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The Failure of the Peace Process with the Turkish Kurds:

A Rational Choice Approach

Master's thesis

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Olomouc 2019

I declare that I am the author of this master's thesis and all the sources I have used have been properly cited and acknowledged.

In Olomouc on ……………   …………………..

Matěj Buček

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Introduction

Kurds represent one of the largest stateless ethnic groups in the world. An approximate number of 25–35 million Kurds inhabit the areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Armenia. The political situation of ethnic Kurds varies significantly in each of these countries. In Iraq and recently in Syria, the Kurds have achieved a certain degree of autonomy, but such accomplishments have been preceded by a long political struggle involving violent conflict as well as sudden regional developments. In today's Turkey, there are approximately 15 million Kurds, making up almost 20 % of the total population (cia.gov, 2018). The story of the Turkish Kurds throughout the 20th century has a been a one of violence and state repression. The Turkish republic has traditionally adopted a hostile approach towards the Kurdish demands of independence or autonomy and has even denied their ethnic identity altogether. Under such circumstances, a revolutionary Kurdish group, with goals of Kurdish independence reached through a violent struggle, emerged – The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Yet with the changing course of the Turkish politics and the rise of a new party towards the parliamentary majority, the Turkish government eventually changed its strategy towards the Kurds and the recent years saw the initiation of an unprecedented peace process with the PKK with ambitions to finally resolve the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

Fig. 1: Kurdish-inhabited areas (bbc.com, 2017)
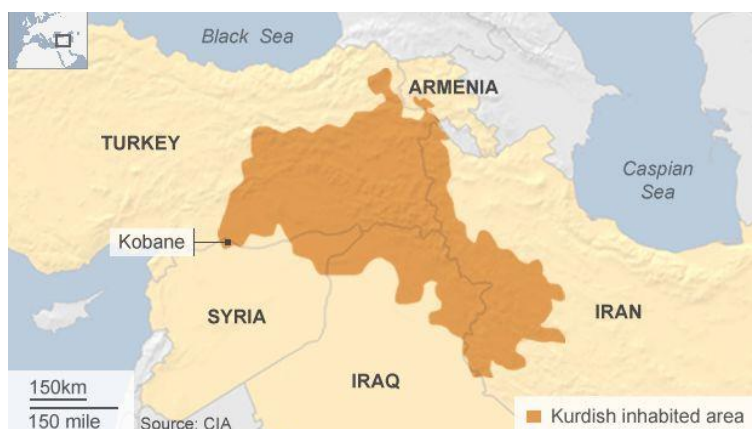
The main aim of this thesis is to analyse the peace process in Turkey that took place in the years 2013–2015 and explain its eventual failure. The question: *What led the actors to the decision to end the peace process?* will be answered through the use of

rational choice theory. In order to be able to fully explain the rationale of both the Turkish government and the PKK throughout the negotiations, it is necessary to first understand the nature of the conflict which has been going on from the very beginning of the modern Turkish republic. The language used during the negotiations, the presence of certain taboos, the role of deeply held beliefs and important individuals were a direct result of the conflict's long history. Furthermore, the peace process was preceded by a number of attempts by both sides of the conflict to engage in negotiations. These attempts played a major role in shaping the final form of the peace process and a good understanding of them is essential in determining the motives of key actors and the perceptions of their situation regarding the conflict. The long-term and short-term historical context of the conflict will be approached in the first and second chapters.

Rational choice theory constitutes the theoretical framework through which will the peace process be analysed. The decision to use rational choice theory stems from the theory's economic outlook on the behaviour of both the group and the individual, capable of identifying objective factors explaining the decisions taken by the actors. Rational choice theory operates under the basic assumptions that actors are engaged in a cost-benefit analysis and are always in pursuit of their self-interest above anything else. The purpose of the third chapter will be to explain how rational choice theory approaches the issue of conflict resolution, and to put forward a number of conditions determining the likely outcome of the negotiations. Furthermore, there are many cases of the use of rational choice theory in conflict resolution, creating an opportunity to draw parallels between the individual cases.

In the last chapter, the main goal of this thesis will be fulfilled. Rational choice theory will be applied to the case of Turkish peace process. By identifying the political circumstances of the peace process and explaining the influence they had on the calculations of the negotiating parties, it will be possible to establish the main reasons leading to the failure of the peace process and the eventual return to violence. The detailed knowledge of the conflict's history will be as important as the history of the peace process itself for determining the conditions under which the actors concluded that the continuation of negotiations is no longer in their best interest. The Colombian peace process will be used as a point of comparison, serving as model case of a successful peace process according to rational choice theory, to further

highlight the shortcomings of the case of Turkey. Lastly, it is also important to point out the obvious limitations of rational choice theory. It is not the purpose of this thesis to explain the failure of the peace process in its entirety. Rational choice theory can only address the breakdown of a peace process as a result of a systematic failure in the process of bargaining.

Despite the failure of the Turkish peace process, it has been the first genuine attempt to resolve the Kurdish issue non-violently in the history of the conflict. It is highly likely that the Turkish government, if favourable circumstances arise once again, might pursue a new peace process. Whether intentionally or due to the lack of expertise or information, the Turkish peace process was accompanied by many setbacks and mistakes that made the peaceful resolution unlikely. If this thesis succeeds in establishing a set of objective reasons which prevented the peace process from achieving its goals, it might not only contribute to the growing understanding of conflict resolution but could also serve as a valuable source material for the Turkish policy-makers in the case of a new peace process. Important parts of this thesis are likely to remain relevant in the future, as many of the aspects discussed in it are enshrined in the conflict's history and not influenced by sudden changes.

Literature review

The issue of Kurds in Turkey is a one that receives a lot of global attention. The developments and consequences of the Turkish peace process have been closely followed by the academics, politicians and media alike from the moment the negotiations officially began. There already exists a large body of academic literature interacting with the topic using various social scientific approaches. Many of the scholarly articles also focus on specific aspects of the peace process, ranging from geopolitical developments, historical analysis, role of political systems, to the role of individuals. The available literature is in a general agreement with regards to identifying the weaknesses of the peace process, yet the conclusions vary significantly regarding the main reasons for its failure. The study of this topic has also been affected by political realities. Turkish academics are most closely familiar with the day-to-day developments of the peace process and the issues surrounding it, yet the increasingly authoritarian nature of Turkey has affected their academic freedom and independence. Many of the Turkish academics had to leave the country

and continue their work elsewhere. Those, who remained unaffected by recent purges in academia are more likely to display a certain degree of bias in favour of the government's policies. A small number of such potentially biased academic studies has been used in this thesis, but their use was limited mainly to the acquisition of secondary information.

For understanding the historical background of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, three publications stand out for their extensive use in this thesis. The first of them is *A Modern History of the Kurds* by David McDowall. This book offers a detailed overview of the history of the Kurdish people as well as a sympathetic outlook on their plight to freedom. The second, *Nationalism and Politics in Turkey*, edited by Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden, is a collection of essays on the topic of Kurdish and Turkish nationalism and the interaction between them. Key chapters of this book have been used to explain the processes of nation-building and identity-forming in post-war Turkey. Lastly, the book *Turkey's Kurds* by Ali Kemal Özcan has constituted the primary source for the understanding of the history and nature of the PKK and the specific role of its leader.

The Turkish peace process constitutes a very recent and relevant topic. For these reasons, a selection of works primarily consisted of various working papers and abstracts has been chosen. For example, papers by Serra Hakyemez and Mesut Yeğen not only offer a good overview of the peace process' developments, but also greatly focus on the institutional aspects and the role of key actor on the outcome of the negotiations. Furthermore, this thesis has used the practical sub-division of the Turkish peace process into three rounds, as according to these authors. This thesis has also greatly benefited from the expertise of its supervisor Gökhan Bacik in the topic of the Arab Spring and its role on the Turkish peace process.

In approaching the theory of rational choice, this thesis has relied on the contributions of authors having a similar understanding of rational choice theory and its role in conflict resolution. Authors Mason, Fett, Zartman and Shugart have in their respective studies frequently referenced each other's work with the aim of establishing a consistent approach with a specific set of conditions and predictions. Furthermore, publications from the *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre* have been used in explaining the case of Colombia, as Norway was one of the two main

observers in the Colombian peace process. Lastly, the contributions of an internationally best-selling book *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury have been used to paint a more comprehensive picture of the broader nature of a non-zero-sum game negotiating and problem-solving.

1. Turkey's Kurdish question: 1923-2009

1. 1 Turkish national identity and Turkey's approaches to the Kurdish minority

When the Ankara government declared the foundation of a new republic in 1923, it has seemingly abandoned its previous promises of ensuring the political and cultural rights of the Kurdish population and instead aimed to create a new political entity based on the national model (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:69). Yet only a few years earlier, with the signing of the Amasya Protocols in 1919, the future founders of the republic indicated their support for the ensuring of the Kurds' social and cultural rights (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:68). Furthermore, the Treaty of Sevrès from August 1920 presumed the creation of independent states in both Armenia and Kurdistan as well as the secession of territories to Greece in Thrace and western Anatolia (Schön, 2013:3). But the rising opposition to the last Ottoman sultan Mehmed VI., and his perceived submissive attitude towards allies' demands, sparked the Turkish National Movement that led to the creation of a new republic amidst the turmoil, where previous agreements meant very little.

Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938), the military leader of the Turkish National Movement and the first president of the Republic of Turkey, founded the nation on five main principles that subsequently became the state ideology simply known as Kemalism. These were: nationalism, westernization, secularism, homogeneity of Turks and civilization and modernization (Sonyel, 1989:147). While all of these principles were used to justify the state's approach toward the Kurds, it was the state's emphasis on homogeneity of a new nation that made addressing the issue a near impossibility. The Kurds became "Mountain Turks", Kurdish "broken Persian", Kurdistan "the south-east' and the Kurdish question "the south-east question" (Özcan, 2006:71). To be a citizen was equated with being a "Turk". That is to say, as long as Kurds were willing to call themselves Turks, they would not face any legal discrimination and would enjoy all the rights as every other citizen (Barkey, Fuller, 1998:10).

The whole process of nation-building was a project of the nation's elites surrounding Mustafa Kemal, very much in the top-down manner and under the watchful eye of the military. The focus on a unitary ethnic state in Turkey reflected the traumatic experience of the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire through the

continuous emergence of various nationalist movements (Gunter, 1988:391). It was therefore deemed necessary for the republic to "Turkify" its citizens or in words of Ismet İnönü: *"We will annihilate those who oppose the Turks or 'le turquisme'"* (Özcan, 2006:70).[1] Such rhetoric also reflected the republic's reliance on the military as the guardian of its values, since the founders of the republic came from within its ranks. A role that the military has performed several times ever since.

The concept of the national identity in the new republic was greatly influenced by the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, a Turkish sociologist and writer, who argued that a nation is an outward expression of a specific culture (McDowall, 2007:190). To live within the borders of the republic newly meant belonging to a Turkish culture. Regardless of one's ethic origin, specific upbringing and education defined one's culture and therefore also his or her nationality. In the years prior to the declaration of the republic, Mustafa Kemal emphasised the existence of a collective Muslim identity, which asserted the need of Turks and Kurds to live as brothers under the institution of the Caliphate. But the eventual dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924 under Mustafa Kemal's secular reforms constituted a civic model of citizenship, where Turkish identity overcame the religious one. Mustafa Kemal envisioned a modern state along European lines and thus the existence of deep-seated cultural and political traditions of Kurds became a considerable obstacle (Mcdowall, 2007:191).

In the days of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire, despite being far economically and socially far behind the Turks, Kurds enjoyed a certain level of autonomy in local affairs. Since the 16th century, there existed almost 20 semi-autonomous governorates ruled by the main Kurdish tribes together with approximately 400 beyliks (chiefdoms) in eastern Anatolia. The rule over the governorates and the beyliks was inherited from father to son in the chief families (Dag, 2014:50). But under the new republican regime, any prospects of continuous autonomy seemed very unlikely right after the first elections to the Grand National Assembly in 1924 (Özcan, 2006:71). For the state, a distinct Kurdish entity had to be interpreted in new, different and most importantly non-ethnic specific terms. The state came to confront the Kurdish issue as a social clash between the "past and the present" and as a case of "regional underdevelopment" (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:69). Any Kurdish

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[1]Ismet Inönü (1884-1973) was a Turkish general, prime minister and presidential successor of Mustafa Kemal after his death in 1938.

opposition to the state was simply a case of "banditry", "feudal reactionism" or "foreign incitement" devoid of any ethnic or collective dimension. Over most of its existence, the state has utilized the combination of politics of repression, assimilation and discrimination as the main methods of solving the Kurdish question.

In its first decade, the republic moved swiftly to suppress any expressions of Kurdish identity through the instances of closing of traditional religious schools, banning of Kurdish language publications and eventually through an all-out ban on speaking Kurdish. Furthermore, the process of replacing Kurdish place names for Turkish ones began. The Kurds even began to face discrimination within the army, where the Kurdish soldiers were facing ill-treatment and abuse and were often singled out for performing the most unpleasant duties (Mcdowall, 2007:191). After consolidating its power, the state felt confident that the disorganized chiefs of Kurdistan were incapable of any collective action aimed at ejecting the Turks.

1. 1. 1 Early Kurdish rebellions

In the aftermath of the creation of a new, secular and specifically Turkish state, we can talk about three major Kurdish revolts of the 1920s and 1930s. After the closure of religious schools, i.e. the madrasas, in the Kurdish areas, there could be little doubt that the state was aiming to combat the existence of a distinct Kurdish culture, as these schools presented the main source of education for most Kurds. At the same time, the last important ideological tie between the two ethnic groups was cut - the cultural and political significance of religion (McDowall, 2007:193). The ban on speaking Kurdish in public was being enforced and any previous promises of semi-autonomy for the Kurds seemed to be forgotten.

The first of the large revolts came in 1925 under the leadership of Sheikh Said. There indeed was a previous attempt at rebellion called the Azadi revolt in 1924, but it was immediately disrupted by the state before it had any time to organize and ended in utter fiasco. Sheikh Said's uprising was not only motivated by the goal of an independent Kurdistan, but also constituted a reaction to the very essence of the republic and its secular and modernist ambitions. The revolt longed for the state of things as they were in the times of the Ottoman Empire. Such longing was manifested by its second main goal of restoration of the Caliphate and by proclaiming one of the sons of the late Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II. the King of

Kurdistan (McDowall, 2007:194). The revolt was swiftly suppressed by the army and, at the time, it seemed that the Kurdish dissidence was at an end. The state's "turkification" efforts continued in a relatively same manner as prior to the revolt. The Kurdish dissidence moved beyond Turkey's border into the neighbouring countries or into Europe.

The second large-scale uprising of 1930 under General Ihsan Nuri Pasha became known as the Ararat uprising. This uprising was able to overcome the previous one's local dimension as it was launched by the transnational Kurdish party Khoyboun, which had been founded in Lebanon in 1927 (Gunter, 2008:5). It was also the first Kurdish uprising where there were Kurdish fighters crossing the Iranian-Turkish border to join the fight and eventually retreat in case of a military defeat. Such a defeat came quickly, as Turkey was able to mobilize large numbers of troops and air forces and also receive some degree of support from Iran (Olson, 2000:81). When the suppression of the uprising was announced to the Turkish public, the press labelled the rebels bandits and brigands despite the fact that it was spearheaded by a modern, nationalist and secular organization (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:70).

A few years after the Ararat uprising, the state began its efforts to dismantle the Kurdish identity in full. The ideas of social engineering were popular not only in Nazi Germany at the time, but amongst many intellectuals in Europe and beyond. In June 1934 Law No. 2510 was enacted. This law granted the state wide-ranging powers over the population and divided Turkey into three respectable zones. 1) localities for people possessing Turkish culture, 2) regions to which people of non-Turkish will assimilate and 3) regions to be completely evacuated (McDowal 2007:207). Such law was limited only by the sheer size of the task of moving and assimilating three million people in a country with population of only over 16 million at the time.

The third and largest of the early Kurdish rebellions took place in the Dersim province throughout 1937 and 1938. The main reason behind the rebellion was the enactment of Law No. 2510 that effectively started the resettlement process. The revolt was led by Sheikh Sayyid Riza, the leader of Alevi Zaza Kurds, and was met with an unprecedented use of force by the state. During the spring of 1938 a combination of aerial bombing, gas and artillery barrages were used against the

rebels and the rebellion was ultimately crushed in December 1938 (McDowall, 2007:208). It should be noted that many of the Kurdish tribes actively supported the state in its suppression of the rebels or at least remained neutral, but after the scope of the third rebellion the Turkish authorities decided to eliminate anything that might suggest a separate Kurdish nation (Gunter, 2008:5). The province's name was subsequently changed to Tunceli, meaning "Bronze Land" in Turkish, after the eponymous military operation supressing the revolt.

David McDowall argues that the methods used by the state against the Kurds in the areas affected by the rebellion resembled those used against the Armenians during the Great War. Thousands of Kurds were said to have perished, including women and children. Apart from the direct violence and repressions, the resettlement programs have also moved large numbers of Kurds from fertile areas into uncultivated ones, further increasing the total death toll (McDowall, 2007:209). Dersim was the last of the 'tribal' revolts against the state. In 1945, the Kurdish chiefs were suspected of regular meetings in the cities of Diyarbakir and Giavar. The state was able to launch a quick wave of arrests and executions preventing another possible rebellion and ultimately showing the real level of control they wielded in the Kurdish areas. It wasn't until 1965 that the area east of the river Euphrates was declared safe enough for foreigners to travel, for the first time since the 1930's (McDowall, 2007:210).

1. 2 The rise of the PKK

In a relative quiet that followed in the two decades after the Dersim rebellion, the policies of ethnic resettlement and suppression of the Kurdish identity seemed to reach the desired effect. The "Aghas", i.e. the Kurdish chieftains, quietly disowned their identity not for the purposes of any sort of autonomy, but for the influence over the Kurdish peasantry and in order to become more closely integrated into the ruling Turkish establishment (McDowall, 2007:402). Furthermore, an increasing number of young Kurds were living in urban areas, partially integrating into the Turkish culture through an educational system allowing only the use of the Turkish language and instilling the Kemalist values onto its students. But the interactions between these demographic changes and the regime's slow process of opening up to the political

competition amidst the emergence of new ideologies meant, that the future of the struggle for Kurdish independence will take a new and different form.

The opening up of Turkey's democracy coincided with the rise of a new generation of cosmopolitan and better educated Kurds with little to no memories of the violence of the 'tribal' rebellions (Marcus, 2007:19). The period of nearly 10 years after the 1960 coup marked the freest era in the republic's history. Many young people were swept by a wave of various radical, both socialist and nationalist, movements that sprung into the existence over the decade. In 1965 an underground Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey, a nationalist party with a goal of a Kurdish federation within Turkey, was formed (Marcus, 2007:20). The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey's strategy was heavily inspired by the Kurdistan Democratic party of Mustafa Barzani in Iraq.[2] But the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey could gain only a limited support from the Kurdish people, as they themselves had more sympathy towards left-wing parties like Turkish Workers Party. One of the members of the young, left-wing oriented Kurds of the time was Abdullah Öcalan.

Abdullah Öcalan was born in 1948 in a small village of Ömerli, a village so small in fact, that it didn't even have an elementary school. He had to travel several kilometres each day to the neighbouring village to attend school. He was a good student hoping to become an army officer one day, utterly uninterested in contemplating his ethic identity at the time (Marcus, 2007:17). Such an interest arose with his arrival to Ankara in pursuit of further education amidst the growing sentiments of a defiant Kurdish identity in the big cities. These sentiments naturally arose in urban areas, due to their proximity to places of higher learning, especially universities where social sciences were being taught. The students had the opportunity to see the contradictions between their personal experiences of growing up in rural Kurdish areas, the public ideology denying the existence of Kurds and the radio broadcasts from the Kurdish diaspora (Marcus, 2007:17). But despite the Turkish Workers Party's popularity amongst the Kurds, its reluctance to speak about a "Kurdish issue" left many of its supporters dissatisfied.

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[2]Mustafa Barzani was a Kurdish nationalist, born in today's Iraq, and the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party from 1946 to 1979.

The first organization with a direct goal of raising consciousness of the Kurdish population was the Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East. The Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East approached the Kurdish issue through the lenses of economic inequality between the eastern regions and the rest of Turkey. It combined Marxism with Kurdish nationalism to mobilize young Kurds on the issues of social justice and identity (Yavuz, 2007:10). During his stay in Istanbul in 1970, Öcalan established connections with the movement, which marked his first revolutionary political activity. The movement moved towards violence at the end of the decade, when its leaders were often travelling abroad, most notably to Lebanon, for an armed training in Palestinian guerrilla camps. Such radicalization happened at a time when the democratic rights, stemming from the 1961 constitution, were seen to be eroding in the wake of the 1968 election law, aimed against the operations of the socialist Turkish Workers Party (Marcus, 2007:22).

The military coup of March 1971 marked an end to the period of political radicalism and eventually amended the 1961 constitution to significantly reduce personal freedoms and the rights of civil society. Öcalan was arrested for his ties with the Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East, but was, after seven months, eventually released. The imprisonment was a defining moment for Öcalan, as he was there able to meet politically experienced veteran revolutionaries. For him, it was a time of realization and learning, or in his words: "*For me, prison was a school on advancing the political struggle*" (Marcus, 2007:25). He left the prison convinced that there can be no objective of an independent Kurdistan reached through the cooperation with the Turkish left. Öcalan now planned to start an organization of his own, an organization of Kurds willing to fight a war against the Turkish state for their independence.

1. 2. 1 The PKK

Öcalan was very critical of previous Kurdish independence movements, their justifications and strategies. In his eyes, the struggle of Mustafa Barzani in Iraq represented a "primitive" ideological approach that was doomed to fail. Öcalan argued that Barzani remained a part of the feudal Kurdish society that so often relied on foreign powers, most notably the USA, for support (Marcus, 2007:34). Öcalan based his approach on the assumption that Kurdistan was a classic example of a

colony that was denied its right to self-determination (Öcalan, 2009:26). After the 1974 amnesty, Öcalan gathered with six of his political colleagues to start a national liberation organization on Marxist-Leninist principles, independent on the Turkish left. This organization became known as Apocular, i.e. the followers of Abdullah.

Apocular was an exclusivist group consisting of people close to Öcalan, who were, above all, loyal to his leadership and vision (McDowall, 2007.421). By 1975, the group already had a total of 16 members and preparations were on the way for the founding of a structured Marxist-Leninist political party. The PKK was officially founded on 27th November 1978. In the first two years of its existence, the PKK focused its efforts on the activities in the rural Kurdish regions where it targeted local tribal leaders and various neo-fascist groups (McDowall, 2007:421). The PKK wasn't the only group engaged in political violence at end of the decade and the situation in the country became very unstable yet again. In September 1980, the Turkish army executed a military coup, suspended the constitution and started with repressions. Öcalan had successfully escaped the country, as well as many other of the leading PKK figures. At this moment, Öcalan was faced with a dilemma of whether to turn the PKK into an exile organization or a modern national liberation movement (Öcalan, 2009:27).

Between 1980 and 1983, the PKK laid low with only an occasional raid against the Turkey's border (McDowall, 2007:422). But the significance of Öcalan's timely retreat revealed itself when the PKK launched its first organized guerrilla offensive on the Turkish military facilities in Kurdish towns of Eruh and Şemdinly on 15th August 1984 (Özcan, 2006:170). Apart from the scope and the level of organization of the guerrilla offensive, the fact that many of the PKK members, following their arrests after the military coup, practised self-immolation as a reaction to "brutal torture practises", hinted at a huge difference of the PKK from the previous Kurdish and Turkish revolutionary movements (Özcan, 2006:170). The goals of the PKK also sharply contrasted with the historically conservative beliefs of the Kurdish population. The PKK, preaching secularism and a socialist revolution, divided the ordinary Kurds significantly. Many of the Kurds feared and loathed it, and many, on the other hand, admired its courage and ambition (McDowall, 2007:423).

The ensuing violence of the first seven years of the conflict resulted in over five thousand deaths (Özcan, 2006:171). The over-confidence with which the state conducted itself after the rounding-up of the "terrorists in the streets" in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, only served the PKK in their battle preparations prior to 1984 (Özcan, 2006:171). The state continued its policy of denial and oppression and by 1986 a total of 2842 out of 3524 Kurdish villages had been renamed. But it was the brutal manner in which the state's security forces extracted information and evidence from the suspects detained in the Kurdish areas that proved to be the most potent force for the PKK's recruitment efforts (McDowall, 2007:427). Yet the PKK proved that it was undoubtedly the state's equal in the scope of its intimidation tactics.

In 1986, the state began arming some villagers to form 'village guards' with the aim of blocking the PKK's access and supply lines. The PKK subsequently started assaulting such villages during the next two years, targeting guards, aghas, men, women and children alike in their reprisals against the "traitorous feudal elements" (Gunter, 1988:399). The village guards proved themselves, in their attacks against the PKK's "supply villages", to be no less ruthless that the PKK in the violence against civilians. At the end of the decade, reports of an increasing army brutality and of mass graves in the city of Siirt were published in Turkey (McDowall, 2007:427). The Turkish south-east was caught in a seemingly never-ending cycle of violence. But a new hope for the possibility of a de-escalation of the conflict emerged after the 1991 general election, after which the policy of denial was starting to be replaced by a new approach.

1. 2. 2 Turgut Özal and the challenging of Kemalism

Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the National Security Council (MLG) was very successful in reducing terrorist activities in Turkey, but the price paid in terms of human rights was very high. The MLG was also starting to exercise a near total authority over the security matters in dealing with the Kurds (Gunter, 2008:110). In April 1991, Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law entered into force, signalling an unrelenting approach of the state in the suppression of the Kurdish identity. The law it made easier to arrest public figures, intellectuals and academics peacefully speaking for the Kurdish rights (Gunter, 2008:6). Yet, prior to the October 1991 elections, a public debate about the on-going Kurdish insurgency had been opened up

for the first time. The government's view that a complete military victory was the only way of resolving the conflict was weakened both by its longevity and also by the level of support of the PKK from the ordinary Kurds (McDowall, 2007: 429).

In 1989, Turgut Özal became the 8th president of the Republic of Turkey. He was a reformer who also happened to be half Kurdish. His personality, together with the changing public opinion about the necessity of a primarily military solution to the PKK problem, started the process of acknowledging the ethic aspect of the Kurdish question. The possibility of a genuine peace process started to increase as Öcalan himself called for the cessation of violence as well as proclaimed his willingness to abandon the goal of a separate Kurdish nation in favour of cultural and political rights of the Kurdish people (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:88). Özal let the public know that the government was indeed searching for a new model to solve the Kurdish problem that went well beyond police measures. By this statement, Özal challenged the longstanding Kemalist consensus and, together with the introduction of specific new ideas, became an early "post-Kemalist" (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:85).

From the perspective of the government, there were many reasons to consider changing the course of action and reassessing the approach toward the Kurds. Apart from the obvious reasons, the size of the PKK, its operations and the stalemate of the armed struggle, there was also a demographic factor. The Kurdish population in Turkey was steadily growing at a much faster pace than that of the Turks, making the continuous denying of their ethnicity an ever growing problem (Izady, 1992:119).[3] Yet regardless of the exact numbers of Kurds in Turkey, the MLG report from 1996 estimated that there might be as much as 40 % of Kurds in Turkey by 2010 (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:89). Özal's propositions nonetheless created a furor in Turkey. For his supporters, they presented an acceptable and rational concession in order to build a good relationship with those who were likely to form an autonomous Kurdish region. But his opponents saw his policies as a grave threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey and its political and social unity (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:90).

On 17th March 1993, Öcalan followed his previous calls for the cessation of violence by a unilateral declaration of a ceasefire at a press conference in the Bekaa valley

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[3]Although there is no consensus on the exact number of Kurds in Turkey throughout the time mostly for political reasons, Izady quotes a study claiming there were a total of 13,7 million Kurds in Turkey in 1990 (Izady, 1992:119).

(Daghi 1993:42). But only a few weeks later, on 17th April, the Turkish president Turgut Özal died. Through this turn of events, the possibility of a peace process was as low as it has ever been. With Özal's death, the leading figure of a new course, searching for a compromise, was lost. Finally, the MLG and many of the Turkish political elites argued for the renewal of the offensive against the PKK as they had interpreted Öcalan's calls for negotiations as a sign of weakness and a window of opportunity for a decisive military victory (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:94).

1. 3 The decline of the PKK

The period after the death of Turgut Özal can be considered amongst the most violent ones in the history of the Kurdish question in Turkey (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:74). The Turkish government's attitude after 1993 can be best summed up by a quote from Doğan Güreş, the general chief of staff: "*The PKK will die like the dogs in their own blood*" (Özcan, 2006:179). If the first seven years of the conflict lead to over five thousand deaths, by 1994 the total death toll exceeded twenty thousand (Kirişçi, Winrow, 1997:126). Özcan argues, that the Turkish intelligence services were relatively aware of the declining fighting capabilities of the PKK and the state's renewed offensive reflected their conclusions based on research and various reports (Özcan, 2006:179). But a subsequent string of political developments has again created circumstances for the possibility of a non-military solution to the conflict.

The first of them were Turkey's renewed prospects of the EU membership under the Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, who in December 1995 declared that: "*The road to the EU passes through Diyarbakir*" (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:102). In the same month, Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate country for the EU membership. But even at that time, challenging the Kemalist establishment presented considerable political risks for the reformer. The second development was related directly to Öcalan's changing perspective on the conflict. During his stay in Italy in 1998, he told the Italian press that he was planning to resign as a leader of the PKK, as "95 per cent of the PKK was the PKK he opposed" (Özcan, 2006:180). But the most important milestone was created by the Turkish intelligence services when they managed to finally capture Öcalan in Kenya in February 1999.

The irreplaceable role of Öcalan for the PKK, or simply the cult of personality he embodied, can hardly be overstated. After his capture, many PKK supporters in

Turkish prisons and throughout Europe self-immolated in response to the perceived threats to Öcalan's life in the prison (White, 2000:210). Öcalan's arrest and imprisonment immediately strengthen the hard-liners in the Turkish politics, but his surprising call for the PKK fighters to lay down their arms and pursue negotiations constituted the most important shift in fifteen years of fighting and had yet again raised hopes of a non-violent political solution (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:102). At this time, a careful and reluctant policy of recognition of the Kurdish problem began replacing the longstanding politics of repression and denial. In October 2001, a constitutional amendment was passed, effectively removing legal prohibitions on the use of the Kurdish language. A few months later, a limited Kurdish television broadcasting was even permitted as well as courses of the Kurdish language in private schools (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:106). In January 2000 during its congress, the PKK began officially accepting Öcalan's project of "democratic confederalism", which he started to develop after his imprisonment (Cassier, Jongerden, 2011:148).

In 2001, a group of former members of an Islamist and newly banned Virtue Party decided to start a new party to contest the 2002 general election. Justice and Development Party (AKP) was founded by Istanbul's former mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan together with a long-standing member of the parliament Abdullah Gül. The AKP managed to present itself as a clean, ably led, "democratic conservative" alternative to the "corrupt" established parties, while not offering much in terms of specifics (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:106). Regardless, the AKP came out as an undisputed winner of the 2002 elections and subsequently became the party responsible for the carrying out of the Turkey's new, more democratic approach towards the Kurds. Amidst the rising pressure from the EU on the human rights questions and Turkey's prospects of becoming the EU candidate, the AKP government continued the policies of loosening restrictions on expressions of the Kurdish culture and assisting internally displaced Kurds to return to their former homes (Casier, Jongerde, 2011:106). The AKP's policies gained some praise from the Kurdish voters, but it was very careful not to be seen as a party undermining the unitary structure of Turkey and risking a conflict with the Kemalist establishment (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:107). Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that "more democracy, not repression" was the answer to Kurds' grievances.

The PKK was for the first time in its history faced with the problem of a decreasing number of fighters. Between 2003 and 2005, over 1500 militants left the organization. Such a development can be explained by a combination of two major factors. First were Öcalan's calls for a ceasefire, his rejection of the PKK's militant wing together with his new goal of a Kurdish autonomy within Turkey through a legal and democratic process. The second factor emerged in the aftermath of the US invasion into Iraq, which led to the achievement of concrete gains by the Iraqi Kurds, making the PKK's recent project seem somewhat insignificant in comparison (Cassier, Jongerden, 2011:149). The PKK had also grown impatient with the slow pace of the Turkish government reforms, as full political and cultural rights seemed nowhere in sight. The opportunities the US invasion of Iraq created for the Kurds, convinced the PKK to terminate the ceasefire and yet again take up arms on 1st June 2004.

The Turkish military was aware of the possibility of a de facto Kurdish state in post-Saddam Iraq. Also, by 2004, Turkey's goal of becoming the EU member has somewhat lost its priority amidst the growing euroscepticism of the Turkish bureaucracy. When the PKK renewed its offensive, there was nothing stopping the conflict from escalating yet again. The clashes that began in 2004, reached their peak in 2007 and 2008 (Cassier, Jongerden, 2011:155). In 2006, after estimated 600 Turkish deaths just within that year, the AKP came under a great domestic pressure to authorize a retaliatory military strike against the PKK's forces in northern Iraq (Turkish Press Review, 2007). This eventually happened in February 2008, when the US military opened the air space in northern Iraq for the Turkish air forces, though at a considerable cost to the diplomatic relationship between the two NATO allies.

Despite the renewal of the military struggle between the PKK and the Turkish army, the political dimension of the Kurdish question in Turkey had been significantly altered by the five-year long ceasefire and the government's policy of loosening of the cultural restrictions. In 2005, the Democratic Society Party (DTP), a Kurdish nationalist party, was starting to become a serious competitor for the AKP in south-eastern Turkey. The DTP managed to win 21 seats in the parliament in the 2007 general election, demonstrating that Kurdish politics was becoming increasingly more integral to Turkey's political agenda (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:155). At the same time, the PKK was able to concentrate its efforts on civil campaigns in the

Kurdish regions, demanding language rights in education. Throughout its short existence, the DTP was permanently accused of being directly tied to the PKK or at least of supporting its illegal activities. Such accusations were becoming increasingly harder for the DTP to deny, as many of its members were publicly calling Abdullah Öcalan the leader of the Kurds (Today's Zaman, 2007).

Turkey's approach to the Kurdish question in the late 2000s oscillated between the acceptance of the Kurds' differing ethnic origin and associating "Kurdishness" with disloyalty to the state (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:78). The government spared no effort in pursuing court cases against the DTP mayors for speaking Kurdish on official public occasions and chose a strategy of non-cooperation with the DTP municipalities (Öktem, 2008: 6). After the 2007 general election, the importance of the DTP in the south-eastern region became clearly visible. But with 75 Kurdish members within its ranks, together with the electoral victory in most of the south-eastern regions, the AKP could claim to be a Kurdish-friendly party, representing the Kurdish interests as well (Casier, Jongerden, 2011:122).[4] The party was able to gather support among the Kurdish voters with its policies of economic development and employment, as these were shown to be the issues of primary concern to the voters (Jenkins, 2008:18). The south-eastern regions then became a competition between the AKP and the DTP in the 2009 local elections. But the eventual success of the DTP in these elections was cut short by its subsequent disbandment later that year by the constitutional court, paving a way for the AKP's dominance in the region. The democratization process of the last decade was once again in danger as thousands of Kurds took to the streets amidst the violent protests against the court's decision (Aljazeera.com, 2009).

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[4]The AKP was able to receive over 50 % of the votes in the regions of Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia (Bahar, 2007).

2. Turkey's Kurdish question: 2009-2015

2. 1 The First round of negotiations

The events that culminated with the dissolution of the DTP also marked the end of the first attempt at negotiations in the history of the conflict. As early as 2007, although officially pursuing the same strategy towards the Kurdish question as in the previous years, the AKP was secretly looking for an alternative route. That same year, at a MLG meeting, it was decided that a new policy of negotiation with the PKK together with a more lenient approach toward cultural recognition of Kurds was to be adopted (Yeğen, 2015:5). In 2008, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Erdoğan's chief advisor for foreign affairs, and Murat Özçelik, Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, officially visited the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Masoud Barzani (Yeğen, 2015:6).[5] Until this point, it was a long-held policy priority of Turkey to ignore and contain the Kurds in Iraq. When in March 2009 the PKK yet again declared a unilateral ceasefire, the AKP was in an ideal position to start turning its new approach into practice.

There were many reasons as to why the AKP was willing to put the old policies into question. The 2007 general election turned out to be very successful for the AKP when it gained well over 50 % of the total vote. Having such a strong position, delivering the AKP an absolute majority in the parliament, meant that the AKP government was able to avoid the internal conflicts and filibusters of the previous coalition governments (Hakyemez, 2017:3). Furthermore, the potential involvement of the Turkish Army in hampering the AKP's efforts was limited due to the ongoing criminal investigations of the Turkish Army for its alleged connections with paramilitary forces (Hakyemez, 2017:2). Finally, by 2009, the PKK had already abandoned its dream of an independent Kurdistan and focused on its new goal of achieving a regional autonomy as postulated by Öcalan in his prison writings. Öcalan's ideas of a "democratic autonomy" already presumed the necessity of a peace process and a non-military solution.

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[5]Although the visitation represented a significant and symbolic milestone in the Turkey-KRG relations, Turkey's economic interests played a major role in their initiation as 80 % of the goods sold to the KRG came from Turkey (Larrabee, Tol, 2011:145).

In August 2009, Beşir Atalay, the Minister of Interior, organised a string of meetings where journalists, public intellectuals and various NGO's were supposed to voice their suggestions on the Kurdish issue. These events were a part of an ongoing government effort to solve the Kurdish question through "more freedom and more democracy" (Landis, Albert, 2012:258). This effort subsequently became known to the public as the "Kurdish opening". The AKP continued with the opening regardless of the opposition to it from the Republican People's Party and Nationalist Movement Party, as it had secured the absolute majority in the parliament (Yeğen, 2015:7). Later in August, Öcalan sought to present to the government a roadmap for the resolution of the conflict but the document was confiscated before it left the Imrali Island, never to reach the public (Landis, Albert, 2012: 258). Regardless of the political opening, the AKP was still unwilling to officially include Öcalan in the process. To negotiate with him would mean crossing the most notable red line of the previous Kurdish policy, as for the last 25 years he was cast as the "arch enemy" of the Turkish people (Matthess, Günter, 2013:3).

The process of opening was nonetheless facing serious setbacks. In November 2009, a number of 34 PKK militants and refugees entered Turkey as a gesture of goodwill amidst the ongoing ceasefire. The PKK members were met by a cheering Kurdish crowd at the Habur border gate and the whole situation turned into a victory show for the PKK (Yurtbay, 2017:33). The so-called Habur incident generated further discontent of the Turkish nationalists, which was also to some extend shared by the AKP voter base. As a reaction to the incident, the process was slowed down (Yeğen, 2015:7). On 7th December, the PKK killed seven soldiers in Reşadiye, Tokat. Four days later, the DTP was banned by the Constitutional Court for its ties to the PKK. Both sides blamed each other for the disintegration of the Kurdish opening. The PKK blamed the opening's slow progress, the government's refusal to react to Öcalan's roadmap, and the banning of the DTP together with the pressure put by the state on the Kurdish politicians for their suspected ties to the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) for the failure of the process.[6] The government, on the other hand, blamed the PKK for violating the ceasefire and therefore making any form of negotiations impossible (Yeğen, 2015:7). The First round eventually collapsed due to the lack of

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[6]The Kurdistan Communities Union is an umbrella body for all Kurdish national movements, founded in 2005. The KCK is regarded by the Turkey as a political branch of the PKK and considered a criminal organization.

trust between the actors and the absence of a shared purpose. The opening wasn't able to generate any form of comprehensive path towards a peace deal (Yarali, 2017:56). But while the Kurdish opening was seemingly ending in failure, there were already secret meetings taking place between the Turkish Intelligence Agency and the executive members of the PKK in an attempt to continue the peace process.

2. 2 The Second round of negotiations

For the next 36 months, there was no confirmation of possible peace talks between the state and the PKK and the public was kept completely unaware of any developments. It wasn't until June 2011, shortly after the general election, that an audio recording from one of the meetings was leaked to the public. The state's prosecutor in Ankara issued an arrest order for the chief director of the Turkish Intelligence Agency with a charge of treason in reaction to the audio leaks (Hakyemez, 2017:6). Although the AKP government wasn't planning on making the peace talks public any time soon at the moment of the leak, it promptly stepped in to stop this criminal investigation.[7] The necessity of the AKP to intervene in the prosecution only highlighted the differing interest within the state. As a method of preventing further prosecution of intelligence agents taking part in the negotiations, a law was passed in 2011 conditioning such investigations on the approval of the prime minister (Hakyemez, 2017:6).

The Oslo Process was a series of direct talks between the Turkish government, the PKK and Öcalan, carried out from 2009 to 2011. It marked the first instance the government was willing to cross the red line of not negotiating with the PKK leader, although unofficially (Ensaroğlu, 2013:13). The meetings were conducted in secret with the assistance of international observers. Three main topics were discussed: cease-fire and disarmament, new constitution and legal reforms, and lastly the reparations and reconciliation (Hakyemez, 2017:4). The goals of the meetings were very similar to Öcalan's 2009 roadmap, which the government previously rejected. The roadmap presupposed the withdrawal of the PKK militants from Turkey and the

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[7]Several months before the audio leaks, when the leader of the Republican People's Party was commenting on rumours surrounding the possible secret talks with the PKK, considering them an acceptable move, he was called a "dishonoured slanderer" by the Prime Minister Erdoğan (Hürriyet Daily News, 2012).

PKK's eventual entrance into legality in the new, post-conflict Turkish republic (Yeğen, 2015:7).

In Öcalan's view, the meetings represented the most important opportunity to achieving results in the hundred-year history of the conflict (Hess, 2012). Although a concrete roadmap has indeed been presented and negotiated at the meetings, the unstable ceasefire only deepened the doubt and distrust between the parties. The ceasefire, which lasted from March 2009, ended in June 2010 when the PKK started the democratic people's war. Yet the process wasn't terminated as Öcalan immediately called for another ceasefire, which eventually lasted until June 2011, the end of the Second round. As the Oslo process was never meant to be a public one, the audio leak effectively terminated it. But the leak represented only a superficial reason for the Second round's failure, since the public reaction to the confirmation of negotiations was overall mostly positive and no significant outrage has followed (Hess, 2012). As the negotiation process disintegrated, the PKK renewed the democratic people's war when the PKK militants killed 13 Turkish soldiers in July 2011 (Yarali, 2017:57). The PKK accused the state of betraying the Oslo process by refusing to sign protocols that were previously agreed on. The Government responded to the PKK offensive with more military operations and also quickly moved to arresting the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) politicians, as well as journalists and activists, for their suspected ties to the KCK (Yeğen, 2015:8).[8] Consequently, 2012 turned out to be the most violent year of fighting since 1999.

Although eventually ending in failure, the Second round represented a significant development in the government's approach towards resolving the conflict. Not only was the government willing to sit behind the negotiating table with the representatives of the PKK, but the process also led to the realization of the AKP that Öcalan had to be involved as he began to be considered an irreplaceable and necessary actor. Negotiating with the PKK was still considered to be "a dirty business" for the large portion of the Turkish society composed of nationalists and Kemalists (Bacik, 2013:1). Yet the public reaction to the audio leaks, which confirmed such a "dirty business", showed that there existed a widespread support for a non-violent resolution to the conflict (Hess, 2012). Furthermore, the AKP

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[8]The Peace and Democracy Party was the successor party to the constitutionally banned Democratic Society Party.

government was willing to negotiate the same terms it had rejected only a short period of time before. It became increasingly obvious for the AKP that the strategy of military operations combined with marginalizing the PKK was yielding unsatisfactory results (Matthess, Günter, 2013:3).

Voices critical of the AKP's strategy often claimed that the Oslo process has never been a sincere one. Given the timeframe of the Second round, set precisely between the 2009 local election and the 2011 general election, it was argued by some of the BDP politicians that the government was simply buying time in order to stall the PKK and secure more votes in the Kurdish regions (Hess, 2012). The first two rounds were not made public and involved a few actors (Yarali, 2017:57). But the way in which the Second round ended created the circumstances for a genuine and transparent peace process, as it became obvious that a non-violent resolution to the conflict could be both feasible and politically profitable.

2. 3 The Third round of negotiations

Most of the year 2012 was characterized by military clashes between the Turkish security forces and the PKK which were going on since July 2011. A new impulse towards the reopening of the peace talks came as a result of a 68-day hunger strike by hundreds of Kurdish prisoners from November 2012. The AKP was well aware that had any of the prisoners died during the strike, their credibility amongst the Kurdish voters would be tarnished. At the same time, the AKP knew that only Öcalan's own calls for the end of the hunger strike was most likely to be respected by the PKK and the Kurds at large (Hakyemez, 2017:4). On 28th December, Erdoğan declared on the national TV that talks between the state and Öcalan were going on (Yeğen, 2015:8). For the first time, the representatives from the BDP visited Öcalan at Imrali island as well as the PKK's main military base in Qandil (Yarali, 2017:59). A system of interactions between the actors spontaneously emerged, where Öcalan would be communicating with the PKK through the BDP deputies. In effect, Öcalan became an official negotiating partner for the government (Yeğen, 2015:8).

The first two rounds of negotiations saw Öcalan ever more involved in the government's Kurdish strategy, albeit at an unofficial level. With the emergence of the Third round, he became the government's go-to person in trying to open talks with the PKK. The government's increasing willingness to communicate with the

imprisoned PKK leader constituted a direct response to the growing unsustainability of a military solution. Not only was the conflict yet again caught in a military stalemate, but nearly 30 years of fighting in the country took its toll on the public, which grew tired of the Kurdish problem (Bacik, 2013:2). Any effort of the AKP to try to crush the PKK by force alone would not only be unlikely to yield the desired results, but it would also endanger its electoral support. Yet possibly the most important factor which shaped the form of the Third round was the "Arab Spring" and the subsequent development in Syria. The Arab Spring dramatically altered the dynamics of the Kurdish issue in Turkey as it transformed the PKK into a regional power and created a new Syrian dimension. The influence of the Arab Spring on the Kurdish issue will be analysed in the latter part of this chapter.

On 21st March 2013, the day of the Kurdish New Year celebration, well over a million of Kurds gathered in the city of Diyarbakir to hear the deputies of the BDP read Öcalan's letter calling for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Though the AKP officials weren't present at the celebrations, the message that was read aloud to the masses was a direct outcome of the talks between the government and Öcalan.[9] Two days later, the PKK heeded Öcalan's call and declared a ceasefire. By April, the government was already on the verge of reaching a historic peace agreement with the PKK (Hakyemez, 2017:1). The issues of the withdrawal of the PKK, democratization, disarmament and normalization were being discussed. Each of these topics was meant to present a milestone in a three-stage peace process. The PKK's withdrawal from Turkey represented the first stage. Though both parties showed their willingness to abide by the rules agreed on for the period of the PKK's withdrawal, it didn't take long before a number of serious setbacks emerged.[10]

In September 2013, the withdrawal was halted as the PKK accused the government of building new military installations around the same places from which the PKK was withdrawing. Absence of any legal framework, under which the process would offer some form certainty to the PKK, presented the first major setback, which continued to play a role throughout most of the Third round. While the PKK was

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[9]In the letter, Öcalan made conciliatory references to the Islamic brotherhood of Kurds and Turks, despite the very secular nature of the PKK, and to the political unity of the Kurds and Turks and their age-long coexistence (Yeğen, 2015:9).

[10]The withdrawal that followed the 2013 ceasefire progressed without any mayor violence, which was in stark contrast to the 1999 withdrawal that saw hundreds of casualties (Yeğen, 2015:9)

calling for a legal framework, the AKP repeatedly stated that there was no need for such a thing, as it relied on its parliamentary majority, which ensured its control over political institutions (Ensaroğlu, 2013:17). The AKP even refused to seek the approval of other political parties as demanded by the Kurdish side (Mathees, Seufert, 2013:2). Prior to the withdrawal, the AKP had indeed established a "Council of the Wise" as well as a special commission in the parliament called the "Solution Process", but these two groupings mostly presented a step towards greater civil society participation and the widening of discussions, not towards a legal basis of the process (Yarali, 2017:62). The ad-hoc approach of the AKP revealed that the confidence, with which the government relied on high public support for the peace process, led to the relative non-existence of the technical aspects of the negotiations.

With its political position reaffirmed in the 2014 local election, the AKP moved to amend an already existing law so it granted the National Intelligence Organization the authority to officially negotiate with "terrorist organizations" (Yeğen, 2015:9). The closest the AKP ever came towards providing a legal framework for the disarmament and decriminalization processes was in June 2014 when it introduced the "Draft Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration". This law was meant to constitute a legal basis for all state institutions' contribution to the process (Hürriyet Daily News, 2014). Although the BDP has long called for the introduction of such a law, the AKP's strategic timing of the law hinted at its usefulness for the much-needed victory of Erdoğan as the party's presidential candidate in the upcoming elections. Regardless, the dominant approach of the AKP to keep the negotiations intact can be characterized as the politics of "as if". Under the existing laws, the state could prosecute anyone known to be associated with the PKK or KCK, yet the peace process went on "as if" these laws were not applicable at the time. The only guarantee the AKP could offer the PKK was that this situation would continue as long as the AKP kept control over the state's institutions (Hakyemez, 2017:7).

Another major setback emerged with the evolving situation concerning the siege of Kobani starting in September 2014. The regional dimension of the Kurdish issue was well demonstrated when the Islamic state (IS) battled the forces of PKK-affiliated Democratic Union Party (PYD) in northern Syria. As tens of thousands of Syrian Kurds were fleeing from the atrocities committed by the IS, the AKP government

turned a blind eye as it had found the whole situation working in their favour. The existence of a de-facto Kurdish autonomy just south of Turkey's border presented a grave threat for the government's efforts to disarm the PKK. The AKP's "unfriendly" approach towards the PYD and a relative contentment with its potential defeat caused an outrage among the People's Democratic Party (HDP) and the PKK-sympathising Kurds in Turkey (Yeğen, 2015:10).[11] When protests erupted in Turkey over Kobani, the peace process was halted. These protests saw over 40 civilian deaths and nearly meant the end of the whole peace process, if not a full-scale civil war. Given the gravity of the situation, the AKP eventually agreed to permit the passage of the Iraqi Peshmerga forces and equipment through Turkey's borders to help the PYD in their fight. This concession significantly eased the refreshing of the peace process and its continuation (Yeğen, 2015:10).

The prolonged period of ceasefire seemed to work in the PKK's favour as it was able to visibly increase and consolidate its control in eastern Turkey. The peace process offered the PKK both time and safety to focus on its civilian activities through the KCK, which was organizing itself as a sort of alternative government structure (Bacik, 2015:38). The KCK came to dominate the Kurdish politics and played an instrumental role in turning the wider civil society into active agents of resistance (Yeğen, 2016:17). Furthermore, with the PKK abandoning its separatist goals and the activities of the Democratic Society Congress, a civil society platform of the Kurdish National Movement, the agenda of regional autonomy in the south-eastern Turkey moved to the forefront of the issue. The Democratic Society Congress had the necessary organizational prerequisites for eventually becoming the regional parliament, as it was consisted of political representatives of Kurdish political parties and local assemblies.

2. 3. 1 The disintegration of the Third round

Despite the many flaws and setbacks, by 2014, the peace process saw the introduction of a number of amendments loosening the restrictions on various forms of expression of "Kurdishness" in Turkey. Since the onset of the negotiations in April 2013, laws have been passed allowing private school education in Kurdish,

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[11]The HDP was established prior to the 2014 local elections and essentially became the successor party to the BDP. The HDP was meant contest the general elections while the BDP turned into a regional party.

allowing Kurdish place names, legalizing the use of Kurdish language in political campaigns, establishing Kurdish language literature departments at universities and even establishing a public state TV channel broadcasting in Kurdish (Lõhmus, 2016). Furthermore, the negotiating parties were capable, through their choice of tactics, symbols and language, to persuade the public that a peaceful solution was both possible and in the interest of all (Hakyemez, 2017:6). However, with the aftermath of the Kobani crisis, the government's approach became more security-oriented as the PKK affiliated Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) declared an autonomy in the cities of Cizre and Sur.[12] At the same time, the government insisted on the PKK's complete disarmament before the negotiation would fully continue. The PKK on the other hand demanded the introduction of constitutional changes before its disarmament would continue (Yeğen, 2015:10). At the end of 2014, the peace process appeared to reach a dead end as the politics of "as if" seemed to reach their limit.

On 28th February 2015, the representatives of the AKP and the HDP announced Öcalan's call for disarmament of the PKK together with his 10-article draft for negotiations to the public. While the government was very careful not to give the impression of supporting Öcalan's draft, it became clear that once again there existed a ground for negotiations (Yeğen, 2015:10). The Dolmabahce agreement, as the announcement became known thereon, marked the first instance the government was willing to acknowledge Öcalan as a negotiating partner and the first instance the overall content of the peace talks was revealed (Yarali, 2017:69). The PKK heeded Öcalan's call and declared its support for the draft. Yet the PKK conditioned the continuation of its disarmament by the fulfilling of the steps mentioned in the draft by the government beforehand (Kurdistan National Congress, 2015). Most importantly, the PKK demanded the introduction of a "third eye" to monitor the advance of negotiations. The government showed its willingness to establish a monitoring committee, very much to the disagreement of the President Erdoğan.

By March 2015, President Erdoğan began to fully enter the negotiation process. He was very critical of the Dolmabahce agreement, claiming that: *"there cannot be an agreement with a political party that is being supported by a terrorist organization"*

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[12]Although the PKK repeatedly denied controlling the YDG-H, The PKK's leadership called the YDG-H's militant actions, during and after the peace process, legitimate and justified (BBC, 2015).

(Hürriyet Daily News, 2015). He expressed his opposition to the PKK's demands further as he stated that thanks to the reforms implemented by the AKP, there was no longer any "Kurdish question". Erdoğan found himself in a conflict with the AKP government over the implementation of the monitoring committee demanded by the PKK. After weeks of meetings between the president and the government, as the peace process stagnated, Erdoğan was able to convince the AKP to accept his reservations (Yeğen, 2015:13). The "third eye" was eventually refused and the process halted until the general election in June.

Erdoğan's intervention in the process, which saw him oppose the strategy of his former party, came as a surprise at the time. Erdoğan was able to persuade the AKP that the peace process was not developing in its favour but in favour of the HDP. Opinion polls consistently showed that the HDP might reach over 10 % of the vote, effectively endangering the AKP parliamentary majority (Yeğen, 2015:14). Erdoğan's subsequent active role in the general election campaign, despite the Constitution stating that the president must remain neutral, supports the view that his main goal was the continuous AKP majority in order to make future constitutional changes possible (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015).[13] This likely explanation for his intervention is intertwined with his political ambition of a presidential system. Such an approach would see the entirety of the peace process with the PKK terminated if it was leading to a lower popular support of the AKP or helping the opposition parties. Given the distinct role Erdoğan played in Turkish politics for the last 15 years, another explanation might see his lack of influence over the Dolmabahce agreement behind his opposition to it (Yarali, 2017:69).

The general election of June 2015 saw the AKP lose the parliamentary majority it managed to hold onto for the last 13 years. The HDP gained over 13 % of the vote, winning in many Kurdish areas which voted for the AKP four years ago. The popular support of the AKP conferred a form of legitimacy upon the peace process that was practically conducted outside of the law (Hakyemez, 2017:2). When the AKP lost its majority, the peace process came to an end. After the election, the situation escalated rapidly. HDP representatives were denied authorization to visit Öcalan just a few

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[13]Although Erdoğan wasn't campaigning for the AKP directly, he was holding rallies prior to the election where he targeted opposition parties and praised the ongoing policies of the government (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015).

days after the elections. By 11th July, the PKK proclaimed that neither the HDP nor Öcalan could further order them to fully disarm (Yarali, 2017:71). In the aftermath of the Suruç suicide bombing perpetrated by the IS, the PKK claimed responsibility for the killing of two policemen allegedly working in the counter-terrorism task force.[14] On 24th July, military airstrike operations were started against the IS, the PKK and the KCK-affiliated Kurdish groups in Syria by the Turkish government (Yarali, 2017:72). When the two-and-a-half-year long peace process ended, a new phase of the conflict between the state and the PKK has begun, unprecedented in its scope of violence and extremity.

While the conflict once again raged on in the south-east, the HDP politicians who read Öcalan's letter during the 2013 Newroz celebrations were facing charges of "terrorist group propaganda" by the state prosecutors. Throughout all of the third round, it was only the control of the AKP over the institutions that protected the Kurdish politicians in contact with the PKK from criminal investigation (Hakyemez, 2017:6). The peace process has been suffering from both the negligence of the technical aspects of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and from the inability to realise concrete reforms (Bacik, 2015:38). For these reasons, it is possible to view the Third round essentially as a "strong ceasefire" that eventually deteriorated into military clashes as it has happened many times in the past (Bacik, 2015:38). Turkey's restrictive political system proved to be a significant obstacle for the possibility of a successful resolution of the Kurdish issue.

## 2. 3. 2 Effects of the Arab Spring on the Third round

The political upheaval in the Arab world that started in Tunisia in the beginning of the 2011, ended up eliminating the regional status quo on which the Turkish peace process was built on. As the Arab Spring spread to Syria, where it eventually escalated into a civil war, the Turkish government was observing with a strong sense of unease the emergence of another armed Kurdish group on its southern border, the PYD. The Assad regime in Syria began tolerating the PYD as it concentrated its efforts on defeating the government-opposing forces. The growing threat from the IS only further strengthened the state of non-aggression between the PYD and the

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[14]The killings were meant to be a reprisal for the Suruç bombing as the PKK had long accused the AKP of collaborating with the IS (BBC, 2015).

Assad regime. By January 2014, the PYD declared an autonomy in parts of northern Syria and began to organize itself into three cantons (Acun, Keskin, 2017:22). The significant effect of the existence of the PYD on the Turkish peace process was fully revealed throughout the Kobani crisis, when the continuation of the both the negotiations and the ceasefire were conditioned by the Turkish government's consent to allow the passage of reinforcements through its territory to reach the PYD.

Fig. 2: Kurdish armed presence in Syria and Iraq (bbc.com, 2016)
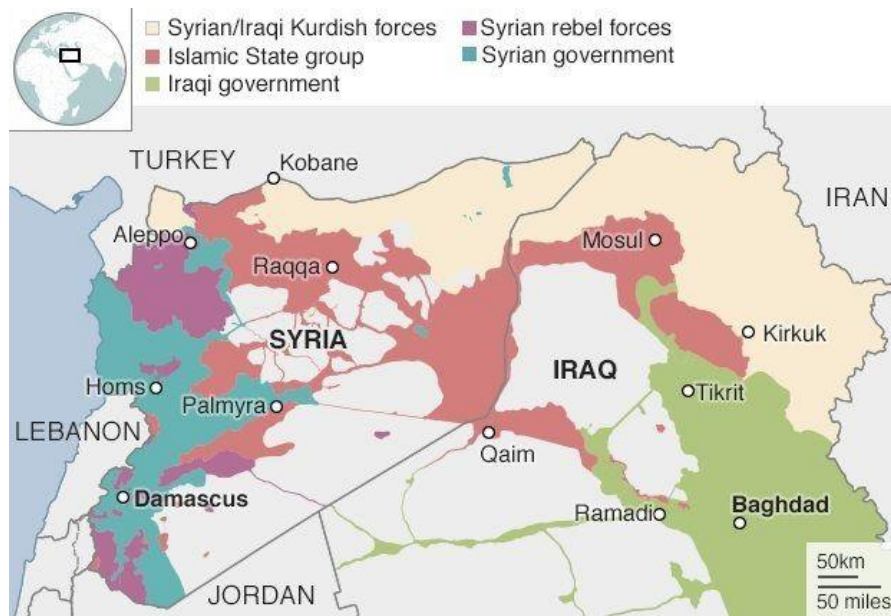
The Arab Spring, or more specifically its effect on Syria, has significantly altered the balance of power between the Turkish government and the PKK. With the emergence of a de facto Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria, the PKK became a transnational movement. The PKK-affiliated PYD considers Öcalan its intellectual mentor and, given the close historical and family ties of the Turkish and Syrian Kurds, there suddenly existed practically no border between these groups (Mathees, Seufert, 2013:4). Furthermore, at the start of the Third round, Prime Minister Davutoğlu hypothesised the reinvention of the nation states of the Middle East with the end goal of a federalised Turkey with ambitions of acquiring the Kurdish areas of Iraq and Syria (Mathees, Seufert, 2013:6). Such an ambition was based on the assumption of a successful disarmament of the PKK and the subsequent peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue. But the PYD's control of three cantos in Northern Syria, combined with the existential threat posed to it by the IS, made sure that a total disarmament of the PKK became impossible (Bacik, 2015:43). The PYD also

managed to gain support of the global community, most notably of the US, in its fight against the IS. With Turkey's allies offering arms support to the PKK's affiliate, the resolution to the Kurdish issue became ever more complex. When the Turkish military initiated its military offensive against the PKK, President Erdoğan declared that "*there is no difference between the IS and the PKK*" (Bacik, 2015:42).

3. Rational choice theory

Deeply rooted in the classical economic school of thought, rational choice theory views the individual (or a group) and the society at large as actors inherently in pursuit of their self-interest. Rational choice theory operates under two basic assumptions, that of the methodological individualism and the concept of rationality itself (Petracca, 1991:293). Under this theory, human behaviour is seen as goal-oriented and calculated. Actors in society are expected to seek to attain their purposes, and such persistence then constitutes the substance of rationality (Petracca, 1991:295). Rationality is therefore understood in terms of means, not ends. Regardless of the "rationality" of the actor's objectives, the way the actor optimizes the objective's realization is always subjected to the same process of rationalization (Bakalova, 2013:104). Rational choice theory is seemingly uninterested in the influence of social structures and other supraindividual entities on the actor's decision-making, which is unconditioned and universal. According to Gary Becker, the rational choice approach can be applicable to all human behaviour (Petracca, 1991:291).[15]

Cooperation in rational choice theory is explained in terms of reciprocity. In full accordance with the game theory, cooperation is conditioned by the choices of other actors as in the case of the prisoner's dilemma thought experiment. The interacting individuals engage in a series of cost-benefit analyses, weighing the immediate gains or losses against the possibility of long-term advantages of cooperation (Bakalova, 2013:107). Self-interest represents the basis for cooperation, as the interacting sides view the situation to be a non-zero-sum game. If the actor perceives the situation to be generating clear "winners" and "losers", then conflict emerges. Conflict is bound by the same rules of rationality as all other interactions, pursuing universal interests of power, security or wealth (Kaufman, 2006:49). Given the ever-present lack of complete and objective information surrounding both the other actor's actions and the context of a situation, the interacting sides are caught in a state of uncertainty, further increasing the costs of cooperation.

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[15]Gary Becker (1930-2014) was an American economist, sociologist and a Nobel Prize laureate, who was a staunch proponent of microeconomic analysis and rational choice theory in all social sciences.

The concept of a negotiation in rational choice theory is determined by the primary role of self-interest in the human nature. Fisher and Ury created a number of rules for a "principled negotiation" of calculating rational actors. Fisher and Ury argue that people inefficiently argue over positions instead of interests. If the parties focus on the interests underlying their positions, they are more likely to approach the foundation of the dispute, as the positions of the actors are replaced by separate and easily approachable issues (Avruch, Black, 1990:223). The ability of actors to communicate clearly and separate key issues from "noise" (possibly with the help of a third party) opens the opportunity for a resolution. The parties then enter the problem-solving phase of creating a set of mutually beneficial outcomes. The final benefits of a negotiation, or "utilities", can either be maximized or minimized and the solution can be measured by its degree of a relative efficiency (Avruch, Black, 1990:223).

The main criticism of rational choice theory in political science stems from its deliberate omission of the historical and structural groundings of a particular situation. Rational choice theory often deals with a set of hardly quantifiable definitions (like the presence of a state) and with an enormous scope of social and economic variables to be modelled. The application of rational choice theory on socio-political issues can lead to conclusions that are de-contextualized and imprecise in a way that various structuralist and historical approaches seek to avoid (Díaz, 2013). Another point of criticism of rational choice theory is that it doesn't enquire how do actors acquire their goals and why they pursue one set of goals over the other. The absence of a preference-formation theory is put to contrast with rational choice theory's focus on individual preference or utilities, which could be considered a normative assumption on its part, equating concrete aims of actors with the public good (Petracca, 1991:313).

3. 1. Rational choice approach and internal conflict resolution

3. 1. 1 Costs of conflict

The decision to start negotiations or not amidst an on-going conflict is determined by the same cost-benefit analysis as all other forms of interaction. The warring sides estimate the relative costs of a unilateral victory or a negotiated settlement (Villaveces-Niño, 2003:7). Combination of specific economic, institutional and

military conditions determines the likelihood of negotiations or a continuation of violence. Various theorists have identified a set of conditions increasing the chance of a behavioural change of warring parties. Zartman argues that increased pain, fatigue or plain boredom from being at war lowers the benefits of conflict (Villaveces-Niño, 2003:8). Manson and Fett argue that the parties estimate their probability of military victory, how long it will take to achieve it and the rate at which they are capable to absorb the costs of conflict, against the payoffs of a settlement (Manson, Fett, 1996:549). Given the broad variety of social and political factors playing a role in a continuous conflict, there exists a near infinite number of decisions to be modelled. To deal with this problem, rational choice theory focuses on concrete events (Díaz, 2013).

Manson and Fett identified several conditions increasing the chances that a government will pursue a negotiated settlement in an internal conflict: 1) the length of a conflict, 2) the accumulated costs of conflict and the decrease in popular support for its continuation and 3) an intervention by a third party (Mason, Fett, 1996: 551,552). The factors negatively correlated with the likelihood of a settlement were identified as: 1) The amount of time necessary to achieve a complete victory and 2) the relative size of the government's army (Mason, Fett, 1996:553). The nature of the internal conflict was shown to be inconclusive to the probability of a negotiated settlement. Whether the conflict was ethically-based separatist war, or a politically-based revolution, the difference in the likelihood of a successful resolution was deemed insignificant despite the author's presumption of an easier divisibility of goals in an ethnic war (Mason, Fett, 1996: 554).[16] Lastly, the negative correlation between the estimated time necessary for a military victory and the probability of a negotiated settlement was explained using the anchor bias in a decision-making process, as the length of the use of the military strategy only further justifies its continuous use (Díaz, 2013).

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[16]Such a finding goes contrary to the earlier work of Paul Pillar who claimed that the likelihood of a negotiated settlement greatly depends on the availability of a compromise, more often present in cases of separatist wars, where possibilities of an increased autonomy instead of a separation clearly scale the basic demands (Pillar,1983: 24).

3. 1. 2 Stalemate and institutional environment

According to Zartman, the first precondition to a negotiated settlement in inter-state conflicts is the presence of a "mutually hurting stalemate" (Zartman, 2001: 8). It is the perception of the condition of a mutually hurting stalemate, not its objective existence itself, that forces the interested parties to act. If just one of the sides does not recognize that the conflict has reached a dead end, then the mutually hurting stalemate has not yet occurred (Zartman, 2001:8). If the warring parties perceive the situation to have reached the mutually hurting stalemate and at the same time are searching for a "way out", then a "ripe moment" emerges for the initiation of early negotiations. A "way out" constitutes another perceptional, yet a less complex element. The ripe moment is a combination of both the subjective and objective elements representing an ideal opportunity for the initiation of negotiation proposals which have been "in the air" for a long time and that only now begin to appear attractive (Zartman, 2001:8). According to Zartman, the whole initiation phrase of the negotiations is grounded in the ability of the actors to recognize the "correct timing" and their ability to create a sense of a possible settlement (Zartman, 2001:9).

The concept of a mutually hurting stalemate is fully consistent with rational choice notions of a cost-benefit analysis. But the acknowledgment of a mutually hurting stalemate by the parties constitutes only a necessary but not sufficient condition. The second precondition necessary for the initiation of negotiations is the existence of an institutional change, which may be seen as a first objective step on the "way out" of the conflict. The purpose of such a change is to lower the barriers of entry to new participants into the political market, opening the door to a subsequent alteration of the "rules of the game" (Shugart, 1992:122). For a government to establish the total costs of a conflict, it must weigh the costs of suppression against the costs of toleration. The government-opposing forces, on the other hand, must weigh the costs of resistance against the costs of participation. If, for one of the sides, the cost of competition becomes lower than the cost of conflict, an institutional change is likely to follow. In the case of the government, the institutional change would see the introduction of new electoral security guarantees and lower barriers to rebel participation. In the case of rebel forces, the change would see the providing of guarantees to the government that its interest will remain protected under a new set of rules (Villaveces-Niño, 2003:7).

Under certain circumstances, the realization of the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate by the parties can also lead to the escalation of the conflict. One of such circumstances is the presence of a group of "hard-liners" or "true believers" in the ranks of the party. These actors might advocate further continuation of violence despite the presence of an increasing pain related to the conflict (Zartman, 2001:12). Regardless, if the moment of joint perception of a mutually hurting stalemate passes without producing any results, the warring parties often double-down in their efforts to achieve a total victory, concluding that the opposite side will never truly be ready for a peace process (Zartman, 2001:13). The ability to avoid the continuation of the conflict under conditions of a mutually hurting stalemate is determined by the willingness of the parties to persuade each other of the existence of a "mutually enticing opportunity". If such an opportunity is not developed, then, even under the condition of already initiated negotiations (e.g. after the mutual declaration of a ceasefire), the situation becomes unstable and a possible settlement becomes unlikely (Zartman, 2001:14).

3. 1. 3 Ceasefire

Shugart draws special attention to the nature of a declared ceasefire and its relevance to the possibility of a successfully negotiated settlement. All ceasefires are not equal as they often put one of the parties in a relatively advantageous situation given the specifics of the conflict or the nature of the institutional rules of the game. For example, the rebel forces that have extensively relied on outside sanctuaries are more likely to oppose ceasefire terms demanding their demobilization and confinement to the bases outside the country. Such terms are even more likely to be rejected if the rebel forces' political support could not be guaranteed in the absence of their soldiers (Shugart, 1992: 128). In this scenario, the rebel forces might continue to fight in order to receive more favourable terms in the future. On the other hand, with a high degree of mobilization of their supporters, the rebel forces can rely on their political network in the possible election, further decreasing the total costs of competition. As a general rule, the government conditions institutional change of lower barriers of participation with the disarmament and demobilization of the rebel fighters and the rebels seek to maintain their forces as an insurance against reneging (Shugart, 1992: 128). Shugart concludes that in each successful case, the rebel forces were demobilized prior to the election (Shugart, 1992:130).

3. 1. 4 Role of third parties

One of the objective factors corelated with the increased likelihood of a successful settlement is the presence of a third party. The interjection of a third party can take various forms, ranging from mediating the negotiations, policing the truce, to even military intervention. The presence of a disinterested third party may provide the necessary credibility to the negotiations and offer a package of incentives to both sides to make the costs of cooperation (and future competition) lower than the costs of a continued conflict (Mason, Fett, 1996:553). Although the parties might indeed be bargaining in good faith, they are perpetually caught in a security dilemma that is further increasing the chances of the renewal of violence on the account of "risk-aversion" logic of the actors (Kaufman, 2006:49). The impartial peace-keeping activities of the third party can lower the degree of uncertainty amongst actors and effectively decrease the risks of continued warfare. In many cases, the third party presence is especially sought after by the rebel forces, as the rebels rarely possess equal amount of resources as the government, making a continuation of the conflict after a period of ceasefire a possible major setback in the rebel's efforts. Walters (1995) concluded in his study about civil wars that no settlement is likely to be reached or to be hold without the intervention of a third party to police the peace process (Mason, Fett, 1996: 533).

3. 1. 5 Role of sacred values

Ginges et.al. used rational choice theory to analyse the role sacred values play in the process of conflict resolution. The term "sacred values" can be in this context broadly understood as a set of "taboos" or "red lines" which the absolutists of the interested parties are unwilling to cross. The authors investigated the possibility that antagonism to compromise over sacred values might be mitigated by equitable losses over sacred values by both sides of the dispute (Ginges et.al, 2007). Demonstrated on the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, authors found that the willingness of the absolutists to reach a compromise indeed increased if a perceived fair trade-off of the sacred values was presented. On the other hand, the opposition of the absolutists to proposals considerably increased if the trade-off of sacred values was accompanied by material incentives (e.g. reparations, investments) (Ginges et.al, 2007). This shows that the presence of sacred values in negotiations poses a challenge to rational

choice theory as it seemingly leads the actors to forfeit possible benefits. In stark contrast, the same situation of adding further material incentives to the trade-off of sacred values decreased the amount of opposition to a compromise of the non-absolutists. It is possible to conclude that actors in the presence of sacred values follow a different bargaining logic, where the relative loss of the other party's sacred values is equitable with the negotiation gains.

3. 2 The case of Colombia – Rational choice approach

The internal conflict in Colombia represents a case of a prolonged military conflict between the Colombian government and the guerrilla forces of the Revolutionary Armed forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army that continued despite several attempts at a peace process throughout its history. Even though it is not a representative case of an ethnic-separatist internal conflict, it is a case of an asymmetric revolutionary war accompanied by the existence of deep-seated social and economic grievances and of a divided populace. The recent attempts at resolving the conflict are an example of a classic notion of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, through which will the peace process in Turkey be viewed in the final chapter. The main aim of this subchapter is to analyse the recent peace process in Colombia through the lenses of rational choice theory.

The conflict in Colombia began in 1964 with the creation of the FARC and its subsequent guerrilla activities in the rural areas. It came in the aftermath of the *La Violencia* period and the evolving organized criminal activity surrounding the drug market.[17] The conflict quickly began to be characterized by frequent murders, torture, rape, forced displacement and "disappearances" (ICTJ, 2009). The displacement of millions of people due to the violence only further deepened one of the main grievances of the conflict - the unequal distribution of land. The 1990s saw the introduction of another belligerent group of right-wing paramilitaries called the Colombian United Self-Defence Group. All paramilitary groups began to be increasingly more dependant on illicit drug trafficking, all the while the government was continuously expanding its military operations in a belief that a military victory was at hand (ICTJ, 2009).

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[17]*La Violencia* (The Violence) is a name of the ten-year-long civil war in Colombia (1948-1958) fought between the Colombian Conservative Party and the Colombian Liberal Party. Both sides also fought the forces of the Colombian Communist Party.

The case of Colombia shows that the length of the conflict is strongly associated with the number of attempts for peace through a negotiated settlement. Prior to 2012, the FARC engaged in peace talks with the government in 1983, 1990 and 1998. The year 1998 represented the second most recent attempt that was accompanied by two specific factors: 1) an extensive and successful military offensive by the government that weakened the FARC leadership, and 2) a period of an economic crisis (Díaz, 2013). The economic circumstances lowered the utility of continued military operations of both sides. The peace talks which ensued in 1999 ended in 2002, despite the international efforts. The government then pledged to continue the war with increased resources. Throughout the 2000s, the FARC was slowly losing its control over the key areas and was forced into defensive positions (ICTJ, 2009).

In November 2012, the government opened formal peace talks with the FARC. Prior to this initiative, the government already obtained an approval for the reform of the Constitution with the aim of defining a Framework for Peace. The issue of creating a legal basis for transitional justice and the future treatment of former guerrillas came to the forefront of the peace talk preparations. The government showed its dedication towards pursuing a genuine DDR process ensuring a just treatment of the FARC members in case of a peace agreement (Melo, 2013:2). It can be argued, that at least one of the sides of the conflict perceived the situation to become a mutually hurting stalemate. The FARC was already facing serious military defeats and setbacks with the number of areas under its influence ever-decreasing. But even though the government was successfully pushing the FARC back, it concluded that the total costs of a military victory were too high as it would still take at least several years of intense offensive to break the FARC completely (Melo, 2013:4). At the same time, the government presumed that the initiation of a full-scale peace process was the safest option, since the strategies of blanket amnesties or a new constitutional assembly would be accompanied with a high risk of political defeat. The FARC was aware that if it rejected the negotiations proposal, it would take many years before a similar opportunity would arise again. For FARC, the costs of participation were significantly lower that the costs of conflict given its decade-long military retreat.

The first issue of the negotiations was the democratic political participation of the guerrillas after their disarmament. The government chose an indirect approach of concentrating on general issues of rights and opportunities for political opposition, as

there existed a rather hostile climate towards the FARC's political participation (Melo, 2013:3). Such an approach would nonetheless make legal political activities more attractive for the FARC, e.g. by giving it easier access to radio, TV or financial subsidies. The FARC was willing to accept the slow progress on this topic as it could possibly benefit from long negotiations which would give it both the polical visibility and opportunities to present its proposals to the Colombian society (Melo, 2013:5). The fact that both parties managed to broadly agree on the form of land and agrarian reforms showed that the negotiations presented a positive-sum game, where approaching the core issues behind the conflict appeared a realistic option. The FARC eventually gave up its goals of making the Zones of Peasant Reservations autonomous in exchange for the government's vows to support the existing Zones of Peasant Reservations and create new ones in the future (Melo, 2013:3).[18] In the final part of the peace negotiations, the government passed laws facilitating the demobilization of the FARC and judicially shielding the pending peace deal from possible changes by later administrations, further decreasing the FARC's fears of reneging and with it its costs of participation.

The FARC immediately declared a unilateral ceasefire when the peace talks began. The government, on the other hand, intended to fully demonstrate its perceived 'upper hand' and strength to both the public and the FARC and insisted that the process was to continue without a ceasefire. Nonetheless, the government pursued a strategy of "de-escalation" that eventually lead to the number of battle related deaths to virtually drop to zero (Herbolzheimer, 2016:3). Both sides successfully continued the de-escalation of the conflict. The FARC announced its commitment to stop the kidnappings and the practice of recruiting children, while the government gradually reduced the scope of its military operations. By 2015, a de-facto ceasefire has been reached. The peace process also stood out for the level of the international attention it both sought and received. The negotiations took place in Havana with the countries of Cuba and Norway as observers and with Venezuela and Chile as "accompanying countries". The involvement of specific regional players further ensured that various political inclinations of the countries would be balanced. The negotiations themselves were confidential and both the public and international organizations

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[18]The Zones of Peasant Reservations represent one of the ways of solving the rural development issue in Colombia and at the same time are a potentially lucrative base of support for the future legal activities of the FARC.

were to co-operate once a deal was reached. The third parties greatly helped the peace process in the necessary capacity-building and problem-solving in the moments of crisis. Special envoys from the UN, US and later EU also significantly helped draw the global attention towards the peace process, further increasing the pressure on the interested parties to find solutions (Herbolzheimer, 2016:8).

Although the conflict itself lacked any sacred values in a fashion similar to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both sides saw the importance of establishing the truth and ensuring justice as main prerequisites to a stable peace. The Framework for Peace already offered some forms of alternative sanctions and possible suspension of penalties.[19] The government accepted its responsibility in violating human rights and proposed restitutions and compensations to the victims of its actions. In 2014, both sides announced their commitment towards ensuring victim's rights to truth, justice and reparations with the guarantees of non-repetition (Herbolzheimer, 2016:4). Victims of the conflict received special attentions and were even invited to the negotiation panels by both sides.[20] The willingness showed by the parties to acknowledge past crimes, cooperate in establishing the truth and compromise over just sentences greatly enhanced the chances for a successful settlement. The steady continuation of the negotiations was determined to a great extent by the trade-offs between the FARC's demands for granting amnesties and the government's pursuit of just sentences with regards to both the public and international expectations (Melo, 2013:4).

The government presumed the necessity of the public participation in approving the outcome of the peace talks. Prior to the 2016 peace agreement, two laws on the eventual plebiscite have been passed. Although the final agreement has been eventually very narrowly rejected in the referendum of October 2016, the Colombian peace process represents an example of a genuine peace process containing many of the aspects increasing the possibility of a peaceful settlement according to rational choice theory. The peace talks took place under the specific circumstances of a perceived mutually hurting stalemate and the existence of a "ripe moment" to start negotiating. The Colombian government created the necessary institutional

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[19]e.g. by working to assist the victims and repairing societal damage instead of serving a prison sentence.
[20]This represented the first peace process to frame the agreement on transitional justice on the input provided directly by the victims invited to the negotiations (Herbolzheimer, 2016:4).

environment, decreasing the costs of cooperation for both negotiating parties, which facilitated the possibility of approaching the main grievances behind the conflict. Furthermore, the democratic participation, as well as the role of the third parties, were seen as necessary by both the government and the FARC in order to successfully resolve the conflict. The peace process also saw the introduction of new innovations, such as giving the victims of the conflict official hearings to help establish the truth and justice.

4. The peace process in Turkey: Rational choice approach

The process that started in March 2013 represented the first genuine attempt at a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK in its history. Turkey represents a case where the length of the conflict is, contrary to many other studied cases of internal war, not associated with the number of attempts at a peace process. In the case of Colombia, there was a total of four instances of initiated peace talks including the possibility of ending the conflict. Although the two cases show many similarities regarding the nature of the military stalemate, the ceasefire, and the estimation of the costs of conflict prior to engaging in a dialogue, Turkey is an example of the state's reluctance to negotiate for historical and ideological reasons and of the reliance on a primarily military solution. There existed several occasions when the circumstances could be interpreted as "ripe" for negotiations according to rational choice theory but were not perceived to be as such at the time by at least one of the sides or were quickly spoiled by a series of unfortunate events and developments.

4. 1 Turkey's reluctance to engage in a peace process

The reality of the state's oppositions towards negotiating with the PKK (and earlier Kurdish organizations) is a direct result of the long denial of the core issue behind the conflict, the existence of a specific Kurdish identity in Turkey. This denial was shown to be prevalent throughout most of the republic's history up until the turn of the century. The attempt of Turgut Özal to open the Kurdish question to the possibility of a peaceful solution abruptly ended with his sudden death. Özal, and many of his supporters, already viewed the conflict as having reached a military stalemate, while seeing the high costs of pursuing a military solution exclusively. Yet regardless of Özal's public standing or political skills, his propositions were met with fierce opposition from the nationalist parties as well as the military. Öcalan's calls for a ceasefire were seen just as a further justification for continued military operations by the hard-liners within the army, as they were interpreted as a sign of weakness that pointed to the inevitability of a complete military victory. Only the prospects of a potential EU membership somewhat decreased the brutality with which the state approached the Kurdish insurgency, even though only the destruction of the PKK still represented the only solution acceptable to the Turkish military.

The rise of the AKP towards the parliamentary majority saw the introduction of the policy of loosening restrictions on expressions of the Kurdish culture, but the issue of the PKK was approached separately through force, although with a lesser degree of harshness. Öcalan's capture turned out to be a breaking point in moving towards the possibility of negotiating with the PKK, especially when combined with the AKP's relative openness towards a more democratic approach to the Kurdish issue. The First round of negotiations (2007–2009) and the Second round of negotiations (2009–2011) haven't managed to initiate anything approaching a peace process, yet they constituted a major shift in government's strategy. The First round managed to establish contacts with the PKK and open the public discourse on the topic of the internal conflict. The Second round saw the introduction of direct negotiations as well as regular meetings with Öcalan. Yet both rounds took place under an unstable ceasefire, disrupted by instances of violence, and most importantly were conducted in utter secret. It can be argued that up to this point, the state's intention was mainly centred on stalling the PKK in order to gain support of the Turkish Kurds in crucial elections, because the negotiations weren't able to generate any concrete propositions or visions.

4. 2 Contextual axis of the peace process

4. 2. 1 Estimation of the total costs of conflict

In the months following the failure of the Second round, opinion polls revealed that there existed a relatively high level of public support towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. This might have been the decisive factor convincing the state to start pursuing an open and more ambitious peace process. The possibility that negotiating with Öcalan and the PKK might not just not alienate the AKP's voter base but win over large portions of the electorate in the Turkish south-east greatly increased the potential pay-offs from a peace process for the government. The change in AKP's strategy reflected the length of the conflict, approaching its fourth decade, the decreasing confidence in the military's ability to crush the PKK through force and lastly the inevitable toll the long conflict took on the public. Furthermore, the state had the opportunity to fully benefit from the reality of having imprisoned the PKK leader. The government could have used the status of Öcalan as a powerful bargaining chip in negotiations with the PKK, offering better conditions of

imprisonment for specific demands or as a tool of increasing the trust between the negotiating parties.

According to the set of conditions determining the likelihood of the government to pursue negotiations identified by Manson and Fett, the Turkish case demonstrated factors both increasing and decreasing the likelihood of a negotiated settlement at the moment of its initiation. The factors negatively affecting the likelihood of a peaceful resolution - the amount of time needed to achieve complete victory and the relative size of the government's army have both played major role in justifying the government's previous approach and were shown to be still influencing the attitudes of the actors within the state. Especially in the later stages of the peace process, as the negotiations stalled, the government started to rely yet again on the methods used in the past. On the side of factors positively correlated, two were present – the length of the conflict and the accumulated costs of conflict together with the decrease of public support for a military solution.

By 2013, the PKK's goals changed significantly when compared to its initial demands from the 1980s. After his capture, Öcalan immediately began working on the concept of democratic confederalism, which the PKK subsequently accepted is its main doctrine. Such an approach already presumed the necessity of a democratic solution and the pursuit of the Kurdish autonomy as an acceptable compromise. The PKK has long sought the possibility of a peace process and has on many occasions declared its willingness to disarm in the case of a democratic solution (BBC, 2010). The crowd of over a million people on Newroz 2013 in Diyarbakir, many of them waving the flags of the PKK or KCK, demonstrated to the PKK that they could potentially rely on a significant public support in the case of its demobilization and entrance into legality. Negotiations presented a very good opportunity for the PKK to at least partly achieve its goals, as opposite to the continuation of conflict as usual. Even though the costs of competition appeared lower than the costs of continued conflict, the PKK was well aware that it had the capacity to continue fighting for many more years. In comparison, it appears that the PKK's military situation prior to the start of the peace process, although similar in some respects, was slightly better than that of FARC in Colombia, as it had more of its leadership intact and had the advantage of sanctuaries outside the country, while the government had no real estimation of the time necessary to achieve a military victory.

4. 2. 2 Nature of the stalemate

One of the main preconditions for the initiation of a peace process is the perception of a mutually hurting stalemate by both sides of the conflict. The fact that the government pursued, although very carefully, a policy of loosening restrictions and was secretly meeting with the PKK leaders between the years 2009 and 2011 shows that the effectiveness of a military solution was put into question, as other means of resolving the conflict became feasible. Whether the government viewed the situation as having reached a dead end at the time remains unclear, but it was actively searching for a new way out after nearly 30 years of undecisive military conflict. The combination of the AKP's "more democracy, less repression" approach towards the Kurdish question, together with the PKK's pursuit of democratic confederalism created the circumstances where each party's goals could be achieved with less costs through political competition than through violence. The PKK openly expressed its support for a political solution and with it its acknowledgement of the impasse. On the side of the government, such an acknowledgement was directly tied to the public's reaction to it. The moment it became clear that there existed a public support for a peace process, the government decided to pursue negotiations at an official level.

The circumstances under which the peace process began can be considered as having been favourable to the likelihood of a successful settlement. Zartman's notions of "ripe moment" and "correct timing" to approach solution that has been "in the air" for some time seem to be applicable to the situation in Turkey by March 2013. From the start of the Third round, both sides managed to effectively convey the message of peace as a way out of the conflict through their choice of symbols and language and keep the public support for the process at high levels. Furthermore, both parties had the opportunity to put into motion proposition already secretly discussed throughout the previous rounds of negotiations. Yet despite the successes in conveying the vague notions of peace to the public, the parties failed to persuade each other of the equally important notion of mutually enticing opportunity. The prolonged periods of stagnation of the negotiations left the dynamics of the process to be dictated by events outside the influence of the interested parties. When the negotiating parties demonstrated their inability to channel the expectations of peace into concrete results, the process became unstable, as according to Zartman's theory. In February

2015, both sides aimed to remedy the process' failings by the introduction of the Dolmabahce agreement. But throughout the two years of negotiations, the circumstances, under which the process started, changed so dramatically, that previous notions of "ripeness" have become obsolete. A good example of such a shift is Erdoğan's opposition to the Dolmabahce agreement, his hostile rhetoric towards the representatives of the HDP, and lastly his ability to convince the AKP to eventually withdraw its support for the agreement and suspend further negotiations.

4. 2. 3 Strength of the ceasefire

Öcalan's call for a ceasefire, which was announced by the HPD politicians on 21st March 2013 in Diyarbakir and subsequently heeded by the PKK, was very different from the previous declarations of unilateral ceasefire by the PKK leader. This time, the ceasefire was not only an opportunity to de-escalate the violence, but a part of a broader peace process, including calls for both the disarmament and demobilization, preceded by months of contacts between the government and Öcalan. Also, it marked the first time that the government was willing to pursue a conciliatory approach towards the PKK, creating a de facto mutually respected ceasefire. According to Shugart's theory, the PKK's willingness to accept the terms of the ceasefire can be explained by the existence of a significant regional political support for the organization, which was not conditioned by the presence of the PKK's forces in the specific regions. The PKK could also benefit from the sympathetic approach of an established party - the HPD. Although the PKK also represented a case of an organization extensively relying on outside sanctuaries, it did not affect its level of support for the calls for its disarmament and demobilization, because it had long sought the possibility of a political solution.

The ceasefire could be considered as stable, increasing the likelihood of the fulfilment of its main goals. The initial stages of the withdrawal of the PKK fighters took place with no major incidents. But amidst the lack of accompanying institutional factors facilitating the DDR process, both sides began exploiting the ceasefire in the case of the failure of the peace process. The government exploited the withdrawal of the PKK forces by building new military facilities in areas known to have been frequently used by the PKK. As the negotiations stalled, the PKK, on the other hand, used the long ceasefire to consolidate its political support through the

activities of the KCK. In the case of Colombia, the period of mutual non-violence was viewed as a necessary condition for the successful continuation of negotiations and the implementation of the decisions agreed on. Even though the ceasefire in Turkey was successfully enforced, the window of opportunity it offered for the negotiations remained unused. In the absence of institutional changes, both parties used the ceasefire for the advancements of their own goals. Furthermore, the ceasefire was increasingly threatened by the developments outside Turkey (the Kobani crisis) and the military activities of the PKK-affiliated YDG-H.

4. 2. 4 Value-oriented setbacks

The set of specific values on which the Turkish republic was founded upon inserted a number of red lines into the peace process. The Turkish state's fundamental insistence on its unitary nature has made for more than 80 years the non-violent resolution of the Kurdish question nearly impossible. Yet even with the ongoing peace process with the PKK, the government was reluctant to consider granting autonomy to the Kurdish regions in Turkey. Although the AKP's government has conceptualized the possible federalization of Turkey, it has managed to remain very much a hard-liner (or a moral absolutist) on the issue of a constitutional change in regards to the unitary nature of the state. The PKK, on the other hand, replaced its initial goal of an independent Kurdistan with the aim of establishing a "democratic autonomy" more than a decade earlier.

The first red line the state was willing to cross, was to break the tradition of demonising Öcalan and never directly negotiating with him, but such a move constituted a known necessary step towards the initiation of the peace process at large, more than a form of concession. Furthermore, despite the AKP's policy of a relative tolerance towards expressions of a specific Kurdish identity, the use of words such as "Kurd" or "Kurdish" in the discussions accompanying the peace process still constituted a major point of controversy.[21] Regardless of the ongoing peace process, the government refused to significantly shift its rhetoric and amend its approach towards the PKK, KCK or even the Kurdish politicians known to be in contact with

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[21]Throughout a meeting between the AKP and the Kurdish HDP, a dispute emerged between the AKP's minister of culture Ertuğrul Günay and the HDP member Hasip Kaplan over the use of the word "Kurdistan", which eventually lead to a suspension of the meeting session (Hürriyet Daily News, 2014).

these groups. The government has also shown strong reluctance to compromise over one of the most important and symbolic issues of the process - the status of Öcalan. A willingness to offer to the Kurdish side the possibility of alteration of the sentence passed on Öcalan, or at least the possibility of the improvement of his imprisonment conditions, could have significantly increased the trust between the two sides as well as represent a major gesture by the state in its peace efforts. Yet the most important setback was the complete failure to introduce a commission for truth and justice, the establishment of which was previously agreed on during the Oslo talks.

In stark contrast to the Colombian case, there was no acknowledgement of past crimes and no acceptance of responsibility for the human rights violations by both the government and the PKK. The negotiating parties never cooperated nor exchanged their perspectives about their visions of ensuring truth, justice, nor approached the issue of the victims of the conflict and the human toll it took over the decades. The peace process did not generate any real possibility of reaching any important compromises over the core values of the actors. Instead, the actors argued over moral positions, not specific interests, while there was not even a basic agreement over the acceptable vocabulary regarding the ability to address the individual issues. Bearing in mind the theory of negotiation by Fisher and Ury, it can be argued that the actors failed to separate issues from "noise" and engage in a "principled negotiation", which was most notable in the inability, of at least one of the sides, to compromise over deep and long-held beliefs about the nature of the conflict. Such setbacks decreased the mutual trust between the parties and with it the potential benefits of the willingness to compromise over core issues.

4. 2. 5 Role of regional developments

One of the major shifts in the peace process' dynamics, radically altering both parties' estimations of their total situation, emerged as a consequence of the Arab Spring. The external element of Arab Spring led to the destabilization of the peace process, which was already facing a number of serious setbacks. In the Turkish government's calculations, the possibility of a negotiated settlement was conditioned by the PKK's complete disarmament and demobilization. The emergence of a PKK-affiliated PYD fighting the IS at Turkey's border made the total disarmament very unlikely. The PYD's declaration of autonomy considerably shifted the balance of

power between the PKK and the Turkish government, and with it made the initial perception of the mutually hurting stalemate obsolete. Amidst these regional changes, the PKK's priorities shifted dramatically, especially in the context of the peace process' slow progress bearing little to no results. The PKK's attention shifted towards the defence of the Kurds in Syria and Iraq against the IS and at the same time offered to the PKK a new goal of fighting for the Kurdish autonomy outside Turkey. Additionally, the government's response to Kobani crisis nearly led to the breakdown of the peace process and the renewal of the conflict.

The effects of the Arab Spring in Syria have significantly decreased the likelihood of a negotiated settlement, because they have increased the costs of cooperation for both sides. In order to reach a peace deal, the government would have to tolerate only a partly disarmed and demobilized PKK. While the PKK was not pursuing the continuation of the conflict in Turkey, its interests became international, and its complete disarmament would existentially threaten its allies pursuing similar goals. The conditions under which the peace process started were no longer applicable two years later due to the regional changes outside the control of the negotiating parties. This situation led, regardless of the later efforts of the Dolmabahce agreement, to an increased hostility of certain key actors towards the other party's demands, further decreasing the chances of the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The case of Turkey showcases the fragility of a peace process when it is confronted with the changing status quo outside the influence of the actors. Although the Turkish peace process consisted of many concrete flaws, the growing regional instability, under which it took place, presented possibly the most significant setback in its efforts. It can only be hypothesised, how an unstable regional political situation would affect the Colombian peace process, which was considerably better equipped to deal with potential unforeseen setbacks. The location where the peace process takes place appears to be equally important as how it is managed.

4. 3 Technical aspects of the peace process

4. 3. 1 Institutional setbacks

The most notable difference between the Turkish and the Colombian cases was in the way each government approached the legal and institutional framework of the peace

process. Although the theoretical basis regarding the enactment of an institutional change in rational choice approach is fairly straightforward, it doesn't further elaborate on the effects the individual institutional changes have on the peace process. Both cases saw the government initiate the negotiations after it has deemed the costs of competition/cooperation to be lower than the costs of conflict, but only in the case of Colombia has the "way out" constituted the enactment of laws lowering the barriers to rebel participation in the initial phrase of the peace process. Colombian government has succeeded in creating a mutually enticing opportunity through the early introduction of laws guaranteeing the negotiation status of the FARC and its possible entrance into legality. These concrete steps made the individual issues of peace process approachable, created a basic level of mutual trust and with it enhanced the likelihood of a negotiated settlement.

The reasoning behind the Turkish government's approach towards the institutional guarantees followed an entirely different logic. Given the historical opposition of large parts of the political elite and the population towards negotiating with the PKK, the AKP chose a very careful approach towards the introduction of tangible legal changes accompanying the negotiations. Such an approach has from the very beginning made the peace process substantially non-transparent and unpredictable. It seems that the government wanted to keep the possibility of walking back from the peace process open in the case that its continuation would be unlikely to generate a positive outcome for the party's interests. This points to a fact that the continuation of the Third round of negotiations was directly tied to the political interests of a specific party, as there has never been any effort to transform the peace process into a cross-party project with peace as its main goal.

Throughout the peace process, the PKK and the KCK remained criminalized and the Kurdish politicians with known links to these organizations were selectively facing prosecutions. For the government-opposing forces, the politics of "as if" constituted the larger part of the institutional protection given to their representatives engaged in the negotiations. Although the discussions included the issues of military withdrawal, disarmament and the eventual demobilization and rehabilitation, in the absence of a legal framework, no clear path towards their fulfilment appeared to exist. The PKK has long demanded the introduction of a constitutional change and Öcalan has proposed a concrete roadmap to the government on many occasions, but the

government was very reluctant to comply. The absence of a constitutional change comparable to the Colombian Framework for Peace, which was passed with the support of political parties across the political spectrum, seriously decreased the potential of the peace process to accomplish any of its goals. Instead, the Turkish government moved to create an institutional framework protecting only the state officials engaged in the negotiations.

The AKP estimated that its powerful position within the Turkish political system would ensure the PKK would cooperate when offered a peaceful way out. Such strategy would offer the AKP the possibility of pursuing a peaceful resolution without the costs of being restricted by new legislation. Yet this approach turned out to be incapable of achieving any of its major goals, especially as the peace process was reaching a dead end, where each side was demanding of the other to be the first to abide by its promises. Furthermore, it is a remarkable fact of the peace process, that its entirety went on without any direct negotiations and almost any contact between the representatives of the AKP and the PKK. The main method of conveying information between the negotiating parties remained through the HDP politicians acting as messengers between Öcalan and the PKK leaders. Even the Dolmabahce agreement came as a compromise between the AKP and the HDP atop the discussion about Öcalan's draft for negotiations.

Although rational choice theory can sufficiently explain why the way the government approached the institutional aspects of the peace process decreased the likelihood of a successful settlement, the tools of the theory are not sufficient enough to fully describe the whole rationale behind the government's pursuit of the particular approach. From a cost-benefit perspective, it can be argued that the AKP considered the peace process to be profitable only as long as it was in the position to dictate the dynamics of the negotiations, and also as long as it felt confident of its popular support, especially in the south-eastern Turkey. Yet the processes behind the government's decision to pursue an institutionally half-hearted peace process can only be partly explained using rational choice theory. Even at the time of the peace process, it became obvious that the negotiations were not producing the desired results and were stuck at key issues. Although the government closely observed the impacts of the peace process on its public image, its reluctance to change the approach towards the institutional/constitutional change was even more closely tied

to the historical and cultural traditions of the Turkish republic. To explain the key question of why the government ignored the institutional aspects of the peace process to such a degree, it would be necessary to use structuralist or historical approaches to the conflict resolution.

4. 3. 2 Absence of a third party

For reasons similar as in the case of the institutional change, the Turkish peace process did not see the introduction of a third party. The Third round saw the introduction of no disinterested observers in order to mediate and monitor the peace process. The AKP firmly insisted on the local nature of the negotiations and refused the inclusion of any different country, mechanism or organization into the process (Hürriyet Daily News, 2014). The PKK, on the other hand, has long demanded the presence of a third party. It wasn't until the Dolmabahce agreement, that the parties agreed on the introduction of a third party, possibly the USA, and a monitoring committee. Yet it is highly doubtful if such a late introduction of one of the most important conditions for a peaceful settlement would have the desired effect, even if it wasn't eventually refused after the intervention of the President Erdoğan into the peace process.

The presence of a disinterested third party in the peace process is strongly correlated with the increased likelihood of a peaceful resolution. From a rational choice perspective, its presence greatly reduces the costs of cooperation by lowering the level of uncertainty amongst actors and the risks of continued conflict. The total absence of a third party in the Turkish peace process meant that the actors were caught in a security dilemma, from which they were unable to escape on their own. As Walter concluded that no settlement is likely to be reached without the intervention of a third party, it is possible to claim that its absence in the Turkish case constituted one of the main reasons for the failure of the peace process. Such a conclusion is further supported by the significant positive effects the presence of a third party had in the case of Colombia. The Colombian case showed that the presence of specific countries acting as observers, together with the attention from major global players, including international organizations, greatly increased the pressure on the negotiating parties to continue the peace process and greatly decreased the changes of a breakdown of the negotiation in the case of a crisis.

4. 4 Explaining the failure of the peace process

At this point, it should be possible to identify the main reasons behind the failure of the Turkish peace process. Using rational choice theory, specific aspects of the peace process have been analysed in order to estimate their total contribution to the likelihood of a successful settlement, or its failure. Although the Colombian case represented a valuable tool for comparison in the determination of the relative effects of the individual aspects on the peace process, its reach was limited to the contextual and technical aspects, meaning it could hardly elaborate on the different core issues between the two cases and the level of challenge they posed to the actors. Additionally, the rational choice approach has been used, to some extent, to explain the government's reluctant approach towards the introduction of specific elements into the peace process for cultural and historical reasons. But these conclusions play only a secondary role, as they represent one of the major weaknesses of the rational choice theory. Although they have been taken into consideration, the main focus is centred on the fulfilment of the conditions affecting the effectivity of the peace process.

The main factors positively correlated with the likelihood of a successful peace process were shown to be present prior the to initiation of the negotiations. The estimated costs of conflict, concluding the advantageousness of cooperation/competition for both sides, and the mutual perception of a mutually hurting stalemate created a very stable basis for the initial phrase of the peace process. Another factor widening the window of opportunity for uninterrupted negotiations was the presence of a rather strong ceasefire. With these specific conditions in mind, the early stage of the peace process can be considered very similar to the case of Colombia, as both the actors and the public were justified in having expectations of the conflict's peaceful resolution. Yet even the strongpoints of the Turkish peace process were eventually overshadowed by its shortcomings, the "ripe moment" has passed without producing a mutually enticing opportunity and the ceasefire became increasingly unstable.

All the remaining dimensions, introduced in the third chapter, were shown to negatively impact the likelihood of a negotiated settlement. The most notable of these was the issue of the third party's presence, because of its complete absence.

Furthermore, the peace process was unable to offer legal guarantees to the government-opposing forces to facilitate a DDR process, offering the PKK a route towards legality. Institutionally, the peace process was very weak. The ad hoc mechanism the government chose was capable of dealing with only the secondary issues. The peace process also failed to establish a mechanism through which the issues of truth and justice could be resolved, as well as effectively address the core values of the actors in a meaningful way. The core values of the status of Öcalan and the possible Kurdish autonomy weren't even seriously addressed throughout the peace process. Lastly, the peace process suffered serious setbacks, which could not have been foresaw or controlled by the actors. Regional developments have dramatically changed the conditions present at the start of the peace process, significantly altered the balance of power and even the goals of the actors.

It is possible to conclude that the decision of the Turkish government to renew the military conflict with the PKK and end the peace process was not an action that couldn't have been foreseen, nor it was a spontaneous decision made by a single individual. The government calculated that the continuation of the conflict was preferable to negotiating with the PKK. Given the overwhelming presence of factors negatively correlated with the likelihood of a negotiated settlement, the Turkish case can be considered a weak peace process, especially when compared to the Colombian case. The Turkish peace process lacked the necessary institutional mechanisms and political effort to resolve an ethnic that has been going on since the founding of the Turkish republic and that is still enormously controversial and divisive.

Conclusions

The aim of this master's thesis was to explain the failure of the Turkish peace process using rational choice theory. In order to be able to approach such a complex issue, so enshrined in the country's history and political culture, it was necessary to focus on both the long-term and short-term historical aspects influencing the decision-making processes of key actors. The use of rational choice theory meant that all actors' decisions were interpreted as the result of their calculations striving to maximize the possible political gains. Such interpretation was then used on a set of specific conditions determining the likely outcome of a peace process.

The first chapter of this thesis was devoted to the in-depth description of the history of the Kurdish question in Turkey. It was necessary to establish the essential role the perception of the Turkish national identity has played in the state's approach towards the Kurds. The nature of the PKK, its goals and strategies, were described in the context of the history of the previous unsuccessful Kurdish uprisings. The attention was then focused on the changing attitudes of various Turkish governments towards the Kurds and the PKK. The most significant shift towards a non-violent solution of the conflict was determined to be the moment the AKP became a dominant political force in Turkey.

The string of three rounds of negotiations was the subject matter of the second chapter. The first and second rounds constituted essential steps towards the first instance of a genuine attempt at a peace process. The Thirds round became the synonym for this thesis' understanding of the Turkish peace process. The timeline of the Third round was described in detail up until its end and the eventual return to violence. Special attention was given to the regional dimension of the peace process and to the role specific individuals played in the negotiations, most notably Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Öcalan.

The third chapter was dedicated to explaining rational choice theory and its use in conflict resolution. In this chapter, core assumptions of rational theory were presented and, most importantly, the conditions influencing the calculations of the actors were identified. The conclusions of these calculations were then associated with the likely outcome of the peace process. According to the conditions defined,

Colombian peace process was selected as a good example of a case exhibiting most of the factors positively correlated with the likelihood of a negotiated settlement and as a point of comparison for the following analysis of the case of Turkey.

In the final part, rational choice theory was applied to the case of Turkish peace process. All six dimensions of a peace process – costs of conflict, stalemate, ceasefire, third party presence, sacred values and institutional change were analysed in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the peace process. The analysis showed that the Turkish peace process, either completely or mostly, failed to approach at least three of these dimensions – third party presence, sacred values and institutional change. The remaining three dimensions were shown to create circumstances increasing the likelihood of successful negotiations, as they constituted a set of conditions deterring the actors from continuing the violence. Yet these positive factors were eventually negated by the effects of the Arab Spring. Regional developments were shown to make the initial circumstances of the peace process obsolete.

Through the application of rational choice theory, it is possible to conclude that the Turkish peace process was fairly stable and exhibited the basic conditions for a successful peace process only in its early stages. Nonetheless, as the peace process continued, no significant progress came as a result of the negotiations. The government was unwilling to approach the two basic conditions necessary for a peaceful settlement – institutional change and the introduction of a third party and refused to compromise over its core values. The Arab Spring then further increased the total costs of cooperation and discouraged both actors from negotiating. The PKK was not given any incentives to continue its disarmament while the government greatly underestimated the scope of the efforts needed to resolve the conflict peacefully. The failure of the Turkish peace process was the result of the absence of a mutually enticing opportunity and the presence of regional instability. Under these conditions, the AKP concluded that the total destruction of the PKK was a strategy bearing lesser risks and costs that the continuation of the negotiations.

The Turkish peace process is an example of a weak peace process, especially when compared to the case of Colombia. Rational choice theory successfully explained how the absence of specific factors significantly increased the possibility of the

renewal of violence. Yet, as it was mentioned in the introduction, rational choice theory can offer only a partial explanation of the peace process' failure. The Turkish peace process was in a large part defined by the presence of a number of red-lines resulting from the nature of the Turkish state and its history. Rational choice theory only addressed the influence of these red lines on the calculations of the actors. If the Turkish-Kurdish conflict is ever to be resolved, then the understanding of how to approach and overcome the core grievances is necessary. For this reason, further research focusing mainly on social, economic and cultural aspects of the conflict will be an essential addition to the efforts of finding a theoretical way out of the conflict.

This thesis has benefited from the abundance of available literature on the history of the Kurdish question in Turkey as well as on the topic of rational choice theory. Nonetheless, this thesis has intentionally omitted the use of available literature offering a more detailed description of the inner workings of the PKK. The focus was mostly oriented towards understanding the changing preferences of the Turkish state under the assumption, that it was the government that needed to change its strategy for any peace process to take place. Yet the PKK is a complex organization and not all its wings agree on the overall strategy of pursuing democratic confederalism through reaching some kind of a deal with the Turkish government. Therefore, in the same way as the AKP had to incorporate the changing public opinion into its calculations, The PKK had to incorporate the influence of its various wings and affiliates within the party. The use of rational choice theory on the decision-making processes within the PKK and the role of these decisions on the final outcome of the peace process would offer another dimension to the explanation of the failure of the Third round of negotiations.

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Abstract

This master's thesis deals with the Turkish-Kurdish peace process which took place between the years 2013–2015. The aim of the thesis is to explain the failure of the peace process through the use of rational choice theory. This thesis places great emphasis on both the long-term and short-term history of the Kurdish issue in Turkey in order to identify the key aspects of the conflict and the main preferences of the actors involved. Rational choice theory is used to establish a set of conditions determining the likely outcome of the negotiations and as a theoretical tool explaining the decision-making processes of the actors. Based on the conducted analysis, it should be possible to identify the main reasons which led the Turkish government to the final decision to end the peace process and continue the military conflict.

Key words: Kurds, Turkey, peace process, negotiations, rational choice theory, conflict resolution, AKP, PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá Turecko-Kurdským mírovým procesem, který probíhal mezi lety 2013–2015. Hlavním cílem této práce je vysvětlit selhání Tureckého mírového procesu skrze teorii racionální volby. Značná část této práce je věnována dlouhodobé i krátkodobé historii Kurdské otázky v Turecku za účelem identifikace klíčových aspektů konfliktu a základních východisek aktérů. Teorie racionální volby je použita k určení podmínek, které zásadním způsobem ovlivnily výsledky vyjednávání a jako teoretický nástroj vysvětlující rozhodovací procesy aktérů. Na základě provedeného výzkumu by mělo být možné identifikovat hlavní důvody, které přivedly Tureckou vládu ke konečnému rozhodnutí ukončit mírový proces a pokračovat ve vojenském konfliktu.

Klíčová slova: Kurdové, Turecko, mírový proces, vyjednávání, teorie racionální volby, řešení konfliktů, AKP, PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan