spatial environments, but it would be mistaken to conceptualise them in an overly rigid or determinative fashion.

Practises of Exclusion

A universal thread that united all my Kurdish interviewees resident in western Turkey was their shared experience of discrimination, from casual racism on the streets to experiencing the brunt of institutionalised discrimination, particularly in school. Indeed, notwithstanding the ongoing ceasefire, hostility toward Kurds in Turkey is reported to be increasing (Scarboro & Yiğit, 2014: 4). Although many of the specific incidents could be interpreted as casual racism that occurs in some form or other across all societies, their cumulative effect consolidated the sense of social exclusion of Kurdish migrants. In addition to the hugely traumatic experience of relocating from a rural village to a global metropolis such as Istanbul, many of the migrants had firsthand experience of the ravages of the war and bore the attendant psychological damage. In such a context, the daily insults and exclusion took on an even greater significance. The speaking of Kurdish on the street often provoked angry responses from passers-by, which not infrequently would lead to scuffles. Mehmet recalls that on occasion when he would speak Kurdish in the *dolmuş*,¹⁹⁰ he would be abused by Turkish fellow passengers. However, he smilingly explained that as the *dolmuş* drivers were usually themselves Kurdish they would simply turn the music up to defuse the situation. He also explained that exponents of the MHP used to round up gangs to attack Kurdish workers that lived in the *bekar evi*¹⁹¹ situated in Eminönü, until they organised themselves and fought back and eventually physically drove off their attackers. (Interview 48, 2013).

Many children suffered extensively at school as a result of the inherent challenges of changing schools, linguistic issues and the often sub-standard of the education they had received in schools in Kurdistan (see Müderrisoğlu, 2006: 64). Secor reported that many of the participants in her focus group recounted that they personally or their children first encountered “Kurdishness as a label and social position in Turkish society in school” (2004: 360). As a young child Arjen migrated from Muş to the Sariyer district – a rather well to do neighbourhood - of Istanbul in the early 1980s so that his mother could receive medical

¹⁹⁰ Private mini-buses that function as collective taxis and typically carry passengers only for short trips.

¹⁹¹ *Bekar evi* were shared dormitories usually occupied by single male workers recently migrated from rural areas.

treatment. He described how before he even opened his mouth he was identified as Kurdish by his classmates due to his physical appearance. Given the socio-economic demographic of that neighbourhood, there were very few Kurds in his school and he was bullied consistently. He recalls speaking Turkish relatively well but imperfectly, so that when his teacher utilised more elaborate terms for simple objects such as folders, he did not understand. The only classmate that did not ridicule him and used to explain in a form of Turkish that he understood was the daughter of an African diplomat.

Kurdish students were also among the preferred targets of right-wing groups and depending on one's school they were subject to regular beatings and humiliations. Arjen's family decided to move to Istanbul's Gaziosmanpaşa district so they would feel less socially isolated because there were more Kurds and Alevi living there. Arjen however attended school in Küçükköy close to Gazi where, along with other Kurdish and Alevi colleagues, he was subjected to continuous bullying and assaults by right-wing students. The violence only declined in 1986 after around two hundred Kurdish youths from the nearby Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa district came to defend the Kurdish and Alevi students and physically confronted the right-wing aggressors (Interview 40, 2013). In another seemingly mundane example, a middle class Kurd born in Ankara was berated by his physical education teacher as a "separatist" (Interview 8, 2012).

At university level such violence against Kurdish students continued. Kazaw, a Kurd from Kars, recalled that when he was studying at the University of Bursa, Grey Wolves active on the campus used to enter their dormitories at night and oblige the Kurdish students to go to the canteen where they were beaten and humiliated for hours and forced to parrot Turkish nationalist sayings, behaviour which was completely ignored by the university authorities (Interview 12, 2012).

It should be noted that not all Kurds in Istanbul would identify as part of a Kurdish diaspora. Certain swathes of Kurdish society prefer to emphasise their Islamic identity and its shared features with religiously minded Turks. Similarly, many Alevi Kurds concede greater importance to their shared religious bonds with Alevi Turks than they do with fellow Kurds. Others have integrated into Turkish society by negating their Kurdishness. Assimilation and self-denial has usually remained the prerogative of Kurds with significant

degrees of social capital in terms of education and socio-economic stability, which was unavailable to many of the economic migrants and most certainly the conflict-generated migrants. One could recount examples of Kurds who identify as Turkish *ad infinitum*¹⁹², but even for them the shameful shadow of their Kurdish origins lingers like a menacing family spectre with the potential to undermine their Turkish credentials. Yet the fact remains that millions of Kurds have rejected such potential identitarian trajectories and identify primarily as Kurds, and they accordingly constitute an internal Kurdish diaspora within Turkey. Such divergent developments within a wider community are of course not unusual “because the formation of a diasporic community depends on the acceptance and elaboration of this connecting and disconnecting [between the here and the there, the past and the present], the community of diaspora is always less than the population of the group declared in official censuses (if declared)” (Houston, 2004:403).

In summary, many of the Kurds dispersed across western Turkey can be considered as a form of internal diaspora. The concept of diaspora as described by Houston in relation to Kurds in western Turkey is a constant process of self-articulation rather than an established social category. He explains that it “requires the self-constitution and self-representation of subjects as a group in connection to a place, mapped or imagined. It is both the active constituting of that connection as well as the narrativization of its rending that create a diaspora” (2004:403). It echoes Brubaker’s assertion that “we should not think of diaspora in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim” and as a “category of practise” (2005:12). These processes of self-realisation reinforce the structural and cultural boundaries elaborated by the Turkish state which have rendered Kurdish migrants’ access to the labour market, educational resources and housing extremely difficult. The Kurdish diaspora in Turkey should not, however, be considered as a unified actor. Social and political realities within it vary according to one’s gender, class position, the timing of one’s migration from Kurdistan and whether it was as part of a stable pattern of economic chain migration or as a forcibly displaced migrant, socio-economic background and social standing in Kurdistan, previous political engagement, ethno-religious identity and the cities and neighbourhood where one finds oneself living. Finally, as diaspora

¹⁹² To give but one contemporary example, the leader of the CHP Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is believed to be of Kurdish origin and his father was deported from Dersim in the wake of the rebellion there in the 1930s.

is a relational phenomenon and not a “bounded entity”, the Kurdish diaspora within Turkey has ebbed and flowed over time, experiencing moments of greater coherence and intensity on certain occasions such as the arrest of Öcalan in 1999.

Waves of Kurdish Migration

The mass migration of Kurds westwards beyond the confines of Kurdistan dates to the labour migration of the mid-twentieth century. This wave was later supplemented with the forced migration of the 1990s. However, the presence of Kurds beyond Kurdistan dates back into the history of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman documents regarding concerns over internal migration within the Empire cite fears over Kurds resident in the city as far back as 1826 (Herzog, 2011:130). Registers from 1849/1850 attest to the strong presence of poor Kurdish labourers from Bitlis and Kiğı in the district of Kasımpaşa in Istanbul (Riedler, 2011:65). In addition to these poorer classes of Kurds, many of the ruling Kurdish families of the semi-independent emirates which were defeated by the centralising Ottoman state in the mid-nineteenth century fled into exile in Istanbul (Klein, 2007:137 and Van Bruinessen, 1992:180). Indeed it was many of these Kurdish notables who were to establish the first Kurdish national movement in Istanbul in 1908/1909, the Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress/*Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (KTTC) (Klein, 2007:139 and see McDowall, 1996:90). In 1908 the KTTC also established a Kurdish school in Istanbul to serve the estimated 30,000 Kurds resident there (Olson, 1991: 398) and numerous Kurdish nationalist publications were also published there (Aras, 2013: 44).

The number of Kurds displaced from Kurdistan rapidly increased following the suppression of the Kurdish revolts of the early Republican period. After the Sheikh Said revolt of 1925 was crushed militarily, 500,000 Kurds were deported to the west of Turkey (Jwaideh, 2006:206) and entire districts were summarily de-populated (Van Bruinessen, 1992:291 and Andrews, 1989: 111-112). A British army officer travelling in Kurdistan in 1930 reported that the population of Bitlis had been reduced from 40,000 to 5,000 inhabitants and that of Muş from 30,000 to 3,000 (ibid, 2000:99). In 1934, the state passed the

Settlement Act No 2510, which gave legislative form and ideological legitimation to practises of deportation and exile which had been ongoing for a decade or more (see Jongerden, 2007:174-177). The most notorious example of deportation is associated with the Dersim revolt in 1936-38. A special law, known as the Tunceli Law 2884/*Tunceli Kanunu*, was passed in 1935 to finally quell the residual autonomy of the province. The law conceded “extraordinary powers to deport and arrest people, and explicitly stated that the accused would have no right of appeal or even the right to know the charges against them” (Watts, 2000:15). The exact figure of deportees remains unknown, but considering that the death toll is estimated at around 40,000 (White, 2000:88), it is most likely that the figure cited by a retired General Kenan Esengin of 3,470 people is a blatant mistruth (in Van Bruinessen, 2000: 11).

In any case, bald statistics cannot portray the immense impact the deportations have had on the collective memory of the people of Dersim in particular, and the wider Kurdish population in general. Innumerable Dersimli families bear the inherited narrative of the deportations and it is surely not too great a leap to suggest that this traumatic past is a partial explanation for Dersim’s radical political character. Houston’s suggestion (2004:403) that the narrativisation of one’s diasporic condition is a central characteristic of diaspora can be clearly seen in the familial memory of the Koçuşağı tribe. Bejan, the granddaughter of the tribe’s head Seyitan at the time of the rebellion, which had actively sided with Seyt Riza in the rebellion, recounted that after the revolt was suppressed Seyitan and his brothers Lillo and Cemşi and their families were sent into ten year exile in Bursa, Manisa and Bolu respectively. In the confusion during the deportation, three of Seyitan’s daughters went missing. Unbeknownst to their parents, the three had been assigned by the state to a Turkish family in Bursa for seven years. Bejan recalled that her grandparents and her three aunts themselves constantly re-told the story of their childhood separation and demanded that she never forget their family’s past. One of the women taken, now in her eighties, confessed to Bejan that even now, many decades later, she cannot forget the trauma of that period (Interview 51, 2013). The case of this one particular family highlights how the narrative of suffering and exclusion takes on a trans-generational quality and over time becomes an integral part of its identity. This instance is but a single thread of the vast

collective Kurdish narrative of suffering, wherein it would be almost impossible to find a Kurdish family without a corresponding tale of misfortune.

Thus, Kurds in the diaspora live their Kurdishness through their direct and inherited experiences with an almost fetishised sense of suffering endured in Kurdistan. As Ahmetbeyzade remarks “the bodies of Kurdish youth, flesh and blood, torn apart by the war waged against the Kurds in Turkey, become significant for exiled Kurdish mothers [...] who are waging a counter hegemonic resistance to state violence” (2007:176). Although Ahmetbeyzade restricts these processes to Kurdish mothers in a gendered understanding, the cult of martyrdom and a type of discreet pride at ‘successfully’ enduring generations of state brutality is shared by both men and women. The narrative of pain and suffering thereby confounds spatial relocation and the passing of time by remaining a constant factor in Kurdish self-identification. As a final remark, forced exile remained a much utilised tactic for the Turkish state from the Kemalist period right through until it once again became an integral part of the state’s counter-insurgency strategy in the 1990s. Therefore, the presence of a large swathe of Kurds in the western parts of Turkey as a result of punitive state measures and the collective upheaval of these relocations remains a traumatic fulcrum in Kurdish identity in the diaspora.

Second Wave Migration – Labour Migration

The largest proportion of Kurds or people of Kurdish origin in western Turkey arrived as economic migrants between the 1950s and the 1980s. As outlined more extensively in Chapter II, the Turkish state underwent enormous social change from the late 1940s onwards, upon its incorporation to the global market and its industrialisation. These processes affected all of Turkey; both the rural areas as sites of emigration and the urban centres which received these waves of migrants. One should not conclude that rural-urban migration was exclusively or even predominantly a Kurdish phenomenon. Indeed, until the 1970s immigration was more extensive from the Black Sea region than from Kurdistan, but by 1990 around 15% of Istanbul’s population had been born in the east or south-east

(Wedel, 2001: 116). Turkey's urban population in 1945 was 4.7 million, whereas by 2000 it was 44.1 million or some 65% of the population (Yılmaz, 2003:2). Like many other countries, Turkey's social geography was resoundingly reconfigured in the post-war period.

Since Istanbul has become the most popular location for Kurdish migrants, most of the field work for this project was completed there. Accordingly, the following section will reflect a certain Istanbul bias, and although developments in Istanbul shared the broader patterns of migration and integration observed elsewhere in Turkey, each city and region possess their own peculiarities and this should be borne in mind. Abu-Lughod's article on upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo highlights the commonality of much rural-urban migration in the post-war period at the global level. Her description of "the typical migrant, here as elsewhere, is a young man whose first contact in the city is often with a friend or relative from his original village" (1961:25). This was indeed the case for the first wave of Kurdish labour migrants.

Initially many migrated on a seasonal basis to the industrial cities and returned to their villages of origin to participate in the harvest of their family crops. These seasonal migrants were known as *gurbetçiler* and they worked in menial and physically demanding jobs, for example as porters or on the construction of the railroads (Karpas, 1976:54). They lived in pitiful conditions in overcrowded male dormitories or *bekar evi*. Gradually, the original migrants arranged for close family members or *hemşehri* to follow them to the cities. They were carefully selected as the work was hard and necessitated able-bodied young men, so bachelor brothers and eldest sons were usually the first summoned (ibid:86). Over time, as more stable employment was found in the cities, visits to their villages of origin became ever less frequent and it became necessary to reunite families by bringing the wives and children to the city. Work was increasingly found in the expanding textile, chemical and food industries (Saraçoğlu, 2010:253). Generally, wives and children were only brought after there was an "assurance of housing and continuous employment to sustain the whole family" (Karpas, 1976:54). The migration process of labour migrants was minutely managed. Importantly, relationships were maintained with their villages of origin which served as a "psychological safeguard against alienation and a practical guarantee that if economic conditions in the city deteriorated the migrant had a place to return to" (ibid).

It is at this stage that the *gurbetçiler* began to establish what became known as *gecekondu* neighbourhoods as a means to re-unify their families.

As mentioned in relation to diaspora, the danger of concept overstretching has led to the term *gecekondu* being understood and used in a number of different fashions (see Pérouse, 2004). An early definition from 1953 describes them as “hastily erected buildings, lacking most of the times elementary comfort conditions, not conforming to construction regulations and being developed regardless the land owner’s rights” (Yavuz in Pérouse, 2004:4). It should be noted that the transition to the *gecekondu* generally marked an improvement in living conditions for the migrants who had lived in the city centres and often even for their families arriving directly from the villages. They usually consisted of single storey dwellings occasionally with a small patch of ground around them. As they were in the periphery where space was at the time plentiful, they were not crowded as closely together as other residences in central parts of the cities. They were usually constructed by the people who were to live in them, little by little, in the evenings after a day’s labour had already been completed. Rooms were added as families expanded and houses were subject to constant improvements according to the availability of financial resources (Karpaz, 1976: 92). The first *gecekondu* settlement was established in Zeytinburnu in 1947. *Gecekondu* areas then quickly sprouted up all over the urban periphery of Istanbul to such an extent that by 1999 it was estimated that 65% of all housing in Istanbul was characterised as such (Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:3).

Until the 1980s Turkey’s economy enjoyed almost constant growth and industry appeared to have an inexhaustible demand for workers. Thus the emergent residential patterns were the concrete manifestation of the social mobility of the Kurdish workers. Although *gecekondu* settlements were built without permission and often on state owned land, they rapidly became normalised and integrated into political patronage networks. In exchange for political support, legal title to the properties was retrospectively conceded and they were furnished with municipal services such as sewerage and electricity. Ahmet İsvan, the Mayor of Istanbul from 1973-77, publically lauded the *gecekondu* dwellers declaring that: “Each year 120,000 new compatriots immigrate to our city, full of admirable faith and courage. These people with a big heart create neighbourhoods without roads or water or

light on the margins of our beautiful Istanbul. It is them who, by transgressing our urbanism documents, show the inadequacy of some of our laws” (in Pérouse, 2010:5). Accordingly, although a certain stigma associated with living in *gecekondu* neighbourhoods lingered, living conditions, employment and educational possibilities were likely an improvement on the previous standard of living in the city centre or the countryside. Plus, the enduring links with the rural villages brought material support and emotional solace to the challenges of settling in the radically different socio-cultural universe of the city.

The importance of the enduring links with villages of origin is clear in Seufert’s (1997) work on the Saran clan of the Koçkiri tribe and their chain migration to Istanbul from Sivas. As per the classic model, the early pioneers of migration were single men who resided in *bekar evi* of the city centre before gathering sufficient savings and, in the first sign of upward social mobility, migrated toward the *gecekondu*. Initially they had to buy land on the informal land market. However, with the consistent arrival of more clansmen they “became powerful enough to occupy new land and defend it against competing immigrant groups”, meaning that the next waves of migrants of their clan “no longer had to pay for building sites” (Seufert. 1997:158). In addition to securing accommodation, a system of internal loans or private credit permitted them “one by one to buy lorries and work as motorized carriers” (ibid:159). Provision was also made for health care for the sick (1997:160). This brief example illustrates the immense value of the back and forth between the city and the village, especially in the early phases of migration, whereby migrants in the city could rely on manpower from the village needed to carve out and defend their own territory for building houses and for financial capital to invest in business in the cities. These types of supports were almost totally absent for the subsequent wave of forced migrants.

In addition to the political repression of the post coup period, the Turkish economy underwent significant re-structuring at the macro-level in the 1980s. A structural adjustment policy under the auspices of the IMF was implemented in 1980 which had a direct impact on the *gecekondu* dwellers. The Turkish lira was devalued by almost 50% and a whole raft of other reforms that disproportionately impacted on the urban poor were implemented (Zürcher, 2004:268). It marked a move away from industries which had hitherto been subsidised by the Turkish state as part of a general programme of Import

Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) and resulted in industrial decline and concomitant job losses. It also had a significant impact in terms of urban planning and the housing market it had also had a significant impact. Neo-liberal incentives encouraged “the entry of large-scale private construction firms into the housing market and the emergence of large-scale housing projects constructed in urban fringe areas” (UNDP-Ministry of Environment, 2002: 6/13 in Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:4). In short, the *gecekondu* became increasingly commercialised and lucrative sites for profiteering and investment. It led to the verticalisation of housing stock in *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, wherein modern apartment buildings replaced the cottage style houses of the early period. It also led to a reconfiguration of the *gecekondu* demographic. Previously, the vast majority of residents had built (or their families had built), their own houses, but it became the case that now the neighbourhoods contained “*gecekondu* renters, *gecekondu* owners, owners of multiple *gecekondus*, those who had title deeds, those who did not, etc” (UNDP-ME, 2002: 6/14 in *ibid*). Consequently, due to the commercialisation of the sector newly arrived immigrants could not easily afford to access housing in the established *gecekondu* (Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:3). The increasingly competitive labour market and the hollowing out of government social welfare programmes rendered the city which had seemed such an auspicious destination only years before, a much more inhospitable environment (Betül Çelik, 2005:141); an environment that was becoming even more hostile due to the worsening ethnic tensions provoked by the insurgency in Kurdistan (*ibid*). Such was the backdrop to the waves of Kurds forced to flee their villages and towns during the conflict in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

Third Wave of Migration – Conflict-Generated Migrants

It has never been possible to draw a rigid distinction between economic migration and migration derived from concerns over security (see Foster, 2007). As the conflict intensified the wider economic conditions deteriorated, thus obliging many Kurds to seek employment outside of Kurdistan. The economy and the conflict are so intrinsically linked, that even some Kurds’ own personal narratives regarding their decision to flee reflect both economic and security concerns. Houston cites a letter from the Beritan tribe to the *Yeni Safak* newspaper which explained that military restrictions on access to pasture and the

closure of certain roads needed to transport cattle had ruined a previously wealthy tribe (2001:20). Should Beritan tribe members have migrated to the west, could they be classified as economic or conflict-generated migrants? In other cases, many Kurdish migrants in the west who had departed for economic motivations and maintained an indeterminate interest in returning to their villages were prevented from doing so by the destruction of said villages. It is also true that, particularly for certain tribes, the conflict provided economic opportunities to serve as Village Guards, in the service industries centred on the huge number of Turkish troops in the region and in the construction of military infrastructure such as bases and roads for the army, not to mention the burgeoning illicit economy. However, as has been discussed in chapters IV and V, there is incontrovertible evidence that it was deliberate government policy to forcibly evacuate thousands of Kurdish villages and towns, thus obliging them to flee to larger cities in Kurdistan and the west Turkey. Their coerced departure led to their transition from “rural poor to rootless destitute city dwellers” (Zucconi, 1999:27).

The migration patterns of these migrants were in stark contrast to the earlier waves of economic migration. Erder observed in 1997 that this wave of migration operated “without the slightest institutional organization, completely through an informal process and under the pressure of extraordinary conditions. This forced migration is highly dissimilar to the voluntary migration even though the places of departure are the same” (in Bediz Yilmaz, 2003:9). Firstly, by virtue of the fact that these new migrants had been forced to leave, it is likely that their places of origin were located in areas where the conflict had been active. Thereby, many of these Kurds had first hand experiences, as participants, witnesses or victims of the conflict. As their villages had been destroyed they lacked the fallback option of return to the village and the material support inherent in the extended support networks of village life. In many cases, all of their wealth and possessions were destroyed in the evacuations, leaving them literally with only the clothes on their back. Herro¹⁹³, a Kurdish migrant resident in Istanbul, recalled that his family and neighbours in a village near Malazgirt were roused from bed before dawn at the height of winter and forced to abandon their houses without the opportunity to even put on their shoes. His family’s migration

¹⁹³ As previously cited in Chapter V

began literally barefoot (Interview 10, 2012). Most damagingly, forced migrants had not prepared to emigrate; the painstaking groundwork carried out by male members of the family as in the cases of the chain-migration of previous generations did not take place, so no provisions had been arranged in terms of work or housing. Many of those who had not already migrated had been active primarily in the agricultural sector, and were extremely unsuited to the job-market in western Turkey, particularly with the decline in demand for manual labour. And tragically, entire families moved together ranging from the elderly to newborn infants, increasing the hardship of the experience (see Betül Çelik, 2005 and Bediz Yılmaz, 2003).

The enormous social challenges faced by forced migrants were detailed in a 2002 Göç-Der report. Firstly, the overwhelming majority of displaced persons were of Kurdish origin and had migrated between 1989 and 1999, directly correlating to the period of the conflict's greatest intensity. In distinction to economic motivations of previous Kurdish migrants to western Turkey, "practices within the emergency rule (*sic*), namely depopulation of villages, forcing to become village-guards, closing of pasture lands" were given as the main motivation for migration (in Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:11). The denial of pasture neatly demonstrates the difficulties in extricating economic from security related concerns. 41% of the surveyed migrants left en masse with the entirety of their village, thereby cutting them off from any possibility of return or ongoing material support. A quarter of them spoke only Kurdish and 42.3% were illiterate. 43.4% had children of school-going age who were not in education. 91.3% had experienced unemployment and 88% were not covered by social security (*ibid*). The only factor in the forced migrants' favour was that there were large established Kurdish communities in western Turkey from previous waves of migration. Accordingly, almost half of the migrants chose their destination on the basis of the fact that kin or *hemşehri* members were present there (*ibid*). A large number of my interviewees reported that they initially moved to stay with relatives, however given that entire families moved as one, it was seldom satisfactory as a long-term solution and generated much inter-familial pressures and tensions (see Wedel, 2001:121).

Two of the greatest challenges confronting conflict-generated migrants were accommodation and employment. Even for those who had a certain amount of savings, the

increased prejudices against recently arrived immigrants rendered it almost impossible for Kurds to rent apartments from Turkish landlords (Betül Çelik, 2005:142 and Secor, 2004:361). Thereby increasing the importance of the primordial support systems of the migrants through *hemşehri*, tribal and kin networks and producing a de facto ghettoisation of recently arrived Kurds.

The preceding generations of migrants had undergone an admittedly arduous, but viable transition from temporary city centre accommodation to the *gecekondu* neighbourhoods. This was not the case in the 1990s; the *gecekondu* had become commercialised spaces which were spatially saturated and it was no longer feasible to construct one's own dwelling. *Gecekondu* houses were "no longer a barrack[s] built by its inhabitants but a multi-storey building constructed by specialised firms" (Yılmaz, 2004:142). The director of the Beyoğlu Child Centre described the situation as that "the new poor are not rich enough to inhabit the *gecekondus*" (in Yılmaz, 2004:143). Many migrants did however succeed in living in *gecekondu* areas, but importantly as tenants or hosted by extended family or *hemşehri*. The remaining migrants who were unable to find such a solution were forced to seek shelter in the crowded inner city slums such as Tarlabası in Istanbul. Conditions in neighbourhoods like Tarlabası were wretched. The assignation of a historical protected status to the neighbourhood in 1993¹⁹⁴ has ensured its structural decrepitude, as it is no longer permitted to make the necessary improvements to buildings to render them even close to a standard fit for human habitation (see Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:14). Accordingly, its residents have reported startling levels of physical ailments and disease, particularly tuberculosis, pneumonia and orthopaedic complications (ibid, 2004: 134).

Beyond these inner city areas, the only alternative possible way to get housing was to attempt to construct entirely new *gecekondu* in the extreme outskirts of the city which were uninhabited or even practically uninhabitable because they were located on steep hills or in marshy land.

¹⁹⁴ It is now subject to major renovations by the Istanbul municipality and a number of its residents have been yet again displaced. <http://www.tarlabasiistanbul.com/>

However, the times of the past where squatting of public land was tolerated if not implicitly encouraged were over and public opinion was firmly against ulterior *gecekondu* developments (see Saraçoğlu, 2010). By the 1990s, the municipality actively contested any efforts to construct *gecekondu* neighbourhoods, as evident in the destruction and subsequent rebuilding of a family home four times in succession in the new *gecekondu* district of Ayazma (Pérouse, 2006:5). Ayazma is a neighbourhood of around 15,000 mostly Kurdish inhabitants that lies in the north of Istanbul. It is characterised by an almost complete lack of municipal services; there is no sewage system and electricity is pirated from overhead power lines. It is poorly connected by a number of outward leading roads and “internal communications are done on foot, by crossroads and primitive trails, especially on steep slopes” (ibid: 4). All of which is exacerbated by the insufficiency of running water and its poor quality (ibid). In short, life in a contemporary *gecekondu* is miserable and moreover hugely insecure with the risk of imminent destruction by the authorities and vulnerable to the vagaries of nature such as floods or mudslides.

Large numbers of Kurds fleeing the conflict thereby ended up living in three distinct situations: overcrowded rented accommodation or hosted by family in established *gecekondu* areas; dilapidated inner city slums or precarious newer *gecekondu* on the extreme outskirts of the cities. However, regardless of where they lived Kurds tended to face similar social and economic challenges. Adaman and Çağlar (2006) listed five overlapping types of exclusion: economic; social; political; spatial and discursive. All of which were experienced to differing extents according to one’s particular socio-economic and residential situation. As previously mentioned, competition in the labour market was much more acute in the 1990s and Kurds were, accordingly, for the most part active in the informal economy. A female migrant pithily summed up the situation by remarking that back in Kurdistan “one person worked and fed many people; here many people work and cannot feed even one person” (in Yüksekler, 2006:45). Men generally found work in the construction industry, the recycling business and in particular areas such as the *dolmuş* sector. Interestingly, migrants from Mardin, although it is miles from the sea, have established an almost complete monopoly on the sale of stuffed mussels in Istanbul (Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:18). They are prepared by women in the basements of dilapidated buildings in Tarlabası, before being sold on the streets of Beyoğlu by adult men and children. Women,

particularly those limited by their linguistic capacities often work in the textile industry (see Betül Çelik, 2005:146). As one, or even two, wage-earners was no longer enough to support a family, children were forced, often at the expense of their schooling, to work part or full time to supplement the family income. Children worked as street vendors and shoe shiners but they also worked in demanding jobs in the textile sector. This often required those fortunate enough to still attend school to have to travel directly to work after attending school in the morning and do an exhausting eight hour shift, which of course left little time for homework or any typical childhood activities. (Müderrisoğlu, 2006: 61).

Families often had to sacrifice some of their children's education in order to subsidise the schooling of others. Herro, a middle child in a family of eight children, which moved from Malazgirt to Istanbul when he was eleven, explained that he was the only one of his family to continue with his education. In fact, he recalls being the only child in his neighbourhood in Sultanbeyli to actually finish his schooling (Interview 10, 2012). Zeynel, originally from Erzurum, was resident in Gaziosmanpaşa. His father failed to find a job for almost two years and it was his responsibility, as a ten year old, to financially maintain the family. He combined school and various jobs – in the textile sector, in a shoe factory and as a waiter – for three years by attending school in the morning and working in the afternoons until he was thirteen and it became no longer possible to combine the two and he abandoned education. All of his siblings education was similarly truncated (Interview 48, 2013). These narratives are representative of many Kurdish families. The overarching poverty soldered families together as single economic units, and consequently children's education was subordinated to economic necessity because notwithstanding their youth, they were often more employable than their parents.

The difficulties in the labour market were compounded by the almost complete absence of state support for impoverished families. Firstly, there is an enormous dearth of reliable information regarding the number of inhabitants in Istanbul. Pérouse cites a Gaziosmanpaşa district official who admitted that the 1990 census potentially underestimated the district's population by up to two thirds (1997:5). In the absence of reliable statistics, the successful operation of any form of social welfare programme, even if the political desire existed to create one, would be impossible. In Turkey one is obliged to officially register one's place of residence, but an unknown number of migrants have not

done so. Many Kurds, given their experiences with the Turkish state and security forces in Kurdistan, are reluctant to engage with the state. Many also lack the linguistic skills or knowledge to navigate the labyrinthine bureaucracy of the Turkish civil service and because many of the villages whence they departed no longer exist, it generates further bureaucratic challenges in terms of sourcing relevant documents. Many Kurdish migrants live in dwellings that are not recognised by the state or in properties for which they have no formal documentation as regards ownership, which further complicates all bureaucratic interaction with the state. In addition - notwithstanding all evidence which points to the contrary- many Kurds continue to view their current displacement as but a temporary aberration and are convinced that they will sooner or later return to Kurdistan¹⁹⁵.

As unregistered citizens, Kurdish migrants are mostly limited to seeking employment in the informal economy, but in Turkey one can only access the public health services by working in the formal economy. Therefore, huge numbers are compelled to rely on the means tested, 'Green Card' which guarantees basic health care to the poorest strata of Turkish society (Adaman & Çağlar, 2006:17). In a perversely cruel scenario, many Kurds who still own property in Kurdistan, which they can no longer access and which generates no income because state forces have driven them from their land, are denied the Green Card because of this very property (Müderrisoğlu, 2006: 48). Aside from health care, other state support systems for the impoverished are equally insufficient (Adaman & Çağlar, 2006:31) and open to political manipulation and corruption. In such a context of a deficient state, with inadequate support for the internally displaced people, the importance of *hemşehri* associations, family and kinship support networks has become even more pointed. The more powerful *hemşehri* associations have struck up political relationships with the mainstream Turkish parties; particularly the AKP and the CHP, which provided social services in return for their bloc votes (see Grabolle-Çeliker, 2012, 117-126 and Zürcher, 2004: 270). This aspect of *hemşehri* politics can partially explain the poor electoral performance of the successive Kurdish parties in districts in western Turkey overwhelmingly populated by Kurds. Many PKK supporting Kurds strategically vote for Turkish parties rather than Kurdish ones in order to procure local services.

¹⁹⁵ The 2002 GÖÇ-DER report stated that 93.7% of Kurds surveyed wish to return to their villages (in Bediz Yılmaz, 2003:11).

The Kurdish population in western Turkey is not homogenous and is trans-generational in character. It is marked by linguistic differences (Kurmanji, Zaza and Turkish) and characterised by strong sub-regional identities as exemplified by the importance of *hemşehri* associations. Religious divisions between Alevi and Sunni Kurds and the intensity of religious belief within them are also relevant features. The communities are also diffused spatially in different cities and neighbourhoods according to class divisions, regional provenance and the period of migration. Indeed, many people from Kurdistan or with recent origins there do not even identify as Kurdish, preferring to present themselves as Turkish, which entails not only abandoning Kurdish as a language but also speaking Turkish with a good accent, meaning a feigned Istanbul accent with no hint of Eastern pronunciation (Betül Çelik, 2005:144). Others still advanced their religious identity before their ethnic one. The arrival of the masses of forced migrants acted as a catalyst for a wider re-consideration of Kurdish identity in the diaspora and reversed certain assimilationist tendencies (ibid: 153). Their “sense of deprivation, disempowerment, and material loss in many cases, reinforced their ethnic consciousness since many believed that it was solely because of their ethnic backgrounds that they had to live through such traumas” (ibid: 149). This daily evidence of this ethnic discrimination and marginalisation, had a radicalising effect across the Kurds in the west, which led it to become an area where the PKK rapidly expanded its networks beyond Kurdistan.

PKK Mobilisation in the West

As has been discussed in Chapter III, the PKK’s origins were in Ankara in the 1970s (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011) but by the mid-1980s almost the entirety of its mobilisational efforts was concentrated in Kurdistan as the PKK considered it “the most appropriate area to start a political and armed struggle for revolutionary change in Turkey” (ibid: 129). In the 1980s the PKK did not have an extensive organised presence in the cities of western Turkey. However, one should not conclude that the PKK’s organisational weakness in the West meant that it did not have any supporters or sympathisers in western Turkey. As previously

explained, Kurdish migrants maintained strong links with their villages of origin; knowledge of the conflict was acquired during holidays back in Kurdistan, seasonal migration and through family networks. Della Porta has explained that one's immediate social networks are the "main source of political information" (1988:159), a tendency that was heightened due to the heavily censored Turkish media and the limited literary skills of many Kurdish migrants. Accordingly, it is clear that through interpersonal and kin networks, the PKK's struggle was well known in the west and one can logically presume that it had a certain degree of support. As the PKK expanded and consolidated its presence in Kurdistan and the conflict intensified, so too did its need for material support in terms of fighters and money. It was at this point in the late 1980s that it actively started to build clandestine networks of support in areas with large Kurdish populations. In a relatively brief period of time, the cities of western Turkey became areas of massive PKK support. The following section will elaborate how these networks were established and how the PKK interacted with its intermittent allies in the Turkish radical left.

The 1980 coup d'état devastated the Turkish left. It shattered its organisational structures, imprisoned thousands of its militants, forced thousands more to flee into exile and intimidated its former sympathisers into desisting from any expression of support. It led to further fragmentation of the already splintered radical left landscape. However, irrespective of how repressive a regime or how calculated its brutality, it is not easy to eradicate social movements which are deeply embedded in their immediate social environments. As discussed in Chapter III, the radical Turkish left had enjoyed tremendous support in the late 1970s. It is worth recalling that the infamous 1977 Mayday demonstration witnessed 200,000 leftists in the streets, with the radical Dev-Yol's supporters¹⁹⁶ numbering 40,000 (Samim, 1981: 60). In addition to the left being able to count upon huge numbers of militants or active supporters, they enjoyed passive and territorialised support in certain *gecekondu* neighbourhoods with large Alevi and Kurdish populations.

Support for radical armed groups was derived from their efforts to give material legitimacy to their leftist rhetoric by engaging in projects of immediate collective social

¹⁹⁶ This was before the 1978 split which led to the establishment of Dev-Sol (Samim, 1981:77).

utility. Wedel, in her article on one particular neighbourhood¹⁹⁷, explains the process by which six radical leftist groups, in spring 1977¹⁹⁸, expelled the mafia-style figures who controlled the informal housing economy from the neighbourhood and established People's Committees to co-ordinate the assignation of housing (Wedel, 2002:58). In the course of a number of fierce battles with the police in autumn 1977, in which twelve activists and residents lost their lives, the leftists managed to defend the territorial integrity of the neighbourhood and re-build the areas which had been destroyed in the clashes. The neighbourhood then became a *de facto* autonomous zone where the police could not readily enter and which was protected by armed guards at night to ward off fascist attacks (ibid, 58-59). Therefore, a well defined radical left social environment developed, characterised by a density of political and social ties. Interpersonal relations were defined as "warm and inclusive" (ibid: 59) and a social revolutionary morality was enforced under threat of expulsion from the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood had its own judicial system, established a "people's room" for communal activities, offered evening classes on political matters and regular sub-neighbourhood assemblies took place to discuss matters of importance (ibid). This island of subaltern solidarity was crushed by the coup. Party cadres were arrested or disappeared into clandestinity and "nearly every family in the neighbourhood experienced raids in the middle of the night, arrests, torture and imprisonment of their loved ones" (ibid:62). However, the strong, inter-personal bonds established and the sense of gratitude felt toward to leftists for preserving the neighbourhood did not simply disappear with the advent of state repression. It remained an overwhelmingly leftwing neighbourhood and the former head of a People's Committee was elected *muhtar* in the 1990s (ibid: 61). Vast neighbourhoods with large Kurdish and Alevi populations such as Gaziosmanpaşa, Mayıs Mahallesi, Sultanbeyli and others all boasted similar revolutionary heritage. Accordingly, pockets with a strong radical leftist outlook existed around Istanbul and in other western cities; however, Turkish leftist organisations had been enormously weakened and were not able to capitalise on their radical potential.

¹⁹⁷ She declines to actually name the neighbourhood but it follows a quite typical trajectory of political mobilisation for any number of marginal neighbourhoods.

¹⁹⁸ The groups listed were THKP-C, Dev-Yol, Dev-Sol, TKP-ML-TIKKO, Halkin Kurtulusu and Halkin Yolu (Wedel, 2002: 58).

The PKK, to paraphrase Akkaya and Jongerden (2011), was “born from the left” and from its very foundation always had close relations and ideological solidarity with the Turkish radical left. It is worth recalling that the PKK declaration marking the start of the insurgency declared that it “is not a war of liberation for the Kurds. The day the Kurds will be free, the Turks will be free too [...]. The national liberation struggle is also the liberation struggle of the Turkish people” (in *ibid*: 132). Aside from rhetorical declarations of solidarity, in the immediate aftermath of the coup the PKK’s early efforts at regrouping in the diaspora were launched in conjunction with groups such as Dev Yol (see chapter III and Interview 34, 2013). The PKK’s first effort at forging a broad alliance with other Kurdish and radical Turkish groups, such as the FKBDC, petered out in 1986 (*ibid*: 133 and Marcus, 2007:65). This did not discourage the PKK from launching further such initiatives, including a brief armed campaign with the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party–Front/*Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi* (DHKP-C)¹⁹⁹ in the Tokat region in 1996 (see Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011:133). However, with such strong leftist credentials, the PKK took advantage of the organisational feebleness of its allies to attract many militants that had been active in the plethora of other leftist groups into its own ranks. By the late 1990s it was unquestionably the strongest oppositional underground movement in Istanbul and, with the possible exception of Dersim, all across Turkey.

The PKK’s Initial Steps in Istanbul

Individual trajectories to activism or personal radicalisation are an important element in the wider political violence literature. The ‘moment of encounter’ (O Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming) when civilians make initial contact with insurgent organisations is of particular relevance as it reflects two important features of mobilisation: spatial considerations and pre-existing or emergent social networks (see *ibid*). As discussed in chapter I, patterns of recruitment can vary according to a vast array of conditions. The

¹⁹⁹ The DHKP-C was the successor to Dev-Sol after the breakup of the group in 1992. However, it is still commonly referred to as Dev-Sol.

preceding chapters (III, IV, and V) have focused on chronologically and spatially contrasting settings for PKK recruitment, while the following section will detail how recruitment practises differed in the cities of western Turkey in comparison to Kurdistan, but it also differentiate between the heterogenous Kurdish communities in the internal diaspora. Thereby, reflecting Viterna's concern that the search for uniform recruitment narratives can lead to misleading conclusions (2006: 40).

The following sections will draw heavily on interviews with two senior ERNK cadres active in the Marmara region. Sezer (Interview 50, 2013) was in the very first wave of PKK activists in Istanbul from 1989 and the other, Daham became active three years later in 1992 (Interview 9, 2012). Interestingly, neither came from a politicised Kurdish background, highlighting the diversified nature of the PKK's recruits in Western Turkey. Sezer is of non-Kurdish origin, from central Anatolia. His family had strong leftist sympathies and his father had been in the radical teachers union TÖB-DER. Given his family's leftist renown, his father was taken into custody following the coup in 1980. Even though he was only eight years old Sezer was also detained and tortured. After he finished high school he left to study law at Istanbul University in 1989, determined to embrace radical politics. He was most interested in the PKK because of its rural guerrilla forces and Dev Sol because its "Marighella" style urban guerrillas. Sezer scorned the legal leftist movements, as he believed them to be infiltrated by the police and that they served simply to draw leftists into the public eye where they could be repressed easier. He struck up a friendship with a Kurdish student one day in the student canteen who had connections with the PKK and henceforth abandoned any interest he had in Dev Sol. As a non-Kurd in an ostensibly Kurdish movement, his views were very much from a socialist internationalist perspective. He felt that if the PKK were successful it would trigger a revolutionary wave, something of which he viewed the Turkish radical left as being simply incapable of realising. He served as an ERNK cadre in Istanbul before joining a guerrilla unit in Kurdistan. He was active until 1993 when he was captured and imprisoned for thirteen years.

Daham, on the other hand, was born in Istanbul to a politically uninvolved family which self-identified primarily as Alevi and then as Turkish. In secondary school he had been active in wider Turkish left politics. Upon starting university in 1992, he decided that he wanted to join the PKK. He described it as a conscious decision motivated by the reports of

the conflict emanating from Kurdistan, which at the time was at its nadir; he was also aware of its likely personal consequences. Within a month of starting university he had joined the PKK's clandestine university movement YCK and within a few months he had risen to an executive position of his faculty. Daham admits that he learned more about his Kurdishness and actually became more Kurdish due to his participation in the PKK. He was captured before he had the chance to join the guerrillas in Kurdistan and he eventually served eleven years in prison. He retained his ERNK position in the movement in prison and was a commander in charge of organising PKK prisoners. Such a trajectory into the PKK by an Alevi Kurd from a non politicised background was not unusual and is replicated in many other cases.

Sezer and Daham's militant trajectories combine elements of many of both Viterna and, Bosi and della Porta's ideal type recruits: combining structural, personal, interactive elements as well as a degree of coincidence. Sezer could be considered as an ideological recruit heavily influenced by "deeply rooted family and/or local traditions of counter-hegemonic consciousness" (Bosi & della Porta, 2012: 362). However, he also seemed to follow an instrumental path as he had become convinced that "armed activism would lead to concrete results" (ibid); while Daham could be classified as a politicised recruit due to his former militancy in leftist organisations (Viterna, 2006:20). Yet they were also both driven by individual motivations. Daham saw the PKK as a means to realise his Kurdishness and, most likely, as a form of rebellion vis-à-vis his politically quiescent and assimilationist family. While Sezer's determination to participate in a guerrilla movement, any guerrilla movement, betrays a youthful enthusiasm for the lure of excitement and danger. Yet Sezer was also a deeply politically motivated and very knowledgeable militant, thus highlighting the fact that rigid categorisation of motivations is not entirely useful as multiple motivations inevitably overlap. It is perhaps rather more worthwhile to closely integrate understandings of personal trajectories with the chronological and spatial contexts in which they emerge and focus on the relational dynamic between the individual and one's immediate social environment.

At the macro level, as the PKK expanded as a movement, it underwent a significant structural re-organisation in 1987 with the founding of a number of sub-organisations under the command of the ERNK, so as to "organize its various social strata individually" (Özcan,

2006: 172 and see Gunes, 2012:110, Gunter, 1997:31-32 and Chapter IV). It was at this point that the student movement YCK was established. Even though the decision had been made to create a youth and student movement, the PKK's greatest focus was on consolidating the insurgency in Kurdistan. Therefore, politically minded Kurdish students in the west had begun to inform themselves about the conflict in an autonomous fashion (Marcus, 2007:133) but remained a non-mobilised segment of PKK support. It should be reiterated that the PKK did have a presence in western Turkey. Marcus reports on a PKK presence in the Aegean as early as 1986 (ibid: 133) and claims that they were "well established" in 1988 (ibid: 132). This presence was, however, strongest amongst recent immigrants and was linked back to Kurdistan. Strong distinct structures in the west for the most part began to emerge following the consolidation of the student movement as an organisational hub.

As Sezer explained, when he started university in 1989 there was essentially no organised PKK presence within the universities, so he and his friend from the cafeteria went about establishing it. They began to sound out like-minded colleagues and organising themselves. They had limited contacts with the PKK so they acted for the most part in a completely autonomous fashion. They occasionally received minutely printed copies of *Serxwebûn* that had been smuggled in from Europe, the print of which was so small that they had to read it with a magnifying glass. Sezer's emerging PKK cell expanded slowly but because it had limited contact with the PKK itself it remained completely off the authorities' radar. Unbeknownst to them, similarly disconnected groups had been forming across many of Istanbul's universities. In March 1990 to mark the *serhildan* in Kurdistan, the PKK leadership made a call for a Newroz demonstration at Istanbul University's Beyazit campus, thus leading to the first mass PKK mobilisation in Istanbul. Unexpectedly, around 2,500 students turned up; the vast majority were Kurdish but there was also a sizeable percentage of Turkish leftists. There were some minor clashes with the police and a number of demonstrators were briefly detained (Interview 50, 2013). This was the watershed in the PKK's emergence in Istanbul. Henceforth, the autonomous and disconnected student organisations which were also present in Yildiz, Marmara and Istanbul Technical Universities amongst others were linked vertically to the movement and horizontally between each other.

Networks were quickly established by the PKK's student activists and sympathisers in the collective dormitories which were shared by students attending different universities. These shared spaces permitted them to overcome the segmentation of having separate organisations for the various universities. The role of collective dormitories is redolent of the early phase PKK mobilisation in the 1970s in teachers' training colleges. The majority of those involved at this stage were Kurds who had come directly from Kurdistan to attend university and not second generation Kurds who lived with their immediate families in Istanbul. Sezer describes the initial phase of mobilisation as very emotional and a direct response to what the students knew was occurring in their hometowns and villages back in Kurdistan. He claims that his Kurdish comrades quickly became fixated with the conflict, it was like a "chronic disease" for them and they suffered from a sense of impotence as there was very little they could do from Istanbul. However, they quickly became organised and channelled their collective energies into consolidating the emerging PKK network in Istanbul. Kurds who had been active in Turkish leftist groups flooded into the PKK, dismayed and detached from what were seen as the mundane and everyday concerns of the Turkish left. It is also worth pointing out that the other Kurdish groups active prior to the coup had failed to re-establish any presence in the universities, rendering the PKK the only vehicle suited to engaging with the conflict (Interview 50, 2013). The PKK's consolidation in western Turkey incorporates a number of diffusion processes, including both relational and non-relational ties (McAdam & Rucht, 1993:60). Initially, as illustrated in the discussed cases, there was a degree of non-relational diffusion (Soule, 2004: 295) whereby the shared revolutionary and/or Kurdish identity of the two militants led them to actively seek out the movement. Subsequent to this direct links were created with the movement and horizontal ones were forged with likeminded youths around the movement, particularly in student dormitories. All of which led to the formation of personal networks and "systems of meaning" (della Porta & Diani, 2006: 119) which were strengthened over time and facilitated radical political commitment and the growth of the PKK.

The movement rapidly spread outside of the universities and Sezer explained that the early student organisers became the ERNK branch of the PKK in Istanbul. By June 1990, only three months after the Newroz demonstration, the PKK students were assigned by the movement to relocate to the peripheral neighbourhoods across the city to set up branches

of the organisation there. Students recruited in the universities did not stay within the university environs for very long. They underwent political training given by visiting senior ERNK cadres, at secret locations in Istanbul for fifteen days or so and were then sent out to the neighbourhoods. The movement classified recruits according to their personal characteristics and accordingly assigned them to activism in Istanbul or sent them directly to the mountains as guerrillas. One's own personal preference was not taken into account (Interview 50, 2013).

Marcus details the difficulties faced by many of the university students who joined the guerrillas. Some suffered from the physical rigours of life in the mountains and had difficulties adapting to the military discipline of life as a guerrilla. Others were taken aback by the "intolerance toward debate or free discussion" and the excessive deference toward Öcalan (2007:134-135). The young recruits' lot was worsened by a directive apparently sent by Öcalan that warned of infiltrators and spies in their ranks, fostering an atmosphere of paranoia and suspicion towards them. Marcus reports that at least twenty four of these recruits and maybe even up to one hundred were executed by the PKK in 1989 and 1990. In one particularly egregious incident in 1989 around a dozen students recruited from the city of Eskişehir were reported to have been executed shortly after reaching the guerrilla units (2007:135).

Sezer, however, paints a slightly more nuanced picture of these early waves of recruits. He explained that although some were recruited from the universities, these were usually Kurds from the most directly affected conflict areas such as Mardin and Hakkari. Marcus' depiction of them as cosmopolitan, critical minded city youths is misleading. They were Kurds born and raised in Kurdistan and would have been politically socialised and informed of the conflict through their family networks and thus not as naive as Marcus portrayed them. Also, in the very late 1980s and early 1990s students did not compose the majority of recruits sent back to fight as guerrillas. Nevertheless, that is not to dispute that such brutal excesses occurred. Although none of my interviewees had any such recollections, it seems probable that those that had decisively broken from the movement like Marcus' interviewees would likely be far more forthcoming in that regard. Moreover, in addition to the rapid expansion of its ranks at this time, there were also internal challenges to Öcalan's leadership, which would have exacerbated paranoia regarding infiltrators and

facilitated an environment wherein the execution of handfuls of new recruits would have not seemed excessive.

The nascent ERNK structure in western Turkey was divided into a Marmara command, then an Istanbul division and finally sub-divided into neighbourhood units (Interview 9, 2012). A strategic decision was taken by the PKK to initially focus on the poor and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which had the largest number of migrants from areas where the conflict was most intense and latterly home to the many internally displaced Kurds. These neighbourhoods were characterised by huge unemployment and underemployment. As the insurgency expanded in Kurdistan and with the growing unpopularity, or indeed failure, of PKK conscription (see Marcus, 2007:117 and Gunes, 2012:105), the PKK needed fighters. One of the few things which these neighbourhoods had in abundance was young people with little or no life prospects, thereby rendering them biographically available for recruitment (Viterna, 2006: 15). Daham was in command of two neighbourhoods which had a large percentage of Kurds and a revolutionary heritage dating back to the 1970s. He was in charge of recruitment – both for the guerrillas and the local PKK organisation - and of obtaining logistical resources. In a recurrent overlap of the private and the political, he listed three main reasons why it was relatively easy to recruit people from such districts. Firstly, the standard of living for young people was pitiful. They lived in either overcrowded *bekar evi* or in cramped accommodation with their families and were thus deprived of even a modicum of privacy. They barely had enough money for material exigencies and the possibilities of personal betterment through education were essentially nonexistent. Secondly, this individual frustration occurred in an imposing atmosphere of conflict. Daham described it as a pervasive politicisation parallel to the war in Kurdistan, and that many families radicalised together. And finally, there was a strong organisational impetus from the PKK to promote the movement and entice new recruits (Interview 9, 2012). Sefer, a former PKK prisoner, opined that many of these poor recruits joined the guerrillas as an emotional reaction to reports on the conflict from their home regions and that the emerging ERNK structures served to channel this emotional outflow into the PKK (ibid). The speed at which recruitment occurred was notable. The expected minimum was that every new member would recruit at least three further people but Sezer recounted how in one single neighbourhood he managed to personally recruit ninety five new

militants. This accelerated chain recruitment also made use of tribal networks, so that if a number of any one particular tribe joined, then the rest would automatically be obliged by custom, if not by conviction, to support it (Interview 50, 2013). A typical recruit in Istanbul, therefore, combined elements of Viterna's militant categorisation (2006); some came from politicised – Kurdish or leftist – families or backgrounds, others joined, consciously or not, as a means to escape the drudgery of their own lives, but there was little presence of “reluctant recruits”, coerced either directly or by force of circumstances into the movement.

Returning to the notion of the ‘moment of encounter’; as the moment when movement activists first interact with potential sympathisers and supporters. Mobilisation and recruitment are quite macro terms and often taken as self-explanatory, which obfuscates what are in essence inter-personal exchanges that occur in concrete socio-spatial environments. It is not uncommon that the minutiae of these interactions are not afforded sufficient academic attention. The PKK has a long history, dating back to its first mobilisation in the 1970s, of fully immersing itself in the social environment of its putative supporters²⁰⁰. Accordingly, the newly recruited students moved on a full time basis to the impoverished neighbourhoods. The new cadres received specific instructions regarding how they were expected to behave in relation to the residents. They stayed with families that were willing to host them or alternatively squatted in unfinished building sites and lived “hand in hand” with the people. They attended weddings and funerals, accompanied young children to the dentist, washed the dishes of their hosts. They spoke to everyone, advising Kurdish school children to be proud of their background and to never deny their Kurdishness and asking elderly Kurds to remember them in their prayers (Interview 50, 2013). Conditions in these neighbourhoods were tough and Daham recalls often spending weeks at a time without ever having the chance of taking a bath (Interview 9, 2012). It was thus from a position of intimate familiarity that political issues were broached. As in Kurdistan, they focused on the Kurdish aspect of the struggle and accorded a much lesser attention to issues of left-wing politics. When people appeared receptive to their political message they engineered ways in which they could contribute to the movement, ranging from directly recruiting them to financial contributions and the occasional hosting of militants. As analysed in previous chapters, the PKK was extremely reflexive in its dealings with its constituency. Although they

usually introduced politics into their interactions with the Kurdish public by discussing the nationalist aspects of the struggle, they were cognisant of the embedded leftist heritage of certain Kurdish regions. To give a concrete example of such reflexivity, when the PKK assigned cadres to neighbourhoods such as Yakacık and İdealtepe largely populated by Kurds and Alevis from Erzincan and Sivas, they were encouraged to focus on the leftist aspects of the struggle given the political outlook of these regions. On the other hand, when dealing with the Kurds from Mardin resident in Kasımpaşa and Tarlabası, they pointedly focused on nationalist themes (Interview 50, 2013).

This first wave of mobilisation in Istanbul was focused on facilitating the recruitment of young men and women of fighting age to fill the ranks of the guerrillas, which they found predominantly amongst the poor rural migrants. As the guerrilla army expanded its material demands simultaneously grew; the PKK recognised that it needed to take advantage of its potential support amongst the Kurdish middle classes. Accordingly, contacts were actively sought in middle class neighbourhoods. Daham was active in two specific neighbourhoods; the first was a 'classic' subaltern Kurdish migrant one in Mayıs Mahallesi, whereas the other, Ataşehir, had a mixture of Turks and Kurds and was composed of a more middle class demographic. Daham's contrasting experience in the two neighbourhoods highlights the heterogenous character of the Kurdish migrant population. He described the relationship between the neighbourhoods as being love-hate in nature. They shared a common Kurdishness but were deeply divided by their class positions. As a conduit between the two, Daham was viewed as a bridge between otherwise very different worlds and a means for both communities to sate their curiosity about lives on the other side of the class divide. At this stage, there was a noted rise in previously non-politicised Kurds actively engaging with the movement. This popular reaching out to the movement was present in both the poor and the better off neighbourhoods. Daham recalls that they had access to safe houses even within highly exclusive gated communities in Ataşehir. Families contributed proportionate according to their means, be that in financial or other forms of support. The routinised gathering of money served as a pretext for organising encounters with PKK supporters, thus reinforcing bonds which might otherwise fallen into abeyance. In contradiction to established rational choice theories of individualism, these families' contribution and

²⁰⁰ See Chapter III and the Siverek resistance.

association with the movement carried grave risks. Anyone suspected of supporting the movement could be detained before any charges were levelled by the state for fifteen days. Over the course of this period, it was commonplace to be systematically tortured by the authorities searching for any shred of intelligence. Another tactic of the state was to secretly detain suspects, because if they remained off official records they could be held on an indefinite basis. Anyone convicted of supporting the PKK was guaranteed a minimum three year prison sentence. Notwithstanding the grave risks, many Kurds collaborated with the PKK, most probably because of inter-familial links with it and because the pervasive feeling of collective oppression weighing heavily on many Kurds, encouraged them to offer at least occasional support to the movement (Interview 9, 2012).

Gaziosmanpaşa – Leftist Stronghold

Of all Istanbul's neighbourhoods Gaziosmanpaşa, commonly known simply as Gazi, perhaps bears the most noted revolutionary heritage. It is often given as 'the' example of a *gecekondu* neighbourhood and it bears a reputation in wider Istanbul as a hotbed of political radicalism and criminality. It lies to the north east of Istanbul's Golden Horn and although considered a peripheral neighbourhood of Istanbul, it is easily reachable by a number of public buses²⁰¹ in under an hour. Its population was estimated to be around 700,000 in 1997 (Pérouse, 1997: 2). It was successively populated by Turks displaced from Thrace in the 1920s, by immigrants from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in the 1950s, by Black Sea and Sivas migrants in the 1970s, then by Alevis from central Anatolia (ibid:10) and finally by Kurds, particularly from Dersim, through the 1980s and 1990s. The latter waves had significant numbers of Alevis and the neighbourhood is considered an Alevi stronghold.

²⁰¹ As of 2013, when I conducted a series of interviews there.

In the early and mid nineties, three leftist groups were particularly strong in Gazi: the DHKP-C; MLKP (Marxist-Leninist Communist Party/*Marksist-Leninist Komünist Partisi*)²⁰²; and TIKKO (Interview 45, 2013). TIKKO drew heavily on the support of Kurds with origins in Dersim, the MLKP was a smaller organisation and it was almost exclusively concentrated in Gazi while the DHKP-C was the strongest of all the leftist groups and was active across Istanbul and in many other cities. One could conceivably imagine that, given such an underlying revolutionary character, the PKK would have immediately honed in on Gazi as a source of recruits and support. In fact they did the very opposite and it was not until late 1993 and 1994 that it made its first tentative efforts to mobilise there (Interview, 42, 2013). The relative strength of other groups in Gazi was evidenced in the events surrounding the March 1995 Gazi massacre (see Jongerden, 2003, Marcus 1996, & Leezenberg 2003). The *Doğu* teahouse frequented by Alevis was strafed with gunfire by a passing car, killing two people. Outraged by the event and convinced of police collusion, thousands of residents gathered around the local police station, which was staffed by officers known to have right-wing political sympathies and notorious as a site of torture. The police then opened fire on the demonstrators, killing a further fifteen. In the aftermath of the massacre fourteen alleged MLKP militants were tried and sentenced to substantial prison sentences.²⁰³ Shortly afterwards, the body of Hasan Ocak, a founding MKLP member was found with visible signs of torture dumped in a nearby forest (Jongerden, 2003: 86-87).

The fact that the PKK was not a leading actor in such a seminal event in Gazi, highlights that even by 1995, its presence there was weak. Indeed Rang, a former PKK prisoner from Gazi, recalled that the first major PKK demonstration that he saw in Gazi itself was as late as 1998 at the funeral of a local guerrilla, Adnan Seker (Interview 45). Sezer explained that the PKK made no effort to organise there for two main reasons. Firstly the other established leftist groups were strong, so they would have faced substantial competition for new recruits.

²⁰² The MKLP was founded in 1994 by the union of a number of Maoist, pro - Albanian communist movements see http://www.mlkp.info/index.php?kategori=1012&Who_we_are?

²⁰³ A number of police officers were also tried for the killings. One officer condemned to twenty four years imprisonment later had his sentence reduced to one year and one month. The Gazi police chief Necdet Menzir was sacked by Tansu Çiller for his management of the episode but was subsequently included in the DYP party list for the 1996 election and elected to parliament (Jongerden, 2003: 86).

Tarrow has explained that “a common outcome of competition is radicalization: *a shift in ideological commitments toward the extremes and/or the adoption of more disruptive and violent forms of contention*²⁰⁴” (2011:207). By avoiding competitive escalation with leftist groups in Istanbul, the PKK was able to preempt energy and resource sapping feuds and concentrate on its principle objective of supporting the insurgency in Kurdistan. Secondly, in any area where the radical left was strong there was heavy police infiltration. In the early 1990s the PKK was determined to remain off the authorities’ radar as much as possible to avoid imperilling the flow off recruits and resources back to Kurdistan. The PKK’s strategy thereby resembles the fashion – as discussed in Chapter V – in which it used a limited repertoire of contention in order to channel resources to where they felt they were best utilised, in the rural insurgency. They did, however, recruit some people from Gazi but this was on the basis of individual contacts and family links rather than as part of a comprehensive strategy (Interview 50, 2013).

Over time, as the PKK grew in strength in Istanbul the Turkish left began to contract. The Turkish left remained relatively strong in certain areas until the late 1990s²⁰⁵ but it was fractured and badly disorientated at the ideological level by the collapse of the USSR. Its orthodox rhetoric was offputting for many youths (Interview 45 & 42, 2013). On the other hand, for Kurds with strong leftist convictions the PKK advanced very similar arguments to the leftist organisations, as well as advocating for the independence of Kurdistan (Interview 42, 2013). The PKK’s success in Kurdistan granted it a strong credibility amongst many Kurdish youths, but also Turks and other minorities, as can be evidenced in the case of Sezer. In simple terms, the PKK seemed more likely to bring about radical change than its leftist counterparts. Disappointment with the limitations of the radical left led many of its militants to flock to the PKK, thus changing its ethnic composition dramatically and its ranks expanded to include many Turks, Turcomans, Arabs, Pomaks, and Assyrians among others (Interview 9, 2012).

²⁰⁴ Italics in the original quotation

²⁰⁵ Even today, leftist groups the DHKP/C in particular command significant support in certain neighbourhoods such as Gülsuyu, as observed at the huge attendance at the funeral of one of its militants Hasan Ferit Gedik in October 2013 (Sunday’s Zaman, 2013).

The mid 1990s brought about a phase of what Bosi and della Porta would classify as solidaristic recruitment, which occurs in the latter stages of conflict and is triggered by developments in one's immediate social environment due to an escalation of the conflict (2012:362). In the case of Kurds in Istanbul, one cannot observe an urgent need to mobilise in order to defend one's community, as was witnessed in places like Northern Ireland (Bosi, 2012), in Kurdistan proper or indeed even in leftist and Kurdish enclaves in western Turkey in the immediate pre-coup period. Rather, one can note a steady escalation in political activity in Kurdish neighbourhoods which inevitably drew youths into the movement. Youths became ever more receptive to the PKK's political message, given the reports of the depredations of the ongoing conflict in Kurdistan, as well as the general excitement inherent in political demonstrations and low intensity clashes with the police.

The recruitment in this period emphasises the importance of spatial dynamics and proximity. Many youths got in contact with and were latterly mobilised by the PKK simply because, in simple terms, it was there. It was on the streets, at celebrations, in the schools and universities. Celebrations were organised to commemorate special occasions such as the 15th of August (launch of the insurgency in 1984), Newroz or to mark the Hallabja massacre. The events were held in public squares, rented rooms such as cinemas or even in the street. Occasionally, room bookings were disguised as weddings in order to not arouse the suspicions of its owners. These celebrations were attended by hundreds of people, where pro-PKK music groups such as *Koma Mezrabotan* played Kurdish music (Interview 38, 2013). Gatherings like this were festive occasions, but also served to familiarise the locals with the movement and vice versa. People close to the PKK even operated a number of *dershane* or private pre-university preparatory schools which offered evening courses. Baran attended such an institute in the outskirts of Istanbul in the late 1990s where he was approached by PKK activists who attempted to enlist him (Interview 8, 2012). The PKK also directly approached individuals that they felt had the appropriate political sympathies. Zeynel's father established a little grocery store for him to run in the Karayolları area of Gazi. PKK militants used to call by and leave him party literature to read. A cousin of Zeynel who had become active in the ERNK used to drop off pro-Kurdish newspapers such as *Özgür Gundem* and *Özgür Ülke*, and then he began to take extra copies for his friends (Interview 42, 2013). Herro explained that as a child, he also used to do little jobs for the movement.

He used to spray party graffiti around his neighbourhood in Sultanbeyli, stick up posters and help deliver papers. When demonstrations and gatherings were held, he used to attend and round up others to also participate (Interview 10, 2012). It was thus in such a gradual process that youngsters became incrementally mobilised.

Often the final step to greater commitment was the encounter between such semi-engaged youths and the police. The ERNK was aware that police violence was the most direct means of radicalisation (Interview 9, 2012). Demonstrations often degenerated into physical confrontations and it was almost certain that anyone detained after such clashes would be tortured to some degree, thus triggering further hatred of the regime and integration into the movement as means of obtaining revenge. Rang had been active on the periphery of the movement in Gazi but after he attended a YCK gathering in Saraçhane in 1998 to mark Öcalan's forced departure from Syria, he was one of three hundred arrests. He was beaten, verbally abused and humiliated. Immediately upon his release he dedicated himself to the PKK, stopped attending school and sought out clashes with fascists and the police until he was arrested and sentenced to prison shortly afterwards (Interview 45, 2013).

The PKK shared two of its principal recruitment areas with the radical left; the universities and those predominantly Alevi neighbourhoods with a recent history of political radicalism. It seems likely that the PKK had realised the inherent risks of an overly antagonistic relationship with its erstwhile or potential Kurdish or leftist allies, as a result of the self-destructive campaigns of violence in the late 1970s. Aside from tensions with TIKKO, after the PKK had started to edge into its Dersim stronghold which, led to four deaths (Leezenberg, 2003:205); relations were relatively amicable with the movements of radical left. In the cities of western Turkey, the transition from the wider leftist milieu to the PKK was a common trajectory. Several of my interviewees raised in the west reported such paths to their adherence to the PKK. Rojan explained that after he moved to Istanbul from Izmir, he was determined to link up with the PKK and that it was through friends of his in *Halkin Kurtuluş* that the initial contacts were established (Interview 38, 2013); while numerous other interviewees reported similar radical left to PKK trajectories (Interviews 9, 38, 40, 45, 42).

Daham explained that the YCK co-operated with the wider projects of the student left and co-operated in the organisation of campus boycotts and student campaigns. He recounted that the YCK participated indiscriminately with the Turkish left and not just specific elements of it; an arrangement he described as a “unity of action” between the PKK and the left. On commemorative occasions or in response to specific atrocities in Kurdistan, they collectively attacked state institutions and banks with Molotov cocktails. The imbrication between the left and the PKK was such that when Daham was first arrested it was on the suspicion that he was a Dev Sol rather than a PKK militant (Interview 9, 2012). Bahoz recalled that in around 1997, when he was actively considering going to the mountains, a platform of radical groups including the PKK and TIKKO had co-organised a form of revolutionary picnic in the outskirts of Istanbul. A festive revolutionary atmosphere reigned there, revolutionary songs were sung and food was shared. Each group presented themselves as if in a radical recruitment fair to their prospective members, explaining their party positions and objectives (Interview 23, 2012). Zeynel explained that in 1996, an alliance was struck up with TIKKO to co-ordinate their activities in Gazi and demonstrations were, if not co-organised, then at least co-ordinated with the different groups. As the PKK expanded exponentially and cut into Dev Sol’s traditional constituency, the latter became somewhat defensive and relations between them cooled through 1997 and 1998 but they were limited to ideological disagreements and never resulted in deadly violence (Interview 42, 2013).

Constitutional Kurdish Politics

The other significant development in the 1990s was the establishment of a legal Kurdish political party, HEP in 1990. It was banned and it was succeeded by DEP (Democracy Party/*Demokrasi Partisi*) in May 1993, which was in turn banned and replaced by HADEP (People’s Democracy Party/*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*) in 1994 (Watts, 2010:69). The legal political parties have been the focus of numerous works (Watts, 1999, 2006 & 2010, Barkey 1998, Bozarlan 1996b & 2008 *inter alios*). Space does not permit to engage in a detailed discussion of their fortunes here, aside from elaborating on how the legal party institutions and networks served as an ulterior environment from wherein the PKK reinforced bonds

with its constituency. The relationship between the PKK and the legal parties remains a topic of great controversy, which has led to the party's numerous iterations being shut down under the accusation of serving as a PKK mouthpiece or as supporters of terrorism.

The legal party has naturally been most successful and active in Kurdistan itself, but it is also mobilised and has branches across Turkey. It has even achieved some notable success at the municipal level, such as when HADEP won control of the Akdeniz district of Mersin in 1999 (Doğan & Yılmaz, 2011:475). Others have highlighted the poor performance of the party in areas heavily populated by Kurds, suggesting that the PKK and the movement [Kurdish in a wider sense] "were unrepresentative of many ordinary Kurds" (Watts, 2010:169). Such a view seems rather dismissive of the enormous logistical challenges of maintaining the party infrastructure in cities where Kurds are a minority. It underestimates the impact of the constant imprisonment and banning of hundreds of party activists, the convoluted procedures for transferring one's vote from one city to the next (especially in the case of forced migrants), the fear many migrants have of publicly expressing their support for the party (Wedel, 2001:64) and the deeply embedded nature of patronage bloc voting in marginal migrant neighbourhoods (Grabolle-Çeliker, 2012:117 and Zürcher, 2004:270).

The first pro-Kurdish party was not designed as a political front for the PKK but rather emerged from "within the Turkish political system itself" (Watts, 2006: 133). This is a significant distinction between them and the relationship between the IRA and Sinn Féin with which it has been tenuously compared. A number of the SHP's Kurdish deputies were expelled from the party for attending a conference at the Kurdish Institute in Paris (ibid:2010:62). These deputies then went on to found HEP. The relationship between the legal party and the PKK has fluctuated over time but the two arguably grew closer due to the continuous legal obstacles with which the party was confronted and the murderous violence that the state exercised against its members. HEP, DEP and HADEP had by 1996 already suffered the killing of ninety two of its members (Barkey, 1998: 135, White, 1997:243 and Bozarslan, 1996: 17), which is not to mention the countless other supporters and sympathisers who met similarly violent ends. Even high profile members were not immune from the violence of the state; Batman's DEP deputy, Mehmet Sincar was killed in

mysterious circumstances after he had begun to investigate the killings of his party comrades (van Bruinessen, 1996:21). The election of Hatip Dicle as party (DEP) president in 1993 marked a turning point as he sought to “publically align the party with the PKK” (ibid: 69 and see Barkey, 1998:130).

The debate on the relationship between the PKK and the legal Kurdish parties is a topic of furious legal and political dispute. A reasonable conclusion would be that upon HEP’s foundation it emerged from the same political milieu as the PKK and that they broadly shared the same goals, thus guaranteeing a degree of political coherence. Arguments about the vertical control of the party by the PKK, and Öcalan in particular, remain unsubstantiated. It is however, undeniable that the two are tightly bound by horizontal ties and interpersonal relationships. To give but one example, Şemdin Sakık, the controversial former PKK commander who broke the 1993 ceasefire, is the brother of current BDP deputy and founding DEP member Sırrı Sakık. There are thus strong emotional commitments between them. Undoubtedly, at the local level the PKK has on occasion used its power to force decisions upon the legal party. In 1998 in Kahta, the PKK demanded the party run the highly respected Mehmet Polat in the national election, which he had no possibility of winning, rather than the municipal election, which he would have almost certainly won due to his local popularity because it reportedly had qualms about his past as a Kawa militant (Interview 23, 2012). However, in a reverse of the scenario in the 2004 mayoral election in Diyarbakir, the candidate proposed by DEHAP, Osman Baydemir, prevailed over the PKK’s preferred candidate, outgoing mayor Feridun Çelik who subsequently withdrew from the race (Watts, 2010: 88 and Mango, 2005:50).

The PKK leadership did not establish HEP, but once it had been founded it considered it as a positive step for the wider Kurdish movement. It immediately offered the party its substantial material support (van Bruinessen, 2000a:6 and White, 1997:225). It was viewed as a potential way to mobilise those who were unlikely to be mobilised by the clandestine PKK. Sezer recalls that ERNK militants in Istanbul were ordered to physically assist with the opening of neighbourhood branches. He viewed it as a waste of time and a distraction from the PKK’s own responsibilities so he and a few colleagues rushed around the city and haphazardly opened three branch offices in a single morning (Interview 50,

2013). As a generalisation, the party catered to the middle classes and bridged social divisions that the PKK could not. It raised the level of popular consciousness of the Kurdish struggle and once individuals started to engage at any level with Kurdish politics they were consequently easier to mobilise than politically inactive Kurds. A female senior BDP representative in Europe and her brother from Izmir, were working on their family tree as teenagers when they discovered that they were in fact Kurdish. They subsequently joined HEP in 1990. She remains active in legal politics but her brother went onto become a noted PKK commander (Interview 5, 2011)²⁰⁶. As previously mentioned, legal activists suffered greatly from state repression and their unwarranted persecution led many of their family members to become active in a more radical fashion. The best known, most contemporary example is the case of the mayor of Sur municipality in Diyarbakir Abdullah Demirbaş, who has been repeatedly incarcerated on a series of preposterous charges. His teenage son is currently in the mountains as a guerrilla as he had become dismayed at what he evidently considered was the futility of institutional politics (Interview 13, 2012 and see Toumani 2008). The legal party offices sometimes represented the first port of call for Kurds interested in politics; although Mehmet had attempted to join the guerrillas in Adiyaman when he first arrived in Istanbul, he simply did not know where or to whom he should go to reintegrate himself into the movement. Accordingly, he started to frequent the HADEP offices in Gazi and subsequently began to re-associate himself with the clandestine aspects of the movement (Interview 48, 2013).

The expected duration of an ERNK career in Istanbul was short, no more than two years. There were a number of possible exits: death; exile; imprisonment; the mountains or a withdrawal from underground PKK politics and into the legal elements of the movement, in the pro-Kurdish media in newspapers such as *Özgür Gündem* or *Özgür Ülke*, and the legal party. It thus served as a multi-directional conduit between the militant end of the PKK spectrum and sympathetic but inactive supporters. In a way, one could describe it as composing the outer layers of the PKK's constituency, linked by its personnel's past or future experiences in the PKK and the strong interfamilial overlap between them. However, perhaps its greatest contribution to the Kurdish cause, and consequently to the PKK, has

²⁰⁶ I only discovered about the role of her brother in the PKK in 2013 on a subsequent field work trip.

been the manner in which its violent repression by the state has thoroughly delegitimised the Turkish government in the eyes of huge swathes of Kurds; leading to the belief of the “impossibility of conducting legal opposition” (Bozarslan, 2000:25) which has led many to embrace the radical approach of the PKK.

Conclusion

As discussed in chapter V, the divisions between the rural and the urban were diminished by patterns of urban migration and the forced displacement of millions of Kurds from their homes in the countryside to the urban periphery. A large, if as of yet still unknown number of these uprooted Kurds relocated to the cities of western Turkey, thus leading to an intrinsic imbrication of the Kurdish rural and the Turkish urban. The PKK’s constituency was geographically dispersed throughout the Turkish state and beyond, rendering it necessary to also analyse how the PKK mobilised in the urban environments in western Turkey if one is to ascertain a comprehensive understanding of the movement. The PKK enjoyed minimal territorial control in the western Turkey. Although it enjoyed strong support in certain neighbourhoods, it never compared to the territorial presence it enjoyed at stages in rural Kurdistan or even in certain Kurdish cities where it operated parallel judicial systems and a range of other pseudo-state activities. It could therefore not mobilise support by the provision of social services, nor could it systematically coerce Kurds in the west to contribute resources or join as guerrillas. It did enjoy strong legitimacy and recognition from swathes of the Kurdish internal diaspora, which facilitated a strong degree of social control. The PKK’s successful mobilisation therefore contradicts approaches which prioritise territorial control. Its presence and the consolidation of its constituency long distant from the mountains of Kurdistan was not derived from its coercive power “but rather the result of support relationships with local communities and their own enforcement of norms of loyalty and non-betrayal through mechanisms of social control” (Malthaner, 2011a:253).

The PKK in western Turkey accordingly mobilised under radically different socio-spatial and structural conditions. This paper argues that the Kurds in western Turkey meet all of the criteria barring the international aspects of a diaspora (Brubaker, 2005 and Baser & Swain, 2010). The importance of boundary maintenance in the Kurdish internal diaspora proved to be of immense utility to the PKK. Practises of social exclusion and state neglect strengthened Kurdish identity in spite of migration and exile, leading to resilient communal structures and networks which were utilised by the PKK as channels to consolidate and expand its support. As previously discussed, the Kurdish community in western Turkey is trans-generational and is composed of varying social strata and not all of it can be considered as part of the internal diaspora. Yet, the dimensions of the Kurdish internal diaspora were sufficiently extensive to allow rapid PKK expansion from a small number of mostly student activists to include huge numbers of youths from the urban periphery and to build up a vast constituency around the movement.

The PKK's mobilisation in western Turkey was strategic and thoroughly calculated. It resisted the temptation to launch military campaigns at state targets in western Turkey and remained focused on its principal objective, which was to not imperil supply routes of materials and new guerrillas to the insurgency in the Kurdistan. Concomitantly to the expansion of the insurgency, the demand for material resources, financial support and fighters also expanded thus increasing the importance of the PKK's support networks in western Turkey. Accordingly, the PKK concentrated on broadening its constituency to also encompass somewhat better off Kurds with disposable income to finance the campaign while also maintaining its recruitment amongst the poorer elements of Kurdish society to serve as guerrillas. The PKK's success was due to its strategic malleability; it avoided clashes with other leftist groups and thus limited unnecessary spirals of violent escalation and the attention of the authorities. It remained cognisant of the different social and cultural orientations of its sympathisers and thus adapted its rhetoric accordingly. It deployed a more leftist rhetoric when engaging Alevi Kurds with a strong leftist background and it applied a more nationalist hue in its dealings with sympathisers whose origins were from the heartland of Kurdish nationalism, Mardin and Şırnak. It recognised that bonds of reciprocal trust were not generated by radical speeches or party publications but by shared inter-personal experiences and bolstered by bonds of affection. It accordingly dispersed its

young militants to the impoverished neighbourhoods where they integrated themselves into the daily lives of its sympathisers. The PKK was also sufficiently confident to realise that the emergence of a Kurdish parliamentary party was not a threat to its hegemonic position in the Kurdish struggle but rather a further resource that could be utilised in parallel to its own armed campaign. It utilised the political space opened by HEP and its successors, in terms of political consciousness and the manner it undermined the Turkish state to access middle class and intellectual Kurds which might have otherwise remained outside the fold of the movement.

The PKK's success was such that it integrated itself in the radical political texture of cities like Istanbul. It mobilised internally displaced Kurds, poverty stricken migrants, assimilated Kurds and even won over large amounts of support in neighbourhoods like Gazi, which had long been strongholds of the Turkish revolutionary left. Its adoption of the mantle of the foremost leftist revolutionary group in Turkey also permitted it to acquire a multi-ethnic membership composition. In a brief period of time, starting from scratch the PKK established robust local structures that served as the framework around which its de-territorialised constituency emerged. The quantifiable contribution the PKK's mobilisation in the West had on its war effort can never be known. However if one is to accept sources close to the PKK, which claim that the largest number of PKK recruits in 2010, were from Istanbul (Interview 6, 2012); it shows that the state's policy of draining the sea to isolate fish was an utter failure. It simply relocated the fish into the far more dangerous position of Turkey urban heart.

Conclusion

The PKK evolved from being a small group of student radicals in Ankara in the mid 1970s to a mass guerrilla army with tens of thousands of supporters dispersed across Kurdistan, western Turkey and across Europe less than twenty years later. As well as traversing vastly different spatial environments, in the period of this research the PKK witnessed great changes from the last years of the grand epoch of national liberation movements in the 1970s, the brutality of the 1980 coup d'état and the successive years of military rule, to the global decline of Communism. This thesis does not however, attempt to elaborate any grand narratives, neither of recent Kurdish history nor of the PKK as a movement in the period concerned. It rather concentrates on one dimension of the PKK's emergence and consolidation as an insurgent organisation; its relationship with its supporters and how this has progressed over time and space and the impact it has had on the PKK's repertoire of contention.

In order to achieve this challenging objective, use has been made of the concept of constituency as initially developed by Malthaner (2011a, 2011b & 2014). Although it has little "real world" application or popular recognition, the notion of constituency serves to conceptually organise and clarify the complex array of relations between armed groups and their supporters. The constituency is the main analytical paradigm in the thesis but its underlying relational premise also extends beyond the armed group-supporters binary. The constituency does not emerge in a socio-spatial vacuum; armed groups and their supporters are also engaged in formative interactions with a wide spectrum of institutions and actors such as the state, as well as rival and allied movements present in their immediate social environment. Therefore while remaining cognisant of the principle theoretical focus of the project, the relational impact of these other forces on both the armed group and its supporters was also considered.

In this concluding chapter, the implementation of the concept of constituency will be summarised. Additionally two analytical aspects key to the emergence of the constituency

will also be discussed; the formative impact of the state (Goodwin, 2001) and interactions with other political actors; be they adversaries or allies. The strategies adopted by the movement in response to environmental developments, normative limits and interactions with other social and political actors, i.e. the processes of movement agency which were central to the establishment of its constituency will then be briefly summarised. This concluding chapter will then address the principal theoretical question of the project: in what fashion did the PKK's relationship with its constituency impact its patterns of mobilisation and the types of violence it deployed. It will draw a number of tentative conclusions in this regard and discuss the challenges in identifying causal relationships. It will finally outline a number of areas from whence this project can lead to projects of further empirical and theoretical research.

Constituency

Malthaner has explained that “a relational perspective on violent insurgencies seeks to understand how the actors’ interactions shape the way they act, and how these interactions evolve over time” (2011a: 256). A relational perspective is central to the concept of constituency. A constituency is not an inherent social category itself, by which it can be understood that individuals do not self identify as part of an armed group’s constituency. A constituency is rather a hermeneutic category of social relations which for the purpose of social science analysis, orders the interactions between armed groups and their supporters and sympathisers. It is thus a highly contingent and dynamic concept because although an individual might consistently interact with a movement over time, it is certain that the nature of the interactions change. Heraclitus’ metaphor, “one cannot step twice into the same river” (in Stern, 1991: 581) can be applied to the nature of armed movements’ interactions with their supporters. It can be interpreted as meaning that the experience of the act of stepping in the water changes both the person and the river and, as a consequence, it also the relationship between them. Heraclitus was speaking in relation to the fluidity of broader human phenomena which is even more intensified in the context of armed conflicts. The social processes of war, “the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level [...] sometimes leave profound social changes in their

wake” (Wood, 2008:540). Violence changes individuals; it provokes strong emotional reactions and can consolidate sympathies or enmities. Furthermore violence in conflict situations is multitudinous; it arrives not only from insurgents and incumbents but also revives pre-existing feuds and facilitates ulterior and opportunistic violence (Kalyvas, 2003). Not to mention, the impact of quotidian biographical developments such as growing older, marriage and family dynamics which, notwithstanding the dramatic circumstances of armed conflict, continue to occur.

On the other hand, armed groups themselves are in the permanent throes of change and evolution. Firstly, at the micro-level the high attrition rate ensures that the actors on the ground – if not necessarily more senior figures – are always changing due to death and injury and also at a psychological level by the horrors of witnessing, enduring and inflicting violence (Kalyvas, 2006: 56). At a more macro-level, armed movements evolve according to changes in relative strength in relation to the state and other armed and unarmed actors, degrees of territorial control, their access to resources and also in relation to developments completely outside of their import such as commodity prices and rise and fall of global powers. Importantly armed groups and their constituencies, as this project has shown change by interacting with one another by processes of mutual learning wherein normative limits and thresholds of tolerance are clarified and acknowledged. It must be noted though, that these processes of interaction can both erode and consolidate insurgent support (Malthaner, 2014). The concept of constituency is a means to simplify ever fluid patterns of interactions between actors who by virtue of those very same interactions are also undergoing constant change.

Armed group–constituency relations have been categorised into four distinct groupings: relations of utilitarian social exchange; bonds of kinship; patron-client relationships and friendships; communal identity and lastly relations forged by the processes of mobilisation itself (Malthaner, 2014). Of course, these are ideal types and in reality there is much overlap between them. The concrete realisation of these relations is conditioned by the socio-spatial environment, recalling Waldmann’s observation of the necessity of a “minimum of spatial concentration” (2005:242) for the foundation of a radical community. Indeed, it is true that the provision of social services such as schools and

medical centres demands a strong territorial domination if not outright control by insurgent organisations. Furthermore, kinship and communal relations are more easily consolidated in spatial contexts under the influence of insurgents. Yet, armed movements can maintain constituencies in the absence of territorial control such as in diaspora communities by means of social control.

Following Malthaner's work (2011a, 2011b & 2014), this thesis has acknowledged that armed groups and constituencies interact in given territorial contexts. It has however further elaborated that these bonds are not determined territorially rather influenced by it. Accordingly, when patterns of territorial control are adjusted, the relations between armed movement and constituencies do not simply cease but that they rather take on new forms. Indeed, they can even slip into abeyance only to re-emerge at a subsequent time and even in a different location. Incumbent oppression can in fact consolidate the bonds between them by provoking moral outrage (Wood, 2008: 542) and insurgent acts of violence often become interpreted as ever more legitimate (Malthaner, 2011b:193). Armed group–constituency relations can be described as spatially conditioned but sufficiently flexible to be reconfigured in even vastly different contexts. All of which has to be heavily qualified by the recognition that if armed groups adopt different practises of violence or disregard the normative limits and expectations of their constituencies that relations can deteriorate if not completely rupture as in the case of *Al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya* in Egypt in the 1990s (Malthaner, 2011b). It is also plausible that an armed group's orientation toward its constituency can be diluted if it becomes less dependent on its constituency for material and other resources. Armed movements which acquire access to marketable resources and thus consolidate their financial security or gain external backing could conceivably concede less importance to their support networks. In addition, armed groups can become physically separated from their constituencies as was the case with a number of Turkish leftist and Kurdish movements when they fled into exile in Europe thus diminishing the importance of its territorially rooted constituencies inside Turkey. Accordingly, armed group–constituency relationships should not be considered in a teleological way, relations between them can decline as well as be consolidated. And they should be viewed as relationally constituted rather than territorially defined.

Factors Influencing Constituency Formation

Armed group–constituency relations are not simply a naturally occurring result of particular structural features or an inevitable product of historical processes but forged by the respective orientation and interaction between both relevant parties. Armed groups possess agency, meaning that they make choices as regards how to interact with their potential supporters. As of course do non-militants who can choose, albeit in a more circumscribed fashion, how to engage or not engage with armed groups. The fashion in which movements make use of their agentive capacity in relation to supporters and sympathisers is key to the consolidation of a militant constituency. Although armed group–constituency relations are established by mutually constitutive interactions, they are also conditioned by their socio-spatial environment. Relations between them are influenced by specific instances and practises of movement agency, the nature of the state, and how they engage with other political actors; these three factors will be briefly recapped in this section.

Movement Agency

Movements are consistently faced with decisions in relation to how they interact with external actors, contingencies and structural developments (see Jasper, 2004). In the PKK's case, these interactions have been composed of mechanisms of competitive escalation with its Kurdish and Turkish leftist counterparts (della Porta, 2013); polarisation with right wing movements in the 1970s (McAdam *et al*, 2001); diffusion in terms of geography and of mobilisational repertoires (Alper, 2014 & Soule, 2004) and emotional mechanisms such as fear and fear abatement (Johnston, 2014) and pride (Wood, 2001). In the wider literature there is much focus on insurgent decisions as to whether to escalate campaigns of violence, to seek external allies or to sue for peace; while strategic choices in relation to insurgent support networks are the subject of less analysis. Invariably, movements make decisions which are unpopular and lose them support or even consolidate support for their opponents. However, the manner in which movements reflect upon the popular impact of their strategies varies widely. Attempts to forcibly implement insurgent

imperatives can result in movements becoming detached from their constituency and strengthen opposition to them. Alternatively, movements can reconsider their strategies and frame their demands in different way, subtly adjust them or even completely abandon certain policies.

The PKK adopted a reflexive position in relation to a number of its policies. In terms of its general framing, once it became clear that its overtly Marxist focus was somewhat unintelligible if not objectionable to large swathes of Kurdish society; it re-framed it in more Nationalist terms. The PKK similarly discarded any public repudiation of religion in order to not dissuade religiously minded Kurds from mobilising. When it became clear that forced conscription was generating discontent, it completely abandoned it as a policy. Although, it did not entirely cease attacks on Village Guards in the wake of popular concerns, it drastically reduced such attacks and open massacres of civilians associated with Village Guards were halted. These are some brief examples of strategic decisions taken by the PKK which were undoubtedly informed by the reaction and/or expectations of its constituency. This is not to suggest that the PKK pursued only policies which were supported by its constituency but rather that it factored its constituency's response into its strategic calculations and on occasion sacrificed short term objectives to the long term necessity of maintaining popular support.

The State

As more structurally minded theorists such as Goodwin (2001) and Wickham-Crowley (1993) have proposed, the state does bear a huge impact on the emergence and development of armed groups. The state should of course not be reified or viewed as a homogenous coherent institution but rather as a "significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules and practices cohabiting in limiting, tension ridden, often contradictory relation to each other" (Brown in Aretxaga, 2003:398). The Turkish state has played a central if not always consistent role in the PKK's mobilisation. The state, its practises of repression and assimilation and even its efforts to obtain Kurdish support are present in all the socio-spatial contexts discussed in this thesis. Historic Turkish

repression and neglect of Kurds and Kurdistan resulted in a trans-generational narrative of Kurdish suffering; a narrative which was easily incorporated into the discourse of the PKK. The PKK's initial mobilisation in the late 1970s, took place in a context of a reduced state presence, it was thus able to construct networks of supporters and sympathisers with relative ease in comparison to later periods. The 1980 coup d'état radically rearticulated relations between Kurdish society and the state. State brutality and mass torture reinvigorated the narrative of Kurdish victimhood rendering it of immediate physical and emotional importance. It no longer consisted of stories of historic betrayals and periodic violence in remote mountain villages which characterised relations between Kurds and the state but direct personal experiences of torture, humiliation and death. The 1980 military takeover not only popularly confirmed the PKK's view that the state could not be reformed but also generated renewed and intense personal grievance against the state, thus facilitating the expansion of PKK support.

In subsequent periods, the state provided incentives to potential PKK supporters to remain loyal to the state through the Village Guard system. The system did in fact hinder the PKK's efforts but in the long run Village Guard's violent excesses alienated many non-aligned Kurds. It also furnished the PKK with proximate military attainable targets thereby increasing its military coherence which was put to subsequent use against the state forces. Counter-insurgent policies of the late 1990s, including targeted assassinations and torture did successfully inhibit the PKK's armed campaign and ultimately led to its ceasefire but at a huge human and political price. The forced deportation of millions of Kurds further delegitimised the state and engendered such bitterness that the PKK's campaign of violence was condoned and lionised by huge numbers of Kurds. Accordingly, the Turkish state's tactical measures did indeed militarily weaken the PKK but favoured the consolidation of its support. Remarkably the PKK's constituency expanded even after its military decline and the unprecedented demographic re-organisation of the Kurdish people, highlighting the resilience of armed group–constituency relations.

Rival and/or Allied Movements

The presence of ulterior movements can impinge on the consolidation of armed movement–constituency relations. Interactions between movements targeting the same reservoir of supporters and resources can lead to competition and processes of violent outbidding (De Fazio, 2014). It can lead to radicalisation as movements adopt ever more radical stances to distinguish themselves from others, the hardening of movement boundaries and an end to multiple memberships which often serve as a de-escalating measure. As per the logic of the so-called “strategy of tension” (della Porta, 1995:60-61), inter-movement violence can be also used by the state as a pretext for repression. While hostile interactions with adversarial movements often lead to spirals of escalation, tit-for-tat campaigns of mutual violence and radicalisation. This can result in deterring moderate engagement and simultaneously consolidating the resolve of more committed militants.

In the case at hand, the presence of alternative revolutionary or Kurdish groups occurred in two geographically and chronologically distinct contexts. In the mid 1970s, the PKK relocated to Kurdistan in part because of the preponderance of rival left wing movements and limited scope for expansion in Ankara. Upon returning to Kurdistan, they discovered that the political scene was also populated by a number of other Kurdish movements. It would be overly simplistic to categorise the PKK as having had poor relations with all of them but relations with some, most notably KUK, were characterised by bloody violence. Interactions between the Kurdish groups were a catalyst for the PKK’s evolution to an armed movement. These bitter clashes created lingering enmities within the Kurdish community and most likely restricted the PKK’s mobilisational capacity in subsequent periods. After the 1980 coup, the PKK emerged as the only significant revolutionary group as its erstwhile rivals demobilised, merged on an individual basis with the PKK or operated exclusively in exile. The only other period where the PKK was forced to engage with significant competition from other groups was in the course of its mobilisation in the 1990s in the cities of western Turkey. However, unlike the 1970s it adopted a compromising attitude in toward them. This is likely also because the PKK was initially rather weak and the leftist groups were also in relative decline and neither could thus afford debilitating

conflicts. The PKK even conceded the traditional revolutionary stronghold Gaziosmanpaşa, heavily populated with Kurds, to its rivals and avoided any concerted mobilisation there until the late 1990s. This less antagonistic approach proved fruitful for the PKK and it eventually surpassed its left wing counterparts as the strongest armed organisation in the cities of Turkey. In the absence of reciprocal campaigns of violence many leftist militants drifted into the PKK. The PKK's constituency thus expanded to encompass many traditional sympathisers of leftist organisations.

The Causal Argument

The principal question of this thesis queries if the PKK's relationship with its constituency influenced its mobilisation and the patterns of violence it deployed. This question was premised on its grounding in the empirical clarification of a number of elements: the manner in which the PKK developed its constituency; how the constituency changed over time and the space; and changes in the PKK's repertoire of contention. Thus it is in fact an explicitly causal analysis; in what way did one aspect of the PKK mobilisation – its relationship with its supporters – impinge on another, its repertoire of contention. Causal analysis proposes that “the cause of event X is the minimum set of antecedents that [1] actually occurred, [2] is generally sufficient to produce events of type X, and [3] without which X would not have occurred in this setting” (Tilly drawing on Stinchcombe 1993: 1602). However, the case under analysis is conceptually much more complicated. The ‘event’ to be explained is not in fact an ‘event’ but a broad movement repertoire differentiated between how it is formally stabilised by the vertices of the PKK and actually realised on the ground by its militants. As has been detailed in the preceding chapters, patterns of PKK violence and contestation also varied across spatial contexts and according to a range of factors not connected to its relations with its constituency. It is therefore extremely difficult to exclusively argue at a general level that X demands by its constituency led to Y changes in behaviour by the PKK.

To recap, causal mechanisms are predicted to “recur in different combinations with different aggregate consequences in varying historical settings” (McAdam *et al*, 2001:24),

There is intense debate and many varying definitions of causal mechanisms questioning if they can be analysed at the individual, structural or collective levels (Mahoney, 2001: 581). Neither has any consensus been reached whether causal mechanisms are directly observable or if their presence can be merely inferred (Gerring, 2008:166). It has been affirmed that “causal relations must be inferred because, following Hume, [...] causality can never be directly observed” (Kiser & Hechter, 1991:4). Other authors have explained that causal mechanisms are “ultimately unobservable physical, social or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate” (George & Bennett, 2005:137). Unsurprisingly, this has also proved to be the case in this project. The challenge of identifying causal relationships in relation to the PKK is particularly difficult because of its structure and the role played by its charismatic and unimpeachable leader. The PKK leader Öcalan was based in Syria while its guerrillas were located inside the borders of Turkey in often isolated rural areas. Until the 1990s, communication with the fighting units was erratic and there was little or no direct control by the movement’s upper echelons on developments on the ground. Guerrilla commanders were made aware of movement objectives but not given precise instructions on how to realise them. This form of localised autonomy ensured that movement directives such as conscription and the campaign against Village Guards were complied with inconsistently across Kurdistan as per how each individual unit decided to pursue them.

Over time it became clear that certain PKK policies were unpopular with its constituency and they were subsequently abandoned. If one takes for example the issue of conscription; it could ordinarily be offered as relatively straightforward proof of the causal influence of its constituency on the PKK’s repertoire of contention. However, it is not quite as simple as that. Decisions taken by a spatially distant and disconnected leadership generated difficulties on the ground for its fighting units. Once it became clear to the leadership that policies such as conscription were deeply unpopular they were formally renounced by the movement in 1990. However, the leadership shifted responsibility for the failure of some of its policies on the shoulders of local commanders, such as PKK commander Halil (Cemal) Kaya who was executed in 1988 reputedly for his efforts to implement official movement policy (Marcus, 2007: 144). Credit for the revision of PKK strategies is popularly afforded to the same leadership which designed them, most notably

Abdullah Öcalan. As discussed in Chapter 4, Öcalan is a charismatic leader and in simple terms, it seems that all the movement's achievements are attributed to his leadership while any of its failings are imputed to the rank and file. In circles sympathetic to the PKK, the rearticulation of movement strategies is not understood as a result of pressure from below but rather derived from the foresight of its leader. In a similar fashion, the PKK's drift away from Marxism is attributed to Öcalan's insights when in practice the cautious deployment of leftist rhetoric was a *de facto* movement practise on the ground from the 1980s. However, the absence of public declarations by the PKK similar to that issued by Sheikh Fadlallah – a high ranking cleric associated with Hezbollah - in relation to the unpopularity of suicide attacks and large scale assaults which resulted in many local casualties in south Lebanon amongst its constituency (Malthaner, 2011b: 206), does not necessarily invalidate the findings.

The combination of the dynamic and fragmented nature of the relationship between the movement and its constituency and the nature of the PKK as a movement headed by a charismatic leader has rendered it arguably impossible to outline robust causal mechanisms. Yet, there is a strong relationship between popular discontent and subsequent modifications of PKK policy. Two of the most pronounced instances of PKK changes in strategy were the abandonment of conscription and the more selective targeting of Village Guards. In addition, although not in response to specific discontent but rather in relation to a disjunction with prevailing social norms and expectations, the manner in which the PKK softened its position in relation to religion and made nuanced use of nationalist or leftist frames according to its audience also bolsters the findings of this thesis. However, that is not to argue that the PKK simply re-adjusted its positions to correspond with those of the Kurdish masses. It has been outlined that the relationship between armed groups and their constituencies is mutually constitutive and characterised by a form of dialogue notwithstanding evolving power discrepancies. It is important not to over-compensate for the prevailing academic approaches which neglect civilian agency and power by affording the constituency excessive attention, at the expense of the agency of armed groups. The PKK has successfully revolutionised social relations in Kurdistan and diffused a re-defined understanding of Kurdish identity. It has managed to introduce a radical reordering of the role of women in Kurdish society. It has overthrown prevailing social hierarchies and forged

entirely different expectations of horizontal political mobilisation in contrast to the vertically organised mobilisations of the past. And arguably, most significantly it has created a horizontal understanding of Kurdish identity which traverses religio-sectarian divisions, linguistic differences and has overcome tribal fragmentation.

How then can changes in PKK behaviour be imputed to the preferences of its constituency? It has been suggested that in the absence of directly observable mechanisms that in order to distinguish between rival causal explanations there are three necessary elements: plausibility, limited time lag between cause and effect, and empirical implications (Kiser & Hechter, 1991:6). Firstly, in terms of plausibility, it is entirely plausible that an armed group heavily dependent on its constituency for material resources and political legitimacy would re-calibrate its strategies according to the normative limits of its constituency. The PKK is just one of many armed groups which have incorporated the expectations of its supporters into its strategic decisions; as attested by examples such as the indigenisation of the EZLN (see O'Connor and Oikonomakis, forthcoming) and the IRA (Collins, 1997). Additionally there was also a limited time lag between constituency discontent and strategic adjustment of movement policy in relation to the practise of forced recruitment to the PKK. Shortly after opposition to conscription became apparent, it was abandoned as a practise. Although, it took longer for this decision to be formally sanctified at its Second National Conference and Fourth General Congress in 1990, this was related to the logistical challenges of safely gathering the requisite insurgent leaders together for the assembly. Furthermore, the practise was never rigorously implemented to begin with by commanders involved in the fighting, which were aware that this policy would harm their relations with their immediate constituency. Finally, if one considers the empirical implications of why the PKK ceased military conscription, the explanation that it was due to its constituency's concerns is convincing. Although, as discussed in chapter IV, many forced recruits were simply ill suited to the insurgent life, Marcus' argument that PKK was willing "to take into account the demands and criticisms of the people it wanted to represent" (2007:119) is persuasive. Potential alternative explanations could argue that by the time the PKK abandoned conscription it was attracting sufficient numbers of motivated volunteers so as to not require conscripted ones. Yet, it seems improbable that were it not for the wider unpopularity of the policy, the PKK would have dismissed the possibility of a guaranteed

stream of fighters. Even reluctant recruits can be trained into becoming good fighters and the PKK possessed the means to provide such training in its camps across the Iraqi border. Conscripted to the ranks of the PKK also precluded conscription (for males) into the Turkish army thus strengthening its own ranks while simultaneously weakening those of its adversary. In addition, the emergence of a Kurdish army in opposition to the Turkish one also furnished the movement with a degree of 'state like' legitimacy and was laden with symbolic importance. Nonetheless, the PKK abandoned the strategy. Forced recruitment was a counter-productive strategy when the alternative possibility was the short term sacrifice of the number of militants which it could put in the field in exchange for the long term support of its constituency.

This project is sufficiently modest in scope to recognise that the PKK's relationship with its constituency has not been the exclusive determinant of its strategic choices. Alternative aspects such as the relative balances of forces and international developments have also weighed upon the PKK's strategic decision-making. This thesis has simply argued that the considerations of its constituency and the PKK's intent to maintain good relations with it were also part of the strategic equation. A definitive causal relationship linking the expectations and normative limits of the constituency and the PKK's repertoire of contention has not proved possible to find. However, a strong relationship linking strategic changes in the PKK's repertoire of contention and the demands and expectations of its constituency has been outlined. The detailed evidence produced in the course of this thesis has provided a sufficient basis to conclude that its constituency did indeed have an impact on how the PKK mobilised.

Avenues for Further Study

The project opens up a huge number of possibilities for further research. As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, currently the field of Kurdish studies is flourishing across a range of subject matters. Research focusing on the PKK and the ongoing conflict which was a topic long neglected is enjoying a period of unprecedented academic interest (Romano & Gurses, 2014, Baser 2014 and Gunes & Zeydanlioğlu, 2014). This project

has focused on but one element of the PKK's mobilisation which can be expanded on in a number of fashions. The PKK's relationship with its constituency could be spatially disaggregated whereby the manner in which the PKK operated in specific locations could be analysed in detail. As was heretofore mentioned on numerous occasions, the spatial environments where the PKK mobilised were hugely contrasting. Undoubtedly, interesting internal or external comparisons or even single case anthropological projects on the various locations - specific towns or provinces - of the PKK's mobilisation would generate a huge amount of empirical data that could be used to verify the hypothetical arguments advanced in this thesis. Such a spatially concentrated analysis would most likely provide sufficient empirical data to develop robust causal mechanisms at the micro-level. Alternatively instead of a spatial analysis, an organisational focus on different elements of the movement itself could serve as a means to investigate how the PKK interacted with its constituency. One could focus on the ERNK's sub-organisations such as the Kurdish Alevi Foundation and examine in detail its campaign to mobilise Kurdish Alevis and assemble a more inclusive vision of "Kurdishness". This project is also chronologically delimited and any analysis of the maintenance of its constituency since Öcalan's capture and the revival of the armed struggle in the 2000s would be extremely worthwhile. A more intensive analysis of the movement over briefer periods of the movement's existence, such as the years between the coup and the launch of the insurgency in 1984 would also likely prove interesting.

At a theoretical level this project offers an immense array of possibilities for future research. An obvious direction would be to analyse the notion of constituency in the case of armed groups with lesser dependency on its supporters as a result of enjoying external backing of a neighbouring power or access to marketable resources. Comparative analyses would also facilitate a thorough examination of the concept's rigour. The period analysed in this project with the exception of the pre-coup years and to a lesser degree in western Turkey in the 1990s and the area of Dersim, was characterised by the PKK enjoying a form of revolutionary monopoly in the absence of rival movements. It would prove most interesting to analyse the emergence of armed movement-constituency relations in a context with a plurality of revolutionary groups to analyse how the processes of constituency building interact with escalatory spirals with rivals and opponents. The late 1970s in Turkey provides the perfect exemplar of a political environment populated by multiple armed actors and has

been hitherto remarkably understudied. Research focusing on multiple competing movements would extend the relational basis of this approach beyond the armed movement-constituency dyad. It would also be interesting to analyse the processes whereby successful revolutionary movements such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua institutionalise (or not) their relations with the constituency. A final other element of potential relevance would be to analyse the consolidation of armed group constituency relations in either more authoritarian or more democratic states. How the formation of an insurgent constituency affected by contexts where there are no legal opportunities for political expression or where there are numerous institutional options for expressing political dissent?

Future research could be also improved by a greater engagement with primary source material produced by the PKK itself. For a variety of reasons ranging from time to linguistic capacities, it has not been possible to access much of the PKK's primary literature for this thesis. An astute parsing of the digital archives of PKK newspapers such as *Serxwebûn* and even newspapers sympathetic to the Kurdish cause such as *Azadiya Welat* and *Özgür Gündem* would likely furnish some insights on the PKK's internal decision making processes. Another rich source would be the movement's own archives. However, negotiating access to them is difficult if not impossible for researchers unaffiliated to the movement. An alternative remedy to the absence of archival sources would be to interview high level relevant figures within the movement. This is again a logistically challenging task as many of these senior members are deceased, imprisoned or scattered across the world. As past interviews with high ranking PKK members have shown, it also might not necessarily prove a fruitful way to gain insights into the decision making processes of the movement²⁰⁷. Experienced militants are usually very disciplined from an ideological perspective and unlikely to stray from the party line. Furthermore, insurgent primary sources whether oral or written, are notoriously self serving - although interesting in their own right - they do not automatically facilitate a more accurate understanding of the relationship between armed movements and their constituencies.

²⁰⁷ A number of interviews have been conducted with Abdullah Öcalan prior to his arrest by Gunter (1998), Kutschera (1999b) as well as by an array of Turkish reporters compiled in *Seçme Röportajlar* (1994).

Nonetheless, the incorporation of such material would bolster any future research.

This project has embraced the relational and spatially contextualised approach pioneered and adopted by Malthaner (2011a&b), della Porta (2013), Bosi, Demetriou & Malthaner (2014) which has proposed to focus on civilians and their interactions with armed groups, beyond the conventional understanding of civilians as passive victims of insurgent violence. This school of thinking remains in its early stages and undoubtedly the concept of constituency and its underlying relational premises will be vigorously examined and ultimately refined as it is more widely applied. Accordingly, the application of this broad approach to future research in place of more structurally or rational choice oriented methods whether in a comparative format or with new case studies already indicates an extensive programme of research.

Concluding Remarks

The thesis has not sought to legitimise or downplay the PKK's practices of violence but rather to contextualise it. The PKK is responsible for the deaths of thousands and it is notable for the imposition of a cruel disciplinary regime within the movement which has led to an unknown number of executed militants. The PKK's repertoire of contention is extremely nuanced, reflecting prevailing balances of power, changing socio-spatial environments and its interactions with its constituency. In addition, while its violent actions understandably attract a disproportionate share of attention, the PKK's engagement with its constituency was largely characterised by the absence of violence. Nonetheless, the PKK has not realised any of its revolutionary objectives; it has however succeeded in avoiding defeat and consolidated itself as a "persistent insurgent group" (Goodwin, 2001:219). Its longevity is remarkable if one considers the diverging fates of its leftist revolutionary counterparts of the 1970s. Those that have achieved success such as the ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa or the Sandinistas in Nicaragua (particularly in its current period in government) have sullied their emancipatory credentials by their subsequent behaviour in power. Other insurgencies such as the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo*/Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army) in

Colombia have become marginalised in both a political and geographic sense, capable of surviving but with little hope of enacting societal change. Many others such as the Tamil Tigers and the plethora of Turkish and Kurdish groups discussed in chapter III, were destroyed or currently exist in name only. The PKK has avoided the destiny of its erstwhile contemporaries, not by detaching itself from broader society or retreating into Kurdistan's impregnable mountains but by integrating itself ever closer with Kurdish society. It has done so by wedding a resolute guerrilla army with a broad political mobilisation which has embraced much of Kurdish society thus providing the social support necessary to ensure its continued existence in the face of ever present state repression. This paper suggests that the PKK's 'success' is a result, less of the qualities and steadfastness of its inner cadres but rather how the PKK's core incorporated and utilised the strength of its periphery.

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Appendix I: Interview Index

Interview 1: 2 February 2011, Germany (unrecorded) – Karan & Xanem, two German based Kurdish student activists.

Interview 2: 16 July 2011, Germany, (unrecorded) – Karan and Kurdish female XYK member.

Interview 3: 13 July 2011, Germany, (unrecorded) - German member of the Freedom for Öcalan Initiative.

Interview 4: 25 August 2011, Germany, (recorded) – German based KOMKAR representative.

Interview 5: 25 August 2011, Germany (recorded) – Two German based KOMCIWAN activists.

Interview 6: 3 September 2011, Belgium (recorded) - Female European based, senior BDP representative.

Interview 7: January 6 2012, Germany (recorded) – German born XYK activist.

Interview 8: 27 March 2012, Istanbul (unrecorded) – Baran, Kurdish academic of Dersim origins.

Interview 9: 30 March 2012, Istanbul (recorded) – Daham, ERNK commander and political prisoner of eleven years and Sefer, YCK activist and political prisoner of four years.

Interview 10: 31 March 2012, Istanbul (recorded) – Herro originally from Malazgirt, son of PKK militia member and victim of forced migration.

Interview 11: 3 April 2012, Istanbul (recorded) – Welat, teacher from Silwan.

Interview 12: 3 April 2012, Istanbul (recorded) – Kazaw student from Kars.

***Interview 13:** 7 April 2012, Istanbul (unrecorded) - Bejan Matur, Kurdish poet and writer and Abdullah Demirbas, Mayor of Sur, Diyarbakir.

Interview 14: May 15 2012, Germany (unrecorded) – Abdullah originally from Bingöl, German based PKK sympathiser.

Interview 15: 15 September 2012, Ankara (unrecorded) – Renas, civil servant of Kurdish-Arab background, originally from Kiziltepe.

Interview 16: 12 September 2012, Kiziltepe (unrecorded) – Four men in late twenties and early thirties.

Interview 17: 12 September 2012, Kiziltepe (unrecorded) – Ciya, victim of forced migration.

Interview 18: 13 September 2012, Mardin (unrecorded) – Ahmet, PKK sympathiser from Mardin.

Interview 19: 13 September 2012, Mardin (unrecorded) – Botan, father of a number of PKK guerrillas and a victim of forced migration.

Interview 20: 14 September 2012, Mardin (unrecorded) – Berfin, father of PKK guerrilla

from Mardin.

***Interview 21:** 17 September 2012, Diyarbakir (recorded) – Salih Sezgin, PKK political prisoner and author.

Interview 22: 18 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – two females from Diyarbakir and Bingöl.

Interview 23: 19 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – Bahoz from Adiyaman.

Interview 24: 20 & 21 September 2012 Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – Mazlum from Mardin, former political prisoner and TKSP activist.

Interview 25: 21 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – Suran from Kulp, victim of forced migration.

Interview 26: 22 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – Karsaz an Islamist from Siirt.

Interview 27: 24 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – Aram a guerrilla and former political prisoner from Diyarbakir.

Interview 28: 25 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – Mazlumder activist from Mardin.

***Interview 29:** 25 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) - Zübeyde Zümrüt, BDP Diyarbakir.

Interview 30: 26 London (unrecorded) – PSK/Komkar activist from Silwan.

Interview 31: 21 September 2012, Diyarbakir (unrecorded) – former political prisoner.

Interview 32: 13 December 2012, Germany (recorded) – Perwer, PKK sympathiser from Cizre.

Interview 33: 10 January 2013, Germany (recorded) – Rasul from Nusaybin.

Interview 34: 13 February 2013, Germany (recorded) – Zar from Dersim, founder member of Kurdish Alevi Federation.

Interview 35: 18 February 2013, Belgium (recorded) – Two former guerrillas, Azad from Bismil and Faqi from Dersim.

Interview 36: 19 February 2013, Belgium (recorded) – Serdar a former political prisoner from Urfa and current KNK member.

Interview 37: 20 February 2013, Belgium (recorded) – Former political prisoner and academic.

Interview 38: 22 February 2013, Belgium (recorded) – Rojan, a former guerrilla from Izmir.

Interview 39: 26 July 2013, Germany (recorded) – Karker, a Yezidi former guerrilla.

Interview 40: 25 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Arjen, a former PKK political prisoner from Muş.

Interview 41: 25 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Mervan from a Kawa supporting family from Çatak.

Interview 42: 26 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Zeynel from Erzurum and a former PKK prisoner.

Interview 43: 28 October 2013, Istanbul (unrecorded) – a former Kawa supporter from Adiyaman.

Interview 44: 28 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Farhad a former PKK political prisoner from Malazgirt.

Interview 45: 28 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Rang former PKK political prisoner originally from Sivas.

Interview 46: 28 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Jiloan a former guerrilla from Bismil.

Interview 47: 30 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Darin a former Halkin Kurtulus activist from Varto.

Interview 48: 30 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Mehmed a PKK supporter from Adiyaman.

Interview 49: 30 October 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Besna a female PKK supporter from Kulp.

Interview 50: 1 November 2013, Istanbul (unrecorded) – Sezer a former ERNK organiser, guerrilla and political prisoner.

Interview 51: 3 November 2013, Istanbul (recorded) – Bejan the daughter of a tribal leader involved in the Dersim rebellion.

All names with the exception of those with an asterisk* have been changed to pseudonyms.

Appendix II: Glossary

Acronym	Original Name	English Translation
ADYÖD	Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği	Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi	Motherland Party
ANC	African National Congress	
AP	Adalet Partisi	Justice Party (Est. 1961)
ARGK	Artêşa Rizgariya Gelê Kurdistan	People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan
AYÖD	Ankara Yüksek Öğretim Derneği	Association for Higher Education in Ankara
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi	Peace and Democracy Party
Bir-Kom	Birlik Komitesi	Common Committee
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi	The Republican People's Party
CKMP	Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi	Republican Peasants' Nation Party
DDGB	Devrimci Demokratik Güç Birliği	Revolutionary Democratic United Force
DDKD	Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Dernekleri	Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association
DDKO	Devrimci Dogu Kultur Ocaklari	Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (Est. 1969)
DEV-GENC	Devrimci Gençlik	Federation of Revolutionary Youth
DEV-YOL	Devrimci Yol Hareketi	Revolutionary Path/Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front

DEV-SOL	Devrimci Sol	Revolutionary Left
DFLP	Al-Jabha al-Dimuqratiya Li-Tahrir Filastin	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DHKP-C	Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party–Front
DISK	Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu	Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions
DYÖKD	Diyarbakır Yüksek Öğrenim Kültür Derneği	The Cultural Higher Education Association of Diyarbakır
DP	Demokrat Parti	Democrat Party (Est. 2007, ANAP+ DYP)
---	Demokrat Parti	Democrat Party (Est. 1930)
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi	True Path Party (Est. 1983)
ERNK	Eniye Rizgariye Navata Kurdistan	National Liberation Front of Kurdistan
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna	Basque Homeland and Freedom
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army
FKBDC	Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi	Unified Resistance Front against Fascism
FLN	Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional	National Liberation Forces
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé	Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallaha
HRK	Hazen Rizgariya Kurdistan	Kurdistan Freedom Brigades
IRA	Óglaigh na hÉireann	Irish Republican Army
IP	İşçi Partisi	Workers Party
KDP	Partîya Demokrata Kurdistanê	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Est. 1946)

KIP	Kürdistan İşçi Partisi	
KNK	Kongra Netewiya Kurdistan	Kurdish National Congress
---	KOMCIWAN	Youth Wing of KOMKAR
KOMKAR	Yekitiya Komelên Kurdistan	
KTTC	Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti	Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress
KUK	Kurdistan Ulusal Kurtulusculari	National Liberation of Kurdistan
---	Kawa	Kurdish Proletarian Union
MGK	Millî Güvenlik Konseyi	National Security Council
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi	Nationalist Action Party
MIT	Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı	Turkish National Intelligence Unit
MLKP	<i>Marksist-Leninist Komünist Partisi</i>	Marxist-Leninist Communist Party
MSP	Millî Selâmet Partisi	National Salvation Party
ORK	Ordiya Rizgariya Kurdistanê	
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
PKK	Partiya Karkaren-i Kurdistan	Kurdistan Workers Party
PRK	Rizgari	Liberation
PLO		Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PPKK	Partiya Pêşenga Karkerên Kurdistan or Sivancilar	Kurdish Vanguard Workers Party
PSK	Partiya Sosyalîst a Kurdistan	Kurdish Socialist Party
	Rizgari	Liberation
RP	Refah Partisi	The Welfare Party
SHP	Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti	Social Democratic People's Party

---	Stêrka Sor/ Beş Parçacılar	Red Star
THKO	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu	People's Liberation Army of Turkey
TIKKO	Türkiye İşçi ve Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu	Workers' Peasants Liberation Army of Turkey
TİP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi	Workers Party of Turkey
TKP	Türkiye Komünist Partisi	Turkish Communist Party
TKP-ML	Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist	Turkish Communist Party Marxist-Leninist
TKDP		Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party
TKSP	Türkiye Kürdistanı Sosyalist Partisi / Özgürlük Yolu Têkoşîn	Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan
TÖB-DER	Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği	Association of All Teachers Unity and Solidarity
TMMOB	Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
UKO	Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu	National Liberation Army
YCK	Yekîtiya Ciwanên Kurdistan	The Union of Kurdish Youth
YJA-Star	Yekiniya Jinên Azad-Star	Free Women's Units
YJWK	Yekîtiya Jinên Welatparêzên Kurdistan	Union of Patriotic Women of Kurdistan
YKWK	Yekîtiya Karkerên Welatparêzên Kurdistan	Union of Patriotic Workers of Kurdistan