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Re-Considering State-Society Dynamics in Turkey's Kurdish Southeast

Nicole F. Watts

- 1 State-society relations in Turkey's Kurdish southeast have long been characterized as pitting a powerful and determined state against a reluctant, resistant, but largely overwhelmed population. Such an image of a binary, state *versus* society relationship is readily substantiated by a myriad historical and contemporary examples: multiple Kurdish rebellions against the central state, cultural and political dissent articulated from poetry to political parties, emergency rule law in Kurdish-majority provinces, extrajudicial killings condoned and organized by state security forces, a series of constitutional court decisions to close parties supported by at least a third of the region's electorate, street clashes between protestors and police in Diyarbakır – the list is long. It was in recognition of this (continuing) history and less-than-ideal relationship between the state and Kurds in the southeast that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan argued in mid-2009 that it was time to bring 'freedom and security, in their fullest sense, to our Eastern and Southeastern regions' and to work towards creating a new kind of Turkey in which no one felt 'crushed, excluded, or oppressed' and 'no one, absolutely no one, feels like a second-class citizen when dealing with the state and its institutions' (Erdoğan 2009). And it was with these points in mind that a 2008 Turkish think tank report on the southeast enjoined: 'The State should remember that, at the very least, it owes an apology to society in general, and to Kurdish people in particular' (TESEV 2008: 36).
- 2 This special issue offers a kind of 'Yes, but...' response to these characterizations. It is not our intent to minimize them or belie their authenticity but to take them as a contextual framework that, while pointing to persistent structures and dynamics that have indeed set the fundamental rules of the game, nonetheless only tell parts of the story, and do not capture all possible moves and countermoves taken by the many different players involved. Yes, state policies in the southeast and towards the

country's ethnic Kurds have been -- and still are -- driven in large part by a security imperative that has legitimated the security establishment's control over policy making and rationalized a wide array of coercive mechanisms. Top-down models of social engineering and the provider-logic of father state have and do still dominate conceptualizations of appropriate interventions in the southeast. Nonetheless, rather than take these experiences and narratives as the end point of analysis we here use them as our point of departure.

- 3 In this vein, this issue seeks to re-assess state-society relations in the southeast in two main ways. First, we reconsider standard conceptual assumptions, emphasizing in particular the need for nuanced approaches that do not take either the Turkish state or Kurdish society as unitary and treat the relationships between them as variable rather than stable. The 'southeast' has indeed been constructed through war, discourse, and imagination as a kind of zone of exceptionality, resistance, and contestation, but it is not immune to the same gritty dynamics of real-life state-society relations that exist almost everywhere: an incoherent and often-divided state that usually lacks the resources to execute policies effectively; social groups that co-opt local officials and penetrate state institutions in various ways; blurred boundaries between public and private that complicate the idea of a state space distinct from a social one; all sorts of non-hostile and in fact mutually beneficial relations that form on all sides; resistances that not only undermine state authority on many different levels but sometimes reproduce its power. Moreover, state-society relations in the southeast, just like in other places, are dynamic and changeable.
- 4 Second, then, more specifically, we reconsider state-society relations in the region since 1999 in the context of the significant political changes that have occurred in the last ten years. Rather than assuming a permanent 'state of exception' (Agamben 2005; also see Öktem 2006) or a static, binary relationship with fixed players, then, this issue emphasizes historical specificity and calls for an open recognition of the variability of authority, accommodation, and protest through time and across space, as well as a willingness to explore and interrogate a state-society boundary that has been simultaneously effective and over-stated.
- 5 In keeping with these themes, this essay is divided into four main parts. Part I examines some of the ways state and society in the southeast have typically been depicted in both popular and academic scholarship. Building on eclectic body of state-society relations scholarship, Part II offers some alternative fundamentals for a more nuanced way of studying state-society relations in the southeast. Part III offers some thoughts on why and how state-society relations in the southeast became 'exceptional' in the 1980s and 1990s, in the sense that they differed fundamentally from other parts of Turkey, and Part IV examines the degree to which we can evaluate the post-1999 period as constituting a new phase of state-society relations in the region.

I. Traditional depictions of state-society relations in the southeast

- 6 Both popular and scholarly narratives of state-society relations in the southeast have tended to depict the state as a well-coordinated entity that, beginning with the establishment of the republic in 1923, imposed itself with varying degrees of success on the Kurdish population of the southeast, applying force to suits its aims but ignoring

the well-being of ordinary people. A classic rendition of this perspective can be found in the following passage from Kurdish activist and author Musa Anter's famous memoir, *Hatıralarım*. Anter writes:

The villagers used to take wood to Mardin to sell. They transported it by donkey. They would sell the firewood for about 50-60 kuruş. If the donkey and the saddle were in good condition, they could sell it for 5-6 lira. To make the donkey go while riding it, Kurds say 'ço'. Poor Kurds who didn't know Turkish and who didn't know anything about this would say 'ço,' and the gendarmes would stop them and beat them up for speaking Kurdish. When the Kurd – speaking Kurdish -- tried to defend himself against this, they would prosecute him and charge him with a crime. Something like this happened to one of my mother's relatives. His donkey and firewood were confiscated and sold (to pay the fine). He received 5 Turkish lira for them, but his fine was 12 lira. So he was jailed for two days and beaten up. Three and a half months later when the tax collectors came to our village, they wanted him to pay the remaining seven lira outstanding on the fine and said that if he didn't pay, they would seize his house and belongings. Of course the gendarmes came along with the tax collectors. My uncle was able to pay the fine by selling a few of his sheep. This incident didn't just happen to my uncle, it was commonplace. If there was a documentary archive of crimes in Mardin you would find a great many of this sort of disgraceful document (Anter 1991: 29).

- 7 In Anter's narrative, relations between state and Kurdish society are emphatically negative and oppositional; binary (interactions occur directly between state authorities and Kurdish villagers, who each play clearly delineated roles); and hierarchical (authorities punish villagers, who seem almost helpless here to stop them). The state is depicted as almost omniscient; restrictions on the use of Kurdish are not just issued from a central office in Ankara but are applied at the local level by multiple sets of state representatives who, somewhat remarkably, possess sufficient capacity to track his uncle's failure to pay the full fine from one set of institutional representatives (gendarmes) to another (tax collectors).
- 8 Anter's portrayal – given dark substance by the author's murder at the hands of state-sponsored death squads at a Diyarbakır fair in 1992 -- has long been reiterated by activists, academics, journalists, and other commentators, as Güneş Murat Tezcur discusses extensively in his contribution to this issue. Relying, as he argues, on dichotomies between ethnic and civic nationalism and/or between state and society, many analysts and observers have reinforced the idea of the state as a unitary 'overlord' state (Robins 1993) with essentially unchanging (i.e. adversarial) policies towards Kurds, especially in the southeast. Kurds themselves tend to be portrayed as falling into two main groups: ordinary people, who are variously ignored and repressed, and 'traditional' Kurdish landed and tribal elites, who are portrayed as co-opted and, sometimes, thus less than fully Kurdish (McDowall 1997: 400). The 'natural' Kurdish response to Turkish rule is assumed to be resistance and protest, something seen as prevented only through heavy levels of state pressure -- thus we read repeatedly of 'Kurdish re-awakenings' and 'rebirth' at times of increased mobilization (see e.g. White 2000: 13-131).
- 9 Some points are worth noting here. First, it is important to emphasize that there has been a great deal of sensitive scholarship on Kurdish politics in Turkey that complicates the binary, state-versus-society model, even if indirectly (see e.g. work by Belge; Bozarlan; Somer; Yeğen, Kirişci and Winrow, Dorronsoro), indeed sometimes by the same scholars otherwise faulted for perpetuating a binary model (e.g. McDowall

1997, whose masterwork certainly teases out many of the ambiguities of state and society that might fall by the way in some of his generalizations). So the dominance of the state-versus-society paradigm is not because we entirely lack alternative information or because we don't know better. I elsewhere elaborate (Watts forthcoming-a) on the various empirical, theoretical, and methodological reasons for the durability of this paradigm, but it is worth briefly stating that probably the most important reason the model continues is because there is so much empirical evidence to support and perpetuate it. The military's identification of Kurdish 'separatism' -- very broadly defined -- as one of the most serious threats to the security of the state helped justify two military interventions (1971 and 1980) in civilian politics, excluded civilian officials from having any serious input into policymaking on the Kurdish issue, and contributed to the construction and perpetuation of a repressive juridical and security regime that criminalized many types of contention and identified particular 'identities of resistance' as internal enemies, thus stripping challengers of their rights as citizens and implicitly (if not explicitly) justifying their persecution (see e.g. Cizre 2003, 2008). Although there have been divergences, confrontations, and deviations, the security imperative and the security apparatus has been allowed to dominate policymaking. The closure of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) in December 2009, the detention of many pro-Kurdish mayors and activists, and ensuing clashes between protestors and police in cities such as Diyarbakır certainly conveys the impression of an exhaustive and repetitive cycle of conflict, of a relationship of near-permanent opposition.

- 10 Nonetheless, it is clear that the state-versus-society paradigm formulates a narrow reading of Kurdish-state relations in the southeast and disregards or sidesteps many other important questions and developments. Working with a binary model, for instance, it is hard to understand why so many Kurds in Turkey have not rebelled, how and why the nature of Turkish governance in the southeast has changed over time (for example, it differed substantially before the 1980 military coup and after), why and how Kurdish cultures and dissent survived and changed; and why so many Kurds vote for mainstream Turkish or Islamic parties. This last point and many others are developed by Tezcür in his contribution here.
- 11 Moreover, ironically, while the binary state-versus-society/oppressor-and-victim model has dominated our thinking, there is also an implicit and (less commonly) explicit appreciation for the fact that in some ways Turkish authorities clearly failed to achieve their goals. Without minimizing the enormous impact of the centralized Turkish state on culture and politics in the southeast, it is clear that, if as Joost Jongerden writes in this issue, state authorities aimed at a 'homogenous and ubiquitous representation throughout the territory as everywhere the same, from west to east and north to south,' then something went very wrong.

II. Reconceptualizing state-society relations in the southeast

- 12 Our re-assessment of state-society relations in the southeast, then, constitutes an effort to open doors onto some of these complicated and fascinating dynamics. For the contributors to this issue, it involves four inter-related tasks. First, building on a diverse body of work on state-society relations (e.g. Migdal 1988, 2001; Mitchell 1991;

Migdal et al 1994; Gupta 1995; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Das and Poole 2004) we seek to disaggregate the state rather than assuming it to be a unitary actor. This can be done by studying officials at different levels of governance – Migdal divides them, for instance (2001: 117-122), into those ‘in the trenches,’ the ‘dispersed field offices,’ ‘agency’s central offices,’ and ‘commanding heights’ -- and by looking at different institutions and institutional responses to particular policies or events, for example, between the judiciary (or parts of it) and the parliament. The value of such an approach is illustrated in this issue by Senem Aslan’s investigation of the judiciary’s varied responses to court cases concerning Kurdish names. Without an appreciation for the fact that, as she documents, the upper courts tended to support the right to give Kurdish names -- in contrast to lower courts that tended to reject them -- we cannot really explain how so many people in Turkey come to have (legal) Kurdish names or why naming has become such a contentious issue. Similarly, Marie Le Ray notes in her study of legal activism in Tunceli/Dersim how different representatives of the judiciary have given different decisions regarding, for instance, the right to hang Newroz posters. The explanatory power of the ‘disaggregated state’ is further illustrated in this issue in Jongerden’s contribution, in which he argues that the failure of the proposed Village Return and Rehabilitation Development Plan—intended to create new settlements to house villagers forced to leave their homes in the fighting of the 1980s and 1990s—can be attributed in good part to divergent institutional responses between the plan’s home institution, the Regional Development Administration of the Southeast Anatolia Project, and governors and military officials, who preferred to have villagers living in urban areas where they would be easier to supervise. Resistance by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to the plan sounded its death knell; as Jongerden writes, the project ‘hit the rocks’ even before the pilot plan was implemented.

- 13 By applying an anthropology (Migdal 1988, 2001; Das and Poole 2004) or ethnography (Hansen and Stepputat 2001) of the state that situates state actors within specific social and political contexts, we gain insight into the kinds of pressures officials face in their daily negotiations and interactions with different actors. This not only sheds light on policy implementation or lack thereof but pushes us to explore the potential for different types of relations between state and social actors, rather than assuming that a dominant national narrative is necessarily relevant. Officials trying to implement policy in villages in the southeast, for instance, face very different constraints and opportunities than those sitting in Ankara. They may be quite capable, as Gupta writes of a case in India (2001: 65-96), of carrying out one or more functions of stateness – for instance, inspection and surveillance -- but not implementing others, for instance, exacting discipline. Assuming states to be ‘messy until proven otherwise’ also encourages us to problematize coordinated and unitary action. Furthermore breaking the state down into constituent parts helps focus more precisely on studying the concrete ways in which the state makes itself appear in ‘everyday and localized forms,’ as Hansen and Stepputat put it (2001: 5), and how the state tries to make itself tangible.
- 14 Second, the articles in this issue seek to ‘unpack’ the notion of society by examining different social responses to governance and statecraft in the southeast. What is very clear from the collection of essays here is the diversity of responses from local inhabitants and the need for micro-level studies of their interactions with the state. The value of such an approach is illustrated in particular by Leila M. Harris’ study of villagers in Harran. The fact that many villagers welcomed the GAP project, she argues,

speaks to the ways that substantial state investment can encourage at least some local communities to recast themselves as 'subjects of nationalist, statist, and modernization efforts' rather than as rebels or victims of the system.

- 15 While many of Harris' interviewees were ethnic Arab, it is clear both from her work and from many of the other studies here that common ethnicity does not necessarily equate with political preferences or hold equal 'value' at all times and for all people. Such a perspective means challenging Turkish and Kurdish nationalist narratives that portray Kurds uniformly as a 'security threat' or, conversely, as a subjugated and oppressed population with a natural and universally held desire for independence. Developing a more nuanced view of social responses and differing interpretations of what Brubaker (2005) calls 'groupness' also involves setting aside the binary categories of oppressor/victim promoted by human rights activists and other movement organizations. In fact, as many of the articles in this issue illustrate, Kurdish responses to state policies have varied dramatically depending on the person, place, and time. Farmers Mufa and Amit both live in Kurdish villages in Urfa province's Harran plain, but one views the state's GAP project as beneficial, whereas the other sees it as something akin to 'suicide,' as Harris reports. Variations in Kurdish responses to the Turkish national project – and the socio-political implications of such variations -- are discussed extensively by Tezcür in his contribution here. As he writes, because of the fact that Kurdish identity is 'formed, articulated, and lived in many different ways,' this poses challenges for Kurdish nationalists trying to mobilize large sectors of the population. Problematizing the relationship between ethnicity and action also suggests a methodological shift, Tezcür argues, calling for an 'ethnic-boundary making approach' to studying state-Kurdish relations that draws attention to the strategies and processes that groups use to try and construct groups by defining boundaries between themselves and others.
- 16 Third, building on literature in state-society relations as well as in ethnic conflict and social movement theory, we seek to foreground the state-society dynamic. This involves several enterprises. One is to locate the state as an actor competing with other groups for the right to make rules and norms. The 'mélange model,' as Migdal once termed it (1988), establishes relatively clear identifications of state and societal players, then examines how and why they work in cooperation and conflict. When do state actors gain more influence than social authorities? How and why does this change? What sorts of accommodations do they reach with each other, and how does this happen? In particular, we are interested in how state-society relations in the southeast have changed since 1999, a period marked by a significant reduction in the PKK's military strength on the ground in the Kurdish regions of the country; by new international developments (Turkey's accession to the EU, and the U.S. and British invasion of Iraq); and the civilianization of governance in the southeast. Do we see shifts in power relations, expansions or restrictions of the political field, and new capacities on the part of state and society to maintain or challenge authority? If so, to what can we attribute this?
- 17 Another important aspect of the state-society dynamic is the recognition of the mutually transformative process between state and society. Put simply, social groups and state actors influence, shape, and constrain each other; the impact is not just top (state) down. This point is emphasized in a number of the articles in this issue. In his contribution, Jordi Tejel Gorgas argues that opposition between Turkish and Kurdish nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s compelled both Turkish and Kurdish elites to

continually adapt their discourse in contrast to their perceived enemy: as he writes, 'a kind of mimicry, in a double sense, was established between the 'dominant' (the Turkish state) and the 'oppressed' (the Kurdish dissent movement).' Moving to more recent decades, Senem Aslan's study of Kurdish naming cases shows how activists' efforts to push the envelope of Turkish legal reforms elicited particular sorts of responses on the part of local officials and judges, in turn shaping the judiciary's application of recent legal reforms concerning Kurdish names. Marie Le Ray's study of law activism in Tunceli/Dersim shows how activist-lawyers' strategies and efforts to engage one authority against another sometimes resulted in verdicts favorable to their clients. Marlies Casier's study highlights the pressure Turkish human rights organizations have put on Turkish authorities both nationally and in terms of their policies in the southeast, and the way authorities have tried to counter this through the appropriation of human rights discourse. Clémence Scalbert Yücel illustrates how notions of 'tradition' and 'culture' were transformed through interactions between local officials and Kurdish performers of dengbêjî (a style of Kurdish singing), with the process of institutionalization changing dengbêj song practices. And Joost Jongerden demonstrates how displaced villagers in the southeast returned to their original homes despite planning officials' designs to the contrary, contributing to the failure of the resettlement project. These cases all underscore James Scott's attention (1988) to the way that both ordinary people can empower or undermine state policies and practices, even in contexts in which the state appears to wield vastly more resources than challengers and citizens.

- 18 An additional facet of our examination of the state-society dynamic involves interrogating the distinctions we typically make between who and what constitutes state and society. As Mitchell wrote almost 20 years ago (1991), an alternative approach to the state has to begin with the uncertain boundary between state and society. For us this involves both questioning our standard classifications of who constitutes official, challenger, and ordinary citizen, as well as spaces and institutions themselves. At what point can state institutions be treated as sites of social challenge? When do private spaces such as the home become a public office? How do the conversations about such people and places change over time, imbuing them with different meanings? As a number of the articles in this issue note, such blurriness is particularly evident in the case of the Kurdish-party-controlled municipalities. It is also a factor complicating perceptions of the new human rights bodies established in the last five years by the AKP administration, as Marlies Casier documents in her article here. What becomes evident in these studies is the fact that such pro-Kurdish and human rights 'officials' sometimes defy categorization, alternately and/or simultaneously serving as both movement entrepreneurs and civil bureaucrats, and sometimes of more than one 'state-like' apparatus (i.e both as Turkish state officials and as officials of a kind of quasi-Kurdistan).

III. The southeast as a space of exception

- 19 The southeast discussed in this issue is not a fixed territory with clearly demarcated borders but a cultural and political construction. Socially produced spaces are the products of practices constituted through interactions and multiple narratives (see Harris, Jongerden and Tejel Gorgas in this issue). As Tejel Gorgas details, the

construction of the east and, later, southeast as a space of exception dates to the early years of the republic, and while understandings of what is meant by this have changed over time (see e.g. Yeğen 2004), the 'east' or eastern Anatolia has long been understood as something beyond geography, as, in Tejel Gorgas' words, 'the location of actual armed resistance and the representation of a region intrinsically conservative and counter-revolutionary.'

- 20 As used here, then, the southeast is distinct from the official Turkish administrative region of the same name, neglecting some provinces officially classified as southeast (Kilis, Gaziantep, Adiyaman) and including others technically part of Turkey's administrative Eastern region. We conceptualize them here as part of metaphorical Kurdish southeast even if geographically they lie northeast or west (in the case of Tunceli/Dersim) because these provinces have Kurdish populations that were directly affected by the war and emergency law rule. Geographic designations are, then, ambiguous and inconsistent, very much an artifice given concrete meaning through, among other things, governmentality and conceptions of population. However, our discussion of the southeast writ large should not obscure the fact that those 'within' the region tend to act in locally distinctive ways across space and time, and there is no necessary or usual coordination in action or rhetoric between cities or provinces within the southeast. Electoral variations between and within provinces and cities are one of the most obvious indications of this (see e.g. Dorronsoro and Watts 2009; Kirişçi 2007).

Creating exceptionality: processes of differentiation in the southeast

- 21 Use of the term southeast is thus not meant here simply as a synonym or stand-in for 'Kurdish issue,' which can be roughly defined as the question of how the Turkish political establishment resolves the tension between its unitary, Turkish-nationalist based political framework, on the one hand, and collective Kurdish mobilization demanding cultural and political rights including some form of self-determination, on the other. The Kurdish issue is thus a national question involving the status of Kurdish-state relations throughout the country, and while it incorporates questions of governance in the southeast, it extends beyond this.
- 22 Conversely, a discussion of state-society relations in the Kurdish southeast constitutes an assertion that there is something different or exceptional about state-society relations in this region, as distinct from Kurdish-state relations in other parts of the country. This difference is not sociologically innate or fixed; neither ethnicity nor social structure (i.e. tribalism) defines the southeast as a distinct sub-space. Rather, a number of factors and actors have constructed it as such. Key aspects of this differentiation process include the security regime in operation here almost continuously since 1979-1980 and the application of different sets of laws under martial and then extraordinary rule law (*Olağanüstü Hal*, or OHAL) that was in effect in most of the region until the late 1990s and in four provinces until 2002; the activities of the PKK and its efforts to monopolize the means of coercion and symbolic capital, creating dual and dueling authorities in parts of the southeast; the different level and nature of party activities in the Kurdish-majority provinces from the late 1970s onward; differing regional configurations (with Iraqi Kurdistan) and international linkages (i.e. to the Kurdish diaspora in Europe) than in other parts of Turkey; and much more restrictive

control over information as compared to other parts of the country due to both the PKK and the state.

Characteristics of exceptionality

- 23 Cumulatively, these distinctions helped produce a particular kind of state-society relationship in the southeast. First, security institutions dominated the state apparatus at the expense of the conventional court system and electoral institutions. Extraordinary law institutionalized a state-versus-society relationship, and the state to a large degree lost symbolic authority and the ability to legitimate its rule through non-physical means. The state's relationship with 'society' in the southeast was, then, exceptionally coercive. Although the parliament and other branches of the Turkish state exerted some limited checks on military power in other parts of Turkey, in the executive, regular parliamentary renewals of OHAL aligned security, executive and legislative branches of the state, with the clear preponderance of the first. This legal 'state of exceptionality' (Agamben 2005; also Das and Poole 2004) was something recognized by the European Court of Human Rights, for instance, when it stopped requiring domestic remedy for court cases originating with plaintiffs in the southeast and instead allowed them to directly petition the court.
- 24 Such dominance of the security state did not necessarily mean a uniform application of policies, as several articles in this issue make clear. For instance, Senem Aslan's article shows how even in the 1980s and 1990s, officials applied decisions regarding Kurdish name cases inconsistently, even after the Ministry of the Interior sent out national circulars stating that officials in registration offices should register names of parents' choice. Nevertheless, as she writes, state registrars continued to refuse to register Kurdish names, the gendarmerie searched for Kurdish names to inform legal authorities, and local public prosecutors occasionally filed suits against parents who gave their children Kurdish names.
- 25 Second, both because of the dominance of the security regime, and because the PKK sought to sever typical mediation channels between government and people (for instance, tribes) and monopolize others (pro-Kurdish political parties), the context of the 1980s and 1990s created an image of a dense state-society barrier and a high level of polarization between authorities and local people. Many Kurds in the southeast came to see the state as highly unrepresentative, impenetrable, and fundamentally different than themselves. This can be thought of as a 'de-naturalization' of the state (see e.g. Hansen and Stepputat 2001) as it took on the image and practice of above and beyond the reach of ordinary people, of being disassociated from society, and of being an imposed rather than 'natural' feature of daily life. If, as Hansen and Stepputat argue, one main way the state governs is by acquiring 'discursive presence and authority to authorize,' then the state in the southeast in this time largely lost this authority. And, indeed, the PKK's effort not to mediate between citizen and state but replace that state authority entirely contributed to a kind of blockage in representation and the formulation of social demands and interests within formal political institutions. It is in this highly polarized context, for instance, that the Turkish Human Rights Association was formed, as Casier writes in her contribution to this issue, noting that especially in the southeast, the emerging human rights organizations 'came to occupy an anti-

authoritarian space offering one of the few vehicles through which people could engage in criticism of the official state ideology and policies.'

- 26 Somewhat paradoxically, however, in *practice* boundaries between state and society were blurred through the security regime and militarization of society because state policies were not only implemented by officials in uniforms and judicial robes but by village guards, militias, and extrajudicial forces (Balta Paker 2009; also Dorransoro 2006). This era saw, in other words, state penetration of society in new ways. In particular, the existence of state-sponsored village guards composed of local Kurdish tribes and clans, or portions of them, meant that Kurdish 'society' was regimenting and patrolling 'itself.' This perpetuated the sense that villages and towns had been incorporated into a kind of detention camp in which, as Agamben writes (2005:39), people 'moved about in a zone of indistinction between the outside and the inside, the exception and the rule, the licit and the illicit' and 'every juridical protection disappeared.' The security forces' penetration of private and social spaces -- the home, the office, the cultural fair, for instance -- extended threat, coercion, and punishment into ordinary and private places. The case of Vedat Aydın, a founder of the Diyarbakır branch of the Human Rights Association and the pro-Kurdish HEP party's regional branch chairman in Diyarbakır, is perhaps one of the earliest and best known such examples. Aydın was taken from his family and his home late at night by policemen (or men dressed as police) and found shot dead a few days later on a highway outside Diyarbakır. No perpetrators were ever identified or prosecuted (Watts forthcoming-b). This transformation of the borders of the state through the mechanism of the privatization of enforcement is explored extensively by Marie Le Ray in her discussion of the law in Tunceli. As she writes, the village guards contributed to making the state 'less legible' because they moved across the 'divide between legal and extralegal forms of enforcement' and also used this 'acquired right to violence to settle local and community conflicts'.
- 27 A third characteristic of this period was a new societal dualism in which Kurdish society was simultaneously reproduced as more unified and homogenous (i.e. as people who are victimized, repressed, and distrusted), and, at the same time, reconfigured with new fault lines and split into new sorts of factions and groupings (i.e. village guards, PKK supporters, new urban migrants). The war, OHAL, and forced migration blurred some of the differences and distinctions that had permeated Kurdish society in the southeast in earlier decades, producing a more unitary and more broadly nationalized populace in the sense of the construction of a national subject. This was demonstrated, for instance, through electoral results that showed increasingly consistent support for pro-Kurdish and Islamic parties rather than secular Turkish parties. On the other hand, the 1980s and 1990s also created new social distinctions and differences, or more accurately, reconfigured old divisions and competitions along new lines, and with new types of resources (see especially Balta Paker 2009). The 1980s and 1990s also saw the development of new hierarchies of authority, as PKK-supported and aligned actors and those who benefited economically from the war and the drug trade moved into positions to challenge so-called traditional elites and those who had dominated the political scene prior to the 1980 coup.

IV. Post-exceptionality? State-society relations in the southeast after 1999

- 28 Nonetheless, the fact that the southeast has been a kind of space of exception does not mean this is a permanent status or that the state-society relationship is not under negotiation. Collectively, the articles in this issue suggest at least the possibility of 'post-exceptionality' in state-society relations in the southeast. Such post-exceptionality does not signal 'democratization,' stability, or a shift to something imagined as 'normalcy' (i.e. an alignment with relations in other parts of Turkey) but indicates an environment in which substantial reconfigurations in the nature of authority are taking place, creating a chaotic and tense environment. As Le Ray writes of Tunceli in her contribution to this issue, 'The unilateral cease-fire of the PKK in 1999 and the official lifting of the emergency rule in July 2002 did not suddenly turn war into peace and a state of emergency rule into a binding rule of law on the whole national territory.' Rather, post-exceptionality involves a de-stabilization of the Turkish nation-state project, struggles to create new spaces and alternatives to dominant discourse, and new efforts at the production and control of knowledge. It is thus a highly contested process involving many levels of challenge, accommodation, and counter-moves. Moreover, the imprint and influence of both the security state and the PKK are still very much present, with neither exercising hegemonic authority but both nonetheless shaping and circumscribing actors on the ground.
- 29 Collectively, the essays in this issue point to several main dynamics of the post-1999 period that suggest a new, 'post-exceptional' phase of state-society relations. First, political authority is redistributed among a wide number of state and non-state actors, with pro-Kurdish municipalities playing a particularly important role in blurring the boundary between state and society. Second, 'social' resistance to state policies has become increasingly institutionalized, largely taking place within the formal political arena and legal channels. Third, as in earlier eras, the state-society relationship is again mediated through third-party players, although such players have been reconfigured and reconstituted due to the PKK-state war. I briefly discuss each of these dynamics here in turn.

Hedging hegemony: the crowded field of political authority in the southeast

- 30 In the 1980s and 1990s the struggle for physical, juridical, and symbolic control over land and people in the southeast was roughly bi-polar, between central state institutions and the PKK. In contrast, in the post-1999 period, central state officials share authority and governance with multiple sets of actors. State-society relations are multi-faceted, negotiated on many levels, and involving many different players. These include parties, municipalities -- in the southeast almost exclusively controlled either by the Kurdish nationalist parties or the AKP -- non-governmental or civic committees and associations (some but not all affiliated with the PKK), and European and EU institutions and actors, all of whom may be involved in various ways in a range of governance projects ranging from local renovation projects and infrastructural improvements to population surveys, health reforms, cultural festivals, literacy programs, sociological research on local folkloric traditions, the production of films,

books, and audio recordings, and more. Put another way, although state authorities regained physical control over territory in the second half of the 1990s, they began to cede or lose control over symbolic, informational, and economic capital.

- 31 In this issue, articles by Scalbert Yücel, Tezcür, and Jongerden in particular highlight the important role played by pro-Kurdish dominated municipalities in encroaching on central government authority and offering new formulations of state-society relationships. Pro-Kurdish parties first won local offices in the southeast in 1999 (and again in 2004 and 2009), and their control over municipalities has blurred the boundary between state and movement, official and activist, and state and society. As Scalbert Yücel puts it, pro-Kurdish municipalities are 'situated in an inbetween space,' on the one hand seen as governmental offices staffed by state actors, and, on the other, as part of the broader Kurdish national movement. Zeynep Gambetti also eloquently discusses this bifurcation of authority in her work (Gambetti 2008), noting that in Diyarbakir, people have two oppositional sets of planners and agencies to resist or to enforce their demands.
- 32 Such inbetween-ness is evident in many of the activities carried out by pro-Kurdish mayors and municipalities. On the one hand, many of their endeavors look like routine languages of governance (Hansen and Stepputat 2001): the gathering and control of knowledge of the population, and the generation of resources ensuring the reproduction and well being of the population. At the same time, these seemingly mundane governance functions have been carried out through the prism of the Kurdish national movement; thus, for instance, municipal health booklets have been published in Kurdish under the rationale of better access to the population, and such activities as the naming of parks and streets take on very high symbolic value (Jongerden in this issue; also Watts 2006 and forthcoming-b).

The Institutionalization of resistance

- 33 Another dynamic evident in the post-1999 period is an increasing tendency towards the institutionalization of resistance in which challengers use formal institutions of state to challenge Turkish authorities. This is a reflection both of pro-Kurdish party control over municipalities, which gave activists new access to material and symbolic resources, and to changing perceptions of state institutions -- especially the legal system -- as being accessible in new ways and a potential instrument for promoting particular interests.
- 34 Access to the tools and resources of governmentality and government practices has facilitated a number of activities that bring contentious social practices and norms into formal realms of representative government, bridging the state-society relationship in new ways. As Scalbert Yücel discusses, for instance, *dengbêjî* -- long discouraged and then outright prohibited by Turkish officials -- is now an activity licensed by municipal officials in Diyarbakir. A 'deviant' social practice thus has become officialized. Similarly, local practices of using Kurdish place names even after Turkish authorities changed and Turkified them (see e.g. Öktem 2008) have been incorporated into a now-standard repertoire of institutionalized contentious action, as pro-Kurdish municipalities seek to reconstruct and Kurdify public space through the naming and renaming of parks and streets (Jongerden in this issue; Gambetti 2008, Watts 2006). As Jongerden writes in this issue, 'the (re)naming strategy of DTP mayors not only directly

counteracts past efforts to efface Kurdishness from rural and urban political geography, but also tries to reintroduce a Kurdish politico-cultural sensitivity into the public setting of everyday life.'

- 35 Particularly striking are new civilian efforts to use the court system, a topic examined by both Le Ray and Aslan in this issue. As Le Ray writes, inhabitants of Tunceli/Dersim may on one level consider the court system an instrument of repression and domination but nonetheless recognize that on a practical level it works in an incoherent way that can, ultimately, be exploited to their benefit. She notes that because people and organizations in Tunceli know the system is inconsistent, 'they often refuse to give up when a court dismisses a case or when a verdict goes against them.' People also apply to the courts not only to try and redress grievances but as a site of active mobilization. As Aslan argues in her contribution here, the post-2000 period saw Kurdish activists increasingly using Kurdish names and naming cases as a 'tool for the symbolic creation of Kurdish nationhood,' applying for approval for many names that had nationalist connotations and included many letters of the Kurdish Latin alphabet.
- 36 The institutionalization of resistance offers new sorts of resources for challenging central Turkish authorities, but it can also be seen as reinforcing the authority of the state and legitimating top-down policymaking and governance. While the Kurdish national movement aims to challenge Turkish governmentality and, more generally, the Turkish national basis of the Turkish state, it does not challenge the idea of authority as properly located within traditional state institutions. The DTP's emphasis on good governance, for instance, reflects modernist top-down efforts to transform Kurdish society both along the lines of the civilizing mission and into a new sort of Kurdish subject. The logic of opposition in the Kurdish southeast is thus, as in many other places, that of would-be statebuilders, something that affirms and reproduces the 'state spectacle' (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 37). Such reliance on the categories and master frames provided by the state is hardly new, as Tejel Gorgas' contribution to the issue reminds us: even in the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, Kurdish elites created categories that mirrored those of the state (also see Bozarslan 2003).
- 37 Similarly, the EU-espoused ethos of multi-culturalism, human rights, and democratization offers both incentives and master frames and, at the same time, imposed or self-imposed limits on challengers' demands. For instance, despite the landmark symbolic value of a Turkish-state-approved dengbêj project, Scalbert Yücel argues that the involvement of the state in the project through the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism has not substantially modified negotiations between the actors involved. As she writes, 'even though there is no longer a ban, auto-censorship is still in force and the dengbêjs are represented as "innocent relics" who portray the Kurdish part of the "Anatolian mosaic" promoted by many government officials in the 2000s.'

Restoration (and reinvention) of intermediaries

- 38 Third, the articles in this issue highlight the ways that the state-society relationship is again facilitated through intermediaries, in particular, political parties (DTP and AKP) and, to a lesser degree, non-governmental organizations, civic groups, new and traditional media, and the European Union and associated actors. Instead of a two-way relationship between state and social actors, then, state-society relations can be

thought of as a triadic exchange between state actors, Kurdish 'society,' and intermediary political institutions that serve both to integrate Kurds into the polity and as sites for resistance and dissent (for more on this see Watts forthcoming-a).

- 39 State-society relations in the southeast have typically involved 'third party' actors who transform the state-society dynamic from a two-way relationship to a more complicated triadic exchange of cooperation, cooptation, bargaining, and challenge (see e.g. Bozarslan 1996; Tejel Gorgas in this issue; also, especially, Belge 2008). However, many such intermediaries, particularly tribes, lost some or all of their influence during the fighting in the 1980s and 1990s, or saw this influence reformulated in the context of the PKK-state war. In the post-1999 period, pro-Kurdish political parties, the AKP, and a network of Kurdist associations and non-government organizations serve in most parts of the southeast as liaisons between state institutions and ordinary people. While only some of these actors are aligned with the PKK, all are forced to position themselves vis-à-vis the PKK and the state, and their work is conducted through the prism of the region's experiences of war. The complexities of such positioning are particularly striking in the case of human rights organizations, as Casier's article here makes clear, as well as parties, as Tezcür discusses. For instance, he argues, the PKK's decision to return to arms in 2004 becomes understandable only when one analyzes how the PKK's control over its Kurdish constituency was threatened by the rising appeal of the AKP in the wake of the EU-induced reform process. 'It was not a coincidence,' he writes, 'that the PKK remobilized its armed forces few months after the March 2004 local elections when the AKP won in many Kurdish provinces.'

Conclusion

- 40 Collectively, the articles in this issue draw attention to a number of important points that complicate typical conceptions of state-society relations in the southeast, and, more generally, contested borderlands and spaces of exception. First, we find that in some ways state-society relations in the southeast are and have been like such relations elsewhere; they are not so exceptional as to be beyond the scope of analysis. In the Kurdish southeast, like elsewhere, the state has often operated in an incoherent and inconsistent fashion; social reactions have been mixed; and both elites and ordinary people have influenced officials, policies, and practices in important ways. This was true even in the 1920s and 1930s, and in the late 1980s and 1990s under emergency law rule.
- 41 Second, at the same time, state-society relations in the southeast have indeed been strikingly different in particular ways, not because of anything innate to the region but because both authorities and challengers have made them such. Especially since 1980 state-society relations in the southeast were 'exceptional' in the sense that they were structured by different rules and practices than those in other parts of Turkey and were marked by the predominance of coercive methods of rule, lack of representation and accountability, and the security establishment's penetration of Kurdish society.
- 42 Third, we find that in the post-1999 period important changes in the nature of governance and authority can be seen in many parts of the southeast. Many different players now compete for and wield symbolic, informational, and material resources. Pro-Kurdish municipalities have played an especially important role here in offering new conceptualizations of representation and blurring the boundary between state and

society as well as official and challenger. Many of the articles here also point to an institutionalization of resistance that has accompanied legal reforms and changing perceptions of authority. This moment can be characterized as a phase of post-exceptionality in which public institutions and public space have become sites for the reinterpretation of the citizen-state relationship in the southeast. However, the nature of this reinterpretation means that the distinctiveness of the southeast in terms of its particularity is not necessarily being eroded but may even be being institutionalized.

- 43 It is in this context of contested post-exceptionality that the December 2009 closure of the pro-Kurdish DTP, detention of dozens of pro-Kurdish mayors and activists, and waves of street protest can be interpreted. For some activists and disheartened observers, these events -- made all the more striking given that they came after almost half a year of AKP-led discussion of a Kurdish reform package and 'democratic opening' -- seemed to indicate a return to the state of exception and a renewal of an unadulterated state-versus-society relationship between citizen and authorities in the southeast. They certainly reinforced the idea that whatever various politicians might say or even do, Turkish policies in the southeast would continue to be driven by traditional security imperatives enforced through mechanisms of physical and juridical coercion.
- 44 At the same time, the closure of yet another pro-Kurdish party and the subsequent detentions and protests cannot erase the very substantial transformations in the nature of authority and representation that have taken place on the ground in the southeast in first decade of the 21st century. What the events do highlight, however, is the uncertain and tension-fraught experience of 're-naturalizing' the state. It is possible to see the post-1999 phase of post-exceptionality as the start of a process in which state authority -- now shared, if uncomfortably, by central Turkish and local Kurdish actors -- began to seem again a 'natural' feature of people's mental and physical landscape. If so, the December 2009 clashes between activists and Turkish authorities highlight the challenges of this process, as well as the tenuousness of the public self-performance of the 'state in transformation' perpetuated by both the AKP officialdom and pro-Kurdish party leaders.

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