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The Transformation of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party): Exploring Domestic, Regional, and Global Dynamics

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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PKK (KURDISTAN WORKERS' PARTY):

EXPLORING DOMESTIC, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PKK (KURDISTAN WORKERS' PARTY): EXPLORING DOMESTIC, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL DYNAMICS

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The main purpose of this study is to explore the underlying factors behind the political and ideological transformation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) since its foundation. Through the detailed analysis of the role of Turkey's internal versus external factors on the evolution of the PKK over time, this work finds that changing political developments in the Middle East were more influential than Turkey's shifting domestic political environment. Hypothesis testing revealed that the 1991 Gulf War, 2003 Iraq War, changing political dynamics of the Middle East following Syria's Arab Spring, and policy changes worldwide implemented after the 9/11 terrorist attacks played determining role in the PKK's shifting profile over time. Turkey's political sphere regarding the Kurdish issue; however, fell short in providing overarching explanation over the terrorist organization's changing ultimate goal. Findings showed that the terrorist organization's ultimate goal and its concomitant strategies led the Turkish government to adjust its counterterrorism policies rather than vice versa, which indicates the importance of the external factors and the PKK's capability to keep up with the changing regional and international realities.

Data were collected through the study of Ocalan's prison writings, his defense texts, organization's official documents, reports and final declaration of PKK congresses and conferences, statements of PKK cadres, and the pro-PKK media outlets.

The findings indicate that the intertwined projects of democratic republic, democratic confederalism, and democratic autonomy in the last decade as well as the goal of a separate Kurdish state before 1999 resulted from the detailed analysis of changing regional and international conjuncture by the leadership of terrorist organization, especially jailed Ocalan.

To my parents and family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Why has the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan- PKK) been changing its ultimate goal and strategies almost every ten years since its creation in 1978? What are the underlying factors behind this transformation? Can changes in the domestic arena provide overarching explanation about this transformation of the PKK, which predominantly carries out terrorist activities in Turkey? If not, what are the other factors? To what extent do the 1991 Gulf War and 2003 Iraq War have an impact on the PKK's change? Do the changing political realities in the Middle East that have influenced the political sphere in Syria, Iran, and Iraq following the Arab Spring have impact on the overarching strategies of the terrorist organization? The answers to these questions will help comprehend the profile of the PKK.

The PKK is designated internationally as an ethnic insurgent and terrorist organization, operating especially in the Middle East and EU. It emerges as the most significant factor in the last three decades that has complicated the Kurdish problem. Capitalizing on the Kurdish issue for its cause, the PKK has caused over 30,000 casualties as well as immeasurable economic loss in Turkey. Turkey has been among the major victims of terrorism attacks worldwide. This has far-reaching effects on regional political stability and international relations in the Middle East. It even moved Turkey to the brink of war with Syria in the 1990s. With its transnational criminal network ranging from the Middle East to Europe, it has been one of the most active worldwide narco-criminals. Considering all these factors, one can argue that its terrorist activities do not

only have domestic implications, but also international implications that threaten regional and global security. Then, why does the PKK, which has international implications, need to revise its ultimate goal?

The PKK officially declared its ultimate goal five times in its history via its pro-PKK media outlets. It started out as a Marxist-Leninist separatist organization, demanding an independent Kurdistan to pioneer the spread of socialism in the 1980s. However, in the 1990s it continued its armed struggle in the hope of creating an independent Kurdistan comprising southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, but dropping the socialist ideology into the background. Since the capture of its leader, Ocalan, in 1999, it sought to realize the goal of democratic republic in Turkey, democratic confederation in the so-called Kurdistan-which refers to some parts of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, and northern Syria- where the Kurdish population prevails, and, in the summer of 2010, democratic autonomy[1] in the southeastern Turkey.

It is also noteworthy to note the casual link between the PKK's ultimate goal and political developments in the Middle East. Founded in the Cold War era, the PKK's second period coincides with the end of the cold war and post-Gulf War of 1991 period in the Middle East. The third and fourth periods correspond to the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the US invasion of Iraq. This dissertation is, thus, built on the assumption that internal factors fall short in explaining this change in PKK's ultimate goal over time. Given an issue of significant importance to Turkey and to the international relations of the Middle East, this dissertation will strive to answer the question "how has PKK changed over time?" and "what has caused these changes?"

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[1] It was declared in its official website: Firat News Agency, "Pkk Is Ready to Declare Democratic Autonomy, Says Karayilan," http://en.firatnews.com/index.php?rupel=article&nuceID=276.(Accessed December 13, 2010).

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The main purpose of this dissertation is to analyze a specific ethnic insurgency, namely the PKK. More specifically, it examines changes in the PKK's goals and tactics and aims to find out what has caused these changes in the evolution of PKK over time. I will strive to investigate and answer these research questions: "How and why has the PKK transformed ideologically and politically over time? To what extent have internal and external factors transformed the PKK? Have changes in the domestic, regional, and international arena shaped the PKK's ultimate goal and concomitant tactics over time?

The dependent variable is Kurdish autonomy vs. a separate Kurdish state. In particular, these goals are an independent Kurdish state based on a Marxist-Leninist ideology, a federation of Kurds and Turks, "democratic republic", "democratic confederation" in the region, and "democratic autonomy"[2] in southeastern Turkey. Its tactics vary but are not limited to indiscriminate attacks, exploitation of Kurdish nationalism, protracted popular war, urban-warfare strategy, suicide bombing, transnational strategy, civil disobedience, and the like. The main independent variables are changes in the domestic, regional, and international environment. Domestic factors are economic and political development, the democratization process, and counter-terrorism policies. Regional factors are political stability and the democratization process in Iraq, and the US involvement in the Middle East. International factors are the pre and post-cold war era and the 9-11 terrorist attacks and subsequent developments, such as war on terrorism policies. In this regard, the hypotheses are:

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[2] Ocalan elaborates it in detail in PKK, "Democratic Autonomy Is the Real Agenda of the Kurds," http://www.pkkonline.com/en/index.php?sys=article&artID=63 (Accessed January, 1, 2011).

H1: Increased democratization efforts in Turkey decreases PKK's popular support.

H2: The September 11 attacks have increased anti-terrorism policies worldwide that helped constrain the PKK.

H3: The greater the democratization of Iraq, the less likely is a Kurdish state.

H4: The stronger the US-Turkish relations are, the weaker the PKK.

H5: The better the relationship between Turkey and its neighboring states, the weaker PKK with regard to external support.

The main, broad assumption of this work is that internal factors cannot, in and of themselves, explain enough about how the PKK has changed. Rather, it is critical to consider regional and international factors in the evolution of PKK over time. Thus, it is assumed that researchers should carry out regional and international level analysis in addition to the state level analysis so as to understand the evolution of ethnic insurgency and make comprehensive suggestions on how to deal with it. From the policy-making perspective, this work aims at helping one realize the importance of regional and international factors besides the internal factors on ethnic terrorism, and thus assist decision makers in implementing more effective counterterrorism policies by taking into account the international and regional dimensions of ethnic insurgency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main focus of the literature review will address the evolution of the PKK. This study will review three main sources of the literature on Kurdish nationalism, the Kurdish problem, and PKK terrorism for two reasons: first, the PKK is seen as one of the most influential factors that contribute to the evolution of Kurdish nationalism and that radicalized the Kurdish issue. Second, the PKK is recognized by the international community as a terrorist organization. This dissertation will add to the literature review in

three ways: First, the existing literature focuses mainly on either the Kurdish problem[3],

Kurdish nationalism[4], or the PKK's methods, objectives, and its terrorist activities.

However, little work examines the broad scope of the PKK's transformation. Thus, the

dissertation will solely concentrate on the factors that led the PKK to change its ultimate

goal or, in other words, the evolution of the PKK over time.

Second, many works look at the domestic and regional dimension of the Kurdish

problem.[5] They analyze the developments in the domestic and regional arena and their

impact on the Kurdish cause. The PKK is seen as a revolutionary social movement for the

Kurdish issue. This research contributes to the literature by addressing these

developments so as to determine whether they have an impact on the PKK's

transformation.

Many studies examine the implications of these developments on Kurdish

nationalism. The overwhelming majority deal with the complex issues of nationalism,

state formation, ethnic conflict, and leadership with regard to the Kurdish issue.[6] These

works provide valuable insight into the PKK's role on these complex issues. The studies

on Kurdish nationalism have flourished dramatically in the last two decades. The most

important factor is the changing dynamics in the Middle East regarding the Kurdish issue.

The Gulf War of 1991 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 have had an especially

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[3] Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict Series (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998); Ali Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds : A Theoretical Analysis of the Pkk and Abdullah Öcalan*, Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2006).

[4] Mohammed M. A. Ahmed and Michael M. Gunter, *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, Kurdish Studies Series, No. 7 (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2007); Robert W. Olson, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s : Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

[5] Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending : The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[6] Robert W. Olson, *The Goat and the Butcher : Nationalism and State Formation in Kurdistan-Iraq since the Iraqi War*, Kurdish Studies Series, No. 6 (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2005).

outstanding impact on the Kurdish nationalism.[7] Similarly, in this study, these developments are considered as the important factors underlying the PKK's transformation.

However, little work questions why the PKK has changed its ultimate goal and strategies in the face of these developments. For instance, few works look at the impact of the US invasion of Iraq on the nature of the PKK. This dissertation argues that structural conditions and political conditions and constraints in the region affect the evolution of Kurdish nationalism, hence the evolution of the PKK. For instance, Ahmed and Gunter contend that the emergence of de facto Kurdish self-rule in Northern Iraq after two developments, the Gulf War of 1991 and the invasion of Iraq, enhanced the possibility of the creation of a Kurdish state,[8] which was the ultimate objective of the PKK at the outset. Although the studies see the state formation as a remedy to the Kurdish problem, they analyze the political situation in the Middle East and concluded that it is unlikely, because the unity of Iraq is essential for the US and Iraq's neighboring states for political stability in the region.[9] In light of these recent developments, the PKK leadership also sees the impossibility of the creation of a new state. It advocates "democratic confederation" in the region comprising of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, where the Kurds form the minority.

Third, many works focus mainly on the PKK terrorism. The main concern is whether Turkey's domestic and foreign policies are effective in countering the PKK.[10]

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[7] Nur Bilge Criss, "The Nature of Pkk Terrorism in Turkey," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 181, no. /Mar (1995).

[8] Ahmed and Gunter, *The Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism.*

[9] Åsa Lundgren, *The Unwelcome Neighbour : Turkey's Kurdish Policy*, Culture and Society in Western and Central Asia, 3 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).

[10] K Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy* (2004); FS Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovers the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 86(2007).

This study, however, mainly addresses the transformation of the PKK in the face of these policies.

Many studies examined the Kurdish problem radicalized by the PKK and its implications on the inter-state relations and domestic politics.[11] Many works argue that the PKK has been the driving force behind the conflicts and cooperation between the neighboring states where the Kurds form the minority.[12] For instance, Turkey and Syria were at the brink of war in the late 1990s because of Syria's support of the PKK. However, in the light of the recent developments, the PKK's terrorist activities have led these states to cooperate against the PKK due in part to the "geopolitic and geostrategic consequences"[13] of an independent Kurdish state. For instance, the Kurdish problem in Syria, Iraq, and Iran made many of the Kurds natural allies of the PKK. The creation of the Kurdish independent state would affect their national integrity. The PKK and the radicalization of the Kurdish problem also led Turkey to begin to play an active role in the Middle East, where she paid little attention for a long time. Thus, this dissertation will contribute to the literature by analyzing not only the regional developments but also how they led the PKK to change its ultimate goal.

Many works also have been devoted to the analysis of underlying reasons behind the Kurdish problem in Turkey. The overwhelming majority of these studies argue that the treatment of the Turkish state on Kurds as ethnic minority is the main driving force behind the emergence and the rise of the PKK. While some argue that the political and economic developments in Turkey have a positive impact on the Kurdish problem, but the PKK is the main obstacle in the possible solution to the Kurdish problem, the others

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[11] Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending : The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey.*
[12] Olson, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s : Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East.*
[13] *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s : Its Impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, 84.

highlight the impact of these developments, but further ironically argue that the PKK should take a part in the solution. However, they do not specifically address how these developments lead the PKK to change its ultimate goal. Especially, after the capture of Ocalan, little work examines what the PKK seeks to achieve. Thus, this study will give weight to the recent developments such as democratization and political and human rights reforms to meet the Copenhagen criteria and their implications on the nature of the PKK.

The PKK has also been subject to the studies in conflict and terrorism. Its roots, objectives, and methods have been detailed in these studies.[14] Some have tested the impact of the counter terrorism policies on the number of the terrorist attacks and whether there is a decline in the PKK's recruitment. However, few works look at the relationship between these policies and the PKK's changing discourse on its ultimate goal. Thus, this study will argue that the recently enacted counter terrorism policies, unlike the previous ones, have a positive impact on the Kurdish problem and lead the PKK to change its discourses on its strategy.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO NATIONALISM

It is also deemed necessary to mention here the standard works on the formation of the nation and national identity construction to understand the emergence of Kurdish nationalism and the role of the PKK. Due to the limitations of the project, however, I shall try to limit the boundaries of the discussion to the evolution of nations and nationalism. Then, I will apply it to the Kurdish nationalism in the next topic.

It is important to note here that there is no agreed-upon concept of the nation and nationalism.[15] Yet, most of the interpretations fall into four schools of thought:

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[14] Criss, "The Nature of Pkk Terrorism in Turkey."
[15] L.E. Cederman, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *The Handbook of International Relations* (2002): 410.

Primordialism, perennialism, modernism, and ethno-symbolism.[16] One of the main issues that results in different outcomes is the timing of nations and the emergence of nationalism. Primordialists argue that nations and nationalism have always existed since time immemorial[17], and hence are the product of primordial division of humanity. They contend that nation is a historic entity and can be identified by tracing socio-biological origins. Nationalists, in general, appeal to the primordialist discourse "to convince others and themselves that their own nations are naturally given entities", in other words, for national mobilization.[18] Nation-states have power and means, such as media and official education, to enforce their own primordialist vision. Stateless nationalism, in contrast, lacks both the monopoly of information and control of the media.

Perennialists agree with the primordialists' argument that nation is a historic entity, but have different view of whether nations can be identified by tracing socio-biological origins (primordialists) or cultural characteristic of each nation over time (perennialists). Some perennialists, called as continuous perennialists, also draw attention to modernist account of nation and nationalism. They agree with modernists that both concepts, as an ideology and movement, are recent innovations, but only for the newly independent nations, such as Czechs and Slovaks, Serbs and Croats, and Syrians, and as a result of long wars such as Napoleonic wars or WWI. Yet, it is not valid for the old nations, such as France, England, and Russia, because they are the products of the collapse of the Roman Empire.[19] Recurrent perennialism argues that particular nations

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[16] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 3.
[17] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[18] Cederman, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," 412.
[19] Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States : An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (London: Methuen, 1977), 15.

"may come and go, but the phenomenon itself is universal."[20]

Modernists see nationalism as a modern and recent political phenomenon.[21] They argue that the French Revolution marks the beginning of a new era where nationalism has emerged as a principle of self-determination. Imagining a nation was made possible by the revolution which lessened the privileged access to particular local languages; eradicated the monarchs' privileged power; and led to the technological innovation of printing press.[22] For Anderson, nationalism, or what he prefers nation-ness, is a modern cultural *artefact* and nation is an imagined political community- imagined as sovereign, finite, and horizontal.[23] They have been constructively imagined and invented because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communication".[24] Their existence depends on shared perceptions and feelings of the members of imagined community so as to achieve political and economic objectives. Hobsbawm argues that invented tradition is a set of practices designed by national elites to create social cohesion among members of a political movement and justify *raison d'être* of the movement.[25]

The modernist approaches, in practical terms, also provide valuable insights into the studies on emerging nations and the rise of nationalist movements. Smith argues that the socio-economic version of modernism, for instance, contends that nations and

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[20] A.D. Smith, *The Nation in History* (University Press of New England Hanover, NH, 2000), 35.

[21] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006). E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[22] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 36.

[23] *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 4-7.

[24] *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 6.

[25] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 : Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2-9.

nationalism are best understood as an outcome of unbalanced growth of capitalism and of

disparities in regional resources.[26] Economic and political dominance of the cores over

the resources of the periphery induces a reactionary nationalism against Western

imperialism or internal colonialism.[27]

Socio-cultural versions of modernism suggest that the processes of modernization

have helped states create culturally homogenous society through a state-run, standardized

public education system. This cultural homogeneity, in turn, resulted in conflicts between

the core society and the late-comers due to the uneven impact of what Gellner calls "the

tidal waves of modernization".[28] Such conflicts triggered secessionist challenges to states

where "social conflict was reinforced by cultural markers such as colour, language, and

religion".[29] Thus, nationalism is not direct product of industrialization or modernization,

but "its uneven diffusion".[30]

Ethno-symbolists, such as A. D. Smith[31], John Hutchinson[32], and John

Armstrong[33], have brought different dimension to the studies of nations and nationalism.

It emerges from the theoretical critiques of the polarized accounts of perennialism and

modernism. Ethno-symbolism suggests that the roots of all nations date back to pre-

modern era. What makes it different from modernist account is the idea that nations have

pre-modern origins. Nationalism derives its power from "myths, memories, traditions,

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[26] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 6.

[27] Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain : Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977). Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism : The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

[28] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 166.

[29] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 7.

[30] Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 166.

[31] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

[32] J. Hutchinson, "Modern Nationalism," *London, UK: Fontana* (1994).

[33] John Alexander Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and

can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias".[34] The

combination of history and culture, as Smith argues, gives rise to conflict over territory

and resources in multi-ethnic societies, which was the case in Macedonia, Kashmir, and

Nagorno-Karabagh.

The cases of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are litmus test for the

theories of nationalism. Theorists of nationalism presented us with very different

interpretations. For the collapse of Yugoslavia, primordialists contend that the internal

conflict triggered by the resurgence of "Serbian pre-modern ethnic symbolism"[35] led to

the breakup of Yugoslavia. However, many modernists argue extreme nationalism did

not derive solely from primordial division of Yugoslavian people. Rather, it was because

a "lingering negative memory of imperfect coexistence"[36] propagated by the media.

Similarly, ethno-symbolists argue that pre-existing cultural resources such as myths,

symbols, and traditions mobilized by some civilian and military rulers via state-control

media were responsible for the conflict that eventually led to the breakup of Yugoslavia.

EVOLUTION OF KURDISH NATIONALISM AND THE PKK

Despite the abundance of the literature on the origins of Kurdish nationalism,

there is a lack of serious theoretical discussion among the academic circles. This absence

has even become more apparent following the first Gulf War of 1991 when the Kurdish

issue has become an international issue. Many researchers from different academic

disciplines provide different view about the origins of the Kurdish people. Because the

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[34] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 9.

[35] Daniele Conversi, "Mapping the Field: Theories of Nationalism and the Ethnosymbolic Approach," *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism. History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press* (2007): 25.

[36] "Resisting Primordialism and Other-Isms: In Liue of Conclusions," in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism* (2002), 275.

area was conquered by many empires and nation-states such as Seljuks, Ottoman, and

Persian, it lacks the establishment of a Kurdish history, known to all. The fact that the

origin of the Kurdish people is unknown led the PKK to create its own understanding of

Kurdish ethnic origins to justify its political ends.[37] The main claim is that the Kurdish

people settled in the area of so-called Kurdistan, historically known as Mesopotamia,

4.000 years ago.[38] There are also different theoretical perspectives on the origins of

Kurdish nationalism. The prominent scholars are Amir Hasanpour, Hamid Bozarslan, and

Martin van Bruinessen. Especially in the 1980s, many Kurdish nationalists argue that the

origins of a Kurdish nation date back to the late nineteenth century and developed into a

political movement in the following century, seeking an independent state or autonomous

region. Some nationalists further contend that the Kurds, as the oldest nation of

Mesopotamia and one of the most influential nations to world civilization, Kurds have

successfully maintained control over their territory by the mid-sixteenth century, playing

a profound role in the creation of the political and cultural life of the Kurds.

The Kurdish nationalist discourse emphasizes the distinction of Kurds in politics,

culture, and language. According to some primordialists, the origins of Kurds date back

to the Median Empire. They base their claim on the writings of *Sharafname* by Sharaf

Khan Bitlisi and *Mem-u-Zin* by Ahmet Khani.[39] Some primordialists also conducted

archeological studies, arguing that the Kurds are descended from the Medes and

inhabited around Hamadan, the capital of the Kurdish settlement, following the long

lasting fight against the other tribes. Kurdish nationalists who would like to relate the

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[37] Sedat Laciner and Ihsan Bal, "The Ideological and Historical Roots of the Kurdist Movements in Turkey: Ethnicity, Demography, and Politics," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, no. 3 (2004).

[38] Gunter, *The Kurds Ascending : The Evolving Solution to the Kurdish Problem in Iraq and Turkey*, 3.

[39] Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problems," in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview* (1992), 48-49.

Kurds to the Median Empire embrace Minorsky's claim that the origins of Kurdish language find its traces in the language of Median Empire. The second argument that Hassanpour points out is based on ethno-territorialism. He argues that the Kurds' ethno-territorial identity, in contrast to the modernist account of nationalism, precedes the emergence of nationalism, by pointing out "the rise of Kurdish political power in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ...in the land of the Kurds".[40] In the Kurdish historiography context, the Kurdish lands are identical with the Zagros Mountain.

Although some Kurdish nationalists underline the primordial account of nationalism, modernist approaches to Kurdish nationalism have been on the rise. Among others, Dogu Ergil[41], Mesut Yegen, Robert Olson[42], Kirisci and Winrow[43] deserve more proper attention to better understand the effect of modernization on the origins of Kurdish nationalism. They argue that developments in mass urbanization, transportation, media, and communication increased social cohesion and awareness of the differences between the Kurds and the others. While some suggest that Kurdish nationalism is a product of internal colonialism[44], others emphasize socio-cultural version of modernism. Both modernist schools of thought, however, share the argument that it emerged as a reaction against the suppressing nationalism of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. The first group argues that uneven spread of modernization in Turkey produced more advanced and less advanced

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[40] Emrullah Uslu, "The Transformation of Kurdish Political Identity in Turkey : Impact of Modernization, Democratization and Globalization" (Thesis (PhD), University of Utah, 2009), 26.

[41] Dogu Ergil, *Dogu Sorunu : Teshisler Ve Tespitler : Özel Arastirma Raporu* (Istanbul: TOBB, 1995).

[42] Robert W. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

[43] Kemal Kirisci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey : An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 1997).

[44] Musa Anter, *Hatiralarim* (Sultanahmet, Istanbul: Doz Basim ve Yayincilik, 1990)., İsmail Besikci, *Dogu Anadolu'nun Düzeni; Sosyo-Ekonomik Ve Etnik Temeller* ([Erzurum: E. Yayinlari, 1969)., Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

groups. Economic disparities between the region where the Kurds form the minority and the other regions in Turkey have played a determining role in the formation of Kurdish nationalism. The second group argues that the dominant group, the Turks, sought cultural homogeneity through standardized system. In order to create a homogenous society, Turkey implemented assimilationist policies towards ethnic Kurds. Gunter contends that "an extreme form of Turkish nationalism with its associated historical myths"[45] suppressed Kurdish identity through gradual assimilation. Ibrahim and Gurbey, in the same vein, states, especially Turkey, implemented various policies over time that sought to integrate the Kurdish minorities into the dominant society.

The Kurdish case also fits well into the theoretical framework offered by Anthony Smith. Smith's ethno-symbolist paradigm provides valuable insights that go beyond modernist version of Kurdish nationalism. Scholars, within this paradigm, argue that the modern Kurdish nationalism find its traces in pre-modern forms of Kurdish ethnic community. For Smith, territorializing of ethnic identity is the first dimension to imagine a community. Ethno-symbolists argue that there have been numerous historical documents, such as *Mem-u-Zin* and *Sharafname*, that identify "Kurdistan", as a collective name of Kurdish community.

Myths, symbols, memories, and values also play a crucial role in distinguishing the Kurds from others. Van Bruinessen[46], Barkey and Fuller[47], and Murat Somer[48] claim that suppression of symbolic values such as Kurdish history, culture, language, and

[45] Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 6.
[46] Martin van Bruinessen, *The Kurds in Movement : Migrations Mobilisations, Communications and the Globalisation of the Kurdish Question* (Tokyo: Islamic Area Studies Project, 1999).
[47] Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*.
[48] Murat Somer, "Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications," *The Middle East Journal* 58, no. 2 (2004): 240.

territory has been responsible for creating ethnic grievances and encouraging ethnic conflict against the Turkish state. For instance, the celebration of *Nawroz* on 21 March, as the first day of spring, is considered to be an important symbol of Kurdish identity. *Nawroz* was not allowed in Turkey until recently, because the celebration organized by pro-Kurdish nationalists mobilizes Kurdish nationalist sentiments that go beyond a cultural celebration. Like the celebration of *Nawroz*, the PKK leadership successfully exploits ethnic symbols and myths, such as historical and territorial memories of the Kurds, to provoke fear and hostility against the Turkish state and mobilize ethnic support for their terrorist activities.

A HISTORY OF THE KURDS

The Kurdish problem, or previously known as Turkey's Eastern question, has become the most important issue that has preoccupied Turkey's both domestic and foreign policies for a long time. Both the region where the Kurds form the majority and the issue itself has evolved into various dimensions that concern different nation-states, ethnic nations, and political parties. In order to understand why the PKK has changed its political ends almost every ten years since its creation, it is deemed necessary to study a brief history of the Kurds and their historic relationship to diverse empires and nation-states. Because the origins of Kurds have been subject to ideological manipulations, especially by the PKK to pursue political means to its end, this section seeks to shed light on a number of issues with regard to the origins of Kurds. First, this section will provide common facts about the Kurds.

The Kurds are described by many as the world's largest stateless nation that

predominantly settles in the area of so-called Kurdistan[49], historically known as Mesopotamia. Despite the lack of official statistics, the Kurds are considered to number about 30 million, inhabiting mainly Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Moreover, there is a significant Kurdish Diaspora population in various geographic regions of Europe and America that plays a major role in supporting the PKK's terrorist activities in Turkey. The Kurds are predominantly Sunni Muslim people with their own language and culture that have been affected by surrounding cultures. Following the defeat of Ottoman Empire in the World War I, a number of new nation-states was created in the area, but not a separate Kurdish state.

As mentioned earlier, there are many claims about the ancestors of the Kurds. However, these historical claims give little information about the Kurds' cultural markers such as language, religion, and appearance. The general belief is that the Kurds settled in the mountainous area of Mesopotamia 4,000 years ago. Kurdish historiographers etymologically associate the term "Kurd" with the ancient term "Carduchi" that were used to describe some tribes mentioned in the work of Xenophon's Anabasis which describes epic journey of the Greeks to the Black Sea through so-called Kurdistan and Armenia. Yet, this concept is also subject of controversy among researchers. While some researchers believe the Kurds are originally Persians, Kurdish historiographers, such as Minorksy, argue that the Kurdish society remains heterogeneous in almost all aspects such as linguistic and ethnic identity. The PKK, however, advocates just the opposite. It claims that the Kurds are descended from the Medes that conquered the region, which was previously held by the Assyrians, where today's Kurds live. The region was, then,

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[49] It is important to note here that the term "Kurdistan" does not refer to any historical political entity as the PKK strives to manipulate it; rather it is used as a geographical term that refers to an area in the Middle East where the Kurds form the majority.

conquered by the Persians around 550 BC. Considering the fact that Kurdish language belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family, the terrorist organization's claim that the Meds are ancestors of the Kurds seems to be valid. Considering "the conquests of Mesopotamia by many nations such as the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Seljukis, and Ottomans"[50], as Laciner asserts, however, there is no certain relationship between the Meds and Kurds. Another argument that the PKK puts forward is that the Kurds are historically the real owner of Anatolian region and the other civilizations such as Greek, Hittite, Lydia, and Assyrian were of Kurdish origin. These claims strongly suggest that the PKK strives to construct a common history in order to get support from the Kurdish people for its political ends.

Historically, the Kurds inhabiting the area of so-called Kurdistan were in a struggle with diverse empires and nation-states that strived to control the region. Yet, the main motive of this resistance was not against assimilation by these empires and nation-states in an effort to create a homogenous identity; rather it was in the form of a resistance to central authority. The Ottoman, Safavid, and Qajar empires granted Kurdish emirates with autonomy in exchange for loyalty to the central authority while promoting ethnic pluralism. Some tribal communities, however, were either in cooperation with central authority to secure their positions or in a balancing act in cooperation with other regional actors to weaken the central authority.[51]

The practices of the Ottoman Empire were different from the Turkish treatment of ethno-religious minorities that practiced a sort of ethno-cultural homogeneity until recently. During the Ottoman era, minority status was based on religious, not ethnic

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[50] Laciner and Bal, "The Ideological and Historical Roots of the Kurdist Movements in Turkey: Ethnicity, Demography, and Politics," 475.

[51] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 1-21.

terms. Only the Christian and Jewish communities were granted minority status. The Kurds were considered part of the Muslim community along with Turks and Arabs. The Ottoman Empire could successfully integrate ethnic minorities into the mainstream society. However, increased centralization policies during the nineteenth century resulted in emergence of a Kurdish nationalism in a religious character.

The Kurdish movement in a nationalist character finds its traces in the 1920 Sevres Treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Allies. Although the Treaty promised the Kurds autonomy or full independence at the request of Kurdish people, it never materialized. It has constituted the main subject of the debate between the Kurds and Turks. The Turkish victory in the War of Independence led to the creation of a Turkish republic as an internationally recognized state. With the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, the Kurdish quest for autonomy or independence was rendered officially invalid. Except for the Christian Armenians and Greeks, no other ethnic minorities including the Kurds were denied ethnic identity by the Turkish state. It promoted what Yavuz argues was "a homogenous secular nationalism that did not tolerate diversity and insisted that all inhabitants become Turks".[52] Given the fact that the Kurds predominantly live in the periphery of the modern Turkey, are ruled by the tribal leaders, and are economically at the mercy of Kurdish landlords, they were not able to take advantage of the modernization of Turkey and remained basically unaffected by the new regime's Turkishness policies. This, in turn, resulted in the Kurdish resistance and sporadic rebellions throughout Turkey's history. In order for the new regime to survive, the central government responded to the Kurdish resistance with authoritative methods, forgoing a

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[52] M. Hakan Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationality in Turkey," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, no. 7 (2001): 7.

variety of basic legal and moral principles and values such as rule of law, multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups, and accountability of government officials.[53] However, this suppressive policy did not end the Kurdish resistance.

Kurdish nationalism remained under the influence of the socialist movement in Turkey in the 1950s and 60s. As a result, the PKK emerged in the late 1970s as a Marxist and Kurdish nationalist organization which has radicalized Kurdish nationalism since then. The armed conflict between the PKK and Turkish state has resulted in more than 30,000 casualties as well as immeasurable economic loss to Turkey.[54]

The Kurdish issue, radicalized by the PKK, emerges as the single most important factor that prevents the political and economic development of Turkey. Increased democratization efforts towards the solution to the Kurdish problem after the capture of Ocalan have not materialized due to the presence of PKK terrorism. Starting its journey with the aim of creating an independent Kurdish state in the Middle East, the PKK has realized the fact that an independent Kurdish state in the region is impossible. Thus, it seeks to monopolize the efforts to solve the Kurdish problem on their terms and understanding.

METHODOLOGY

The study seeks to answer the central question: "How has the PKK evolved over time?" As suggested earlier, the dissertation revolves around exploring six key hypotheses. Answering them can shed light on how the PKK has changed. In order to examine the dependent variable, the evolution of the PKK over time, six hypotheses are oriented towards exploring the domestic and regional factors that affect the PKK

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[53] D Ergil, "The Kurdish Question in Turkey," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 3 (2000): 125.
[54] Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationality in Turkey."

terrorism. The literature about the PKK either tries to examine the role of the PKK as an independent variable on the Kurdish nationalism, or is limited to studies on the domestic politics where the PKK is dependent variable. This study, however, strives to explore the international and regional aspects of the PKK terrorism in addition to the domestic aspects. Thus, the hypotheses are built upon the method of inquiry that allows the researcher to make exploratory research on the evolution of the PKK.

It is worth mentioning the hypotheses again here. I will then discuss how they will be explored. The hypotheses are:

H1: Increased democratization efforts in Turkey decreases PKK's popular support

This hypothesis will strive to explore the impact of the internal dynamics of Turkey on the PKK's profile. This hypothesis will be explored descriptively. First, support of the PKK will be graphed between 1991 and 2011. Second, whether intervention of democratization efforts such as legitimization of Kurdish language and abolition of martial law make any difference (upward or downward) in the slope. In order to explore the PKK's transformation, this hypothesis aims at understanding the extent to which democratization process in Turkey towards the solution to the Kurdish problem weakens the PKK's raison d'etre. It is argued that the more the democratic reforms satisfy the Kurdish population in the region, the more the PKK affiliated political party loses its vote share in the predominated Kurdish provinces vis-à-vis other political parties, especially the governing political party. Thus, the graphic that will illustrate the relationship between the popular support of the PKK and democratic efforts of the government will help analyze this hypothesis.

It is important to note here the summary of the casual link between Turkey's Kurdish problem and the PKK terrorism to help one understand the aim of the hypothesis. Turkey could not initiate a long-term progress towards solution to the Kurdish problem due to the more than a 30-year struggle against the PKK terrorism. The Kurdish problem, hence, has always been one of the major obstacles in front of the Turkey's EU bid. The improper implementations in the past in the name of counter-terrorism, even, inadvertently increased the PKK's power in the struggle to win hearts and minds of the Kurdish population. However, the capture of Ocalan marks the new phase towards the solution to the Kurdish problem. Turkey's reforms on democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and protection of minority rights have gained momentum especially since 2005, when the EU officially initiated accession negotiations with Turkey. Meanwhile, the PKK also strives to turn these developments into political advantage. The PKK's recent discourses on this issue are the main methodological indication of how the PKK capitalizes on the democratization process as a means to achieve its ultimate goal. The PKK has been striving to gain political recognition through the Kurdish political party-Peace and Democracy Party, the successor of the banned Democratic Society Party because of the connections with the PKK terrorist organization. The PKK justifies its terrorist activities in the name of "democratic Turkey", rather than "national independence". In this perspective, this hypothesis argues that democratization process has changed the PKK's profile from once the Marxist separatist organization into more nationalist organization that seeks to create a democratic confederation within the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Thus, the organization uses the freedom of democratic rule of law to promote its own war.

H2: September 11 attacks have increased anti-terrorism policies worldwide that helped constrain the PKK

This hypothesis aims at identifying international factors in the PKK's transformation. Taking into account the fact that the PKK officially changed its ultimate objective three times over time, it will strive to see whether there is a relationship between the PKK's violent attacks and its ultimate objective. This hypothesis will also be explored descriptively. First, the PKK's violent attacks will be graphed between 1984 and 2007. Second, whether the intervention of anti-terrorism policies worldwide after 9/11 terrorist attacks makes any difference (upward or downward) in the slope.

The notion that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter has vanished, to some extent, in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The attacks generated an unprecedented level of international cooperation. Although interstate cooperation has eroded with the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the 9/11 terrorist attacks were a watershed for realizing the fact that no state, even the most powerful one, could overcome the transnational aspect of terrorism, urging interstate collaboration. The call for "war on terrorism" gave the states upper hand in their fight against their respective terrorists. Turkey also has benefited from this situation. The Europe, where the Kurdish Diaspora is so powerful, is vital for Turkey in its fight against the PKK. Capitalizing the freedom of democratic rule of law, the organization engages in recruitment, fund raising, and training activities in the EU countries. Subsequent to the EU's decision to designate the PKK as the terrorist organization in 2002, some PKK training camps, pro-PKK media outlets, and its financial arms were shut down recently. Although the recent operations led by the EU states against the PKK do not satisfy Turkey's demands, they have impact on the PKK.

Thus, this hypothesis argues that the PKK has sustained a profound blow as a result of the international cooperation after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

H3: The greater the democratization of Iraq, the less likely is a Kurdish state.

In order to survey the PKK's transformation, It will examine the indicators of how likely a Kurdish state before and after 2003 (before democratization of Iraq) and then after 2006 (after democratization of Iraq).

Why is the likelihood of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq important in the PKK's modus operandi? In order to understand the terrorist organization, it is important to give some information about the political developments in Iraq. The Kurds have been the strongest supporter of the US in its efforts to fulfill the objectives since the invasion of Iraq. The US has taken advantage of the relatively stable Kurdish area in its struggle against the insurgency. On the other end of the spectrum, dreaming an independence state for a long time and enjoying semi-autonomy in northern Iraq since the Gulf war of 1991, the Kurds also has been one of the strongest challenges to the US efforts to preserve an intact Iraq. Because the de facto Kurdistan is comprised of some parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, the creation of independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq threatens the political integrity of these existing nation-states. Besides, the Kurdish quest for secession has potential to trigger further fragmentation of Iraq. This quest also overlaps the PKK's current ultimate goal. Carrying out the terrorist activities in the region under different names but following the PKK's direction, the PKK seeks democratic confederation in the de facto Kurdistan. Thus, the Kurdish secession will help the PKK achieve its ends. Since the invasion of Iraq, the US has tried to prevent the Kurdish quest for independence. It has strived to establish a democratic regime in which the Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds have

shared power. They formed a "national unity government" in 2006. The Kurds were

represented by the post of president. The Kurds were granted many rights such as the

recognition of Kurdish Regional Government and the right to veto.

Despite the current problems such as the failure to form a government in the last

election and the potential violence after the withdrawal of the US from Iraq against the

Kurdish people, the Kurds seem to be enjoying the democratic regime in Iraq, making

independent Kurdish state less likely.

H4: The stronger the US-Turkish relations are, the weaker the PKK

This hypothesis will also be explored descriptively. First, the PKK's terrorist

attacks will be graphed between 1995 and 2010. Second, whether steps taken to

strengthen the relationship between the US and Turkey made any difference in the PKK's

violence trends. This will help comprehend the role of the US in Turkey's fight against

the PKK.

Although the relationship between the US and Turkey has seemed to lose its

strategic importance with the end of the cold war, the political developments in Turkey's

immediate environment for the last two decades, especially in the Middle East, reveal the

fact that they both need each other to advance their mutual interests. However, this

strategic of importance has never been materialized into the concrete strategic partnership

due to the lack of mutual understanding since 2003 over the future of Iraq in general, the

Kurdish issue in particular, that have been amalgamated by differences over the Middle

East, especially relations with Turkey's neighboring countries in the Middle East.[55] These

differences emanate largely from a remarkable shift in Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey

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[55] F. Stephen Larrabee, *Troubled Partnership: U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010).

has been an active "diplomatic actor" in the Middle East, resulting from the geopolitical change in the Middle East.[56] In the new environment, Turkey faces multifaceted security threats and challenges including the rise of Kurdish nationalism and separatism and transnational PKK terrorism. [57]The driving forces behind Turkey's effort to improve the relationship with the US are: the possible emergence of Kurdish state in northern Iraq that have massive negative implications over Turkey's internal stability and the PKK's cross-border terrorist attacks from its sanctuaries in northern Iraq that have been accelerated since 2003. [58]On the other hand, the US needs Turkey's active political role to fulfill its objectives in the Middle East, especially with regard to the "long-term stability and economic recovery of Iraq". [59]This hypothesis, thus, argues that the more both states have strategic issues of mutual concern, the better is the relationship, which, in turn, will help Turkey weaken the PKK.

H5: The better relationship between Turkey and its neighboring states, the weaker PKK with regard to external support.

This hypothesis will mainly strive to explore the impact of the rise of Kurdish nationalism and separatism, specifically in the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq, on Turkey's Middle East policy. It focuses on understanding of policy change in the last decade in its relations with its neighboring countries in the Middle East to deal with the PKK terrorism and relevant issues. It argues that the policy shift has been driven by the

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[56] "Turkey Rediscovers the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 86(2007).
[57] "Turkey's New Geopolitics," *Survival* 52, no. 2 (2010).
[58] *Troubled Partnership: U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change*.
[59] Stephen J. Flanagan, Samuel Brannen, and Bulent Aliriza, *Turkey's Evolving Dynamics : Strategic Choices for U.S. - Turkey Relations* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009).

fact that Turkey's security and economic recovery entails regional stability in the Middle East, urging Turkey to establish good relationship with them, once rivalries.

Turkey's relations with its neighboring countries in the Middle East were always strained in the 1980s and 1990s. Especially Syria and Iran gave logistical support for the PKK terrorism to destabilize Turkey. The emergence of vacuum of power in northern Iraq after the Gulf War of 1991, as well, gave new impetus to the PKK's cross-border terrorist attacks. However, the Iraq war has changed the calculus of the regional states. It has urged regional cooperation and rapprochement of the regional states against the PKK. The creation of the PKK-affiliated terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria, and Iran after the invasion has been the main driving force behind this strategic cooperation. As mentioned earlier, the PKK seeks democratic confederation in the so-called Kurdistan, comprising the Kurdish-dominated areas in these countries. The US failure to establish a strong central government in Iraq that would ipso facto prevent the Kurdish quest for independence is another factor that urges improved relations among these states. The independence Kurdish state is not in their interest due to the destabilizing effect on their respective countries.

This will involve examining relationship between Turkey and Iraq, Iran, and Syria. I will look at the number and types of diplomatic visits and agreements. In order to explore these hypotheses, the dissertation aims to employ qualitative analysis of the nature of the PKK terrorism. It will draw upon primary and secondary resources. The primary sources will be the statements and decisions taken at the PKK congresses held almost every four year since its foundation, Ocalan's statements before and after his capture in 1998, PKK's declarations in its official websites, and media sources in

addition to the scholarly articles and books. The PKK's inner statements help reveal the

nature of its goals and tactics over time. These primary sources provide valuable insight

into its reactions to the changes in the domestic and regional arena.

The first and foremost primary source is the decisions made at the PKK's

congresses.[60] The PKK has held eleven congresses and seven general meetings under the

name of KONGRA GEL, which was named after the capture of Ocalan to prevent the

PKK from being labeled as terrorist organization by the international community. The

PKK was founded at the first congress in 1978 and determined its ultimate objective as

the creation of an independent Kurdish state based on Marxist-Leninist ideology. The

following congresses not only state the procedures and methods but also juxtapose the

internal and external illegal activities towards the achievement of its ultimate goal.

Although the decisions made at these meetings provides valuable insight into its inner

information about its long term objectives, structure, and methods, they shed light into

the then-domestic politics and international politics of the Middle East with regard to the

Kurdish issue and their relations. Thus, they help to analyze how the PKK was shaped in

the face of the domestic and regional developments. The second primary source is

Ocalan's statements before and after his capture in 1998.[61] The founder of the PKK and

undisputed leader, Ocalan made many statements about the PKK's past, present, and

future. His statements are generally based on the theoretical aspect of the PKK's

objectives. Thus, his statements reflect the reactions to the developments that affect the

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[60] Although it is not possible to reach the original forms of decisions made at the PKK congresses, there are many scholarly articles and books that refer to the manuscripts of the decisions published in the Serxwebun magazine, the PKK's declared official periodical.

[61] Ocalan's statements are mostly found in the pro-PKK's media outlets and periodicals. For instance, http://www.gundem-online.net/, http://www.yeniozgurpolitika.org/ (in Turkish), and http://en.firatnews.com/ (available in English), and http://www.pkkonline.com/tr (in Turkish)

nature of PKK terrorism.[62] The pro-PKK media outlets and periodicals, as the third

primary source, that propagate the PKK terrorism publish not only PKK's leadership's

interpretation of domestic politics and international politics of the Middle East, but also

their impact on the organization. The prominent pro-PKK media outlets and periodicals

vary but not limited to three newspapers (Yeni Ozgur Politika in Germany and Azadiya

Welat (in Kurdish language), two news agencies (Firat News Agency and Dicle News

Agency), two satellite TV stations (Roj TV in Denmark and MMC TV), and a radio

station (Radio Serhildan).[63]

This dissertation aims to examine these primary sources at three different periods,

which will yield insight into how the PKK has changed. The first period consists of the

ensuing years after the creation of the PKK in 1978 till 1990. In this period, the pro-PKK

daily and weekly publications increased for propaganda and recruitment purposes. The

most striking party document was written just before the creation of the PKK. This

document is considered by the organization as the "first manifesto", which was published

in an illegal magazine, Serxwebun[64]- the official periodical of the PKK. The first

manifesto, like the other Communist party manifestos, reflects the organization's

worldview under the influence of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. In these magazines and

papers, the PKK tried to propaganda its own Kurdish history which it would further use it

for self-determination purposes. During this period, Ocalan frames the theoretical aspect

of the organization, trying to wed Marxist ideology with Kurdish nationalism towards the

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[62] Despite being imprisoned, Ocalan continues to lead the PKK through the meetings with his lawyers. His statements and comments on the Kurdish and related issues are published in the pro-PKK media outlets. For instance, http://en.firatnews.com/index.php?rupel=article&nuceID=1458

[63] Emrullah Uslu, "The Kurdistan Workers' Party Turns against the European Union," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2008).

[64] The official magazine of the PKK, Serxwebun, is published in Germany. It is not available online.

then-PKK's ultimate goal. The decisions made at the PKK Congresses not only reflect Ocalan's vision, but also practical side that contains its methods, principles, and party structure.

The second period starts with the Gulf War of 1991 and lasts till the capture of Ocalan in 1999. In this period, the "united-independent Kurdistan" concept began to vanish in the face of "regional and international vitals of the Middle East".[65] Analysis of the developments in the region and Turkey and their implications on the PKK can be seen first in the Congress pronouncements and then Ocalan's statements in the publications. Thus, these statements can be considered as the evidence to the then-PKK's pursuit of "a federation of Kurds and Turks, and simultaneously bidding for a role in an independent Kurdistan comprising southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq". [66]

Moreover, 1990s are the rise of the influence of the Kurdish Diaspora on Turkey with regard to the Kurdish problem. The first pro-PKK TV channel was established in 1995.[67] The foundation of the TV channel was so important in a globalized world where "ethnic consciousness and politicized ethnic identity"[68] is broadcast for propaganda and framing purposes, which would be impossible so fast otherwise. Given the fact that Ocalan had an enormous influence on the organization, the broadcasting was based on Ocalan's dictations. Thus, it provides valuable insight into the theoretical and practical analysis of the PKK.

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[65] Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds : A Theoretical Analysis of the Pkk and Abdullah Öcalan*.

[66] Criss, "The Nature of Pkk Terrorism in Turkey," 17.

[67] The first international pro-PKK satellite television was MED-TV which began to broadcast from England and Belgium as a result of the PKK's fifth Congress in 1995. It was banned in 1999 at the request of Turkey. The successor TVs are MEDYA TV banned in 2004 by France and ROJ TV still broadcasting from Denmark at the expense of Turkey's harsh pressure. Nevertheless, Roj TV has been officially indicted by the Danish attorney general in 2010.

[68] David Romano, "Modern Communications Technology in Ethnic Nationalist Hands: The Case of the Kurds," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 35, no. 1 (2002): 128.

The third period comprises of the ensuing years after the Ocalan's imprisonment up till now. The statements of Ocalan during and after the trial shed light into both PKK's future route and the implications of the developments at the domestic and regional arena on the PKK's long-term objectives in the past. Considered as "the second manifesto"[69] in the organization, these documents imply the transformation of the PKK. The statements in the pro-PKK publications help to compare discourses and objectives of the PKK over time in each period.

To sum up, the inner statements of the PKK will help understand the PKK's ideological and political transformation. This data will also help achieve the objectives of the dissertation. It is noteworthy to note here that this study differs from the previous studies in the sense that it finds the traces of the changing political discourses of the terrorist organization from inner statements of the PKK, especially Ocalan. In other studies, little attention was devoted to the PKK's organizational perspective over the changing regional and international factors and how the leadership evaluates these factors. The ultimate goal of the terrorist organization and its theoretical and ideological considerations are determined by Ocalan and declared in the consecutive PKK congresses.

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[69] Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds : A Theoretical Analysis of the Pkk and Abdullah Öcalan.*

CHAPTER 2

TURKEY'S INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND THE PKK'S TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to explore the impact of Turkey's internal factors on the transformation of the PKK in its ultimate goal over time. As stated earlier, the PKK has specifically changed its ultimate goal five times since its creation in 1978. Committed to the creation of independent Kurdish state in its early stages as a solution to the Kurdish problem, the PKK renounced goal of secession in 1999, following the capture of its leader Ocalan, and moderated it to claiming Kurdish autonomy first in the so-called Kurdistan and then Turkey. It is hypothesized that that the proper implementation of democratization efforts, especially in the last decade, and anti-democratic practices in the past has played a determining role in the PKK's transformation.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section identifies the factors underlying the development of political awareness among Kurds that radicalized Kurdish nationalism. The aim is to help understand under what condition the state policies on the Kurdish issue was formed. It lays the groundwork by underlining the failure of the Turkish state to handle the Kurdish issue that resulted in the Kurdish resistance and sporadic rebellions including the emergence of the PKK that has been fighting Turkish government politically and militarily. The second section introduces Turkey's democratic and anti-democratic state practices towards Kurdish issue to serve better understanding of the analysis of the following section that examines the influence of democratic initiatives by the Turkish government on the PKK's ultimate goal over time.

This chapter concludes that there is no relationship between Turkey's democratization initiatives and the PKK's transformation. The terrorist organization's ideological and political transformation increased its popular support. However, Turkey's democratization efforts sought to prevent the radicalization of Kurdish nationalism and solve the Kurdish problem.

THE ROLE OF TURKEY'S DEMOCRATIZATION EFFORTS

This section studies the impact of Turkey's Kurdish policies on the PKK. It is argued that radical changes in Turkey's Kurdish policies forced the terrorist organization to accord its ultimate goal accordingly. Considering the argument that democratization efforts of the Turkish government following the capture of Ocalan became a turning point for the terrorist organization, the role to which I refer here has two periods: the first period where the Kurdish issue was under the military sphere and counter-terrorism policies concentrate mainly on the elimination of the PKK terrorism till the late 1990s and the second period where the civilian control prevails over the military elites and the counter-terrorism policies focus for the most part on the factors underlying the Kurdish problem.

In the first period, Turkey, advertently or inadvertently, denied the Kurdish reality. It viewed the problem as the socio-economic problem of eastern Turkey and produced policies accordingly.[1] As a result of the PKK's indiscriminate violence since the late 1970s, the Kurdish problem remained in the military sphere.[2]The Turkish government produced policies varying from resettlement policy to state of emergency in the predominated Kurdish provinces, which played a counterproductive role that gave the

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[1] SE Cornell, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," *Orbis* 45, no. 1 (2001).
[2] M. H. Yavuz and N. A. Ozcan, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party," *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 1 (2006).

PKK terrorism an upper hand in framing the Kurdish issue. As a result of these policies, the PKK terrorism was militarily defeated, but not politically, and Turkey, for this reason, faced a harsh criticism by the domestic and international actors due to the allegations of human rights violation.

In the second era, the Turkish government got a chance to play a crucial role in containing radicalization of Kurdish nationalism following the capture of Ocalan. Turkey lived in a golden age between 1999 and 2004 toward "the normalization of Kurdish conflict via demilitarization and liberal democracy".[3] While the PKK declared unilateral ceasefire in 1998 that lasted till 2004 and Ocalan was captured in the following year, the EU in the 1999 Helsinki Summit approved Turkey's EU candidacy, which triggered the enactment of a number of laws pertaining democracy, human rights, and protection of minority rights. These unprecedented developments changed the public discourse and opened up a more liberal discussion of Kurdish question. The terrorism and security threat perception of Turkish citizens dropped from 39.3 to 5.5 percent during the ceasefire.[4] The government abolished the state of emergency, some restrictions in broadcasting and education in Kurdish language, and bureaucratic and judicial obstacles that prevented liberal discussion of Kurdish issue. In 2005, the governing political party leader Erdogan acknowledged the "Kurdish reality", signaling the departure from the previous state policies. Meanwhile, the EU started membership negotiations in 2004 as a result of the progress made by Turkey since 1999. Despite the fact that these negotiations have never materialized as expected due to the rising mistrust by the Turkish citizens against the EU, they achieved to change the PKK's ultimate goal.

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[3] Somer, "Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications," 236.
[4] Ibid.

The PKK welcomed Turkey's EU-initiated reforms in the early 2000s because

Turkey made incredible progress towards Kurdish problem. Correspondingly, the PKK

called for "democratic Turkey", denouncing "independent Kurdistan" as its ultimate

goal.[5] The terrorist organization demanded a new constitution that would grant Kurdish

rights and recognize Kurdish identity as "one of Turkey's two constituent nations

together with Turks".[6] However, the EU reforms did not benefit the PKK as it expected,

except the abolition of death penalty that saved Ocalan's life.

Because of the accelerated accession process, the PKK lost its grassroots support

in Turkey's predominated Kurdish areas.[7] The PKK's weakness in the military sphere

translated into its weakness in the social and political sphere. The improvements in all

segments of the political and social environment helped the governing political party

outperform the pro-PKK political parties in the predominated Kurdish provinces in the

local and general elections.[8] As a result, the PKK returned to its terrorist activities to

survive in the new domestic environment.

Aiming at creating an independence Kurdish state till the late 1990s, the PKK

suffered a major blow with the capture of its leader, Ocalan, in 1999. It announced a

unilateral ceasefire that lasted till 2004 and attempted to resume its strength by pulling its

forces to the safe haven in Northern Iraq. Taking advantage of the development, the

Turkish government launched an unprecedented democratization process towards the

Kurdish problem. The PKK resumed the arm conflict by calling off the ceasefire in 2004

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[5] Aliza Marcus, "Turkey's Pkk: Rise, Fall, Rise Again?," *World Policy Journal* 24, no. 1 (2007).
[6] S Cagaptay and D Yegenoglu, "Left-Wing Monster: Abdullah Ocalan," (2006).
[7] Emrullah Uslu, "The Kurdistan Workers' Party Turns against the European Union," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2008).
[8] Günes Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 6 (2010).

due to its decreasing influence on the Kurdish constituency. The democratization process was such that what Tezcur argues "challenges the political hegemony of the insurgent organization over its ethnic constituency".

In response, the PKK declared "democratic confederation"[9] in the so-called Kurdistan to resume its influence in the determination of the Kurdish politics in 2005. It reformed its legal and illegal organizations in line with the new ultimate goal. Suffering a major blow following the series of police operations against its urban arm of the terrorist organization, namely Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) since 2008, the PKK declared to forgo the quest for "democratic confederation", instead seek "democratic autonomy"[10] in the southeast Turkey in the summer 2010 to undermine the democratic opening, also known as Kurdish opening, initiated by the government to solve the Kurdish problem that breeds the PKK.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL AWARENESS

Before examining the recent developments in Turkey towards democratization in order to solve Turkey's Kurdish problem, it is also deemed necessary to give information about the historical development of Kurds' political awareness. The recent origins of Kurdish nationalism date back to the Ottoman era. Yavuz argues that the Kurdish nationalism has evolved through five stages and the Turkish state policies play a determining role in constructing "Kurdish ethno-nationalism".[11] These are "the impact of the centralization policies of the Ottoman State from 1878-1924, the socio-political consequences of the transformation from a multi-ethnic Ottoman entity to a new nation-

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[9] For further information about democratic confederation; Abdullah Ocalan, "The Declaration of Democratic Confederalism," http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=10174
[10] Agency, "Pkk Is Ready to Declare Democratic Autonomy, Says Karayilan".
[11] Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationality in Turkey."pg 1

state and the reaction of the Kurdish tribes to the nation-building project of Mustafa

Kemal from 1925-1961, secularization of Kurdish identity within the framework of the

broader leftist movement in Turkey between the 1960s and 1970s, PKK-led violent

insurgency from 1984-1998, and the candidate status of Turkey and the Europeanization

of Kurdish question in Turkey" after the capture of Ocalan in 1999.[12]

KURDISH UNREST, PRE-WWII

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Turkishness has become the sole

identity in the new republic of Turkey. Although the Kurds have become the dominant

minority in Turkey, constituting now almost 20 percent of the Turkey's population[13], the

Kurdish identity has not been officially recognized in the constitution. Given the fact that

the Kurds dominantly lives in the periphery of the modern Turkey, are ruled by the tribal

leaders, and are economically at the mercy of Kurdish landlords, they were not able to

take advantage of the modernization of Turkey and remained basically unaffected by the

new regime's Turkishness policies. This, in turn, resulted in the Kurdish resistance and

sporadic rebellions throughout the Turkey's history. In order for the new regime to

survive, the central government responded to the Kurdish resistance with authoritative

method, forgoing a variety of basic legal and moral principles and values such as rule of

law, multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups, and accountability of government officials.[14]

However, this suppressive fashion did not end the Kurdish resistance. In contrast, it

exacerbated the situation, leading to three major Kurdish uprisings. The first one was the

rebellion led by Sheikh Said in 1925. It evolved in both nationalistic and religious

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[12] "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationality in Turkey," 2.
[13] The Kurds' population is estimated at 15 million in Turkey, although there is no official record that shows the exact number of the Kurds living in Turkey
[14] Ergil, "The Kurdish Question in Turkey," 125.

manner against the state's secularity and official ideology of Turkishness. It marks a new

era in the way the Turkish government treated its Kurdish citizens. The revolt justified

successive governments' efforts to take suppressive measures against what the security

officials saw the Kurds as the potential threat to state security.[15] 1930 of General Ihsan

Nuri Pasha in Agri and 1936 of Sheikh Sayyid Riza in Dersim, Tunceli could mobilize

some Kurds in the predominated Kurdish cities in Turkey. However, the Kurdish revolt

ended in a total Kurdish defeat and led the government to take precautions against the

possible revolts such as the exile of some Kurds from their original areas to the other

areas, where the Turks form the majority.

KURDISH UNREST, POST-WWII

Although the Kurdish unrest before World War II remained in the tribal and

religious arena in response to Turkey's secular and modernization policies throughout the

country, the Kurdish political awareness draws a different pattern in the postwar period.

With the emergence of multiparty democracy in Turkey in 1950, the new government

sought co-option policies by allowing the exiled tribal leaders to return. These sheikhs

and aghas that had influence on their tribes precipitated the migration of Kurds to the

western cities of Turkey, where most of them could integrate into the mainstream

society.[16] The Turkish government achieved, to some extent, success by melting the

Kurds into the Turkish national identity by the late 1960s. However, it did not eliminate

the southeastern problem. Thus, it led to the emergence of the new political parties which

mainly advocated the economic and political development of predominated Kurdish cities

of Turkey. 1960s were in many ways an important milestone in the construction of

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[15] Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*.
[16] Kemal Kirisci, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (2000).

Kurdish identity. The constitution of 1961 after the 1961 coup granted relatively more rights and freedom. Although the granted rights did not provide the Kurds with the recognition of Kurdish identity, it paved the way for the rise of the Kurdish nationalism. The Kurdish problem became the political material for the political parties. This, in turn, led to the division of Kurdish leadership. While some radical Kurds associated with the leftist political parties, advocating Marxist-Leninist ideology for the Kurdish problem, the traditional Kurds cooperated with the rightist parties with the aim of preserving the tribal hierarchy. Due to the lack of cohesion between the Kurdish tribal leaders and the 1971 military intervention, leftist radicalization prevailed in the construction of Kurdish nationalism throughout the country. The migration of Kurds to the western cities and the growing enrollment in higher education led to the increased awareness of economic and political backwardness of the predominated Kurdish cities vis-à-vis the western cities of Turkey. Thus, the Kurds remained under the influence of the radical leftist organizations which cut off their relationship with the leftist political parties.[17]

During the 1960s, the Kurdish left gradually realized the fact that the Kurdish identity could not be achieved under the leadership of the Turkish political parties. Thus, they sought separate political movements. In 1969, the Kurdish activists established their first distinctive Kurdish organization, namely the Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East (DDKO). According to its publication, the main problems in front of the solution to the Kurdish problem were economic backwardness of eastern Turkey, the destructive influence of Kurdish sheikhs and aghas on the Kurds, and the suppressive measures of the Turkish security forces in the eastern Turkey. These discourses actually were the main discourses of the leftist political parties. However, the main difference was what the

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[17] Cornell, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics."

left-wing parties offer for the Kurdish problem. They maintain that the solution was "the socialist revolution under the leadership of the Turkish proletariat".[18] This led many Kurdish nationalists to seek separate Kurdish groups. Upon the prohibition of the DDKO by the government to prevent the rise of the extreme leftists and their conflict with the extreme rightists, the Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations was established but failed to bring the Kurdish leftists together.

The mid-1970s are considered as the beginning of the radicalization of the Kurdish nationalism under the PKK. The emergence of the PKK goes back to the establishment of the Ankara Democratic Patriotic Association of Higher Education, popularly known as Apocus, led by Ocalan and his associates in 1974. With the creation of the PKK officially in 1978, the Kurdish nationalism has transformed into new era in which the solution to the Kurdish problem has been constrained to a greater extent. With the political and military cadres, it has begun to engage in terrorism intended "to frighten the Kurdish population in the southeast into supporting it".[19]

ELECTORAL POLITICS OF THE PKK

This section will explore why the terrorist organization has participated in the legal political system in order to comprehend the radicalization of Kurdish nationalism led by the PKK. The PKK has been conducting terrorist activities for more than 30 years. In order to reach its ultimate goal, it has engaged in the electoral politics since the early 1990s by founding pro-Kurdish political parties. It has established six political parties five of which were closed down by the Constitution court and participated in the local and general elections. The reason behind this electoral engagement, like the other ethnic

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[18] MM Gunter, "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey," *The Middle East Journal* 42, no. 3 (1988).Pg. 393-394
[19] J Brown, "The Turkish Imbroglio: Its Kurds," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 541(1995).Pg. 118

terrorist organization, is to draw attention and gain legitimacy in the domestic and international arena, achieve popular support, and obtain hegemony over the Kurdish population.

Engaging in a battle of recognition and power consolidation via terrorist activities, the PKK founded its first political party, namely People's Work Party (HEP), in 1990. The party with Marxist identity practiced its first experience in the 1991 general election. In a coalition with the leftist Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) to unify leftist and Kurdish votes given the impossibility of passing 10 percent national threshold for the pro-Kurdish political party, HEP gained political victory by entering the parliament with 22 representatives on the SHP ticket. Under serious threat of closure of the party that was later found illegal by the Constitutional Court over its violation of integrity and unity of the Turkish state, the HEP deputies resigned from SHP and formed the Democratic Party (DEP) in 1993. DEP protested the local election held in 1994 to draw attention to the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Upon the closure of HEP by the Constitutional Court in 1994, the Kurdish nationalists founded the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) in the same year as a successor party. Participating in the general elections held in 1995 and 1999 and the local election held in 1999, HADEP received 4.2%, 4.7%, and 3.48% vote share respectively, which amounts to almost 1.5 million votes. Considering the Kurdish people in Turkey around 15 million, the vote share for the pro-Kurdish political party is relatively so low. However, it won 36 municipalities in the predominated Kurdish provinces including 1 metropolitan and 6 city mayoralties. HADEP relatively performed poorly in the western cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Mersin where the Kurdish

population is high. Thus, it can be argued that the political campaign of the pro-Kurdish political party does not appeal to the overall Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin.

In an anticipation of closure by the Constitutional Court on the grounds that it had organic link with the PKK, the members of the HADEP formed Democratic People's Party (DEHAP). The pro-Kurdish DEHAP in a coalition with the other radical leftist parties did better in the 2002 general election with 6.2% vote share and the 2004 local election with 5.2% vote share. However, the governing party (AK PARTY), which was founded in 2002, outperformed DEHAP in the predominated Kurdish provinces in both elections and monopolized the Kurdish votes by implementing unprecedented democratic reforms that were appeal to the Kurdish citizens. Thus, the governing party has emerged as the leading political force by swiping the Kurdish votes that were fragmented among right-wing and Kurdish nationalist political parties (when democratization radicalizes).

The successor Democratic Society Party (DTP) was founded in 2005 upon the order of imprisoned Ocalan given its defeat vis-à-vis AK Party before the closure of DEHAP by the Constitutional Court. DTP preserved its vote share by obtaining 5.2% and 5.7% respectively in the 2007 general election and 2009 local election. In the general election held in 2007, DTP candidates participated in the election as independents in order to overcome 10% national threshold. Despite decrease in its vote share in 2007(5.2%) vis-à-vis that in 2002 (6.2%), the pro-Kurdish political party could manage to compete with the governing party. In the 2009 local election DTP won eight provinces in the predominated Kurdish provinces by increasing its vote share (5.7%).

DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION
Turkey has been living its golden age in the name of democracy. The underlying reasons behind this has been what Somer and Liaras indicates as "structural changes in

both external and domestic conditions, as well as to changes in public perceptions of the

Kurdish issue", which appears to be the greatest obstacle to the democracy.[20] The most

striking parts in the structural changes that play a determining role have been Turkey's

EU membership negotiations, increased civilian control over military, and Turkey's

relations with the US and northern Iraq. These changes have helped the Turkish

government initiate unprecedented reforms towards the Kurdish issue.

STATE OF EMERGENCY (OHAL)
Turkey's domestic policy over the Kurdish problem in the 1980 and 1990s, in

general, was driven by the PKK terrorism. Thus, it aimed to eliminate the PKK terrorism

to solve Turkey's Kurdish problem. This, in turn, resulted in more authoritarian laws,

increased military role in politics, and hard line bureaucracy and political culture, which

further complicated the Kurdish problem.[21]

In response to the indiscriminate violence by the PKK against the Kurdish

population for territorial control and the Kurdish support, Ankara employed a campaign

of integration of Kurdish people by co-opting Kurdish elites and leaders through

"parliamentary politics, emphasizing Islam as a common bond between ethnic Turks and

Kurds, and economic packages".[22] However, the Turkish state was not able to integrate

mass Kurdish citizens into the mainstream political life. PKK's indiscriminate attacks on

the military as well as civilians and its mass killings led many Kurdish citizens to be

alienated from the Turkish state because of the fear and the perception that the Turkish

state failed to provide security its Kurdish population. The Kurds, by fear or material

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[20] M. Somer and E. G. Liaras, "Turkey's New Kurdish Opening: Religious Versus Secular Values," *Middle East Policy Middle East Policy* 17, no. 2 (2010).
[21] Ergil, "The Kurdish Question in Turkey."
[22] Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey."Pg. 782

interest, gave the PKK active or passive support for its cause. Due to the decrease in Turkey's control over the Kurdish rural areas vis-à-vis the PKK, the government implemented village guard system in 1985. Reaching the number of around 90,000 in 1990s when the PKK was at the height of its power in Turkey, the village guards were valuable assets in containing the PKK terrorist campaign by providing language assistance and additional forces to the Turkish military. Although the system was a short-term measure, it became an essential part of the military operations against the PKK terrorism. The village guard system, however, has been one of the most debated issues in the counter-terrorism policies. Some security experts argue that it is still effective instrument in countering the PKK in the southeast Turkey. [23]

One of the most influential factors in the rise of Kurdish nationalism was the state of emergency (known as OHAL) that was implemented in 1987 in some provinces in the southeast Turkey where the PKK was active. Starting in 8 provinces and amounting up to 13 in the course of time, OHAL was abolished in 2002 as a result of the EU-induced democratic reforms. Although OHAL seemed to be a necessary tool in containing the PKK, at least in the short run, it had negative effects in the long run in the name of Turkey's democracy, human rights records, and international prestige. In order to show that it was the sole power that domains the region the PKK attacked a broad range of targets that they see as collaborators with the Turkish state including the security forces, village guards, and the Kurdish tribes. Underestimating the PKK threat as "a handful of

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[23] Saban Kardas, "Turkey Debates the Village Guard System," http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=34976

bandits"[24] at the outset, the Turkish state declared OHAL in order to re-achieve stability

in the southeast. During the OHAL in force, Turkey enacted many anti-terror laws which

have always been criticized by the international institutions and the EU. In doing so,

Turkey blocked the way in which the solution to the Kurdish problem could have been

discussed freely in the media and scholarly. By repealing the state of emergency in the

predominated Kurdish cities in the southeast Turkey in 2002, the Turkish government

took an incredible step towards the solution to the Kurdish problem.

BAN ON KURDISH LANGUAGE

With the rise of Kurdish nationalism under the influence of socialism in the 1960s

and 1970s, the left-wing publications that offered socialist solution to the Kurdish

problem increased. This, in turn, began to radicalize the Kurdish nationalism. The 1982

Turkish Constitution in the aftermath of 1980 military coup banned the use of Kurdish in

public in addition to the other restrictions on the Kurdish language and culture. Lifting

the use of Kurdish language in public in 1991, Turkish government grabbed an

opportunity in solving the Kurdish problem in the aftermath of the capture of Ocalan in

1998 and admission of Turkey's EU candidacy status in 1999. Decreasing PKK's

violence following Ocalan's call for unilateral ceasefire created a political environment in

which the government obtained flexibility and room for political maneuverability about

the Kurdish problem. As parts of packages of EU-inspired reforms since then, Turkey has

abolished many restrictions on the Kurdish language such as Kurdish language

broadcasting by private television and radio as well as state-owned television. Thus,

Turkey, albeit insufficient, could break up the monopoly the PKK had for a long time in

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[24] Quoted from M. Somer, "Resurgence and Remaking of Identity: Civil Beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics, and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds," *Peace Research Abstracts Journal* 42, no. 5 (2005).Pg. 613

broadcasting in Kurdish language through its channels based in some European countries.[25] If foreseen to lift the restrictions on the Kurdish language in the past, Turkish state could have been in better position in winning Kurds' hearts and minds vis-à-vis the PKK.[26] Although the government has taken unprecedented steps towards broadcasting and publishing in Kurdish language, they are far from satisfying the Kurdish demand for bilingual public education which many security experts consider as the factor that furthers political division between Turks and Kurds.

BUREAUCRATIC AND JUDICIAL BARRIERS OVER KURDISH ISSUE

As part of the "harmonization packages" between 2002 and 2004 for the EU membership, the Turkish government loosened the laws on political parties, press, and associations. Turkish government amended many criminal codes and anti-terror laws in order to facilitate liberal discussion of Kurdish problem by various segments of the population. While the discussion of the subject was taboo for fear of being charged for a violation of unity and security of Turkish state, the academicians and the media could begin to utter their point of view on the Kurdish problem.

ANALYSIS

This section will analyze the extent to which the proper implementation of the democratization reforms since 1999 and anti-democratic practices in the past have influence on the transformation of the PKK. Why did the PKK, which was founded on the goal of secession, undergo change in its ultimate goal? It is argued that realizing the fact that Kurdish secession does not appeal to the Kurdish constituency, the PKK has pursued more moderate goal since 1999, namely "democratic Turkey", "democratic

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[25] Cornell, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," 44.
[26] Leyla Boulton, "Ankara Quick to Air Shift on Human Rights " *Financial Times*, December 15, 1999.

confederation" in the so-called Kurdistan in 2005 and "democratic autonomy" in Turkey in 2010, which are also consistent with the realities of the region.

In this section, I will use data on Kurdish vote in the local and general elections for the pro-Kurdish political parties that have participated since the early 1990s. The electoral support for these political parties is assumed in this chapter as "the mass mobilizing power of the PKK". The PKK has carried out terrorism campaign for almost 30 years. In order to reach its ultimate goal, it has engaged in electoral politics by establishing pro-Kurdish political parties in addition to its terrorist activities. There have been six pro-Kurdish political parties over time five of which were shut down by the Constitutional Court based on their affiliations with the PKK. By looking at the vote share of these parties in the local and general elections throughout Turkey and in the Kurdish predominated provinces of Turkey, I will try to determine the PKK's support. Thus, the impact of Turkey's increased democratic reforms since 1999 and the lack of democratization efforts in the past on the electoral support of the pro-Kurdish political parties will be examined.

The PKK carried out secessionist strategy till the capture of its leader in 1999. Turkey's Kurdish citizens' support for the pro-Kurdish political parties remained limited in the local and general elections till then. They failed to reach the 10 percent national threshold required to be represented in the parliamentary, when they individually participated in the elections. Their vote share in the 1990s remained stable. It can be argued that the Kurds' vote tendency has been the determining factor in the electoral politics. The Kurdish votes, in general, were fragmented among the center-right political parties in the elections before the foundation of the center-right AK Party in 2002. The

current governing party, AK Party, has monopolized the Kurdish votes by implementing unprecedented democratic reforms since 2002. Especially swiping the Kurdish votes in the 2004 general elections, the AK Party has emerged as the leading political force in the predominated Kurdish provinces. In response, the PKK renounced its unilateral ceasefire and declared its ultimate goal as Kurdistan democratic confederalism in 2005 to appeal to its Kurdish constituency and resume the political hegemony over the Kurdish population in Turkey.

Until the 1999 local and general elections, the vote share of the pro-Kurdish political parties remained stable. We can argue that the political support of the PKK with the goal of secession was limited. it could not generate enough vote for its cause among the Kurdish population. In a time when the state practice in the Kurdish predominated provinces was repressive, the pro-Kurdish political parties, HEP, DEP, and HADEP respectively, participated in general elections three times and local elections in two times. Because HEP participated in 1991 general election in a coalition with the leftist SHP, the vote share for HEP could not be determined. Plus, the successor pro-Kurdish political party DEP protested the 1994 local election. Assuming the Kurdish population in Turkey as 15 million, the average vote for these parties (around 1,5 million) is relatively very low. However, the vote share can be assumed high in the predominated Kurdish provinces. Among the Kurdish citizens who migrated to the western cities from southeast Turkey as a result of the state co-opting policies, security reasons, or other material interests, the Kurdish nationalism is also very low.

In the local and general elections, the center-right parties and religious political parties outperform the leftist parties. Thus, it can be argued that the Marxist-Leninist

ideology is by no means virtually identical to the Kurdish population. Thus, the rightist parties' vote share has been always high vis-à-vis the leftist political parties but was fragmented.

As shown in Figure 1, the vote share for the pro-Kurdish political parties draws a different pattern in the OHAL provinces. Almost in all provinces these parties increased its support until the 2002 general election. In contrast to the previous election, the Kurdish nationalist party, under HADEP, participated in the local and general elections two times (1995 and 1999) without making coalitions with the other leftist parties. In the local and general elections held in 1999, HADEP won 37 municipalities including 1 metropolitan city (Diyarbakir) and 6 major cities in the OHAL provinces (Van, Agri, Siirt, Bingol, Hakkari, and Batman), which have been considered as strongholds of the Kurdish nationalism. However, in the 2004 local elections, although DEHAP increased its vote share from 3.8% in 1999 local election to 5.2%, it failed to preserve the same amount of its votes in the previous general election held in 2002. Despite its coalition with the marginalized small political parties, as it did in the 2002 election, the pro-Kurdish political party lost 4 municipalities that were previously won without making any unity with other parties in 1999.

Figure 1: Vote Share of Pro-Kurdish Political Parties

Vote Share	Turkey	OHAL Provinces	Maximum	Minimum
1995	4.2	29.7	54.2	7.1
1999 Local	3.48	24.75	42.9	11.8
1999 General	4.7	30.85	46.1	12.9
2002	6.2	41.18	56.1	22.2
2004	5.2	32.58	50.1	13
2007	5.2	42.51	60	14.3
2009	5.7	46.98	71.5	20. 0

The PKK's ultimate goal of secession was consistent with the political situation in Turkey with regard to the Kurdish problem. Turkey relatively did less to satisfy Kurds' legitimate demands. Some restrictions on the Kurdish language since 1980 coup d'état were removed in 1991, albeit insufficient. The anti-terror law that provided heavy jail terms for those who commit separatist propaganda was modified in 1995. However, some policies, such as the state of emergency in the Kurdish predominated provinces and anti-terror law that regulates "thought crime" which made the Kurdish problem a taboo, were counter-productive. These policies arguably brought about human rights abuses and suppression of Kurdish ethnic and cultural rights that yielded all kind of support for the PKK.

The electoral support for DEHAP in a coalition with the marginalized leftist political parties, referred to the Democratic Power Union, reached a peak as a reaction to the capture of Ocalan and a failure of the then government to redress the Kurdish legitimate

grievances, despite the positive impetus deriving from the approval of Turkey's candidacy for the EU in Helsinki Summit in 1999. The 2002 general election also changed the political landscape that was previously unstable politically and economically. It led to the birth of a political party, AK Party, which has overwhelmingly prevailed in the ensuing elections since then.

With a commitment to redress the Kurdish problem, AK Party not only attracted the Kurds in the southeast Turkey but also those living in the western cities. It has emerged as the most influential party with 34% vote share. With its state policies that address economic and political stability in general, and Kurdish issue in particular the government could strengthen democracy which left less room for Kurdish nationalist insurgency to maneuver. With the traditionalist and conservatist Kurdish votes, the 2004 local election was a swiping victory for AK Party in the predominated Kurdish provinces vis-à-vis pro-Kurdish DEHAP. Thus, it became a real threat for the PKK's hegemony over the Kurdish population.

The hypothesis posits that in response to AK Party's increasing monopoly over the Kurdish vote and pro-Kurdish political party's failure to mobilize the Kurds politically, the PKK had to renounce its goal of secession and seek more moderate goal that had to be consistent with realities of Turkey and the Middle East. The PKK officially announced "democratic confederalism" as its ultimate goal in 2005. It is a system made up of creation of a federation of Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. Realizing the fact that the creation of Kurdistan in the Middle East is impossible, the PKK began to seek a confederation in the so-called Kurdistan in 2005. However, demanding a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem, albeit in its terms, the PKK seized this opportunity in

the beginning of 2000s. The organization and its legal wing political party developed a discourse that supports Turkey's EU-inspired democratic reforms in that the Kurds would have been immediate beneficiary of these initiatives. The PKK hoped that it could have been recognized by Turkey and the EU as the sole legitimate representative of the Kurdish people. However, the PKK's lust for the EU diminished due to the failure of DEHAP to attract enough Kurdish votes in the 2004 local election, as in the 2002 election, as shown in Figure 2, and forestall the rise of the governing party (AK Party) as a leading force in the southeast Turkey. Succeeding pro-Kurdish party DTP due to the closure of DEHAP by the order of imprisoned Ocalan tried to block the governing party's democratic initiatives by demanding "constitutional recognition as a separate nation [and] amnesty for the imprisoned Ocalan [that goes] beyond the recognition of Kurdish ethnic-cultural rights" (Turkey's new Kurdish opening). Declaring "democratic confederalism" in 2005, the PKK sought to orient democratic developments in Turkey towards the Kurdish issue for its own sake. It seems that the defeat of the radicalized Kurdish nationalism in the 2004 local election played a determining role in PKK's change in its ultimate goal. The local elections have been an important asset that helps the pro-Kurdish political parties display a tour de force given the impossibility of the Kurdish nationalism to receive votes beyond 10% threshold in the general elections.

Figure 2: PKK's Vote Share and Turkey's State Policies Towards Kurdish Problems

Vote Share for the pro-Kurdish political parties
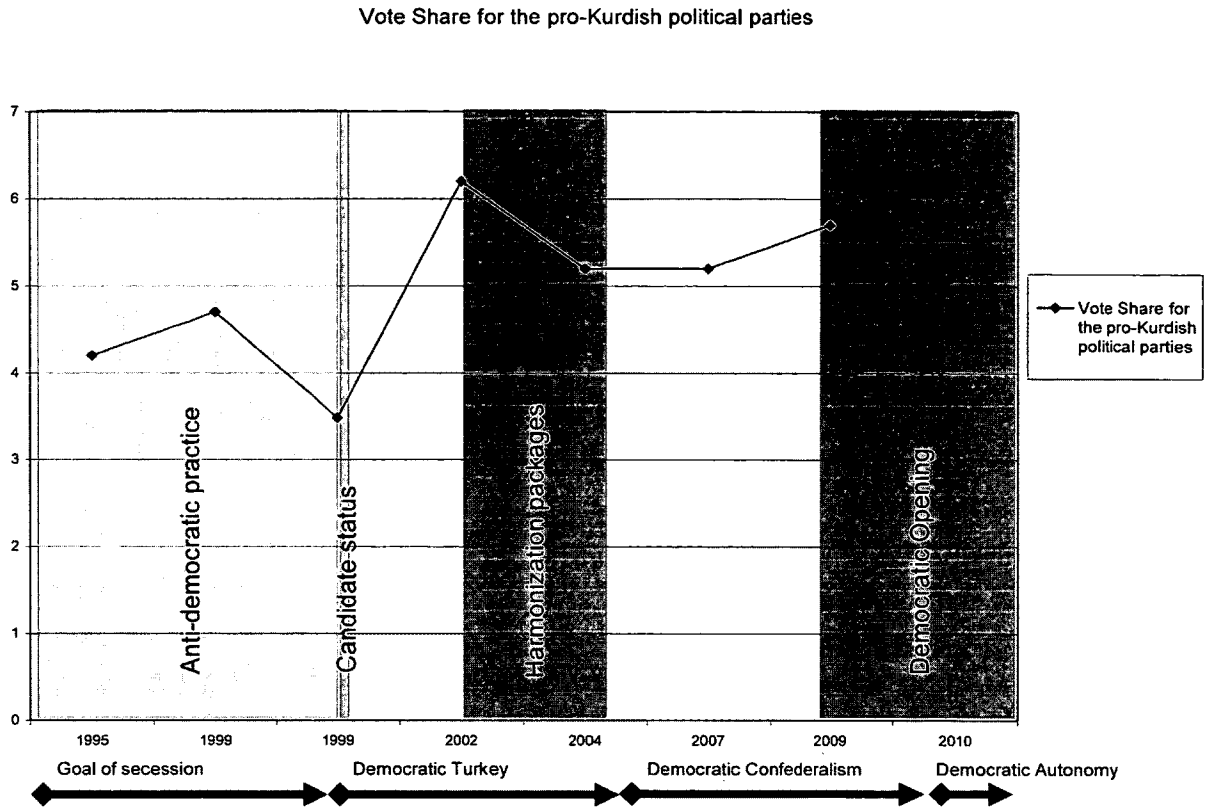
The 2007 general election was the first test for the pro-Kurdish DTP with the new

goal in line with the PKK but different discourses. The governing party's democratic

reforms proved useful to increase its vote share in the predominated Kurdish provinces.

Both AK Party and DTP won almost 90% in the entire southeastern region. Although the

vote share of DTP with its independent candidates in 2007 (5.2%) is less than 2002

general election (6.2%), it received 200,000 votes more than in 2004 local election,

despite the same vote share (5.2%).

Although the governing party proved to be the strongest party in the predominated

Kurdish provinces, despite a significant drop compared to the 2007 general elections,

DTP did better in these provinces in 2009 local election, winning eight provinces

including Van and Siirt where the pro-Kurdish political party lost in the previous

election. DTP could increase its vote share (5.7%) not only in the overall Turkey but also

in the southeast Turkey. Although the governing party increased its strength in the

previous elections since 2002 due to its policies towards Kurdish issue that appeared to

be an alternative to the radicalized Kurdish nationalism, it failed to keep political will and

increase democratic reforms due to the PKK's increased terrorist activities and the

bureaucratic and political resistance by the other political actors. Under these

circumstances accompanied with the governing party's Turkish nationalist discourse and

increased military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq, the pro-Kurdish DTP

grabbed the opportunity to discredit democratization efforts in the eyes of the Kurdish

population so as to forestall another electoral setback which would have weakened its

claim to be sole representative of the Kurds (when democratization radicalizes).

In the 2009 local election, the vote share in the predominated Kurdish provinces

significantly shifted in favor of the pro-Kurdish DTP. DTP could control almost all major

municipalities in the predominated Kurdish provinces, while AK Party's share vote

decreased dramatically in these areas. Under these circumstances, the government

initiated a "democratic opening" to regain its vote share in the Kurdish areas. The

initiative was also mostly to end the 30-year conflict between the PKK and the Turkish

state that has been more beneficial for the former. Because DTP was founded by the

order of imprisoned Ocalan, the democratic opening was what Candar argued as "it

undermined its own raison d'etre as a legitimate political entity in Turkey".[27]

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[27] Cengiz Candar, "The Kurdish Question: The Reasons and Fortunes of the 'Opening'," *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 4 (2009).Pg. 18.

Democratic opening, despite vague in its content, stands out to be the boldest initiative in Turkey's history in finding a civilian solution to the Kurdish problem. The initiative consists of short, middle, and long term strategies. In the short run, the government has focused on the development of the Kurdish cultural rights such as changing the name of streets in the predominated Kurdish cities back to Kurdish. In the mid term, the government has granted amnesty to the PKK militants who did not carry out terrorist activities in the past. In the long run, the government would make some constitutional amendments that would emphasize cultural diversity without recognizing Kurdish identity in the constitution. Long term plans has also included giving more autonomy to the local administrations.

The democratic opening created a harsh criticism from both Kurdish and Turkish nationalists for fear that they would have lost their influence on the issue. The initiative has suffered erosion by the deliberative terrorist attacks by the PKK to undermine the Kurdish opening and the constitutional ban of pro-Kurdish DTP over the organic link with the PKK. Upon the closure of DTP, BDP has been founded as the last incarnation of series of pro-Kurdish parties that have been banned by the Constitutional Court because of their links with the PKK.

At the present time, as of 2011, the most fervently discussed issue in the Kurdish issue is BDP's "democratic autonomy" in the predominated Kurdish provinces to solve the Kurdish problem. This proposal actually has been put forth by imprisoned Ocalan and drafted by the PKK's leadership in Qandil Mountains in Iraq. It consists of eight different dimensions varying from political to social and from economic to self-defense. It also offers recognition of Kurdish flag and adoption of Kurdish language at every level of

education. The surveillance of telephone calls between the PKK and Democratic Society Congress (DTK), which is "an umbrella organization for pro-Kurdish many Kurdish politicians, intellectuals, and representatives of civil-society organizations"[28] and which is claimed to have an organic link with BDP, reveals the fact that the original proposal was drafted by the PKK. The original text reads as "The leader of the Kurdish nation, Abdullah Öcalan, is the founding leader of democratic autonomy. The People's Defense Forces [HPG] is the most basic organized force of today for the self-defense of the people of Kurdistan. Unless the status of the Democratic Autonomous and Free Kurdistan is recognized [of the Republic of Turkey] and as long as our fight against the Turkish state continues, no Kurdish youth will serve as soldiers in the colonist Turkish military. Each young member of Kurdistan contributes to efforts to establish the Democratic Autonomous and Free Kurdistan and considers being a member of the legitimate defense forces aimed to remove threats and attacks on our national patriotism, a moral responsibility and a national duty."[29]

The draft, for sure, was perceived by the mainstream Kurdish and Turkish society as the imposition of the PKK to establish what Kenes argues as "a full-fledged PKK dominance and a Stalinist dictatorship in the region in which they have committed countless violent terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of so many innocent people for the sake of first independence and then autonomy and some loosely defined targets such as cultural rights".[30] The proposal is also deemed to forestall the democratization initiatives that have aimed at solving Kurdish problem in a civilian term, albeit

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[28] Asbarez, "Threat of Closure for Turkey's Sole Pro-Kurdish Party Could Prompt Violence," http://asbarez.com/90691/threat-of-closure-for-turkeys-sole-pro-kurdish-party-could-prompt-violence/
[29] Today's Zaman, "Dtk's Autonomy Project Drafted in Kandil, Softened in Diyarbakir," *Today's Zaman* 2011.
[30] Bulent Kenes, "Democratic Autonomy or Autonomous Democracy?," *Today's Zaman* 2010.

piecemeal, and efforts to prevent "exit tendencies ... by empowering the voice option",

by which the pro-Kurdish BDP intends to confront the rise of the governing party that has

committed to solve the Kurdish problem in the coming general election to be held in June

2011.

CONCLUSION

The recent democratic initiatives since 2008 have been relatively full-fledged

reforms, but they are not the first ones. Outstanding attempts were made in the early

1990s, in 1999, and 2002. These attempts not only have shaped the way the Kurdish

question was discussed in the mainstream society and media but also have led to the legal

and institutional changes such as the abolition of state of emergency in the southeast

Turkey and of barriers in front of the broadcasting and education in Kurdish language.

Although the reforms have been met with harsh criticism by both Kurdish and Turkish

nationalists because of their potential to weaken their influence on their constituency, the

Kurdish issue has come to a point where the PKK was forced to change its ultimate goal.

Kurdish resistance and sporadic rebellions after the foundation of Turkish

republic plays a crucial role in the formation of state policies on the Kurdish issue. The

Turkish state implemented policy of co-optation of tribal and religious leaders that have

great influence on the Kurds to prevent Kurdish unrest that were characterized as tribal

and religious in nature before the creation of the PKK in 1978. The Kurdish resistance to

Turkey's secular and modern reforms evolved into nationalist movement with the

emergence of the PKK under the influence of socialist ideology that had impact on the

construction of Kurdish nationalism. In addition to the terrorist activities, the PKK sought

political recognition and legitimacy domestically and internationally, popular support,

and hegemony over the Kurdish problem by engaging in electoral politics with its pro-Kurdish political parties.

Although the engagement of electoral politics through its pro-Kurdish political parties was secondary to the PKK's terrorist activities in the 1980s and 1990s, it has become an important tool in a battle of recognition and power consolidation after the capture of Ocalan in 1999. Nevertheless, terrorist attacks were conducted against the Kurdish citizens in the predominated Kurdish provinces in the pre- and post-election periods. The vote share for the pro-Kurdish political parties, however, remained limited "due to the lack of genuine support for outright separation among Turkey's Kurds".[31] It could not appeal to the Kurdish citizens with the promise of independence.

With the capture of Ocalan, the PKK's fight in the legal arena has come into prominence. Ocalan renounced the goal of secession in the wake of his capture in 1999 as impossible and unnecessary, emphasizing democracy as "the only alternative in the Kurdish question"[32]. He further said that "If the democratic solution is fully implemented, it would become even a more successful and realistic model than autonomy and federation".[33] With the new ultimate goal, the pro-Kurdish DEHAP in a coalition with the small leftist political parties under the "Democratic Power Unity" increased its vote share from 3.48% in 1999 election to 6.2%.

As shown in Figure 2, the 2004 local election for the pro-Kurdish DEHAP was a severe defeat due to the reforms carried out by the Turkish government under the "harmonization packages" designed to transform Turkey's political and legal system in

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[31] Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, 26.
[32] Abdullah Öcalan, *Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question* (Mesopotamian Publishers, 1999).
[33] *Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question* (Mesopotamian Publishers, 1999), 18.

line with the EU criteria. The Kurds did not give credit to the pro-Kurdish political party that is associated with the PKK. The result of the 2004 local election also explains why the PKK declared "democratic confederalism" as its ultimate goal in 2005. The PKK, already militarily defeated, felt compelled to determine an ultimate objective in accordance with the realities of Turkey and the Middle East when defeated in the political arena in order to regain the Kurdish support.

The 2007 general election and 2009 local election were also other determining factors in its declaration of "democratic autonomy" in the summer 2010. It is argued in this chapter that in order to forestall democratization efforts that have weakened the PKK in the electoral politics and that have undermined its own raison detre, the PKK had to appeal to the Kurdish citizens by proposing more demands that threaten Turkey's national security, unity, and peace.

CHAPTER 3

POST-SEPTEMBER 11 POLICIES WORLDWIDE AND THE PKK'S

TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to explore the impact of international factors in the evolution

of the PKK with regard to its ultimate goal. More specifically, it is intended to figure out

the extent to which increased worldwide anti-terrorism policies following the September

11 terrorist attacks led to the transformation of the PKK. In order to survey the change in

its ultimate goal, the PKK's violent attacks will be graphed between 1984 and 2010. The

data was drawn from the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) that

allows tracing the number of terrorist activities of the PKK by 2010. It is assumed that

there is a relationship between the PKK's strategy of violent attacks and ultimate goal.

Thus, the chapter will look at the impact of anti-terrorism policies worldwide to see

whether they make any difference in the number of the PKK's violent attacks.

This chapter is divided into seven sections that are deemed necessary to

understand the international aspect of the transformation of the PKK. All sections, except

the analysis section, elaborate the main contributions of the September 11 terrorist attacks

to the PKK's shift in its ultimate goal. The first section examines how the PKK became

an international terrorist organization recognized by the US, EU, Nato, and many other

states as well as international organizations as a result of the worldwide reaction against

terrorism. The second section identifies worldwide counter-terrorism policies and its

impact on the fight against the PKK terrorism. The third section looks at the extent to

which the revival of Turkey's importance in the post-September 11 events plays a role in

obtaining necessary support from international community to weaken the PKK terrorism. The fourth section analyzes various means of support of the PKK and their role in the "Global War on Terrorism" era. The PKK's reaction to the post-September 11 events in an effort to circumvent the loss of its *raison d'etre* is detailed in the next section. It is argued that the PKK had to adapt to the new realities in order to survive by changing its ultimate goal, structure, and operating procedures. The sixth section examines the transformation in the EU's perception about the PKK following the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001. Because the EU is an important asset for the terrorist organization with regard to the political and financial support that the PKK obtains through pro-PKK networks in Europe to maintain terrorist activities in Turkey, the shift in EU's perception towards the PKK plays a crucial role in Turkey's fight against terrorism. The last section analyzes the relationship between the PKK's ultimate goal and the number of terrorist activities of the PKK in order to figure out the impact of worldwide counter-terrorism policies in the last decade on the PKK's transformation. This chapter concludes that the relationship between these two variables is descriptively significant in the immediate period before and after 2002, which validates the hypothesis that September 11 attacks have increased anti-terrorism policies worldwide that helped constrain the PKK. However, in the ensuing years after the US invasion of Iraq, the number of terrorist attacks of the PKK gradually increased due to the PKK's ability to adapt to the changes in the domestic and regional arena.

GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

To comprehend the reasons underlying the transformation of the PKK, one needs to examine the changes in the international arena. This section argues that the September 11 events played a determining role in the PKK's strategies and tactics. The role to which

I refer here is changing global perceptions of terrorism, hence the PKK, following the

September 11 events. In order to come to the conclusion about this, one needs a

collection of materials from the 1990s and similar discussions from after 9/11. The 1990s

were, simply put, the worst decade for Turkey in which the terrorist organization moved

beyond rural-based insurgent activities and employed urban terrorism that targeted many

urban targets in Turkey as well as Turkish institutions abroad. However, Turkey felt

alone in countering the PKK's terrorist activities not only in Turkey but also abroad. The

most important case which shows the EU's perception about the PKK is Ocalan issue.

After fleeing Syria, as a result of Turkey's pressure on Syria politically and militarily,

Ocalan arrived in Italy after he was denied political asylum in Russia. Not to mention the

request of Danielle Mitterand, widow of the former President of France (Francois

Mitterand), from EU countries to grant Ocalan political asylum, Italian Prime Minister

D'Alema stated that its government could grant Ocalan political asylum on the condition

that he gave up on terror. Upon Turkey's pressure on Italy, D'Alema met with German

Chancellor Schroder to convince him to send Ocalan to Germany. In a conference,

however, Schroder said that "we do not want him to be extradited, because Germany is

where most of the Turkish and Kurdish people in Europe live".[1] Following the expulsion

of Ocalan from Italy without trial, it was the US government which played a crucial role

in the capture of Ocalan, not the EU countries. There are also many cases that show the

different perceptions of terrorism in the EU foreign policy discussions. For instance, until

after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the EU did not have a list of designated terrorist

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[1] "129 Day Pursuit Ends in Turkey," *Milliyet* 1999.

organizations, while the US designated the PKK as a terrorist organization in 1997.[2] This means the EU countries failed to crack down on the PKK's terrorist and criminal activities in Europe before 9/11 events, due to the lack of common perception and definition of terrorism.

It is argued that one of the main contributions of the September 11 terrorist attacks is the development of worldwide reaction against terrorism. Because of this joint reaction, states that suffer from ethnic insurgency gained advantage over their respective terrorist organizations by receiving a wide variety of support from the powerful states and international organizations such as the UN and Nato. Similarly, many scholars consider the event of September 11 terrorist attacks has been a watershed in constructing a shared understanding against terrorism. However, in the pre-9/11 events era, the global and general perceptions of terrorism, and hence the PKK, was different vis-à-vis those after 9/11. Many states have defined the acts of terrorism according to their national interests. Some terrorist organizations that kill innocent people were deemed by the other countries as "freedom fighters". In the past, some states as well as NGOs supported some terrorist organizations by providing logistics, foot soldiers, and safe heaven for their strategic planning and training purposes. However, after the September 11 terrorist attacks that targeted the symbol of American military power Pentagon and economic power World Trade Center, the world realized the fact that no state, even the strongest one, is immune to the terrorist attacks. Secondly, even the strongest state could not struggle the terrorism unilaterally, which ultimately led to the increased international cooperation.

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[2] Joanne Mariner, "The Eu, the Farc, the Pkk, and the Pflp: Distinguishing Politics from Terror," *FindLaw's Legal Commentary* 2002.

In this regard, the international community, especially the US, realized the fact that the PKK was one of the major threats to the US and the free world. As argued, the PKK is an ethnic insurgent and terrorist organization that goes beyond Turkey's domestic realities. It has far-reaching effects on Turkey's international relations of the Middle East and European Union. With its transnational criminal network lying from the Middle East to Europe, it has been one of the most significant narco-criminals.[3] It can be argued that its activities do not only have domestic implications, but also international implications that threaten regional and global security. Thus, a terrorist organization with national and international implications is anticipated to be affected by the worldwide counter-terrorism measures.

WORLDWIDE COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICIES

In the aftermath of terrorist attacks, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1373 and 1566 that were considered as decisive and advanced step in the counter terrorism by the international community.[4] Although the Security Council exhibited expressions of strong criticism on several terrorist attacks prior to the September 11 events, it had never appealed to its Chapter VII to force states to stand for the resolution. The resolution brought about many rules and regulations that member states have to oblige. Accordingly, the resolution, without making any definition of terrorism, calls on the states to take all necessary actions to combat all forms of terrorist activities varying from fund-raising to participation in the commission of terrorist acts.[5]

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[3] L. Mincheva and T.R. Gurr, "Unholy Alliances Iii: Communal Militants and Criminal Networks in the Middle East, with a Case Study of the Kurdistan Workers Party (Pkk)," (2008).

[4] Eric Rosand, "Security Council Resolution 1373, the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and the Fight against Terrorism," *American Journal of International Law* 97, no. 2 (2003).

[5] Michael Byers, "Terrorism, the Use of Force and International Law after 11 September," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2002).

Then, to what extent have the measures taken by the UN Security Council affected the PKK's strategies? Although the PKK has mainly been conducting terrorist attacks in Turkey's borders, the other forms of terrorist activities of the PKK have been carried out outside Turkey. For instance, the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reveals that the PKK and its affiliated network in Europe have run 80 percent of the European illicit drug market.[6] In addition, it is estimated that drug trafficking constitutes almost 60 percent of the PKK's annual revenues that have been estimated about 800 million dollars by the Turkish officials.[7] The PKK has been using drug trafficking and the other forms of illegal activities orchestrated by the Kurdish Diaspora to finance its terrorist activities in Turkey. Thus, the UN resolution plays a crucial role in cutting the PKK's financial activities in Europe.

It also called on member states to adjust national laws to the "international conventions and protocols to combat terrorism"[8] so as to develop a concerted action against terrorism. The resolution also calls for international cooperation against those who provide any form of support to terrorist organization as well as obliges states to share intelligence, monitor borders, and "afford one another the greatest measure of assistance for criminal investigations or criminal proceedings relating to the financing or support of terrorist acts".[9] The resolution also instructed the member states to report their actions on the resolution's implementation to the Counter-Terrorism Committee that was created by the Security Council in accordance with the resolution 1373.

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[6] UNODC, "World Drug Report 2010," ed. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010), 55.

[7] Frank Hyland, "Turkey's Multifaceted Anti-Pkk Strategy Continues to Unfold," *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 12 (2008).

[8] United Nations, "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Wide-Ranging Anti-Terrorism Resolution; Calls for Suppressing, Financing, Improving International Cooperation," in *Resolution 1373* (2001).

[9] Ibid.

One of the prerequisites for an effective international cooperation in the fight against terrorism is to synchronize states' policies about the definition of terrorism, designation of terrorist organizations, and state actions taken against terrorist groups. In this regard, the resolution 1566 adopted in 2004 by UN Security Council can be considered as an important contribution to the counter-terrorism efforts. The resolution reads in the third paragraph as follows:

> Criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature, and calls upon all States to prevent such acts and, if not prevented, to ensure that such acts are punished by penalties consistent with their grave nature.[10]

REVIVAL OF TURKEY'S IMPORTANCE

The September 11 events led to the revival of Turkey's strategic importance in the global war against terrorism. The events justified Turkey's emphasis on the fact that all-out struggle against international terrorism was necessary, which calls for international cooperation due to Turkey's long lasting fight against terrorism.[11] Turkey has been among the world's main victims of terrorism due to the international assassination campaign by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) against the Turkish diplomats and their families in the 1970s and 1980s and 30-year insurgency of the PKK. The Turkish government has always accused EU countries to take no appropriate action against terrorist activities of Kurdish separatists. Turkey perceives that

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Huseyin Bagci and Saban Kardas, "Post-11 September Impact: The Strategic Importance of Turkey Revisited," (ESF Working Paper, 2004).

other states do not comprehend its suffering from the Kurdish terrorist activities. Hence, Turkey, at all levels, exhibited a quick response to the September 11 terrorist attacks due to the understanding of the devastation of the terrorist attacks that Turkey had experienced for a long time.

Turkey could not obtain the necessary support from international community for its fight against PKK's terrorist activities carried out in the Middle East and Europe. Thus, Turkey's relations with its neighboring countries and European countries have been from time to time problematic. Although Turkey militarily defeated the PKK, it could not eliminate it politically and financially because of the reluctance or failure of these states, especially European countries, in Turkey's fight.

STATE SUPPORT OF THE PKK IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM ERA

One of the outstanding contributions of the September 11 events is the discontinuation of the state support, to a greater extent, for the PKK as a result of the global understanding of terrorism. State support is crucial factor in terrorism. Byman et al. argue that state support or sponsorship of an insurgency was common practice in their foreign policy during the cold war. Both superpowers and some regional powers engaged in proxy war by supporting ethnic insurgencies so as to weaken one another and their respective proxies.[12] Many terrorist groups during the cold war received state support for ideological reasons by some states that "considered the systemic factors as appropriate to change the borders or dominate their rivalries"[13] Likewise, founded in the Cold War era, the PKK was an elusive blessing for the Soviets and their satellites in the Middle East. During the Cold War, the PKK sought to create an independent Kurdish state in the

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[12] Daniel Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001).
[13] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

region based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology that was appropriate for the national

interests of Turkey's neighboring counties that sought a weakened Turkey as the US ally.

The Turkish government accused seven states comprising of Armenia, Iran, Iraq,

Lebanon, Russia, Syria, and Greece for supporting the PKK terrorism especially during

the Cold War and until the end of 1990s.

Turkey's growing relations with Syria in the security area against the PKK

terrorism well illustrate how the state support of the PKK decreases to a greater extent.

The PKK terrorism in the first decade of the post-cold war era has become a major issue

in Turkey's relation with Syria, which dates back to the most parts of the cold war era.

Syria was always what Sayari notes as "PKK's principal source of external logistical

support and training".[14] Even, Syria provided Ocalan and his comrades with a safe haven

for a long time from the early years of 1980s. Although Syria has its own Kurdish

minority in its soil, the Kurdish nationalism was not a security threat because of the well-

established relationship between Ocalan and the Syrian authorities based on their shared

threat perception against Turkey. This relationship survived even after the demise of the

Soviet Union due to the conflict between Turkey and Syria on the water issue. The

conflict resulted from the failure of both states to come to an agreement on the status of

the Euphrates River. While Syria complained that the construction of dams on the

Euphrates River as part of Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) projected in 1980s would

have led to the scarcity of water on which Syria's agriculture extremely depend, Turkey

tried to assure Syria as well as the neighboring countries about the quality and quantity of

the water. Despite these assurances and many protocols signed for the management of

water resources, Syria opted to house Ocalan and the PKK terrorists and provide safe

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[14] Sabri Sayari, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 1990s," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 3 (1997).

haven for training purposes in order to force Turkey to release more water into its soil.[15]

This conflict eventually led to the brink of war between Syria and Turkey in the late

1990s, which forced the former to expel Ocalan outside the country. Prior to Ocalan's

expulsion to Russia, Europe, and Kenya respectively, the PKK enjoyed Syria's external

support, enabling it to train its terrorists and command the terrorist organization.

However, Turkey's relations with Syria have outstandingly flourished recently due to the

"shared interest in containing Kurdish nationalism and preventing the emergence of an

independent Kurdish state on their borders".[16] The policy change of Syrian government

has chiefly resulted from the concern over the likelihood of the emergence of Kurdish

state in northern Iraq that might lead to "economic and political improvements [with]

Syria's own Kurdish population".[17]

State support with the end of the cold war did not end, rather as Byman argues,

"dimensions and nature of outside aid and the identity of the providers have changed

significantly".[18] Radicalized Kurdish nationalism in the Middle East has internationalized

after the first and second Gulf crises.[19] The Gulf crises complicated Turkey's relations

with its neighboring countries in the Middle East. The power vacuum in northern Iraq

following the Gulf War provided the PKK with opportunity to find havens in northern

Iraq from which to launch terrorist attacks to Turkey. Turkey feared that the power

vacuum and the possibility of Iraq's partition would have led to the emergence of de-

facto Kurdish state that would have changed the regional balance of power and

undermined Turkey's national security due to the PKK's quest for independence in

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[15] Criss, "The Nature of Pkk Terrorism in Turkey."
[16] Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovers the Middle East," 107.
[17] "Turkey Rediscovers the Middle East," 109.
[18] Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, xiii.
[19] Criss, "The Nature of Pkk Terrorism in Turkey."

Turkish soil. The PKK grasped the opportunity and declared that it sought an independent

Kurdish state comprising of southeast Turkey and northern Iraq, instead of a Kurdish

state in the broader so-called Kurdistan.

The types of external assistance and its implications may vary depending on time

and necessity. While during the cold war some states overtly supported insurgencies, in

the post-cold war era the state support, at least overtly, became difficult. Even, it has been

less attainable for insurgencies after the September 11 terrorist attacks due to the ensuing

actions taken by the UN or Nato against those who provide external support of terrorist

organization. However, the existence of insurgency implies the presence of external

support. External support is not what states were the only actor that was capable of

providing support anymore; rather non-state actors began to play more important role in

the outside assistance. In another words, the new actors in backing insurgent movements

are "different in their means and objectives from cold war superpowers".[20] In comparison

to states, these groups are less dangerous, but they are also harder to manage or coerce.

Among others, Diasporas assume a prominent role in furnishing many insurgencies. For

instance, the Palestinian, Irish, Tamil, and Kurdish Diasporas have played a major role in

sustaining their respective insurgencies. Diasporas, in general, has become a sort of

backbone of insurgency with regard to financing and recruiting. It is more reliable source

than state support.[21]

Although popular support for the PKK is *sine quo non* for successful insurgency,

it is not a sufficient factor to reach its ultimate goal. Kilcullen argues that while external

support is necessary, even when insurgents enjoy popular support, it is vital when they do

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[20] Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 103.
[21] *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 3.

not. [22] Further, Record argues that external assistance is "the single most important factor in determining war outcomes". [23] According to him, organization's will and strategy underpinned by external support has the capability to disturb the balance of power between weaker and stronger. Given the fact that the PKK's state support began to suffer extensively due to the diminished state sponsorship by the regional powers, except Syria till the late 1990s, because of the changes in the regional arena that did not favor state sponsorship after the demise of the Soviet Union, led the PKK to engage in different types of criminal activities, especially drug trafficking, as a means to its end. It is estimated that the PKK's financing from different means of criminal activities, especially drug trafficking, was about ten millions of dollars annually in the 1990s.[24] The PKK's annual income is estimated at least ten times more in 2007.[25]

For successful insurgency, insurgent movements require a variety of external support, most of which, in general, cannot be acquired domestically. The value of the external aid varies depending on to what extent external support fulfills domestic needs in its struggle.[26] During the 1990s, while the PKK could get financial support for its terrorist operations through the involvement of different types of trafficking, safe havens in northern Iraq and Syria that could not otherwise obtain domestically played a crucial role in training, organizing, and stage operations. Political instability in Iraq and dispute between Turkey and Syria over water resources provided the PKK with opportunity to

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[22] David Kilcullen, "Counter-Insurgency Redux," *Survival* 48, no. 4 (2006).

[23] Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath : Why Insurgencies Win* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 23.

[24] Michael Radu, *Dilemmas of Democracy & Dictatorship : Place, Time, and Ideology in Global Perspective* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

[25] Sedat Laciner, "Drug Smuggling as Main Source of Pkk Terrorism," http://www.usakpedia.com/content/Drug_Smuggling_As_The_Main_Financial_Source_of_the_PKK_Terrorism.

[26] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

engage in terrorist and criminal activities in the region. That Turkey lies between the

Middle East and Europe facilitates the PKK to play a determining role in drug trafficking.

THE PKK'S REACTION TO THE POST-SEPTEMBER 11 EVENTS

The September 11 events reveal how the changes in the international arena, as

argued in the dissertation, have capability to transform the PKK. Founded in the cold war

era, the PKK experienced one of the most important transformations in the post-cold war

era. The second transformation in response to the international developments has taken

place in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The new Kurdish political activism started with the capture of Ocalan, accelerated

with the recognition of Turkey's candidacy for the EU membership in 1999, and was

reinforced by the changing attitude of international community towards all kinds of

terrorism, including ethnic insurgency that was perceived as freedom fighters like the

PKK, especially by the EU, before the events of September 11. The PKK adapted to the

new political realities by "changing [its] structural, organizational, and strategic

operations"[27] that fit into its new ultimate goal of "democratic Turkey" that called for the

constitutional recognition of Kurdish minority rights and Kurdish culture in Turkey,

replacing original goal of Kurdish secession. In order to escape from the death penalty, as

some observers argue, Ocalan ordered a unilateral cease-fire and withdraw of the PKK

militants to northern Iraq to prevent dissolution of the organization and use it later for a

bargaining chip. He then renounced the PKK's violence and announced his aspiration for

"peace initiative" with the Turkish government on Kurdish issues.[28] The ceasefire could

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[27] Vera Eccarius-Kelly, "Political Movements and Leverage Points: Kurdish Activism in the European Diaspora," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2002): 91.
[28] Presidential Council PKK, "To Get Outside the Borders of Turkey," http://www.pkkonline.com/en/index.php?sys=article&artID=11 (Accessed March 22, 2011).

only last until 2004 due to what Cagaptay argues as "diminished morale among PKK foot soldiers and democratic politics [that] eroded the group's *raison d'être*".[29]

Upon the call for his initiative, the PKK, in 2002, tried to escape from being labeled as terrorist organization in the eye of international community by changing its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) with a commitment to non-violent activities. Despite these changes, the organization did not comply with the calls for disarmament, instead "continued its military training and planning and continues to threaten violence"[30] so as to not lose its bargaining power vis-à-vis the Turkish government. With the name change, the terrorist organization sought to avert being labeled as terrorist organization as well as to reach large masses to mobilize for its end. By doing so, the PKK aimed at taking forward the re-organization process and shifting towards the legal arena.

The decision was made in the PKK's eighth congress that was carried out in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq. The pro-PKK Kurds define the eighth congress as "a new era of historical movement"[31] because of the radical changes in the PKK's objective and strategies. They argued that the decision of the Congress reflected the changes that took place both in the international and regional arena that affected the Kurdish nationalism.

Like the other congresses, the PKK's eighth congress plays a crucial role in the PKK's history. Carried out almost every five years, the congress sets long term strategies

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[29] S. Cagaptay, "Can the Pkk Renounce Violence? The Kurdish Terrorist Group's Rhetoric May Change, but Its Beliefs Do Not," *Middle East quarterly.* 14, no. 1 (2007).
[30] START, "Terrorist Organization Profile: Kurdistan Workers' Party (Pkk)," http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data_collections/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=63.(Accessed March 8, 2011).
[31] PKK, "Resolution on the 8th Congress of the Pkk," http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=8488

based on the assessment of what Ozcan argues as "the organization's past activities as well as the state of political and military conditions prevailing in the region"[32] through the lenses of the PKK's ideology. Thus, the decisions made at the congresses reflect the transformation of the PKK in the face of domestic, regional, and international developments. For instance, the congress called for armed struggle against the Turkish state in the third congress held in 1982 to PKK militants who fled the country to Lebanon just before the 1980 military coup. In the fifth congress in 1995, the organization emphasized the importance of the political struggle in addition to the military struggle. The foundation of the first pro-Kurdish political party in 1994 marks the beginning of the new era in the PKK's history. The organization entered into new period of revival and strategic planning by declaring a unilateral ceasefire that lasted until 2004 in the seventh congress held in 1999 after the capture of Ocalan.

Likewise, the organization renounced the military struggle the PKK carried out for almost twenty years in the eightieth congress. It pointed out that the PKK successfully accomplished its mission by inspiring the "Kurdish national resistance" and further argued that "the PKK-style struggle"-that is armed struggle- no longer served to the organization's end. The congress also maintained that the solution to the Kurdish problem lied in the democratic civilization that would exacerbate the situation otherwise. The congress, lastly, calls for "peaceful political *serhildan* (uprising)" which the successor KADEK sees as "the only effective method in creating the democratic

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[32] Nihat Ali Ozcan, "Pkk Party Congress Sets Long-Term Strategy Based on Threat Perceptions," The Jamestown Foundation,
http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5234&tx_ttnews[backPid]=167&no_cache=1

transformation in the state and the society at large".[33] Although the terrorist organization maintained that it would have sought peaceful activities rather than military achievements, KADEK maintained the same symbol and the presidential council and threatened the Turkish state with the prospective terrorist attacks, if its demands were not met.

The events of September 11 also led to the changes in the regional arena that affected the PKK's modus operandi in accordance with its ultimate objective. The terrorist organization abolished Kadek and founded Kurdistan Peoples Congress (Kongra-Gel) to accommodate the organization's ideology, strategy, and organizational structure. The organization argued that the decision had been based on the necessity to adapt to the developments in the Middle East following the US invasion of Iraq and transform the organization into so-called democratic organization that aimed at mobilizing larger number of people and that transcends Marxist-Leninist organizational models.

Created in 2002 in an effort to transform the terrorist organization into legal political grounds following the capture of Ocalan, Kadek could not accomplish its mission. The leadership stated that the developments and the policies the organization pursued were insufficient to overcome the problems they faced. Therefore, the new projects and solutions, the organization further argues, should also have considered the external factors, not to mention the internal factors, that pave the way for so-called democratic transformation and solutions.

By the same token, the fact that international community has become more sensitive to terrorism after the September 11 terrorist attacks led the PKK to determine a

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[33] PKK, "Resolution on the 8th Congress of the Pkk".

new concept, albeit in the organization discourse. In this regard, the terrorist organization founded Kongra-Gel with relatively more moderate goal that renounces terrorist activities in its discourse and that does not claim Kurdish secession. The decision of transformation, however, mostly traces back to the work of imprisoned Ocalan for his defense. The statements, then, turned out to be a new political project that was first called as democratic republic and then democratic confederalism, both of which were perceived as "radical [reinterpretation] of the concept of democracy".[34]

The PKK sought democratic republic as its ultimate goal until the PKK's ninth congress held in 2005. The organization founded Kadek in 2002 and its successor Kongra-Gel in 2003 in an effort to politicize and legalize the Kurdish struggle following the capture of Ocalan in 1999 in line with its ultimate goal. However, the new project did not serve its purpose and failed to prevent the further divisions in the organization over the organizational remodeling and operational strategies. Thus, the organization reestablished the PKK for ideological leadership and the control of the organization's road map in 2005. In the PKK's tenth congress, also known as restructuring-PKK congress, the terrorist organization declared "Kurdistan Democratic Confederalism"[35] (KCK) in accordance with Ocalan's orders as a new goal and structural model that consists of Kongra-Gel as a judicial branch and the PKK as an ideological force of the organization. The KCK has been perceived by some analysists as "the modernized version of PKK's armed structuring in the 1990s".[36] The organization also founded

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[34] Ahmet H. Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "The Pkk in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?," *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue, Oxon/New York, Routledge* (2010): 145.

[35] Abdullah Ocalan, "The Declaration of Democratic Confederalism," http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=10174.

[36] Ihsan Bal, "The Democratic Initiative Knocked over the Kck," http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3260/the-democratic-initiative-knocked-over-the-kck.html.

affiliate groups in Iraq, Iran, and Syria in order to promote the goal of democratic confederalism in the so-called Kurdistan. Therefore, the offshoot organizations that are the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) in Iran, Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (PCDK) in Iraq, and PYD in Syria were founded under the framework of Kurdistan Democratic Confederalism. The modus operandi of these organizations as well as other political and military wings of the terrorist organization in each part of so-called Kurdistan were coordinated by the Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (KCK), which was created as an umbrella organization that was oriented towards the achievement of the PKK's ultimate objective in the region.[37]

Despite the limitations that did not go beyond the symbolic character in the initial period, the project of Kurdistan Democratic Confederalism was endeavored to internalize among the members of the PKK by forming theoretical models. The pro-PKK media outlets, especially Roj Tv that has been broadcasting from Denmark since 2004, publicized the project as following:

"The system of nation states has become a serious barrier to the development of society and democracy and freedom since the end of the 20th century. The only way out of this situation is to establish a democratic confederal system that will derive its strength directly from the people, and not from globalisation based on nation states.... A system of democratic confederalism would be the model for the resolution of the problems of the Middle East. Neither the capitalist system nor the pressure of imperialist forces will lead to democracy; except to serve their own interests.... The task is to assist in developing a grass-roots based democracy. Democratic confederalism is a system which takes into consideration the religious, ethnic and class differences in society.... For Kurdistan,

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[37] Akkaya and Jongerden, "The Pkk in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?."

however, democratic confederalism is a movement which does not interpret the right to self determination to establish a nation state, but develops its own democracy in spite of political boundaries. A Kurdish structure will develop through the creation of a federation of Kurds in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. And by uniting on a higher level they will form a confederal system....From now on, three laws will be applied in Kurdistan: EU Law, the law of the national government and the democratic confederal law. So long as the national governments of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria respect the democratic confederal laws the Kurdish people will observe their laws and thereby common ground will be sought".[38]

Changing attitudes against terrorisms in the international community after the September 11 terrorist attacks affected the PKK's modus operandi in the regional arena. The new Kurdish activism in the EU illustrates how the PKK has changed in its political activism to gain international support against the Turkish government. As Renard says, the Kurdish activism in Europe relied overwhelmingly on "terrorist attacks, training, and fundraising in Europe by the PKK members" that exploited "the lack of European counter-terrorism cooperation" against the illegal activities of the PKK and the reluctance of EU countries to list the PKK as a terrorist organization till 2002.[39]

Kirisci argues that European Parliament passed a resolution in December 1998, "following the crisis between Turkey and Italy over the extradition of Ocalan to Turkey"[40], that well illustrates how the PKK-affiliated Kurdish organization in Europe

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[38] Ocalan, "The Declaration of Democratic Confederalism".

[39] Thomas Rhenard, "Kurdish Activism in Europe: Terrorism Versus Europeanization," *Terrorism Monitor Volume 6*, no. 13 (2008).

[40] Kemal Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," in *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, ed. Lenore G Martin and Dimitris Keridis, *Bcsia Studies in International Security*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 289.

could achieve its objective. While the resolution criticized Turkey's Kurdish problem and demanded an international solution to the Kurdish problem, it did not refer to the PKK as a terrorist organization, ignoring the terrorist activities of the PKK in Europe.

This organizational and structural change led to the "Europeanization"[41] of the Kurdish movement that targeted the EU institutions such as European Council, the European Court of Justice, and the European Court of Human Rights, rather than European government institutions so as to gain momentum in the EU-induced reforms that has taken place in Turkey since the 1999 Helsinki Summit that approved Turkey's EU candidacy.

The PKK carried out the terrorist activities in Europe at organizational and state level. The most important pro-PKK organizations, inter alia, are Kongra-Gel, Democratic Society Coordination of European Kurds (CDK), Kurdistan National Congress (KNK), the Association of Kurdish Organization in Europe (KON-KURD), and other associations that represent Kurdish professional and social segments.

Performing the organization's external affairs, political, and diplomacy task, Kongra-Gel in Europe strives to present to the European interlocutors that the PKK is not a terrorist organization, but freedom fighters. Hence, it lobbies the EU supranational organizations in coordination with the European sympathizers and non-governmental organizations for its political ends.

CDK is responsible for the coordination of the PKK's activities in Europe. In general, it develops projects that fulfill the Kurds' social, political, and cultural needs. The organization is in charge of many tasks varying from taking care of immediate

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[41] Andreas Blatte, "The Kurdish Movement Ethnic Mobilization and Europeanization," in *EUSA 8th International Biennale Conference* (2003).

family members of the PKK members who lost their lives in the struggle for the so-called

Kurdistan to campaigns against Turkey's efforts to convince European countries to take

action against the terrorist organization.

The establishment of KNK traces back to the Kurdish Parliament-in-exile. In

order to gain popular support from the Kurdish Diaspora and international support for its

cause, the PKK established Kurdish Parliament in exile in Europe upon the closure of

Democracy Party (DEP) by the Supreme Court due to its organic link with the terrorist

organization. The Kurdish parliament in exile was established in The Hague, Netherlands

in 1995 as a diplomatic wing of the PKK in accordance with the decision made in the

PKK's fifth congress. The so-called parliament carried out regular meetings in some

European countries including Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Russia, and Italy.[42] The

organization enjoyed little success due to the its failure to embrace other Kurdish political

organizations in Europe that support the Kurdish nationalist movement in the Middle East

such as KDP and PUK moderates and led to the closure of the organization by the PKK

in 1999. However, it successfully established the valuable contacts with the

representatives from different European political parties that helped the PKK "mobilize

considerable support among politicians and public figures in Europe"[43]. As a result of this

transnational organizing, many politicians and a considerable amount of European public

perceived the PKK as the representative of the Kurds in Turkey.

Founded in 1999 following the closure of Kurdistan Parliament-in-Exile in

Europe upon the order of Ocalan, KNK was planned under the PKK terrorist organization

during its transformation from KADEK to Kongra-Gel. However, the citizens of Kurdish

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[42] Martin van Bruinessen, "Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question," Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (Florence: European University Institute, 2000).
[43] Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 289.

origin who do not support the PKK's cause rejected this offer, which then has led to the

loss of its functions since 2003. Thus, it failed to represent all citizens of Kurdish origin,

but it maintained to function as a lobbying committee for the PKK's cause.

One of the most important functioning organizations is Kon-Kurd, which is

umbrella organization for the federation of Kurdish associations operating in many

European countries, especially Germany, Holland, France, and Belgium. The

organization is in charge of recruiting and financial support of the PKK. It accomplished

to fill the gap when the terrorist organization failed to coordinate the terrorist activities in

Europe after the capture of Ocalan. Kon-Kurd and its associations have been influential

in coordinating campaigns and achieving mass participation in the demonstrations.

EU COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICIES AGAINST THE PKK AFTER 9/11

Many observers argue that there has been transformation in the EU's perception

about the PKK. Despite far from satisfactory perceived by Turkey, the EU has increased

its efforts to crack down the PKK terrorist activities in Europe in the last decade.

Overlooking Turkey's military and political struggle against the PKK terrorism and the

PKK's terrorist activities varying from extortion to fund-raising from Kurdish Diaspora

and from money laundering to recruitment in the past, the EU countries have realized the

extent to which the PKK is a real threat to their security. Although the PKK controls the

organization from the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq, it obtains its financial support

mainly from extortion and fund-raising from Kurdish Diaspora and drug trafficking lying

from Afghanistan to the European countries.[44] The PKK also organizes all forms of

trafficking through the social network that the terrorist organization formed in the

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[44] Birol Akgun, "Avrupa Pkk'yi Neden Şimdi Anlıyor?," [Why does the EU Realize Now?] *Institute of Strategic Thinking* (2010).

European countries. The official reports reveal the fact that the PKK, directly or indirectly, has been responsible for half of the drug trafficking that amounts to 5 billion dollars annually.

Despite the terrorist activities of the PKK in the European countries, the Turkish elites and public claimed that there were some reasons behind the EU's inaction against the PKK. First, Turkey has always been under European criticism about its Kurdish policy. The charges were often related to many issues varying from human rights violations of ethnic Kurds to the repression of ethnic expression of Kurds, which in turn have become a major obstacle to Turkey's bid for European Union membership. Secondly, Turkey has been perceived by the EU as "a security consumer or an insecurity provider"[45] that has implemented "military-oriented security strategy"[46] that requires assertiveness in the region in the fight against Kurdish separatism. This was also another reason why the EU did not recognize the PKK as a terrorist organization in the past. Thirdly, the European countries overlooked the PKK activities in return for non-violence against the European citizens.

However, the EU has changed its attitudes towards the PKK. It is argued that there have been three factors underlying this shift in the last decade: the revival of Turkey's strategic importance, "global war on terrorism" as official security policy of first of all the US, EU, and Nato, Turkey's increased democratization efforts that have caused both Turkey and EU to become closer, and the US harsh stand against the PKK in recent years.

First of all, the international environment in the 1990s where Turkey's strategic

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[45] Bagci and Kardas, "Post-11 September Impact: The Strategic Importance of Turkey Revisited," 21.
[46] Ibid.

importance to the US and EU was relatively less and where Turkey had to struggle with the PKK alone, despite the PKK's grave threat to the international security, has yielded to the international environment where Turkey's importance in the global war on terrorism has been realized since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Grasping this opportunity, the Turkish officials at all level manifested at every occasion their willingness to take actions it deems necessary to assist international initiatives. The Turkish government, at the same time, repeatedly emphasized the "commonality between its war against the PKK and the US war against terrorism"[47] -notion that like al qaeda, the PKK is "an enemy of all humanity"[48] with about 50 -100 million dollars income annually from heroin and all kinds of trafficking and which caused more than 30,000 casualties that is what Bal indicates "ten times more than the casualties of 9/11 terrorist attacks".[49] Turkey grasped the opportunity in the hope of reciprocal assistance in its fight against the PKK terrorism and tried to meet "every request that the United States has made for assistance with regard to the war in Afghanistan and the wider international campaign against Al Qaeda."[50]

Secondly, despite limited cooperation among its members, the EU resorted to reform its regulations and rules in the security, financial, and law arena in order to increase its effectiveness of its counter-terrorism efforts in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks. The European Union also emphasized its commitment to the cooperation with the US, UN, and other international organizations and countries. Primarily, the EU decided to

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[47] Paul E. Gallis, *European Counterterrorist Efforts : Political Will and Diverse Responses* (New York: Nova Science Pub., 2004), 131-32.

[48] Michele Steinberg, "Pkk Terrorists Named 'Drug Kingpins'; Nations Move against Narcoterrorism," *Executive Intelligence Review, August* 1(2008): 48.

[49] Ihsan Bal, "Al-Qaeda and Pkk: "Bad Terrorist" and "Good Terrorist"," http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/1523/al-qaeda-and-pkk-bad-terrorist-and-good-terrorist-.html (Accessed March 20, 2011).

[50] Gallis, *European Counterterrorist Efforts : Political Will and Diverse Responses*, 132.

prepare a list that consists of terrorist activities and groups operating within the borders of European Union so as to help the international community crack down all forms of terrorist activities.[51] Hence, the EU promised to take action against all forms of terrorist activities within the EU borders regardless whether they target the EU members. In this respect, the European Council defined "terrorist acts" and made a list of "persons, groups, and entities involved in terrorist acts"[52] to eliminate financing of terrorism.

Although the PKK was not in the list in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, in 2002 the EU annexed eleven organizations, including the PKK and KADEK, as well as seven individuals to this list.[53] The EU took action for the first time against non-European international organization to freeze their assets.[54] The Council continuously updated the list and included the successor Kadek and Kongra-Gel to the list in 2004.[55] However, many observers maintain that the inclusion of the PKK in the list has been considered a late step when taken into consideration of the fact that the PKK was founded in late 1970 and since then Europe, as the EU acknowledges, has been an important asset for financial and logistical support through "mainly activities such as extortion, human trafficking, drugs, and arms smuggling, and money laundering, raising large amounts of revenue"[56] to strengthen its military struggle against the Turkish state.

[51] Umut Kedikli, "Avrupa Birligi'nin Terörizmle Mücadele Politikalari Ve Hukuki Boyutu," [The EU's Counter-Terrorism Policies and Legal Dimension.] *Security Studies* (2003): 63.

[52] Europa, "Freezing Funds: List of Terrorists and Terrorist Groups," http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/fight_against_terrorism/l33208_en.htm.(Accessed March 8, 2011).

[53] Official Journal of the European Communities, "Council Common Position of 17 June 2002," http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:160:0032:0035:EN:PDF.(Accessed March 8, 2011).

[54] M. Levitt, "Stemming the Flow of Terrorist Financing: Practical and Conceptual Challenges," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs.* 27(2003).

[55] Official Journal of the European Union, "Council Common Position of 29 May 2006," http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:144:0025:0029:EN:PDF.(Accessed March 28, 2011).

[56] Europol, "Te-Sat 2010: Eu Terrorism Situation and Trend Report " (2010).

Third, the democratic initiatives that targeted anti-democratic implementations that led to the harsh criticism of the EU in Turkey in the last decade have caused both Turkey and EU to understand one another's concerns and policy perspectives towards the Kurdish problem. Turkey strived to solve its Kurdish problem through military means, ignoring other means. However, when the Turkish government initiated to fight with terrorism in a democratic term and realized "its economic, social, and cultural dimension", the European Union felt obliged to cooperate with Turkey in its fight with the PKK terrorism.[57]

This was also reinforced by the inclusion of the PKK to the EU terrorist list following the September 11 events. This sharing understanding about the PKK was reflected in the "EU's September 2005 progress report, which accused the PKK of being the source of violence in Turkey's southeastern region.[58] Although the Kurds have been "the most immediate beneficiary"[59] of EU-induced reforms in Turkey, the recent developments reveal the fact that Turkey cannot solve its Kurdish problem as long as the PKK terrorism persists. Thus, Turkey's efforts are bound to fail, if the PKK continues to get financial and logistical support from outside Turkey.

Last but not least, many observers also argue that the US harsh stand against the PKK terrorism has left little place for the European countries to maneuver. Although the EU recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization in 2002, the pressure made by Turkey and the US on the European Union with regard to the PKK's terrorist activities did not yield a satisfactory outcome for a long time. The EU countries did not show their willingness to combat the PKK terrorism, despite the fact that they were required to take

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[57] Murat Yetkin, "Bağış: Avrupa'daki Pkk Operasyonları Reformlar Sayesinde," *Radikal* 2010.
[58] Uslu, "The Kurdistan Workers' Party Turns against the European Union," 101.
[59] "The Kurdistan Workers' Party Turns against the European Union," 105.

actions including freezing assets and extraditing criminals in accordance with the Council regulations.[60] Between 2003 and 2010, there were a few police operations against the PKK. For instance, in 2004, Dutch security forces stormed a training camp located in Liempde Netherlands and arrested twenty-nine suspects on the charges of "training to prepare for the armed struggle of the PKK in Turkey, by committing terrorist attacks".[61] The authorities declined to extradite the suspects to Turkish authorities and released seven of them a few months later. In a similar vein, German authorities shut down two publishers of the pro-PKK media outlets –*Ozgur Politika* and Roj online- operating in Germany in 2007. However, the German Federal court then overturned the decision of the Interior Ministry to shut down the former newspaper.[62] However, following the decision made by the US Ministry of Commerce to list the PKK leadership as the drug kingpin in 2009[63], the some European Union countries launched a series of police operations against the PKK in 2010. France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Belgium intensified operations against the PKK in coordination with the Turkish officials and detained many senior members including Zubeyir Aydar, leader of the Kurdish National Congress (Kongra-Gel), and Remzi Kartal, the PKK's leading figure in Europe. The Belgium authorities also targeted Roj TV, the pro-PKK media outlet. Upon the closure of the television station, the broadcasting was made from the station studios in Sweden. The increased EU operations against the PKK in the recent years were deemed an indication

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[60] Europa, "Combating the Financing of Terrorism," http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/fight_against_terrorism/l24402_en.htm
[61] AFP, "Dutch Police Raid Kurdish Camp," News24, http://www.news24.com/World/News/Dutch-police-raid-Kurdish-camp-20041112.(Accessed April 1, 2011).
[62] Soner and S. Cagaptay, Fikret Cem "Europe's Terror Problem: Pkk Fronts inside the Eu," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2413 (Accessed April 1, 2011).
[63] Press Center, "Treasury Designates Three Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers ", ed. US Department of the Treasury (2009).

of the impact of Turkey's democratization efforts towards Turkey's Kurdish problem on

the EU countries and[64] the US pressure on European Union.[65]

ANALYSIS

This section analyzes whether there is a relationship between the PKK's ultimate

goal and its use of violence in order to figure out the impact of worldwide counter-

terrorism policies following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the PKK's transformation.

Carrying out its first terrorist attacks in 1984, the violence against what it perceived

enemy of the organization was the main tool of the organization until the capture of

Ocalan in 1999. During that period, the major incident types, as shown in numbers in

Figure 3 were assassination, armed assault, bombing/explosion, hijacking, hostage taking,

facility/infrastructure attack, and unarmed assault. The PKK carried out these attack types

as a means to reach ultimate goal of secession. As seen in Figure 3 the terrorist activities

of the PKK intensify in the period before and after 1993. Thus, we can argue that the

Gulf war of 1991 as an external factor plays a determining role in this increase. The

terrorist organization launched deadly attacks on Turkey by capitalizing the power

vacuum in northern Iraq following the war. In order to achieve its ultimate goal of

secession and exhibit its power in the region, the PKK maintained terrorist attacks against

the Turkish officials and citizens of Kurdish origin that it deemed as collaborators of the

Turkish government.

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[64] Yetkin, "Bağış: Avrupa'daki Pkk Operasyonları Reformlar Sayesinde."
[65] Mehmet Özcan, "Recent Operations against the Pkk in Belgium," *International Strategic Research Organization (USAK)* 2010.

Figure 3: Number of Terrorist Activities of the PKK Between 1984-2007[66]
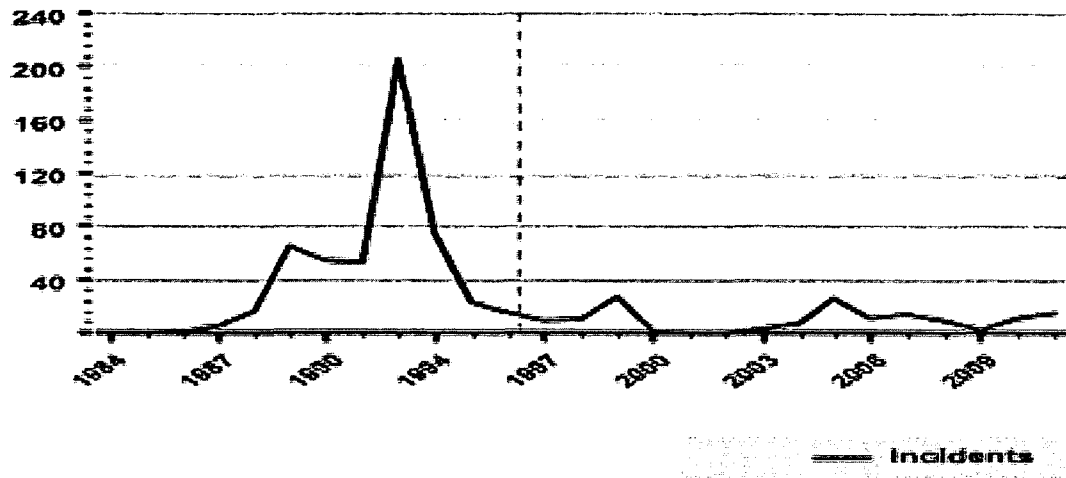
As this chapter argues, the second transformation takes place in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. However, it traces back to the capture of its leader, Ocalan. During his trial, he renounced the PKK's terrorist violence and declared that the terrorist organization sought the constitutional recognition of Kurdish minority rights and Kurdish culture in Turkey under the framework of "democratic Turkey". The terrorist organization had to retreat to the safe haven in northern Iraq in accordance with Ocalan's order and entered into a period of recruitment activities and recovery process. Although the terrorist organization sought the politicization of Kurdish struggle after the capture of Ocalan, it continued to use commission of violence as a bargaining chip in an effort to reach its end. As seen in Figure 3, the number of terrorist activities in 1999 and 2000 is higher in comparison to the number of attacks in the following years after 2003.

The terrorist organization changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) and announced that it would have sought peaceful

[66] Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism Datset.

agenda in 2002. The reason behind this statement was what many experts argued that the

PKK had to adapt to the changes in the international arena. In another words, the

transformation of the PKK into an organization with a commitment to so-called peaceful

agenda was "an attempt by the PKK to distance itself from its violent past in an effort to

circumvent the ban on its activities and be accepted as a legal party inside Turkey"[67],

which resulted from the development of worldwide reaction against terrorism following

the September 11 terrorist attacks. That the number of terrorist activities of the PKK was

relatively low in the immediate period before and after 2002 validates the argument in

this chapter.

    The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 changed the external dimension of the new

Kurdish activism led by the PKK. The Iraqi Kurds represented by the two main political

parties, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP),

emerged as an indispensable asset for the US in the reconstruction process of Iraq,[68]

which weakened the PKK's power in the immediate period in the region. The foundation

of successor Kongra-Gel in 2003 also could not its mission, despite its relatively more

moderate goal it pursued. Thus, it had to reestablish the PKK and lift the unilateral

ceasefire in order to adapt to the changes in the regional arena in an attempt to re-acquire

its power it enjoyed previously. The PKK gradually increased its terrorist activities, as

seen in Figure 3, in accordance with its ultimate goal declared in 2005 as democratic

confederalism in the so-called Kurdistan.

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[67] BBC News, "Kurd Rebels Change Their Name," *BBC News* 2002.
[68] Somer, "Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications," 236.

CONCLUSION

While the PKK has exploited Turkey's socio-political environment that was

conducive to popular support for the PKK's cause, the international environment and its

associated effects on the Middle East region prolonged its survival. As Uslu and Aytac

argue, three important international developments caused the PKK to shift its ultimate

goal and strategies to enhance its survival ability.[69] The first one was the first gulf war of

1991 that transformed the PKK into sole ethnic terrorist organization, dropping its

Marxist-Leninist discourse. The second development is the radicalization of Kurdish

Diaspora after the massive migration from predominated Kurdish provinces of Turkey to

European countries. This also led the PKK to form pro-PKK Kurdish networks, such as

the Kurdish Parliament-in-exile, in accordance with the decision made at the PKK's fifth

congress in 1995. The third was the capture of its leader in 1999 with the help of the US

and Israeli intelligence. The terrorist organization has always defined Ocalan's

apprehension as an "international conspiracy" of the security services of many nations

including the US, Israel, and England.[70] The fourth was the democratic reforms in Turkey

following the official recognition of Turkey for the EU membersip in 1999. The fifth and

the most outstanding international factor is the war against terrorism declared by the US

following the September 11 terrorist attacks. States that suffer from terrorism gained

advantage against their respective ethnic insurgents due to the global understanding of

terrorism threat. The last and the most important factor has been the repercussions of the

US invasion of Iraq on the Kurdish issue, the PKK in particular. These international

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[69] Emrullah Uslu and Onder Aytac, "War of Paradigms: The Pkk, Europe, and Turkey," *Understanding and Responding to the Terrorism Phenomenon: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective* (2007).
[70] Rojhelat, "15 February – 12th Anniversary of Ocalan's Abduction," http://english.rojhelat.eu/world/999-15-february--12th-anniversary-of-ocalans-abduction.(Accessed March 13, 2011).

developments and concomitant effects on the Middle East have transformed the PKK in its ultimate goal over time.

The PKK's ability to adapt to these international developments lacked the Turkish government's ability to eliminate the PKK terrorism. For instance, the EU listed the PKK as a terrorist organization twenty-four years later after the creation of the PKK in 1978. Turkey always criticized the EU for not taking action against the terrorist activities of the PKK in Europe. EU, in general, opted to develop softer approaches to terrorism issues. They tend to take harsh measures in their counter-terrorism efforts when the terrorism has a direct impact on their security. In another words, they are more reluctant to develop cooperative initiatives with the other countries, if there is less concern about their security than the other countries concerned.

The Europeans are inclined to prioritize their national interests over the global issues; at least that was the case before the September 11 terrorist attacks. As Hoffman argues, the failure of Italian and German governments to prosecute or extradite Ocalan to Turkey in 1999 when Ocalan ended up in Europe following the pressure of Turkey and the US on Syria to expel Ocalan, for fear of PKK's possible retaliation, illustrates how the EU is softer on terrorism.[71] Thus, the Europe "seemed more inclined to provide a safe haven for international terrorists than to seek their apprehension".[72] However, the 9/11 terrorist attacks forced the EU to take further measures to combat international terrorism in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 and 1566. accordingly, the EU established and updated regularly a list of persons, groups, and organizations, including the PKK and its successor organizations KADEK and

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[71] Bruce Hoffman, "Is Europe Soft on Terrorism?," *Foreign Policy*, no. 115 (1999).
[72] "Is Europe Soft on Terrorism?," *Foreign Policy*, no. 115 (1999): 63.

KONGRA-GEL, involved in various forms of terrorist activities to freeze their financial assets. In order to circumvent the potential repercussions, the PKK renounced its past terrorist activities and declared that it would seek a peaceful agenda. In this period, the number of terrorist activities decreased drastically.

PKK terrorism has always been a source of antagonism between Turkey and the EU. The European governments habitually overlooked the PKK's activities that would have otherwise weakened the PKK's financial resources that harm Turkey's internal efforts to counter PKK terrorism. Some observers argue that the European's reluctance toward the PKK activities in Europe does not result from its antagonism to undermine Turkey's stability; rather it is because of the differences in their respective foreign policy outlook. The EU tends to see the international relations through interdependence prism, while the realist perspective dominates Turkey's foreign policy because of the security threat emanating from the PKK terrorism. In the past, the radicalized Kurdish problem led by the PKK shaped Turkey's foreign policy behavior, especially during the 1980s and 1990s. The powerful elites in the formation of foreign policy "have successfully externalized the sources of political Islam and Kurdish separatism".[73] However, the process of desecuritization emanating from the "European Union accession process and concomitant steps toward democratization and a transformation of the political landscape"[74] have changed Turkey's counter-terrorism approaches towards the Kurdish issue that were shaped by the bureaucratic and military elites and ultranationalists in the past. This led the EU to feel obliged to cooperate with Turkey in its fight with the PKK terrorism. After a long period, some EU countries initiated a series of police operations in

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[73] Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 5 (2008): 495.
[74] Ibid.

2010 as a result of the shared understanding between Turkey and EU, which has increased the hopes for further measures against the PKK terrorist activities by the EU countries.

CHAPTER 4

DEMOCRATIZATION OF IRAQ AND PKK'S TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to explore the impact of regional factors in the transformation

of the PKK. It is hypothesized that the greater the democratization of Iraq, the less likely

is a Kurdish state. This is important to consider because the rise of a Kurdish state is the

PKK's top priority. Therefore, any factors that influence the rise of a Kurdish state are

crucial for understanding the extent to which the PKK can evolve and meet its ultimate

goal. Moreover, understanding that is central to the thrust of this dissertation.

In order to trace the change of the PKK's ultimate goal as well as to figure out

how likely a Kurdish state is before and after 2003 and then after 2006, the developments

that have taken place in Iraq since the US invasion of Iraq will be examined.

As mentioned earlier, the PKK's ultimate goal was to establish "democratic

confederation" in the so-called Kurdistan region- the region that consists of parts of

eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, and northern Syria where the Kurds

form the major ethnic group- until 2010. The terrorist organization, for now, seems to

give up this overarching goal that transcends geographical borders of Turkey. Instead, it

seeks now relatively more moderate goal- that is "democratic autonomy" in Turkey's

southeastern provinces. Therefore, this chapter will examine whether or not the

likelihood of independent Kurdish state in Iraq is an influential factor in the

transformation of the PKK.

This chapter is divided into six sections that illuminate changes in the PKK's

ultimate goal over time. The first section examines the democratization process in Iraq in

the last decade. Evidence strongly suggests that despite the major issues, such as the status of Kirkuk, other disputed areas that have oil rich deposits, and the likelihood of ethnic and sectarian violence that preclude a full-fledged democracy, there have been considerable achievements towards democracy. The second section examines the Iraqi Kurds' popular demand for independence in northern Iraq in order to predict the future of northern Iraq. It suggests that there is a clear difference between the official discourses and what the Kurdish public really wants. It argues that the Kurdish leadership is aware of the fact that the Kurdish secession is not possible, at least in the short run. The third section identifies the historical developments in the emergence of *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq. It is argued that the Gulf war of 1991 and the US invasion of Iraq have played a determining role in this emergence. The importance of Iraq's integrity in Turkey's fight against the PKK terrorism is detailed in the fourth section. The evidence suggests that Turkey's problem is not the creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, but its major impact on Turkey's Kurdish problem that have been exploited by the PKK. It is also argued that Turkey has to develop comprehensive policy towards Iraq and against the likelihood of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq in order to resolve its Kurdish problem. The analysis section examines the relationship between the developments in Iraq towards democracy and the PKK's ultimate goal in the last decade. Similarly, this chapter concludes that the democratization efforts in Iraq reduce the likelihood of the declaration of Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which, in turn, leads to the transformation of the PKK.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF IRAQ

This section will examine the extent to which developments in Iraq towards democratization since the invasion of Iraq have affected the PKK's ultimate goal. It is argued that developments in Iraq towards democracy play a determining role in the

terrorist organization's long-term strategy. It is important to consider because understanding the evolution of the PKK and its chance to meet its goals depends on understanding the process of democratization in Iraq. The role I refer here is the fact that the achievements of the Iraqi Kurds make the terrorist organization's projects less appealing. As noted earlier, until the capture of Ocalan, the terrorist organization had a project to build a Kurdish state that also contains northern Iraq. However, after being arrested, even more importantly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the PKK gave up northern Iraq and focused specifically on the project that aimed at transforming Turkey with regard to the Kurdish issue until it figured out that the process in northern Iraq went beyond an autonomous region. It can be argued that the PKK started to lose its power to shape the Kurdish issue within this period. While Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, the US, and Turkey were at the negotiation table, the PKK remained outside of the table over the Kurdish issue.. Therefore, one can argue that one of the important reasons underlying Ocalan's democratic confederalism project put forward in 2005 derives from the claim that the terrorist organization remained under the shadow of the gains of Iraqi Kurds.

Then, what are the developments in northern Iraq that make the terrorist organization so unsettling? Do the achievements of Iraqi Kurds thwart the goals of the PKK? Before trying to find answers to the questions, I will first examine how the Kurdish Regional Government became "the federal state's only clearly defined region with its own assembly"[1] as a result of the electoral politics.

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[1] Gareth Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview," *Occasional paper, The Jamestown Foundation, Washington DC, February* (2008): 22.

The democratization process since the 2003 invasion of Iraq has produced not only major achievements, but also impediments for the Iraqi people and its Kurdish population. The experiences worldwide, however, suggest that democracies take time to flourish.[2] Thus, it can be argued that the democratic achievements in Iraq so far have been immature.

As a result of Iraq's divided society, Iraq was always ruled by the autocratic leaders and did not produce democracy in the past, prior to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The main problem in Iraq now has been the lack of unifying national identity that derives from different ethnic identity and conflicting objectives and interests especially among three dominant actors in Iraq.[3] This division had deteriorated even more after the withdrawal of the US forces from Iraq in 2011[4] and the formation of fractious coalition of Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish factions after more than nine months following the March 2010 election.

The democratization process has begun to take place in the wake of US-led coalition victory in Iraq. The first task was to create a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) with the main task of forming an interim Iraqi constitution, also known as the Law for the Administration of Iraq in the Transitional Period. In April 2004, interim Iraqi government replaced CPA in order to run an official election for the Iraqi National

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[2] Zalmay Khalilzad, "Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 3 (2010).

[3] Aram Rafaat, "An Independent Kurdish State: Achievable or Merely a Kurdish Dream?," *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 32, no. 3 (2007).

[4] The overwhelming majority is divided into Shi'a and Sunni Arab majority (75-80 percent), Kurdish minority (15-20 percent), and another minority groups (5 percent) including Turkmen and Assyrians. See Freedom House, "Freedom in the World- Iraq (2006)," (2005).

Assembly in order for the Iraq's historically divided society to resolve their differences through a new Iraqi constitution.[5]

The first post-invasion election for the National Assembly was held in January 2005, resulting in the victory of the coalition of Shiite political groups under the United Iraqi Alliance with some 48% of the seat, the coalition of Kurdish groups led by the PUK and KDP under the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan with some 14% vote share, and the other Shiite group led by the interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi with some 14% of the votes. Although the boycott of the Sunni groups cast a shadow over the election because they considered it as illegitimate under a foreign occupation, many observers saw the election as "positive development"[6] towards democracy. Moreover, what strengthened this positive development was also the high turnout in the election.

The polls were a turning point for many reasons. The main reason, inter alia, was the achievement of the Kurdish and Shia community for the first time to be represented in the Iraqi government. The second important contribution was the fact that the winning parties had to run the government by coalition in which they had to "negotiate and compromise rather than impose".[7] The Iraqis took two more steps for democracy in the same year by approving the draft constitution in a national referendum in October and voting for a new parliament in December.

The new constitution has been considered as a reflection of converging interests of both Arabs and Kurds to see a weakened central government. Article 1 of the new

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[5] Daniel Byman, "Constructing a Democratic Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities," *International Security* 28, no. 1 (2003).

[6] Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, "The Implications of Elections for Federalism in Iraq: Toward a Five-Region Model," *Publius.* 35, no. 3 (2010).

[7] Michael Rubin, "The Future of Iraq: Democracy, Civil War, or Chaos?," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9, no. 3 (2005).

Iraqi Constitution reads as follows: "The Republic of Iraq is an independent, sovereign nation, and the system of rule in it is a democratic, federal, representative parliamentary republic".[8] The constitution rules that Iraq is a federal and parliamentary system that shares considerable powers with the regions and provinces. Thus, it requires approval of more than 80 percent of representatives to make important decisions so as to avoid a domination of any ethnic grouping.[9]

The first election in 2005, however, has marked the beginning of the new problems that have prevailed in the subsequent democratization efforts in Iraq. First, because the Sunnis did not participate in the election, the constitution was drafted by the transitional government that was composed of the representatives of Shiites and Kurds. Thus, the draft was considered as a reflection of those groups' interests and expectations, excluding the Sunnis. Secondly, the Kurds gained advantage at the federal level over the Iraq's future, which would help them turn the process into their advantage should they want to secede from Iraq in the future. This was evidenced in the Kurdish demand for recognition of Kurdish federated region that included Kirkuk and Khanaquine in the draft constitution, which led to the frequent delays to finalize the draft. The status of Kirkuk and Khanaquine was determined in the article 149 of section 2 to be decided in a local referendum at the end of 2007, which, however, has never materialized so far due to the lack of agreement that results from its potential to cause tension between the central government and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) as well as neighboring states, especially Turkey.[10] As a result, while the January 2005 resulted in the domination of

[8] The Associated Press, "Text of the Draft Iraqi Constitution " *The New York Times* 2005.
[9] Khalilzad, "Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq."
[10] International Crisis Group, "Iraq and the Kurds: The Brewing Battle over Kirkuk," in *Middle East Report* (2006).

Shi'a religious parties over the federal government and many provincial governments, it gave leeway to the Kurdish secessionist aspirations.[11]

The second parliamentary election since the US invasion of Iraq was held in 2010. Although the previous election held in 2005 provided some achievements towards democracy, there were still concerns about whether the election would lead to stability that is more political and the future of democratic experiment.[12] One of the most important developments in this election was the participation of the major Sunni factions of Iraq to pursue their interests not through the boycotts, which was the case in the 2005 election, but by sending representatives to the National Assembly. Thus, the election was considered as "the most open and most competitive election in the nation's long history of colonial rule, dictatorship, and war".[13] However, the election results did not bring about political turmoil and relax the Iraq's ethnic and sectarian tension. By obtaining the votes of millions of Sunnis, the Iraqi National Movement, led by the former interim Prime Minister Allawi, achieved a slight victory with 91 seats over the State of Law Coalition, led by incumbent Prime Minister Al-Maliki, with 89 seats. In the next nine months, neither side could form a coalition to pass the majority of 163 of the 325 seats that was required to create a government. Before the constitutional deadline, the parties ended up an agreement under the leadership of Maliki, allocating some important positions to the Allawi's coalition. The committee was a welcomed development by the US officials in that it allowed the inclusion of Sunnis in a government.[14]

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[11] Anderson and Stansfield, "The Implications of Elections for Federalism in Iraq: Toward a Five-Region Model," 359-60.

[12] Robert Grenier, "Iraq 'Condemned' to Democracy " *Aljazeera* 2010.

[13] The New York Times, "Iraq Elections," *New York Times* 2010.

[14] Ibid.

Although the elections, by itself, are not a sufficient indication of functioning democracy, in post-autocratic regimes like Iraq, they are necessary and indispensable ingredient. The third and the succeeding elections, likewise, indicate, more explicitly, the extent to which the democratic transition has been achieved in comparison with the first and second elections. While the first election of 2005 reflected the ethnic and sectarian division of the country, the March election held in 2010, as the second parliamentary election and the fifth nationwide election after the referendums and local elections, was more a reflection of "issue-oriented form of politics"[15] rather than ethnic and sectarian loyalties. However, the current situation in Iraq does not yield hope for the Iraq's future. Sectarian violence is more apparent than that in the past. It is obvious that the Shiite supremacy and Maliki's strong relationship with Iran irritate enough both the Sunnis and Kurds. Maliki's persistent border standoff with the KRG emerges as the single most important factor that threats the concept of unified Iraq.

All in all, although the overwhelming majority of Kurds and Arabs favor a federal form of democracy, there have been major issues that preclude full-fledged democracy in Iraq. These include "contentious matters of the division of oil wealth and the resolution of disputed territory"[16] especially between the KRG and the central government.

The US-led war on Iraq that began on 20 March 2003 is considered to have triggered major changes in the terrorist organization. The invasion of Iraq is claimed to alter not only the balance of power in the Middle East, also the balance of power in the Kurdish movement against the PKK. In the face of achievements and growing

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[15] Adeed Dawisha, "Iraq: A Vote against Sectarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 3 (2010): 27.
[16] United States Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq Report to Congress, in Accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9010, Public Law 109-289; Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)," Dept. of Defense, http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS113019.

importance of the Iraqi Kurds during the invasion, the project of democratic

transformation offered by imprisoned Ocalan lost its significance, even was considered

marginalized.[17] In order to evaluate the results of the changing balance of power and

determine a new party line, the PKK held its ninth congress, founding the People's

Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra-Gel) based on "The Manifesto of Democratic Civilization

drafted by the Kurdish people's leader, Abdullah Ocalan, and his recent work, the

Defense of Free Human Being".[18] Ocalan's proposal was not the establishment of a

Kurdish state; rather a kind of administration of so-called Kurdistan region by People's

Congress. With the adoption of this proposal in the PKK's ninth congress, the terrorist

organization shifted to a different line from nation-state understanding that advocated for

decades. Ocalan defines People's Congress as follows:

> Kurdistan People's Congress (KHK) is a model that is the most realistic
> and analytical style. If the issue was a single part of Kurdistan, you might
> not have such an organization. Yet, given the fact that each part and
> nation-states strongly affect each other, there needs to have such an
> organization and political representation. Perhaps, it can be intimidating
> for Turkey when compared with the past. However, such a structure based
> on a unitary state and a well-defined democracy seems to be the most
> appropriate solution in the face of the Kurdish nationalism that is close to
> becoming a nation-state in the neighboring state.[19]

The terrorist organization, in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, expressed its pleasure

with the developments in Iraq by stating, "After the intervention, Iraq is moving toward a

democratic federal system. Kongra-Gel recognizes the perspective of a democratic

federal Iraq."[20] However, it became uncomfortable with the later developments in

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[17] Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "2000'lerde Pkk: Kırılmalara Rağmen Süreklilik," *Toplum ve Kuram* 4(2010): 87.

[18] People's Congress of Kurdistan, "Final Declaration of the Foundation Conference of the People'S Congress of Kurdistan," http://kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=9357

[19] Abdullah Öcalan, *Özgür Insan Savunmasi* (Taksim, Istanbul: Çetin Yayinlari, 2003), 101.

[20] Kurdistan, "Final Declaration of the Foundation Conference of the People'S Congress of Kurdistan".

northern Iraq towards independence due to the fact that it became incapable to determine

Kurdish policy in the region. In another words, if an independent Kurdish state is to be

set up, it needs to happen under the leadership of Ocalan and his projects. Thus, Ocalan

attempted to block Barzani's leadership by proposing Democratic Kurdistan, instead of

what he defines "second Israel as a much-feared nationalist and statist Kurdistan

project".[21] However, failing to reach the desired goal of this project, the PKK set up an

umbrella organization, called Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (KCK), with the goal

of democratic confederalism in all parts of so-called Kurdistan in order to control

Kurdish nationalism in the region. Although this project seems to remain inactive, the

terrorist organization builds its new projects on "democratic confederalism", including

"democratic autonomy" declared in 2010 as an ultimate goal.

DREAM OF KURDISH INDEPENDENCE

This section examines the extent to which the Iraqi Kurds aspire to an

independent Kurdish state. This is important to consider because it illuminates how likely

a Kurdish state is in the future. Moreover, it indicates the extent of the Kurds'

commitment to the united Iraq. Despite assurances by the Iraqi Kurdish officials to calm

down suspicions of the states involved such as Iraq, Turkey, and the US, the Kurds

historically dreams of an independent homeland. Turkey traditionally fears that a Kurdish

state in northern Iraq would lead the PKK to fulfill its ultimate goal.

The Kurds represented heavily by the KDP and PUK enjoys the "federalist system

that protects the Kurdish right of self-determination"[22] since the approval of the

constitution drafted in the transitional period in 2005. Although officially recognized as

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[21] Öcalan, *Özgür Insan Savunmasi*, 97.

[22] Alexander Dawoody, "The Kurdish Quest for Autonomy and Iraq's Statehood," *Journal of Asian and African studies*. 41, no. 5 (2006): 483.

an autonomous region by Baghdad, the KRG functions as an independent state with "its own government, flag, national anthem, currency, and army (the *Peshmerga*)".[23]

The overwhelming majority of the Kurds are in favor of secession from Iraq. The interviews and surveys also support this claim. For instance, one of the most cited surveys was conducted by the Kurdish activists in Iraq in 2005. It showed that 1,973,412 Kurds out of 1,998,061 voted in favor of Kurdish independence in an unofficial referendum in 2005, which equals to 98.8% of total voting.[24] However, in public statements, the Kurdish officials reject this outcome and insist that the Kurds were committed to the united Iraq.[25] This indicates "a clear difference between public statements of Kurdish representatives and what the Kurdish public really wants".[26] Thus, it can be argued that the Kurdish officials employ "dual strategies"[27] to satisfy the Kurdish popular demand of the Kurdish secession and the US and surrounding countries' demand that rejects the Kurdish secession. The former strategy calls for Kurdish right to self-determination "within the framework of a federal, democratic and pluralist Iraq and in accordance with the constitution"[28], as stated in an interview with KRG President Barzani. This strategy also involves efforts to further Kurdish achievements, strengthen Kurdish influence over Iraq and the status of Kirkuk, and legalize their prudential demand for independence. The second strategy, however, entails efforts to reach an

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[23] T. G. Carpenter, "Middle East Vortex: An Unstable Iraq and Its Implications for the Region," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (2009): 23.

[24] KNC, "Final Counting for an Official Referendum for Independence," KNC USA, http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2005/2/independentstate38.htm (Accessed April 15, 2011).

[25] Azad Berwari and Thomas Ambrosio, "The Kurdistan Referendum Movement: Political Opportunity Structures and National Identity," *Democratization* 15, no. 5 (2008).

[26] Rafaat, "An Independent Kurdish State: Achievable or Merely a Kurdish Dream?," 281.

[27] "The Kurds in Post-Invasion Iraq: The Myth of Rebuilding the Iraqi State," *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2008): 415.

[28] BBC Monitoring, "Kurdish President Barzani Interviewed on Kurdish, Iraqi Issues," http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?rnr=77&lngnr=12&smap=&anr=8600.(Accessed April 15, 2011).

agreement on the reconstruction of the Iraqi state with other minority groups in Iraq as well as the other influential powers over Iraq including the US and Turkey.

However, the recent public statements reveal that Kurdish officials have become more inclined to the former strategy. For instance, from the Turkish standpoint, Cakmak argues that Mesut Barzani made a striking comment on the Kurdish secession that contradicts to his earlier statements.[29] He, says Cakmak, made contributions to the discussion on the prospects of Kurdish secession that has possible repercussions on the region in general, and Turkey in particular. Underlining impossibility of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq in his previous discourses, Barzani firmly emphasized the Kurdish right to determine their future. While these two statements seem to contradict, as Cakmak argues, they are consistent with one another. He has never stated that the Kurds forgo an independent Kurdish state so far; rather he has emphasized the Kurds' wish to live under a full-fledged independent state. He also maintained that the situation in Iraq and regional factors did not favor to take any further steps and, thus, Kurds do not have a goal of secession in the short-term.[30]

As mentioned earlier, the so-called Kurdistan was a province of the Ottoman Empire and was given autonomy as long as the Kurds were loyal to the sultanate. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish autonomy transformed into a desire for homeland. During the Ottoman period, the binding element was religion, rather than nationalism. Even, in the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the religion was superior over nationalist identity. Although the Treaty of Sevres made possible of establishment of

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[29] Cenap Cakmak, "Can Independent Kurdish State in Northern Iraq Be Created?," Bilgesam, http://www.bilgesam.com/tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=914:kuzey-irakta-bamsz-kuert-devleti-kurulabilir-mi&catid=77:ortadogu-analizler&Itemid=150 (Accessed April 18, 2011).
[30] Ibid.

a Kurdish state, the Kurds opted to fight alongside Turks in the War of Liberation in a religious term. Initially, the newly established Republic of Turkey included Mosul and Kirkuk. However, it was blocked by Britain and the cities were transferred to the Iraqi administration.[31]

As a result of the Lausanne Treaty, the Kurds felt into minority status in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Although the Kurdish nationalism in each country began to evolve gradually, it did not transform into a distinct identity due to the many factors including loyalty to the tribalism. The Kurdish nationalism in each country developed against the government policies of these countries. As a result, as Jenkins argues, there were "multiple Kurdish nationalisms, rather than a single nationalist movement"[32] This fragmentation gradually was grown even more due to the differences in each state in language, religion, and life style.

EMERGENCE OF KURDISH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN NORTHERN IRAQ

This section examines the historical background of the emergence of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq. These factors are considered to not only influence the emergence of Kurdish nationalism in the region, but also have played a crucial role in the PKK's transformation. Therefore, analyzing the developments that have taken place in the Kurdish region of Iraq is crucial for understanding why the PKK changes its ultimate goal over time.

Although there were many rebellions before and after the creation of Iraq, they had relatively little impact in the emergence of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq. Rather, the Kurdish autonomy dates back to the movement launched by Mullah Mustafa

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[31] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[32] "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview," 24.

Barzani, the father of current KRG president Mesud Barzani, against the state authority in 1940s. The rebellion was to consolidate the power of his tribes, rather than Kurdish nationalism. Then, it transformed into a large-scale Kurdish nationalism and led him to establish the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). Realizing the fact that he could not achieve its end through the legal means, he launched an armed uprising against Baghdad in 1965.[33] As a result, the central government recognized the Kurdish identity and offered political autonomy. Upon failure of Baghdad to fulfill the agreement, Kurdish rebellion led by Barzani resumed from where it left off. But this time he had to fight against the former member of the KDP, Jalal Talabani, in addition to Baghdad.

KURDISH CIVIL WAR

The conflict led to the Kurdish civil war between two Kurdish factions. Iran seized the opportunity by supporting Barzani forces with weapons, while Iraq supported Barzani. Baghdad was forced to offer Barzani autonomy in order to stop the civil war. Meanwhile, Iraq signed an agreement, namely Algiers Accord, with Iran to block Iran's support for Barzani in 1975. This agreement also resolved the border problem between Iran and Iraq to a certain extent. However, the conflict between Barzani and Talabani continued. Meanwhile, Talabani established the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in June 1975 and initiated an armed struggle backed by Syria against the central government and Barzani forces. In the meantime, two important actors, Massoud Barzani of the KDP and Saddam Hussein that shaped Iraq's current politics arose.

IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The cooperation between the PUK and KDP in the war between Iran and Iraq is considerd as the first sign of the need to act together against the external enemy, despite

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[33] Ofra Bengio, "Iraq's New Political Elites: A Dream Come True?," *Middle East* 13, no. 4 (2009): 41.

PUK's hostility against both Baghdad and the cooperation between Iran and KDP. However, as a result of the disagreement between Baghdad and PUK, the latter joined the KDP forces against the former. Meanwhile, both Kurdish leaders supported Iranian forces. In a reaction, Saddam launched a revenge campaign, also known as Anfal campaign, which resulted in mass killings of the Kurds around 180,000 and destruction of villages around 1,200.[34]

GULF WAR OF 1991

The discussion of the Gulf war provides valuable insights into the PKK's transformation, because many factors involved in the PKK's change trace back to the Gulf War of 1991. While the war played a crucial role in the official emergence of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq, the first transformation of the PKK took place in the wake of this war. The terrorist organization declared that it sought a Kurdish state comprising of northern Iraq and southeast Turkey, instead of the goal of an independent Kurdish state based on Marxist ideology in the so-called Great Kurdistan- the region that consists of some parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent mass killings of the Kurds against the central government urged both Kurdish entities to cooperate. Kurdish leadership has evolved from "a Powerless to a growing ethnic grouping political entity" that has been now playing a crucial role in shaping the future of Iraq.[35]

As a result of the military defeat, Iraqi forces entered into the Kurdish region in order to suppress the Kurdish rebellion. More than one million Kurds had to flee to the mountains bordering Turkey and Iran. In a reaction to this situation, the Allies declared

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[34] Carole A. O'Leary, "The Kurds of Iraq: Recent History, Future Prospects," ibid.6(2002): 18.
[35] Clarence J. Moran, "Kurdish Problem-Federalism or an Emerging State," (Army War College, 1993), 2.

safe haven in northern Iraq to help them return their homes. Despite the ban of Iraqi military aircrafts to fly over the region, the Kurdish leaders initially opted to negotiate with Saddam for fear that Baghdad could attack with its ground forces. As the negotiations was taking place, the Kurdish forces seized Arbil and Sulaymaniyah and declared autonomy in the region comprising of Dahuk, Arbil, and Sulaymaniyah.

Turkey initially was reluctant to accept the Kurdish refugees fleeing from Iraqi forces for fear that the refugees would stay within the border of Turkey, which was considered to exacerbate economic backwardness of southeastern Turkey. Secondly, Turkey was concerned that the PKK could exploit the situation and turn the refugees into PKK militants to attack the Turkish government in large numbers. Turkey's fears that the Kurdish refugees would not return to their homes did not materialize. However, Turkey felt obliged to pursue "a policy of engagement with the nascent autonomous region in northern Iraq"[36] in order for Turkey to "exercise influence and rein in the Iraqi Kurds' separatist aspirations".[37]

SECOND CIVIL WAR BETWEEN MAIN KURDISH PARTIES
The Kurdish leadership formed its first regional parliament after the elections held in May 1992. The parliament was overwhelmingly represented by both KDP and PUK with almost 45 percent of vote share for each party. The Assyrian minority could win only five out of 105 seats. The power sharing did not end up with cooperation; rather it led to the further division and second civil war in 1994. While the west part of northern Iraq was under the control of the KDP, the PUK controlled the east. With the help of Baghdad, the KDP occupied Arbil and Sulaymaniyah, which the latter was recaptured by

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[36] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview," 13.
[37] Ibid.

the PUK in the same year. Both KDP and PUK claimed the sole representative of the

Kurds in northern Iraq. Despite a peace agreement mediated by Washington in 1998, both

Kurdish groups did not cooperate until the US invasion of Iraq.[38]

KURDISH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AFTER THE US INVASION OF IRAQ

As mentioned earlier, the US invasion of Iraq has become a cornerstone for the

growing assertiveness of Kurdish nationalism. For the first time in its history, the Kurdish

aspirations in northern Iraq went beyond autonomy. That the prospect of a Kurdish state

has not affected the PKK's strategies and projects is unthinkable. The statements of

terrorist organization and changing ultimate goal built on Ocalan's projects prove this

influence. For instance, Ocalan expresses his opinions as follows:

> They want to establish a second Israel in the Middle East. Both the United
> States and Israel provide support [Iraqi Kurds] to build a nation-state.
> However, I wanted a democratic Kurdistan. As you know, I fought
> relentlessly against them in the past. Because they perceived me an
> obstacle, they helped Turkey capture me. After that, they gained strength.
> Barzani will build a nation-state because it has the army and supporters.
> The support of the US and Israel is obvious.[39]

Before examining the state-building process of Kurdish Regional Government, it is worth

mentioning the recent developments that have continued with the withdrawal of the US

forces from Iraq that has been another milestone for the Kurdish nationalist movement.

The visit of KRG's president Massoud Barzani to the US in March 2012 shook up the

agenda. This reminded the question: Does the US have a positive attitude towards the

idea of independent Kurdish state as a result of recent developments in the region? The

Kurdish Regional Government, prior to the visit, used moderate discourse over the

Kurdish independence due to the balance of power in the region. However, growing

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[38] Kristen M. Sornsin, "Out of the Mountains into Politics: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iraq" (Central European University, 2008).
[39] PKK, "Pkk 10. Kongre Belgeleri," http://www.scribd.com/doc/20051663/PKK-10-Kongre-Belgeleri.

influence of Iran over the Baghdad regime bothers not only the Kurdish Regional

Government but also the US and Turkey. There already exists problems of oil export and

revenue sharing between the KRG and Baghdad. The concern that Maliki will revoke the

achievements of Iraqi Kurds when possible increases the prospects of an independent

Kurdish state. Then, what are the gains of Iraqi Kurds after 2003?

The US invasion of Iraq provided the Kurdish leadership with opportunity to

resolve their differences. The KDP and PUK held meetings to discuss their prospective

reaction to a US-led invasion in 2002. They came to an agreement that the Kurdish

provinces would be governed by a "joint supreme leadership" until the next election,

when possible.[40]

Shortly after the demise of the Baghdad in April 2003, Barzani and Talabani

stated their willingness to work together with the coalition forces in the efforts to rebuild

the Iraqi state. Despite a suspicion about their commitment to a united Iraq, the Kurdish

leadership has endeavored to grasp every opportunity to prove its intention. In the official

discourses, the Kurds have prioritized maintaining the integrity of Iraq. They argue that

the fact that the overwhelming majority of Kurds voted for Iraq's constitution indicates

how the Kurds committed to the development and establishment of Iraq.[41]

After the coalition forces had toppled the Saddam regime, Iraq was declared a

federal state for the first time. The interim government held the first elections after the

invasion in January 2005 to elect Iraqi National Assembly with the main task of drafting

the Constitution, Regional Assembly, and the governorate council all together. According

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[40] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[41] Michael J. Kelly, "The Kurdish Regional Constitution within the Framework of the Iraqi Federal
Constitution: A Struggle for Sovereignty, Oil, Ethnic Identity, and the Prospects for a Reverse Supremacy
Clause," *Penn State Law Review* 114(2010).

to the constitutions drafted in 2005, the country is made up of 18 governorates, three of which form the KRG. The KDP and PUK participated in the regional election in a coalition under the framework of Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, winning almost 95 percent of 111 seats, with the remaining seven being allocated to the other minority groupings. The historical rivalry between Barzani and Talabani seemed to be over after the election held in April 2005 by which Talabani was elected as the president of Iraq and validated in the ensuing year after the endorsement of the new Iraqi constitution. Meanwhile, the Kurdish assembly appointed Barzani as the first president of the Kurdish Regional Government in June 2005. [42]

The KRG has been determined as "the federal state's only clearly defined region with its own assembly".[43] The Kurdish leadership, from the very beginning, supports federalism and united Iraq as a means to guarantee the Kurds' rights and full control of Kurdish populated areas as well as the disputed territory where the Kurds form the majority.[44] However, many observers suspect that Kurdish strategy has been consistent with the popular Kurdish demand for secession. As mentioned earlier, the Kurds, on particular occasions, enjoys sovereignty with its own army, flag, and currency. Thus, it can be confidently argued that no system can dare to overturn this process to the detriment of Kurds. Aside from these achievements, the Kurds gained experience in nation-building and confidence to shape Iraqi regime with the aim of consolidation of their status. On the other hand, the Kurds' supreme contribution to the efforts to rebuild Iraqi regime suggests that the Kurds are more inclined to the integration of Iraq rather

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[42] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[43] "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview," 22.
[44] Stefan Wollf, "Governing (in) Kirkuk: Resolving the Status of a Disputed Territory in Post American Iraq," *International Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2010).

than secession as long as federalist system of democracy works in an effective manner.

Alternatively, in the event of violence or civil war, the KRG has every means to set up an

independent Kurdish state. The Kurdish officials, on many occasions, have highlighted

their concerns.[45]

The KRG has been enjoying independence from the central government in many

fields such as foreign policy, defense, and economy. For instance, Article 121 of the Iraqi

Constitution recognizes the right to open embassies abroad. Thus, they have

representatives throughout the world, including Australia, UK, and the US.[46] With regard

to the Defense policy, the KRG has its own army, called *Peshmerga*, according to the

same article of the Constitution. By the same token, the Section 5 of the Article 2 of

Special Provisions for Kurdistan Region of Iraq exclusively prohibits the entry of the

Armed Forces of Iraq into the territory of the Kurdistan Region without the permission of

Kurdistan National Assembly. The Section 5 continues as follows:

> The Kurdistan National Assembly may confine the presence of any Iraqi
> Armed Forces to specified places within the Kurdistan Region and may
> limit the numbers and duration of any presence by Iraqi Armed Forces on
> the territory of the Kurdistan Region.[47]

Despite the clear indication of prohibition of operations of Iraqi forces in the territory of

KRG, the tension is very high among the Kurdish and Arab forces about their respective

area of responsibility. This, for instance, was disproportionately evidenced in the Iraqi

military operation in September 2008 in Diyala Province in which the KRG has de facto

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[45] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[46] Rafaat, "The Kurds in Post-Invasion Iraq: The Myth of Rebuilding the Iraqi State," 416.
[47] KRG, "Special Provisions for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq," (2004).

authority.[48]

The KRG also enjoys independence from the central government in its economic relations with the foreign nations. For instance, following the enactment of the oil law by the KRG parliament in 2007, the Kurds made many contracts with the international oil companies without seeking permission from Baghdad. The Kurds signed more than 20 contracts with the international oil companies until the KRG had to stop shipment due to the increasing tension with the central government in 2009. Baghdad detected "more than 40 production and exploration deals signed between the KRG and international oil companies" and called off the contracts of companies working in Iraq's Kurdish region. [49] The KRG stopped pumping oil until it has resumed in 2011 after almost a two-year halt.[50] Considering the fact that oil revenue constitutes almost 95 percent of central government budget, the oil production in the Kurdish region plays a crucial role in central government budget. Thus, it has had a major impact on Baghdad revenue and its relations with the Kurdish region of Iraq. While the federal revenue of the KRG was 17 percent in 2007, the central government budged of 2011 cut the share of the KRG considerably to around 12 percent. In general, the KRG continues to enjoy its de facto independence from the Iraqi government.

IMPORTANCE OF IRAQ'S INTEGRITY IN TURKEY'S FIGHT AGAINST THE PKK TERRORISM

Aside from the other issues involved, the most important factor underlying Turkey's involvement to the developments in Iraq has been its failure to resolve its

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[48] Ramzy Mardini, "Iraqi Military Operation in Diyala Province Risks Renewal of Kurdish-Arab Conflict," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5162 (Accessed April 21, 2011).
[49] Reuters, "Factbox-Oil Companies Active in Iraqi Kurdistan," *Reuters* 2011.
[50] Suadad al-Salhy, "Iraq Lawmakers Approve 2011 Budget of $82.6 Billion," ibid.

Kurdish problem. Primarily, it has to come up with a solution to the Kurdish problem in order to ensure its national integrity and security. In other words, the main problem, as Candar argues, is not the creation of independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. Rather, the importance is that it has capability to exacerbate the Turkey's Kurdish problem.[51] Thus, Turkey has to play a determining role in the region in general, in Iraq in particular by developing a comprehensive policy that should take into account the creation of an independent Kurdish state.

The Turkish government launched a Kurdish initiative in August 2009. This initiative, also known as democratic opening, is considered as remarkable because it coincides with the announcement of withdrawal of US forces in a short period and political and economic rapprochement between Turkey and the KRG.

Many observers argue that the PKK obtains its military and economic power from the situation in northern Iraq created in the wake of the Gulf war of 1991. Many security elites also think that the KRG supports the PKK, at least by taking no action against the PKK presence in its territory. In this regard, Turkey has begun to improve its relations with the Kurdish leadership for five years. Turkey's improved economic and political relations with the KRG derive from the belief that the PKK could be subdued by doing so. The geopolitical factors underlying this change, as Barkey argues, are Turkey's new foreign policy conception that has been bolstered by the "changing perceptions within Turkey of the domestic Kurdish question"[52] and the declaration of withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. The consolidation of the relationship between the two entities is also

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[51] Cengiz Candar, "Why Do We Oppose to an "Independent Kurdish State"?," Usak Stratejik Gundem, http://www.usakgundem.com/haber/1256/-bagimsiz-k%C3%BCrt-devleti-ne-ni%C3%A7in-karsiyiz.html.(Accessed April 22, 2011).
[52] Henry J. Barkey, "Turkey's New Engagement in Iraq," (United States Institute of Peace, 2010).

consistent with the American interests in that it implies that while improved relationship strengthens ties with Baghdad, it reduces the influence of Iran over Iraqi politics. Turkey and the US also share a core interest with regard to Iraq. The main objective is to help Baghdad become democratically stable and politically united Iraq. By doing so, it increases the likelihood of democracy to flourish in the world's fragile and volatile region as a third democratic country after Turkey and Israel.

Turkey's growing interest in the developments in Iraq dates back to the Gulf war of 1991. This interest became more apparent after the increasing role the Kurdish leadership has begun to play in Iraq's future since the US invasion of Iraq. Besides, Turkey's long-lasting interest is multifaceted and heavily affected by the "historical, political, economic, and military" [53] factors. As Kibaroglu argues, "close historical and cultural ties with the Turkomans, or Iraqi Turks, living mostly in northern Iraq; claims of Kurdish groups for independence; rich oil and gas reserves in the Mousul and Kirkuk districts; and instability due to insurgencies in the country"[54] have capability to increase Turkey's concerns.

Although the creation of safe haven in northern Iraq was offered by the Turkish government, it has become a main source of conflict between the KRG and Turkey for two reasons. First, the territory became a safe haven from which the PKK wages cross-border terrorist attacks. In the 1990s, the PKK not only exploited the power vacuum in northern Iraq for its terrorist activities, but also established units in the region it controls to manage arms and drug trafficking to finance its terrorist activities. The PKK is militarily weak in comparison with 1990s. many observers also argue that Turkey's

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[53] M. Kibaroglu, "Turkey's Concerns About the State-Building Efforts in Iraq," *Iranian Journal of International Affairs* 18, no. 4 (2005): 443.
[54] Ibid.

increased efforts towards democracy and the reforms on human rights have weakened the

PKK further, which also led to the poor performing of the pro-PKK political parties in the

elections held in the last decade. On the other hand, the PKK is internationally isolated.

Turkey has improved its relations with its neighboring states in the Middle East which

were accused of supporting the PKK in the past by Turkey. The relationship between

Turkey and Syria has been in transformation. The organization is recognized as the

terrorist organization by the powerful states and international organizations such as the

US, Nato, and the EU. Thus, the PKK's lack of state support makes northern Iraq a

crucial tool for its terrorist activities as a bargaining chip to reach its political ends in

Turkey.[55] Especially after the 1991 Gulf war, the PKK insurgents largely could escape

from the Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq. Turkey also lost its influence, to a

greater extent, in the uncontrolled areas in northern Iraq where the PKK hides after

Turkey rejected to fight alongside the US forces against Saddam. It is argued that if

Turkey had participated in the US invasion of Iraq, it could have eliminated the PKK's

presence in northern Iraq and suppressed the Kurdish demand for independent state.[56]

The US forces fought alongside the Iraqi Kurds during the Iraq war. Turkey lost its

chance to play an active role in Iraq's domestic politics. Turkey was compelled to tolerate

the formation of de facto Kurdish state with its own flag, security forces, and currency.

Turkey considers these developments as the achievements to declare Kurdish secession in

the future.

Turkey's concern about the likelihood of creation of independent Kurdish state is

threefold. First, the formation of the KRG has exacerbated further ethnically, culturally,

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[55] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[56] Ibid.

and politically diverse Iraqi society. It is argued that the other groupings follow the suit in the event of the declaration of independent Kurdish state, which implies a new conflict in the region.[57]

Secondly, Turkey's major concern was the formation of federalism in Iraq based on ethnicity until recently. Now, Turkey fears that this kind of federalist structure paves the way for an independent Kurdish state. This, in turn, leads Turkey's Kurds to follow the suit and even unite with the Iraqi Kurds under a Kurdish nation. Ankara is certain that the ultimate goal of both Kurdish entity is full-fledged independent state, when seized an opportunity.[58]

Thirdly, the KRG spent a considerable effort to incorporate Kirkuk and its oil deposits into its region. This implies the economic independence of the Kurds that does not suit the interest of regional powers, especially Turkey. Kirkuk is comprised of ethnically diverse society comprising of Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. During the Saddam era, the Kurds had to flee Kirkuk because of the Arabization policy of Baghdad. The KRG puts pressure on the central government for a referendum for the status of Kirkuk in order to acquire control over it. Although the referendum was promised to be held in 2007, it was postponed many times due to the lack of agreement in principle between Baghdad and the KRG.[59]

Because the PKK enjoys safe haven in northern Iraq militarily, the support of the KRG and the US plays a crucial role in Turkey's fight against the PKK. During the civil

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[57] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq Report to Congress, in Accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9010, Public Law 109-289; Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)".

[58] Bill Park, "Iraqi Futures, Turkish Options," *European Security* 17, no. 1 (2008).

[59] Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq Report to Congress, in Accordance with the Department of Defense Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9010, Public Law 109-289; Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)".

war between two Kurdish entities of Iraq in the 1990s, Turkey seized the opportunity to launch military incursions against the PKK. Turkey supported the Barzani's KDP because of the Talabani's reluctance to the PKK activities in northern Iraq. In return, Barzani supported Turkey by guiding the Turkish forces to find the PKK's sanctuaries.[60] Turkey carried out more than twenty military operations during the Kurdish civil war. Following the ceasefire between the KDP and PUK, Turkey established a Turkish peace monitoring force in Dahuk, one of the governorates of the KRG, to enforce the ceasefire till 2004. The presence of Turkish bases in northern Iraq provided Turkey with not only intelligence for the PKK's activities, but also "a reminder of Turkey's military might should the Iraqi Kurds ever decide to proclaim full independence".[61]

Turkey lost its patience because of ineffectiveness of the KRG over the PKK, when the PKK militants crossing the borders of Turkey from northern Iraq killed forty Turkish soldiers in 2007. The terrorist attack was considered as the PKK's showdown to indicate that how impotent the Turkish government was in the fight. One of the underlying reason behind the attack was the perception that Turkey's military incursion was impossible because of the US presence in Iraq. However, in November 2007, the US officials promised to provide substantial intelligence in return for a limited Turkish military operation in northern Iraq.[62] Turkey staged a series of military operations against the PKK based in Qandil Mountains in the ensuing month.

Realizing the fact that the military operations did not yield a desired outcome, the Turkish government decided to improve its economic and political relations with the KRG. In the past, Turkey avoided the relationship that might have been considered as

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[60] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[61] Ibid.
[62] Carpenter, "Middle East Vortex: An Unstable Iraq and Its Implications for the Region."

political recognition of the Kurdish autonomy. Two entities, in the past, established communications through the military channels to eliminate the presence of the PKK in the region. Thus, the political and economic relations were considered to stimulate the Kurdish secessionist aspirations.[63]

However, the situation has changed since the end of 2007. Economic bilateral trade in 2007 was around $5 billion. The Turkish contractors carried out many projects including airports, highways, universities, and even the construction of new KDP headquarters, creating almost 15,000 jobs for Turkish citizens. Turkey also supplies 10 percent of the KRG's electricity.[64] However, the improved relations were deteriorated due to the corruption allegations in the KRG. Even, the political disagreement between Turkey and the KRG in 2008 exacerbated the economic relations. The economic and political interdependence has forced them to become closer. The US pressure also compelled the KRG to denounce the PKK's terrorist activities, which led Turkey to initiate a series of diplomatic visits. Turkey now enjoys an unprecedented level of cooperation with the KRG.

As a result, the likelihood of the creation of independent Kurdish state seems to be impossible, taking into account regional conjuncture. The Kurdish leadership is aware of its impossibility. Nevertheless, they do not rule out the Kurdish national self-determination under specific conditions. The achievements by the Iraqi Kurds actually confirm the alleged Kurdish aspirations in the long term. Although nations have a right to self-determination, there are some conditions that need to be met. First of all, a newly state cannot violate sovereignty of other states that are recognized by the international

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[63] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview."
[64] Ibid.

organizations. This requires the consent of the state in which the minority group demands

self-determination. Such an authority from Baghdad seems to be impractical for the

KRG, at least in the short run.[65]

ANALYSIS

This section specifically will examine the indicators of how likely a Kurdish state

is before and after 2003 (before democratization of Iraq) and then after 2006 (after

democratization of Iraq). It will also analyze the extent to which the PKK adapted to the

new realities of Iraq after the 2003 invasion. As mentioned earlier, the dissertation seeks

to analyze why the PKK has undergone a major shift in its ultimate goal. Thus, the

analysis of the likelihood of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, to some extent, will help to

understand the regional factors in the transformation of the PKK.

As mentioned earlier, the PKK sought to create an independent Kurdish state in

the region comprising of northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey in the 1990s as a result of

the power vacuum created in the wake of Gulf war of 1991. Such a transformation,

actually, indicates the PKK's ability to adapt to the regional developments. This dream

faded away from the PKK's agenda, after Ocalan was captured in 1999. The organization

attempted to step forward into the political arena by denouncing its terrorist violence in

the past due to the impact of the unfolding events during this term. The PKK has become

internationally isolated and militarily weakened. Moreover, the PKK began to lose

necessary support from its Kurdish constituency. Because its charismatic leader is in

prison, it felt necessity of a new mission to revitalize the organization. Once the

developments in Iraq turned into the PKK's advantage, it developed a new strategy

reflecting the new realities of the region. The most important reality is the emergence of

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[65] Cakmak, "Can Independent Kurdish State in Northern Iraq Be Created?".

what Gunter indicates as "a semi-independent Kurdish state that is theoretically part of a largely notional Iraqi state and government in Baghdad".[66]

Iraq has emerged as a federal state that was governed initially by the Provisional government led by the Allied forces and then an interim government consisting of representatives of ethnic and sectarian diverse groups. The Iraqis, for the first time, have had a constitution in 2005 that reflects interests of Arabs and Kurds. The Kurdish region has officially emerged as "the federal state's only clearly defined region with its own assembly".[67] This official recognition of KRG's status is considered as the most important indication of the likelihood of a Kurdish state. However, the Kurdish officials have always emphasized the importance of a federal and united Iraq to ensure their communal rights. Although the Kurds were in favor of secession from Iraq, the Kurdish leadership could achieve to canalize this Kurdish popular demand into the democratization of Iraq.

Meanwhile, the PKK developed a new concept, namely democratic confederalism, in the event that the Iraqi Kurds declare an independent Kurdish state. In order to pursue its new mission, the PKK set up terrorist organizations operating on behalf of the PKK in Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Thus, it sought to manipulate and control all the relevant developments taking place in the region. According to this new concept, the PKK sought to establish an alternative model in which three laws –EU law, the law of the national government, and the democratic confederal law- will prevail. The PKK insisted that the democratic confederal system is the only viable solution to the Kurdish problem in the region.

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[66] Michael Gunter, "The Permanent and New Realities Facing the Kurdistan Regional Government: Options and Prospects," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28, no. 2 (2008): 238.
[67] Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview," 22.

One of the main factors that induce the declaration of a Kurdish state is the ethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq. This fragmentation was polarized and escalated into sectarian violence in the post-elections of 2005 period.[68] This is the second indication of how likely the Kurdish state is. The Kurdish leadership, in many statements, emphasizes that they will opt to secede in the event of civil war in Iraq. In fact, the 2005 constitution appears to be the single most important achievement for Iraqi Kurds. The Kurds have gained in Iraq more than a minority group could get in a democratic system. This, in turn, impedes Kurds' secessionist ambitions in the short run.

The status of Kirkuk also appears to be one of the most important problems between the central government and the KRG. Although the constitution mandates a referendum before the election is held, the status of Kirkuk remains uncertain. Turkey fears that Kurdish control of Kirkuk will help Kurds achieve its economic independence from Iraq that is one step forward for the Kurdish secession.

Another problem is whether the federalism should take form on mono-national or multi-ethnic federalism. The former suggests that Iraq's existing eighteen provinces has a limited self government, which encourages the integration of ethnic and sectarian groups and which is also supported by the US and the regional powers, especially Turkey. The latter, however, may lead to a further division and, in turn, division of Iraq into three states. The official political arrangement accepted in the 2005 constitution allows the governorates to incorporate into larger regions should they desire. The KRG has three governorates and wish to include Kirkuk through referendum. Moreover, the US Senate offered an establishment of a loose form of federalism based on ethnicity "as both a

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[68] Khalilzad, "Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq," 46.

desirable and realistically more achievable arrangement for the country's future"[69] The existing situation also supports this outcome. Meanwhile, the PKK seeks to achieve autonomy in the southeast Turkey which is also analogous to the Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq, under the concept of "democratic autonomy" since 2010. The PKK's current ultimate goal is considered consistent with the new development taken place in northern Iraq.[70]

CONCLUSION

This dissertation aims to understand the impact of domestic, regional, and international factors in the PKK's transformation from secessionist terrorist organization to an organization that seeks Kurdish autonomy in Turkey. This chapter has helped meet this goal. It has explored the democratization process in Iraq, the dream of Kurdish independence, the emergence of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq, and Turkey's concerns with regard to the PKK in order to figure out how likely a Kurdish state is after the US invasion of Iraq.

Although the Kurdish autonomy has not led to a *de jure* Kurdish state, it is a *de facto* independent in all respects and the KRG is "governing body of sovereign state".[71] However, some of the territorial goals sought by the KRG remain unaccomplished due to the lack of compromise between the central government and the KRG. The Kurds demand the control of Kirkuk and its oil resources. Meanwhile, there are also some clashes between the Iraqi forces and the Kurdish *Peshmerga* over some provinces. The ethnic tensions and the domestic politics of KRG appear to be prevailing at least in the

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[69] Park, "Iraqi Futures, Turkish Options," 88.
[70] Abdullah Ocalan, "Democratic Autonomy Means a Status for Kurds," http://www.pkkonline.com/en/index.php?sys=article&artID=93.(Accessed April 25, 2011).
[71] Carpenter, "Middle East Vortex: An Unstable Iraq and Its Implications for the Region," 23.

near future for the Kurds.[72] The withdrawal of the US forces also increases the risk of civil war between the Kurds and Arabs on the disputed areas. The presence of the US forces has provided a mechanism to help manage conflict between the Iraqi forces and Kurdish *peshmerga*. Iraqis are also concerned about whether the Iraqi forces will be able to overcome the security problems in a post-American Iraq. Yet, the Kurds seem to be worrying the most.

However, the Kurdish region of Iraq has been the safest and the most stable part of Iraq. The Kurds appear to be reluctant to sacrifice these achievements to a Kurdish independent state, at least in the near future. The Kurdish region of Iraq has been enjoying autonomy for almost twenty years and this autonomy has transformed into a de facto Kurdish state, thanks to its achievements since 2003. They by no means have an intention to lose its achievements and no power can challenge to take them away from the Kurds as long as the Kurdish region is part of united Iraq. Thus, they enjoy the federal form of democracy to ensure their communal rights that were violated in the past.

The Kurds have played a determining role in the reconstruction of Iraq. In return, they achieved the 2005 constitution and the presidency of Iraq that were not imaginable during the Saddam era. As a result, it can be argued that the consolidation of democracy in Iraq makes the declaration of independent Kurdish state less likely, which is also a desired outcome for the regional powers, especially Turkey, the US, and the Iraqi people.

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[72] David Romano, "Iraqi Kurdistan: Challenges of Autonomy in the Wake of Us Withdrawal," *International Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2010).

CHAPTER 5

THE US-TURKISH RELATIONS AND PKK'S TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will analyze the impact of Turkey's relations with the US on the

PKK profile, in order to assess the hypothesis that the external factors, not to mention

Turkey's domestic factors, have played a determining role in the evolution of the PKK. It

is hypothesized that the stronger the US-Turkish relations are, the weaker the PKK.

Relying on the data collected through the study of the PKK's inner statements, including

Ocalan's statements and the decisions made in its congresses, this chapter will explore

the extent to which Turkey's relations with the US has weakened (or not) the PKK and

led the PKK to change its ultimate goal, moving toward Kurdish autonomy from Kurdish

secession based overwhelmingly on armed struggle. In order to identify the relationship

between the trends in the US-Turkish relationship and the PKK's ultimate goal, this

chapter will also look at the number of attacks initiated by the PKK over time, because

the organization determines its strategy in accordance with its ultimate goal. The data was

drawn from two different sources because of their different date range: the Study of

Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) between 1995 and 2007 and The

Institute for the Study of Violent Groups (ISVG) between 2008 and 2010.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section summarizes the

importance of the US support in Turkey's fight against the PKK. It identifies the factors,

regarding the issue of the PKK terrorism, affecting Turkey's relations with the US. The

section suggests that the US war and post-war behavior and its cooperation with Turkey

on cross-border raids affect the PKK. The second section elaborates the trends in the US-

Turkish relationship and the PKK's evolution through the study of PKK's discourses, such as statements of the PKK's leaders and the decisions made at the congresses. Evidence strongly suggests that the US support has played a determining role in the PKK's transformation. The last section descriptively analyzes the number of attacks initiated by the PKK and the US political and intelligence support in Turkey's fight against the PKK. The evidence suggests that the number of the PKK attacks increases when the US support is low.

IMPORTANCE OF TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE US IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST THE PKK

This section aims at understanding the US role in Turkey's fight against the PKK. The US role includes two dimensions: Action in Iraq, including war and post-war behavior, and cooperation with Turkey on cross-border raids.

1.   Action in Iraq, including war and post-war behavior: I hypothesize and explore how this affects the PKK in strengthening the Iraqi Kurds. The US role to which I refer, here, has two aspects: The emergence of a de facto Kurdish state and the lack of cooperation between the KRG and Turkish government.

•   In examining the first factor, we can gain insight into the PKK's evolution because the unprecedented achievements of Iraqi Kurds[1], fearing the emergence of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq, with the overwhelming American support, have led the PKK to undergo a noteworthy change in its political orientation. In another words, strengthening the Iraqi Kurds by the US has affected the PKK. The PKK and Ocalan's

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[1] For instance, Romano argues that "the 2005 constitution and the presidency of Iraq stand out two greatest achievements of [Iraqi Kurds] from 2005 to 2010." "Iraqi Kurdistan: Challenges of Autonomy in the Wake of Us Withdrawal," *International Affairs* 86, no. 6 (2010): 1349.

democratic transformation project seemed less appealing to a wide range of Kurds living in all parts of so-called Kurdistan in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq *vis-à-vis* the achievements of the Iraqi Kurds.[2] The Kurdish region of Iraq with its own flag, security forces, government, and parliament appeared to be a model that inspired the Kurds living in all other parts of so-called Kurdistan. This also not only challenged but also inspired the Kurdish nationalists in Turkey. Imprisoned Ocalan, and hence the PKK, changed its rhetoric as well as the organization's political and organizational structure.[3] The terrorist organization changed its ultimate goal from "democratic transformation of Turkey" to "democratic confederalism".[4]

Since the beginning of war, Iraq's territorial and political integrity has been the principal priority of the US. However, the present situation is a decentralized Iraqi federalism with a weak central government that exclusively favors the Iraqi Kurds. This risks the integrity of Iraq in the future, because of the policies of the Iraqi Kurds oriented towards pushing for more sovereignty in many areas. The main reason behind this present situation, perceived justifiably by Turks, is the US policies towards the Iraqi Kurds. Both the US and Turkey, however, share a strategic vision of an Iraq: a united Iraq with a strong central government. Such a strong and functioning Baghdad would be an important element in regional balance of power against Iran as well as capable of eliminating the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. The outcome, however, was counterproductive for both nations. While the US invasion has assured the integration of

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[2] Akkaya and Jongerden, "The Pkk in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?."

[3] "The Pkk in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?," 149.

[4] It is important to note that the PKK declared in its seventh congress that it sought "democratic transformation of Turkey" as a solution to the Kurdish problem of Turkey, based on Ocalan's proposal made at his trial. See PKK, "The Peace Project of the Kurdistan Workers Party (Pkk)," Kurdish Media, http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=7680.(accessed June 21, 2011).

Kurdish leadership into Iraq by paving the way for its emergence as an influential power in Iraqi politics through the democratic channels, it has strengthened the means to accomplish a Kurdish secession in the event of civil war between the Arabs and Kurds of Iraq. Turkey fears that the Kurdish nationalists in Turkey led by the PKK to follow the suit and even seek to unite with the would-be Kurdish state. The PKK seeks what it terms "democratic autonomy" in Turkey, but many security elites argue that the terrorist organization will pursue a goal of Kurdish secession in the area, comprising of southeastern part of Turkey and northern Iraq, if an independent Kurdish state emerges.[5] It is actually the least desirable outcome for the US, not to mention the other neighboring countries of would-be Kurdish state.

- The second aspect in which the US could play a determining role is the lack of cooperation between Turkey and the KRG against the PKK. The failure of Turkish government to pass the March 1 resolution, authorizing the deployment of the US forces to Turkey as a northern front created a political and military gap, which was filled by the Iraqi Kurds. Thus, Turkey's influence over the Kurdish leaders as well as the reconstruction of Iraqi politics is weak in comparison with that during the Saddam regime. Growing assertiveness of Kurdish leadership, as a result of the loss of Turkey's influence, has been reflected in its relations with Turkey. The Iraqi Kurds, on many occasions, have prevented Turkey from improving its relations with Washington and Baghdad. For instance, the Kurdish leadership vetoed the memorandum of understanding, signed between Iraqi and Turkish government in 2007, which would have served as common grounds for both nations to tackle the PKK issue through political and military

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[5] Fuat Karacali, "Türkiye'nin Güvenlik Politikaları Ekseninde Pkk Ve Terör," Politik Akademi, http://www.politikakademi.org/2011/05/turkiye%E2%80%99nin-guvenlik-politikalari-ekseninde-ortadogu-pkk-ve-teror/#_ftnref12 (accessed June 22, 2011).

means. With the memorandum, the PKK, also, would have been regarded as a terrorist organization in all regions of Iraq, including the Kurdish region of Iraq. Thus, the Kurds opted to veto it, stating that the central government could not sign an agreement with other nations on behalf of the Kurds. However, the reason behind the move was the fact that the PKK issue has been a bargaining chip for the KRG to meet its demands, such as the status of Kirkuk.[6]

It can be argued that growing assertiveness of Iraqi Kurds can be attributed to the fact that the Kurdish region of Iraq has been the only stable part of Iraq and the US has been overwhelmingly dependent on the Kurdish support to achieve its goals in Iraq. As Tevernise noted, "as the war has worsened, the United States has come to depend increasingly on the Kurds as partners in running Iraq and as overseers of the one part of the country where some of their original aspirations are actually being met."[7] This dependency has curtailed the US will to put pressure on the KRG to eliminate the presence of the PKK. Nor has the US exerted its authority over the KRG to overcome the differences between the KRG and Turkey over many issues.

The improvement of the relationship between Turkey and the US after the beginning of 2008 caused the latter to help intensify dialogue between the KRG and Turkey, because of the growing Kurdish demands for secession and the likelihood of Turkish military incursion into Iraq as a result of the increased PKK cross-border attacks. However, the outcome was not sufficient to ease the tension between the KRG and Turkey as well as between the US and Turkey.

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[6] Soner Cagaptay, "Iraqi Kurds and the Turkish-Iraqi Memorandum against the Pkk," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2651 (accessed June 24, 2011).
[7] Sabrina Tavernise, "In the Rugged North of Iraq, Kurdish Rebels Flout Turkey," *The New York Times* 2007.

2. Cooperation with Turkey on cross-border raids: It is argued that the lack of mutual understanding between the US and Turkey has led Ankara to establish closer ties to Middle East countries, which has impacted the evolution of the PKK. The terrorist organization set up an umbrella organization (KCK- Kurdistan Democratic Confederation) in 2005, under which the PKK's affiliated terrorist organizations in all parts of so-called Kurdistan (PJAK in Iran, PCDK in Iraq, and PYD in Syria) operate, with the goal of democratic confederalism in the region. The PKK has sought to force Turkey to establish stable relations with Iran and Syria in order to further weaken the strained ties with the US and its Western allies.[8]

Turkey's major problem, as indicated earlier, is the PKK terrorism that shapes its foreign policy and the main issue that prevents the improvement of its relations with the US is the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. Ankara accused Washington of ignoring her requests to crack down on the PKK or put pressure on the KRG to work closely with Turkey over this issue. Despite assurances by the US to disarm the PKK, the terrorist organization enjoys safe haven in the uncontrolled mountains of borders between Iraq and Turkey. It is estimated that the PKK maintains 3,500 to 5,000 militants in the sanctuaries in the mountains of northern Iraq. Ironically, the US invasion of Iraq increased the organization's hopes to bring about a solution to the Kurdish question that serves its own ends. Following the 9th congress[9] held in Dola Koga camp in northern Iraq shortly after the US invasion of Iraq, the organization declared that:

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[8] Wladimir van Wilgenburg, "Kurdish Pkk Using Pjak to Isolate Turkey," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36765&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=b9901d43e8

[9] In the 9th congress, the organization founded KONGRA-GEL after the dissolution of KADEK in order to escape from being labeled as a terrorist organization in the international arena.

> By intervening against the Saddam regime, at the hands of which the Kurds and all people of Iraq suffered oppression, the USA has played an important part in initiating a new era. KONGRA-GEL welcomes this move on the part of the USA, but wishes to point out that constructive results can only arise once a permanent solution to the Kurdish question is found and implemented.[10]

Especially during the Bush administration, the US was reluctant to permit Turkey to keep the organization in check through cross-border military operations into Iraq; not least, because it did not want to jeopardize Kurdish support in its fight against terrorism in Iraq.[11] In the absence of synchronization of resources against the PKK terrorists by the US, Iraq, and Turkey, the terrorist organization carried out a renewed series of terrorist attacks in the recent years of the Bush administration in the name of "self-defense"[12], in response to Turkish military and police operations in Turkey. Because of the lack of Turkey's ability to strike back at its sanctuaries across the border in Iraq, the attacks have led the Turks to conclude that "the US waged its war on terror by military means, and rejected the right of Turkey to do the same".[13] Anti-Americanism in Turkey has reached to an unprecedented level due the perception by the Turks that the US overlooks the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq[14] and the fact that the Iraqi Kurds has been the most reliable American ally in the US war in Iraq which has made Turkey less important for

[10] Kurdistan, "Final Declaration of the Foundation Conference of the People'S Congress of Kurdistan".(Accessed May 28, 2011).

[11] Evren Balta-Paker, "The Ceasefire This Time " Middle East Research and Information Project, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero083105.(Accessed May 31, 2011).

[12] The terrorist organization defines "self-defense" as: "KONGRA-GEL believes that the political, social, cultural and economic rights of the Kurds can only be attained through democratic political struggle. It regards the right to self-defense as defined in various international agreements and UN resolutions as a universal right. The continuation of the policies of denial and annihilation against the Kurdish people and the captivity of our leader under solitary confinement render legitimate self-defense a crucial moment of the national-democratic struggle of the Kurds. Therefore, as long as these conditions continue, the use of all means of self-defense available under international law is vital." See Kurdistan, "Final Declaration of the Foundation Conference of the People'S Congress of Kurdistan".(Accessed May 31, 2011).

[13] Stephen J. Flanagan and Samuel J. Brannen, "Turkey's Shifting Dynamics: Implications for U.S.-Turkey Relations," (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008), 11.

[14] Gamze Güngörmüş Kona, "Yeni Irak, Yeni Orta Doğu Ve Türk Dış Politikası," *TASAM Stratejik Ongoru* 9, no. 101 (2005).

the US in its efforts to stabilize Iraq.

The growing Kurdish secessionist aspirations of Iraqi Kurds as well as the possibility of Turkish military operation into Iraq following a series of deadly PKK attacks on Turkish security forces from its bases in northern Iraq forced the US to reassess its policies towards the PKK issue. Following the second series of the PKK deadly attacks in 2007, the US and Turkey made an agreement, authorizing Turkish military operations within the borders of Iraq and the real-time intelligence on the militants' whereabouts. However, the operations did not produce a desirable result due to the absence of support of the Iraqi Kurds with "precise and extensive intelligence networks".[15]

As a result of Turkey's failure to reach mutual understanding with the US as well as Europe in the post-Saddam era, the Turkish government has sought alternative balancing relations with the West with which Turkey hoped to counter the PKK terrorism more effectively. Ankara has opted to increase its relations with Iran and Syria with which Turkey finds a common ground. The PKK's goal, fomenting Kurdish autonomy in Turkey as well as in both countries, and a possible Kurdish secession in Iraq also pose a challenge for both countries. Turkey's policy of rapprochement with Iran and Syria was met with harsh criticism by Washington in an era where the US has pursued a policy of containment of both states.

The terrorist organization's second political transformation in the post-Saddam era came in the summer of 2010 amidst strained relations between the US and Turkey. The PKK declared that it sought "democratic autonomy in Turkey" with which it has

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[15] Tavernise, "In the Rugged North of Iraq, Kurdish Rebels Flout Turkey."

hoped to "introduce a new political model"[16] in all parts of so-called Kurdistan. Although

the internal dynamics of Turkey appears to be the only reason underlying the

organization's political shift, it can be argued that the PKK seeks to form basis for a

would-be united Kurdish state, comprising of Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iraq, by

seeking to achieve autonomy in Turkey that resembles the Kurdish region of Iraq.

RECENT TRENDS IN THE RELATIONSHIP

This section studies the recent trends in the relationship between the US and

Turkey and the PKK's inner statements. This is important to consider because .

understanding the PKK's transformation in its ultimate goal depends on understanding

Turkey's relationship with the US. It is argued that the US role matters to the evolution of

the PKK, because Turkey's strained ties with the US, resulting from diverging policy

choices over Iraq and Kurdish region of Iraq specifically, serve the PKK's interests in the

region. In the post-Saddam era, the PKK has sought "democratic confederalism" in the

region and "democratic autonomy" in Turkey respectively.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the foundation underlying the strategic

relationship gradually faded away. Both Turkey and the US continued to define each

other as ally, but the strategic relationship was often at odds due to the lack of clear

mission as they had during the cold war. However, Turkey's integration with the West

steadily continued.

The PKK was relatively powerful in military terms in the 1990s because it could

find sanctuaries in northern Iraq that have been beyond Turkey's control. The Turkish

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[16] Emrullah Uslu, "Pkk Intensifies Violence to Bring Turkey into Confrontation with the European Union," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36592&tx_ttnews[backPid]=26&cHash=bff3ea812b (accessed June 23, 2011).

government foresaw the fact that Turkey needed the US as a security provider in the region; not least because of the PKK's external support of its neighboring states that enabled it to perform terrorist activities in Turkey successfully in the 1990s. Turkey demonstrated its willingness to be an important ally of the West by providing unconditional support for the US-led campaign to expel Saddam from Kuwait.

However, the consequences of the war were costly for Turkey. The terrorist organization convened its fourth congress at the height of the Gulf crisis. At the congress held in northern Iraq, the PKK made important decisions in the light of the changes in the regional arena and declared that it aimed at creating a Kurdish state by the end of the 1990s. One of the main decisions made in the congress was to create rebel zones in Turkey under the name of "a piece of independent land" by synchronizing its armed activities and mass activities (press meetings, protest marches, death fasting, occupations, raids, and the like). By doing so, the terrorist organization intended to draw attention of international arena to its struggle for the Kurdish problem that was already internationalized by the Gulf Crisis. The war led to the establishment of a Kurdish region in northern Iraq from which Turkey suffers the consequences because of Turkey's Kurds' similar aspirations that impose a great threat to Turkey's national unity. The second negative consequence of the war was the fact that the achievement of a de facto autonomy resulting from the establishment of no-fly zone in northern Iraq invigorated the Kurdish nationalism and provided the PKK with a safe haven in that area from which it launches series of cross-border terrorist attacks on Turkey. The establishment of the no-fly zone in northern Iraq led the PKK to consider the move as the desire by the powerful states to create an independent Kurdish state in the region. It exploited the power vacuum

in the Kurdish region of Iraq and used the region as a military base. Shortly before his move to Europe from Syria in 1998, Ocalan emphasized the importance of the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq by stating that: "by moving out of Ankara we set up a party; by moving to the Middle East we created an army; and now by moving to Europe we will become a state".[17] Thirdly, Turkey also suffered economically because of the UN sanctions on Iraq that lasted four years. Turkey lost more than 20 billion dollars by enforcing four-year UN economic sanctions. Many Turks believe that the closure of its border gates with Iraq aggravated the economic backwardness of Turkey's Kurdish provinces.[18]

Although Saddam was a real threat to the regional stability, he was in cooperation with Turkey in confronting the PKK. The Saddam administration allowed the Turkish military operations in the Iraqi borders based on hot pursuit agreement between both entities during the 1990s. The terrorist organization faced intense domestic and cross-border operations that led to the mass casualties of the organization. On the other hand, the PKK intensified its terrorist attacks in accordance with the decisions held in the 4th congress until the capture of Ocalan in 1998.

The Gulf War of 1991 revitalized the role Turkey could play in the region in the post-Cold War era. This led to the improvement of Turkey's relations with the US as well as the PKK's political, ideological, and structural shift at the end of the 1990s. The developments in Iraq with regard to the PKK and the decisions made at the congresses as well as statements of Ocalan will help understand the transformation that took place in 2000. First, the US began to play an active role in the fight against the PKK; at least

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[17] Abdullah Ocalan, "Roma Konusmalari," *Wesanen Serxwebun* 2000, 82.
[18] Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq, 1991-95," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 4 (1996): 354.

because the rise of Turkey as a regional power in the region attracted the US to meet its objectives in the Middle East. The first indication in the right direction was the inclusion of the PKK to the US Department of State list of Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1996. The second issue that signaled the new US commitment was the assurance to deny the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq in the US-mediated Washington Agreement that ended four-year war between Barzani and Talabani. The fourth of the articles reads as: "no concessions would be granted to the PKK, and they should not be allowed to be based in Iraqi Kurdistan".[19] These developments ultimately led to the capture of Ocalan in 1999 with the help of the US intelligence, and hence the transformation of the terrorist organization. The pro-PKK media considered the operation as "international plot" against the Kurds, claiming that "the regional and international developments with regard to the Kurds required elimination of Ocalan, and hence the PKK, for hegemonic system".[20]

After the capture of Ocalan in February 1999, the organization strived to increase the tension in Turkey to militate against the due process and stop his execution. Realizing the fact that increased terrorist activities would be counterproductive to the approval of his execution and the organization's political activities, Imprisoned Ocalan gave the organization orders, in a letter, including the end of armed struggle and withdrawal of militants to the sanctuaries in northern Iraq, through his lawyers. In his letter, Ocalan also renounced the armed struggle and gave signal of the PKK's transformation by indicating that:

[19] Gareth R. V. Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan : Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 102.
[20] ANF News Agency, "Abdullah Öcalan: Öcalan Ideolojik Mücadele Ile Komployu Geriletti / Analiz," http://www.rojaciwan.com/haber-64503.html (Accessed June 2, 2011).

> It is obvious that the new situation requires the PKK's transformation in all aspects. It will urge the transformation. The PKK with its conventional structure could not play a role in Turkey. The ideological and political change as well as strategic change is inevitable ...Since the beginning of the century, especially after the WWII, the armed struggle based on ethnic, religious, and nationalist conflicts yield to the democratic settlement and compromise in the process.[21]

The second wave of the change in the ultimate goal of the organization came before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Failing to overcome the organization's hopelessness following the capture of its leader, the PKK held its 7th congress[22] in October 2000 in the Qandil Mountains in northern Iraq. The manifest, under the name of "The Manifest of Democratic Transformation and Unity", declared that:

> The democratic political struggle has been adopted to be applied in all arenas as the basic form of struggle of the new Party strategy which is imperatively in accordance with the developments inside and outside. Within this framework, it has been concluded that the armed struggle organization, ARGK, must be changed, appropriated to be reorganized as the people's defense force and its existence be dependent upon the democratic transformation of Turkey and the Resolution of the Kurdish question.[23]

As it appears from the statements, ideological and organizational shift, moving toward "democratic transformation" of Turkey from Kurdish secession based on armed struggle, came after the improvement of Turkish-American relations, especially after 1995. The transformation of the PKK after the capture of Ocalan as a result of the Turkey's increased ties with the US continued to take shape in accordance with the "process of changes and transformations that started with the collapse of the Soviet system and the

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[21] Abdullah Ocalan, "Kurtler Demokrasinin Motor Gucudur," *Wesanen Serxwebun* 2000.

[22] The PKK held the meeting earlier than the actual date of October 2002 due to the panic and chaos in the organization.

[23] Presidential Council of the PKK, "Our Extraordinary 7. Congress Is a New Beginning for Our Party and People," http://kicadam.home.xs4all.nl/pers/2000/1/09e0200.html (accessed June 04, 2011).

international level it reached with the attacks of 11 September"[24]. The September 11

terrorist attacks led to the growth of worldwide reaction against terrorism. As a result of

the active role Turkey played in the global war against terrorism, such as the contribution

to war in Afghanistan and the wider international campaign against Al-Qaeda, led the US

to not only list the PKK as a terrorist organization, but also force the EU to take

substantial measurements against the PKK's activities in Europe. Meanwhile, the PKK

held its eighth congress in 2002 in order to avoid the problems it anticipated to face in the

European countries. In the final resolution of the eighth congress, the PKK publicized a

change of name and strategy, declaring that "the PKK style struggle is now out of date

and that is why all the activities under the name of PKK were ceased as of 4 April

2002".[25] The organization founded the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress

(KADEK) and abolished the PKK in an effort to legitimize its *raison d'être* in the

international arena. However, the change of name and strategy could not help the terrorist

organization thwart the ban on its transnational terrorist activities. Both the PKK and

KADEK were declared as terrorist organization by many countries.

Although the soured relations have been originated from the outcomes of the first

Gulf War, the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was a major blow for the relations. Turkey's

worst fears have gradually become reality. The invasion exacerbated sectarian violence in

Iraq and the Kurdish aspiration for self-determination has gained momentum to a greater

extent that cannot be reversed. Despite the military cooperation during the 1990s in

Bosnia, Kosovo, northern Iraq as well as in Afghanistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks,

the diverging threat perceptions and interests over Iraq and the Kurdish issue became

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[24] PKK, "Resolution on the 8th Congress of the Pkk".(accessed May 28, 2011).
[25] "Final Resolution on the 8th Congress of the Pkk," http://www.freedom-for-ocalan.com/english/hintergrund/dokumente/doc_170402.htm (accessed June 5, 2011).

major impediments to the relationship. Turkey's rejection of the US request for support at the outset of the Iraq war as a northern front was the first obvious signal of how the relationship would take form during the Bush administration.[26]

During the Bush administration era, the US saw Turkey through the prism of strategic partnership in its critical operations, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military cooperation and civilian coordination between Turkey and the US in Afghanistan was high, despite diverging policy responses, but converging interests in the other areas. Turkey supervised the International Security Assistance Forces in Kabul for two times and has assumed responsibility for "providing humanitarian, economic, military, and security assistance in Afghanistan".[27] Turkey has also been critical in the efforts to stabilize Iraq by opening its airbase at Incirlik for "American military operations and logistics in Iraq".[28]

The US invasion of Iraq was also an important ingredient in the PKK's transformation. While the war changed the balance of power in Iraq as well as in the Kurdish region of Iraq that rendered the "PKK and its democratic transformation project"[29] obsolete, Turkey has lost its importance and capability to influence the developments in Iraq, especially in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Turkey's efforts to ensure close monitoring of the developments in northern Iraq and keep the organization in check failed due to the Iraqi Kurds' assertiveness because of a strong American presence and support.

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[26] Ted G. Carpenter, "Estrangement: The United States and Turkey in a Multipolar Era," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2010).
[27] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, *The United States and Turkey: A Model Partnership*, First Session, 2009, 1.
[28] Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, *The United States and Turkey: A Model Partnership*, First Session, 2009, 2.
[29] Akkaya and Jongerden, "The Pkk in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?," 149.

With the creation of KADEK, the organization sought mainly a democratic transformation of Turkey as a solution to the Kurdish problem.[30] However, the achievements of the Iraqi Kurds towards an independent Kurdish state forced the organization to propose a new project at the regional level. The new project was based on Ocalan's written defense, submitted against the charges of illegal entering Greece in the Athens court. The project, later on, turned into an organizational restructuring that would comprise of four nation-states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Ocalan obviously indicated:

> We need a "People's Congress" that involves all parts of Kurdistan. The existing Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) with its content and format does not cover solution. It is not functional because it is narrow and inadequate to meet the current needs…Considered "Kurdistan People's Congress" should not seek secession; rather it can solve problems in the existing nation-states with the principles of peaceful and democratic politics.[31]

The terrorist organization changed its name from KADEK to KONGRA-GEL in the ninth congress, held on October 24, 2003, in accordance with Ocalan's above-mentioned proposal, at least, in an attempt to make it more appealing to a wide range of Kurds living in all parts of so-called greater Kurdistan. However, the organization's new project did not appeal to its militants who were trained to fight. Ocalan, in an attempt to prevent the major split, proposed the concept of "democratic confederalism", defined as "not a state system, but a democratic system of the people without a state"[32], as a solution to the Kurdish problem in the Middle East. Ocalan elaborates the concept as follows:

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[30] Necati ALKAN, "Türkiye'nin Terörizmle Mücadelesi," ISREF, http://www.isref.org/index.php?pid=43&page=view&id=239 (accessed June 5, 2011).

[31] Abdullah Ocalan, "Özgür İnsan Savunması," http://www.scribd.com/doc/20054887/Ozgur-%C4%B0nsan-Savunmas%C4%B1.(accessed June 5, 2011).

[32] "The Declaration of Democratic Confederalism".(accessed June 6, 2011).

> Democratic confederalism is a movement which does not interpret the right to self determination to establish a nation state, but develops its own democracy in spite of political boundaries. A Kurdish structure will develop through the creation of a federation of Kurds in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. And by uniting on a higher level they will form a confederal system... From now on, three laws will be applied in Kurdistan: EU Law, the law of the national government and the democratic confederal law. So long as the national governments of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria respect the democratic confederal laws the Kurdish people will observe their laws and thereby common ground will be sought.[33]

Following the end of ceasefire declaration in 2004 and the declaration of the concept of "democratic confederalism", the organization re-founded the PKK designed as an ideological body of umbrella organization, namely Union of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), which aims to carry out Ocalan's ideology of democratic confederalism. Although the terrorist organization reiterated that it did not seek to create a Kurdish state, the KCK system with its legislative, executive, and judicial bodies resembles a nation based on separation of powers. While the KCK executive council carries out the political and military activities of the organization, the KONGRA-GEL runs the legislative branch and the judicial body is composed of the People's freedom court, disciplinary committee, and the public court. As mentioned earlier, the PKK is the ideological organ of the organization.

It can be argued that the PKK's ideological and political shift during the Bush administration derives from the effects of the Iraq war of 2003 that led to the rise of de-facto Kurdish state in Iraq and the loss of Turkey's ability to keep the organization in check through the military cross-border operations. Turkey's military and political influence over the Iraqi Kurds weakened to a greater extent, which, in turn, complicated the Turkish-American relations. The cooling of relations became more apparent in the

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[33] Ibid.

following years. The Turkish government constantly sought the US military and political assistance to eliminate the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. Despite the heavy pressure of Turkey, the US neither took military action against the PKK nor allowed its Nato ally. Nor did it attempt to put pressure on the KRG to take severe measures on the PKK presence in the region under its control until 2006.

Between 2006 and 2009, the relationship between the US and Turkey was relatively more constructive because of the US intelligence and political support of Turkey in its fight against the PKK terrorism. Due to the increased possibility of Turkish military cross-border operations into northern Iraq as a response to a series of sensational terrorist attacks from northern Iraq by the PKK, the US felt obliged to support Turkey. The underlying reason was to prevent a Turkish incursion into northern Iraq for fear that it would have destabilized the most stable region in Iraq. The US appointed Retired General Joseph Ralston in September 2006 as Special Envoy with a task of bringing the security officials of Turkey, Iraq, and the US together to work effectively to neutralize the PKK in northern Iraq. This move was perceived as an important step in the right direction to mend the US-Turkish relations.[34] The progress was a major blow for the PKK because of the possible synchronization of resources, assets, and willingness of these governments to eradicate the presence of the PKK across the border of Turkey and Iraq that the PKK never regarded as possible due to the tension between Turkey and the other two governments. The PKK attempts to discredit the process through the pro-PKK

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[34] Perry Clark, "Reassessing Us National Security Strategy: The Kurdistan Worker's Party (Pkk)," (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2008).

media outlet was an evidence of how the terrorist organization was discomforted.[35] In

October 2007, due to the absence of sufficient commitment of the US government, the

appointment ended up with the resignation of Ralston from his position, despite "several

framework agreements with Baghdad and Ankara"[36] that have never materialized. As a

result of the failure to reconcile the parties involved, the Turkish government felt obliged

to take unilateral military action against the PKK under the public and military pressure.

However, the authorization of cross-border military operations into Iraq by the Turkish

National Assembly came after the second series of the PKK attacks in October 2007 that

killed 12 Turkish soldiers. Upon the agreement reached by Turkey and the US during the

visit to Washington by Erdogan in the following month, Turkey launched military strikes

into Iraq with the intent of eliminating the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq.

According to the agreement reached, the US also pledged to provide Turkey with the

"real-time targeting intelligence on the PKK inside" to help Turkey strike the right targets

by setting up coordination center in order to facilitate the communication between high

level military officers.[37] The US intelligence support played a crucial role in Turkey's

fight against the PKK during this term. In its tenth congress held on August 21-30, 2008,

the terrorist organization evaluated the cooperation between the US and Turkey against

the PKK militants in Turkey by stating:

> The elimination and extermination concept based on the alliance between
> the US, Turkey, and Iran, formed in 2007, against our political movement
> and ...the all-out war in all areas, including ideological, psychological,
> military, political, and economic areas, against our people and guerillas

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[35] Kurdish National Congress, "Kurdish National Congress Is Demanding the Immediate Resignation of General Ralston " Kurdish Aspect, http://6.www.kurdishaspect.com/doc1026107.html (Accessed May 14, 2011).

[36] Flanagan and Brannen, "Turkey's Shifting Dynamics: Implications for U.S.-Turkey Relations," 11.

[37] "Turkey's Shifting Dynamics: Implications for U.S.-Turkey Relations," 12.

are seen as a serious threat and danger for the future of our people and movement.[38]

After the cooling relations between Turkey and the US during the Bush Administration, President Obama's visit to Turkey in April 2009 marked a beginning of a new era in the relationship. This visit had a political meaning that conveyed a message that the US wanted to renew its ties with Turkey through transatlantic partnership in that the visit was part of a European tour after the G-20 meeting in London and the Nato summit in Strasburg. Instead, the visit might have come after a Middle East tour that would have been considered as continuity in its foreign policy toward Turkey.[39] During his visit, Obama appreciated Turkey's changing priorities and its policy shift toward the Middle East to pursue its national interests after the 2003 Iraq war. This understanding is essential for Turkey because it had to face many challenges with the US that led to the increased anti-Americanism in the Turkish public during the previous US administration. Obama proposed "model partnership" that increased the level of expectations of both sides in managing the differences over many issues, especially Iraq that has been a real concern for both nations. However, their priorities have been different. While Washington's approach towards Turkey derives from Turkey's increased influence over the Middle East that can play a determining role, for instance, in exiting Iraq with a great success and containing Iran for its nuclear ambitions, Ankara's main concern is the rise of Kurdish separatism in Iraq that drives Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East. The efforts, including the high level unprecedented visits among both nations following Obama's visit to Turkey, to give meaning to the "model partnership" failed due to the

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[38] PKK, "Pkk: Pkk 10. Kongre Sonuç Bildirisi Açıklandı," ANF News Agency, http://www.rojaciwan.com/haber-40027.html

[39] Nuh Yilmaz, "U.S.-Turkey Relations: Model Partnership as an 'Empty Signifier'," *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1 (2011): 11.

two recent incidents. Turkey's vote against a US-backed UN resolution for further

sanctions against Iran as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and the

flotilla incident of 2010 sparked a different set of crisis between Turkey and the US,

resulting in allegations of shift in Turkey's axis by the Europeans. The Turkish

government denied the allegations and argued that the debate derived from the lack of

understanding of its multidimensional foreign policy. Amid axis shift debates, the US

officials still perceive Turkey with its democratic settings as a vital ally and a model for

the region.

In the recent years, the cooperation between the US and Turkey against the PKK,

albeit limited, has increased. The leadership of the PKK claimed that the cooperation

between Washington and Ankara in the late Bush administration era was confined to a

real-time intelligence support, started in 2007, through Predator unmanned aerial vehicles

that enabled Turkey to pinpoint the targets of the PKK militants in order to preempt its

cross-border terrorist attacks, whereas the Obama administration has stepped up the

cooperation with Turkey against its leadership and sources of funding by imposing

sanctions over drug smuggling in support of its terrorist activities.[40] The US Department

of Treasury designated the PKK as a foreign narcotic trafficker pursuant to Kingpin Act

in 2008 and named its key leaders as the main drug traffickers in 2009 and 2011.[41] This

move has been welcomed by the Turkish authorities because the move is considered to

urge the EU to cut off "its network across Europe to produce, transport, and traffic"[42]

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[40] Baki Gul, "Kongra-Gel 8. Genel Kurul Uzerine,"
http://www.firatnews.com/index.php?rupel=nuce&nuceID=43624 (accessed June 4, 2011).
[41] Today's Zaman, "Us Imposes Sanctions on Pkk Leaders for Drug Trafficking,"
http://www.dunyatimes.com/en/?p=12355 (accessed June 3, 2011).
[42] US Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Designates Five Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers," ed. U.S. Treasury Department Office Of Public Affairs (Embassy of the United States, Ankara, Turkey, 2011).

illicit narcotics. However, it can be argued that although that kind of support has been a deep shock for the PKK, the elimination of the PKK seems to be impossible as long as the US and the KRG work with Turkey to eradicate the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq.

ANALYSIS

This section will analyze the impact of the US-Turkish relations over time on the number of PKK terrorist attacks. Many studies looked at the impact of the Turkish government policies on the number of the PKK violence and found out that the relationship between these two variables is statistically insignificant.[43] Some, however, concluded that the PKK's internal dynamics has played a determining factor in the number of the PKK violence.[44] Thus, because the organization's strategy, such as self-defense and serhildan, is based on its ultimate goal, the number of the PKK terrorist attacks will help analyze the relationship between the PKK's transformation and Turkey's ties with the US. However, it is important to note that it is not easy to establish causality between two observed events, because there have been other factors, which were descriptively explored in this dissertation, that challenge this causality. These factors interact with all of the others that result in the evolution of the PKK. However, it can be argued that the US role plays a determining role in the PKK's ultimate goal and strategy to meet its goal by observing the coincidences between the US support and the number of the PKK attacks.

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[43] Tarik Eser, "The Impact of the Turkish Policies and Actions toward the Pkk Terrorist Organization: A Time Series Analysis" (PhD, Sam Houston State University, 2008).
[44] Mustafa Cosar Unal, "Turkish Responses to Violence by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Pkk): Policy Choices and Policy Effects" (PhD, University of Maryland, 2009).

The data was taken from two different open sources because of their different date range: START (1995-2007) and ISVG (2008-2010). The data includes the violent incidents, comprising of bombings, armed assault, arson, hijacking, hostage taking/kidnapping, and robbery, committed by the PKK for the time period of 1995 through 2010. The numbers of civilian and security officer deaths and the PKK militants killed are also graphed in Figure 4.

In order to explain the relationship between the number of violence attacks committed by the PKK, in accordance with its ultimate goal, and the US support, this section will examine it in four periods. The first period is between 1995 through 2000, when the PKK was relatively weakened and sought the Kurdish secession as its ultimate goal. The PKK carried out a total number of 294 attacks and suffered the most casualties during this term (n=3337). As seen in figure, the number of attacks initiated by the PKK decreased to a greater extent from 81 in 1999 to 3 in 2000 (96.3%) in the immediate post-period of American support in Turkey's fight against the PKK. The first substantial American support was the inclusion of the PKK on the US Department of State list of foreign terrorist organization in 1996. Then, the US mediated a peace treaty (Washington Agreement) between Barzani and Talabani to end four-year war. In the agreement, the parties agreed to deny the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. The US support for the capture of Ocalan in 1999 was the major blow for the terrorist organization. The PKK realized the fact that it had to give up the Kurdish secession because the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq was a threat to the alliance between the US, Turkey, and the Iraqi Kurds against the Saddam regime. Ironically, the organization had to declare unilateral

ceasefire and withdrew its forces to the sanctuaries in uncontrolled mountains of northern

Iraq in accordance with the order of imprisoned Ocalan.

Figure 4: Number of PKK Attacks and Casualties
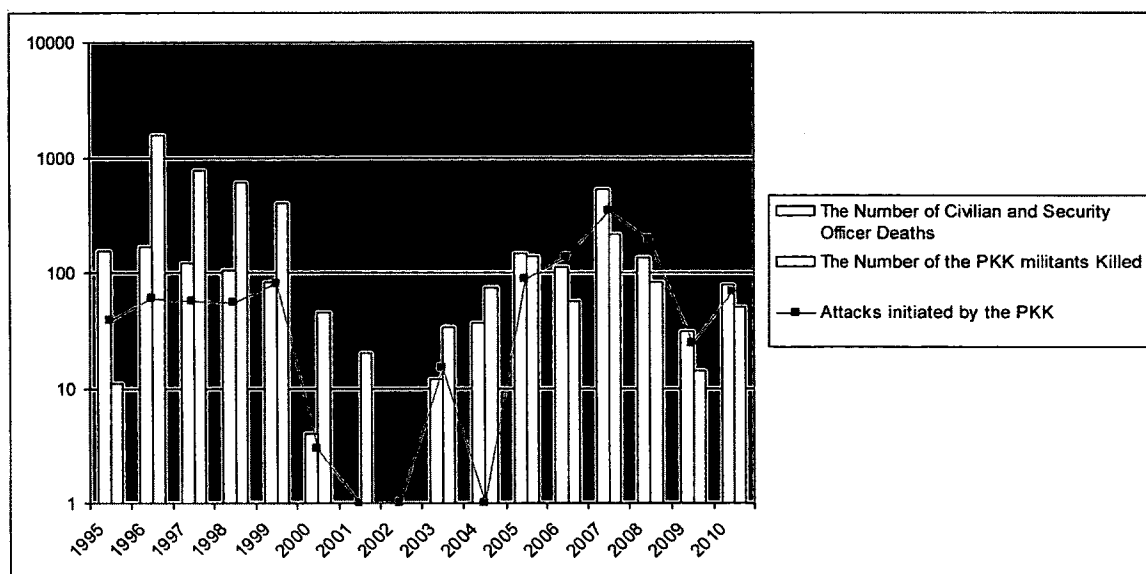
The second period starts in 2001 and ends in 2003. During this term, there were

no terrorist attacks, with the exception of 2003 (n=15), due to the unilateral ceasefire

declared by the PKK. However, it can be argued that the underlying reason behind the

ceasefire was the fear that the organization could face mass casualties due to the

enhanced strategic partnership between the US and Turkey accompanied by the

worldwide reaction against terrorism following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The US-Turkish

strategic partnership expanded based on common interests to promote global security

after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The terrorist organization had to declare that "the PKK

style struggle is out of date and …the activities under the name of PKK were ceased as of

April 4, 2002" in accordance with the decision made at the eighth congress held in

northern Iraq. During this term, the PKK also experienced an ideological and organizational shift, driven, as mentioned earlier, by the growth of worldwide reaction against terrorism. It abolished the PKK and founded KADEK, claiming to seek a "democratic transformation" of Turkey, to escape from its terrorist identity. The organization, then, founded the KONGRA-GEL, abolishing the KADEK, due to the changing balance of power in Iraq following the US invasion of Iraq that ruled out the PKK and its democratic transformation project".[45] The organization re-founded the PKK as an ideological body of KCK to carry out Ocalan's ideology of "democratic confederalism" proposed in 2005 following the end of unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK in 2004.

In the third period (2004-2009), the number of the attacks initiated by the PKK reached at an unprecedented level with a total number of 782 due to the end of unilateral ceasefire declared by the organization in 2004. It realized the fact that unilateral ceasefire weakened the organization because of the changing balance of power in Iraq that led to the unprecedented achievements of the Iraqi Kurds. In order to introduce itself as the real representative of the Kurdish people in all parts of so-called Kurdistan and the only party that should be taken into consideration in the resolution of the Kurdish problem, the organization established an umbrella organization (KCK) with offshoot terrorist organizations in all parts of so-called Kurdistan that function in the name of the PKK. During this term, the PKK carried out cross-border terrorist attacks from its bases in northern Iraq due to the deteriorated American-Turkish relations, emanating from the 2003 Iraq war, that led to the reluctance of the US in taking action against the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. As seen in figure, there is a dramatic decrease in 2008 (n=191)

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[45] Akkaya and Jongerden, "The Pkk in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?."

and 2009 (n=24) from a total number of 345 in 2007 in the number of the PKK attacks. It can be argued that the US political and intelligence support in Turkey's fight against the PKK played a crucial role in the decrease in the attacks initiated by the PKK. Because the increase in the number of the cross-border terrorist attacks by the PKK exhausted Ankara's patience as a result of the lack of its ability to keep the terrorist organization in check through the military incursions into Iraq and the lack of the US commitment, the US felt obliged to provide support which, in turn, mended its ties with Turkey. This was reflected in the number of terrorist attacks in 2009 (n=24).

The fourth period starts in 2010 when the tension between the US and Turkey was high due to Turkey's vote against a US-backed UN resolution for further sanctions against Iran and the flotilla incident of 2010. Washington, however, still sees Ankara as a vital ally and a model for region. As a result of this, the decision made by the US Department of Treasury to design the PKK as a foreign narcotic trafficker and impose sanctions against the PKK's key leaders over drug smuggling in support of terrorist activities during the Obama administration reveals the fact that the relationship between the US and Turkey is in the right direction. Therefore, the number of terrorist attacks is at the lowest level (n=9) as of June 16, 2011 vis-à-vis the number of attacks in the recent years.

CONCLUSION

This chapter, in accordance with the main argument of the dissertation that argues that external factors, in addition to the Turkey's domestic factors, play a determining role in the PKK's ideological shift, aimed to explore the impact of trends in the relationship between Turkey and the US (as an regional factor) over time on the PKK's transformation in its ultimate goal. It has explored the importance of the American

political and intelligence support in Turkey's fight against the PKK through the study of the PKK's inner statements, including Ocalan statements, decisions made at the PKK congresses, and statements in the pro-PKK media outlets. This chapter has also analyzed the number of attacks initiated by the PKK between 1995 and 2010 to meet the chapter's goal. It concludes that the better is the relationship between Turkey and the US, the weaker the PKK is. Considering that external factors shape the PKK's profile, it can be argued that there is a relationship between the attacks initiated by the PKK and its ultimate goal, hence trends in American-Turkish relationship.

Turkey's main problem is the Kurdish problem radicalized by the PKK. It drives the relationship between the US and Turkey. There are two related issues, concerning Turkey, that render the improvement of Turkey's relations with the US crucial: The emergence of the de facto Kurdish state within the borders of Iraq and the presence of the PKK in the region under the control of the KRG. With regard to the first issue, both the US and Turkey share a common interest to prevent the rise of an independent Kurdish state in order to achieve the regional stability. Ankara fears that such a move by the Iraqi Kurds would have a dramatic impact on its integrity and security because the radicalized Kurdish movement in Turkey would grasp the opportunity to follow the suit. The American presence in Iraq has played a crucial role in stabilizing the country by helping the Kurds enjoy the democratic transition of Iraq as well as avoiding a civil war between the Arab and Kurdish ethnic groups, which, in turn, decreased the likelihood of emergence of a Kurdish state. However, the complete withdrawal of American forces from Iraq concerns Turkey because the US influence and security assurance over the Kurds will gradually fade away. Thus, Turkey needs the political support of the US to

mediate an intensified dialogue between the KRG and Turkey to overcome their differences over the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq and the other areas.

The second issue is the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq. The terrorist organization has enjoyed safe haven in the mountains of northern Iraq since the Gulf War of 1991. It is estimated that the PKK maintains 3,500-5,000 militants in the sanctuaries. The terrorist organization has convened almost all congresses and conferences in this region, because of the lack of the US and KRG commitment as well as the impossibility of Turkey to carry out military operation in northern Iraq. In the absence of the US political and intelligence support, Turkey has waged periodic sensational attacks on Turkey from sanctuaries in northern Iraq in the recent decade, claiming many lives of Turkish civilians and security forces.

The relationship between the US and Turkey plays a determining role in the transformation of the PKK. The substantial US support in Turkey's fight against the PKK dates back to the 1990s. Although many observers argued that Turkey's post-Cold War strategic importance to the US would gradually wane, the Gulf War of 1991 revitalized the role Turkey could play in the region in the post-Cold War era. The US support during the 1990s, as a result of Turkey's rise as a regional power, led to the capture of Ocalan as well as the ideological and structural change in the beginning of new century.

Between 2001 and 2003 before the US invasion of Iraq, the relationship between the two entities continued to improve under the "war on terrorism" framework. During this term, the number of PKK attacks was nil, with the exception of 2000 (n=3), because the organization attempted to escape from its terrorist identity in the international arena

through "the ideological and political change as well as strategic change".[46] The PKK

realized the fact that the improved relationship between Turkey and the US would have

put heavy pressure on the EU countries to take harsh measurements against the PKK's

activities in their area of responsibility.

Growing tension between the US and Turkey over the invasion of Iraq persisted

during the Bush administration. The US reluctance to crack down on the PKK in northern

Iraq further exacerbated the tension. The result was the increase in the number of the

PKK attacks and casualties due to the PKK's cross-border terrorist attacks from its

sanctuaries in northern Iraq. The US intelligence support that started in October 2007

considerably decreased the PKK's cross-border terrorist attacks in 2009 (n=24) and 2010

(n=68).

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[46] Ocalan, "Kurtler Demokrasinin Motor Gucudur."

CHAPTER 6

TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND THE PKK'S TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore the relationship between Turkey's closer ties to its neighboring states, Iran and Syria, and the PKK's political shift, in order to assess the argument that external factors, in addition to the Turkey's internal factors, have affected the PKK's ultimate objective. It is, here, hypothesized and explored that the Turkey's growing security and trade cooperation with its neighboring states, Iran and Syria, has pushed them to stop backing the PKK terrorism. It is important to consider because it is argued that the lack of external support from these states, which played a determining role in the past in its fight against Turkey, has forced the PKK to appeal to the Kurds living in what the PKK terms "all parts of Kurdistan", referring to some parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, with its ultimate goal of "democratic confederalism". It is also hypothesized that the lack of cooperation between Turkey and Syria and Iran, which has been the case following the Arab Spring that has wracked Syria since March 2011, plays a crucial role in the transformation of the PKK. It is argued that the terrorist organization builds its new projects according to the new situation in Syria. The conflict between Turkey and Syria, and not to mention Iran, well suit the terrorist organization's future plans.

The number and types of high-level visits and agreements will be examined in order to figure out the extent of these states' support for the PKK. The recognition of the

PKK a terrorist organization by Syria in 1998 and Iran in 2004 is considered to play a crucial role in Turkey's fight against the PKK in the past.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will identify the reasons behind Turkey's rapprochement with Iran and Syria until 2011 when the Arab Spring reached Syria. The section suggests that the role of Iran and Syria in containing a Kurdish state to emerge and Kurdish separatism led by the PKK underlies Turkey's efforts to increase its economic and security cooperation. The second section will study the impact of domestic, regional, and international factors over the relationship between Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The last section will analyze the number and type of high-level visits and agreements in order to figure out whether these states still provide the PKK with support. The section suggests that the growing security and trade cooperation and the absence of cooperation since 2011 between these states played a crucial role in the PKK's political and structural shift.

TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

This section studies the rapprochement and estrangement between Turkey and its neighboring state, Iran and Syria, with regard to Kurdish problem in the region. This is important to consider because it is argued that Turkey's closer ties to its neighboring countries affected the PKK's strategic calculations, forcing it to shift its ultimate goal. It is also argued that Turkey's strained ties with these countries have empowered the terrorist organization in its efforts to realize its ultimate goal. It is worth mentioning here again that the terrorist organization sought democratic confederalism in the region, comprising of all parts of so-called Kurdistan, from 2005 to 2010 and currently seeks greater autonomy in Turkey with which it is considered to project democratic confederalism or an independent Kurdish state in the so-called greater Kurdistan that has

become a political entity. The PKK, failing to sustain its external support that enjoyed during the 1980s and 1990s, felt obliged to introduce comprehensive projects, manifested by imprisoned Ocalan, to mobilize the Kurdish minorities in Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, at least, as a counterbalance against Turkey's closer ties to its neighboring countries to fight against the PKK effectively.

The role to which I refer here has two dimensions: Preventing emergence of an independent Kurdish state and containing Kurdish nationalism. The level of relationship, however, varies depending on the security perceptions of Iran and Syria over these two dimensions. In other words, the more these two subjects bother them, the more do Syria and Iran feel the need to approach Turkey.

1.   The first dimension is improved relations to prevent emergence of an independent Kurdish state in the region: Understanding these states' policy aimed to prevent a Kurdish state sheds light on the role the closer ties among these nations play in the evolution of the PKK. In examining the first dimension, two reasons come into prominence: because a would-be Kurdish state in northern Iraq is considered to help the PKK with its affiliated organizations operating in what the terrorist organization refers to "all parts of Kurdistan", referring to some parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, mobilize the Kurdish minorities against their respective states in a radical way that further destabilizes these states and the region. This was the case between 2003 and 2011. Following the 2003 Iraq war, Turkey, Syria, and Iran was on the same page when it comes to preventing a Kurdish state in the region. There was a growing degree of common ground for these neighboring countries with regard to a de facto Kurdish state in Iraq. Many scholars argue that one of the main reasons behind the rapprochement

between these states is the shared fear that an emergence of Kurdish state in the region might threaten their territorial integrity by inspiring their respective Kurdish population to demand a greater autonomy or, even, to secede.[1] However, Turkey's strained relations with Syria since the Arab Spring in Syria have removed the reason behind this rapprochement. Even, the Syrian regime paves the way for the Kurdish uprising to punish Turkish government. This is also the case for Iran because Iran compromised tacitly with the terrorist organization not to carry out terrorist activities in Iran after the Arab Spring hit Syria. Moreover, Iran supports Syrian regime against Turkey for its national interests.

Although Turkey and the US share concerns about the impact of would-be Kurdish state on the regional politics and the prospect for Iranian influence over Baghdad[2], the failure to find a common ground with the US and the KRG, America's most reliable partner in Iraq, pushed Ankara towards Iran and Syria which have had to face the same problem. Like Ankara, Syrian and Iranian government prefer a united Iraq rather than federalism.[3] However, it is important to note that a weak Baghdad led by Shiite groupings "incapable of proving a political, economic, or conventional military rival"[4] best serves Iran's long-term interest. Additionally, Iran and Syria perceives that a

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[1] Bulent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 5 (2008): 496. See also Banu Eligür, "Are Former Enemies Becoming Allies? Turkey's Changing Relations with Syria, Iran, and Israel since the 2003 Iraqi War," *Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies* (2006).

[2] From the US perspective, the Kurds' strong activism in the Iraqi politics is deemed necessary to prevent Shia dominance in Baghdad. See Sean Kane, "The Coming Turkish-Iranian Competition in Iraq," (United States Institute of Peace, 2011), 6.

[3] Wladimir van Wilgenburg, "Is Syria Cooperating Militarily with Turkey against the Pkk?," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36863 (accessed July 4, 2011).

[4] Kane, "The Coming Turkish-Iranian Competition in Iraq," 13.

Kurdish state would be pro-American and used as a counterbalance against their

advances in Iraq as well as in the Middle East.[5]

It is important to note here that a pro-American Kurdish state is not in the PKK's

interests, as well, because it does not reflect its desire for an independent Kurdish state.

The formation of a Kurdish state, as the organization wishes, is supposed to be

accomplished through Ocalan's so-called democratic transformation project. In another

words, a pro-American Kurdish state means elimination of the PKK. On the one hand,

the PKK enjoys the achievements by the Iraqi Kurds that have enabled the PKK to

consolidate its position in northern Iraq, and strives to realize a Kurdish autonomy in all

parts of so-called Kurdistan that resembles the Kurdish region of Iraq. On the other hand,

it criticizes the strong relationship between the US and KRG. Ocalan has always been

critical of Barzani and Talabani in their relations with the US and considers himself as

the main representative of the Kurdish people.[6] His opinion about a would-be Kurdish

state is as follows:

> Instead of "nationalist and statist project of Kurdistan", "Kurdistan
> Democratic Project" will bring about more positive and analytical
> approaches of Turks, Iranian, and the Arabs as a nation state to the Kurds.
> The Kurds are not a source of fear, rather will be treated as friends and
> brothers that are sought to compromise. Instead of being a "divide-
> conquer" tool, they will play a strong role, as a volunteer and free, in the
> integration. Kurds will be democracy assurance and provider in the
> Middle East. They will be regarded as a community with its democratic
> power that deserves respect and support in its move, not an instrument of

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[5] Ioannis Michaletos, "The South Eastern European Changing Strategic Lanscape," Research Institute for European and American Studies, http://www.rieas.gr/research-areas/global-issues/transatlantic-studies/267.html (accessed July 5, 2011).

[6] In an interview with Ocalan, he said "Barzani is like a collaborator. When Iran asks Barzani to kill Iranian Kurds, Barzani does so. You cannot call Barzani's movement a Kurdish movement... Barzani and Talabani are like feet or arms, but I am the main head or mind. The United States should speak with me, the mind. I have twenty-five years of experience." See Abdullah Öcalan, "We Are Fighting Turks Everywhere," *Middle East Quarterly* 5(1998).Available at http://www.meforum.org/399/abdullah-ocalan-we-are-fighting-turks-everywhere (accessed July 7, 2011).

hegemonic powers.[7]

The fact that the prospect of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq has become more apparent led to the formation of a new alliance in the Middle East. Both Turkey and the US failed to find a common ground with regard to Iraqi politics. Thus, Turkey found itself in a new political activism that distanced itself from the West with which Ankara used to speak the same diplomatic language in the Middle East politics.[8] This activism was reinforced by "strategic depth doctrine"[9], formulated by the incumbent Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, with the aim of improving its relations with its neighboring countries to; at least, diversify its dependency in resolving its Kurdish problem. With the new activism in its foreign policy, Turkey's relationship with its neighboring countries reached to an unprecedented level until 2011, despite the negative consequences of Arab spring that also hit Syria and, to a lesser extent, Iran. However, this move was a major blow to Turkey's relations with the US.[10]

2. The second dimension to which I refer is the role of Turkey's neighboring countries (Iran and Syria) to contain Kurdish nationalism. The policy choice of these countries in the last decade until 2011 is the key to understanding the PKK's political shift from ultimate goal of Kurdish secession to Kurdish greater autonomy in the Kurdish regions of aforementioned countries. It is argued that Turkey's closer ties to these countries affected the PKK's strategic calculations, forcing it to undergo political shift in its orientation. It can be also argued that Turkey's strained relations with Syria and Iran

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[7] *Özgür Insan Savunmasi*, 34.

[8] Joshua W. Walker, "Reexamining the U.S. -Turkish Alliance," *Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2007).

[9] It will be detailed in the next section.

[10] Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 6 (2006).

since Syria's Arab Spring urges the terrorist organization to have a mutual cooperation between them and revise its ultimate goal.

Turkey's foreign policy shift towards Iran and Syria traces back to the US invasion of Iraq. Turkey's growing tension with the US over the Iraq war led Turkey to conclude that it needed to seek alternative ways- that is improved relations with its neighboring countries (Iran and Syria) - to deal with its Kurdish problem radicalized by the PKK. The terrorist organization has played a determining role in constructing a single pan-Kurdish identity in the Middle East that challenges unity and integrity of the countries involved. In the Middle East region, there is no other pro-Kurdish terrorist organization that can challenge the PKK with its affiliated organizations operating in the other Kurdish regions of Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Ocalan exercises influence that goes beyond the PKK over the radical Kurdish nationalists in Syria and Iran as well as, to a lesser extent, in Iraq. Ocalan is recognized as undisputed leader by the PKK and its affiliated organizations operating in the other parts of so-called Kurdistan and their supporters.[11]

The terrorist organization led by Ocalan is in a position where it assesses political and military circumstances at all levels and sets the agenda for the future to change the developments into a political victory. Foreseeing the alliance between Turkey, Iran, and Syria against the terrorist organization, The PKK, being organized in all parts of so-called Kurdistan since especially 2003, has sought to become a political power that forces political transformation with its so-called democratic transformation projects, manifested

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[11] Cengiz Candar, "Dağdan Inis –Pkk Nasıl Silah Bırakır?: Kürt Sorunu'nun Siddetten Arındırılması," (TESEV, 2011), 37.

by Ocalan, especially in Turkey and in Iraq, Iran, and Syria.[12] By doing so, the PKK

sought to push Turkey to work closer with them against the PKK in order to complicate

Turkey's relations with the US (a valuable partner in its fight against the PKK), also

consolidate its position in northern Iraq.[13] Turkey's closer ties towards the Middle East

countries have played an influential role in the US reluctance to take military action

against the PKK in northern Iraq. In this respect, the PKK problem goes beyond the

borders of Turkey and has become a real threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey's

neighboring countries where the Kurds form minority.

With the 2003 Iraq war, the Kurdish nationalism radicalized by the PKK has

become an important ingredient that brings the neighboring countries closer. The Iraqi

war led to the formation of new alliances in the Middle East with regard to the Kurdish

problem.

Overall, it can be argued that Turkish government's foreign policy towards its

neighboring countries, with regard to PKK, was successful until 2011. In order to

accomplish its goal, Ankara improved its ties to Syria and Iran by making unprecedented

agreements on security and economic areas, which led them to proclaim the PKK a

terrorist organization. This can be considered great victory because such a development

was a novel for Ankara in the 1990s.

TRENDS IN TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND SYRIA

This section will examine the recent constructive and destructive developments in

Turkey's relations with Iran and Syria. Understanding Turkey's changing foreign policy

attitudes towards Iran and Syria is the key to understanding how these developments

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[12] Baki Gul and Cengiz Kapmaz, "Öcalan Ideolojik Mücadele Ile Komployu Geriletti / Analiz " Firat News Agency, http://www.firatnews.com/index.php?rupel=nuce&nuceID=40391 (accessed July 4, 2011).
[13] Wilgenburg, "Kurdish Pkk Using Pjak to Isolate Turkey".

transformed the PKK into a terrorist organization with overarching political objective for all parts of so-called Kurdistan, from an organization seeking Kurdish secession in the past. Designating the PKK a terrorist organization and deepened economic and security ties to Turkey by these two countries well illustrate the lack of external support of the PKK. This section will first explore the issues underlying the closer ties and then look at the historical background of Turkey's relations with each country. Other issues in the relationship will be excluded or mentioned depending on the nature of dissertation.

A PROCESS OF DESECURITIZATION IN TURKEY

Turkey underwent what Aras and Polat call "a process of desecuritization"[14] that enabled Turkey to employ flexible foreign policy towards the Middle East politics. Many scholars argue that this changing foreign policy attitude derives from the changes at the internal and external level, comprising of foreign policy outlook of the current Turkish government[15], EU inspired democratization process[16], instability of Iraq, and the emergence of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq. These factors led to the radical departure from Turkey's traditional foreign policy attitudes. For instance, National Security Political Document (MGSB- *Milli Guvenlik Siyaset Belgesi*) that traditionally guides Turkey's foreign policy reveals that Iran, Syria, Iraq, Russia, and Greece are no longer perceived a national threat.[17]

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[14] Aras and Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran," 495.

[15] The current government has won a third consecutive term by maintaining highest vote of 50 percent in the last general election held on June 12, 2011, since it assumed power in 2002.

[16] Aras and Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran."

[17] Cenap Cakmak, "Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi Ve Türk Dış Politikası " Bilgesam, http://www.bilgesam.org/tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=887:milli-guevenlik-siyaset-belgesi-ve-tuerk-d-politikas&catid=122:analizler-guvenlik&Itemid=147 (accessed July 10, 2011).

In the past, the traditional tendency in its foreign policy making was to

"externalize domestic problems and search for foreign enemies as the root causes of

security problems".[18] Syria and Iran fit well into this foreign policy perception as the root

causes of Kurdish separatism and political Islam in Turkey respectively. The

securitization of domestic problems lacked the improvement of Turkey's ties with Iran

and Syria, leading them to provide the PKK with external support. For instance, during

the 1980s and 1990s, the PKK maintained military training at the camps based in Syria,

especially in Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, until Ocalan was forced to

leave Syria.[19] Iran was also accused of providing the PKK with weapons for

unconventional war against Turkey. Both Syria and Iran employed sort of proxy war to

destabilize Turkey.

TURKEY'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVISM

Turkey's changing threat perception towards the Middle East countries coincides

with "strategic depth" foreign policy. The new foreign policy vision urged Ankara to

employ "zero problem policy toward Turkey's neighbors" to resolve its regional disputes,

including the radicalized Kurdish nationalism. Turkey's democratization reforms and

economic stability have rendered the new activism favorable to pursue more active role

in the Middle East politics vis-à-vis that in the 1990s. This political shift was largely

materialized in Turkey's relations with Iran and, to a greater extent, Syria.[20]

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[18] Bulent Aras, "The Davutoglu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (2009): 4.
[19] Damascus had to expel Ocalan in 1998 for fear of Turkey's military intervention. See F.Stephen Larrabee, *Turkey as a United States Security Partner* (Rand Corporation, 2008), 14.
[20] Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 80.

With the war in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran began to encounter a real threat, deriving from the PKK's ultimate goal.[21] Turkey seized the opportunity to improve its relations with the countries with which Turkey hoped to eliminate the PKK terrorism by applying "zero problems with neighbors foreign policy". Turkey's new foreign policy vision helped Turkey reduce the PKK's external support in the region to a greater extent. During this term, the PKK became an organization that was militarily squeezed into mountainous area of northern Iraq from which it carries out transnational terrorist attacks into Turkey.[22]

RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND SYRIA

Today, the Syrian Kurds comprise of 9 percent of an estimated 20-25 million Kurds living in the Middle East.[23] In contrast to the Kurdish citizens of Turkey and Iraq, Syria's estimated 2 million Kurds reside in three non-contiguous parts of Syria that have borders with Turkey. The Kurds of Syria have been subject to suppression by the successive Syrian government since the 1950s. Many Syrian Kurdish political groupings united to call for recognition of Kurdish rights with failure. Hafez al-Assad regime, in an alliance with the PKK and Talabani's PUK, actively undermined the emergence of pan-Kurdish sentiment in Syria. Meanwhile, it supported pro-Kurdish nationalist groups in

[21] It is important to note here that the terrorist organization operates in Iraq, Iran, and Syria under different names. The PKK founded Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (PCDK) in Iraq in 2002. It has influence over municipalities in the Qandil district of KRG. The PKK's offshoot organization in Syria is Democratic Union Party (PYD), founded in 2004. The PYD has been influential over the Kurdish citizens of Syria. The armed representative of Kurdish movement in Iran is the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), founded in 2004. These offshoot organizations operate under the umbrella organization (Kurdistan Democratic Confederalism-KCK) to fulfill the organization's regional aspiration of democratic confederalism, manifested by Ocalan in 2005. These organizations seek Kurdish autonomy in their respective countries in the hope of realizing a much larger return- that is "democratic confederalism" in the so-called greater Kurdistan.
[22] However, it is important to note here that it operates transnationally in the European countries for financial and recruiting purposes.
[23] It is important to note that the Kurds, according to the CIA World Factbook, roughly comprise 18% of the population in Turkey, 15-20%in Iraq, 7% in Iran, and 9% in Syria, with smaller minorities in other Middle Eastern countries.

Turkey (PKK) and Iraq, especially Talabani's PUK, to destabilize its neighboring countries.[24] The relationship between PKK and Damascus was based on mutual interest during the 1980s and 1990s where the PKK enjoyed safe haven in Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley until 1998. In return, Ocalan did not embrace Syrian Kurds who rejected to join the PKK by "condemning the fight for Kurdish national rights in Syria and frequently repeated the Assad regime's claim that most Syrian Kurds are not native to Syria".[25] The PKK's long-lived honeymoon with Syria ended up in a situation where the terrorist organization was left no choice but to move its camps to northern Iraq as a result of the decision of Syria to expel Ocalan in 1998. However, this decision backfired because many of the Syrian militants of the PKK who were encouraged by Damascus to fight against Turkey traveled to northern Iraq where they jointly carry out cross-border attacks against Turkey and Syria for greater Kurdish autonomy.

Three main issues drove Turkey's relations with Syria in the past: Turkey's annexation of Hatay province in 1930, Turkey's intimate relations with the West and Israel, and, most importantly, Syria's external support for the PKK. The capture of Ocalan in 1999 has been a turning point in the relationship. Ocalan, escaping from Turkey just before the 1980 military coup, found safe haven in Syria and trained its militants in the sanctuaries in Syria, especially in Syrian-controlled Beka Valley. Damascus had to expel Ocalan and close the PKK's training camps as a result of Turkey's threat that housing Ocalan and the PKK's militants was *casus belli*. Syria's policy change marks the beginning of a gradual improvement in bilateral relations. The first visit of Syrian president Bashar Assad in January 2004 at the presidential level after

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[24] James Brandon, "The Pkk and Syria's Kurds," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1014 (accessed July 12, 2011).
[25] Gary C. Gambill, "The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 6, no. 4 (2004).

almost half century accelerated high-level diplomatic activism, which has resulted in the

foundation of the Syrian-Turkish High Level Strategic Cooperation Council with the aim

of developing relations in every areas, including security and economic areas in 2009 and

held the second meeting in 2010. The pro-PKK media outlets denounced these recent

constructive developments.

The Syrian state has been the first partner of anti-Kurdish regional alliance led by

Turkey. Anti-Kurdish alliance has transformed into a strategic character with both "the

Turkey-Syria High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Agreement" held in 2009 and

2010 and "Counter-terrorism Cooperation Agreement".[26]

Assad's visit shortly after the US invasion of Iraq is remarkable because it

indicated Syria's growing concerns about the developments in Iraq during that time.

Growing Kurdish unrest led by the PKK within Syrian borders and concern about the

emergence of de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq underlie Syria's approach towards

Turkey. Damascus feared that a would-be Kurdish state could spark its own Kurds'

demands. Kurds in Syria are the largest ethnic minority with 3 million population (9%).[27]

The recent unrest in Syria exacerbates Turkey's partnership with Syria. Ankara

worries about the impact of Syria's uprising and government failure to control the events

over Turkey's Kurdish problem and the fight against the PKK. In this unfolding events in

Syria, the PKK-affiliated terrorist organization (PYD) strives to seize the opportunity to

gain the right to self-determination under a federal system in Syria as a solution to the

Kurdish problem.[28] As security experts argue, this will help the PKK settle down,

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[26] Cihan Özgur, "Suriye Ve Türkiye'nin Zihniyet Kardeşliği," *Ozgur Gundem* 2011.(accessed July 16, 2011).
[27] Wilgenburg, "Is Syria Cooperating Militarily with Turkey against the Pkk?".
[28] Eric Bruneau, "Syrian Unrest: The Kurds Remain Cautious," *Rojhelat* 2011.

consolidate its position in Kurdish region of Syria, and get support from the Syrian Kurds in the event of regime collapse in Syria without strong democratic transition, as was the case in northern Iraq in the wake of Gulf War of 1991.[29]

RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAN

Turkey and Iran enjoyed improved bilateral relations in security, trade, and energy areas. Most notably, both states have cooperated against the Kurdish separatism. In the post-Saddam era, they share a strategic vision-that is united Iraq, capable of averting a Kurdish state to emerge in the region. Currently, this joint initiative, however, has been undermined by both Turkey's closer diplomatic and economic ties to the KRG as a remedy to the Kurdish nationalism and Iran's obvious support for Iraqi Shiite domination in Iraqi politics.[30] The struggle between Turkey and Iran over the future of Syria further complicates bilateral relations. Tahran accuses Ankara of inciting the anti-government uprising in Syria for fear that it will be isolated in the Middle East in the event of regime change in Syria.[31]

It is worth mentioning here the background of the trends in the relationship between the PKK and Iran in order to understand the reasons underlying Iran's policy choices over time towards Turkey. Kardas and Ozcan analyze Iran's relationship with the PKK in five stages.[32] In the first stage (1980-1982), the ideological differences drove the bilateral relationship. Islamic Republic perceived the Marxist PKK as an organization

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[29] Aaron Stein, "Worry over Pkk, Kurds Shape Turkey's Syria Policy," *SETimes* 2011.

[30] Ziya Meral and Jonathan Paris, "Decoding Turkish Foreign Policy Hyperactivity," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2010): 81.

[31] For the Turkish perspective, see Nihat Ali Özcan, "Turkey-Syria-Iran Triangle Is Being Redrawn," *Hurriyet Daily News* 2011.(accessed July 12, 2011).

[32] Saban Kardas and Nihat Ali Ozcan, "Pjak, Iran and the United States: Kurdish Militants Designated Terrorists by the United States," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=34759&tx_ttnews[backPid]=26&cHash=8c916b712f (accessed July 14, 2011).

that strived to ignite Kurdish aspirations for an independent Kurdish state. In the second

stage (1982-1988), Iran's closer ties to Syria and Iran-Iraq war urged Iran to establish

good relations with the PKK to weaken two pro-Western countries (Turkey and Israel).

During these two stages, Iran's motivation in reaching out to Turkey was driven by

realpolitik.[33] Thus, Iran was never considered a reliable partner by Turkey. Turkey, in the

past, perceived Iran as a neighboring state that strived both to export its theocratic regime

and destabilize Turkey by providing the PKK with logistical support in the 1980s and

1990s.[34] Both attempted, and still compete, to gain greater influence and political

advantage over one another in the Middle East politics. Despite soured relations due to

Iranian assertive foreign policy and Turkey's west-oriented foreign policy, both managed

to coexist peacefully.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the growing Azeri nationalism in Iran

and Turkey's increasing influence over Caucasus and Central Asian countries provided

Iran with a reasonable excuse to cultivate its ties to the PKK in the third stage (1988-

1997). During this stage, the Kurdish nationalism did not pose a real threat, thanks to its

repressive policies toward the Iranian Kurds, despite the minor clashes between the

armed Kurdish nationalists and Iranian regime. The most influential armed Kurdish

organizations among the Iranian Kurds[35] were Komala Party and Kurdistan Democratic

Party (PDK), which were militarily defeated in 2000, and were not strong in comparison

to the PJDK, which was founded in 2004, to attract the Iranian Kurds as well as counter

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[33] N. Karacasulu and I.A. Karakir, "Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement," *Ege Academic Review* 11, no. 1 (2011).

[34] Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 286.

[35] According to the CIA World Factbook, Kurdish population makes up 7 percent of Iranian total population of nearly 78 million. The Kurds are concentrated around northeast part of Iran, with which Turkey and Iraq has borders.

the Iranian regime.[36] Thus, the Iranian regime, perceiving less threatened by the Kurdish

nationalism, was accused of providing the PKK with logistical support by Turkey, despite

the absence of strong evidence.

The next stage (1997-2003) marks the beginning of fragile partnership due to the

changing regional balance of power. Iran, allegedly, stopped providing active support of

the PKK due to the ambiguity of the PKK's future after the capture of Ocalan and

growing international reaction against terrorism after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The last stage begins with the US invasion of Iraq. The main confrontation

between Iran and the PKK has begun to take place in the wake of US invasion of the Iraq

in 2003. The PKK's ultimate goal of democratic confederalism has attracted many

Iranian Kurds. The bilateral relations have reached a confronting stage when the PKK

founded the PJAK in 2004.

The US invasion of Iraq has changed its strategic calculations in its foreign

policymaking, urging to work closer with Turkey against the negative impact of the

regional developments. The underlying reason has been the emergence of a Kurdish state

and Kurdish nationalism led by the PKK. Both Turkey and Iran share a strategic vision of

Iraq-that is a united Iraq. For Turkey, the emergence of a Kurdish state is considered to

further radicalize the Kurdish nationalism and destabilize Turkey. For Iran, a would-be

Kurdish state is considered pro-American and, therefore, would be avoided, as part of its

strategic calculations. Secondly, economically Kurdish state in the region is not its

national interest because of the possible destabilizing impact on its security.[37]

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[36] See Rozh Ahmad, "The Kurdish Struggle in Iran: A Lost Cause?," Kurd Net,
http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2011/3/irankurd718.htm.(accessed July 14, 2011).
[37] Karacasulu and Karakir, "Iran-Turkey Relations in the 2000s: Pragmatic Rapprochement," 115.

Iran was under a real threat deriving from the PKK's structural and political shift after the US invasion of Iraq. The PKK seeks overarching political goal of Kurdish autonomy, including the Kurdish parts of Iran. The most influential organization among the Kurdish nationalists of Iran is the PJAK, which has been designated a terrorist organization, controlled by the PKK's umbrella organization (KCK), by a number of states and international organizations, including the US[38], Nato, and EU. The PJAK was formed in 2004 with an aim to create a democratic confederacy in Iran[39] and, currently, has been seeking a greater autonomy[40], similar to the ultimate goal of the PKK. In an interview with LA Times in 2008, a former PJAK commander, Mamand Rozhe, argues that the formation of the PJAK by the PKK, on the one hand, was a response to growing cooperation between Iran and Turkey and, on the other hand, to bring Turkey and Iran closer in an effort to isolate Turkey in the international arena in its fight against the PKK.[41] Ever since that time, Iran was subject to occasional cross-border terrorist attacks from Qandil Mountain of northern Iraq that shelters the organization's military and political headquarters.[42] However, there has been cooperation between the terrorist organization and Iran against Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria which further complicates Turkey's closer ties to Iran.

Turkey's strong ties with Iran, however, increased significantly in the wake of the Iraqi war, particularly in the security area, based on the shared concern about Kurdish nationalism. Both states have made many security cooperation agreements, including the

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[38] "Treasury Designates Free Life Party of Kurdistan a Terrorist Organization ", ed. The U.S. Department of the Treasury (2009).

[39] The Assembly of the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), "About Us," http://www.pjak.org/eng/about.php (accessed July 14, 2011).

[40] "Declaration of Democratic Solution to the Kurdish Question in Iran," http://www.pjak.org/english.php?id=1103 (accessed July 14, 2011).

[41] Wilgenburg, "Kurdish Pkk Using Pjak to Isolate Turkey".

[42] Candar, "Dağdan Inis –Pkk Nasıl Silah Bırakır?: Kürt Sorunu'nun Siddetten Arındırılması," 38.

one which recognized the PKK a terrorist organization in 2004. Bilateral relations have

stepped up in the other fields, as well. The next section will examine the security and

economic cooperation between Iran and Turkey in detail.

ANALYSIS

This section will analyze the impact of the security and trade cooperation between

Turkey and its neighboring states, Iran and Syria, on the PKK's external support from

these states. I will explore the argument that Turkey's closer ties to these countries

decreased the PKK's external support, forcing it to change its ultimate goal. This will

involve looking at the number and types of diplomatic visits and agreements. The timing

of Syria and Iran's recognition of the PKK a terrorist organization in 1998 and 2004

respectively also illustrates the absence of external support from these states.

1998 ADANA PROTOCOL

Turkey-Syria Treaty signed in 1998 marks the beginning of Turkey's closer ties to

Syria. Prior to the protocol, both states signed only 11 agreements during the period of

twenty years after the foundation of the PKK in 1978 where the terrorist organization was

relatively strong in military terms. These agreements, however, were never ratified

because of the soured relations. With Turkey-Syria Treaty signed in 1998, Damascus

recognized the PKK a terrorist organization and pledged to meet the following

commitments:

> 1. Syria, on the basis of the principle of reciprocity, will not permit any activity
>
> which emanates from its territory aimed at jeopardizing the security and stability
>
> of Turkey. Syria will not allow the supply of weapons, logistic material, financial
>
> support to and propaganda activities of the PKK on its territory.

2. Syria has recognized that the PKK is a terrorist organization. Syria has, alongside other terrorist organizations, prohibited all activities of the PKK and its affiliated organizations on its territory.

3. Syria will not allow the PKK to establish camps and other facilities for training and shelter or to have commercial activities on its territory.

4. Syria will not allow PKK members to use its country for transit to third countries.

5. Syria will take all necessary measures to prevent the chieftain of the PKK terrorist organization from entering into Syrian territory and will instruct its authorities at border points to that effect.[43]

JOINT SECURITY COMMITTEE

Turkey's relations with Syria have stepped up gradually in the aftermath of the Adana Protocol signed on October 20, 1998. Both sides established a Joint Security Committee, holding regular meetings, represented by military officials of both countries involved.[44] The visit of the-then Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer to attend Hafiz al-Assad funeral ceremony in June 2000 signaled Turkey's departure from previous policies towards Syria. Following the visit, Syrian Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam paid a visit and signed a security cooperation agreement against the PKK, signaling the desire to deepen the security cooperation. However, Turkey's pressure over Syria to sign a declaration that emphasized recognition of "territorial integrity and

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[43] "Minutes of the Agreement Signed by Turkey and Syria in Adana (Unofficial Translation) - 20 October 1999 ", ed. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1998).

[44] Özlem Tür, "Turkish-Syrian Relations–Where Are We Going?," *UNISCI Discussion Papers* (2010): 4.

sovereignty as a prerequisite for the advancement of relations"[45], referring to the water issue and status of Hatay, undermined the new political activism between Syria and Turkey. This led the successive Syrian President Bassar al-Assad to delay his expected visit to Turkey until 2004.

THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The first visit to Turkey after 50 years, realized by Bashar al-Assad in 2004, marks the beginning of a new era between Syria and Turkey. During his stay, he emphasized closer ties in the fight against the PKK and common threat perception of a would-be Kurdish state. What made the visit an important element is the fact that water issue and the status of Hatay lost its priority at Syria's security agenda, which paved the way for increased security and trade cooperation agreements.[46]

The Prime Minister Erdogan visit to Syria, following Assad's visit, opened the ways for deepening trade relations. Both sides signed a free trade agreement. It came into force in 2007. Erdogan paid a second visit to Damascus to attend the Syrian-Turkish Business Council meeting after the free trade agreement came into force in 2007. The main reason behind the growing trade relations was the developments in the region. The crisis over Iraq changed the strategic calculations of both states, forcing them to establish closer ties based on perceived common threats and interests- growing Kurdish nationalism and a would-be Kurdish state in northern Iraq. International pressure led by the US over Syria further has pushed Damascus towards Turkey. The changes in Syria's strategic environment, such as 9/11 terrorist attacks and the US invasion of Iraq, forced

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[45] Meliha Altunisik and Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations," *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 2 (2006): 239.

[46] Mehmet Ali Birand, "Assad's Visit Presents a Great Opportunity for Syria, Turkey," *Hurriyet Daily News* 2004.(accessed July 16, 2011).

Damascus to engage in balancing relations that required an establishment of good relations with Ankara. For Turkey, on the other hand, deepening ties with Syria were necessary given, at least, growing Kurdish nationalism led by the PKK. Again, the mutual concern about a possible repercussion of an independent Kurdish state over their respective Kurdish population has driven their foreign policy approach towards each other.

SYRIAN-TURKISH HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC COOPERATION COUNCIL

The bilateral relations in recent years have gone beyond the Kurdish nationalism radicalized by the PKK. Turkey's closer security and trade cooperation has come to the unprecedented level where Turkey considered economic and political integration with Syria before the unrest in Syria.[47] Both sides founded Syrian-Turkish High Level Strategic Cooperation Council in 2009 to "expand and solidify their cooperation on a wide range of areas of mutual concern and interest".[48] The second meeting was held in Ankara in 2010 with the aim of "increasing the trade exchange volume, expanding the base of economic and investment cooperation, carrying out gas linking and electricity projects and developing the border crossings and the transport system with its different fields".[49]. During the meetings both parties agreed to expand the Free Trade Agreement and signed 48 agreements, including energy cooperation, water resources and most notably security cooperation against the PKK.[50] Both countries also removed the visa

[47] Saban Kardas, "Turkey: Redrawing the Middle East Map or Building Sandcastles?," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 1 (2010): 119.

[48] Turkish Foreign Ministry, "Joint Statement of the First Meeting of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Republic of Turkey, Damascus," ed. Turkish Embassy (Helsinki, Finland2009).

[49] SANA, "Joint Statement of Syrian-Turkish High Level Strategic Cooperation Council's 2nd Meeting " *Turkish Press* 2010.

[50] Emrullah Uslu, "Turkey Signs Strategic Cooperation Agreements with Syria and Iraq," The Jamestown Foundation, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35666

requirements as part of political and economic integration. Such a move disturbed the strategic calculations of the terrorist organization. In an interview made in Qandil Mountains, one of the members of the terrorist organization states that the main reason is "to discourage the Kurds to build a national movement and break their unity"[51] because of the military aspect of the agreements.

The strategic vision shared by both states has also been reflected in the trade sphere. It has led to the removal of the past issues from their political agenda. Even, Syria is no longer perceived as external enemy of Turkey, according to the "National Security Policy Document" that guides Turkey's domestic and foreign policies.[52] According to Syrian state news agency, Turkey has been Syria's biggest foreign investor.[53] The improved economic relations go back to the beginning of 2000. The foundation of Turkish-Syrian Business Council in 2000 resulted in an increase in Turkey's exports by 37 percent.[54] According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), bilateral trading volume has increased considerably. For instance, the trading volume was almost 2 billion dollars in 2009[55], resulting from the free trade agreement signed in 2004 and ratified in 2007 by both governments.[56] The following figure illustrates this relationship.

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[51] Eric Bruneau, "Pjak on Turkish/Iranian Cooperation against Transnational Kurdish Struggle," Rojhelat, http://www.rojhelat.info/english/perspectives/1261-pjak-on-turkishiranian-cooperation-against-transnational-kurdish-struggle (accessed July 16, 2011).

[52] "Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi Kabul Edildi ", *CNN Turk* 2010.

[53] Flanagan and Brannen, "Turkey's Shifting Dynamics: Implications for U.S.-Turkey Relations," 14.

[54] Eligür, "Are Former Enemies Becoming Allies? Turkey's Changing Relations with Syria, Iran, and Israel since the 2003 Iraqi War," 2.

[55] "4 Ülkenin Ekonomik Büyüklüğü 1 Trilyon Dolar," *Son Dakika* 2010.

[56] Meliha Benli Altunisik, "Turkeys Changing Middle East Policy," *UNISCI Discussion Papers* (2010): 152.

Figure 5: Turkish Trade with Syria and Iran, 2000-2010[57]

Year	Trade Volume with Syria in Dollars	Trade Volume with Iran in Dollars
2000	729.507	1.051.514
2001	744.617	1.200.335
2002	773.019	1.254.933
2003	824.104	2.394.469
2004	752.439	2.775.089
2005	823.807	4.382.645
2006	795.146	6.693.511
2007	1.174.270	8.056.583
2008	1.752.239	10.229.448
2009	1.442.653	5.430.848
2010	2.272.415	10.687.739

HIGH SECURITY COMMISSION

Turkey's recent rivalry with Iran dates back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Despite the ideological differences between secular Turkey and Islamic Iran, both

managed to coexist peacefully. Turkey's ignorance of the Middle East politics helped her

[57] Data from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-syria.en.mfa and http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-iran.en.mfa

stay neutral in the Iran-Iraq war. In comparison to previous years, export to both states increased seven times.[58]

Turkey's neutrality also pushed Iran to establish Turkey-Iran High Security Commission in 1988 "to coordinate efforts against, and exchange of information about, terrorism, and in particular, activities related to the terrorist group PKK".[59] However, the commission could not produce concrete results, due to Iran's desire to contain Turkey's political activism in the Middle East.

Turkey's relations with Iran has gradually transformed into a partnership with the arrival of AK Party government led by incumbent Prime Minister Erdogan, following the November 2002 general election. Turkey's policy shift toward Iran can be best explained by looking at the domestic and regional factors. In the domestic sphere, as mentioned earlier, zero-problem policy of the government toward its neighboring states as well as the declining influence of military on foreign policy making has played a crucial role in constructing good relationship with Iran. The government has perceived the role of Syrian and Iranian government an essential element in its fight against the PKK.[60]

The changes in the regional arena also pushed Iran to work closer with Turkey. Both states share a common interest in containing Kurdish nationalism in the region. In the past until the late 1990s, the Kurdish political groupings were not influential in political and cultural activities in both Iran and Kurdish region of Iran. The PKK's revolutionary activism in Turkey began to attract the Kurdish activists in Iran, leading to the formation of PJAK in 2004, following the PKK's ideological and structural shift.

[58] Omer Taspinar, *Turkey's Middle East Policies : Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 22.
[59] "Terrorism: National Terrorism Prevention Framework," ed. UNODC (2003).
60 Nasuhi Gungor, "Ahmedinejad's Visit to Turkey: Two Neighbors Oscillate between Threat and Friendship," SETA 2008.

Although the PJAK leadership denied being founded by the PKK in the beginning, the organization acknowledged the organic ties to the PKK in its subsequent official statements.[61] Both states again reinforced the security commission to cooperate actively against the PKK and PJAK. The neighboring states have held 12 High-Level Security Commission meetings so far.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON SECURITY COOPERATION

Turkey and Iran's growing concern about armed Kurdish nationalist movement with the political objective of Kurdish autonomy within their respective borders to accomplish Kurdish confederalism in the region has led both countries to work closer in the security field. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Tehran in 2004 was the most important step towards security cooperation in the fight against the PKK, leading to a Memorandum of Understanding on Security Cooperation, which designated the PKK a terrorist organization.[62] It is worth mentioning here that the agreement came two months after the PKK renounced five-year unilateral ceasefire in May 2004 and three months after the PJAK held its founding congress in April 2004.[63] The agreement was updated in April 2008, allowing an exchange of intelligence against the PKK and PJAK and cooperation in the security field.[64] Since then, both states have been sharing intelligence [and] conducting "coordinated, simultaneous operations on their respective borders".[65]

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61 Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Gareth R. V. Stansfield, "The Political, Cultural, and Military Re-Awakening of the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iran," The Middle East Journal 64, no. 1 (2010): 25.
62 Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovers the Middle East," 107.
63 Gareth Jenkins, "Turkish Generals Admit Military and Intelligence Coordination with Iran," The Jamestown Foundation 2008.(accessed July 15, 2011).
64 "Iran, Turkey Sign Memorandum to Deepen Cooperation against Terror," Today's Zaman 2008.

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NATURAL GAS AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Turkey, in the past, perceived Iran as a serious threat with a possible outcome of Islamic fundamentalism, especially in the 1980s. Turkey's suspicious of Iran was exacerbated by Turkey's accusation that Iranian regime covertly supported the PKK in the 1990s. In an absence of threat of Islamic revolution perceived by the Turkish government, the-then Turkish Prime Minister Erbakan signed an agreement with Tehran to purchase $23 billion worth of natural gas during his visit in 1996. As a result of the growing concern about the government's outreach to Islamic world, the Turkish military declared Iran as an external threat in 1997, which ultimately led to the resignation of Erbakan. The tension remained high, leading Iran to withdraw its ambassador to Turkey in the late 1999s, until a process of normalization began to take place because of Iran's changing attitudes towards the PKK after 2000.

Turkey's cooperation with Iran has also been reflected in the energy and economic cooperation. Iran has become the second biggest supplier of natural gas to Turkey after Russia. In addition to an energy agreement in 1996, which allowed Turkey to import $23 billion of natural gas, Ankara and Tehran signed two new agreements in 2007: one deals with the improvement of electricity infrastructure and the second one allows transferring of gas from Turkmenistan to Europe through Turkey. Ankara's deepened and diversified trade and energy partnership with Tehran appears to be an important element of tension with the US.[66]

Growing number of high-level visits have also played a constructive role in the bilateral relations. Turkish Prime Minister official visit in October 2009, accompanied by the largest delegation ever since the Iranian revolution of 1979, including the Ministers of

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[66] Gungor, "Ahmedinejad's Visit to Turkey: Two Neighbors Oscillate between Threat and Friendship."

Foreign Relations, Energy, and Economy and a great deal of representatives of the

Turkish Grand National Assembly, news agents, and business sectors, demonstrates

Turkey's willingness to deepen its cooperation with Iran. The visit, however, drew

international attention because it came at a time of heightened tension between Iran and

many states, especially the US, over its nuclear program. Although Ankara shares long-

term interest with the US about the preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, it

does not support the US-led sanctions against Iran. A nuclear-armed state in its

immediate environment is not in Turkey's interest because it spurs further proliferation of

nuclear weapons in the Middle East[67], which in turn forces Turkey to rely more on

missile defense. Regarding Iran's nuclear program, Erdogan's second visit to Tehran on

May 17, 2010 resulted in a joint declaration signed by the leaders of Iran, Brazil, and

Turkey on nuclear fuel exchange. Iranian President Ahmedinejad also made some visits

to Turkey to attend COMCEC Economic Summit in 2009 and the Conference on

Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Summit in 2010.[68]

CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to explore the impact of regional factors over the evolution of

the PKK with a particular focus on Turkey's relations with its neighboring states, Iran

and Syria. It hypothesized and explored that Turkey's closer ties and the recent strained

relations with Iran and Syria helped Turkey reduce and increase these states' support for

the PKK, leading the PKK to revise its long-term strategy.

In the past, the terrorist organization opted to establish good relations with

Turkey's neighboring countries to destabilize Turkey. In order to ensure the external

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[67] "Turkey's Political Relations with Iran ", ed. Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010).
[68] Ibid.

support, the organization helped them contain Kurdish nationalism in these states. Thus, the Kurdish nationalist movement did not pose a real threat, as was the case in Turkey and Iraq.

This chapter looked at the underlying reasons behind the rapprochement between Turkey and its neighboring states, Iran and Syria, with a specific focus on the Kurdish issue, in order to meet the chapter's objective. Two factors drove the relationship in the last decade until recently:

They share common interest in preventing a Kurdish state to emerge in the region. It is considered that an economically robust Kurdish state would instigate their respective Kurds to follow the suit, which constitutes a real threat to the national integrity. Moreover, Iran and Syria do not want to see a pro-American Kurdish state in their immediate environment because it would be used as a counterbalance against their advances in the region. Turkey's failure to assure substantial US support in containing de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq played a crucial role in forming a strategic alliance with Iran and Syria.

They also shared interest in containing Kurdish nationalist movement led by the PKK. The terrorist organization with its transnational "Kurdistan Democratic Project" created a single pan-Kurdish identity in the Middle East. Today, there is no other armed pro-Kurdish organization that can challenge the PKK. It has consolidated its power in the Middle East by founding terrorist organizations in Iran, Syria, and Iraq to realize democratic confederalism in the Middle East. Currently, PJAK in Iran, PYD in Syria, and PCDK in Iraq, not to mention the PKK in Turkey, seeks what the PKK coins "democratic

autonomy" within the borders of their respective states. This fact alone was sufficient reason for cooperation between the states involved.

The analysis of the role of international and regional factors also provided valuable insights into understanding the trends in Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran because it helped comprehend both countries' approach towards the PKK over time with regard to external support. We can examine this trend in three periods:

Turkey's policies toward Iran and Syria in the 1980s were shaped by Cold War politics. She perceived its neighboring states in the Middle East as destabilizing factor and did little to sustain the relationship. In return, both Syria and Iran, in an alliance, strived to destabilize pro-Western Turkey by backing the PKK. Ocalan along with the PKK militants found sanctuaries in Syrian-controlled Beka Valley in Lebanon between 1980 and 1998. After the 1979 Iranian revolution, Turkey felt threatened by Iran's efforts to export its Islamic revolution, while Syria was in undeclared war with Turkey due to the status of Hatay, Euphrates water-sharing, and, most notably, its support of the PKK. During the 1990s, the same problems drove the bilateral relationship with a big change. The Gulf War of 1991 forced Turkey to deal increasingly with the Middle East politics. The establishment of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq exacerbated the Kurdish problem in Turkey by providing safe haven for the PKK to carry out cross-border attacks into Turkey. Syria and Iran's active support actively backed the PKK until Syria was forced to expel Ocalan and close the military camps.

The second period starts with the US invasion of Iraq. The Iraqi Kurds aspiration for greater autonomy and the PKK's "democratic Kurdistan project" (also known as

democratic confederalism" forced Turkey, Iran, and Syria to work closer to both contain

a Kurdish state to emerge and Kurdish nationalism.

The Arab Spring of Syria marks the beginning of the last period. Since 2011,

strategic alliance among Turkey, Iran, and Syria and their stand against the PKK has

collapsed due to the changing political environment in the Middle East. Turkey's recent

regional resurgence in the region has been at risk because of its support of Syrian

opposition groupings against the Asad regime. Tensions escalated gradually after Syria

shot down a Turkish jet. Accordingly, the terrorist organization revises its long-term

project in the event protracted civil war and the collapse of Syria's territorial integrity.

Looking at the number and types of diplomatic visits and agreements as well as

the timing of Syria and Iran's recognition of the PKK a terrorist organization provides

valuable insight into the extent of PKK's external support from these countries. During

the first period, Turkey and Syria signed 11 agreements before the Adana agreement

signed in 1998, with which Syria declared the PKK a terrorist organization. The

relationship has gradually increased since then, resulting in many security and trade

arrangements, including the establishment of Turkey-Syria High-Level Strategic

Cooperation Council in 2009 and the second meeting in 2010 to expand the volume of

bilateral trade and Turkish-Syrian Business Council. Both sides also signed free trade

agreement in 2004 and removed the visa requirements in 2009 as part of political and

economic integration. They also signed 48 agreements, including energy cooperation,

water resources, and most notably security cooperation against the PKK and realized

many high-level visits.

During the first period, the most striking agreement signed by Iran and Turkey was a natural gas agreement in 1996. The relationship between Turkey and Iran was strained again until the relationship has undergone a considerable change in 2003. Turkey accused Tehran of interfering in its domestic affairs by instigating unrest in Turkey, leading both states to withdraw their ambassadors. In an effort to contain Kurdish nationalism, Iran and Turkey signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Security Cooperation in 2004 when Erdogan visited Tehran. Iran recognized the PKK a terrorist organization two months after the PKK lifted its five-year unilateral ceasefire and three months after the PJAK was founded. Since then, the security and trade cooperation has gradually stepped up, at least, based on shared concern over Kurdish separatism. The agreement was updated in 2008 in an effort to conduct coordinated operations against the PKK and PJAK.

Trade volume has also increased from $1.051.514 in 2000 to $ 10.687.739 in 2010.[69] Increasing number of high-level visits also demonstrates their willingness to cooperate in various areas, including security field.

All in all, mutual understanding of cooperation against Kurdish separatism and gradual rise of economic interdependence between Turkey and its neighboring states led the PKK to reinvent itself through a series of political and structural transformation. The PKK has transformed into a terrorist organization, pursuing ultimate goal of "democratic confederalism" in what it terms "all parts of Kurdistan". Currently, PKK in Turkey, PJAK in Iran, PYD in Syria, and PCDK in Iraq seek "democratic autonomy" in order to realize "democratic Kurdistan project" of Ocalan- that is democratic confederalism. In addition to the domestic, regional, and international factors, Turkey's closer ties to Iran

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[69] Ibid.

and Syria, as a regional factor, affected the PKK's strategic calculations and removed these countries' support for the PKK. At this point, however, the terrorist organization attempts to reconcile with the Turkish government to focus more on the political developments in Syria. If the peace process is materialized and the political situation in Syria is shaped according to the PKK's interest, it can be argued that the terrorist organization will pursue the goal of "democractic Turkey" and will attempt to create a safe haven in Syria.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The most important contribution of this dissertation is that it proves that external

factors (regional and international) had a greater impact than domestic factors on the

transformation of the PKK. The scholars and practitioners made great contribution to the

studies on the PKK's profile. Some studies have analyzed the terrorist activities of the

terrorist organization[1] and the Kurdish problem[2] and concentrated heavily on the impact

of organization's changing internal[3] and external dynamics[4] on its strategies and the

concept of war. Yet, this dissertation fills the gap in the literature by exploring the notion

that the terrorist organization projects new strategies (ultimate goal) according to the

regional and international developments. It is important to expand here on the importance

of external factors versus internal factors to understand the reasons behind the

transformation of the terrorist organization. First, there is no doubt that the terrorist

organization has a structure that is politically and militarily well organized that can

successfully analyze the political developments in the Middle East region and designate

its ultimate goal accordingly. For instance, the emergence of the PKK with the ultimate

goal of an independent Kurdish state based on Marxist-Leninist ideology in the Cold War

is significant. The terrorist organization, thus, could easily provide external support from

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[1] Mehmet Özcan, *Terörün Matruskasi Kck* (Istanbul; Ankara Strateji Enstitüsü: Hayat ;, 2012).

[2] Sedat Laciner and Ihsan Bal, "The Ideological and Historical Roots of the Kurdish Movements in Turkey: Ethnicity, Demography, and Politics," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, no. 3 (2004).

[3] Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden, and Nic Walker, "Fruitless Attempts? The Kurdish Initiative and Containment of the Kurdish Movement in Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 44 (2011). See also Samih Teymur and Cindy J. Smith, *The Pkk : A Decades-Old Brutal Marxist-Leninist Separatist Terrorist Organization* (Washington, DC: The Turkish Institute for Security and Democracy, 2008).

[4] Cagaptay, "Can the Pkk Renounce Violence? The Kurdish Terrorist Group's Rhetoric May Change, but Its Beliefs Do Not."

Russia and the regional forces under the influence of communist ideology.[5] In other words, Marxist-Leninist a Kurdish state would help Russia and the regional states pursue regional strategies and confront the US and Turkey's regional aspirations. Regarding the internal factors, it is also important to indicate that the socialist movements and revolutionary left in Turkey paved the way for the PKK to emerge. However, the realization of the revolution ended with the military coup of 1980. The left-wing organizations such as the PKK suffered a major blow. On the other hand, the terrorist organization's socialist ideology has never appealed to Kurds' own conservative and family-oriented way of life.

Thus, the organizational structure of the PKK that has not corresponded to the Turkey's internal dynamics has never brought about any significant gains. This indicates that the evolution of the terrorist organization according to the external factors is meaningful. For instance, the secessionist Kurdish nationalism (not based on Marxist ideology) that aimed to secede northern Iraq and Turkey's east in the 1990s helped the PKK accomplish more than what it wished. It can be argued that the change in its ultimate goal was shaped in the light of the changing regional dynamics, because the power vacuum in northern Iraq and the collapse of the Soviet Union forced the terrorist organization to embrace nationalist ideology. There was no way but the nationalist discourse to mobilize the Kurdish people. With this ultimate goal, the PKK could center more on Turkey by obtaining support of Syria, Iraq and Iran. In return, it prevented radical Kurdish formations in these states through secret agreements. In fact, the nationalist and secessionist strategy of the organization during the 1990s was also appropriate with Turkey's political conditions. During this period, Turkey's struggle with

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[5] Kirisci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey : An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict.*

the PKK to avoid the radicalization of Kurdish nationalism was through military means, which led to the counterproductive results.[6]

Therefore, looking at the internal dynamics of Turkey, it can be argued that pursuing a separatist strategy by the PKK seems to be justifiable due to the government's failure to avert perceived state policies toward the Kurdish problem as repressive policies by Kurdish nationalists.[7] However, from the zoom out perspective, the terrorist organization's secessionist ultimate goal corresponds more closely to the external circumstances. Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, in an interview with Ezgi Basaran, argues that "last thirteen years, the organization has developed three projects in line with the directives of Ocalan: Demoratic Republic, Democratic Confederalism, and Democratic Autonomy, respectively. The project of Democratic Republic proposes a democracy based on citizenship rights within the framework of reform that transforms the Turkish political system from nation-state to citizen-state. Democratic Autonomy corresponds to the right to define the cultural characteristics of the people within this new state system, while Democratic Confederalism means the bottom-up self-organization. According to the Ocalan's formula, Democratic Republic is the reform project within the state system, while the other two projects are beyond the state and include stateless politics".[8]

Although these projects seem to be a battle for survival against Turkey's internal dynamics, in fact, they are the efforts to adapt changing regional and international political sphere. It will be more accurate to portray the projects as efforts to overcome the

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[6] Ersel Aydinli and Nihat Ali Ozcan, "The Conflict Resolution and Counterterrorism Dilemma: Turkey Faces Its Kurdish Question," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 3 (2011).

[7] Tezcür, "When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey."

[8] Ezgi Basaran, "Öcalan Devletle Görüşürken Kürtlerden Ne Bekliyor? ," *Radikal Newspaper* 2013.

crisis following the September 11 attacks, 2003 Iraq War, Syria's Arab Spring, and

subsequent political developments in the region.

Another major contribution of this dissertation to the literature is to understand

the PKK's transformation through the lenses of terrorist organization's perspective. For

this purpose, Ocalan's prison writings, his defense texts, organization's official

documents, reports and final declaration of PKK congresses and conferences, statements

of PKK cadres, and the pro-PKK media outlets were analyzed. This data helped achieve

the objectives of this dissertation. It is noteworthy to note here that this study differs from

the previous studies in the sense that it finds the traces of the changing political

discourses of the terrorist organization from inner statements of the PKK, especially

Ocalan. In other studies, little attention was devoted to the PKK's organizational

perspective over the changing regional and international factors and how the leadership

evaluates these factors. The ultimate goal of the terrorist organization and its theoretical

and ideological considerations are determined by Ocalan and declared in the consecutive

PKK congresses. In the last decade, the PKK has engaged in a series of transformations

from secessionist towards Kurdish autonomy under the leadership of Ocalan. The idea of

Kurdish autonomy has been based on "three interwined projects":[9] democratic republic,

democratic confederalism, and democratic autonomy, which have been based on jailed

Ocalan's defense texts submitted to the Turkish courts, European Court of Human Rights

(ECHR), and a court in Greece. In his defense texts submitted to the Turkish courts,

Ocalan described the evolution of Kurdish problem over time and explained the

organization's past mistakes, rather than theoretical and ideological evolution of the

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[9] Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "Reassembling the Political: The Pkk and the Project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, no. 14 (2013).

PKK. The defense texts submitted to the ECHR, unlike the previous one, were the theoretical and ideological approaches to the idea of Kurdish autonomy. In his defense, Ocalan argues that the liberation movement should be based on revolutionary democracy, not on state-building and the movement moved forward in the wrong direction under the ideological and political constrains of the Cold War.[10] The defense texts submitted to the Greek Court and ECHR Grand Chamber address how Kurdish autonomy can be realized and which projects bring about Kurdish autonomy. These are, as indicated before, the projects of democratic republic, democratic confederalism, and democratic autonomy. It is important to note here the meaning of interwined projects. Ocalan refers the project of democratic confederalism as follows:

> The new model of the PKK to the national problems on the basis of Kurdish issue is democratic republic that is free from the nation-state model...Socialism can alternate itself by going beyond political nationalism of capitalism and nation-statism. This can be achieved through democratic republic... KCK, in the Kurdish question, means the practical expression and proposition as a model for a democratic nation not only for the Kurds, but also for ethnic and national communities...Peaceful and political solution to the Kurdish problem together with particularly Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and even Kurdish federal state can be realized by accepting the Kurds' right to self-determination (this is also valid for other peoples' right) and democratic autonomy as a result of this right. The shrinkage of nation-state's power and the expansion of democratic civil society is necessary action for the development of democratic nation. If Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria want to get rid of the Kurdish problem, they are required to take initial steps as what the EU did.[11]

As can be seen, in his defense texts, Ocalan points out overarching strategy that is appropriate for the regional conjuncture, not a separate state as an ultimate goal. As noted above, the projects, which Ocalan emphasizes in his defense texts, were accepted as official party line in the consecutive PKK congresses. For instance, in its congress, the

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[10] "Reassembling the Political: The Pkk and the Project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, no. 14 (2013): 5-6.
[11] Abdullah Ocalan, *Kürt Sorunu Ve Demokratik Ulus Çözümü* (2010).

terrorist organization declared Democratic Confederalism as follows: "Current events throughout the world, including the Middle East, and the situation in Kurdistan have led to the conclusion that to develop and establish democratic confederalism is an unavoidable historical duty".[12] In accordance with the ultimate goal determined by Ocalan, the terrorist organization establishes appropriate strategies in line with the external factors. For instance, The Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (KCK) Cemil Bayik, in an interview, stated organization's strategies as follows:

> The new term is not the old struggle any more. The legitimate defense of the guerrillas and the development of *serhildan* is to preserve, develop, and make the democratic autonomy livable. The process will be the development of the development will of the people, institutional development in political, social, cultural, and economic fields, and constitution of free and democratic life. This is where the fourth period differs from first, second, and third period. The difference between the strategy of both self-defense that will be developed and *serhildan* and those in the past will be seen in this period. This will serve the purpose of protection, development, and survival of democratic autonomy. *Serhildans* will be developed in a character that will regress the domination of nation-state over the society by expanding democratic will of the society. This is not to overthrow the state or establish a new ruling power. Rather, it is to create a system and democratic institution that allows self-management of society. This means the preservation of the existence of Kurdish people, and their future.[13]

The recent statements of the organization provide also valuable insight into the changing regional developments and organizational strategies and possible ultimate goal in the future. In an interview, the statement of the President of KCK's Executive Council Murat Karayilan is as follows:

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[12] "The Declaration of Democratic Confederalism".
[13] Rizgari Online, " Pkk'nýn 4. Stratejik Mücadele Dönemi,"
http://www.rizgari.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=30575

> The insurgency and war was possible to further some of the developments. The current conjuncture of the Middle East is available to advance the battle in Turkey. In the past, there was a strategic alliance among the regional states against us. The alliance was between Iran, Syria, Turkey, and sometimes Iraq. Now, there has been a conflict between these states. Taking advantages of these conditions and obtaining objective-subjective support is possible today... I think, the Turkish state and government had to change its policies due to the external and internal conditions.[14]

As seen above, the PKK's overarching strategies go beyond the borders of Turkey. The terrorist organization's inner statements reveal how it ends up with these projects and puts them into practice. This dissertation, unlike the other studies, explores the evolution of the PKK over time by revealing these relevant statements.

The ideological transformation of the PKK and its casual link with the regional and international political developments will be detailed in the following. The dissertation comprises of six chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. Each chapter explored one hypothesis and the hypotheses were identified according to the turning points since its foundation. The most prominent turning points in this process are 1991 Gulf War, the capture of Ocalan in 1998, 9/11 terrorist attacks, 2003 Iraq War, and the important political developments in the Middle East. The major changes in the PKK's ultimate goal coincide with these turning points.

The PKK has emerged as a result of the Kurdish issue. The Kurdish problem, however, has evolved in a manner that Nasuhi explains: "it emerged at the beginning of the last century; was ignored, suppressed, and deferred; grew in a manner that could not be controlled by the ill-advised and misguided actors for their own interests".[15] Accordingly, the PKK problem has grown to the extent that lacked the possibility to be overcome. Additionally, the fact that the leadership and many members of the PKK are

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[14] Hasan Cemal, "Murat Karayılan Ile Kandil'de 5,5 Saat," *T24* 2013.
[15] Nasuhi Gungor, "Kurtlerle Nereye Ve Nasil," *Star Gazetesi* 2012.

outside of the borders of Turkey; the Kurdish people live in four different countries in the Middle East; the organization can effectively mobilize the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe has given an international dimension.[16] The PKK problem has evolved into a dimension that is now different from cause-effect relationship with the Kurdish problem. For instance, Turkey's democratic reforms maintained for the last ten years have not eliminated the PKK's raison d'être. There has been a new casual link between the Kurdish problem and the PKK as the Prime Minister's chief advisor Yalcin Akdogan indicates: "the PKK has a goal in the form of "autonomy" and it is formulated to ensure political domination and vitality of its armed elements. It has huge industry and a structure that provides thousands of people with status. Therefore, the issue is beyond the steps taken towards the political resolution of the Kurdish problem".[17]

Chapter 2 explored the topic in depth and reached a similar conclusion: democratic reforms and the "Kurdish Opening", in other words, Turkey's internal dynamics were not effective in transforming the PKK. On the contrary, as seen in Figure 2, the pro-Kurdish political party protected or increased its vote share in some elections. Regarding the terrorist organization's ultimate goal, the vote share of its political party, with the goal of "democratic Turkey" declared after the capture of Ocalan in 1999, increased. Although the governing party's democratic reforms in the name of "harmonization packages" achieved to reduce the proportion of pro-Kurdish political party's votes, there was no impact in the next elections. Therefore, the next chapters analyzed and proved that the PKK's ultimate goal of democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy were rather designed according the changing conditions of the

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[16] Candar, "Dağdan Inis –Pkk Nasıl Silah Bırakır?: Kürt Sorunu'nun Siddetten Arındırılması," 89.

[17] Yasin Dogan, "Bölgesel Denklem Ve Pkk " *Yenisafak Gazetesi* 2013.

Middle East region.

The most important shift in the PKK's ultimate goal towards Kurdish autonomy away from a separate Kurdish state resulted from the reaction of international community against the September 11 terrorist attacks. The attacks changed the international conjuncture and led to the revision of security perceptions all over the world. Terrorist organizations that conduct armed struggle in rural areas, such as the PKK, need international support.[18] The PKK has become an international terrorist organization as a result of the support from Turkey's neighboring countries and Kurdish Diaspora. Therefore, the change in security perceptions of the international community can be perceived as the beginning of a process that will lead to significant transformation of terrorist organization in its ultimate goal, which was the case for the PKK. The reflections of these changing perceptions over the international organizations and states were discussed in chapter 3. The impact of counter-terrorism policies over the PKK was analyzed and the chapter 3 reached a conclusion as follows: increased world-wide anti-terrorism policies following the September 11 attacks influenced the PKK's profile and resulted in significant drop in the PKK's terrorist attacks in the first half of 2000s.

Despite dominated by Marxist approach in the management, the terrorist organization has achieved to stay alive, thanks to its rapid reaction to changing regional and international political developments via congresses and conferences held on a regular basis. Most of these activities that guided terrorist organization's strategies and ultimate goal were accomplished in northern Iraq due to the power vacuum in Iraq. The PKK, which became a tool of the regional actors against Turkey, managed to develop strategies

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[18] Ozgur Nikbay and Suleyman Hancerli, "Understanding and Responding to the Terrorism Phenomenon : A Multi-Dimensional Perspective" (Amsterdam; Oxford, 2007).

for minimizing losses in the conflict rather than frontline battle and grew into militarily more powerful in the last ten years. Therefore, preserving Iraq's territorial integrity, in other words, preventing the rise of a Kurdish state, and democratization of Iraq has become top priority for Turkey. In order to realize these foreign policy purposes, Turkey formed a strategic alliance with Iran and Syria against the PKK which afterwards collapsed as a result of the changing political developments in the region.[19] These changes were the exclusion of Turkey by the alliance of Shiite political forces in the Middle East after the Maliki regime came into the power, political crisis in Iraq over the oil-rich regions that harms Iraq's territorial integrity, withdrawal of American forces, and the collapse of the relationship between Turkey and Syria due to the Arab Spring. In accordance with the purpose of the dissertation, chapter 4 only studied the PKK's changing long-term strategies and reached a conclusion as follows: creation of an independent Kurdish state is the PKK's top priority.

Yet, it cannot realize its political goal because Barzani's gains in northern Iraq cast shadow over the PKK's comprehensive projects. Therefore, Ocalan developed "democratic confederalism" to project hegemony of the region. For the realization of the project, the PKK founded organizations in Iran, Iraq, and Syria as offshoots of the PKK in order for them to pursue the political ambitions of the terrorist organization. This project, as chapter 4 proved, transformed into the goal of democratic autonomy in 2010 in accordance with the political developments in the Middle East in general, changing structure of northern Iraq in particular.

This dissertation also analyzed US role in Turkey's war against the PKK. It is important to note that the US role in the Middle East with its military equipment is vital,

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[19] O. Taspinar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision and Syria," *Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2012).

to a greater extent, for Turkey's counterterrorism policies. The history shows that the more Turkey and the US strategically need each other, the more advantages will Turkey yield over the PKK. When we look at this strategic partnership in the last ten years, the bilateral relations have never been at the desired level. The relations developed when the US needed Turkey to pursue its political ends in the Middle East. Yet, the US established alternative partnerships, which was the case in the US-led Iraq War. With the invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish leadership in northern Iraq made tremendous advances by partnering with the US. This move changed the balance of power between Kurdish and regional forces in favor of Iraqi Kurds.[20]

As chapter 5 analyzes, Turkey remained deprived of the US support for many years by not participating in the invasion which yielded disadvantage for Turkey in solving the PKK problem. On the one hand, the Iraqi Kurds made great progress towards a Kurdish state, the PKK forced Turkey to search alternative strategic allies in order to deprive entirely the US support of Turkey on the other. During this period, Turkey developed partnership with Syria and Iran to contain the terrorist organization and offshoots of the PKK in Syria, Iran, and Iraq, which were founded to pursue political ambitions of the organization. This strategic partnership alienated the US from Turkey which consequently wreaked havoc on the Turkey's internal dynamics and blocked the development of strategic partnership with Iraqi Kurds. As a result, analyzing effectively the political developments in the Middle East, the PKK not only deteriorated Turkey's relations with the US, but also made political advances with the project of democratic confederalism and autonomy.

The role of Turkey's relations with its neighboring countries in the Middle East

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[20] Bulent Aliriza and Bulent Aras, "Us-Turkish Relations," (Center for Strategic Research, 2012).

plays an active role in the transformation of the PKK overtime. Especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the terrorist organization implemented an effective war strategy, thanks to the logistical support of Syria and Iran in exchange for the PKK's repression of the Kurdish movement in these countries. The main goal of the terrorist organization during this period was to establish a Kurdish state in Turkey. However, the strategic balance in the Middle East changed with the presence of the US after the invasion of Iraq. Although the PKK managed to deteriorate Turkey's strategically important partners, the US and Iraqi Kurds, it lost the support of Syria and Iran against Turkey. Three essential factors lie behind the Turkish-Syrian-Iranian alliance: economic interests, radicalized Kurdish nationalism led by the PKK that could cause damage to their territorial integrity, if not avoided, and the US threat for Iran and Syria. These three elements get Syria and Iran closer to Turkey. For Turkey, confronting the PKK terrorism necessitated good relations with these countries because Turkey felt alone against the PKK in the absence of the US support. During this period, the security and trade cooperation between them incredibly increased, which subsequently led Turkey to manage to contain the PKK, at least, politically. In order to compensate the loss of this support by Syria and Iran, the terrorist organization developed a comprehensive project (democratic confederalism) to mobilize Kurdish minorities in these countries. It managed to achieve its objective to a greater extent.

The withdrawal of the US forces and the Arab Spring that reached Syria in 2011 changed the strategic regional balance again. Now, Turkey is in a position that prevents Turkey from obtaining support of both the US and the other regional actors. The terrorist organization, on the other hand, has been successful in overseeing regional balance. Now,

it tries to make peace with Turkey due to the fact that the civil war in Syria offers a historic opportunity to the organization. If the PKK manages a particular reconciliation with Turkey, it will move its military power to Syria to pioneer political transition in the event that a possible formation will occur like in northern Iraq. This means that the PKK will be very strong politically and militarily for many years.

As a result, the PKK has a military and political structure that enables the organization to analyze the political developments in the Middle East. It could manage to prevent Turkey from succeeding to contain the terrorist organization by introducing comprehensive projects in accordance with the changing regional balances.

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