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April 14, 2015

Politics, the Press, and the PKK: Representations of the Kurdish Issue in Turkish Media

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the complex dynamic between politics, the media, and the Kurds in Turkey. The relationship between the government and the media has a history of suppression, politicization, and censorship; under the current administration, newspapers face financial intimidation, threats of arrest, and/or physical violence for reporting material out of line with the government agenda. This relationship is further complicated because of international politics, as the English language editions of Turkish newspapers must balance the concerns of domestic politics with a positive projection of Turkey imperative for its international image. The rights of the Kurdish population within the Turkish Republic, and the militancy of the PKK, a violent separatist group, are one of the most divisive political issues in the nation. This work examines how political biases, international considerations, and the press-government dynamic influence the portrayal of Kurds in the Turkish press.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. The Kurds, Turkey, and the PKK.....	12
2. Media and the Government in Turkey: History, Suppression, and Politics.....	43
3. Findings and Textual Analysis.....	63
Conclusion.....	97
Appendix A: List of Parties and Abbreviations.....	102
References.....	103
Citations of Analyzed Newspaper Articles.....	108

Introduction

As protesters swarmed Istanbul in May-June 2013, furious over government construction plans in Gezi Park and police brutality, CNN Türk broadcast a documentary about penguins.¹ The penguin came to symbolize the heavy-handed government response to the protests, but it also represents recent trends in the media as the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, or AKP), has sharply curbed the freedom of the press since the Gezi Park protests.² Many Turkish media companies and journalists have been choosing to self-censor to avoid financial intimidation, arrest, violence, or closure for reporting on controversial events or publicizing views the government prefers suppressed. However, media companies—newspapers in particular—were under fire before this most recent round of media intimidation for blending political commentary and fact in their reports.

Because of their complex relationship with their audience, both traditional print newspapers and their online incarnations offer a unique look into the psyche of a nation. Newspapers have the power to influence their audience's perceptions and access to information, but they must balance this power by printing news their audience wants to read. In Turkey, this dynamic is complicated further by national politics. As with the press anywhere in the world, newspapers in Turkey have recognizable political leanings and incorporate political biases into their texts; in a country with a history of imposing limitations on the freedom of the press, exhibiting clear political agendas can prove to be a smart business move or compromise the paper or journalist's careers and even personal safety.

Because of this distinctive position of newspapers within Turkey, studying them provides valuable insight into societal attitudes and political stances on a range of issues. The so-called

¹ Susan Corke, et. al, "Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Media, and Power in Turkey" (Washington, DC: Freedom House Special Report, 2014): 8.

² Ibid, 3.

“Kurdish issue” is one of the most divisive topics in Turkey. The 30-year guerrilla war between the government and the militant, communist Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanî (Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK) has dominated perceptions of Kurds in Turkey and provoked a host of tensions within Turkish society for the last three decades. The Kurdish issue has affected Turkey’s image abroad and the country’s credibility in international politics. In order to understand more clearly the perceptions of the PKK-government conflict in Turkey, as well as reactions of the media to the conflict within the parameters of the country’s current political situation, I will study coverage of the PKK in three major Turkish newspapers.

Literature Review

Studies of issues in Turkish media cover a range of topics and employ diverse methodologies. Many studies combine aspects of qualitative and quantitative analysis to create data sets, which allow for the evaluation of many papers and the discovery of broad, macro-level trends. Studies utilizing a version of a qualitative-quantitative methodology include examinations of the coverage of the Ergenekon Case in English-language dailies;³ democratic dialogues in secular and religious circles;⁴ the representation of women politicians;⁵ freedom of speech surrounding the trial of Orhan Pamuk;⁶ the coverage of Turkish foreign policy;⁷ “banal

³ İbrahim Efe and Murat Yesiltas, “Representations of the Ergenekon Case in Turkey, 2007-2011: *Today’s Zaman* and *Hürriyet Daily News*,” *Middle East Critique* 2 (2012): 187-201.

⁴ Murat Somer, “Media Values and Democratization: What Unites and What Divides Religious-Conservative and Pro-Secular Ethics?” *Turkish Studies* 11 (2010): 555-577.

⁵ Ceyda Öztosun, “Representation of Women Politicians in the Turkish Media” (M.A. Diss, Eastern Mediterranean University, 2013).

⁶ Murat İri, “The Orhan Pamuk Case: How Mainstream Turkish Media Framed His Freedom Of Speech” *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 18 (2007): 17-24.

⁷ Metin Gurcan, “Theory or Attitude? A Comparative Analysis of Turkish Newspaper Articles on Turkish Foreign Policy, June 2008–June 2011” *Turkish Studies* 14 (2013): 346-71. Also, C. Danielle Vierling, “Motives and Mind-plays of the Media: A Content Analysis of Turkish Newspaper Articles and Editorials on Events in the Caucasus and Central Asia” (PhD diss, American University, 1993).

nationalism” as reproduced in Turkish media;⁸ language used to describe the AKP;⁹ and “war journalism” surrounding the 2009 Gaza Flotilla incident.¹⁰ The scholars conducting qualitative-quantitative studies searched for variables within the texts that pointed to certain attitudes or political statements (the qualitative element) and coded them for study in a data-driven analysis (the quantitative component). All of these studies operated within one language and looked at very specific areas, such as word choice relating to the AKP.¹¹

Qualitatively based studies in this field covered an equally diverse range of issues in Turkish media, such as “ideological presentation” of honor killings;¹² representation of Kurds in the newspaper *Hürriyet*;¹³ self-censorship among journalists;¹⁴ foreign policy;¹⁵ the societal “other”, namely Islamists and Kurds;¹⁶ and the power of news production in managing conflict—particularly the Kurdish conflict—in Turkey.¹⁷ The majority of these studies employed discourse analysis, a technique used to interpret the relationship between language and its broader societal context, as described below. These studies, unlike the quantitative projects,

⁸ Aynur Kose and Mustafa Yilmaz, “Flagging Turkishness: the reproduction of banal nationalism in the Turkish press” *Nationalities Papers* 40 (2012): 909-925.

⁹ Salih Bayram, “Politics and the Turkish Press in the 2000s: From “AKP” to “AK Parti” *Global Media Journal TR Edition* 4 (2014): 40-60.

¹⁰ The Gaza Flotilla incident refers to the raid of a Turkish aid ship bound for Gaza by Israeli forces. Haluk Dag, “Peace journalism or war journalism? A comparative analysis of the coverage of Israeli and Turkish newspapers during the Gaza flotilla crisis” (M.A. Diss, Concordia University, 2013).

¹¹ Bayram, “‘AKP’ to ‘AK Parti,’” 2014.

¹² Ömer Özer and Neda Üçer Saraçer, “Context problem in news and ideological presentation of custom killings in newspapers: An example in *Hürriyet* and *Sabah* daily newspapers” *Journal Media and Communication Studies* 2 (2010): 91-97.

¹³ Dilara Sezgin and Melissa A. Wall, “Constructing the Kurds in the Turkish press: a case study of *Hürriyet* newspaper,” *Media, Culture, & Society* 27 (2005): 787-798.

¹⁴ Esra Arsan, “Killing Me Softly with His Words: Censorship and Self-Censorship from the Perspective of Turkish Journalists,” *Turkish Studies*, 14 (2013): 447-462.

¹⁵ Kazım Batmazoğlu, “Comparative Discourse Analysis of the Turkish Media on the Foreign Policy of Justice and Development Party in the Context of Arab Uprisings” *Turkish Journal of Politics* 5 (2014): 21-38.

¹⁶ Begüm Burak, “The Image of the “Undesired Citizen” in Turkey: A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of *Hürriyet* and *Zaman* Newspapers” *The Globalized World Post* 2012: 1-23. Also, Esra Dogru Arsan “Representations of the “Other” in Turkish News Media: Islamists and Kurds” (Reuters Foundation Journalism Fellowship Programme, Oxford University, 2002).

¹⁷ Ekmel Gecer, “Turkish media under scope: Peace journalism and reporting conflicts” (paper presented at the School of Communication, University of Seville, 3-5 April, 2013).

focused more on the relationship between the media, society, and politics, and provide the option to examine single points in time rather than broad timeframes.

While all of the studies related to the Turkish press outlined the association between the media and politics in the country, the way they approached this connection and their subject matter differed. Quantitative studies identified a trend and attempted to describe the “what” component of a trend—such as the frequency of word choice. They examined their subject matter in far less detail, instead looking for macro trends. The qualitative analyses examined the “why” behind reporting; that is, they observed why politics produced a certain bias or attitude within a newspaper based on specific details and situations. Because of the subtle and uneven nature of political biases in the Turkish press, I chose to use a qualitative discourse and content analysis to embark on a more detailed examination of individual texts rather than searching for potentially unreliable variables. By doing so, I hope to have arrived at the “why,” the reason for the pattern of reporting that I observed.

Six works, those by C. Danielle Vierling, Ömer Özer and Üçer Saraçer, Ekmel Gecer, Dilara Sezgin and Melissa A. Wall, and Esra Doğru Arsan, proved particularly helpful in shaping the course of my research. Vierling’s study of Turkish newspapers’ portrayals of Caucasus and Central Asian events provided insight into the biases and history of the Turkish newspapers used in my analysis.¹⁸ Arsan’s work on self-censorship among Turkish journalists influenced my consideration of methods for the study of bias in the oppressive political environment surrounding the press, and led me to choose methods that allowed deep reading of texts.¹⁹ Like

¹⁸ Vierling, “Motives and mind-plays.”

¹⁹ Arsan, “Killing me softly.”

me, Özer and Saraçer based their methods on those developed by media scholar Teun van Dijk, and their insights were helpful in choosing my own methodology.²⁰

Arsan's piece on "Representations of the 'other'"²¹ and Gecer's study on media coverage regarding Kurdish rights both discussed themes similar to those that I address in this study.²² However, Arsan looked at events regarding Kurds *and* Islamists in society and did not include the PKK, though his method of analyzing newspaper articles individually was quite similar to my own.²³ Gecer's analysis included coverage of the "Kurdish question" in the media using five events and five newspapers, though he preferred a quantitative method complemented by interviews with members of the press.²⁴ I used his work as a guide for terminology and major milestones in the Kurdish movement in the last two decades. Sezgin and Wall's work provided valuable insight into the portrayal of Kurds as a group within a major daily, *Hürriyet*.²⁵ One gap in all of these studies is the lack of comparison between Turkish and English language editions of Turkish newspapers.

I also turned to scholarship on minorities in the media globally, the most relevant studies of which I relate here. Two books, Eugenia Siapera's *Cultural Diversity and Global Media* and Stephen Harold Riggins' *Ethnic Minority Media* provided valuable insight into the theories and case studies in the field.²⁶ However, these collections showed the heavy emphasis in the field upon how minorities portray themselves and their struggles in their own media, rather than how the mainstream media portrays them. I also found many contemporary studies examine the interaction between minorities and the online domain, particularly social media. I focused on

²⁰ Özer and Saraçer, "Custom killings in newspapers."

²¹ Arsan, "Representations of the 'other.'"

²² Gecer, "Turkish media under scope," 42-52.

²³ Arsan, "Representations of the 'other.'"

²⁴ Gecer, "Turkish media under scope," 45-48.

²⁵ Sezgin and Wall, "Constructing the Kurds," 787.

²⁶ Eugenia Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media* (New York: Wiley, 2010). Stephen Harold Riggins' *Ethnic Minority Media* (New York: Sage, 1992).

three conflicts and its media coverage when creating the scope and methods of my study: the Apartheid media of South Africa;²⁷ Catalanian language policy in Spain;²⁸ and the Zapatistas of Mexico.²⁹ All of these countries have minority populations with a strained relationship with the media, though I found Adrienne Russell's article on the Chiapas especially helpful when narrowing my topic to PKK representations in the media. Russell looked at the way the mainstream Mexican media shaped the public's information about the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, as well as how the Zapatistas defined themselves online. Her examination of the discourse of the mainstream media had a similar in focus to my own methodology.

Academic Significance of the Study

This study's findings are relevant for three reasons, as they provide insight into the nature of the Turkish press's reporting for domestic and foreign audiences; the expression of political biases regarding the PKK and the treatment of the PKK and Turkish Kurds in the media; and the interaction between the press and the AKP. As the AKP's foreign policy shifts eastward and the government becomes ever more secretive about its inner workings, the picture of Turkey presented at home and abroad differ more and more. Understanding how and why the press offers each of these audiences a different narrative provides insight into Turkey's political reality that may not make its way into international press coverage.

Analysis of the portrayal of Kurds and the PKK offers valuable evidence of the shifting mindsets of various sectors of Turkish society in regards to the Kurds. As the cycle of war and

²⁷ Hilton Robert Kolbe, "The South African print media: from apartheid to transformation" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 2005).

²⁸ Maria Corominas Piulats, "Media Policy and Language Policy in Catalonia," in *Minority Language Media: Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies* ed. Mike Cormack and Niamh Hourigan (Tonawanda: Multilingual Matters, 2007): 168-187.

²⁹ Adrienne Russell, "Chiapas and the New News: Internet and Newspaper Coverage of a Broken Cease-Fire," *Journalism 2 2* (2001): 197-220.

peace continues, long-running goodwill or heightened animosity in the press, as an extension of civil society, could mark new developments in the conflict. Equally as important is the interaction between the press and the AKP. The AKP's media policies and the press's adaptations to these policies are currently in flux; given the ongoing nature of the conflict and the AKP's rule, this study could identify trends within Turkey that remain relevant for the next several years.

Research Question and Hypothesis

My goal is to understand how media reports on acts of violence related to the PKK reflect contemporary Turkish political conditions as well as each newspaper's known political biases and broader agenda. I base my definition of "political conditions" upon Norman Fairclough's characterization, "suggest[ed] by Held (1987): ...the interaction of the political system (meaning the system of official professional politics...), the social system, and the economy."³⁰ My overarching research questions are the following:

1. How do these newspaper reports provide insight into the newspapers' ideology, specifically in the context of the Kurdish conflict?
2. Do these newspapers alter their reports of the PKK-government conflict in response to political conditions affecting their audience, and if so, how?

My hypothesis is that Turkish language newspapers reveal their political leanings regarding the conflict not by explicitly declaring an opinion, but by citing sources selectively and by including quotes, facts, and speculation that favor either the AKP or the opposition stance towards the Kurds and the PKK. The Turkish-language dailies will contain more political rhetoric and be more candid about government actions than the English-language papers because

³⁰ Allan Bell and Peter Garret, *Approaches to Media Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998):146.

Turkish audiences subscribe to a certain ideology and want to read papers reflecting their beliefs. Conversely, when addressing international audiences, the English-language papers will mute their government criticism in order to project a more favorable image of Turkey abroad and promote Turkish national interests in the international arena.

Methodology

I begin this thesis by providing a broad historical background of the PKK, the AKP, and the evolution of the Turkish media. The PKK is Turkey's most formidable and well-known separatist group due to its more than 30-year insurgency. Conceptualizing the development of the conflict between the national government and the PKK is crucial to understanding the views of the PKK and the Kurds reflected in the Turkish press and society. The AKP, as a groundbreaking, non-Kemalist political party, also merits further description, so as to frame the international and domestic political situation in Turkey sufficiently and clarify the ways in which these factors play a significant role in both the PKK-government conflict and media-government relations in the country.

I will use textual analysis for this project, based on a combination of methodology from discourse and content analysis experts. This methodology is based on premises outlined by scholars Teun A. van Dijk, Anne O'Keefe, Peter Garrett and Allan Bell, Norman Fairclough, and Monika Bednarek. O'Keefe argues that "Because media discourse is manufactured, we need to consider how this has been done – both in a literal sense of what goes into its making and at an ideological level."³¹ I therefore determined that I needed to look not just at the content, but also at its presentation—what went into the making of the reports, including the nature and number of

³¹Anne O'Keefe, "Media and Discourse Analysis," in Gee and Handford (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, (London: Routledge, 2011): 441-454.

quotes, sourcing, the amount of speculation on the part of the newspaper, and the amount and type of background information—and its ideological perspective. van Dijk’s categories of discourse analysis formed the questions I used to inform my analysis; these categories are: lexical items (labels that carry a certain connotation, such as “terrorist”), propositions, implications, descriptions, and global coherence (how the work holds together).³²

I also incorporated elements of Monica Bednarek’s definitions of critical approach, which is a study “that work[s] to reveal power relations and ideology” and diachronic approach, “research on the history of newspaper discourse.”³³ This blend relates closely to elements of “framing,” a technique of analyzing texts best explained by Robert M. Entman.³⁴ Entman describes framing as the “process of selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality, and enhancing the salience of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality.”³⁵ The goal is to understand “the political influence of the news media and into the relationships among elites, media, and the public.”³⁶ While this understanding the aim of my study, I did not technically employ these methods; however, I thought it necessary to state the similarities between my method and Entman’s “framing.”

My research questions do not adhere to only discourse or only content analysis, so I devised a set of criteria based on a blend of van Dijk and Bednarek’s methods that examines use of rhetoric, sources, detail, ideology, and emotion. I posed the following questions to address these criteria while conducting the analysis:

1. How many articles did each newspaper write about the incident in question?

³² Bell and Garret, 31-38. Note: I condense the full list of terms to the ones relevant to my thesis. The others are covered by other definitions or do not appear in the related texts.

³³ Monica Bednarek, *Evaluation in Media Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2006): 11.

³⁴ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).

³⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 23.

2. How long was each article, and how much detail was included? Did an article provide a brief overview of the event, or layers of detail and responses to the event?
3. What sources, if any, did the article quote, and from what background does each source originate? How do these quotes contribute to the overall theme of an article?
4. What theme(s) does the article focus on throughout the story, and what view of the conflict does the theme support (i.e., supportive of one group or admonishing of another)?
5. What language or description impresses the theme upon the reader? How are various actors described, and in what context?

I chose to conduct a qualitative analysis to compare multiple aspects of the texts, such as quotations, sources, context, and detail—all variables that do not transfer easily into a standard form needed for quantitative analysis. Producing a quantitative data set also does not work well for bi-lingual and contextual analyses that require researcher discretion in choosing translations and relevant details. A dataset will not be able to reveal cultural and political trends behind a set of articles and their resulting use of language. Therefore, I will instead use an analysis based on subject matter, extent of coverage, sources, and overall attitude exhibited by the author.

I chose three newspapers and their English counterparts³⁷ to analyze: *Hürriyet* and *Hürriyet Daily News*, *Zaman* and *Today's Zaman*, and *Sabah* and *Daily Sabah*. Each newspaper has a distinct political leaning, to be detailed in Chapter Two, that I believe affects how each paper approaches the issue of the PKK. To limit complications, I chose to examine only articles published the day after the event in question occurred. I excluded editorials and columns written by guest authors in order to focus only on reports generated by the newspaper as a whole. I examined the Turkish and English editions of each paper to compare how each version differed

³⁷ I take English language editions of Turkish papers to represent “internationally oriented coverage” in Turkey.

in its content and rhetoric. The only exception is *Daily Sabah*, which did not open until 2014 and will appear only in the findings and analysis for October 14, 2014. I used events within the last five years to ensure their relevance to modern Turkish politics and the AKP.

The events used in this analysis involve major interactions between the PKK and the government, though the role of each group changed from event to event. Coverage from December 29, 2011 related to the bombing and killing of 34 Kurdish, civilian smugglers on the Turkey-Iraq border who were mistaken for PKK operatives. I chose this event to analyze each paper's defense or lack thereof of the government's mistake and their attitudes towards government efforts against the PKK—even without direct PKK involvement. March 21, 2013 reports covered PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan's call for a ceasefire and truce between the PKK and Turkish government during Nevruz celebrations in 2013. Coverage of this announcement will provide insight into how the media views the credibility of the PKK and their leadership and the role of the government in the peace process. The final event is the resumption of violence between the government and the PKK; more specifically, the bombing of PKK positions by Turkish forces on 13 October 2014. A PKK attack on the local gendarmerie station prompted the government's bombing, but coverage could fault either side. This event will illustrate the views of each paper towards both sides—government and PKK—of the conflict.

Chapter One

The Kurds, Turkey, and the PKK

What is Kurdistan, and who are the Kurds?

The term “Kurdistan” refers to an area in eastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq, northwestern Iran, and a small swath of northeastern Syria in which a sizable portion of the population is ethnically Kurdish.³⁸ The Kurdish population within this region is thought to be around 27 million, but no absolute census on the Kurds exists.³⁹ Though the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and Eastern Taurus, Inner Taurus, and Zagros Mountains divide the area, “Kurdistan” is still easily defined on a map. The larger issue for the Kurds is the political division of their homeland between Turkey, Iran, and Iraq; unity across borders is tenuous and difficult to achieve.

While Kurds share many legends and the *Şerefnâme*⁴⁰ offers a standard Kurdish history, Kurds speak different languages and have diverse religious and cultural practices. Kurds speak two major dialects: Kurmanji in the north and Surani in the south; less common dialects include Zaza in the northwest and Gurani in parts of the south.⁴¹ About seventy-five percent of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, though as many as fifteen percent are Shias.⁴² Other notable religious groups are the Christians, Jews, Yazidis, Sarlis, Qizilbash, and Ahli Haqq; the latter four are far less common and rarely found outside of the Middle East.

Today, many Kurds in rural areas maintain a version of the tribal society that has dominated the civilizations of Kurdistan for millennia. The tribe is the largest unit of Kurdish

³⁸Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006): 3.

³⁹David MacDowall, *A Modern History of The Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2004): 3.

⁴⁰The *Şerefnâme* is a tome outlining the lineage of Kurds, written by Sharaf al Din Bitlisi in 1597. (MacDowall, *Modern History*, 45).

⁴¹These languages are all related, and are more dialects than separate languages. Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992): 5.

⁴²MacDowall, *Modern History*, 11.

society, the sub-tribe a medium unit, and the family the smallest.⁴³ Most tribes were nomadic herders, and while some still are to this day, others settled into agricultural villages around the time of the rise of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴ The complicated development of Kurdish political movements, and the PKK in particular, across borders, geographic obstacles, and cultural differences is detailed below.

A Brief History of the Kurdish People

Pre-Ottoman Kurdish History

Little is known about Kurdish history prior to the Arab invasions of the seventh century, and the limited “accounts exist largely courtesy of the surrounding plains’ cultures.”⁴⁵ While the Kurds most likely developed as a cultural offshoot of Persianate tribes, no one is sure which group actually evolved into the Kurds as we know them today.⁴⁶ The name “Kurd” itself offers little insight, as it “has been used since very early times as a synonym for ‘nomad.’”⁴⁷ We do know Kurds were one of many peoples considered to be Iranian, and they fought alongside the Sassanian Empire.⁴⁸ From the mid-seventh century on, the Kurds were under the rule of Muslim dynasties, including the Umayyad and Abbasids. After this point, Kurdish history reads as a series of occupations and revolts;⁴⁹ the rule of the Umayyads and Abbasids gave way to the Seljuqs, Safavids, and Ottomans.

⁴³ İsmail Beşikçi, *International Colony Kurdistan* (Reading: Taderon Press, 2004): 129.

⁴⁴ Jwadiéh, *National Movement*, 28.

⁴⁵ Maria T. O’Shea, *Trapped Between the Map and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 64.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 68. Also see Entessar, *Ethnonationalism*, 3 and Jwadiéh, *National Movement*, 12. These scholars claim the Medes, the Khaldi, Kardoukhoi, or nameless tribes are the first documentable ancestors of the Kurds, though none offers definitive proof.

⁴⁷ Jwadiéh, *National Movement*, 12.

⁴⁸ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 21.

⁴⁹ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 21: Kurds revolted several times against both dynasties in the late 7th and mid-9th centuries against the respective empires.

While Kurds did not have their own militaries or governments, they were still a recognized ethnic group within the Middle East. They established a few small-scale dynasties, and these existed within the definable region of “Kurdistan.”⁵⁰ Their homeland was well known because of its position on a highway traversed by conquering armies moving east-to-west between Iran and Mesopotamia.⁵¹ The Kurds themselves “were famous for the provision of troops to the Islamic armies.”⁵² By the time the Ottomans gained control of Kurdistan, its inhabitants had already suffered centuries of occupation, warfare, and economic depression—trends that have continued into this century, affected the Kurdish movements of the last hundred years, and supplied the Kurds with a more cohesive identity separate from the many ethnic groups of the Middle East.

*Kurds in the Ottoman Empire*⁵³

Suleiman the Magnificent decisively conquered Safavid Kurdistan for the Ottoman Empire in 1534. “Kurdistan” appealed to the Ottomans because of the strategic buffer region it provided against the expansion of the rival Safavid Empire.⁵⁴ Kurds had to meet few requirements—not colluding with the Safavids or revolting—in order to keep the Ottoman regime from interfering in their internal affairs.⁵⁵ “Noble” Kurds were influential in their provincial governments and were allowed a degree of freedom that later worried Ottoman officials. Ironically, this semi-federal system of the Ottoman Empire provided the disorganized

⁵⁰ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 22: The three most recognized Kurdish dynasties are the Shaddadid, Marwanid, and Hasanwayhid.

⁵¹ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 23.

⁵² MacDowall, *Modern History*, 22.

⁵³ The concept of Kurds within the Ottoman Empire refers to Kurds in modern-day Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. According to MacDowell in “A Modern History of the Kurds,” Iran’s Kurds had no direct relevancy to the Kurdish movement until after the First World War. Therefore, I will not mention Kurds outside of the Ottoman Empire in this work.

⁵⁴ Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2004): 47.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

tribes of Kurdistan the structure they needed to form politically viable organizations, a process detailed in the rest of this section.⁵⁶

In the early nineteenth century, the so-called “Age of Nationalism” swept into the Ottoman Empire from Western Europe, stirring new aspirations for self-determination among many Kurds.⁵⁷ The Ottoman period of political and financial centralization from 1839-1876, known as the *tanzimat*, stopped the proliferation of Kurdish regional control, but also left the area in a state of lawlessness.⁵⁸ Kurdistan was overrun by tribal warfare, and figures—most notably the military leader Shaykh ‘Ubayd Allah—were able to form mildly successful uprisings against the Ottomans.⁵⁹

In 1890, Sultan Abdülhamid II established the Hamidiye, Kurdish cavalry units meant to stabilize the unruly peripheral Ottoman territories.⁶⁰ The Hamidiye’s existence contributed to the development of Kurdish nationalism in three ways. First, these militias concentrated power in the hands of new Kurds, rearranging the tribal structure into smaller, more cohesive organizations, and giving rise to new economically powerful tribal leaders. Secondly, they provided the Kurds definably Kurdish political representation to the Ottoman Court. Finally, the Hamidiye’s reputation for violence and land grabbing prompted Kurds in the intellectual elite and those who lost lands to the Hamidiye to begin a grassroots Kurdish movement of their own against the Hamidiye’s privilege.⁶¹

At the same time, Kurds played a large role in the formation of the Young Turk movement. The Young Turk movement was an anti-Ottoman group, and though it formed in a

⁵⁶ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁷ Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl. *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview* (London: Routledge, 1992): 14.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 75.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 88.

⁶⁰ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, (Stanford: Stanford University, 2011): Chapter 1.

⁶¹ Ibid.

nationalistic age, the Young Turk movement and its reformist organization, the İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress, İTC), declared no ethnically based agenda. Two of the four founding members of the İTC were Kurds.⁶² The Young Turks' 1908 rebellion and use of the Ottomans' 1876 constitution, as well as the İTC's movement away from a pan-Islamic identity, created new space and disunity in the public sphere for ethnonationalist movements within the empire.⁶³

After 1908, Kurds began fragmenting along class lines; those associated with the old regime, like the Hamidiye, opposed the Young Turk movement as a threat to their privilege within Ottoman society, while intellectuals called for an independent or autonomous Kurdistan.⁶⁴ Activists began "the systematic examination and promotion of Kurdish language, literature, history, and culture."⁶⁵ During this time, the first Kurdish organizations appeared, such as Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti, or Society for the Mutual Aid and Progress of Kurdistan.⁶⁶ As the Ottoman Empire disintegrated further, a few Hamidiye leaders and intellectuals even started working together under the banner of nationalism.⁶⁷ This era defined what it meant to be a Kurd and circulated the ideals of nationalist Kurdish movements that have been carried into the modern day. The differences in opinion between the Hamidiye, who advocated a political voice for the Kurds, and intellectuals, who preferred an autonomous region or an independent country, have plagued Kurdish movements into the present as well.

Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire

⁶² Kreyenbroek and Sperl, *A Contemporary Overview*, 102.

⁶³ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 91-93.

⁶⁴ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 95-7.

⁶⁵ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, 77.

⁶⁶ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, 78-81.

⁶⁷ Klein, *Margins*, 172-73.

After the First World War, Woodrow Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points" included the stipulation that "non-Turkish minorities of the Ottoman Empire should be assured of an absolute, unmolested opportunity for autonomous development."⁶⁸ However, the Kurds were unable to capitalize on this support for independent nations due to organizational and international factors. For one, Kurdistan was caught in the crosshairs of the war and suffered major losses at home and in Kurdish battalions of the Ottoman army.⁶⁹ At the same time, the British saw the immense economic potential of uniting the cities of southern Kurdistan in Iraq, and under the purview of the Sykes-Picot agreement, took over most of Kurdistan.⁷⁰ For the next five years, the British, Turks, and Kurds all vied for control of Kurdistan.

According to David MacDowall, "By the spring of 1919 there were three strands of political thinking among the Kurds: pro-Turkish, pro-Allies and finally, among the Dersim Kurds, a desire for complete independence."⁷¹ While the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 opened negotiations for an independent Kurdish state, the Turkish War of Independence dashed these hopes.⁷² During this war, many Kurds sided with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of Turkey and later oppressor of the Kurdish people. These Kurds believed, mistakenly, "that they were fighting for the Muslim Patrimony, in which they had a share."⁷³ Other militants encouraged Kurdish uprisings to weaken the Turks, but the British were willing to drop the idea of "Kurdistan" in order to ensure peace in Iraq and once again intervened in Kurdish affairs.⁷⁴ The Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 settled the territorial dispute between the Turks and the British over Kurdistan; a large portion of northern Kurdistan went to the newly created Turkish Republic

⁶⁸ Edgar O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Struggle: 1920-94* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996): 12.

⁶⁹ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 104-105.

⁷⁰ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 117-121.

⁷¹ Dersim Kurds refers to Kurds in the region of Eastern Turkey known as Dersim. MacDowall, *Modern History*, 125.

⁷² Jwadih, *National Movement*, 131-132.

⁷³ Kreyenbroek and Sperl, *The Kurds*, 18.

⁷⁴ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 138.

and the British took control of the south.⁷⁵ This treaty created the division—territorial and political—that exists today.

Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, 1920-Present

After the creation of new states with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, those relevant to this study being Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, Kurds were no longer able to operate within one political system, so Kurdish movements developed according to Kurdish needs within their new states. While no movement could transfer its specific legal aims and country-specific strategies across borders, Kurdish movements still interacted, cooperated, and protected one another. They allowed a broader network of Kurdish resistance to share ideas between countries. Understanding the Kurdish movements of Iraq, Iran, and Syria will provide a fuller context of the PKK's development in Turkey. Though Turkish Kurds were politically separated from their brethren in other countries, they did not operate in a vacuum without contact with other Kurds.

Iraq

After the British takeover of Iraq, Kurds quickly revolted against their new government at Zakho, 'Amadiya, Zibar, and Erbil in 1919 over military service, taxes, farming, and population movements.⁷⁶ Shakyk Mahmud Barzanji and his group, the *Hiwa*, led an insurgency against the British from May 1919 until 1924. Despite British victories, Shaykh Mahmud established a short-lived Kurdish Republic in 1923. After multiple rounds of clashes with British and Iraqi forces, Shaykh Mahmud's dream of an independent Kurdistan was definitively crushed, though not before inspiring separatist Kurds in Turkey and Iran. Mullah Mustafa Barzani led the next

⁷⁵ Ibid, 141-142.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 148-159.

charge for Kurdish independence, and by 1943, his force grew until Mullah Mustafa could “keep Iraqi forces at bay.”⁷⁷ The coup backfired and caused the dissolution of the Hiwa in 1944, though the dissolution led to the rise of other political and militant Kurdish groups.⁷⁸

One of these new groups was *Shurish* (Revolution), a Kurdish Communist organization that published an influential journal and went on to help found the Rizgari Kurd (Kurdish Liberation) Party in 1945.⁷⁹ All of these parties were short-lived, but they established an official agenda for Kurdish independence and garnered support among intellectuals. In the 1940s the Kurdish Democratic Party (Partîya Demokrata Kurdistanê, or KDP), a Kurdish political movement that had its origins in neighboring Iran, spread to Iraq. The party’s Iraqi incarnation adopted a policy of inclusion and a leftist ideology.⁸⁰ Communist groups were especially popular at this time because of food shortages in Kurdistan that starved many in the early 1940s. For parallel reasons, the PKK adopted similar communist ideals three decades later.

Tensions among the new Iraqi government, Mullah Mustafa, and Kurdish tribes complicated this political situation and eventually escalated into the first Kurdish war in 1961.⁸¹ The revolt was led by *aghas*—a group of military elites—against the Agrarian Reform Law, Mullah Mustafa’s supporters, the KDP, and the national government. After a second coup in 1962, and fearful of a merge between Iraq and Syria, Kurds became frightened. They shifted away from a separatist aim and instead demanded more autonomy and rights from the new Iraqi government, leading to a 1968 peace agreement that allowed for Kurdish autonomy. Its measures were comprehensive and allowed rights to the use of Kurdish language, amnesty for

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 294-95.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 293-294.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 297.

⁸¹ Ibid, 303.

Kurdish fighters, and free elections.⁸² This treaty was the first major step for peaceful government-Kurdish relations in any country with a large Kurdish population.

In the 1970s, Jalal Talabani, a foe of Mustafa Barzani in the KDP, was included in development talks with the government and eventually became the pre-imminent Kurdish leader in Iraq. Talabani helped form the political party, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).⁸³ Despite political progress, squabbles over autonomy and oil regions erupted into the 1974-75 war. Even with Iranian support, Iraqi Kurds lost, forcing nearly 100,000 Kurdish militants to retreat into Iran.⁸⁴ Talabani kept his new movement alive by turning to Syria and the Iranian KDP. In 1986, the PUK and Iranian Kurds formed an alliance against the Iraqi government.⁸⁵ The survival of Kurds and their independence movement would not have been possible without Kurdish communities and supporters outside the Iraqi borders. As the government did its best to quash the Kurdish movement, Kurds were able to step outside of Iraqi territory, regroup, and spread their ideas to other organizations, including those in Turkey. Kurdish groups in other countries have used this cross-border strategy as well.

After the Gulf War ended in 1991, Kurds enjoyed more autonomy. The PUK and KDP bridged their differences to create a coalition-style government in Iraqi Kurdistan.⁸⁶ The US invasion in 2003 further altered the Iraqi political landscape. The Kurds have their own regional government, and Talabani became President of Iraq from 2005-2014. On account of its ability to conduct a quasi-autonomous foreign policy, the Kurdish Regional Government has attracted large amounts of trade and boosted its development over the past several years. It also has an

⁸² Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010): 88-89.

⁸³ The name used differs by Kurdish dialect and is also different in Arabic, therefore I only report the English name. Ibid, 78.

⁸⁴ MacDowell, *Modern History*, page 339-341.

⁸⁵ Entessar, *Kurdish Politics*, 79.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 100.

independent army, the *peshmerga*, which is now the main military force standing up to the Islamic State's advances in Iraq. Over the past ten years, Iraqi Kurdistan has become a model state for the Kurds of other countries.

Iran

Kurds in Iran rebelled early and forcefully: Ismail Agha Simko successfully created an independent Kurdish state between 1921 and 1924. While his forces eventually surrendered to Reza Shah, the first monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty, Simko headed two more Kurdish rebellions before his death.⁸⁷ Scholar of Kurdish history Nader Entessar attributes Simko's ultimate failure to establish a lasting state in Iran to Simko's inability to "create a state in the modern sense of the word, with an administrative organization."⁸⁸ However, his initial success remained an inspiration for Kurdish resistance from the early days of the new region.

In response to these early uprisings, Reza Shah began a repressive campaign against minorities, similar to that which Atatürk had initiated in Turkey.⁸⁹ Reza Shah managed to keep the Kurds in a state of "resentful submission" until his abdication in 1941.⁹⁰ At that time, Iranian Kurds were less willing to revolt, having been "sedentarized" and integrated into the Iranian national economy.⁹¹ The next major moment for Iranian Kurds was the creation of the Mahabad Republic in 1946, shortly after the Allied Armies swarmed Iran in 1941.⁹² Farideh Koohi Kamali called this uprising a "passive revolution" because it took advantage of rare international

⁸⁷ Ibid, 17.

⁸⁸ Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, page. 13.

⁸⁹ MacDowell, *Modern History*, page 225.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Farideh Koohi Kamali, "The Kurdish Republic in Mahabad: Formation of a National Movement," in Mohammed M.A. Ahmed and Michael Gunter, *Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2007): 226.

⁹² Ibid.

conditions and external Soviet support.⁹³ Without these wartime conditions, the Kurds would not have been able to create, let alone sustain, an uprising.

This era also saw the rise of Kurdish nationalist groups, an element absent during the earlier rebellions in Iran. The Komala-i Jiyanaway Kurdistan (Society for the Revival of Kurdistan, or Komala JK) an underground Kurdish nationalist group, was the first of its kind in Iran, and was composed mostly of middle-class intellectuals.⁹⁴ In 1945, an “all-encompassing organization, which could continue its activities openly” formed.⁹⁵ This party was the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (Partî Dêmokiratî Kurdistanî Êran, or KDP-I), and its manifesto declared its intention to create an independent state within Persia for Kurds.⁹⁶ KDP-I formed the Mahabad Republic (January-December 1946) under the leadership of prominent judge Qazi Mohammed and later inspired the KDP of Iraq and Turkey.

Kurdish tribes supported the new Mahabad Republic, mainly as a less threatening alternative to the Iranian government. The Mahabad government managed to form its own army, create an education system in Kurdish, print a Kurdish newspaper, and keep a decently balanced treasury. The Republic met its end when the Soviets left, and with American support, Iranians moved troops into the Mahabad Republic.⁹⁷ In response, the Shah began using military force and political and financial rewards to keep Kurds in check. In 1956, the Javanioudi tribe of Kermanshah rebelled. This tribe’s isolation allowed them to resist the army and their revolt was the largest since Mahabad.

⁹³ Ibid, 226.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid, page 240.

⁹⁶ Ibid, pages 241-42.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

After the Shah put down the Javaniouidi revolt, however, no formidable Kurdish uprisings occurred in Iran until the rise of the Islamic Republic in 1978.⁹⁸ From the fall of the Mahabad Republic through the present, most Iranian Kurdish activity has been conducted through the KDP-I, though it moved its operations to Iraq in the late 1960s. The KDP-I strongly supported the Iranian Revolution, and its old stronghold of Mahabad became a hotbed for revolutionary activity. Today, the KDP-I advocates not for independence, but for rights within the Iranian state.⁹⁹

Syria

Unlike Iraqi and Iranian Kurds, Syrian Kurds were unable to mount a lasting political or social movement. The Kurdish population in Syria was concentrated in the north along the Turkish border and was notably smaller—only around 1 million—compared to Kurdish populations in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.¹⁰⁰ After the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1920, Syria became a French territory. The Kurds were split in their allegiance—some wanted Syrian independence, others supported the French. Partly because of the small size of the Kurdish population and its conflicting loyalties, the first Kurdish political movement developed relatively late in Syria. This group was Khoybun (Independence), a joint Turkish and Syrian Kurdish nationalist movement that targeted the Turkish state and received tacit French support.¹⁰¹ This group went on to aid the Kurdish resistance movements in Turkey of the late 1920s.

Kurds revolted in 1936 and 1937 against the centralized control of Syria, and the French responded by allowing Kurds more, not less, autonomy. The move strengthened tensions

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Kerim Yildiz and Tanyel B. Taysi, *The Kurds in Iran* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007): 1-3.

¹⁰⁰ Kerim Yildiz, *Kurds in Syria*, (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2005): 24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 28.

between Syrian Arabs and Kurds.¹⁰² Independence in 1946 saw few changes in daily life, though Arab nationalism rose in rural Syria.¹⁰³ The Kurds had trouble fitting into the new, nationalist secular mold of Syria. Adib al-Shishakli's coups in 1949, 1951, and 1953 curbed Kurdish rights and spread Arab nationalism further. Al-Shishakli banned the use of languages other than Arabic.¹⁰⁴ The creation of the United Arab Republic, which merged Syria and Egypt in 1958, further threatened Kurdish autonomy and culture. When Egyptian ruler Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser abolished political parties, he simultaneously launched campaigns against communists and Kurds, following a pattern much like that of regimes in the other states with Kurdish populations.¹⁰⁵ He forbade music, writing, and symbols associated with Kurdish culture. Recently formed pro-Kurdish parties, like the Kurdish Democratic Party, were declared illegal and members imprisoned. When the United Arab Republic disbanded in 1961, the anti-Kurdish measures continued.¹⁰⁶

In August 1962, the Syrian government stripped over 120,000 Kurds of Syrian citizenship and in 1973 forced Kurdish families on the northern borders to resettle in the interior of the country.¹⁰⁷ Notably, much of this anti-Kurdish legislation passed in reaction to Kurdish uprisings in Iran and Iraq. The Syrian government rather visibly aided the Iraqi regime in its fight against the Kurds.¹⁰⁸ Syrian Kurds faced far more oppressive measures than their Iraqi, Iranian, and Turkish counterparts and were unable to mount any meaningful resistance except when they worked with organizations across borders, as in the case of Khoybun.

¹⁰² Ibid, 30.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 31-32.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 34-36.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 38.

Kurds in Turkey: 1923-2001

Kemalism and the Kurdish Culture

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first President of Turkey, swept into office and immediately installed an aggressive new ideology now known as Kemalism. In an effort to unify a new state out of the shreds of an empire, Atatürk stressed Turkish national culture at the expense of cultural traditions, especially those of religious and ethnic minority communities. The constitution declared, “The People of Turkey, regardless of religion and race, are Turks as regards citizenship.”¹⁰⁹ In the 1930s, Atatürk convened multiple congresses to define Turkish history, language, and race.¹¹⁰ The focus on a common Turkish history and “homeland” pushed the religion of Islam out of the public sphere in favor of the new “religion” of nationalism. The glue of a common Islamic identity that bound together Turks, Kurds, and smaller ethnic minorities throughout Ottoman times suddenly dissolved. Atatürk cultivated an ideal of “acculturation,” or the gradual blending of culture into one, new Turkish identity.¹¹¹ Early on, Atatürk made it clear that Kurdish identity had no place in his new state.

According to Entessar, “No country has been as preoccupied with the eradication of Kurdish national identity as Turkey in the twentieth century.”¹¹² Kemalism involved enacting repressive laws that in effect outlawed any culture deemed “un-Turkish,” going as far as to call Kurds “Mountain Turks.”¹¹³ These laws prohibited the use of Kurdish language, names, and celebration of cultural events until the beginning of this century. This included a ban on broadcasting on television and radio, publishing in print, as well as any form of education in

¹⁰⁹ Soner Cagaptay, “Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2004): 87.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Metin Heper, *The State and the Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007): 6.

¹¹² Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, 81.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Kurdish. Kurdish names were banned, as was the use of Kurdish in public and political campaigns.¹¹⁴

Throughout the last ninety years, the courts have upheld these laws to varying extents. Military courts strongly defended the notion of the Turkishness of the Kurds, while civilian courts vacillated between recognition and denial of Kurdish identity—the Kurdish vs. “Mountain Turk” debate.¹¹⁵ Until 1991, the bulk of anti-Kurdish cases in the Turkish Constitutional Court focused upon the constitutional clause against violating “national oneness and wholeness” and targeted Kurds that created groups or pro-Kurdish propaganda.¹¹⁶ Kurdish legal activists did start making headway in the latter part of the decade to allow the use of Kurdish names and received international support for the opening of a Kurdish television station; though not until the rise of the AKP did the Kurds begin seeing significant legal reforms.¹¹⁷

Economic Development in Kurdistan

Just as Kurds faced cultural and political repression in Turkey, Turkish economic policy served as a vehicle of oppression as well. While the lack of development in Kurdistan was not due to policies directly intended to curb growth, Turkish modernization plans and land distribution acted as a vehicle to keep Kurdistan economically depressed. The poverty of Kurdistan affected how the Kurdish movements in Turkey developed; it is thus no accident that the PKK made communism part of its manifesto.

Land divided by the Land Code of 1858 kept Kurdish territories in the Southeast “concentrated in the hands of a few local notables...[lacking interest] in increasing productivity

¹¹⁴ Derya Bayir, “Representation of the Kurds by the Turkish Judiciary,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 35 (2013): 116-142.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

in agriculture.”¹¹⁸ These nobles had little to no interest in enhancing agricultural production, nor were the Kurds helped by the Republic’s early development plans due to their lack of infrastructure such as roads and east-west railways.¹¹⁹ The five-year development plans of the early Republic were not discriminatory against Kurdish areas per se—it was Kurdish and Turkish landowners in the region itself who blocked reform and development. The lack of infrastructure within Turkey made transporting goods from the east to the west of the country difficult and hindered cross-national trade.¹²⁰ In addition to these considerations, Kurdistan was recovering from years of war, an undesirable starting point for economic development.

The economic plans of the 1960s and subsequent decades focused on industrialization, which severely impaired the agriculturally based southeast. Unable to shift from functioning as an agricultural region to operating as an industrial hub quickly, the southeast could not attract investment when competing against the rapidly urbanized areas in the rest of the country.¹²¹ This left most of the population impoverished and without the economic support of the government. The government took steps to alleviate the situation early on with varying success; during his long tenure in finance and economy cabinet positions, as President, and as Prime Minister that spanned from 1923 until 1960, Celal Bayar advocated for aid and industry-specific goals in southeast Turkey.¹²² He supported programs to develop industries in the southeast based on natural resources and agricultural production; he also advocated for greater educational opportunities.¹²³ However, later leaders did not adopt Bayar’s zeal for reforms and aid.

¹¹⁸ Heper, *Question of Assimilation*.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 6.

¹²¹ Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question: Critical Turning Points and Missed Opportunities* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998): 65-67.

¹²² Heper, *Question of Assimilation*, 137.

¹²³ Ibid, 137-37

The legal economic activities of agricultural production and industrial work were unable to sustain many Kurds, especially the Kurds in non-arable mountainous areas. Kurds turned to illicit activity in order to maintain livelihoods, the main activity being smuggling. Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey had participated in trading among themselves in the time of the Ottoman Empire, though with the creation of new borders, this “peripheral” economic activity became “smuggling.”¹²⁴

By participating in trade outside of established Turkish channels, Kurdish smugglers created their own, distinctly Kurdish economy. The Turkish state does its best to limit smuggling activities for two reasons: smugglers do not pay taxes, and a sizable (though unknown) portion of smuggling income goes to organizations like the PKK.¹²⁵ The PKK and smugglers operate in the same realm; that is to say, they utilize the same international network of Kurds in order to coordinate the movement of goods, weapons, supplies, and people between borders. Because of this overlap, distinguishing between smuggling and PKK activity is difficult for the Turkish government, and non-PKK Kurds have been mistaken for and punished as PKK operatives in the past.¹²⁶ One such incident, the case of the Şırnak-Uludere bombing, is the focus of my analysis in this study.

Kurdish Organizations, 1923-1975

In response to the Turkish government’s cultural and socioeconomic oppression of Kurdistan, Kurds strove to organize a voice of their own—a voice the Turks would listen to. Turkish Kurds succeeded in creating multiple political and militant groups before the rise of the

¹²⁴ Mesut Yegen, “The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity,” in Sylvia Kedourie, *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2014): 222-223.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ See Chapter Three.

PKK, though the ideological, religious, and socioeconomic divide among Kurds made creating a single, unified movement difficult. Finding a common cause was impossible in and of itself, as Kurds were split between wanting independence, autonomy, or simply recognition within the existing Turkish system, much as they had been during the end of the Ottoman era.¹²⁷ Kurds fighting for independence picked up arms for their cause, as seen below, but those advocating for autonomy or rights more often turned to the political arena, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Early Rebellions and Backlash

Angered by their new position as second-class citizens within Turkey and their crushed dreams for an independent state, the Kurds staged large-scale rebellions in the first decades of the Republic. Three in the early days of the Republic had lasting impacts on Turkish perceptions of, and policy towards, the Kurds. Between 1920 and 1938, there were seventeen Kurdish rebellions in Turkey,¹²⁸ the most notable of which are detailed below. The PKK was born out of a complex convergence of social, economic, and political factors, and this legacy of violent rebellion set a precedent for the PKK's shift to violence. The harsh state response towards these movements also molded the pattern for the state's handling of the PKK in later decades.

Shaykh Said Rebellion, 1925

The Shaykh Said Rebellion occurred in 1925, shortly after the creation of the Turkish state. Shaykh Said of Piran, a leader of the Naqshabandi order of Dervishes, headed the

¹²⁷ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 184-214.

¹²⁸ Heper, *Question of Assimilation*, 1.

rebellion.¹²⁹ The Turkish government, and subsequently many scholars, attributed the rebellion to a reaction against the Kemalist regime, an attempt to obtain rights and fight against the crippling low levels of development in Kurdistan.¹³⁰ Whatever the immediate causes, the rebellion was a fight for independence fueled by religious and nationalist sentiments.

The rebels managed to capture a few Kurdish centers and hold their positions for a number of weeks, aided by their difficult-to-reach locations in mountainous terrain.¹³¹ While the movement was dismantled, efforts to quell pro-Kurdish sentiment failed. In 1927, Syrian and Turkish Kurds worked together to create “Khoybun” (Independence), the new nationalist organization previously mentioned, and dissolved other Kurdish organizations in Turkey. They also pledged to support and draw support from Kurds in neighboring countries, a precedent for almost every subsequent Kurdish movement.¹³²

Ararat Rebellions, 1930

Following the creation of Khoybun, Kurds were ready to plan another offensive against the Turkish state. Ihsan Nuri Pasha, a commander from the 1925 rebellion, took over forces and by 1928 had a small Kurdish state at Ağrı Dağı.¹³³ In a break from previous strategy, the Turkish government tried to negotiate with this Kurdish group, though the group ultimately rejected any offers of peace. After the negotiations failed, Turkish forces attacked in June of 1930. Four days later, the group launched a guerilla-style counteroffensive—a common Kurdish fighting tactic—

¹²⁹ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 194-96.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Jwadih, *Kurdish Nationalism*, 205.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 204-6.

in eight different cities, overwhelming Turkish troops and forcing them to retreat from Ağrı Dağı.¹³⁴

The old pattern of arrests, deportation, and execution began again, though this time, Khoybun reacted by seeking international support from the League of Nations. The League of Nations passed a resolution against “ruthless suppression of the Kurds in Turkey and the violation of the Treaty of Lausanne.”¹³⁵ Even so, the Turkish army destroyed rebel forces, and Kurdish survivors fled to Iran. This conflict demonstrated the pragmatism of having an organization like Khoybun to advocate for Kurdish rights and freedom internationally and to organize resistance movements between countries. While the government reacted by enacting laws that stripped Kurds of legal rights and abolished Kurdish organizations and tribal organizational structures, the Ararat rebellion still proved the necessity of a large, organized advocacy group.¹³⁶

Dersim Rebellion

In 1936, the passage of a law transferring power from tribal leaders to Turkish governors pushed a hitherto uninvolved Kurdish group into the struggle. By 1937, this law grated on Turkish Kurds, pushing them to fight for separation from Turkey once again.¹³⁷ Kurds from Dersim spoke Zaza and were Shi’a, sharing few similarities with the Kurds leading previous rebellions.¹³⁸ Their involvement in a movement against the Turkish state smashed previous

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Jwadih, *Kurdish Nationalism*, 213.

¹³⁶ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 204-6.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 207.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

linguistic and religious boundaries separating Kurds. The antagonizing of tribal, religious, *and* economic traditions was the fuel for a new, inclusive fire of rebellion.¹³⁹

This war went on for two years with heavy losses on both sides—the longest and bloodiest of the conflicts in Turkey to that point. After the rebellion, leaders were again executed, people deported, and civilians killed.¹⁴⁰ Kurds claimed the “Turks resorted to the most inhuman methods to punish the rebels...one source put the number of those who lost their lives at forty thousand; another source put the number of those deported at three thousand families.”¹⁴¹ In 1945, minister of the interior Jalal Bayar “declared the Kurdish problem no longer existed.”¹⁴² In reality, Kurdish militants in Turkey were regrouping and using the lessons of previous rebellions to shape new tactics.

Kurdish Political Participation, 1923-2001

Violent struggle was not the only way Turkish Kurds protested their lack of rights. Groups looking to work with the Turkish state to gain more freedom, rather than fight for an independent nation, formed political parties; later, armed Kurdish groups would combine violent and non-violent strategies by creating their own political parties. After the 1950 election, which saw Atatürk’s party ousted, exiled leaders were allowed to return to their homelands. Kurds could even enter politics—if they gave up their Kurdish identity.¹⁴³ In the 1960s, with the war between Iraq and its Kurdish population in full swing, Turkish Kurds tentatively began forming underground political groups. At this time, the Turkish government was hyperaware of unrest in Kurdish areas. Yet, in 1965, the Turkish Kurds formed their first major opposition group, the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Jwadih, *Kurdish Nationalism*, 216.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ O’Ballance, *1920-1994*, 44-46.

Kurdish Democratic Party of Turkey, which was closely modeled after the Iranian and Iraqi KDPs. The party originally advocated for autonomy within Turkey, but before long the more radical members began agitating for a new, independent Kurdish state.¹⁴⁴ In August 1967 the KDP staged their first public demonstration and the government promptly shut down the party.¹⁴⁵

The next party to come into being was the Doğu Devrimci Kültür Ocakları (Revolutionary Organization for Eastern Culture, or DDKO).¹⁴⁶ In 1970, the Turkish Workers' Party became the first to recognize the existence of Kurds.¹⁴⁷ However, both parties were banned in 1971, and Kurds were arrested on a massive scale.¹⁴⁸ The Kurdish Socialist Party of Turkey appeared, run by Kurdish members of the then-defunct Turkish Workers' Party with the goal of liberating the Kurds and overthrowing "colonial oppression."¹⁴⁹ In 1974, the DDKO reorganized in order to unite Kurdish movements, though this aim failed on account of the diverse economic and political currents within Kurdish society.¹⁵⁰ When, against all odds, Kurdish politicians Edip Solmaz and Mehdi Zana managed to be elected to local positions in Batman and Diyarbakir, respectively, they and their parties were quickly pushed out of the political sphere after the 1980 coup.¹⁵¹

Kurds were left with little recourse nationally, and national political parties dominated regional politics in Turkish Kurdistan.¹⁵² Kurdish parties were not seen again until the rise of the pro-Kurdish democracy movement in 1990.¹⁵³ The first of these was the Halkın Emek Partisi

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¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 411.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 410

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 412.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 414.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 414.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 153-54.

(People's Labor Party, or HEP), founded in 1990.¹⁵⁴ It persevered until 1993 despite government-sponsored intimidation and accusations that it acted as a mouthpiece for the PKK.¹⁵⁵ The HEP was the first nationally recognized and successful Kurdish party in Turkey. The HEP spawned multiple iterations, regrouping each time the government shut down a party; its legacy included the Demokrasi Partisi (Democracy Party, DEP, 1993-94),¹⁵⁶ Halkin Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democracy Party, or HADEP, 1994-2003),¹⁵⁷ and Demokratik Halk Partisi (Democratic People's Party, DEHAP, 1997-2003).¹⁵⁸

These parties sought to democratize the state and reach a peaceful settlement of Kurdish demands for rights within the Turkish state. While these parties attracted much Kurdish support, Kurds still supported national, non-Kurdish parties as well. Kurdish parties struggled to gain the constitutionally mandated ten percent of the vote required for election to Parliament.¹⁵⁹ In 1991, 22 members of the HEP made it to parliament, though by 1994, HADEP was unable to win seats in Parliament despite winning 50 percent of the vote in the southeast.¹⁶⁰ These parties did, however, manage to control considerable portions of regional governments in Kurdish areas.¹⁶¹

Politicians of pro-Kurdish parties were constantly persecuted. Many were arrested or died mysteriously. Between 1994 and 2002 alone, 33 HADEP members were murdered.¹⁶² The courts shut down Kurdish parties and arrested politicians for being too flagrantly pro-Kurdish,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Nicole F. Watts, "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-94," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31 (1999): 631.

¹⁵⁶ Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 157.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 163-164.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Watts, "Allies and Enemies," 649.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Gunes, *Protest to Resistance*, 166.

¹⁶² Ibid, 167.

the most notable case being Layla Zana, arrested for speaking Kurdish in Parliament.¹⁶³ The relationship between the majority of the government and Kurdish representation can be described as tense at its best, and hostile at its worst. Between this oppression and the late development of viable Kurdish parties, many Kurds expressed their frustration with the Turkish government through the only way they saw they had left—violence.

The PKK: 1978-2001

In 1971, the Marxist-Leninist Devrimci Gençlik (Revolutionary Youth, or DEV-GENÇ), found itself on a long list of disbanded parties after Turkey’s latest coup. Kurdish student Abdullah Öcalan, in a move that would shake Turkey to its core, formed an offshoot of the DEV-GENÇ that espoused a Marxist-Leninist ideology but included a Kurdish nationalist edge.¹⁶⁴ This party began as an Ankara-based student group, a peaceful cousin of the violent and anti-parliamentary DEV-GENÇ. As it evolved, it moved to the southeast and utilized the tribal system of Kurdistan to create an organizational framework for resistance. In 1978, Öcalan’s group officially became the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanî (Kurdistan Worker’s Party, or PKK).¹⁶⁵ Until this point, Kurdish independence parties had espoused conservative ideals and relied on tribal leadership for organization. The developments of the twentieth century set the stage for a large, organized, violent organization, and the PKK stepped into the role easily.

The PKK drew upon a communist ideology and decentralized leadership structure, a combination that proved far more effective than previous attempts at Kurdish resistance.¹⁶⁶ The

¹⁶³ MacDowall, *Modern History* 441, and Gunes, *Protest to Resistance*, 160.

¹⁶⁴ Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007): 24-5.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-41. Also Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, “The Making of the PKK,” in Casier and Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics*, 130-31.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

PKK, according to its website, “has been struggling for the existence, freedom and honour of the Kurdish people against the genocide begun by the racist-chauvinist Unionists at the beginning of the 20th century, which aimed to end the freedom of the Kurdish people and wipe them out from history.”¹⁶⁷ Their original 1978 manifesto, however, claimed its cause was a communist, not Kurdish, revolution. The PKK now refers to itself as a “martyrs’ party,” which alludes to its violent nature and to the self-sacrificing dedication of its fighters.

The PKK adapted its current, Kurdish-nationalist ideology in 1984 in reaction to the tumultuous political situation in Turkey and the extreme poverty of the southeast.¹⁶⁸ Instability within the Turkish government and the rise of new Kurdish groups across the borders in Iraq, Iran, and Syria enabled the PKK to form a flexible movement popular among many Kurdish groups and regions.¹⁶⁹ The PKK recruited among the peasantry, where their communist message of economic equality quickly gained popularity.¹⁷⁰ The forces of the PKK rapidly dominated all Kurdish politics in the region. Its guerilla regiments included both men and women, and ranged from 15,000-50,000 militants at any time from 1978-1999.¹⁷¹ From 1978-1980, the PKK focused its attacks on “fascists,” often landowners, and Kurdish tribes that collaborated with the state.¹⁷²

After the 1980 coup, Kurdish activists, including PKK members, were imprisoned under brutal conditions. The PKK still functioned in prison, though its leadership moved to Syria

¹⁶⁷ “34 Anniversary of Kurdistan Workers’ Party,” PKK Online, November 26, 2011, accessed November 30, 2014, <http://www.pkkonline.com/en/index.php?sys=article&artID=175>. Note: “Unionists” here refers to those trying to “unite” the Turkish and Kurdish peoples and “eliminate” Kurdish identity.

¹⁶⁸ Chris Kutschera, “Mad Dreams of Independence: The Kurds of Turkey and the PKK,” *Middle East Report* 189 (1994): 13.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

between 1980-84.¹⁷³ The crackdown on its activities prompted the PKK's first wave of major guerrilla violence.¹⁷⁴ They did not use the term *peshmerga* because of its more Iraqi "feudal" connotations, though they focused on an armed resistance against the military and local gendarme squads.¹⁷⁵ Especially in the 1980s, the PKK was rather indiscriminate in its targets; between 1987 and 1989 it attacked 137 schools as "instruments of Ankara's assimilation."¹⁷⁶ The Turkish government had little trouble in branding the PKK as a terrorist organization with international support because the PKK had demonstrated lack of refinement in choosing targets and its decades-long siege on Turkish outposts in the southeast.¹⁷⁷

The PKK expanded to Iraq in 1981 by working closely with Iraq's KDP. Though Öcalan and Barzani, the two groups' leaders, did not follow the same tactics or ideology, Barzani allowed PKK fighters to stay and train in KDP bases across the border. In 1988, Jalal Talabani, the leader of Iraq's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), signed a similar "memorandum of agreement" with the PKK.¹⁷⁸ However, when Iraq's Kurds created their own government in the northwest of Iraq, they needed to maintain good relations with Turkey for supplies and allied military protection. When Talabani asked Öcalan for a ceasefire and the latter refused, the two groups fought over the border areas. The Turkish government sided with Iraqi Kurds against the PKK. This was the end of official cooperation between the PKK and Iraqi Kurdish groups.¹⁷⁹

The Gulf War forced more than 500,000 (some sources suggest a number closer to one million) Kurdish refugees from northern Iraq into Turkey, inflaming tensions between Kurds and Turks. In order to keep the situation from escalating, then-President Turgut Özal sent the

¹⁷³ Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007): 24-5.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 79-83.

¹⁷⁵ Kutschera, "Mad Dreams," 13-15.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Kutschera, "Mad Dreams," 14.

¹⁷⁸ MacDowall, *Modern History*, 428.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 428-430.

refugees back as quickly as possible.¹⁸⁰ Özal initiated peace talks with the PKK and other Kurdish organizations. The PKK rejected peace talks, though in March 1993 it agreed to a ceasefire. In return, Özal prepared massive reforms for the Kurds—though the details became irrelevant when he died in April 1993, just before delivering the reforms to the National Security Council.¹⁸¹

In May of that year, the PKK broke the ceasefire. In retaliation Prime Minister Süleyman enacted the Castle Plan, a brutal counter-guerrilla measure using special anti-guerrilla units, police, army units, and assassins to wipe out as much of the PKK as possible. Between 1993 and 1995, the Turkish army destroyed around 3,000 Kurdish villages.¹⁸² The government bribed some villages to join their cause, using livestock and jobs as promises to gain loyalty. These villages were by no means safe from government reprisals—if the army suspected illicit activities within a “loyal” village, they would often counter-attack, even killing civilians. The brutality of government actions backfired, and even more Kurds sympathized with the PKK than before.¹⁸³

Turkey began exerting pressure on other governments to control their Kurdish populations. The government’s largest breakthrough in exerting this control was in 1998, when it forced Syria to stop allowing Öcalan safe exile. He fled first to Russia, then Italy, Greece, and Kenya.¹⁸⁴ Panicked, he declared a ceasefire from abroad in August 1998. The Turkish intelligence service and CIA captured him in Kenya on February 15, 1999. The ceasefire immediately broke, and Kurds worldwide protested. In September 1999, the PKK declared

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 430.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 436-8.

¹⁸² Marcuz, *Blood and Belief*, 221-223.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 224-228.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 269-285.

another ceasefire and withdrew into Iraq.¹⁸⁵ In February of 2000, it took further steps towards peace, declaring the war over and restructuring themselves as the purely political Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK). From 1984 until 2013, the death count from the conflict stands at over 40,000 people.¹⁸⁶

The AKP and Kurdish Policy: Liberalizations and PKK Violence

The reforms in Kurdish policy offered by the AKP were the most promising since the creation of the Turkish Republic. Soon after his election in 2002, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan began giving the Kurds more political leeway. He lifted the state of emergency in the Kurdish provinces that still lived under martial law. He removed restrictions on Kurdish speakers in the 1982 constitution and in 2003 allowed for broadcasting and private language courses in Kurdish.¹⁸⁷ Later in the decade, Kurds were allowed to open their first television channel. Members of the Kurdish Demokratik Toplum Partisi, (Democratic Society Party, or DTP) were elected to the Parliament in 2009.¹⁸⁸ Reforms stalled when the DTP was declared illegal and its leadership arrested later in the year. However, the newest pro-Kurdish party, the HDP, has been in existence since 2013, and, at the time of writing, is still allowed to function. The HDP is a new coalition that includes members from pro-Kurdish party Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party, BDP, 2008-2014).¹⁸⁹

The AKP has separated its policy regarding Kurds and violent Kurdish movements more successfully than previous administrations. However, Erdoğan's stance on the Kurds changes regularly and according to Turkish scholar M. Hakan Yavuz, Erdoğan has offered no solution to

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 296-303.

¹⁸⁷ Gunes and Zeydanlioglu, 170-71.

¹⁸⁸ Yavuz in general

¹⁸⁹ Tania Gisselbrecht, "EU-Turkey Dialogue Initiative Working Paper," *Bridging Europe*, 1 (2014): 4-5.

the “Kurdish Issue.”¹⁹⁰ Erdoğan sometimes claims that citizenship integrates Turks and Kurds; other times he points to religion as a unifying factor.¹⁹¹ Religious Kurds appreciated Erdoğan’s pan-Muslim stance, in which they saw a place for Kurds in Turkish society reminiscent of their role in the Ottoman state.¹⁹²

Reactions to Erdoğan’s liberalizations vary: many Kurds and the international community praise him for allowing more cultural freedom, while Turks regard his Kurdish policy more skeptically. At the same time, many Kurds still prefer an independent or autonomous state and continue cooperating with groups like the PKK that operate to such an end. Many Turks saw Erdoğan’s liberalization of Kurdish policy as pro-PKK and grew angry over his delay in retaliating against violent Kurdish actions between 2003 and 2006. The public often views Kurds and the PKK as one and the same, leading to resistance towards any moves towards tolerance in Turkey’s Kurdish policy. However, the AKP, in separating the two groups in its policy, has maintained far better relations with the Kurdish community than its predecessors. After Erdoğan’s peace talks with Öcalan, he may “paradoxically” begin to win the support Kurds, despite the thousands of imprisoned Kurdish nationalists.¹⁹³

In 2005, tensions mounted further as the EU put pressure on Turkey to recognize the Kurds, though Kurdish hope dropped as Turkish anti-EU nationalist sentiment soared. The ensuing violence led to more military skirmishes.¹⁹⁴ Erdoğan, in a break from tradition, decided to handle the violence without using the army. However, his strongest measure was occasionally engaging in angry dialogue with Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government head Barzani, turning to

¹⁹⁰ Yavuz

¹⁹¹ Yavuz

¹⁹² Yavuz

¹⁹³ Omer Taspinar, “The End of the Turkish Model,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56 (2014): 49-64.

¹⁹⁴ Yavuz

classic PKK allies abroad to negotiate and failing miserably.¹⁹⁵ By 2006, the military attributed over 600 deaths to the PKK since the 1999 ceasefire's end in 2004 and encouraged government action.¹⁹⁶ Rival militant group Kurdistan Freedom Falcons added to the fray to create a full-scale war. Both militant groups increased suicide bombing attacks, guerrilla skirmishes in the mountains, and cross-border movements.¹⁹⁷ Further developments will be described in later chapters.

Conclusion

The new millennium started with high hopes for ending the Kurdish conflict in Turkey, but these hopes were dashed almost as quickly as they began. However, the AKP and PKK's failure to negotiate or to create a lasting peace is not wholly their fault. The struggle between Kurdish groups and the Turkish government goes back to the creation of the Republic. The conflict's roots lie in the systematic repression of political, economic, and cultural rights of the Kurdish people; it is unreasonable to assume fourteen years of modest reforms on the part of the AKP can reverse over ninety years of ill will on the part of and towards the oppressed Kurds.

The PKK continues its violence because its demands for independence have not yet been met, and it still functions because of Kurdish support. After a century of revolt and little progress in the way of democratic solutions to the "Kurdish problem," the PKK was able to refine its techniques of rebellion and assume the role of mouthpiece for Kurdish separatists. The PKK's cross-border networks of Kurds allow it financial support and safe havens in the face of Turkish attack, making government counter-measures less effective. The years of struggle between the PKK and the government have not boded well for improved relations between the

¹⁹⁵ Casier and Jongerden, 109.

¹⁹⁶ Casier and Jongerden, 109.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

AKP and PKK or between the Kurds and Turks as a whole, or even between Turkey and its Western allies. As described in Chapter Two, this makes the portrayal of the PKK and Kurds in Turkish media particularly complicated. To placate international audiences, the struggle may be downplayed in international papers, though within the country the politics surrounding it may be amplified according to each newspaper's political background.

Chapter Two

Media and the Government in Turkey: History, Suppression, and Politics

Atatürk charged into his role as Turkey's first President armed with plans for modernization and a new national identity. His strategy for creating a united Turkey included spreading his ideals and the newly formatted Turkish language through state-run newspapers¹⁹⁸—a decision that has influenced the complicated relationship between the Turkish government and the press for the last nine decades. Turkey's press has maintained a tradition of politicization, which often leads to clashes with the government over freedom of speech. Complicating the matter of a free and independent press are the huge conglomerates that dominate the media and influence their newspaper holdings' political leanings; these groups, which are themselves political, are also susceptible to government fines and intimidation for printing controversial material. In addition to the influence wielded by these conglomerates, the AKP has taken advantage of constitutional loopholes and these media groups' vulnerabilities to control Turkey's press even further.

When the AKP was swept into power in 2002, they billed themselves as a party of change. Now, more than a decade later, the AKP has deeply divided the country and delivered on only a few of its promises. Turkey is still not a part of the EU, and its efforts to join have abated; the Kurdish “question” is unsolved, and the PKK continues to wage a war with the Turkish government; and human rights **protections have deteriorated in the past few years**—the most notable for this work being the freedom of speech. In such an uncertain political atmosphere, suppressing and coercing the media is key to the AKP's projection of a positive

¹⁹⁸ Gavin D. Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk: Provincial Newspapers and the Negotiation of a Muslim National Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011): 55-57.

image in the country. Here, I explore the relationship between the media and the AKP to provide background to my analysis in Chapter Three.

A Brief History of Newspapers and Freedom of the Press in Turkey

Following the propagandist style of Ottoman newspapers of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Turkish Republic's first newspapers acted as a vehicle of propaganda for the Kemalist regime and Atatürk's party, the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party, or CHP). Access to newspapers grew throughout the War of Independence, when Turkish forces communicated with the general public by printing papers and leaflets.¹⁹⁹ Atatürk saw newspapers as a way to consolidate the new Turkish language, particularly because he believed "language and its expression in the media should reflect the tenets of a democratic state."²⁰⁰ However, according to Middle Eastern historian Gavin D. Brockett, "print culture in the years 1925-1945 discouraged public debate and conspicuously failed to validate alternative popular perspectives to Mustafa Kemal's vision."²⁰¹ Printing was often restricted to the urban elite, who sought to control the nation's early historical narrative.²⁰² Newspapers became a mouthpiece for Kemalist national identity, and the CHP printed its own propagandist papers.²⁰³

Ataturk introduced a precedent of government censorship by signing the Law for the Maintenance of Order in March 1925, which allowed the government to close any publication he deemed too threatening to public order;²⁰⁴ formal censorship was introduced in 1940.²⁰⁵

Following this move, freedom of expression became a huge political issue, and in order to

¹⁹⁹ Brockett, *How Happy*, 57.

²⁰⁰ C. Danielle Vierling, "Motives and Mind-plays of the Media: A Content Analysis of Turkish Newspaper Articles and Editorials on Events in the Caucasus and Central Asia" (MA diss, American University, 1993): 25.

²⁰¹ Brockett, *How Happy*, 56.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 57.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 70-76.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 63.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 67.

survive, the CHP had to allow the press more autonomy. The CHP transferred the power to close newspapers to the courts later in the decade.²⁰⁶ Opposition parties could advertise in newspapers, and journalists could organize as they saw fit.²⁰⁷

After World War II, provincial newspapers allowed Turks more room to explore personal narratives in the press.²⁰⁸ These newspapers, unlike the political metropolitan newspapers, were more autonomous and cheaper, allowing them to share ideas more freely. Around the same time, discussion of religion appeared in newspapers; Kemalists fought against this new freedom and ultimately lost. By the 1960s, newspapers were allowed the freedom to print diverse political views.²⁰⁹ The two decades between 1940 and 1960 formed the current uneasy balance between large newspapers and the government; while the freedom of the press was legally guaranteed and various ideological newspapers began publishing, the government has retained the power to shut down newspapers it feels threaten the state—a vague definition applied differently by various administrations.

As the number of newspapers available increased, the government maintained a policy of restricting views that strayed too far from its agenda.²¹⁰ The 1980 coup shifted the power dynamic between the government and the press towards the government, setting a new precedent for curbing the freedom of the press.²¹¹ In the 1990s, the government amended the constitution with emergency measures to allow it to censor the press if it deemed doing so appropriate.²¹² Journalists are most often prosecuted for spreading “terrorist propaganda” or reporting on legal

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 91.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 89-92.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 202-204.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, Chapter 4.

²¹⁰ Vierling, “Motives and Mind-plays,” 26.

²¹¹ Ibid, 29.

²¹² Ibid.

matters.²¹³ The press, until the last ten years, maintained strict financial independence from the government in order to ensure as much freedom as possible.²¹⁴

While my thesis is not directly connected to the issue of freedom of the press in Turkey, understanding the restrictions imposed on newspapers is crucial, as they relate to how and to what extent newspapers can express a political leaning. Turkey's history of limiting the press has shaped the complex environment created by the AKP's policies, detailed later in this chapter, in which the newspapers of this study operate.

The Case of the Kurds: Kurdish Publications and Portrayal of Kurds in Turkish Media

To understand the relationship between the media and the PKK, I find it necessary to touch upon the historical portrayal of Kurds in Turkish media. According to scholar Nicole F. Watts, "Discussion of Kurds and Kurdish politics in the Turkish press prior to the 1960s occurred mostly at moments of Kurdish revolt...Kurds tended to be equated with threat, backwardness, pre-modernism, conservatism, and Islamic fanaticism."²¹⁵ In the 1960's, Kurdish periodicals spoke out against these portrayals for the first time, and did so using Kurdish language and propagating Kurdish culture. These periodicals were shut down within months.²¹⁶

Even in the 1990s, "Mainstream newspapers tended to avoid writing about Kurds as a distinct ethnic group and, in particular, they made sure that to the extent possible they did not refer to any group in Turkey as 'Kurds'."²¹⁷ Kurdish newspapers reappeared in the 1990s, though have continued to be persecuted for supporting Kurdish causes; whether or not they

²¹³ Asli Tunç, "Freedom of expression debates in Turkey: Acute problems and new hopes" *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 9 (2013): 154-55.

²¹⁴ Vierling, "Motives and Mind-plays," 36.

²¹⁵ Nicole F. Watts, "Silence and Voice: Turkish Policies and Kurdish Resistance in the Mid-20th Century," in *Evolution of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Mohammed M.A. Ahmed and Michael Gunter (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2007): 66.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 67.

²¹⁷ Heper, *The Question of Assimilation*, 164.

explicitly support the PKK, expressing a “political identity that is uniquely Kurdish” is enough to warrant punishment.²¹⁸ According to a Human Rights Watch report, abuses include “assassination of journalists by shadowy death squads, imprisonment, mistreatment while in police detention, and the confiscation and closing of newspapers.”²¹⁹

As mentioned in Chapter One, the AKP has liberalized its policy towards Kurdish media, though heavy restrictions remain. Public broadcaster TRT has been allowed to offer Kurdish programming since 2009.²²⁰ However, the “pro-government tone of TRT has recently intensified, especially with respect to news programming.”²²¹ The Kurds still have no mainstream, widely heard voice in the sphere of Turkish news, as the government tightly polices Kurdish news outlets. This includes TRT and the country’s only Kurdish-language newspaper, *Azadiya Welat*.²²² This liberalization also means little for treatment of the Kurds in the media. Political biases against Kurdish causes and groups remains entrenched in Turkey, and newspapers with a nationalistic outlook will most likely continue to portray Kurds in a negative light.

Traditions of Politicization in the Turkish Press

Turkey’s press is known for having political biases, most of which are due to corporate and audience-fueled interests. Newspapers cater to certain political readerships, and a person’s political views are easily discernable through his or her newspaper selection. After the state stopped using the press as a Kemalist organ, newspapers with a host of other political ideas and

²¹⁸ Christopher Panico, ed. Jeri Laber and Holli Cartner, *Violations of Free Expression in Turkey* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999): 60.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Tunç, “Freedom of expression debates,” 160.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid, 156.

social sensibilities flooded the public space, though many were closed.²²³ The explosion of printing in the 1980s made the growth of newspapers and political biases within them possible.²²⁴ This era also saw the rise of newspapers owned by large conglomerates or media “empires” that express the views of their parent companies.²²⁵

The huge monopolies on the press are becoming a problem as certain agendas are given more attention in public discourse.²²⁶ The government accepts these monopolies as long as they do not print ideas that stray into sensitive subject areas. The laws guaranteeing freedom of expression are “unevenly enforced,” and to ensure their own safety, papers often censor themselves.²²⁷ The issues of the Kurds and the PKK are among the most sensitive subjects in Turkey, and are therefore heavily limited in the press.²²⁸ The AKP’s recent habit of jailing or otherwise curbing journalists has made the biases exhibited towards Kurds (and other non-AKP-friendly subjects) more subtle. As I describe below, the rise of the AKP had major implications for the news industry in Turkey.

The Rise of the AKP, Political Aspirations, and the Freedom of the Press

The AKP formed in 2001 as a conservative, Islamist party. Its founders came from disbanded parties that were focused on economic development and identified as “Islamist” parties.²²⁹ The background of its founders becomes relevant in the social, economic, and foreign policy spheres. The Refah Partisi (Welfare Party, RP), one forerunner of the AKP, propagated an economic platform of hard work, which attracted the urban poor and religious businessmen.

²²³ Brockett, *How Happy*, Chapter 2.

²²⁴ Sezgin and Wall, “Constructing the Kurds,” 789.

²²⁵ Ibid, 789.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 102-105.

Its foreign policy was decidedly anti-Western and anti-Kemalist, instead in favor of joining forces with Central Asian and Muslim countries.²³⁰ Socially, RP and its later iteration, Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party, or FP), were heavily conservative.²³¹ FP, however, learned from the Welfare Party's mistakes and focused on democracy, human and civil rights, and pluralism.²³²

An FP newcomer was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the mayor of Istanbul, went on to found the AKP, with major consequences for Turkey.²³³ The experiences of the RP and FP taught him not to appear too religious or anti-European; however, the longer the AKP has held office, the more the core values of the AKP's predecessors have shone through. Abdullah Gül began his term as Prime Minister in Erdoğan's place,²³⁴ with aims to join the EU and increase Turkey's GDP. Between the time when Erdoğan was allowed back into politics in 2004 and became prime minister and then was elected to the presidency last year, much of the AKP's goals changed: the government has shifted away from the EU, and the public has accused the AKP of state-sponsored piety and authoritarian tendencies.

The AKP's continued success comes from its economic growth and development projects.²³⁵ The AKP used the reforms and the memory of economic instability to draw support from all classes of society and especially the middle class. The AKP attracted large amounts of foreign capital and went on a building spree that supplied jobs and positive, inflation-free economic growth; Turkey even avoided the worst of the 2008-09 economic crisis.²³⁶ The AKP's economic policies deserve study in and of themselves, though I will focus on the AKP's stances on foreign

²³⁰ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 66-68.

²³¹ Casier and Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics*, 102-105.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ For more information on other political parties during the rise of the AKP, see M. Hakan Yavuz's *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge, 2009).

²³⁴ Note about not talking about local results

²³⁵ Sebnem Gumuscu and E. Fuat Keyman, *Democracy, Identity, and Foreign Policy in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014): 37.

²³⁶ Ziya Öniş, "The Triumph of Conservative Globalism: The Political Economy of the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 13 (2012): 138-140.

policy and religion. The AKP's foreign policy goals have contributed the most to the AKP's treatment of the Kurdish issue and the freedom of the press.

The AKP Abroad: Shifting Aims and Image vis-à-vis the Kurds and the Media

The AKP came into the government with dreams of joining the EU and acting as a leader in the Middle East and Central Asia. As M. Yakan Yavuz explains, "The national identity of Turkey has veered towards three mostly constructed and dominant layers [of nationality]: Islamic, Turkic, and European."²³⁷ Turkey's European identity led to its desire to join the EU, which informed much of the AKP's liberalizations; the EU placed stringent measures upon Turkey's ability to join, which Turkey has not yet met.

During his time as Foreign Minister, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu promoted a "zero-problems" strategy with Turkey's neighbors, which has "been instrumental in improving Ankara's political, economic, and diplomatic relations with the former Ottoman sphere of influence."²³⁸ The AKP ran into more than a few problems with the EU early on, however. In 2004, the European Commission recommended that accession talks begin in October 2005, though they identified a few key issues Turkey needed to handle before ascension would be possible. Two main stipulations were Turkey's human rights record and the Kurdish Question.²³⁹

EU membership, theoretically, would be worth the changes Turkey needed to make in order to join. The AKP sees the EU as a way to soften its reputation of being too Islamic, to reduce the power of the traditionally powerful military, and to secure international backing for

²³⁷ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 208.

²³⁸ Gumuscu and Keyman, *Democracy, Identity*, 75.

²³⁹ Casier and Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics*, 198-200.

governmental reform.²⁴⁰ Despite the economic benefits and AKP encouragement for accession, the European Parliament's staunch support of Kurdish rights within Turkey, which began in the 1980s, is still an issue for many Turks.²⁴¹ A price the EU attached to membership is progress in negotiating with the PKK and releasing jailed Kurdish activists and politicians.²⁴² The suggestions included calls for changes to Turkey's anti-terrorism law and the following clause:

“Turkey will have to find a political and non-military solution to the problem of the south-east...A civil solution could include recognition of certain forms of Kurdish cultural identity and greater tolerance of the ways of expressing that identity, provided it does not advocate separatism or terrorism.”²⁴³

The Kurdish diaspora community in Europe, which contains an organized cultural presence it can use to lobby larger institutions, has heavily influenced the EU's stance on the Kurds.²⁴⁴

AKP's policy towards the Kurds, described in Chapter One, is partly attributable to the international pressure exerted upon Turkey. While Erdoğan has never presented a single, cohesive policy regarding the Kurds that can be tied to EU pressure,²⁴⁵ his loosening of restrictions on Kurdish broadcasting directly correlate to the above suggestion from the EU, five years after the suggestion was first made.²⁴⁶ The AKP's EU aims pacified secular Turks who feared a shift towards the Middle East; in order to serve their own interests and keep the AKP on an EU-facing path, newspapers would respond accordingly. Whatever their political views, these views would be kept within the borders of Turkey, and a portrait of the AKP amenable to the EU would be propagated abroad.

²⁴⁰ Yavuz, 2009, 215-216

²⁴¹ Casier and Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics*, 198-201.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid, 202-04.

²⁴⁴ See Cassier and Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics*, Chapter 11.

²⁴⁵ Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 173.

²⁴⁶ Casier and Jongerden, *Nationalisms and Politics*, 202.

As the years have dragged on without any concrete promises of membership, the AKP has turned away from the EU and towards its Muslim neighbors to the East. A large part of Turkey's increased power in the Middle East is its reputation and consolidation of "soft power" in the region.²⁴⁷ Turkey's perception as a democratic, politically stable economic powerhouse has done wonders for the spread of Turkey's influence and warm relations with its eastern and southern neighbors. They signed a free movement agreement with Syria in 2009, and have encouraged a spread of Turkish culture, such as television shows and fashion, to the Arabian Peninsula.²⁴⁸ Turkey is now seen as a trading state, with multiple trading partners in the Arab world.²⁴⁹ Over the last ten years, however, this increase in soft power and influence in the Middle East has come at a cost to Turkey's traditional alliance with Israel and strong friendship with the United States. These countries see Turkey's new role as an alarming shift towards the East and "consequently as being 'lost' by the West."²⁵⁰

With this shift comes a change in Kurdish and human rights policy. Without as strong of an incentive to join the EU, Turkey has been able to pursue an agenda less acceptable to its "Western" allies. Outcry from the EU and U.S. over the recent curbs on the freedom of the press or continuation of the war with the PKK means less to a country without the promise of EU membership. I believe the media's incentive to project a positive view of Turkey is no longer due to a desire to win European acceptance but is rather meant as a defense mechanism, as I describe below.

Turkey's Current Press Status: "Not Free"

²⁴⁷ Gumuscu and Keyman, *Democracy, Identity*, 74-78.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ronald H. Linden et. Al., *Turkey & Its Neighbors* (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2012): 3.

As of 2014, international NGO Freedom House declared Turkey's press to be "not free."²⁵¹ NGO Reporters Without Borders ranked Turkey 154 out of 180 in terms of press freedom.²⁵² The AKP's promises to liberalize Turkey's laws and constitution have fallen short—very short—in terms of freedom of the press. The AKP carried on the semi-repressive publishing environment of the 1990s until 2013, when it gained the "not free" label. According to Freedom House, "Turkey's status declined from Partly Free to Not Free as a result of a sharp deterioration in the press freedom environment in 2013."²⁵³ The AKP has done its best to limit coverage of national scandals in the press, and in the last few years it has come under criticism for its jailing of journalists. Here, I describe the background to a dispute between the AKP and religious leader Fethullah Gülen in 2013, which affected daily newspaper *Zaman* directly and the Turkish media as a whole indirectly. I next detail legal suppression of journalists following two recent, demonstrative cases from 2013: The corruption case loosely related to Gülen and the Gezi Park protests. I will conclude with a few final thoughts on the relationship between Turkey's freedom of the press and newspaper politicization.

The AKP and the Gülenist Movement: A Foundation for Future Media Suppression

The first case of legal intimidation I examine relates to Fethullah Gülen and his supporters ("Gülenists").²⁵⁴ Gülenists initially backed the AKP because the two groups had

²⁵¹ "Freedom of the Press: Turkey," Freedom House, accessed March 21, 2015, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/turkey#.VRR0PJPF9dI>.

²⁵² Reporters without Borders, accessed March 21, 2015, <https://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

²⁵³ Freedom of the Press: Turkey."

²⁵⁴ Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen began what is now called the "Gülen Movement" or in Turkish, *Hizmet* ("the Service") began sometime around the 1960's. Gülen and his followers are accepted as "moderate Islamists" with a humanitarian mission. Gülen regularly met with leaders from other religions, and his followers created their own media outlets and schools. Globally, Gülen schools number over 1,000 with 300 existing in Turkey alone. Gülen himself moved the United States in self-imposed exile in 1999. For more information on Gülen, see Joshua D. Hendrick's "Media Wars and the Gülen Factor in the New Turkey," *Middle East Report*, 41 (2011).

similarly conservative, Turkish, Sunni Muslim cultural values.²⁵⁵ However, suspicions that Gülenists had influenced the police and judiciary led to conflict, as AKP followers generally supported the National Intelligence Organization.²⁵⁶ A legal investigation into the intelligence service over a matter involving the PKK exacerbated tensions between the two groups; speculation and shady claims were behind most of the tension.²⁵⁷ Allegations in 2013 that the government was trying to shut down schools run by the Gülen movement officially broke the alliance between the AKP and the Gülen movement and led to the 2013 corruption scandal.²⁵⁸

The rift between the AKP and the Gülenists is notable for three reasons: it was played out in the media, it involved the Kurds, and it revealed the authoritarian nature of the AKP. The 2013 school crisis was writ large in newspapers, mostly those Erdoğan accused of being “pro-Gülen”; *Zaman*, a newspaper analyzed in this study, is counted as a member of this “pro-Gülen” media.²⁵⁹ One of the points of contention between the AKP and Gülen was the Kurdish issue, as the 2013 investigation that ended the relationship between the groups was over alleged AKP support for the PKK.²⁶⁰ The Gülenists, despite their pan-Islamic view of Turkish society, still believed Kurds should be integrated into Turkey rather than have a separate state. While the AKP attempted to negotiate with the PKK, Gülenists “[had] a more hard-line nationalist approach to the Kurds.”²⁶¹ Most importantly, it sparked the authoritarian trends exhibited by the AKP towards the media in the last couple years.

²⁵⁵ Mustafa Akyol, “What you should know about Turkey's AKP-Gülen conflict,” *Al Monitor*, January 3, 2014, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/akp-gulen-conflict-guide.html>.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. See also Gönül Tol, “The Clash of Former Allies: The AKP versus the Gülen Movement,” *Middle East Institute*, March 7, 2014, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.mei.edu/content/clash-former-allies-akp-versus-gulen-movement>.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Omer Taspinar, “The End of the Turkish Model,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56 (2014): 49-64.

²⁶¹ Tol, “The Clash of Former Allies: The AKP versus the Gülen Movement.”

The AKP and Protests: Authoritarian Response and Media Targeting

The original Gülen investigation of 2013 prompted corruption investigations into the highest levels of Turkish government, which exploded publically on December 17, 2013. Accusations against the AKP included “money laundering, bribery, gold smuggling, and distribution of prime land among favourites [sic].”²⁶² Erdoğan reacted by accusing Gülenists of using the investigation to smear his government, dismissing senior police officers, and sending police to break up protests in downtown Istanbul.²⁶³ Erdoğan’s actions mirrored his strategy for handling the Gezi Park protests in the summer of 2013;²⁶⁴ Gezi Park protests started as an environmental protest but turned into an expression of outrage against AKP authoritarianism, the place of religion in society, and police violence brutality.²⁶⁵

Famously, CNN Türk played a penguin documentary instead of broadcasting coverage of the Gezi protests, partly because of intimidation.²⁶⁶ After both events, massive numbers of journalists were fired for covering Gezi, though the government denies this charge.²⁶⁷ Imprisonment of journalists is one of the most common ways the AKP has stopped reporting on events or topics it finds unfavorable.²⁶⁸ As Freedom House reported, “As of December 1, 2013, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP) found that 40 journalists were imprisoned as a result

²⁶² Umut Uras, “Turkish probe marks AKP-Gülen power struggle,” *Al Jazeera*, December 24, 2013, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/turkish-probe-marks-akp-gulen-power-struggle-2013122473646994231.html>.

²⁶³ Constanze Letsch, “Turkish PM: corruption probe part of 'dirty operation' against administration,” December 18, 2013, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/18/turkish-pm-corruption-probe-dirty-operation>.

²⁶⁴ About Gezi: environmentalists protested the construction of a mall in Gezi Park, a rare green oasis in central Istanbul. The movement accused the government of overstepping its bounds and colluding with private corporations; in short, the protesters saw the AKP as asserting an authoritarian agenda. The small protest ended up gaining national support. See Susan Corke, et. al, “Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Media, and Power in Turkey,” 2014.

²⁶⁵ Nikos Moudouros, “Rethinking Islamic Hegemony in Turkey through Gezi Park,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 16 (2014): 181-182.

²⁶⁶ Susan Corke, et. al, “Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Media, and Power in Turkey,” 2014.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 13.

of their work...the number still made Turkey the top jailer of journalists in the world, ahead of China and Iran.”²⁶⁹

Recent Trends in Politicization and Self-Censorship

“Since coming to power in 2002, the ruling AKP [has] used legal loopholes to confiscate and to sell independent media organizations to party supporters...Media companies are split into ‘proponents’ and ‘opponents’ of the government.”²⁷⁰

Turkish communications scholar Dr. Asli Tunç’s statement neatly summarizes the current state of political polarization in the Turkish press. The AKP is able to use financial leverage and legal threats to keep journalists from reporting against the government’s wishes. This intimidation, according to Tunç, has changed the political landscape of the media.²⁷¹ Media conglomerates have taken an either pro- or anti-AKP stance in reaction to these restrictions.²⁷² At the same time, journalists have been speaking out about the pressure put on them to self-censor. As former *Today’s Zaman* journalist Andrew Finkel described, “The most effective censor in Turkey today is the press itself. To adopt a stance critical of current policies is to position oneself in opposition to the government—and editors only do so as a calculated risk.”²⁷³

The environment of suppression and intimidation created by the AKP is difficult for politicized newspapers to navigate. Newspapers are deepening their political alliances while simultaneously silencing journalists to avoid closure, financial penalties, and arrests. In Chapter Three, I seek to understand how the press in this environment interacts with a sensitive issue: the

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 14.

²⁷⁰ Tunç, “Freedom of expression debates,” 159.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 160.

²⁷² Ibid, 159.

²⁷³ Arsan, “Killing Me Softly,” 450.

PKK. Below, I explain the political background and relationship with the government of the three newspapers I feature in this analysis.

Political Biases of Hürriyet, Zaman, and Sabah

Hürriyet, *Zaman*, and *Sabah* are all privately owned newspapers, and each is known for holding a particular political leaning. *Hürriyet* has a reputation for being Kemalist; *Zaman* for being Islamic;²⁷⁴ and *Sabah* is heavily pro-AKP.²⁷⁵ I chose these papers for their large circulation, access to an international audience, and definitive political views. While other papers have large audiences and defined political leanings, these three papers provided a range of political views without the sensationalist news that overwhelms other major newspapers.

Each paper reports its circulation differently, if at all, which I include in my description of the papers. For consistency's sake, I will include the sales reported by media company Medyatava for the first week of December 2014:

Zaman: 961,706

Hürriyet: 354,156

Sabah: 306,549²⁷⁶

Medyatava also reports the sales of English dailies in Turkey, with *Today's Zaman* selling 8,817, *Hürriyet Daily News* selling 5,075, and *Daily Sabah* selling 4,381.²⁷⁷ I do not include information about online readership, because concrete numbers are not available.

Hürriyet (Freedom) and Hürriyet Daily News

²⁷⁴ Vierling, "Motives and mind-plays," 23.

²⁷⁵ Arsan, "Killing me softly," 450.

²⁷⁶ "Tiraj," Medyatava, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj/2014-12-01>.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Hürriyet is one of the oldest newspapers in Turkey, founded in 1948.²⁷⁸ It reports its printed circulation as 1.6 million, though this number seems inflated.²⁷⁹ *Hürriyet* publishes editions in Germany and has subsidiaries in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.²⁸⁰ *Hürriyet* is owned by Doğan Inc., part of the large media conglomerate Doğan Media Group, which publishes five other newspapers.²⁸¹ One of these newspapers is *Hürriyet Daily News (HDN)*, which is Turkey’s oldest English language newspaper.²⁸² *HDN* caters to diplomats, expatriates, and audiences abroad, though Doğan offers no concrete circulation statistics for *HDN*.²⁸³

Hürriyet was always a center-left secular newspaper,²⁸⁴ but a clash between the AKP and Doğan Media sharpened the anti-AKP stance of *Hürriyet*. In 2009, the government leveraged fines totaling upwards of 830 million TL against Doğan Group for supposed tax evasion.²⁸⁵ Doğan accused the government of leveraging the fine because of *Hürriyet*’s unfavorable representation of Erdoğan, an assessment with which international organizations agreed.²⁸⁶ Given the heated history between its parent company and the AKP, *Hürriyet* has more reason than ever to express anti-AKP sentiment, however subtly they may need to incorporate this sentiment. However, I believe its English version, *HDN*, tempers their negative views of the AKP in response to the foreign policy considerations outlined above.

²⁷⁸“KURUM PROFİLİ,” *Hürriyet Kurumsal*, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetkurumsal.com/>.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ “Publishing,” Doğan Holding, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.doganholding.com.tr/en/business-areas/publishing.aspx>.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ Vierling, “Motives and mind-plays.”

²⁸⁵ Ebnem Arsu And Sabrina Tavernise, “Turkish Media Group Is Fined \$2.5 Billion,” *New York Times*, September 9, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/10/world/europe/10istanbul.html>.

²⁸⁶ “Doğan v. Erdoğan,” *The Economist*, September 10, 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/14419403>.

Zaman (Time)

Zaman is accepted as a Gülenist newspaper.²⁸⁷ Founded in 1986, it is part of media conglomerate Feza Gazetecilik A.S., which also owns the large Cihan News Agency and *Zaman*'s English counterpart, *Today's Zaman*.²⁸⁸ *Zaman* has a readership in 35 countries and publishes in ten languages.²⁸⁹ It was also the first Turkish newspaper to reach the Internet.²⁹⁰ *Zaman* itself does not post its total circulation. *Today's Zaman*, the English edition of *Zaman*, opened in October 2007.²⁹¹

Zaman has been under government scrutiny since the Gülen-AKP row in 2013. In December 2014, *Zaman* editor Ekrem Dumanlı and more than twenty others were arrested for “forgery and slander.”²⁹² Dumanlı called his arrest a “crime;”²⁹³ while *Zaman*'s editorial staff is certainly not pro-AKP, the manner in which they convey their Gülenist message may change after their editor's arrest. Again, I believe less negative information will be published in *Today's Zaman*, though it may possess political leanings similar to its Turkish language version. I expect to see a shift within both editions in regards to language used to describe the government between the 2011 event and 2013 event.

Sabah (Morning)

²⁸⁷ Vierling, “Motives and Mind-plays,” 23.

²⁸⁸ “Zaman,” Feza Gazetecilik, accessed March 30, 2015, http://ik.zaman.com.tr/ik/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=29375.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Constanze Letsch, “Turkish police arrest 23 in raids on opposition media,” *The Guardian*, December 14, 2014, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/14/turkish-police-raid-opposition-media>.

²⁹³ “Turkey arrests: Raids target Gülen-linked critics of Erdoğan,” *BBC*, December 14, 2014, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30468199>.

Like *Zaman*, *Sabah* is a newer paper, established in 1985, while *Daily Sabah*, its English sister paper, was established in 2014.²⁹⁴ *Sabah* does not publish its circulation numbers, but according to a *Zaman* article published in January 2015, *Sabah*'s circulation is around 318,000.²⁹⁵ Both *Sabah* and *Daily Sabah* belong to Turkuvaz Media Group, which in 2013 became part of the Kalyon Group subsidiary Zirve Holding. Kalyon Group has operations in Russia and the Arabian Peninsula as well.²⁹⁶

Sabah is known for its pro-government stance: the government took over the paper in 2007 over a filing error from a previous merger in 2001.²⁹⁷ *Sabah* was then sold—in a deal subsidized by state banks—to a company owned by Erdoğan's son-in-law.²⁹⁸ The state gained financial and personal leverage over *Sabah*'s material. While investigations into the alleged nepotism of such a deal prompted the sale of Turkuvaz Media Group to Zirve Holding, the government maintains a strong financial interest in the group.²⁹⁹ In early 2015, *Zaman* published an exposé on quasi-governmental firms advertising in *Sabah*, saying advertisements from public companies in *Sabah* were 21 times the amount in *Zaman* despite *Sabah*'s having less than a third of *Zaman*'s readership.³⁰⁰ Kalyon Group also has contracts through the government in its construction operations, namely a contract to build the new Istanbul airport and “the

²⁹⁴ “About Us,” Daily Sabah, access March 30, 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/static/about-us>.

²⁹⁵ “Public ads flow to pro-government media despite low circulation,” *Today's Zaman*, January 28, 2015, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_public-ads-flow-to-pro-government-media-despite-low-circulation_371058.html.

²⁹⁶ “Turkish media group Sabah-ATV sold to Kalyon group,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 20, 2013, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-media-group-sabah-atv-sold-to-kalyon-group.aspx?pageID=238&nID=59898&NewsCatID=345>.

²⁹⁷ Asli Aydintasbas, “Turkey's War on the Press,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 2009, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203917304574414503346981992>. Note: this source may be biased, as he is the former editor of *Sabah*.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ “Public ads flow.” Note: as a competitor of *Sabah*, *Zaman* may be biased in this report, though I found it worth mentioning.

³⁰⁰ “Public ads flow.”

controversial pedestrianization project in Taksim Square.”³⁰¹ *Sabah*’s government leanings are well established, as documented through its funding and history. *Daily Sabah* is following in its parent’s footsteps, but is also too new to reveal any long-term trends.

Conclusion

Every newspaper has a network of readers, advertisers, sources, and writers. In Turkey, the network of each paper is fast becoming a web—one that leaves newspaper executives untangling delicate threads of political alliance, legal trouble, and readership. Newspapers like *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, and *Sabah* are ensnared by the AKP’s recent crackdown on press freedoms while simultaneously trying to express their own political views. The press and the government of Turkey have never had an open and free relationship, though the authoritarian trends of government control of the media have increased under Erdoğan’s leadership. The corporate ownership structure of Turkish newspapers further complicates the dynamic between the political sphere and the press, as corporate interests align newspapers with their own parties and ideologies. In the current media environment, the newspapers’ stronger biases are appearing more subtly in print in order to avoid government backlash.

Covering delicate issues, such as protests or the PKK, is increasingly complex under these conditions. Newspapers with international editions must balance their political positions at home with their desire to support Turkey abroad. Media conglomerates have parent companies operating outside of Turkey may have a stake in portraying Turkey and its business practices as positively as possible. More important to this work, the foreign aims of Turkey that appealed to broad sectors of society—such as its plans to join the EU—would mean Turkish papers would want to offer a peaceful and forward-thinking view of the country to its international audiences.

³⁰¹ “Sabah-ATV sold to Kalyon Group.”

All three newspapers hail from sectors of society that approved of Turkey becoming part of the EU, and to aid this goal, would have tempered their coverage of the Turkish-PKK conflict and portray the government much more favorably than in its Turkish edition.

Chapter Three: Findings and Textual Analysis

In this chapter, I present in detail the findings of my analysis using the methods described in the introduction. I proceed chronologically, providing a brief account of each event, describing findings in each Turkish paper and its corresponding English-language daily, and finishing each section with analysis about the findings within the larger context of Turkish society. The overall analysis and its implications are discussed in the conclusion.

Şırnak-Uludere Bombing, December 2011

On the night of December 28, 2011, thirty-four teenage diesel smugglers³⁰² were killed while making their way home from a smuggling trip to Iraq. The military mistook the group of about forty for members of the PKK.³⁰³ The smugglers were on the Turkey-Iraq border in the Uludere district of Şırnak province, where they lived.³⁰⁴ The Armed Forces sent two F-16 warplanes to the border and bombed the group. According to Pentagon officials, “American drones spotted the caravan and alerted the Turks. American officials offered more surveillance to identify the convoy but ‘Turkish officers instead directed the Americans...to fly it somewhere else.’”³⁰⁵ This information was not reported at the time. The Turkish military conducted an investigation, in 2014 acquitting officers “accused over the botched raid” and determining that the Turkish General Staff had cleared the raid.³⁰⁶

³⁰² At the time of the reports of December 29, 2011, the death toll was incorrectly reported as 35, which I will reference throughout this section to remain true to the original articles.

³⁰³ “Turkey says deadly air strike was an ‘unfortunate accident,’” *The Guardian*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/29/turkey-kurds-air-strike-pkk>.

³⁰⁴ “Massacre at Uludere,” *The Economist*, June 9, 2012, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/node/21556616>.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ “Turkey clears military over Uludere bombing deaths,” January 7, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25643405>.

Hürriyet

Hürriyet published two Turkish articles on the Şırnak bombing. One article, “The AKP’s first description: children of veterans among the dead,”³⁰⁷ focuses narrowly on the AKP’s statement about the bombing and the related logistics, while the other, “Reactions to the bombing,”³⁰⁸ covers the reactions of various politicians, local officials, and national and military representatives. In total, *Hürriyet* gave opposition leaders more quotes than it afforded the government. The article written explicitly on the AKP’s statement on the Şırnak event includes quotations from BDP leaders Selhattin Demirtaş, Gultan Kişinak, Sebahat Tuncel, and Sırrı Süreyya Önder; the governor of Şırnak; and CHP leaders Ülker Tarhan, İlhan Cihaner, Gökhan Günaydin, and Hüseyin Aygün.³⁰⁹ *Hürriyet* published fewer articles about the Şırnak bombing than other newspapers, though they were longer, and *Hürriyet* chose to devote the majority of its two reports to opposition leaders’ statements that cast doubt or expressed outright disdain at the government’s actions.

“Reactions” contains many quotations from the previously mentioned opposition leaders as well as CHP deputy minister Sezgin Tanrikulu.³¹⁰ In total, the article features nineteen quotations from opposition leaders. *Hürriyet* quotes the AKP only once in this article, using Customs and Trade Minister Hayati Yazıcı’s statement, in which he claimed that there was not yet enough information to comment upon the event.³¹¹ When other political parties immediately issue statements, the government’s lack of statements appears deficient. *Hürriyet* turned to criticism of the government rather than seeking further government comment. When citing

³⁰⁷ “AK Parti’den ilk açıklama: Ölenler arasında gazi çocuğu da var,” *Hürriyet*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/19561500.asp>.

³⁰⁸ “Bombardımana tepkiler,” *Hürriyet*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/19565431.asp>.

³⁰⁹ “AK Parti’den.”

³¹⁰ “Bombardımana tepkiler.”

³¹¹ “Bombardımana tepkiler.”

Demirtaş, the paper chose statements in which he called Prime Minister Erdoğan a hypocrite for denouncing bombings in Syria while bombing Turkish citizens, described government knowledge of the smuggling route in the area, and urged protests against the AKP for the bombing.³¹² Demirtaş’s inclusion of information regarding the smuggling route served to highlight doubt about the government’s decision to bomb an area they claimed held PKK operatives when regional officials stated the government knew the group was only smugglers—not terrorists. Other opposition leaders, though not quoted as extensively, offered similar statements, including allegations the government was trying to hide or justify its actions, calls for resignations, and incriminations against the intelligence agency for their mistake of smugglers for PKK terrorists.³¹³

In the article about the AKP’s initial reports (“AKP’s first description”),³¹⁴ the quotations from the AKP are mainly about the investigation into the bombing rather than the incident itself. The article quotes AKP Deputy Chairman Hüseyin Çelik, in which he called those killed “terrorists.”³¹⁵ *Hürriyet* directly follows Çelik’s statement with the Şırnak governor’s description of the group as smugglers, not terrorists. The article provides details about the traffickers themselves and the governor’s call for an investigation. It also includes the point that children of Turkish military veterans were among the dead—refuting notions the smugglers were PKK operatives. Çelik is again quoted, but this time for promising the continued fight against terrorism and defending the “hawkish” action of the government. He only briefly laments the loss of civilians.³¹⁶ The official statement of the General Staff, as reported in the article, consists of eight assertions, seven of which detail the circumstances that caused the attack rather than

³¹² “Bombardımana tepkiler.”

³¹³ “Bombardımana tepkiler.”

³¹⁴ “AK Parti'den.”

³¹⁵ “AK Parti'den.”

³¹⁶ “AK Parti'den.”

commenting on the mistake or the civilians who died.³¹⁷ The eighth promises a “continuing investigation.”³¹⁸ The General Staff’s points about the context of the bombing explain the history of terrorism in the region and the act of Parliament that authorizes air strikes like the one against this group.

The rest of the article strays from the headline’s focus, instead turning to opposition statements. It includes the same quotes from Demirtaş that accused Erdoğan of being a hypocrite, the lack of comment from Çelik, and Aygün. CHP official Tarhan called the incident “disturbing”; CHP Deputy Denizli blamed the government’s “psychology of counter-terrorism” for the bombing; and CHP Deputy Chairman Günaydin cautioned against the use of unchecked intelligence.³¹⁹ BDP officials demanded an explanation for the attack in light of the lack of statements from the AKP. In “Reactions to the bombing” and the second half of “AKP’s first description” *Hürriyet* quotes opposition leaders over twenty times, while citing the AKP and General Staff under five times. While this may be because of the lack of material offered by the AKP and General Staff, the inclusion of such a high number of opposition statements still gives *Hürriyet*’s articles a bias towards the opposition’s viewpoint.

Hürriyet Daily News

HDN published five articles related to the Şırnak air raid, though out of the five, just one reports solely on the incident without political rhetoric. The other four concentrate on the responses of government officials, political representatives, and demonstrators. While the articles quote from both government and opposition voices, the language in each article seems hesitant to criticize the government. The first article, “35 killed in military operation: officials”,

³¹⁷ “AK Parti’den.”

³¹⁸ “AK Parti’den.”

³¹⁹ “AK Parti’den.”

focuses on the event itself and *Hürriyet*'s parent company, the Doğan News Agency; villagers; Reuters; and the mayor of Uludere and governor of Şırnak.³²⁰ The range of sources allows for the most detailed account of events out of *Hürriyet* and *HDN*'s articles, and notably leaves out politicized statements. The report is cautious to ensure every detail is cited, and the phrase “with claims” is inserted before a summary of events. However, the article states that “at least” or “more than” twenty people were killed three times while using the more accurate count of thirty to thirty-five only twice and in the headline.³²¹ These uncertain numbers appear alongside an in-depth account of the military details involved, including the use of thermal cameras, the exact time of the attack, and the graphic scene on the ground. The intricate details of the operation do not match the hesitant report of the death count—when the correct count is included with a clear timeline of the attack, the vague estimate of “over twenty” deaths seems to be deliberately low.

Two articles center on the government's position regarding the raid and its subsequent action: “Şırnak air raid being subjected to review, General Staff says”³²² and “Killings an ‘operational accident,’ says AKP deputy chairman”.³²³ “General Staff” uses information about the death count from the General Staff's statement and Demirtaş's comments. The paper also chose to include a part of the statement claiming that, “the target zone of the air strike was an area frequented by...[the] PKK” closely followed by information about the group's movement

³²⁰ “35 killed in military operation: officials,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/35-killed-in-military-operation-officials.aspx?pageID=238&nID=10273&NewsCatID=341>.

³²¹ “35 killed.”

³²² “Şırnak air raid being subjected to review, General Staff says,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Şırnak-air-raid-being-subjected-to-review-general-staff-says.aspx?pageID=238&nID=10278&NewsCatID=341>.

³²³ “Killings an ‘operational accident,’ says AKP deputy chairman,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/killings-an-operational-accident-says-akp-deputy-chairman-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=10307&NewsCatID=341>.

along the border.³²⁴ It briefly cites Demirtaş when describing the proliferation of smuggling in the region and reports his accusation that Prime Minister Erdoğan is a hypocrite. It also includes two sentences on shopkeepers' closing of their stores in protest in the southeast. The second of these articles, "Şırnak air raid" consists of just four sentences about AKP deputy chairman Hüseyin Çelik's statement that the air raid was an "unfortunate operational accident", a point emphasized in the last sentence of the article as well.³²⁵ His statement also promises an investigation into the incident. *HDN* adds no explanation or speculation to his statement, though it does not include the part of his statement reported in *Hürriyet*, in which Çelik places the bombing in the context of terrorism—a statement opposition leaders decried as an attempt at justifying the bombing.

In the article "Opposition demands explanation of Şırnak air raid," *HDN* reports the opinions of opposition politicians, including BDP deputy Sebahat Tuncel, CHP chairwoman Emine Ulker Tarhan, CHP deputy chair Gökhan Gunaydin, and CHP Tunceli deputy Huseyin Aygun.³²⁶ This article uses the widest range of political sources out of any of the *HDN* articles, though it is much shorter than the *Hürriyet* article about reactions to the bombing. In the quotations, Tuncel accused the General Staff of trying to justify the killings, further saying that the government was sending the message that "you deserve to be killed if you wander in the mountains"; CHP officials, on the other hand, urged caution in reaching conclusions without further information and questioned the military and intelligence operations for their mistake.³²⁷

HDN gives a brief report of the event, though couched in cautious language with qualifiers such

³²⁴ "General Staff says."

³²⁵ "Şırnak air raid."

³²⁶ "Opposition demands explanation of Şırnak air raid," *Hürriyet Daily News*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opposition-demands-explanation-of-Şırnak-air-raid-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=10285&NewsCatID=341>.

³²⁷ "Opposition demands explanation."

as “reportedly”; the report also includes information about the PKK being a terrorist organization. Directly following this statement, it quotes CHP deputy Aygün, who asked, “How can villagers known to have been smuggling goods across the border for years turn into terrorists all of a sudden?” The last article published by *HDN*, “Clashes break out in Southeast Turkey”, examines the protests against the AKP in the southeastern province of Hakkari. It only quotes BDP deputy Esat Canari, who said the AKP was responsible for the “massacre” in Şırnak. It also describes in detail the actions of the protestors, who shouted slogans and “[hurled] stones...before dispersing into side streets.” It does not quote the AKP or any military sources.

Zaman

Zaman printed four articles about Şırnak on 29 December 2011.³²⁸ Two articles, “F-16’s hit smugglers on the Iraq border: 35 killed”³²⁹ and “35 people killed at the Uludere border buried in the morning”³³⁰ examine only the logistics of the attack and the burial of the victims. “Smugglers” quotes the Şırnak governor and Demirtaş. It focuses on the burial preparations, autopsies, and names of the victims. The other article is much shorter, only mentioning burial preparations as reported by Demirtaş.

The article entitled “According to BDP leader Önder, an experience like the 33 second bullet case” quotes BDP Istanbul deputy Sirri Sureyya Onder, who compared the Şırnak “massacre” and the 1943 killings of 33 smugglers, later likening the issue to the movie about Kurdish smuggling, *A Time for Drunken Horses*.³³¹ It also uses Demirtaş’s statement about

³²⁸ Two more short news briefs mentioned the protests in Taksim, but were not directly relevant to voices surrounding the bombing and are therefore not included.

³²⁹ “Irak sınırında F-16’lar kacakçılari vurdu: 35 olu,” *Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_irak-sinirinda-f-16lar-kacakçılari-vurdu-35-olu_1221408.html.

³³⁰ “Uludere sınırında oludrulen 35 kisi sabah defnedilecek,” *Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_uludere-sinirinda-oldurulen-35-kisi-sabah-defnedilecek_1221887.html.

³³¹ “BDP’li Önder’e göre yaşananlar “ikinci 33 kurşun vakası,” *Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20,

Erdoğan's being a hypocrite for bombing his own citizens; it further quotes Interior Minister Idris Naim Şahin as claiming that terrorism sometimes requires such devastating responses.³³² "Protests in Ankara over 35 people killed"³³³ details the Ankara protests in response to the bombing. It quotes protestors who claimed the government used chemical weapons. BDP deputy Demir Çelik is portrayed as supporting the protestors, going as far to say that the government used chemical weapons. The article also mentions that the protests broke up peacefully.

Today's Zaman

Today's Zaman published five articles about the Şırnak air raid on December 29, 2011. Out of the five, four articles have language and themes that focus on the government's reasons for conducting the attack, while one concentrates on the opposition's response. Three of the articles describe details of the government response are about the investigation into the "mistake" and the broader context of terrorism in the region. One of the four articles with language supporting the government is an article that focuses more on the raid itself—though the piece also mentions the questions raised by the incident. Only two articles—"Questions about over airstrike that killed 35 in Southeast"³³⁴ and "Airstrike kills 35 in southeast Turkey, probe underway"³³⁵—describe in significant detail the bombing and reactions of local and national politicians, as the other three articles are only about a page long each.

2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_bdpli-ondere-gore-yasananlar-ikinci-33-kursun-vakasi_1221725.html.

³³² "Önder'e gore yaşananlar."

³³³ "35 kişinin ölümü Ankara'da da protesto edildi," *Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_35-kisinin-olumu-ankarada-da-protesto-edildi_1221837.html.

³³⁴ "Questions about over airstrike that killed 35 in Southeast," *Today's Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015,

<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Uc7J0dk4vYXGY9SeCzZNkXwo?newsId=267130>.

³³⁵ "Airstrike kills 35 in southeast Turkey, probe underway," *Today's Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed

The first article, “Questions abound”, reports the most on the incident itself, heavily quoting the General Staff and National Intelligence Agency while only briefly mentioning Demirtaş.³³⁶ It includes Çelik’s statement, in which he called the bombing an “operational accident” and promised, “The necessary legal action will be taken.”³³⁷ This article places an emphasis on military operations in the region, and the author pens an entire paragraph about the cross-border operations against the PKK that have been occurring with government approval since 2007. It copies another full paragraph from the General Staff’s statement that described the incorrect intelligence that PKK leaders would be in Şırnak the night of December 28. “Questions abound” then speculates about the possibility that PKK militants supplied intelligence operatives within their ranks with false information, saying that “these points suggest that the intelligence failure may have been purposeful and part of a plan to reactivate the PKK in the region.”³³⁸ The article also quotes Reuters and Demirtaş’s statement that Şırnak was “an obvious massacre,” but it discusses opposition views only in one paragraph and in reference to Demirtaş.³³⁹

The other three articles, “Airstrike kills 35 in southeast Turkey, probe underway,”³⁴⁰ “Turkey says border raid saddening, promises no cover up of mistakes”³⁴¹, and “Turkish military says targeted PKK terrorists, probes strikes”³⁴² all use similar language to describe the event,

February 20, 2015,
<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Uc7J0dk4vYXGY9SeCzZNkXwo?newsId=267050>.

³³⁶ “Questions abound.”

³³⁷ “Questions abound.”

³³⁸ “Questions abound.”

³³⁹ “Questions abound.”

³⁴⁰ “Probe underway.”

³⁴¹ “Turkey says border raid saddening, promises no cover up of mistakes,” *Today’s Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015,

<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Uc7J0dk4vYXGY9SeCzZNkXwo?newsId=267113>.

³⁴² “Turkish military says targeted PKK terrorist, probes strikes,” *Today’s Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015,

<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Uc7J0dk4vYXGY9SeCzZNkXwo?newsId=267054>.

though none is as detailed as “Questions abound.” “PKK terrorists” is only three sentences, reports the death of 35 villagers, and says that the General Staff’s drones identified “a group of terrorists...after a tip-off” and the strikes were in “an area with no civilian population.”³⁴³ “Promises no cover ups” is based on Çelik’s press conference after the government announced the Şırnak raid killed civilians, not terrorists. After reporting that the “terrorists” were cigarette smugglers, the article says, “the primary reason behind why the group was there is still unknown” and expresses Çelik’s condolences to the families.³⁴⁴ This article, too, includes information about the PKK’s presence in the region, though only uses Çelik as a source. “Probe underway” quotes the Şırnak governor, the General Staff, an unnamed security official, and Demirtaş. The article uses the same information from the General Staff, Demirtaş, and the unnamed security official as in “Questions abound” and emphasizes the same information about PKK activity in the area, though it places less stress on the investigation aspect of the bombing.³⁴⁵

The one article on opposition statements, “CHP leader calls on government to apologize over the killing of 35 villagers”³⁴⁶ only covers CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu’s opinions, who questions the intelligence used in the operation. However, after quoting Kılıçdaroğlu, the piece again discusses the context of terrorism in the region and the AKP’s statement that, “If there was a mistake, if there was a fault, this will not be covered up.”³⁴⁷ The other opposition politician mentioned in the article is MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, who stressed the importance of an

³⁴³ “PKK terrorists.”

³⁴⁴ “Promises no cover ups.”

³⁴⁵ “Probe underway.”

³⁴⁶ “CHP leader calls on government to apologize over killing of 35 villagers,” *Today’s Zaman*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Uc7J0dk4vYXGY9SeCzZnkXwo?newsId=267147>.

³⁴⁷ “CHP leader.”

investigation.³⁴⁸ In the five articles, government and military officials, the General Staff, and AKP representatives have nearly twice as many quotes regarding the air raid as opposition parties and local governors in the region. While the articles do mention the prevalence of smuggling as a livelihood and the youth of those killed, roughly two-to-three times the space is used to explain why the military thought the group of teenagers were PKK members and why they were justified in holding this belief. The government's involvement is mentioned less than the intelligence service's role in causing the bombing, and government officials are quoted as promising to undertake an impartial and transparent investigation.

Sabah

Sabah published three articles about the Şırnak air strike. One, "Davutoğlu's description of Uludere" is only a brief recounting of the events given by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu during a news conference; he said the government was working to eradicate terrorism and that the government would do its best to ensure a fair investigation.³⁴⁹ The other two articles, "Children of veterans among the dead"³⁵⁰ and "Did F-16's hit civilians?"³⁵¹ focus on the government response and the raid itself, respectively. The article about the investigation quotes the General Staff, Minister of the Interior Şahin, and AKP Deputy Chairman Çelik. This article centers upon Deputy Chairman Çelik's statement that the airstrikes were an "operational error", his promises for a thorough and transparent investigation, and his condolences for the families.

The article elaborates upon his statement by citing Çelik and the General Staff's promises to

³⁴⁸ "CHP leader."

³⁴⁹ "Davutoğlu'ndan Uludere açıklaması," *Sabah*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2011/12/29/davutoglundan-uludere-aciklamasi>.

³⁵⁰ "Ölenler arasında gazi çocuğu var," *Sabah*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2011/12/29/olenler-arasinda-bir-gazi-cocugu-var>.

³⁵¹ "F-16'lar sivilleri mi vurdu," *Sabah*, December 29, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2011/12/29/f16lar-sivilleri-vurdu-iddiasi>.

continue eradicating terrorism in the southeast and Şahin's call for stronger laws against smuggling. The article ends by mentioning the BDP's calls for days of mourning.

The second article, "F-16's?" quotes Şırnak governor Vahid Özkan and BDP Deputy Hasip Kaplan. The article briefly raises the question of why civilians were killed by the F-16 bombardment, as promised in the headline, though it primarily discusses the names of those who died, their burial preparation, and the details of the smugglers' route and wares. It elaborates upon the gruesome events in Şırnak-Uludere, such as the explosion of the smugglers' gas canisters. Like *HDN*, *Sabah* provides clear details of the attack but quotes a death count of "around 20."³⁵² Özkan is only quoted concerning the details of the cause of the smugglers' deaths. Neither article reports politicized statements of opposition parties.

Analysis

Out of the five of the newspapers, *Hürriyet* is the most sympathetic towards the civilians killed and most supportive of the opposition's viewpoints. *Hürriyet* provides the most coverage of opposition opinions and protests against the airstrikes, which are mentioned three times the amount it covers AKP and General Staff statements. *Hürriyet* and *Today's Zaman* were at opposite ends of the political spectrum, as *Today's Zaman* quoted AKP and government officials more than twice the amount it cited opposition politicians. *Hürriyet* is much more politicized than *HDN*—though *HDN* does have a political edge to its reporting as becomes clear in its focus on the AKP and government's statements. Just as *Hürriyet* chose to criticize the government and emphasize government mistakes, *HDN* underreported deaths in one article, and two of its articles on the event cover the government's version of events. Only one *HDN* article is about the opposition, and even then, it is the CHP, not the Kurdish BDP, which provided much more

³⁵² "F-16's?"

strongly-worded quotations against the bombing and the AKP. True to its secularist leanings, *Hürriyet* is critical of the AKP, consistently quoting members of the CHP and the BDP.

Hürriyet's audience, as secular, center-left readers, would be more likely to read articles criticizing the conservative government's actions and sympathizing with the non-militant victims of the bombing, regardless of their views of the PKK. However, *HDN's* reporting confirms the hypothesis that reports for an international audience are more likely to be hypercritical of the PKK rather than the AKP. By publishing stories that heavily favor government sources and focus on the investigation into the operational accident, *HDN* places less stress on the government's mistake itself and more on PKK activity and government's investigation into the event. *HDN* does not feature as much political rhetoric about blame regarding the event as *Hürriyet*, skirting around the issue as much as possible to cover instead the government's next constructive, positive steps. *HDN's* coverage follows my predicted pattern of projecting a positive image of Turkey abroad to woo international support for the Turkish government.

Zaman, like *Hürriyet*, allowed opposition opinions more space in its articles than government opinion, while it also published two strictly factual articles. *Zaman* cited the fewest sources in its articles and kept its reports much shorter than those of the other papers. Unlike the other newspapers, *Zaman* published a long article that quotes protestors. At this time, *Zaman's* editors were far less critical of the AKP than in the following years. Therefore, in a situation in which the government offers little information, *Zaman* keeps its coverage brief and avoids printing anything too damning about the AKP's actions. *Zaman's* coverage includes a human-based, sensationalist angle of the story by quoting protestors and providing details of mourning.

Again, the English version, *Today's Zaman*, appears more sympathetic towards the AKP. It repeatedly favors the government's stance on the issue, allowing opposition leaders' voices

less room in the dialogue. *Today's Zaman* also includes more speculation than *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, and *HDN*; it reports on the highly speculative theory that PKK fighters caused the attack by spreading false information to government forces when no other paper prints this claim. When the article mentions any questions of government actions, the authors of these articles quickly deflect attention towards the terrorism endemic to the region. *Today's Zaman* points to the intelligence service for transmitting incorrect information and blamed the PKK for creating a need for military intervention in Şırnak-Uludere. The relatively low number of politicized articles could have been an attempt to eliminate superfluous political commentary or to use rhetoric from only the most recognizable, high-level politicians—if so, *Zaman's* choice to quote mainly from the head of the BDP and a cabinet member makes more sense.

Sabah is the most pro-governmental paper of the three outlets. With one exception, its mention of BDP's mourning period, it conveys the AKP narrative of events and quotes AKP leaders extensively. The majority of its articles are about the logistics of the raid. The articles with government input cite those who called the raid an operational error and blame the intelligence service rather than a person within the AKP structure. As a newspaper owned by those closely associated with the government, *Sabah's* stance understandably follows the government line closely. Focusing on factual details and not opinions allowed *Sabah* avoid printing anti-government rhetoric that would alienate its conservative, pro-AKP readership.

Öcalan's Nevruz Ceasefire, 2013

On March 21, 2013, the day of Nevruz,³⁵³ Öcalan announced a ceasefire on behalf of the PKK and ordered PKK operatives to retreat from Turkish soil; the announcement came amid a

³⁵³ Nevruz is a holiday celebrated by many people of Turkic, Kurdish, and Persian origin.

peace process started in 2012.³⁵⁴ His statement was read out at a major rally celebrating the Persian holiday of Nevruz in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir. PKK commander Murat Karayilan supported the statement.³⁵⁵ By July of 2013, tensions were once again rising as the PKK began withdrawing its operatives from Turkey. The PKK demanded more action from the Turkish government, including the repeal of an anti-terrorism law that targeted Kurds.³⁵⁶ In October 2014, the ceasefire was officially broken when the Turkish military bombed PKK outposts in Dağlıca.³⁵⁷ As of February 2015, Öcalan once again called for a second ceasefire, though as of the time of writing, it is too soon to tell how this announcement would unfold.

Hürriyet

Hürriyet published eleven articles regarding the Nevruz ceasefire. While foreign, BDP, and AKP reactions are noted as cautiously optimistic and encouraging, many opposition responses go beyond hopeful skepticism and into outright disdain for Öcalan's statement. Three articles cover skepticism regarding the announcement; one, the hope for peace; two, the announcement itself; one, the foreign response to the message; two, the AKP statements; and two are a sample of many politicians' responses. *Hürriyet* quotes non-AKP politicians far more than AKP leaders, and includes far more articles in support of the announcement than reporting negative assessments and predictions. Seven articles express positive messages, and four discuss pessimistic statements.

³⁵⁴ Sebnem Arsu, "Jailed Leader of the Kurds Offers a Truce With Turkey," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/22/world/europe/kurdish-leader-declares-truce-with-turkey.html>.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ "Kurdish PKK rebels tell Turkey to implement reforms," *BBC*, July 19, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23371694>.

³⁵⁷ The Dağlıca incident is discussed below, in the section "Dağlıca Bombing, October 2014."

Those voicing distaste for Öcalan's message include Bahçeli, Güler, and Ahmet Türk. Bahçeli, like Erdoğan, expressed anger at the lack of Turkish flags at the Nevruz ceremony where the truce was announced in the article "Bahçeli: He returned to the show."³⁵⁸ Bahçeli also stated, "Kurdistan is surrounded by treachery on all sides like dark clouds over our homeland."³⁵⁹ He protested that the call for peace was counterproductive to national interests, claimed separatism would run rampant, and said PKK militants would not follow through with their agreement.³⁶⁰ Bahçeli cast blame on the government by remarking that the AKP was "legalizing the PKK" and doubted the government's ability to quell future PKK violence successfully.³⁶¹ The article on Interior Minister Muammer Güler, "Güler: Ban on unveiled Öcalan poster" is two sentences about his opinion that Öcalan posters at the Nevruz celebrations were illegal.³⁶² The article "Peace occurs with honesty" describes co-chairman of the DTK Ahmet Türk's reaction to the message, in which he demands that Kurds "be honest" or lose the trust and backing for the ceasefire from Turks and Kurds alike.³⁶³ He also accuses them of causing "bloodshed" because of their previous lies regarding ceasefires. "You hang Öcalan's coat" quotes Bahçeli, MHP's Oktay Vural, and MHP deputy Özcan Yeniceri, all of whom accuse Kurds of spreading evil and aiming to advance their political power.³⁶⁴

Hürriyet published a positive response from Demirtaş and two articles on the content of Öcalan's message. In "Demirtaş: A shocking step," *Hürriyet* reports Demirtaş's hopeful

³⁵⁸ "Şova döndü," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22869137.asp>.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² "Öcalan posterini açmak yasak," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22861050.asp>.

³⁶³ "Dürüst olunursa barış gerçekleşir," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22863149.asp>.

³⁶⁴ "Öcalan'ın paltosunu asarsın," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22863144.asp>.

message regarding Öcalan's announcement.³⁶⁵ He called Öcalan's truce a "shocking step" towards a new era and a "democratic solution."³⁶⁶ A second article, "İmralı message in Turkish and Kurdish," fairly neutrally discusses the reading of the message in Turkish and Kurdish in İmralı by Pervin Buldan and Sirri Süreyya, though it does mention CHP Vice President Muharrem İnce's disapproval of the lack of Turkish flags.³⁶⁷ Another short article, "Öcalan's coded message" quotes a few lines from Öcalan's statement that emphasize the beginning of "a new era commanded by politics, not weapons."³⁶⁸

The articles on the AKP and foreign responses to the announcement offer a more neutral stance, often congratulating both sides on the truce while expressing caution in celebration. In "US and EU responses to the message,"³⁶⁹ the United States is quoted as congratulating Turkey for the peace agreement, whereas European Union officials are cited as expressing hope for the PKK's message and urged Turkey to follow through with the lead made by the PKK. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland, E.U. European Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Füle, and Foreign Affairs Minister Catherine Ashton are quoted in this article.³⁷⁰ Interestingly, each international group placed the onus of peace on a different group—the U.S. the AKP, the E.U. the PKK.

³⁶⁵ "Demirtaş: Sarsıcı bir adım atılacak," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22865662.asp>.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ "İmralı mesajı hem Türkçe hem Kürtçe," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22863189.asp>.

³⁶⁸ "Öcalan'ın mesajının şifreleri," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22868814.asp>.

³⁶⁹ "İmralı mesajına ABD ve AB'den tepki," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/22870493.asp>.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

Erdoğan's reaction is described in "Erdoğan's first comment," and he is first quoted expressing disdain for the lack of the Turkish flag.³⁷¹ He goes on to say, "the announcement is a positive development" though stresses the importance of follow-through on the part of the PKK.³⁷² The article about Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan, "Öcalan changed the rhetoric of the organization,"³⁷³ provided more background than other sources, including the breakdown of peace negotiations between Turkey and the PKK in Oslo in 2011. Akdoğan said the inclusion of the BDP in talks helped the process. He reported that the President and Prime Minister were hopeful the peace would hold, and asked the BDP to encourage the ceasefire. He described anyone doubting the integrity of the process as "paranoid," thereby dismissing pessimistic claims like those of Bahçeli.³⁷⁴ However, he also cautioned against further divisions in Turkish society. Another article, "Response to Öcalan's statement," offers short statements from many politicians regarding the Nevruz truce, including CHP deputy chairman Gursel Tekin, MHP deputy chairman Mehmet Sandir, Interior Minister Muammer Güler, Deputy Prime Minister Bashir Atalay, Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek, AKP Diyarbakir deputy Ensarioğlu, and Demirtaş.³⁷⁵ All of the AKP politicians had statements like that of Erdoğan's, stressing the application of the truce; Tekin doubted Öcalan's sway with the PKK, and Sandir did not yet have an opinion. Demirtaş's quote expressed hope and support for the ceasefire.

Hürriyet Daily News

³⁷¹ "Erdoğan'dan ilk yorum," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/22868437.asp>.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ "Öcalan örgütün ezberini bozdu," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22870384.asp>.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ "Öcalan'ın açıklamasına tepkiler," *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22866993.asp>.

HDN published five articles regarding Öcalan's Nevruz call for peace. One handles the Nevruz celebrations, one the international reception of the statement, and three the government responses. The article about the Nevruz celebrations, "Fraternity main theme in leaders' Nevruz calls,"³⁷⁶ focuses on President Abdullah Gül's urging those attending Nevruz events to remain peaceful. The article also quotes Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arinç and Prime Minister Erdoğan, who emphasized, "the joy of a joint earnest desire of our nation [Turkey]."³⁷⁷ These politicians welcomed Öcalan's statement with only minor hesitation, a tone reflected by other AKP members. The article also mentioned CHP deputy Sezgin Tanrikulu's bill to celebrate Nevruz, though only in passing.

The three articles on government reactions all concentrate on the AKP. In "Cautious Turkish PM welcomes Öcalan's call for end to armed struggle,"³⁷⁸ *HDN* quotes parts of Erdoğan's statement that stressed patience in testing the strength of the truce, and lamented the lack of the Turkish flag at Nevruz celebrations. The quotes from Erdoğan are mostly positive; about three of the four excerpts from his statement focus on the "positive development," while only one mentions the flag controversy. Erdoğan's aide, Akdoğan, is quoted in "Tone of Öcalan's message matches spirit of the process, says PM's adviser Akdoğan"³⁷⁹ as saying the PKK was making a move towards recognizing "a common history" and fraternity, though urged caution while waiting to see the result of Öcalan's announcement. The segment of Akdoğan's

³⁷⁶ "Fraternity main theme in leaders' Nevruz calls," *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/fraternity-main-theme-in-leaders-nevruz-calls.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43358&NewsCatID=338>.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ "Cautious Turkish PM welcomes Öcalan's call for end to armed struggle," *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/cautious-turkish-pm-welcomes-ocalans-call-for-end-to-armed-struggle-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43389&NewsCatID=338>.

³⁷⁹ "Tone of Öcalan's message matches spirit of the process, says PM's adviser Akdoğan," *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/tone-of-ocalans-message-matches-spirit-of-the-process-says-pms-adviser-Akdogan.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43419&NewsCatID=>

statement included in the article focuses on comments not explicitly related to the ceasefire, such as his approval of Öcalan’s “emphasis on a common history, a common civilization, and a common religion”. The last article about the government, “Wise-men commission may gather outside Parliament,”³⁸⁰ is about the creation of an extra-Parliamentary commission of “wise men” as part of the peace process. The commission was to feature government, civil society, and Kurdish representatives outside of parliament. The article clearly states the commission is an AKP initiative, to distinguish it from a previous CHP attempt to create a “joint parliamentary commission,” and further states the CHP may not support a commission outside of Parliament.³⁸¹ It quotes Erdoğan and CHP leader Sezgin Tanrikulu.

The article about international reactions, “OIC Secretary General commends Turkish government’s ‘determination for peace,’”³⁸² is written around the statement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Secretary General, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu. İhsanoğlu said, “the OIC commends the determination and attempts of the Turkish Government...to terminate the long-standing violence and terrorist activities of the PKK.”³⁸³ The U.S., in a release from Victoria Nuland, and the E.U., in a joint press release from Stefan Füle and Catherine Ashton, were also quoted as applauding the “positive development”, or, as Nuland said, the “Turkish government’s” efforts. Füle and Ashton offered financial support for the peace process.³⁸⁴ The

³⁸⁰ “Wise-men commission may gather outside Parliament,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/wise-men-commission-may-gather-outside-parliament.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43359&NewsCatID=338>.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² “OIC Secretary General commends Turkish government’s ‘determination for peace,’” *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/oic-secretary-general-commends-turkish-governments-determination-for-peace.aspx?pageID=238&nID=43417&NewsCatID=338>.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

European Parliament Socialists and Democrats group chief Hannes Swoboda made a similarly positive statement. None of these groups directly related the call for peace to PKK efforts.

Zaman

Zaman published seven articles regarding Öcalan's Nevruz message. Five are reports and responses from other countries which applaud Öcalan's bid for peace. Two are about Turkish reactions. The first regarding Turkish reactions, "Call for peace welcomed as a positive development," quotes AKP Şanlıurfa deputy Abdülkerim Gök and imam Mullah Kemal Demirel.³⁸⁵ These men focus on the common history between Turks and Kurds, emphasizing Islam, the Battle of Gallipoli, and "brotherhood."³⁸⁶ The second, "TRT Announcer Kırşan evaluates Öcalan's call," quotes radio personality Fethullah Kırşan as being cynical towards Öcalan's statement.³⁸⁷ He called the peace process a failed cycle and Kurdish violence a "chronic problem", and predicted Turkey was "entering a period of legal and constitutional problems."³⁸⁸

The articles about international responses focused on Central Asian, Italian, Dutch, and global media, as well as positive reactions from Amnesty International. "Amnesty International made statements about Öcalan's call" quotes Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Director John Dalhuisen, who called for the Turkish government to "seize the opportunity

³⁸⁵ "Barış çağrısı, olumlu bir gelişme olarak karşılandı," *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_baris-cagrisi-olumlu-bir-gelisime-olarak-karsilandi_2068197.html.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ "TRT Şeş Koordinatörü Kırşan, Öcalan'ın çağrısını değerlendirdi," *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_trt-ses-koordinatörü-kirsan-ocalanin-cagrisini-degerlendirdi_2068181.html.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

created by PKK chief Abdullah Öcalan.³⁸⁹ Central Asian, specifically Uzbek and Kyrgyz, news outlets are the feature of “Central Asian media: Öcalan declares peace,” and the article includes pieces of Central Asia’s Russian news site, Fergana; Uzbek broadcasting service Ozodlik; and Kyrgyz Azattyk Radio.³⁹⁰ All three headlines picked by *Zaman* focused on Öcalan’s announcement and made no mention of the government’s role in peace talks. The article about Italian reactions, “Öcalan’s call finds a place in Italian press,” quotes media group Rai’s news channel, *La Repubblica* newspaper, and paper *Il Sole 24 Ore*.³⁹¹ It mentions the headlines for each news outlet, all of which mention Öcalan’s ceasefire and the Kurds’ willingness to end hostilities—again, no mention of the government. “Öcalan’s call to lay down arms in the Dutch press” is about paper *De Volkskrant*, which reported on the Nevruz crowds in Diyarbakir and presented a brief history of the PKK’s “armed struggle.”³⁹² The last article, “The world has seen Öcalan’s message,” mentions the BBC, the *Guardian*, Germany’s *De Volkskrant* and *Der Spiegel*, Russia’s Voice, Italian news, the *New York Times*, French AFP, and the Central Asian news agencies.³⁹³ Most of the quotations from these international news sources are about the Nevruz celebrations and Öcalan’s message, though the BBC does mention Erdoğan’s role in peace talks briefly. All papers celebrated the peace process, many advancing a theme of a “new and peaceful” Turkey.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ “Uluslararası Af Örgütü, Öcalan’ın çağrısı ile ilgili açıklama yaptı,” *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_uluslararasi-af-orgutu-ocalanin-cagrisi-ile-ilgili-aciklama-yapti_2068179.html.

³⁹⁰ “Orta Asya basını: Öcalan barış ilan etti,” *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_orta-asya-basini-ocalan-baris-ilan-etti_2068156.html.

³⁹¹ “Öcalan’ın çağrısı İtalyan basınında da yer buldu,” *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_ocalanin-cagrisi-italyan-basininda-da-yer-buldu_2068139.html.

³⁹² “Öcalan’ın silah bırakma çağrısı Hollanda basınında,” *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_ocalanin-silah-birakma-cagrisi-hollanda-basininda_2068133.html.

³⁹³ “Öcalan’ın mesajını dünya böyle gördü,” *Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_ocalanin-mesajini-dunya-boyle-gordu_2068131.html.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

Today's Zaman

Today's Zaman published five articles covering Öcalan's announcement. Two detail European responses to Öcalan's statement, and three are about the ceasefire itself and responses to it within Turkey. *Today's Zaman* describes Öcalan's message as "historic" and "long-awaited" in "Öcalan calls for cease-fire, PKK withdrawal in historic message."³⁹⁵ It quotes his message of hope and his attitude that the Kurdish struggle "against all kinds of pressure, violence, and oppression" was entering a new stage by relinquishing the PKK's previously violent approach and turning to one of unity instead.³⁹⁶ This article also outlines Öcalan's struggles in quieting extreme factions in favor of supporters of democracy.

"Observers hopeful about Öcalan's message, lack of Turkish flags raises questions" quotes Öcalan, Radikal columnist Cengiz Çandar, AKP Gaziantep deputy Samil Tayyar, Ankara Strategy Institute head Mehmet Ozcan, CHP deputy Ensar Ogut, and Interior Minister Muammer Güler.³⁹⁷ Çandar dismissed claims that rhetoric of a "Kurdistan" hurt reconciliation efforts, saying, "The peace process has begun. We should be happy."³⁹⁸ Tayyar agreed, pointing to "brotherhood" between Kurds and Turks. Ozcan, Ogut, and Güler all decried the lack of Turkish flags and expressed doubt towards the sincerity of the peace efforts. "Kurdish public, intellectuals laud Öcalan's message" looks at the Kurds invested in the peace talks, including Kurdish intellectual Umit Firat, HAK-PAR deputy chairman Bayram Bozyel, *Today's Zaman* columnist Orhan Miroğlu, and Mus resident Erhan Yiğit; it also describes the crowds in

³⁹⁵ "Öcalan calls for cease-fire, PKK withdrawal in historic message," *Today's Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/todays-zaman_ocalan-calls-for-cess-fire-pkk-withdrawal-in-historic-message_2068220.html.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ "Observers hopeful about Öcalan's message, lack of Turkish flags raises questions," *Today's Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Kz6BtFzUMecy8H-ubF-aHPUw?newsId=310380>.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

Diyarbakir.³⁹⁹ All of the Kurds quoted expressed excitement at a step forward in Kurdish-Turkish relations. The article mentions the toll the PKK's insurgency has had on Turkey, i.e., it “drained state coffers, stunted development of the mainly Kurdish Southeast and scarred Ankara's human rights record.”⁴⁰⁰

European Kurds also expressed support, as “Europe's Kurds welcome ceasefire call, await Turkish response” reports.⁴⁰¹ Among those cited are Öcalan's deputy in Europe, Zubeyir Aydar, and Kurdish businessmen, like London chef Kiro Aga, Paris translator Berivan Akyol, and Berlin Kurdish Center head Ibrahim Ökuduçi. They all welcomed the “freedom” the call for peace offered and hoped the government would follow through on the agreements as well though many expressed caution based on previous ceasefires' failures. The article also mentions Erdoğan's “considerable risks” during his quest for peace and the PKK's designation as a terrorist group.⁴⁰² “EU welcomes PKK leader Öcalan's cease-fire call” quotes Füle and Ashton's joint press release and parts of Öcalan's speech.⁴⁰³ It conveys the EU's hopeful message and offers of financial support.

Sabah

Sabah published five articles about Öcalan's Nevruz peace announcement, two about the government response, one about the response from the U.S., one about Kurdish responses, and

³⁹⁹ “Kurdish public, intellectuals laud Öcalan's message,” *Today's Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Kz6BtFzUMEcY8H-ubF-aHPUw?newsId=310381>.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ “Europe's Kurds welcome ceasefire call, await Turkish response,” *Today's Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Kz6BtFzUMEcY8H-ubF-aHPUw?newsId=310408>.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ “EU welcomes PKK leader Öcalan's cease-fire call,” *Today's Zaman*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=Kz6BtFzUMEcY8H-ubF-aHPUw?newsId=310406>.

one about the history of Nevruz and its relations to the Kurds today. The article “Historic Nevruz” focuses on the historic 2013 Nevruz celebrations in Diyarbakir, printing large segments of Öcalan’s peace statement and the speech of Diyarbakir mayor Osman Baydemir.⁴⁰⁴ It provides a list of the major Kurdish figures at the rally, such as Demirtaş and Leyla Zana, the security issues, and the format of the Nevruz rally. The pieces of Öcalan’s speech included references to an ancient brotherhood between Turks and Kurds going back to “the Tigris and Euphrates valley” and “a new Turkey and new Middle East.”⁴⁰⁵ The article “This is Öcalan’s Nevruz message” is simply a recounting of Öcalan’s speech.⁴⁰⁶ The article about the BDP response, “BDP’s response to Öcalan’s message,” quotes the speeches of Demirtaş and BDP member Gülşan Kışanak.⁴⁰⁷ *Sabah* uses their messages of solidarity and support for peace; both men’s excerpts call for Kurdish backing, and Kışanak is quoted as saying “we’ve given you the Kurdish people the task of following the path of democracy.”⁴⁰⁸

The articles about AKP and government statements were much longer than those about the Kurdish response. In the report about Erdoğan’s statement, “Prime Minister’s quick reaction,” half the space is used to describe his trip to the Netherlands, and the other half expresses his hope about the peace.⁴⁰⁹ The segment about his thoughts on the peace, however, focuses on his disappointment in the “serious lack” of Turkish flags in Diyarbakir and his wariness about whether the PKK would follow through with Öcalan’s ceasefire. The

⁴⁰⁴ “Tarihi Nevruz,” *Sabah*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/21/tarihi-nevruz>.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ “İşte Öcalan’ın Nevruz mesajı,” *Sabah*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/21/iste-ocalanin-nevruz-mesaji>.

⁴⁰⁷ “Öcalan’ın çağrısına BDP’den yanıt,” *Sabah*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/21/ocalanin-cagrisina-bdpten-yanit>.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ “Başbakan’dan flaş açıklama,” *Sabah*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/21/basbakandan-flas-aciklama>.

government comments in “First comment from the government” are centered on Interior Minister Muammer Güler’s statements, solely quoting Güler.⁴¹⁰ He articulated wariness, saying he “needed to see the application” of Öcalan’s statements to believe them.⁴¹¹ He also stated his anger at the lack of Turkish flags at the Nevruz rally.

Analysis

Hürriyet and *HDN* both emphasize the positive elements of and reactions to the Nevruz announcement and, to a certain extent, downplay the comments from those doubting the truce would hold. *Hürriyet* provides a more balanced view of opinions by including Bahçeli’s, Güler, and Türk’s statements against the use of Kurdish banners and lack of Turkish flags. *Hürriyet* offers more detail about how major international players received Öcalan’s message than *HDN*, though this could be because of its Turkish audience—*HDN* would not need to report international reactions to an international audience, as foreign readers would probably already know their governments’ thoughts on the issue. When it does report on the international community’s reactions, *HDN* devotes its attention to the OIC to offer a less-Western oriented view. *HDN* focuses more on Turkish responses from Erdoğan and his closest aid and top ministers. Rather than using space to quote their upset at the lack of Turkish flags, the quotations *HDN* chose project a positive image of peace efforts on the side of the PKK and the government. It also offers a detailed account of the “wise men commission.” *Hürriyet* uses a wider variety of sources in its articles, though *HDN* addresses a different range of topics, like the

⁴¹⁰ “Hükümetten ilk yorum,” *Sabah*, March 21, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2013/03/21/hukumetten-ilk-aciklama>.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

commission and the OIC's reaction. Both avoid using too many comments that cast doubt upon the strength of the ceasefire.

Zaman conveys even more optimistic messages than *Hürriyet*'s papers. *Zaman* acts as an ambassador for the good will surrounding the peace statement coming from other countries. It also mentions the importance of improved relations between the government and PKK and quotes those who are hopeful for a more democratic future. It includes a negative Turkish reaction from Kirsan, but then publishes two positive statements from Demirel and Gök. *Zaman* offers a different set of foreign responses than *Hürriyet*, mainly taking its statements from international news media instead of international politicians; these headlines range more broadly as well, quoting from Central Asian to Italian news outlets and NGO press releases. Notably, *Zaman* includes content that credits the PKK, rather than the AKP, for the step towards peace.

Today's Zaman follows its parent's lead, celebrating the new steps in the peace process. *Today's Zaman* downplays the flag controversy and includes more about Kurdish involvement when describing the peace agreements. *Today's Zaman* also couches its reports in more background on the conflict than other papers; the contrast between the wear of the war and the hope of peace magnified the positive statements about the peace process. It skirts around the flag issue for the most part, as those complaints are less relevant for an international audience. It makes sense that *Today's Zaman* glossed over the flag issue in order to present the most professional, relevant image of Turkey to foreign readers. It quotes more Kurds than the other newspapers and is the only one to gather reactions from European Kurds. Both versions of *Zaman* provide more positive language about the Kurds and more quotations emphasizing brotherhood and Islam than either edition of *Hürriyet*. The more accepting views of Kurds fits with the Gülenist ideal of pan-Islamic cooperation, and the inclusion, though not focus on,

national ideals seems to fit as well. However, as mentioned in Chapter Two, Gülenists agree more with the Kemalist response to the Kurdish issue rather than with the AKP's, which explains why *Zaman* provides more background to the conflict in its articles.

Sabah's articles about Nevruz appear to be in line with its political message as well, celebrating the peace in neutral and AKP-dominated quotes. Its overwhelming focus on the factual topics surrounding Nevruz and the thoughts of AKP leaders favors the government position. It mentions more about the lack of flags than do the other papers, specifically quoting Erdoğan and Güler—Güler being a figure mentioned less in other coverage. Öcalan's statement is offered without as much commentary by other figures; AKP quotations cast high levels of doubt on the PKK's ability to follow through with the agreement. When discussing Erdoğan's opinions on Öcalan's message, *Sabah* does not stay on topic, but turns to another of Erdoğan's agendas: his negotiations on an unrelated topic occurring in the Netherlands. The focus on different events or solely rhetoric in articles about the Diyarbakir rally is telling about *Sabah*'s reflection of the government's wariness regarding the peace process.

In this situation, the Turkish edition of each newspaper could serve its best interests by reporting the Nevruz truce from almost any angle. After thirty years of battle between the Turkish government and the PKK, their domestic and foreign audiences would, for the most part, agree that Öcalan's announcement was a positive development for Turkey and its Kurdish populations. *Hürriyet*'s neutral reporting on the announcement and hopeful rhetoric from politicians would appear uncontroversial to its audience, though its inclusion of the flag controversy would appeal to its secularly nationalist readers. *Zaman*'s emphasis on the role of Islam and brotherhood in the truce fits with its audience's pious beliefs, and its focus on international reactions allowed the paper to skirt around reporting on the AKP too much after its

Gülenist owners and the AKP fell out in late 2012. *Sabah*'s relatively heavy weighting of the flag controversy compared to the other papers again fits its pro-government stance. Its attention was on Erdoğan more than on the Nevruz announcement—if this editing choice was not because of readership preferences, then the publishers were ensuring that their audience came away with a heavily pro-Erdoğan understanding of the events surrounding the Nevruz ceasefire.

Each paper's content on international reactions and its geographic focus are equally as telling as the rhetoric the papers quoted the most. *Sabah*'s brief mention of foreign messages on the issue is only about the United States and is the only "reactions" article the paper published. *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, and their English counterparts have more than one article about foreign reactions. *Hürriyet* pulls its headlines from Europe and the United States. *Zaman*, related as it is to a pan-Turkic, pan-Islamic belief system, includes these reactions but extends the reach further to Central Asian sources as well. The international stories included in each paper reveal not only what their audiences want to know but also what international audience the papers cater and respond.

Dağlıca Bombing, 2014

Event

On October 13, 2014, Turkish warplanes bombed PKK positions in Dağlıca, a town near the Iraqi border.⁴¹² According to the Turkish military, the bombing was "in response to PKK shelling of a military outpost."⁴¹³ The PKK were using rocket-propelled grenades and small-

⁴¹² "Turkish jets bomb Kurdish PKK rebels near Iraq," *BBC*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29611582>.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

arms weapons to attack the post for three days before the government retaliated.⁴¹⁴ The damage caused by the bombing was disputed, with the government claiming that it caused “significant damage” and Kurds asserting that the strike caused no confirmable casualties.⁴¹⁵

Hürriyet

Hürriyet published two articles about the air strike. One, “Response to harassing fire in Dağlıca”⁴¹⁶, is simply a report of the General Staff’s statement about the exchange of fire between the PKK and government forces in Dağlıca. It calls the PKK’s fire near Dağlıca “harassing” and says fire was immediately returned. The second article, “Bombing from Turkish warplanes,” is a more detailed account of the strike, though again only quotes the General Staff.⁴¹⁷ The General Staff reported that Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu had knowledge of the actions, and that PKK operatives fled the Dağlıca area due to the strikes. It also mentions that the F-16 strike was the first military action taken since the beginning of the 2013 peace talks.

Hürriyet Daily News

HDN published one article on the renewal of Turkish air strikes in the southeast, “Turkish fighter jets bomb PKK positions for first time since start of peace bid.”⁴¹⁸ The article offers five short paragraphs about the military strikes—the first since the 2013 peace agreements, a fact the

⁴¹⁴ Constanze Letsch, “Turkish jets bombard Kurdish positions,” *The Guardian*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/14/turkish-jets-bombard-kurdish-positions-pkk>.

⁴¹⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/14/turkish-jets-bombard-kurdish-positions-pkk>

⁴¹⁶ “Dağlıca’da taciz ateşine karşılık verildi,” *Hürriyet*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/27381717.asp>.

⁴¹⁷ “Türk savaş uçakları bombaladı,” *Hürriyet*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/27380856.asp>.

⁴¹⁸ “Turkish fighter jets bomb PKK positions for first time since start of peace bid,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-fighter-jets-bomb-pkk-positions-for-first-time-since-start-of-peace-bid.aspx?pageID=238&nID=72941&NewsCatID=341>.

article mentions twice. It also supplies the context of PKK activity in the southeast and the military logistics, though more surprisingly, it devotes one of its five paragraphs to discuss the “violent protests against the government’s politics over...ISIL’s advance.”⁴¹⁹ While other articles were published about Kurdish protests, none mentioned the airstrikes against the PKK.

Zaman

Zaman published two articles about the air strikes. The first, “Airstrikes against PKK”⁴²⁰ quotes the military’s Chief of Staff and the General Staff. It cites the Chief of Staff as saying that the attacks were initiated by PKK aggression, and that strikes led to “serious casualties.” The General Staff’s quote blamed the attacks on the “open harassment” the PKK had directed towards military outposts in Daligca. The article calls the response “severe” and gives details about the launching of the strike. The second article, “Tunceli conflict”⁴²¹ gives a brief summary of the exchange of fire between the PKK and the Gendarmerie Station in Tunceli before the commencement of air operations. The article is only five sentences.

Today’s Zaman

Today’s Zaman published two articles regarding the air strikes. One, “Fragile talks with PKK are in peril due to escalating violence,” quotes *Hürriyet Daily News* about the logistics of the strikes for half the article, and describes the reluctance of the PKK to negotiate in the other half.⁴²² After discussing the air strike, *Today’s Zaman* focuses on the Kurds fleeing from Kobani

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ “PKK’ya hava operasyonu,” *Zaman*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_pkkya-hava-operasyonu_2250516.html.

⁴²¹ “Tunceli’de çatışma,” *Zaman*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_tuncelide-catisma_2250438.html.

⁴²² “Fragile talks with PKK are in peril due to escalating violence,” *Today’s Zaman*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015,

into Turkey and Kurdish feelings of “betrayal” because of Turkey’s inaction to help the mainly Kurdish inhabitants of Kobani. Öcalan’s threat to halt the settlement of Kurds was met with the AKP’s releasing release of new resettlement plans. While the article purports to focus on the air strikes, it includes nearly a page of political information regarding Öcalan and the government’s negotiations about Kurdish settlements. The article quotes the PKK’s website as well.

The second article, “Turkish fighter jets strike PKK targets in southeast Turkey,” focuses only on the government’s military actions against the PKK.⁴²³ Again quoting *Hürriyet Daily News*, the article outlined the military strikes against PKK fighters in the Dağlıca region. It quotes the PKK’s claim that the military violated the ceasefire though no damage was caused, while the military claimed that the strike “caused ‘major damage’ to the PKK.”⁴²⁴ It briefly mentioned the possibility that peace talks, initiated in 2012, would collapse.

Sabah and Daily Sabah

Sabah published two short articles on the air strikes. One, “Attack on police in Tunceli and Hakkâri,” only reports that PKK operatives were firing upon the Dağlıca border post and that security forces from the Tunceli Gendarmerie Battalion struck back.⁴²⁵ When the “harassment” continued, fighter planes attacked the PKK positions. The second, “Warplanes bomb PKK,” quotes the General Staff, who stated, “the PKK was given immediate retribution for their

<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=J1mSKtY+rEc4CdoYRtCg6eDd?newsId=361624>.

⁴²³ “Turkish fighter jets strike PKK targets in southeast Turkey,” *Today’s Zaman*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015,

<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=J1mSKtY+rEc4CdoYRtCg6eDd?newsId=361541>.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ “Tunceli ve Hakkâri’de karakollara saldırı,” *Sabah*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2014/10/14/tunceli-ve-hakkride-karakollara-saldiri>.

opening fire” and repeats the claim that the military inflicted heavy casualties on the PKK.⁴²⁶ It also states that Prime Minister Davutoglu knew of the operation and approved it.

Daily Sabah published one article about the air strikes in the southeast, “Turkish warplanes hit PKK targets in southeast.”⁴²⁷ It consisted of two sentences, the first of which simply mentions that this was the “first significant air operation against the militants” after the beginning of the latest peace process.⁴²⁸ The second sentence quotes the government line regarding the air strikes having caused “major damage” to the PKK. No PKK statement is mentioned.

Analysis

The lack of attention paid to the renewal of significant Turkish military operations against the PKK is significant for all three papers. *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, *Sabah*, *Daily Sabah*, and *HDN* only report on the military’s version of events; *Today’s Zaman* is the only paper to include any statement from a PKK source, despite its brevity. Their use of the same quotations and *Today’s Zaman’s* outright use of information from *HDN*, suggest that the papers have consensus on the issue. None quotes opposition politicians, and barely any ink, so to speak, is spent on the event. Instead, while perusing the papers for these articles, I found the main Kurdish issue was that of Kurdish protests against Turkey’s lack of support for the Syrian town of Kobani. Perhaps these papers are airing the opinion that in the face of ISIS/ISIL, the PKK is simply a minor issue, or that interest in Kobani’s crisis outweighs the end of the 2013 ceasefire’s application.

⁴²⁶ “Savaş uçakları PKK'yı bombaladı,” *Sabah*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2014/10/14/savas-ucaklari-pkkyi-bombaladi>.

⁴²⁷ “Turkish warplanes hit PKK targets in southeast,” *Daily Sabah*, October 14, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2014/10/14/turkish-warplanes-hit-pkk-targets-in-southeast>.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

In October 2014, the rise of the Islamic State was making headlines globally. In Turkey, the fighting was especially close to home: the battle over the town of Kobani was clearly visible from the Turkish side of the border. News regarding Kurds at this time centered upon their anger at Turkey's lack of intervention against the Islamic State, particularly because Kobani is a majority-Kurdish city. Both national and international audiences would be more concerned with these international events than with a relatively small-scale skirmish between the military and PKK, even if this skirmish does mark the end of the peace process started in 2012. If the readership of these papers did want to hear more about the Dağlıca incident, they would have had a difficult time finding information about it in these papers on account of the little attention it is given. By not reporting on Dağlıca, all three papers kept the incident from becoming a large issue.

Conclusion

The results of this analysis support the hypotheses that Turkish newspapers alter their coverage of the Kurdish conflict in accordance with political biases and that dailies soften or remove said political biases in their English language editions. Despite the differences among the Turkish language dailies, their English versions were remarkably similar on account of the lack of political rhetoric. A summary of the trends and implications of the analysis are included below in the conclusion.

Conclusion

Summary of Analysis

The papers follow the trends predicted in this thesis, with the exception of *Zaman*: in domestic editions, newspapers were more overt about their political leanings, while in international editions they focused on political statements much less. That is not to say that caution was not in full evidence in the domestic sphere, as no paper offered an opinion on government actions directly—instead, they conveyed their biases more subtly through their choice of sources. *Hürriyet*, for example, relied mostly on opposition parties for quotations, while *Sabah* turned to AKP members for its information or, in a situation with few AKP statements, like the case of the Şırnak bombing, left politicized statements out of its coverage. *Zaman*, as anticipated, moved away from supporting the AKP, its main source of citations in coverage of the Şırnak bombing in 2011, to focusing on a pro-Islamic message without an emphasis on any one party during its reporting of the Nevruz ceasefire. Surprisingly, however, unlike what I hypothesized, *Zaman* did not necessarily show support for Kurdish expressions of identity or independence; rather, its pan-Islamic message was broader and it made no statements favoring Kurdish autonomy. Nevertheless, all papers' political leanings are certainly present, and the method of presenting them through sources is the type of subtlety I predicted would occur in this era of self-censorship.

The papers followed a similar method when catering to a certain geographic audience, which was demonstrated in coverage of the Nevruz announcement. *Sabah* mentioned only the US and EU reactions, the two most positive and powerful voices of all the foreign statements; *Hürriyet* focused on these statements, while *HDN* reported the same reactions with the addition of a religiously oriented group. *Zaman*'s stance as a Gülenist organization shone through when

covering this event because of its inclusion of Central Asian reactions and *Today's Zaman's* interviews with European Kurds. Only religiously-based *Zaman* and *Today's Zaman* afforded non-Western and Kurdish worldviews so much coverage. Each newspaper also covered the Nevruz announcement the most, probably because it was the only positive, non-violent event of the three included in this study.

Another overarching trend was the lack or reversal of politicization in the English language dailies. *HDN* included AKP statements in its coverage of Şırnak, leaving out opposition statements, as did *Today's Zaman*. Both English dailies skirted around the flag controversy at the Nevruz celebrations that featured so prominently in Turkish newspapers. The English editions of the three papers closely resembled one another, particularly in their lack of coverage of the Dağlica skirmish. This, too, matches my hypothesis that coverage for international audiences would be tempered to provide a positive image of the government abroad. However, the lack of political rhetoric in these papers could also be due to the irrelevance of such rhetoric for a non-Turkish audience.

The final theme exhibited in these papers is their treatment of the PKK and the Kurds. In both domestic and international editions, each paper repeatedly calls the PKK a terrorist group and does not spend any print space praising the organization—even during the Nevruz peace, they all recounted the tradition of violence of the group. However, each paper was careful to define the PKK as a terrorist organization and differentiate it from the non-affiliated Kurdish public. The only time the newspapers blurred the line between the PKK and the Kurds was in the English coverage of the Şırnak bombing, in which the papers emphasized the PKK's history in the region repeatedly. As predicted, the coverage of the PKK-government relationship changed over time, diminishing as other issues like ISIS became more important.

Implications

The findings of this study allow for a deeper understanding of the politics and international considerations surrounding the Kurdish issue in the Turkish press. The most significant regarding overall bias here is that the international editions of each paper are far less politicized than their Turkish counterparts and tend to gloss over anti-government rhetoric. This means that international readers are supplied less political detail than Turkish readers and may miss key happenings in Turkey. Turkish newspapers are also subtle about their biases, never explicitly stating an opinion and instead cherry-picking sources that reveal their ideological and geographic preferences. This demonstrates the level of close examination required to discern these biases in practice, as well as the self-censorship currently involved in the press.

The rosier view of the Turkish government in English dailies means international audiences will be less likely than Turkish audiences to receive news decrying government actions against the Kurds. A criterion for the success of Kurdish movements, violent or otherwise, is international sympathy for the Kurds' struggle against the Turkish government. If the situation of Kurds in Turkey is portrayed in a neutral or pro-government light to the global community, Kurdish movements will lose international support, which could be damaging to their causes.

The other far-reaching implication of the present study is that it reveals a major trend in the portrayal of Kurds in Turkish language papers. For most of their history, Turkish Kurds have been demonized or stereotyped on account of violent movements within their community. These papers, however, define the PKK as its own entity and clearly distinguished between the PKK, the BDP, and the Kurdish population in general. This could reflect a changing attitude within Turkey towards the Kurdish community and their non-violent and political organizations. As

newspapers either drive or reveal this change within civil society, they could also signal a greater understanding of and respect for the Kurdish community by the government. Turkey's prominence and relative stability within the region could encourage more liberal Kurdish policies to its neighbors, particularly Syria and Iran.

Limitations

Three factors proved to be large limitations of this work: language ability, time, and location. My Turkish is of beginning-intermediate proficiency, and finding and translating Turkish articles took many hours and the help of online translators. Someone with fluent Turkish would be able to study more documents and spend less time translating them. With more time, this study could have included many more events and newspapers for analysis in order to provide further proof of its findings. Lastly, location played a role in the ability to study papers—my access was only to online archives, which for many papers only went back as far as 2000, some only to 2011. Being able to access a print archive in Turkey would have expanded the scope of the work.

Areas for Further Study

My work has revealed the need for further study into the political differences between Turkish and English language dailies regarding topics other than Kurdish violence. Results also argue for an expanded study of Kurdish violence in other newspapers, including those in other countries with large Kurdish populations. An extended version of this thesis would also add valuable insight into the field of Turkish media analysis. Other ways to approach the politicization of newspapers regarding the Kurds include a survey of Turkish newspaper readers' attitudes towards the Kurds, a long-term analysis of newspapers' coverage of Kurdish violence

going back to the formation of the PKK, and/or an analysis of Kurdish media since the rise of the AKP.

Appendix A: List of Parties and Abbreviations

- AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
- BDP: Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, Peace and Democracy Party (Turkey)
- CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party (Turkey)
- CJP: Committee to Protect Journalists
- DDKO: Doğu Devrimci Kültür Ocakları, Revolutionary Organization for Eastern Culture (Turkey)
- DEHAP: Demokratik Halk Partisi, Democratic People's Party (Turkey)
- DEP: Demokrasi Partisi, Democracy Party (Turkey)
- DEV-GENÇ: Devrimci Gençlik, Revolutionary Youth (Turkey)
- EU: European Union
- FP: Fazilet Partisi, Virtue Party (Turkey)
- HADEP: Halkın Demokrasi Partisi, People's Democracy Party (Turkey)
- HAK-PAR: Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi, Rights and Freedoms Party (Turkey)
- HEP: Halkın Emek Partisi, People's Labor Party (Turkey)
- Hiwa: Hope (Iraq)
- HRW: Human Rights Watch
- KDP Türkiye: Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi, Kurdistan Democratic Party (Turkey)
- KDP-I: Partî Dêmkirafî Kurdistanî Êran, Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (Iran)
- KDP: Partîya Demokrata Kurdistanê, Kurdish Democratic Party (Iraq)
- Khoybun: Independence (Turkey and Syria)
- Komala JK: Komala-i Jiyanawî Kurdistan, The Committee for the Revival of Kurdistan (Iran)
- Peshmerga: Iraqi Kurdish military forces
- PKK: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, Kurdistan Workers' Party (Turkey)
- PUK: Yekêtiy Niştîmaniy Kurdistan, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Iraq)
- Rizgari Kurd: Kurdish Liberalization (Iraq)
- RP: Refah Partisi, Welfare Party (Turkey)
- Shurish: Revolution (Iraq)

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